

Graduate Student Organization (GSO) Meeting Minutes: October 17, 2001  
5:30-7:30, MCS Room 180

The following, listed in alphabetical order, attended:

Marway Fayed, Computer Science; Ellie Harrison, Archaeology; Qin He, Geography; Ella Howard, American Studies; Usha Govindarajulu, Biostatistics and GSO Treasurer; Tara Kraenzlin, History; Joyce Macabea; Math; Laura Middlebrooks, Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures; Pradipta Seal, Math; Amanda Serenevy, Math and GSO President; Serge Skirker, Economics; Dera Wilkens, Art History; Masako Yamada, Physics and GSO Vice President.

1. GSO WEBSITE: The website for the GSO is <http://gso.bu.edu> and has been recently updated, with the GSO Travel Grants prominently featured.

2. TRAVEL GRANTS: The deadline for Travel Grant applications is NOVEMBER 1ST, 2001. Applications can be downloaded from the website in PDF format. The GSO Travel Grants were awarded for the first time in the Spring of 2001 to students in the Anthropology and Philosophy departments; each received \$200.00 toward airfare to conferences in London, UK. Departmental reps will soon receive reminders to publicize this deadline.

3. BUDGET ORGANIZATION: The GSO maintains two separate accounts. First, a gift account, from which the GSO Travel Grants are made, and into which donations from last year's Alumni Association fundraising effort went. Secondly, a regular account which contains our base budget of \$3,600.00. Treasurer Usha Govinarajulu hopes to post the budget on the web so that all members have access to such fiscal information.

There is enough money for this fall's awards but will need to raise more funds for next year's/semester's awards (January 2002 onward).

Last year the GSO examined the possibility of assessing a fee to graduate students in order to fund our organization. The administration was reluctant to add another line to tuition bills (nickle-and-diming students) and was willing to provide us with a budget. Such a change would take a few years to implement but would secure automous funding for the GSO. This is our second year of receiving GRS funds; perhaps we will revisit this issue in the future.

Instead of working with the Alumni Association to send a letter directly from the GSO asking for funds specifically for the Travel Grant Fund, this year we have submitted a letter on behalf of the Graduate School in exchange for a certain (negotiable) percentage of the funds raised.

4. HALLOWEEN HAPPY HOUR!! To be held Hallow's Eve, October 31, 2001 from 5:30-7:30 in the BU Pub, located in the basement of the Castle, at the corner of Grandy Street and Bay State Road. In order to avoid the costly and awkward services of BU's Catering and Police Department, we decided to hold our first post-orientation social function at the Pub, which will provide FREE snacks (mini-quesadillas, etc.) as well as FREE drink tickets worth \$5.00 to the first 75 people attending. WE CALL UPON ALL DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES to help publicize the event with email to colleagues, posters displayed in individual departments and word of mouth.

5. BRAINSTORMING FOR END-OF-THE-YEAR PARTY: Various off-campus locations

were suggested, including Marche Movenpick, Uno's Pizzeria (Harvard and Comm Ave), Trio, Limbo, Chili's, Gillians, Sophie's, Wonderbar. To keep costs down, we hope to find a fun spot willing to offer us a large room free of charge to have the event. Masako Yamada will compare prices and facilities, keeping in mind the best locations (close to campus), possibilities for music and dancing and most flexible dress codes. We will also looking into collaborating with other colleges within BU (Law, Engineering, etc) in an effort to pool human resources and funds.

6. NEW OFFICERS NEEDED!!! Amanda Serenevy announced that she and Masako Yamada will be retiring in December after their one-year tenure. They would like to encourage members of the GSO to consider running for these positions. The GSO needs dynamic leaders to represent the interests of all BU graduate students. Elections will be held at the December meeting, Wednesday, December 12th.

7. The discussion on GRADUATE HOUSING took up most of the meeting. The lack of affordable graduate student housing on campus continues to be a great concern, especially for international and non-local students. It was decided that the Housing Report submitted to the administration in January should be reviewed and expanded. The new report should be more widely circulated, being sent to not only the Dean's Office but also the President's Office, the Board of Trustees, Boston's City Council, the Boston Globe, etc. More publicity would bring more attention and pressure on those in the position of making such budetary and land-use decisions. The GSO should work closely with other BU Graduate Student groups like SAGE (Student Association of Graduate Engineers) established and new housing advocacy groups like BUYAH (Boston University Youth Alliance for Housing).

Other ideas included forming a formal graduate student housing list (although housing listserves already exist) and Tara offered to evaluate the Office of Off-Campus Housing webpage in order to send Director Carol Simpson suggestions to improve the site and better serve graduate student needs.

8. HEALTH INSURANCE: There is continued concern regarding the Chickering Insurance Plan offered to BU grad students. The cost has increased about 10% in one year and the benefits offered do little to help those who find themselves hospitalized or suffering from serious illness. GRS administrators seem to be unaware of the drawbacks of the current plan. BU had decided NOT to provide health insurance coverage to graduate students this year. Any such action by BU should include student input regarding this very important issue. (What is the status of the Health Insurance Committee? I doubt BU will ask for our input, we have to make ourselves a part of the process.)

The meeting was adjurned at approximately 7:30 p.m.

(Laura Middlebrooks, Modern and Foreign Languages/Literatures)