Brian Taubeneck for GPSS Vice President of External Affairs

Statement of Objectives

I am running for GPSS Vice President because I am passionate about education issues, particularly those that affect my fellow graduate students. I believe GPSS plays a crucial role on campus and in the community for promoting graduate student work and advocating for our issues. As Vice President, my three main objectives will be: 1) advocating for a State Loan Program; 2) working to increase Sexual Assault Prevention; and 3) ensuring the state provides UW with the necessary tools to continue meeting Seattle’s minimum wage law.

Student Financing
2016 is a policy year in the legislature. Although the legislature appears likely to approve at least a tuition freeze, this is only for resident undergraduates. For many of us graduate students, after unsubsidized Stafford loans, our options for low interest loans are slim. I hope to work with the legislature to start a state loan program that is similar to ones in states like Alaska or Minnesota and offer rates closer to the Stafford rate as opposed to the higher PLUS rate.

Sexual Assault Prevention
The UW has made several good steps in the right direction when it comes to supporting Sexual Assault Prevention. This issue and others like the “Yes Means Yes” consent measures that other states are adopting are ones that the state needs to develop to support both its public and private schools in combating the proliferation of sexual assault.

Minimum Wage Law
Last week, GPSS had a great discussion about Seattle’s minimum wage law and how the UW can meet its requirements for student workers. For me the issue isn’t just a moral question, it’s a question of leadership. While most if not all of the graduate student jobs aren’t affected by the new law, I’m sure that most graduate students have come to school with debt. Helping undergraduate students relieve some of their financial burden is something we can not only relate to, but also something we need to work for. While the economics of the issue will most likely require some hard choices, certainly for the UW, and possibly for SAF, I still believe it is part of our role to advocate for the UW to meet the law’s requirements. As VP, I would work with legislators to remove any possible roadblocks that may occur from a rule or legal standpoint preventing the UW from following the new law.

Professional Background
In order to perform the duties of VP of External Affairs I will be drawing primarily on my experience at the federal level in Washington, DC. Almost immediately upon arrival to DC I was immersed in federal politics. While studying Political Science at the George Washington University, I interned twice on the Hill, for Congressman John Tierney and Senator Ted Kennedy both of Massachusetts. Both were typical Hill internships, but most importantly were the interactions I observed between the staff, the constituents and the Members. I know which issues are important when and I learned when to push and when to hold back. During my senior year I interned for a polling and consulting firm called the Atlas Project. I had my first taste of union politics as our main client was the SEIU. Most of my research consisted of building background profiles of moderate Senators who would be swing votes on upcoming votes on healthcare and card check bills. After college, I worked for 3.5 years for a DC think tank called the Pew Charitable Trusts. I worked as a policy researcher for their centralized Research Services unit. It
was there that I was able to build skills for quick research on a variety of topics under tight deadlines. Since we were nonpartisan I also learned how to sell policies to different policymakers on either side of the aisle, a tool that should come in handy in a state like Washington. This November, after starting my studies at Evans, I became the Policy Analyst for GPSS and have gained experience in a multitude of higher education issues that affect graduate students while also building an understanding of the state’s political landscape.

It would be an honor to represent the Graduate and Professional Students of the University of Washington as the 2015-2016 GPSS Vice President for External Affairs. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Brian Taubeneck
University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs
MPA Candidate, Class of 2016