

UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2015 - Senate Chambers, Talley Student Union

Food Served -6:45 PM-

Call to Order

Roll Call

Guest Speaker: Provost Warwick Arden

The big picture: NCSU is on year 5 of a nine-year strategic plan with five goals:

- Student success (completion rates and post-graduate employment)
- Increase scholarly capacity by investing in faculty and research infrastructure
- Increase growth across the university – interdisciplinary rather than “a collection of departments held together by a football team and a hatred of parking”
- Develop partnerships in the US and internationally – recruit international students and send US students abroad
- Remain in lower quartile among peers for tuition and fees while achieving above goals
- Current budget: approved by NC General Assembly but not yet by Board of Governors; final budget expected by end of November.
- Faculty retention: NCSU salaries have been fairly static; last year the General Assembly didn't appropriate anything for faculty raises so this year NCSU is trying to find this money internally. Focusing on merit raises to retain faculty. Retention rate is improving and is 50% of faculty with actual external job offers. Preventive retention (faculty member is interviewing but has no offer yet) rate is 100%.
- Chancellor's Faculty Excellence Program: interdisciplinary faculty groups submit competing applications for funding for new faculty member to join their group. This began four years ago. 40 applications; 12 funded. In line with federal funding opportunities which focus on bringing together different skill sets. Also called cluster allocations. These are only 30% of allocations so should not interfere with traditional faculty assignments.

Q &A Session with Guest Speaker

- What are new cluster hires' responsibilities to their clusters? – The new hire and his or her department head make a statement of mutual expectations
- Re retaining quality faculty, what are student evaluations worth in evaluating faculty? – Undergrad teaching evals are taken extremely seriously. Low response rates are a problem but these have been improving. On the grad student side, Dr. Larrick is leading working groups on improving grad student education, asking how effective are faculty over time as grad mentors? We need to pay more attention to faculty's record of success with grad students and to grad student feedback. [Here Dr. Larrick added: we are looking at doctoral and master's completion rates by program. Challenges are funding and

mentoring. Progress has been made at departmental level and we are now looking at individual mentors. Dr. Grasso is looking at whether NCSU should continue to elect faculty to the graduate faculty for life, and whether there should be post-graduate faculty review.

- What about cases in which faculty are poor mentors but graduate their students, and the students don't feel OK about giving honest feedback? – Most evaluation so far has focused on lecture-format teaching; this can be improved. If lots of students have a problem with a particular faculty member, the department head and dean want to know about it.
- How would you find out that the above problem is happening? – We need a more robust evaluation system than currently exists, especially outside of the traditional lecture/small class system. Exit interviews for departing graduates can help, but in small academic communities, career-conscious graduates may still avoid complaint.
- Please say more about graduate student retention, especially resources for international students. – Here NCSU is the victim of its own success as the percent of international students has recently increased a lot. 34-35% of graduate students are international. NCSU has added staff to international programs office but still hasn't enough. One problem is that university is always scrutinized for spending money on administration instead of teaching! So resources need to be increased slowly. However, international grad students are retained at about 10% more than US students.
- Is the GSSP changing? – Until 6-8 years ago there was a quota for participating students; now anyone who qualifies can be on the support plan. However, this has to be paid for from other sources, but it's a top priority. Also trying to improve number of fellowships. New: Provost's Graduate Research Program. Also, current fundraising campaign to increase endowments has focus on graduate student contributions. Also, need to make faculty write research assistantships into their grants.
- Can student fees still be paid from some assistantships? – GSSP never paid for fees, but individual faculty members have always been able to use their own resources to pay grad students' fees; this isn't changing. [A rep added: Sometimes items covered by tuition become fees, as in the engineering school fee.] NCSU tries to avoid this; there are separate processes for tuition and fees. Provost knows that lots of grad student fees cover things mainly enjoyed by undergrads; this is why the Chancellor is strict about athletic fees, so for instance there was no increase in athletic fees last year. NCSU is still competitively low with its athletic fees.
- Last point: Enrollment plan is important part of the strategic plan; projecting growth in enrollment at all levels affects entire plan. Six years ago, when Provost arrived here, planning focused on undergrad enrollment; now the plan focuses on quality over quantity for undergrads (600 fewer freshmen admitted) and growth is meant to happen mainly at the graduate level. More grad students and postdocs are needed to keep up with Tier 1 Carnegie research institute classification peers. To attract and retain grad students, NCSU needs to retain faculty, improve research infrastructure, avoid outstripping its resources, and grow in areas with greatest capacity and extramural funding.

Executive Officer Updates (with some internal committee updates)

President – Jacob Majikes

- Update on inter-university activities: NCCU and Duke came to meeting, but UNC didn't. Discussed event planning. Also attended fee committee meeting.

Vice President of Internal Affairs – Doug Czajka

- All reps are now assigned to internal committees; everyone got their first or second choice. First committee meetings should have happened or at least be scheduled. Make sure to turn in letter of credential, constitution, and budget. All chapters need to do all of these, not just new ones. After Mohamed checks budgets, Doug will review all received materials. However, the October 1 deadline will be a soft one.

Vice President of External Affairs – Tyler Allen

- Hooray for new members of university standing committees! Let Tyler know if you are supposed to be on a committee but haven't received the official letter. Three more committees now have open seats: Courses and Curricula, Dining, and Physical Environment. They meet at pre-set times. The top priority to fill is Courses and Curricula since it has only one graduate student seat; the others have more than one seat so a grad student is already on the committee.

Vice President of Academic Affairs – Jessica Nash

- The Research Recognition committee received 26 full travel award applications by the September 15 deadline. Jessica met with Steven Couch, the chief advancement officer, to discuss more funding for the travel award.

Vice President of Communication – Veronica Catete

- The Publicity committee will look into rebranding Pawprints so that more people like to read it. The Talley Student Board of Directors has news – Talley has a new design center which will give free marketing help to student organizations. For now, contact through red-i-projects@ncsu.edu.

Treasurer – Mohamed Desoky

- Absent today. No updates.

Secretary – Susan Rodriguez

- No updates

Public Relations Officer – Charlena Wynn

- Also involved in Publicity committee. Committee will vote on what to do with Pawprints and discuss new name for UGSA. Report from the Council on the Status of Women: LGBTQ climate may be improving. New committee for graduate students to focus on racial diversity.

Constitutional Amendment: Student Senate & Internal Standing Committee

Currently grad students are not filling all of the seats available to them on Student Senate. The purpose of this amendment is to reduce the workload of grad students who represent their chapter in UGSA and serve on the Student Senate. This is the first reading.

Discussion:

- How would this affect reps currently in committees? – If you are on an internal committee and want to be in the Senate instead, talk to Doug who will make sure the committees have enough members.
- Please advertise senate representation to fellow grad students. Note that this is a time commitment of ten hours per month – more rigorous than UGSA.

- Can internal committees function well with fewer members? – Mostly yes.
- Could we have a cap on grad student senators to retain enough reps for internal committees? – Yes.
- Can a rep serve on Student Senate *and* an internal committee? – Yes, if you hate your life.
- Can alternates go to Senate meetings? – Yes, but you can only send a proxy about 3-4 times per year.

Voted to end discussion. Voted to change the amendment to cap at five senators; this proposal failed.

Constitutional Amendment: UGSA Name Change

First reading of this amendment. No discussion.

Resolution to fund a networking event for UNC, Duke, NCCU, and NCSU

We are having a series of inter-university networking events. Instead of paying for them jointly, NCSU will sponsor the first one, then NCCU, and then Duke. UNC has not been very involved in discussions. Ideas for the NCSU-sponsored event: outside/in a picnic shelter at Umstead State Park, food etc. probably to cost about \$500-600 depending on RSVPs, probably on October 18 (Sunday).

Discussion:

- Can these events be specific to academic field? – This might be better for networking, but logistically more difficult.
- Who will want to go to these? – If nobody RSVPs, we can cancel the event and lose only the \$100 reservation fee for the park.
- Is October 18 too soon for plan and receive RSVPs? – Maybe but if notice is too far in advance, people will forget about it!
- Will this conflict with the State Fair? What about UNC's fall break? TAGS has already made hiking plans! But we want to do this before the weather gets cold.
- This is all very vague – Will it help if we don't call it a *networking* event? – Yes.
- What happens next? – If UGSA approves funding, advertise event.
- Motion to end the discussion and vote no to the resolution – failed.
- Clarifying the resolution: it is to invest \$100 for the reservation fee, then potentially more if enough people RSVP.
- Would other universities try their own events if this one doesn't work out? – Yes, perhaps not the same kind, but other universities also want networking, community service opportunities.
- Can we add something to our resolution to make sure the other universities cooperate? – No, our resolutions don't bind them.
- Successful motion to end discussion and vote on resolution – resolution passed.

Carmichael Gym Fee – Update

Presented by Jacob: Overview of proposals, fee committee. Renovation is really needed. Cost is estimated per square foot with a hard minimum. Student Body President is voting in favor of \$47.50 increase. Realistically we need to go along with this. No architect design yet because under NC law, no architect can be hired until the fee is approved. University Recreation says it wants to keep the fee low and will not automatically charge the maximum fee approved. Students will be on planning committee.

Discussion of whether to bind Jacob's vote on the committee:

- We can bind his vote not at all, or to a specific response – no increase, \$37.50, \$47.50, or \$57.50 (this fee would provide a bigger track by the main Carmichael building which would join in the future with the main track).
- Motion: To bind Jacob's vote at all (content of vote to be discussed if bound). No debate. Motion was not carried. Jacob's vote not bound, but he will take today's discussion into account when voting.

Discussion of the fee itself:

- What is the difference in square feet between the two main fee options? – We don't know. The main difference between the \$47.50 and \$57.50 fees is the track.
- In calculating the proposed fees, did anyone account for projected increases in enrollment and therefore more students paying fees? – No, this is a maximum possible fee increase. The current University Recreation fee was for a similar loan that was paid off early due to increased enrollment.
- Will Athletics Department help to pay in order to have the track meet regulations? – Not sure.
- Student Senate will have resolution asking for non-students to have increased cost of membership

Open Floor

- Susan: Apologies for forgetting to put a break in the agenda!
- Rep: Can we move to have a recess of five minutes in future meetings? – Yes.
- Social Committee announcement: Oktoberfest will be on October 24. Committee will find transportation to event; attendees must buy own beer.
- Three-minute thesis competition has only 12 people registered so far! Registration deadline is this Friday but might be postponed. Only PhD candidates are eligible.
- Rep: When will my chapter hear about the decision on our block grant application? – After next exec board meeting. Please note that block grants have rolling deadlines.
- Any comments on UGSA website? – need to put up new Teaching Award applications and deadlines; demonstration of how to find block grant application and how to use Google Drive.

Adjourned.

Next scheduled meeting of the UGSA Council: Monday, October 26 at 6:45 PM