Constituency Update

1. Diversity Action Plan Resolution

Earlier this semester, the UA passed a resolution that is intended to provide insight into the undergraduate perspective on what schools should consider as they begin to craft and implement school-specific diversity action plans. We were delighted to write this resolution in conjunction with the United Minorities Council; the Latino Coalition; the Lambda Alliance; the Asian Pacific Student Coalition; UMOJA; Programs in Religion, Interfaith, and Spirituality Matters; and the Penn Consortium of Undergraduate Women.

The purpose of the resolution was to “reassert that faculty diversity is an important issue for students on campus; encourage Schools to continue to work with students on Diversity Action Plans; [and] create a system of accountability.” The full text can be found on http://pennua.org/. The working group that passed this resolution is continuing work with diversity initiatives; specifically, it is looking into PhD/pipeline programs and retention of young candidates.

2. CMR Oversight Expansion

The Committee on Manufacturing Responsibility has been considering expansion of its oversight into non-apparel companies. The UA debated and passed a resolution that directed our representative on CMR to vote in favor of the proposed expansion. The authors felt that this “would benefit students by ensuring that their tuition money and alumni donations are only used by Penn in dealings with corporations that practice commonly-accepted worker’s rights standards. This in turn protects Penn’s brand name and image by demonstrating that we do not do business with those who violate these universal human rights values. Expanding the Committee’s oversight would lead to greater accountability and monitoring of non-apparel Penn licensees and therefore allow Penn to better know when one of those licensees is violating human rights.”

3. Creation of an Open Data Initiative at Penn

With increasing interest in third-party applications and student involvement in Penn’s technology, access to data has become crucial for student and other campus developers. Easily accessible data enables these developers to create meaningful products for the
campus community. The UA, along with the Student Technology Advisory Board and PennApps Labs, believes that Penn must move forward by opening up certain non-confidential data sets to the public. The UA debated and passed a resolution that encourages the University to create an “Open Data Initiative” to make data in various institutional repositories public and machine-readable. We have seen the success of such initiatives at Oxford, Princeton, and NYU, and we hope that the University moves swiftly to achieve parity in this domain where we currently otherwise excel.

4. PennApps Labs Funding for 2012-2013

PennApps Labs (PAL) is a non-profit, student-run organization, with the goal of improving, maintaining, and creating student-run technology at Penn. It is currently funded and overseen by the Undergraduate Assembly, the Provost's Office, and Information Systems & Computing. PAL aims to support one major project as well as the maintenance and adoption of smaller projects each semester. So far, projects and maintenance have included PennStudySpaces, the Penn Book Bazaar, Penn Course Review’s new interface, and more. A common funding application for student groups has recently been unveiled and will soon be ready for launch. Given the level of progress and efficiency, the UA voted to ask the Provost’s Office for matching funding of $7,500 for the next year. The UA will be passing its budget in the next weeks, and is pleased that PAL has found large funding efficiencies that enabled a 25% reduction over last year’s request. We are thrilled to continue supporting this initiative.

Respectfully submitted,

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