

Dear Department Representatives,

Recently members of the GSO met with Dean Sapiro (Dean of Arts and Sciences) and Dean Whitaker (Associate Dean in the Graduate School). The meeting went very well; we talked about recent GSO activities and discussed ideas for future events.

We (the GSO) introduced the Deans to the co-sponsored event process. We described the application procedure and described the events that were held this semester. The Deans seemed receptive to the idea and we hope that, at some point in the future, this will translate into a larger budget.

The Deans remain very supportive of the GSO travel grants. In fact, Dean Whitaker remarked that our Travel Grant budget is too small and should be increased. We hope that such an increase will come about in the near future.

On the policy end, we asked the Deans about the status of the BU Parental Leave Policy. They are looking into the issue but have not yet formulated a specific policy. We had a few specific questions about the policy and the Dean Whitaker's response is included below.

Looking forward, the Deans are interested in meeting with the GSO on a regular basis. They are interested in the GSO sponsoring professional development programs and so we will try to schedule more of these programs in the future. In addition, they expressed an interest in working with the GSO to organize a poster presentation session for the social sciences and humanities (similar to Science and Engineering Day).

If anyone has ideas about professional development programs, social programs, a poster presentation session, or any other ideas please send them to gso@bu.edu or bring them up at the next meeting.

I hope that everyone is enjoying the warm weather and I will keep you posted on GSO updates throughout the summer.

Sincerely,
Marc McGuigan
President, Graduate Student Organization

Dean Whitaker's response regarding specific parental leave issues that were raised in the meeting:

Two questions came up regarding graduate student parental leave, and particularly what can be done now while a policy is being worked out:

*) It might arise that due to new parenthood a student takes a Leave of Absence for a semester, then wants to finish up and graduate the next semester -- which would not be in compliance with the GRS requirement that a student be registered during the semester when degree requirements are completed and the previous semester. This is a GRS requirement; we can waive it when circumstances warrant. We just need to know the situation.

*) The question was raised if students going on LOA can still participate in the BU student medical insurance plan. This is complicated, is constrained by state laws and the insurer's rules, and is actually in flux. As I said at the time, if a student is registered and in active status in Fall and is on the plan, then goes on LOA for

Spring the insurance coverage continues. The complexity arises if a student is on LOA for the Fall: that student is not an active student, and so is not legally eligible to participate in the student health plan (unless the LOA is medically necessitated; some timing complexities arise; I said it is complicated!). I am not an authority on this, but it seems basically that becoming inactive after being an active student is OK, but getting enrolled while being inactive is not.

Here's a solution if things seem to be getting weird: we can put the student in part-time Continuing Study status, so s/he is active and therefore eligible to participate in the student plan. This means the student is charged a Continuing Study Fee; I can make a Dean's Award to cover that cost. This will let us deal with immediate cases while the insurance policies are being resolved.

In either of these situations -- exception to the registration requirements, or this special Continuing Study Fee award -- the student should make a request to the Department Chair or the Director of graduate Studies, who vets the situation and then contacts me with the request and a departmental recommendation. This keeps communication lines clear and maintains the Department's position of responsibility.

The student medical insurance plan is undergoing extensive changes, with a two-level system and expanded coverage. Details are at <http://www.bu.edu/comp/saweb/medins.html> and links therein.