PPSA Status Report – University Council Meeting 3/29/06

The PPSA Board is happy to announce that Ronald Daniels, Provost at the University of Pennsylvania, has agreed to be the speaker at the PPSA Spring Elections Meeting. This meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 31st, 2006 in Houston Hall, Bodek Lounge. The meeting will be held from 12-1PM and light refreshments will be served.

The PPSA is actively recruiting nominees for the slate of candidates at the Spring 2006 Elections meeting. Interested candidates or those wishing to nominate should contact Ty Furman at tyf@pobox.upenn.edu.

During two February meetings, PPSA Board members engaged in a mid-year review of their 2005-2006 goals and found that while the achievements of the PPSA board sub-committees were generally good, those goals requiring collaboration and consultation with other administrative units in the university met with definite impediments.

The PPSA Board’s 2005-2006 goals are:

- Increase awareness of and participation in PPSA and our activities.
- Improve the level of communication between and among members.
- Increase attendance and participation of PPSA members at University Council meetings.
- Conduct a needs assessment of constituents.
- Facilitate staff input into discussions with the Campus Development Planning Committee including the use of the postal lands.

In the coming months, the PPSA Board will continue to work on these above goals and will prepare a year-end status report which it is hoped will be printed in the Almanac.
PPSA Statement regarding Spring Fling and Hey Day

In the Quality of Student Life report of their 2004-2005 deliberations on Spring Fling and Hey Day, the committee submitted four recommendations that, if enacted, might diminish the problematic aspects of these two events. These recommendations were discussed at length during the November 30, 2005 University Council meeting. One of the four recommendations was to achieve more faculty/staff involvement and visibility during Fling*.

During the Council discussion of the recommendations, Undergraduate Assembly Chair Rachel Fersh stated her belief that it is the “underlying culture of Fling and the mentality of the students that it is acceptable to get intoxicated to such a degree that they are a danger to themselves and others” and referred to the recently approved UA resolution for an understanding of how the UA intended to display leadership and try to change this aspect of Fling culture. The fourth point in the resolution suggests that students continue to take further responsibility for the event by:

a. Continuing to facilitate, participate in, and publicize the role of a program similar to Fling Sober,
b. Being aware of and, if necessary, accepting punishment for disorderly actions and misconduct,
c. Encouraging our peers to engage in conscientious behavior throughout the weekend, and
d. Helping to spearhead the awareness campaign in the weeks and months preceding Fling by:
   1. Instituting an advertisement campaign to publicize the dangers of the weekend and to clarify the University amnesty policy,
   2. Working with College House staff to improve communication,
   3. Contacting students at the grass roots level via individual groups, and
   4. Continuing to discuss ways to improve the Penn campus climate.

However, it has been reported to PPSA board that during the 2/15/06 QSL follow-up conversation, UA leadership presented no concrete plans to operationalize the awareness campaign and in fact, indicated a belief that messages from group leaders do not resonate with undergraduate students, especially seniors and that many leaders would not want to police their peers.

Given that there is no indication that substantial efforts have been made on the part of student leaders to address the underlying cultural assumptions that contribute to dangerous intoxicated behaviors by students that affect the larger university community, PPSA cannot support the recommendation that staff become more involved in either Spring Fling or Hey Day. We state this understanding that the majority of non-students involved in the organization of these events are PPSA members (i.e. Public Safety, Office of Student Life and College Houses and Academic Services) and therefore must be in attendance. Furthermore, we commit for consideration that by not enacting stronger measures to prevent the type of violence and destruction of property as described during the 11/30/2005 Council meeting, the university is in violation of the Policy Prohibiting Workplace Violence as outlined in the May 4, 2004 issue of the Almanac (http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/v50/n32/OR-vio.html)

*Although similar alcohol induced misbehavior on Hey Day was discussed by QSL, Hey Day was not specified in the recommendation nor discussed at the 11/30/05 meeting but the behaviors that have been escalating on Hey Day and expectations for staff members are of equal concern for the PPSA board.