

GPSS Secretary Report for 2010-2011

To: GPSS Senate
From: Shawn L. Mincer, GPSS Secretary
Date: June 17, 2011
RE: 2010-2011 GPSS Secretary Final Officer Report

General Information:

The year started with a bang with the move from the HUB to Condon 401. The incoming officers assisted in the packing up of the old offices in the HUB and with the move to Condon. The first task of myself and the other officers was to get the office unpacked and set up so that we could begin working over the summer. There was a lot to do and those first few months were hectic. I would recommend that the incoming office team begin planning early as the end of the 2011-2012 year will be the process of re-packing the office in preparation for the move back to the HUB. This is always a more time consuming task than one would believe and it would be great if you can get the incoming 2012-2013 team in to help with this transition process.

Document and Information Management:

This is one of the primary functions of the Secretary. This past year we had 2 significant failures of the GPSS website. Our original website crashed and we did an internal basic rebuild using Drupal 7 to have a website with basic functionality. At this time that website is our transitional website as the incoming officer team is going to be working with an internal GPSS web/IT team and UW Creative Communications to design and build an entirely new website. Until that time I have decided not to upload the 2010-2011 Senate documents to the webpage. When the new site design and construction is completed over this summer the 2010-2011 documents can be uploaded to that site. I would recommend that this project be the top priority summer project for the incoming Secretary and Officer corps.

All relevant GPSS documents are currently stored in electronic format on the Secretaries computer. Most of the documents have been converted to pdf format from their original word format in preparation for their move to the website and also to assure they are saved in a more stable format than the original word format they were created in. Other officers and staffs documents are stored on their respective computers. This scattered storage is an area of some concern. The current and incoming officer's corps are all aware of the fact that we need a shared file system in the office with increased accessibility and secure back-up. They are in the process of deciding now how to move forward on a major office hardware infrastructure development plan.

The office technology hardware infrastructure is a serious problem and one that should be addressed over the summer if possible. I developed an ongoing plan and budget that was included in the current 2011-2012 GPSS budget for an ongoing multi-year process of technology replacements and upgrades. This budget and plan was based on an early belief that we would not have significant ongoing resources to apply to this problem. Due to the diligent accounting work of Treasurer Jaffrey a significant amount of money was found in our general fund due to a multi-year accounting error. This discovery led the team to a late in our tenure review of technology options. My recommendation is that the incoming Officer and Executive Committee team move forward with replacing ALL of the existing technology hardware, develop a shared network strategy for our computing and do a total redesign of the website with some

of this windfall. This cost might be in the neighborhood of \$30,000 to do a complete overhaul of both. DO NOT BE AFRAID! JUST SPEND THE MONEY AND DO IT! You and future GPSS administrations will be much happier and productive.

With the website meltdown the GPSS tab on MYUW was put on hold. The website as it currently works would not interface well with the MYUW guidelines for the site. As a bit of history GPSS worked for years to get UW technology and Computing to agree to let us have a direct tab on every students MYUW mainpage. It is a great marketing option and means that everytime a student opens up their MYUW there would be a direct link to GPSS on the left of the page with the other main tabs like the library, etc... Please keep this option in mind as you move forward with the website. The contact at UW Computing is in my email file and the incoming Secretary and Trond Nilsen, Executive Senator have been cc'ed on communications.

The incoming leadership team had a discussion about the impact of the newsletter compared to the time involved in its production. A decision was made to discontinue the newsletter for 2010-2011. Examples of the old newsletter exist in the computer files of previous secretary Lindsay Morse and were on the website. It will be the incoming 2011-2012 Secretary's decision whether to move forward with the newsletter.

The new Guide to Life was promoted over the summer to graduate departments and the Bookstore. Sales dropped dramatically from last year predominately based on the fact that the Law School did not place a large order as they had the previous year and the Bookstore order also showed a significant decrease. It would have been hard to foresee the serious economic situations the University is in when the decision to move forward with the Guide to Life was made. The University has seen serious budget cuts and it looks as if from all forecasts these might continue into the immediate future. I believe these tightening budgets have had a serious impact on the ability to market and sell Guide to Life Books both to the graduate community and the UW Bookstore. This year we sold 400 copies on 32 orders. We still have approximately 1,000 copies and this should be a priority project for the upcoming year. This years team will also need to decide what GPSS will do moving forward in relation to the Guide to Life. Will we continue to do a larger format book, hopefully in smaller purchase numbers or revert back to a smaller scale book.

This year we were much more active with the GPSS Facebook page and created event pages for all of our major events and used them to promote GPSS. This area needs continued focus as Facebook becomes more and more a part of students everyday college/life experience. The Facebook currently links to a GPSS Twitter account. The Twitter was not heavily used by GPSS staff this year except through the Facebook link. The incoming team and strategize about how to use Twitter more effectively.

Resolutions:

GPSS passed 6 resolutions this year:

- 10.27-11: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A UNIVERSAL U-PASS
- 02.10-11: RESOLUTION URGING THE WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE TO MAINTAIN ACCESS IN GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION BY REINVESTING IN STUDENT FINANCIAL AID
- 03.10-11: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A HUSKY STADIUM RENOVATION STUDENT TASKFORCE
- 04.10-11: RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE GPSS FEDERAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND THIS YEAR'S SAGE DAY ON THE HILL
- 05.10-11: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PRESERVING THE EVANS SCHOOL, INFORMATION SCHOOL, AND INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH GENETICS

- 06.10-11: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF UAW LOCAL 4121 BARGAINING EFFORTS

Senate Membership and Meetings:

With the move from the HUB during reconstruction Senate meetings were held in two locations this past year. We started the year in Gowen 301 and ended the year in Condon 109. Gowen 301 worked fine for meetings but there is extreme competition for that space with the HUB closure and ECC closure putting pressure on all students to find adequate meeting spaces. We also had pressure to end the meeting early as the previous administration had reserved the room only until 7pm. So another group was waiting to use the space 90 minutes after the start of our allotted time. This ended up being problematic. Later in the year as we were finalizing scheduling for the later quarters we would have had to use two different spaces due to scheduling conflict. These conflicts along with the ease and convenience of meeting in Condon 109 lead us to move the senate meetings to Condon.

This move did not negatively impact Senator participation in/at Senate meetings. We had strong Senate participation all year. Senate membership varies throughout the year but we had between 120 and 140 Senators on the roster throughout the year. We never had any problems with quorum throughout the year and Senate attendance was consistent throughout the year. One thing we could do would be to remind Senators often about the use of proxy. I believe that proxy is underutilized by our Senate. Consistent reminders throughout the year would probably increase use of the proxy option.

As always we have a number of programs that are not represented. This has been an ongoing issue and we continue to work on it and there has been improvement over the 4 years I have been in Senate. We have more South Campus people in Senate leadership and the Science and Policy Summit also helps to increase our presence in the health and sciences where we have often had less participation.

Committees:

The Judicial Committee met regularly throughout the year to review bylaw language and MOU and APS documents related to the Universal UPass and Dawg Pack. We reviewed language related to the changes with the STF Committee and the proposed bylaw language related to GPSS engaging in business activities. We also reviewed bylaw language related to the restructuring of the legislative committees. This language split the legislative committee into two committees, a state and federal legislative committee. We also had a final meeting where Charles Plummer (Executive Senator) and I had an informational meeting where we garnered feedback from the committee about where they thought GPSS should be focused over the upcoming year.

The DRAC met only once over the year. We met in the fall and began some serious discussions about the purpose of DRAC and whether it was a valid area for GPSS to be involved in as it is described in the bylaws and the DRAC document. The Committee fell apart in the winter quarter and had to be recruited for and reformed. The spring quarter slipped away before we could meet again. I have serious concerns about this committee and it is currently described. I think it is a very good idea to have the DRAC resource document and it should be updated regularly and be made available to students in as many ways possible. My and some of the early committee members concerns were with the actual role of the DRAC Senators and "neutral process observers". We had serious concerns if this was a role that Senators should be involved in due to the fact that grad students should not act as advisers and could be involved in court proceedings if a dispute went that way. I think there needs to be some serious discussions

about the scope of this committee over the summer and appropriate bylaw and document language changes made if needed.

This year I participated in a number of meetings related to the moving of the Dawg Pack at Husky Stadium and the subsequent creation of the Dawg Pack Advisory Committee. This will not be an ongoing responsibility of the Secretary but I was in the right place at the right time as this issue developed with the ASUW BOD and GPSS. My idea to create a scholarship program of football tickets for low income students did come to fruition in the final agreement.

While STF is not a direct responsibility of the Secretary I had many discussions with fellow officers, Executive Senators, and ASUW representatives this past year as we went through first year growing pains with the STF restructuring. This past year was a crucial year for STF and thanks to a concerted team effort STF is on much firmer footing and has the capacity to move forward and succeed as we had hoped when we worked on the redesign.

This past year we have begun serious discussions about the creation of a GPSS internal Diversity Committee. I am in strong support of this idea and believe that summer exec should work on the bylaw language so that we can move forward with this at the first Senate meeting of the year. We could recruit early and get an active diversity Committee working on issues and projects. This need not be a large burden on the Secretary, whose office it should reside in since we are the designated diversity lead for GPSS. This is especially true if my advise on DRAC is heeded and that Committee's mission is reshaped. This committee idea was in part formulated by the wonderful work Nick Wehner, the Publications Assistant did with the formulation of a Rainbow Grads group after feedback from queer students after the Speed dating event.

The Communication/Outreach Task Force never quite came together in the way I had hoped. I see this committee as a group of people who will be part of a team that will assist in actually doing communication and outreach, not brainstorm and advise about how to do it. I hope that this group is solidified and becomes an asset to the actual process of communication and outreach for GPSS.

Lastly, for the short term, and indeed for the long term, a task force is needed to address the Guide to Life issue. Short term would be to assist in sales and distribution and long term would be to plan on how we move forward with the Guide to Life.

ASUW:

The secretary is the official liaison to ASUW. I took this on as one of my primary roles this past year. I think this strategy had great success as many people in the administration and in both GPSS and ASUW have stated that this past year has been one of the best in regards to collaboration between the two student governments. We will need to focus on this moving forward as the UW is under extreme stress due to the economic situation the state is in. A strong, cohesive student voice will be needed to move forward.

I attended almost every ASUW BOD and ASUW Senate Steering meeting this year unless I was out of town or had a direct conflict. I stayed for the entire meeting and actively participated in all discussions. I worked hard with ASUW at all levels to establish a peer relationship. I think this is a key role of the secretary and one that we should definitely focus on in the upcoming years.

One direct task I took on in ASUW was to take an active role in the discussions about how Rainy Dawg Radio should move forward. I sat in on a number of meetings related to the radio and I am happy to say that we managed to “save” the station and get them the resources to move forward effectively. In lean budget times these types of decisions will be ongoing.

One recommendation I have is to create an ASUW/GPSS joint Bookstore Task Force that would work with the student members of the Bookstore Board, interested students, and Bookstore leadership to create strategies to assure the continued success of the UW Bookstore. The bookstore is a unique asset for the UW community and is operated as a trust for our community. We should all take a more active role in assuring the continued success of the Bookstore.

Diversity Efforts:

I served as a member ASUW Joint Commissions Committee (JCC). I attended all of their meetings and worked closely with them on diversity issues and diversity events on campus. If we create a GPSS Diversity Committee at least one member of the JCC should be a member. This would mirror our participation on JCC. The JCC is a key student location to think about and work on diversity issues. While on this committee I also worked with a group of students to create the evaluation form and process that is now being used so students can give feedback on their SAO advisors. This process had never been available before and was started by the work and actions of one of the Commission Directors.

I also served on the Student Advisory Board of the Ethnic and Cultural Center. We met bi-weekly throughout the year. This is a space to get a more activist and campus wide perspective on diversity issues affecting students. I very much enjoyed being on this Board. One ongoing issue we worked with and indeed solved over the year was what to do with the murals from the ECC construction project. After much debate and discussion a plan was created that will save the murals in their original states and they will have locations inside the new ECC. This was a win-win for everyone involved.

I attended a number of Go-Map events as a representative of GPSS this year. This included their fall welcome events and all of their spring recruiting events. This is a great organization that addresses the needs of diverse graduate students here at the UW. I missed some of the meetings of the Student Advisory Board as I had not been notified of the meeting times. I would recommend being in contact with them over the summer and setting up some “get to know you” meetings with staff at the graduate school.

The entire \$4,000 was spent from the Secretary Diversity Fund to sponsor a number of diversity events around campus. I stressed to all fund recipients that they must advertise directly to graduate students and they all sent materials to me to share with the Senate email list and the GPA list serve. I also worked with Secretary Jaffrey and the Executive Committee to find additional funding to assist First Nations with a budgetary shortfall they had from hosting Spring PowWow. We were able to find an additional \$2,200 to help them with their shortfall. Many groups, especially those holding these larger events, struggled this year because of the HUB closure. This created additional costs that impacted many groups ability to put on successful events. I am proud that GPSS was able to help First nations with this financial problem.

The Secretary is the lead for GPSS participation in the MLK Jr. Day of Service. This year we took on our own project through the United Way coordinating process. We took a group of graduate and professional students to the Phinney Ridge Community Center. This was a great day of service and they were great hosts. We had a number of both indoor and outdoor projects and they provided us with lunch

and snacks. I highly recommend that we continue to participate with a GPSS sponsored team in the MLK Jr. Day of service and would recommend if possible that we might develop an ongoing relationship with a site/project that we would do annually.

Staff Summaries:

This was a problematic year for staffing in the Secretary Office. Both positions were hired in the fall and both employees were lost during/after the spring quarter. This disrupted planning and made it hard to move forward on projects as a team in the office. I hope that the incoming Secretary is lucky enough to have stable staffing over the entire 2011-2012. Given that we have both hardware and web projects in the pipeline this job should probably be split so that we can hire two people that have the requisite skills for each position. These are two distinct skill sets and we would be better served as an organization if we hired people who had specific qualifications for each position.

Publications Assistant:

Jennifer Tippins was hired in the fall as Publications Assistant. She had very good qualifications and skills but due to some personal/familial issues and the stresses of transitioning back into graduate school she decided to step down from the position in November. At this time I know Nick would be available in winter quarter so we hired Nick and waited till he was available in winter quarter to replace Jennifer.

Nick Wehner had been the Publications Assistant for the previous secretary so he was able to come into the position and hit the ground running. Nick did great work on promotional materials for all of our events. He was also instrumental in helping the team through the website failures. His technical skills were very helpful and we struggled to get some website function back online and helped us to plan on how to move forward. Nick was also instrumental in discussions that led to the creation of the Rainbow Grads group, which is a new organization for queer graduate and professional students and their allies. This process led to what will hopefully be the creation of the GPSS Diversity Committee.

Web/IT

Jehad Affoneh was hired in the fall as the new Web/IT person. Jehad was tasked with creating a process on our website to automate the Travel Grants process. The expectation was that this would become a completely automated system. The plan was also that this coding structure would be a platform for future automation of GPSS processes on the web. Jehad started this process and was then offered a internship in his field of study. He decided to leave after the fall quarter. The project was only partially coded and fell by the wayside with the new hire and the collapse of the website in winter quarter. Jehad also helped develop the initial long term office tech hardware plan that was passed at part of the 2011-2012 GPSS budget.

Mervyn Johnson was hired in winter quarter to replace Jehad. While updating modules on the website it crashed and his ensuing efforts went mainly into stabilizing the site and assisting in the construction of a new site. We had hoped he would be able to move forward with the coding project that Jehad had started but this did not work out. He became harder to be in contact with over spring quarter and we cut contact with him in spring quarter and he was not replaced.