MEMO

To: Tram Ng
From: Lela Jacobsohn
     Chair, GAPSA
Date: February 27, 2006
Re: GAPSA Status Report for March 1, 2005 University Council Meeting

Graduate Student Center Funding

- The GAPSA General Assembly voted to fund the Graduate Student Center an additional $5,300 bringing the total funding support of the Center to just over $17,000 in fiscal year 2005-2006. The additional funding will be used to create needed storage space in the 2nd and 3rd floor of the Graduate Student Center and to purchase 25 more stackable chairs to meet the increased demand of the Center. Past funding has been given for computer lab expansion, outdoor terrace furniture, co-sponsorship with the Center of the Graduate-undergraduate Mentoring Program, and programs on interdisciplinary opportunities in coursework.

Development Campaign Priorities

- In the last two weeks, GAPSA leaders met with President Gutmann and Provost Daniels to discuss the upcoming Development Campaign and how graduate and professional students will be incorporated in it. The GAPSA representatives shared their report of graduate and professional student development priorities, communicating funding items associated with physical buildings such as the Graduate Student Center and graduate student housing including family housing as well as programmatic initiatives such as research funds for graduate students, a Child Care Grant Subsidy Fund, and graduate and professional scholarships for international students. GAPSA is in the process of evaluating each item for a priority ranking.

Public Safety

- GAPSA Executive Board members participated in Student Leadership Consultation Group with the Vice President for Public Safety and other Public Safety representatives on Thursday, February 2nd. GAPSA representatives voiced concerns received from the graduate and professional student population, particularly the call of expanded Penn Transit services to further east and north in Center City as well as for increased lighting along the pedestrian and cyclist gateways from Center City to campus.
- In addition, GAPSA held a Public Safety Forum during its General Assembly meeting during which a brainstorming session was held on ideas to increase graduate and professional student awareness and utilization of Public Safety services and additional safety solutions. From this forum, a report of the ideas and solutions has been generated and has been circulated. It can be found at gapsa.upenn.edu.
- GAPSA leaders also met with Provost Daniels and Vice President for Business Services Marie Witt and communicated the safety request of expanded Penn Transit services in Center City. GAPSA leaders also communicated this concern about transit to President Gutmann during our meeting together last week. Marie Witt was and has been very responsive in trying to accommodate this request. Business Services is currently investigating the feasibility of options to meet the needs of graduate and professional students.

Campus Development

- The Joint GAPSA-UA Task Force hosted a Campus Development Town Hall meeting on Tuesday, February 21st. Approximately, 40 students were in attendance. The Task Force presented on the results of the campus development student-wide online survey and data collection phase,
communicating the student priorities for the Campus Development Plan. Student participants also contributed their input and questions; Michael Harris and Mark Kocent were in attendance.

- On Wednesday, February 22nd, the Joint Task Force presented these student priorities to the Campus Development Executive Design Committee and received positive feedback on the quality of work and research. The Joint Task Force is working to ensure that student involvement is ongoing throughout the planning process.

**Family Supportive Environment**

- Since 2003, GAPSA, in partnership with the Office of the Provost, the Vice Provost for University Life, and the Graduate Student Center, has devoted itself to improving conditions for graduate and professional students with or planning to have dependents. The newly approved Dependent Care Policy facilitating student leave for childbirth and care-giving purposes marks the realization of the first major student-oriented policy change. Passage of this policy builds on the accomplishments we have already made on behalf of students with dependents: the creation of a Students with Dependents fellow position at the Graduate Student Center dedicated to providing information to aid student life as a parent (incl. health insurance policies and dependent care), the installation of baby changing tables in restrooms in University buildings across campus, and, in progress, the accommodation of private health spaces for graduate student women who are breast-feeding, as well as GAPSA’s ongoing advocacy efforts for the re-establishment of family housing and expansion of affordable child care facilities at Penn.

- Deputy Provost Janice Bellace and GAPSA Chair Lela Jacobsohn spoke about the University’s family-friendly initiatives directed toward graduate and professional students at the February 23rd meeting of the Trustee Student Life Committee. The presentation reviewed the history of the initiatives, their context in national research on attrition of women in academia, the positive progress made to date this year, and ongoing efforts.

**Trustee Dinner Meeting**

- In conjunction with the Vice Provost for University Life and the Offices of the Provost and the Secretary, GAPSA Chair Lela Jacobsohn and Graduate Student Liaison for the Trustee Student Life Committee Alice Chou organized a dinner meeting bringing together Trustees and a diverse group of graduate and professional students. On February 22nd, at the Graduate Student Center, 5 trustees, VPUL Val Cade, Terry Conn, University Secretary Leslie Kruhly, Graduate Student Center Director Anita Mastroieni, and approximately 10 students including GAPSA, BGAPSA, GSAC, and school government representatives and leaders joined each other for dinner and participated in a thoughtful discussion on topics including community-building among graduate and professional students, graduate student housing in its community-building capacity, and the presence of graduate and professional students in the overall Penn environment. The meeting was positive and productive; the outcomes were strong engagement between trustees and students, the generation of creative and useful ideas, as well as communication to the trustees of the constructive working relationship GAPSA has with the Offices of the President and Provost this year and the progress being made by central administration on behalf of graduate and professional students.

**Graduate and Professional Student Outreach**

- **Graduate Student Government Leaders Meeting**: GAPSA organized a gathering of the leaders of the graduate school governments at the Graduate Student Center on February 20, 2006. The main topic of discussion was allocation of student fee. Other topics of discussion included Development Campaign priorities for graduate and professional students and challenges facing international students. In follow-up to the meeting discussion, we have planned a meeting with Vice President for Finance Scott
Douglass to learn more about the student fee allocation process, communicated the Development priorities to the President, and organized an International Students’ Forum.

- **International Students’ Forum:** On Thursday, March 2, 2006, GAPSA will host a forum on and for current international graduate and professional students. The primary objective is to gather information on the issues and challenges faced by these students both on Penn’s campus as well as at the federal level. A summary report will follow as well as meeting by GAPSA Executive Board members with Provost Ron Daniels and Assistant Provost for International Affairs JoAnn McCarthy.

- **School Town Hall Meetings:** As part of GAPSA’s outreach efforts, school representatives have been organizing town hall meetings in their own schools to identify issues, discuss GAPSA initiatives, and have been receiving feedback. Thus far, town hall meetings have been conducted or are planned in 9 of the 12 schools.

**Graduate Student Home-buying and Personal Finance**

- GAPSA, in collaboration with GSAC, met with Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli and representatives from the Office of Community Housing and Business Services to discuss ways to expand the university's mortgage program to graduate and professional students. We are excited to announce that the Office of Community Housing negotiated with mortgage lenders, and 14 lenders agreed to extend their mortgage products for qualifying graduate and professional students. Additionally, Stefany Jones, director of Office of Community Housing, is going to give a "Buying your first home" workshop to be held on Thursday, March 23, at noon at the Graduate Student Center as part of the "Personal Finance Series" sponsored by GAPSA.

**Community-Building Activities**

- Approximately eighty graduate and professional students participated in the GAPSA coed volleyball tournament on December 3rd, 2005. The tournament drew students from all 12 graduate and professional schools with most teams representing multiple disciplines such as second place winning team with its members from the Law and Wharton Schools and the third place winning team with its members from the Vet School and SEAS.

- In follow-up to this successful effort, GAPSA sponsored its annual Dodgeball Tournament on February 11th. 16 teams of eight graduate and professional students participated. All 12 of the graduate and professional schools were represented in the tournament. Several teams were comprised of players from different schools. About 40 student competitors went on to a happy hour at New Deck Tavern, where mingling continued.

- GAPSA organized a "Divine Inspiration" wine tasting activity at the Philadelphia Museum of Art on February 3, 2006. Marnie Old, a Philadelphia wine expert, was on hand to talk to students about the seven different French wines as well as to comment on art throughout the museum that was relevant. 30 graduate and professional students attended the event and all had a wonderful time learning about and tasting French wines as well as the art in the Museum.

- In partnership with BGAPSA, GAPSA organized a happy hour at Houston Hall, on February 23, featuring soul food and visual biographies of prominent black leaders in honor of Black History month. Approximately 400 graduate and professional students attended this event.

- GAPSA organized a Valentine’s Day cocktail party at Red Sky in Old City featuring Valentine-themed chocolate desserts, with approximately 250 students gathered for this event. Additionally, GAPSA had its debut of its new online ticket sales system for this party, facilitating ticket purchase for those students whose schedules or locations limit their ability to purchase tickets from the Graduate Student Center.

- For our upcoming Rebuilding Together initiative, GAPSA is funding $5,000 and volunteering in the hands-on work to rehabilitate a house in West Philadelphia. The Rebuilding Together effort is an
annual initiative at GAPSA and our biggest community-service effort. For more information on how to get involved, please visit gapsa.upenn.edu

**Upcoming GAPSA Executive Board Election**

- Elections for GAPSA Executive Board positions will be held on Wednesday, March 22, 2006 during the GAPSA General Assembly meeting. Terms begin for the new board on May 1, 2006. More information on the election, positions, and job descriptions can be found at www.gapsa.upenn.edu.