September 22, 2011

Fellow Graduate Students,

As you may recall over the summer, the Graduate Student Association lowered the funding caps for graduate students to present at and/or attend conferences, both domestic and international. There were many reasons to lower these caps, but for me the bottom line came to greater access to this funding opportunity. The GSA is a resource for all graduate students and we needed to do what we could to stretch the GSA dollar to serve the greatest number of students.

Some information on how we are funded and what we do with these funds ... every enrolled graduate student pays a Student Activity Fee, which is currently set at $40 per semester. Our current budget, which can be found on the GSA website at gradstudents.cua.edu under Governing Documents, shows anticipated revenue of $186,922 for this academic year from the activity fee. You will also notice a rollover from the previous year, along with anticipated revenue from Crabfest. This brings the total operating budget to $208,810. Under expense, you will see our approved budgeted amounts for conferences, events and lectures, the three main functions of the GSA, as well as allocated funds for the Senate and a few other committees. The Senate line item, or $60,000 of the budget, is funds the GSA transfers back to the various departments that are represented in the Senate. Your Senator(s), your peers in your school and/or department, have the ability to use these funds for student-led initiatives in the school and/or department. Please feel free to contact your Senator (contact information is available on our website) to see how funds are being allocated this academic year.

I am writing to let you know that as of today, the Graduate Student Association has exhausted its budget for conferences. This means that for the remainder of the academic year, we will not be able to fund any request that is submitted. We are working to find ways to shift funds in our operating budget to fund additional conferences, but I do not believe we have the flexibility at this time to re-budget enough resources to make an impact. YOU DO HAVE OPTIONS! While the GSA may not be able to fund your conference request, I urge you to contact your department Senator, to see how they may be able to assist using those funds set aside as mentioned above. I also urge you to contact your department chair, dean of your school, the Dean of Graduate Studies office, and perhaps the Provost's office, to see if funding is available for graduate students to present at a conference.

Please know that we are working to advocate for additional resources to better serve the graduate student community here at CUA. As part of our efforts we are sending an electronic survey in our next eNewsletter, asking for your much-needed input on the programs and services offered by the GSA. Your input will better assist us in assessing how best meet your needs.

I am sure this is not the news you were looking for. However, in the spirit of knowledge and truth, we wanted to keep you informed. I welcome your feedback on the budget and strategic planning process for the GSA. Please feel free to contact me at 22lewis@cardinalmail.cua.edu with any concerns you may have.

Yours in Service,

James J. Lewis
President, Graduate Student Association