To: GPSS Executive Committee; incoming Vice President Adam Sherman; incoming President Aaron Naumann; and incoming Washington Student Association President Sarah Round
From: Ben Henry, GPSS Vice President
Date: June 6, 2011
Re: Vice President’s Year-End Report and Recommendations

Faced with one of the largest revenue shortfalls in state history and having confronted budget cuts on campus, 2010-11 was an extremely challenging year for the Vice President’s Office.

From advocating for financial aid and research funding in D.C. and Olympia to advocating for students with children on campus; from organizational capacity building with the Washington Students Association (WSA) to setting the legislative agenda for the Student Advocates for Graduate Education (SAGE); and from successfully advocating for the reinstatement of the Child Care Matching Grant Program to working to save the Washington State Work Study Program, the VP’s Office has risen to the task.

The following is a look at the challenges we have faced and our accomplishments for the year, with recommendations to our successors on how best to move forward:

**Washington State Legislature**

*The Vice President serves as legislative liaison, representing GPSS and advocating for graduate and professional student interests to the Washington State Legislature.*

**CHALLENGES**

- A drop in revenue because of an economic downturn resulted in a $5.3 billion state budget shortfall.
- Tax revenue initiatives were resoundingly rejected in the November elections, all but eliminating new revenue as a possible solution to a balanced state budget.
- Three of the four state financial aid programs that benefit graduate and professional students had been suspended in previous sessions.

**KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

  - Proposed what became SB 5795, a bill that created a funding mechanism for the Child Care Matching Grants program, and got the bill out of Senate Ways & Means and Rules and as far as being eligible for a floor vote. (See Exhibit 1.)
- Successfully prevented the outright suspension of what had been the last remaining state financial aid program from which graduate and professional students benefit, State Work Study. (See Exhibit 2.)
MEMORANDUM

• Facilitated internal student leadership discussion on safeguards to local tuition control (see Exhibit 3a). While we were unable to work these provisions in as amendments to HB 1795 (see Exhibit 3b), this sets a blueprint for what can be pursued next year.

• Maintained blog to keep constituency informed and to maximize transparency.

• Advocated for a variety of bills, including those that would create:
  o Ph.D. programs at branch campuses (this passed and was signed by the Governor; see Exhibit 4 for GPSS testimony).
  o Student trustees for community and technical colleges (see Exhibit 5 for UW Student Regent’s testimony on the bill).
  o A parking tax exemption to help the U-PASS program (gpss2011.blogspot.com/2011/02/parking-tax-bill-vital-to-u-pass.html).

• In conjunction with the President’s Office, organized the fourth annual GPSS Higher Education Summit, entitled, “Losing Leverage: The Impact of State and Federal Funding Trends for Graduate and Professional Education.” (See Exhibit 6 for Summit abstract.)

• Authored and worked with our Senate to pass the GPSS Legislative Agenda, which governs what we are able to lobby on in Olympia and Washington, D.C. (See Exhibit 7.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Propose a bill that would create mechanisms, like those outlined in Exhibit 3, that would offer opportunities for students to assert their voice and perspectives in tuition setting. A potential bill would mandate:
  o That institutions create budget advisory committees made up of students that directly advise the provost of each respective four-year state institution.
  o Public comment periods at boards of trustees or regents meetings.
  o The creation of a student position on the Steering Committee of the newly created Council on Higher Education, the successor of the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

• Advocate for the reinstatement of Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment, Health Professions Scholarship, and Graduate Fellowship Trust Account programs.

• Advocate for more funding for State Work Study and Child Care Matching Grants (or, depending on the budget climate, advocate for the preservation of current funding levels).

• Advocate for new revenue solutions and a dedicated funding source for higher education.

• Brainstorm outside-the-box ideas that gets at the underlying problems of a broken tax structure that is vulnerable to market fluctuations.
Implementing Budget Cuts at UW

CHALLENGES

• UW was anticipating over $200 million in state budget cuts. A letter from Interim President Phyllis Wise to the Legislature outlined how potential cuts would manifest at UW (see Exhibit 8). Parts of this letter created panic among students on campus.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

• Facilitated dialogue among students in programs named as facing possible elimination or consolidation by calling emergency information-sharing and strategizing meeting. Advised students from affected programs on advocacy strategies. These efforts contributed to preservation of independence for the programs facing consolidation named in the letter, the Evans School of Public Affairs and the Information School.

• Organized GPSS Day of Advocacy on behalf of students from impacted programs. This included meetings with the Governor’s Higher Education Advisor, the Office of the Speaker of the House, the Chair of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, the Chairs and Vice Chairs of both higher education committees, the Chair of the House Education Appropriations Committee, the Vice Chair of House Ways & Means, and the Ranking Minority Members of the House and Senate Higher Education committees, among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Budget cuts will likely be an ongoing theme next year. It is imperative that incoming GPSS leadership hone in on specific examples of how budget cuts will impact graduate and professional students. This is easier said that done, as the administration is typically reticent to call out specific groups or programs. But to really incite action from and stir the passions of students, they will need to understand how they will specifically be impacted by budget cuts. Those with the most at stake are the most likely to act.

Washington Student Association Board of Directors

The Vice President is GPSS’s primary voting representative to WSA’s Board of Directors, and is a Board member of the WSA’s UW chapter.

CHALLENGES

• The organization plunged into a revenue crisis because the Associated Students of Washington State University pulled out of the coalition.

• This prompted a revenue and retention study and S.W.O.T. analysis, which I authored (see Exhibit 9a), and which found a profound lack of organizational capacity.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

• As Chair of the WSA Strategic Planning Task Force, produced a short- and long-term strategic plan that identified primary objectives and developed strategy options to achieve those objectives. (See Exhibit 9b for the final report.)
MEMORANDUM

• Steered WSA to focus on organizing and mobilizing to support legislative efforts, as part of the short-term strategic plan. This was done by forging a 15 cents per full-time enrolled student dues increase to fund the creation of a statewide Organizing Director position.

• Brokered and facilitated a meeting in Olympia between ASWSU and WSA leadership. Presented to WSU’s Student Government Council (see Exhibit 9c).

• Shepherded the start-up and first elections of the UW Chapter of WSA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Implement and update strategic plan with a focus on building organizational capacity. See Exhibit 9b for complete recommendations.

Student Advocates for Graduate Education (SAGE)

The Vice President serves as federal legislative liaison and, along with the President, as a primary delegate to SAGE.

CHALLENGES

• The Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives proposed sweeping cuts to federal research funding, which would significantly impact UW, the top-funded public university in the country when it comes to research.

• President Obama proposed eliminating the current practice of deferring interest on graduate student loans until graduation.

• The absence of a formalized federal advocacy support structure resulted in capacity challenges for the Vice President’s Office.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

• Successfully lobbied coalition to adopt research funding as a legislative priority.

• In conjunction with the UW SAGE team, successfully gained coalition support of comprehensively revamped policy white papers (see Exhibit 10).

• Worked with the President to codify changes to the GPSS bylaws to create the Federal Legislative Steering Committee (FLSC), which supplements the amended State Legislative Steering Committee and provides more federal advocacy support to the VP’s Office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Work closely with the FLSC to develop a more comprehensive GPSS federal lobbying strategy.

• Build a coalition with ASUW and the Student Regent and reach out to Washington State University’s Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA) to coordinate a joint federal lobbying trip to maximize the chances of scheduling meetings with actual members of the Washington state Congressional delegation.

• Re-establish GPSS’s relationship with the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students, utilizing the increased capacity afforded by FLSC.
Shared Governance/University Committee Appointments Management

The Vice President appoints graduate and professional student representatives to various University working committees, which cover matters ranging from budgeting to academics to transportation to environment and sustainability. The Vice President manages representatives and acts as liaison when appointees need to interact with GPSS officers, the Executive Committee, or the full Senate. It is a vitally important function of GPSS to ensure strong student representation on the University's decision-making committees.

CHALLENGES

- With dozens of committees to keep track of and with a very busy constituency, it can be sometimes challenging, depending on the committee, to recruit and retain appointees.
- No formal reporting and communications structure was in place, an institutional memory problem because of the high turnover rate of student appointees.
- A midyear website failure made management and recruitment inefficient and overly time-consuming and problematic.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Appointed approximately 50 students to represent graduate and professional students on various university committees.
- Implemented revamped committee reporting procedures to enhance institutional memory and communications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hire a motivated and detail-oriented Legislative Assistant to help manage committee appointments.
- Continue the quarterly committee reporting procedures, and enlist the Executive Committee to provide oversight to committee reports. Also improve transparency and communication by including a committee report agenda item at Senate meetings.
- Ensure that the GPSS website is professionally revamped, with an eye to committee application and appointment processes.
- Develop an online archiving system for quarterly reports, to make them accessible to relevant stakeholders and so management of these reports is less burdensome on the VP’s Office.
- Include the Campus Sustainability Fund Committee and Provost Advisory Committee for Students under the definition of “Special Committees” in the GPSS bylaws, to acknowledge the importance of these committees to the student community and to provide additional oversight to ensure that strong candidates are chosen for these appointments.
Students With Children, On-Campus Advocacy

CHALLENGES

- Child care is the third greatest barrier to degree completion.\(^1\)
- Resources at UW’s Seattle campus for student-parents were believed to be lacking, and we heard from student-parents that a lack of community exists on campus.
- Not enough is known about this population of students and their unique needs to make informed policy decisions.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Co-chaired the GPSS Student-Parent Task Force, charged with addressing the unique challenges students with children face on campus.
- Developed and conducted a campus campaign to build community among the student-parent population, assess their needs through quantitative and qualitative research, and generate awareness about gaps between existing resources and need.
- Organized Students With Children Mixer, to build community and develop issue awareness early in the school year (see Exhibits 11a and 11b).
- Organized Students With Children Awareness Day, which called for students to bring their children to class for a day to demonstrate to the University community the number of students and children impacted by University policies (see Exhibits 11c, 11d and 11e).
- Conducted the Students With Children Census, a comprehensive needs assessment of student-parents on campus.
- Delivered final Task Force report, with needs assessment and policy recommendations, to UW Vice President of Student Life (see Exhibit 11f).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The incoming GPSS administration should continue to lead the conversation with stakeholders to develop and implement policy solutions. See Exhibit 11f for a full list of recommendations.

Media Coverage

CHALLENGES

- GPSS had strained relations with The Daily because of conflicts that pre-dated this GPSS administration, and there was a distinct absence of coverage of the graduate and professional student perspective.
- The media is a very powerful advocacy and communications tactic that has been underutilized.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Cultivated a significant media presence, with four Vice Presidential appearances in the Seattle Times and 23 in The Daily, and an appearance on KUOW; and multiple mentions of GPSS and our concerns on TVW’s “Inside Olympia” with Austin Jenkins.

- A listing of media coverage from the VP’s Office: http://benhenry.com/gpss-media-coverage.html

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop strong relationships with the incoming Editor at The Daily and with the higher education beat writer at the Seattle Times. Cultivate relationships with other media, like PubliCola and The Stranger.

- Designate a GPSS media point person to handle the writing and timely distribution of press releases.

Policy Analyst and Legislative Assistant

LAUREN HIPP

In addition to providing policy analysis and research support to the President and Vice President, GPSS Policy Analyst Lauren Hipp went above and beyond, working to publish GPSS policy white papers and testifying on behalf of GPSS twice, to the Senate and House Ways & Means committees. She also wrote and analyzed the annual graduate and professional student survey, tracked bills, helped organize the GPSS Higher Education Summit, was instrumental in the successful reinstatement of the Child Care Matching Grants program, and advised the Vice President on legislative issues. See Exhibit 12 for Lauren’s final report.

MELANIE MAYOCK

GPSS Legislative Assistant Melanie Mayock was much more than a scheduler and assistant. She was the driving force behind graduate student involvement in Huskies on the Hill advocacy day. She didn’t stop there, taking campus organizing to a new level through an expanded role more accurately described as an organizing director. Finally, her fastidious, detail-oriented approach to managing committee appointments resulted in strong graduate and professional student representation. See Exhibit 13 for Melanie’s final report.