

Graduate and Professional Student Council
General Assembly Meeting
12-11-2007 7:00 - 8:30 pm

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Convene: 7:01 pm

Thank you to the Duke University Stores for the very generous donation of all of the gifts for GA Representatives at this meeting!

I. Judicial Committee Elections

Yvonne Ford – There are two people who have been nominated to participate as members of the judicial committee – Bomin Shim and Ping Zhao. The role of this committee is to investigate bad conduct and put forth bylaw amendments. There are three spots that need to be filled so the floor is open for further nominations.

Will Wittels - He nominates Jan Pierskalla.

Jan Pierskalla – He accepts the nomination.

Yvonne Ford – Since there are no more nominations, Bomin Shim, Ping Zhao, and Jan Pierskalla are the slate proposed for approval.

Slate Approved Unanimously

II. Approval of the Minutes from 11/13/07

Move to approve the Minutes from the 11/13/07 meeting.

Motion: Luke Riservato, Second: Eric Vance

Motion Passes Unanimously

III. Know Your Status

Joel Volpe – He is a graduate student who is involved with “Know Your Status,” a group dedicated to provide free HIV testing for Duke students and postdoctoral fellows. They provide a 20 minute rapid antibody test, which is intended simply for screening and is not meant to be definitive but is 99% accurate anyhow. This past semester they tried to reach out to GnP students but the events that were held were not well attended and in addition, some of these events were canceled due to funding problems (Know Your Status is partially funded by a grant given to the University in order to study the demographics of students who get tested. However

the IRB for this study wasn't approved in time for the scheduled events so they had to be canceled. Now it is approved so it shouldn't be a problem.). In the past they've had a problem getting involvement from GnP students before, meaning that they did not get tested (less than 10 people in a day at certain sites). He's here to solicit feedback on improving the use of this service by GnP students.

Michael Schwartz – In Fuqua they had flu shots offered during the middle of the day (roughly 11-3) and it was advertised at least a week in advance. This program was pretty successful. In Fuqua, perhaps Seminars 11 & 12 would be good locations.

Luke Riservato – Having an event in the Medical School might be a good idea. There are concerns with confidentiality, so it would be good to have an event where people would be able to be tested without being seen by others or identified by records.

Wadia Haddaji – Maybe there could be events held at the Bryan Center.

Joel Volpe- We do have these every Monday from roughly 12-5 in the Bryan Center.

Yvonne Ford – Next semester the School of Nursing will have about 500 people, so you may be able to get the ABSN students to volunteer to help do the swabbing.

Liza McClellan – What is the goal for this study amongst the Duke student population when there are other communities for which this testing might be more appropriate in the Durham/North Carolina communities?

Joel Volpe – The study is essentially just a way for Know Your Status to get money to allow people to get tested. Also it will provide demographic information about who gets tested, without yielding patient confidentiality. So far, those tested at Duke have been representative of the demographic balance at the population overall.

Oliver Gjoneski – You may want to publicize that the test is an oral swab (versus a more invasive test).

Yvonne Ford – Is there counseling available for people who have positive results?

Joel Volpe – Though there have not been any positive results obtained through Know Your Status, all testers are trained in and licensed in pre- and post-test counseling.

Liza McClellan – Since there have not yet been positive results in the Duke community, would this service not be better for other communities due to a higher need (e.g. Durham)?

Joel Volpe – We also test at NC Central, but that is a good point.

Theresa Finn - Part of the purpose of these groups and events is to destigmatize getting tested in addition to allowing people to ascertain their own HIV statuses.

IV. University Ombudsperson Address

Dr. John Blackshear – He is here to talk about his role as the new Student Ombudsperson. He is a clinical psychologist by training, he used to work at CAPS but is now involved at the Academic Resource Center handling things like learning disabilities, etc.

The Ombudsperson is a person with whom students might be able to talk about issues arising within a class population in order to get advice or mediation or even to get issues taken back to the University. This is a confidential service, he doesn't even take notes. It is also an impartial role; he does not intend to convince a person to take a particular action. The University has taken a stance that he can work independently even though it is a University sponsored position. The other part of this position is it feeds back into the system in a report fashion. For example, he assesses and reports such things as where did the most problems bubble up and how can we address these things on the University level. He has also done some mediation (e.g. with problems within departments and labs) to work through issues so that students are heard and resolutions are reached. So far it has been a pretty positive experience. He does not adjudicate, but he does advise students of their rights and advise on how to obtain appropriate support. Undergraduates are often consumers of this service, but there are a lot of GnP issues related to education on policy procedures and rights regarding GnP students. He doesn't ever go back to another party and "tell on" a student. The only way issues do go to someone else is if the student gives consent and it is absolutely necessary. He has dealt with nearly 50 cases in the first 3 months of which 80% or more have been involving GnP students.

He brought some cards with his personal number and email address. He keeps his meetings with students private and erases all information about who he has met and when. If anything ever goes before a jury, there is a press within Congress to allow Ombudspersons to have be protected by a shield so they do not have to testify against students.

Unidentified Speaker – At what point would it be warranted for a student to contact you?

Dr. Blackshear – Anytime something feels "funky," a student should call.

Sometimes it is easier to head things off, but also he meets with people even after there have been other attempts at deliberation. He doesn't always need to be involved in the resolution, but he can help initiate talks.

Eric Vance – What are some of the major rights and policies overlooked by GnP students and/or their programs?

Dr. Blackshear – There is a lot of protection afforded to students by the University. Many people know about their DGS, but not many know about the roles within the administration, such as the roles of people like Dean Nowicki, Provost Lang, etc. These people have responsibilities to students and there is a lot set up so that students can get questions answered about policies and procedures and how to get things decided. For example, many students do not know who makes decisions regarding students living off campus, as many GnP students do.

Josh Wilson – We used to have an Ombudsperson position within GPSC, but we stopped it because of legal issues. Are you a member of the National Ombudsperson Association and what other legal issues are involved in your position?

Dr. Blackshear – He is a member of the International Ombudsperson Association. Most of the legal concerns relate to the shield in State and Federal governments protecting the privilege of the student-ombudsperson confidential relationship.

Josh Wilson – When we were moving away from having our GPSC Ombudsperson position, we got the sense that the University did not want to deal with having such a position itself, but now you are here talking to us as the person in that role. Why did this reluctance change? Was it the CCI or some other issue?

Dr. Blackshear – There was a press from various groups (such as DSA) who voiced a need for this position. Ben Reese created the charter that was presented to the University Administration so that the position would be understood. Once they saw what it was, they were more in favor of it.

Crystal Brown – The ball had been moving and the discussion had been ongoing for some time, especially with regards to undergraduates. This has been contemplated for some time, but has just now come to fruition.

V. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Presentation

Dr. Gary Glass – With regards to mental health, he addressed GPSC last year and learned more details about threats to the mental health of GnP students. For example, he heard about occasional conversations where it appeared as if a student’s advisor/PI/mentor was saying “threatening” things to the student, telling him/her that they will not succeed without being at work all of the time. A lot of times there are communication gaps between personal relationships due to career obligations. He would like to address some things so that students can judge whether to pursue some assistance with CAPS.

(He asked Reps what they thought when they heard “CAPS” – responses included “Crazy,” “Mental Illness,” “Medication,” and “Anorexia.”)

These responses you have provided basically relate to three things. “Anorexia” is a severe diagnosis, “crazy” is a term used to informally describe a mental illness, and “medication.” Some people feel as if they would be forced to “lie on a couch” if they came to CAPS for services, which is unfortunate because there are a range of student concerns. Some issues are as severe as anorexia, but there are others that are less severe. One of the major concerns involved in the lives of GnP students is trying to figure out when they have progressed from existing within a normal extent of challenging, stressful academic pressures to a situation in which they should get help. There is a stigma against pursuing help for mental health issues for many reasons, but the solution is the same – we need to promote a culture that says it is okay to ask for help. Unfortunately this does not happen, especially within some of the more competitive academic areas. In truth, it is really a strength for one to utilize his/her available resources. We have to remember that weakness is not the opposite of strength – both are temporary conditions. We tend to treat weakness as permanent and strength as temporary, forcing us to feel as if we continually need to prove our strength, even at the expense of mental health.

We provide many services at CAPS, including individual, couples and group counseling.. Often one's perspective becomes narrowed by the pressures of academia, forgetting that it is necessary to keep perspective within other areas of life. Sometimes medication does help with some issues, but many people are afraid of having chemicals "alter" them. CAPS also provides consultation services if you are worried about the health of one of your peers. We are very aware that mental health issues may be helped simply by promoting communication, etc. and that the best methods do not always involve psychotherapy or medication.

We have provided and continue to provide workshops on various specific things. Some are skill based, like the "Personal Growth Workshops." We also have discussion groups where people talk about various issues. There are also lecture-based groups that help people learn more about a particular mental health issue.

Some of the personal growth workshops on tap are:

- Meditation and Mindfulness Class – sign up for this very early
- Stress for Success Workshop
- CAPS Creative Dance Class – use world music to make people aware of their bodies and emotions
- Exploring Manhood – one of the interns is putting this together to see how gender and sexual orientation may affect issues
- Bodysong – this explores the relationship of a person with food. It is often very helpful for people who are not quite sure about whether they are at the point of disordered eating or not.
- Divided Commitments – this is often attended by GnP students in relationships
- Between Race and Racism – this takes a look at experiences that do not often get talked about, and even when they do they are negated or denied.

Xing Zong – He wanted to know whether it is possible to establish some programming on career services and some services specifically for international students.

Dr. Glass – There is going to be some programming related to this. It is not uncommon for people to get to the end of their programs and not clearly know exactly what they intend to do afterward. They are working in particular on services for international students (and some events are very heavily frequented by international students, such as the dance class, because in some other cultures there is even more of a stigma attached to seeking help for mental health concerns.

David Kahler – All of these programs sound great, but how are you getting space for all of these events? He was under the understanding that many of these groups and CAPS in general was running out of space for such events. It is possible for GPSC to lobby for more access to spaces for CAPS, if needed.

Dr. Glass – The dance classes are held above the Marketplace, they are looking for other areas as well. They make major efforts to effectively schedule things by picking appropriate times and by putting smaller groups in smaller venues. They are not going to try to grow so fast that they outstrip their capacity.

Michael Schwartz – Is there a phone number available for a student to call who needs counseling?

Dr. Glass – Yes, it is 660-1000. To get an appointment you have to call for yourself (i.e. someone else cannot call for you). If you are concerned about someone else, stop by to be advised on how to get him/her to seek help him/herself. Especially if you are told when you call that you cannot be seen for a long while, but you feel very uncomfortable with waiting, tell the person who answers that you need to be seen earlier and they will make it work. Couples appointments are made by calling the same number.

Wadia Haddaji – How are you working to diminish the stigma that exists related to seeking assistance with mental health issues?

Dr. Glass – They are trying to talk to as many groups as possible, including parents during Parents' Weekend, etc. They also have posters trying to emphasize "authenticity...purpose...connection...balance" as associated with CAPS and not the "stigmatizing" words of "crazy...anorexia...medication...loser." There is a balance that people need to find to determine they need to see someone. One sign that a person may benefit from seeking help is if his/her performance drops off to the extent that his/her goals are in jeopardy.

Heather LaBreche – The psychology clinic is another resource that students may seek out.

Dr. Glass – CAPS is not officially affiliated with this clinic, but they refer back and forth with it. The main purpose of the Psychology Clinic is to be a training clinic for those at the doctoral level of education with faculty oversight. CAPS is primarily for servicing students.

VI. Teach for America

Caroline Davis – She is the regional recruitment director for Teach for America and recruits from schools within the Carolinas. There are 13 million low income students, and of the roughly 50% of these that will graduate high school, about 50% of these end up performing at the level of an 8th grader. This has nothing to do with their intelligence or capacity for learning and has everything to do with the system that's letting them down.

The way that low income schools play out, in math and science, you are just as likely to have a person trained in English as your teacher. Less than half of low income students will ever have a math teacher that ever took any college level math.

As GnP students, you have an incredible opportunity to help change this. Teach for America has access to many achievement oriented people. They have 29 teaching locations – you get to preference where you go and what you teach. For example, if you are highly trained in math you could choose to teach math. This is notable, because students who are taught by teachers who are experts in math perform at least 1 grade level higher than those who are not.

There are a couple of other logistics – teachers receive full salary and benefits. You receive the equivalent of the Americore stipend so during your service you can put loans in forbearance and the program will pay your interest for you. At the end the two years you will still have about \$10,000 more to go toward your loans. To participate in this program, you do have to be a US citizen or a current resident.

She encourages you to read the materials to see the stories. Also, you can email specific people listed in the brochure she handed out. Additionally, you can contact her personally or you can log into the website: teachforamerica.org. There are 2 deadlines for you or any of your constituents – Jan 4th and Feb 15th.

VII. End of Semester Remarks

Crystal Brown – She wanted to take a moment to say thank you to all of the Reps. She has put together a letter to go out to all of the Reps to go over all the accomplishments from this semester. The time we have to do extracurriculars is so small so we are so happy to have you involved in GPSC. It is a privilege to work with you.

We will also be sending out a survey for you to give feedback to be incorporated into GPSC for the next semester so please do not ignore this – it is your chance to give feedback.

Another thing – this past weekend the Board of Trustees were here and in their meetings was the QEP committee presentation. The old theme was: “Reimagining a liberal arts education for the 21st century”. The new theme is “Enhancing Education for a Global Citizenship in the 21st Century.” The goal is to enhance the undergraduate experience by making use of the depth and richness of the Duke Professional and Graduate student population. This indicates that the input we had during the QEP presentation is being paid attention to and the GnP population is being considered in this process.

Adjourn: 8:13 pm