MEMO

To: Tram Ng  
From: Lela Jacobsohn  
Chair, GAPSA

Date: January 23, 2005

Re: GAPSA Status Report for January 25, 2005 University Council Meeting

**Graduate Student Leadership Outreach**

- *National Student Leaders:* On November 18 - 20, 2005 two members of the GAPSA executive board, a member of GSAC board, and Anita Mastroieni, director of the Graduate Student Center, represented the University of Pennsylvania at the National Conference on Graduate Student Leadership convened by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation at Washington University in St. Louis. The conference included three graduate student leaders and administrators from 18 universities around the country who are institutional members of the Wilson Foundation’s Responsive Ph.D. Initiative. Each delegate presented on topics related to: the public responsibility and the role of the Ph.D.; interdisciplinary education; diversity and inclusiveness; professional development and career options; graduate student life; and governance and graduate student leadership. Penn was considered by conference attendees a model for graduate student leadership and involvement. Proceedings from the conference will be published this spring.

- *Penn Student Leaders:* GAPSA organized a meeting with the leaders of the graduate school governments in December. Representatives from nine schools were able to attend. Several common issues were identified in the meeting. Funding for the school governments was one of the main topics of discussion. Although some school governments (e.g. Engineering, Design, Nursing) receive generous funding from their schools for initiatives and events, some school governments do not receive any funding. Other common challenges identified were: lack of summer funding; insufficiency of career services for particular programs within schools; inability to access other school's facilities, and the fee of Pottruck Center for graduate and professional students. The meeting proved to be very useful for providing access and communication between graduate student government leaders. GAPSA will host the second meeting of this kind on Monday, February 6th.

**Interdisciplinary Study and Research**

- *Interdisciplinary Collaborative Projects and Summer Fellowship Program:* GAPSA has been striving to provide graduate and professional students opportunities for interdisciplinary research and to identify additional or alternative sources of funding support for students. I am excited to announce that the Provost and the GAPSA General Assembly have accepted a GAPSA proposal for a competitive program for graduate and professional student-conceived interdisciplinary projects that includes an awarded summer fellowship (jointly funded by GAPSA and the Office of the Provost) and the identification of collaborative student scholars from different departments or schools. GAPSA and the Provost’s office have worked together to define the application process, criteria for selection, and other related details. Information on the fellowship and the application process will be publicized to graduate and professional students and made available to the University community in the coming weeks.

- On Thursday, January 26, GAPSA leaders will present to the Council of Graduate Deans on existing barriers to interdisciplinary study and research experienced by graduate and professional students. This meeting is a part of ongoing work with the Provost and Deputy Provost on these issues.
• In ongoing efforts to overcome these barriers, GAPSA along with the Graduate Student Center co-sponsored a lunchtime interdisciplinary information session toward the end of last semester. Taking Classes Outside Your School: Wharton, Law, and Fels Institute of Government provided over 50 graduate and professional students with information on how they can take advantage of resources and courses in other schools within the University. Representatives from Wharton, Law, and Fels explained the policies and procedures for Penn students to enroll in their classes and distributed information about specific courses that are appropriate for students outside their programs. GAPSA and the Graduate Student Center are very pleased with the turn-out and believe that it shows graduate and professional students’ interest in and commitment to interdisciplinary education and research. Based on this success, we plan to offer more information sessions featuring other schools and programs. GAPSA continues to work with the President, Provost, and Graduate Student Center to move this aspect of the Penn Compact forward for graduate and professional students at Penn.

Public Safety

• GAPSA Executive Board members and Policy Directors will participate in the upcoming meeting of the Student Leadership Consultation Committee with the Vice President for Public Safety and the Vice Provost for University Life on Thursday, February 2nd. GAPSA representatives will voice concerns received from the graduate and professional student population. Additionally, the GAPSA Safety and Security Policy Director, with a UA representative, will meet with Lauren Steinfeld, Chief Privacy Officer, to discuss the planning of an educational session for students on identity theft and computer security.

Campus Development

• The joint GAPSA-UA Campus Development Task Force has completed distribution of student-wide online survey and the data collection phase. They have been engaged in analysis of the results of the survey and preparing a report of the key results for use by the Design committee. Leaders of the Task Force have met with Michael Harris to discuss the results, input process, and next steps and have been working with the DP to communicate highlights of the results.

Family Supportive Environment

• In the context of GAPSA’s ongoing efforts to establish a family-supportive environment for graduate and professional students (for those who are or are planning to be parents), with the Graduate Student Center and GSAC, we announced earlier this year the new position of Students with Dependents Fellow to provide information that will guide student life as a parent (incl. health insurance privileges, dependent care, and university privileges while on leave). The fellow’s responsibilities included development of a website which is now up and running and can be found at: http://www.gsc.upenn.edu/swd/index.html. As additional information is gathered, it is placed on the website, and the fellow continues to serve as a resource for students.

• Additionally, GAPSA worked with the DP recently to share information about the range of its efforts to create a family-supportive environment. An article focusing on this topic is expected in the near future.