PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF A DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Wed., Sept. 1st, 2010

The motion currently on the table is substantially the following: TO REVISE THE CONSTITUTION IN ORDER TO CREATE A NEW POSITION—DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS—UNDER WHOSE PURVIEW WILL BE NEW DUTIES IN ADDITION TO THE DUTIES OF THE POSITIONS CURRENTLY REFERRED TO AS ELECTIONS CHAIR AND THE WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR RESPECTIVELY, ACCORDING TO THE RATIONALE AND DESCRIPTION BELOW.

The current motion is that the Graduate Student Senate approve the substance of what appears immediately above in small caps and the text of the proposal below which, if approved, will take effect in the Fall 2010 term.

The following proposal recommends that, in order to facilitate the creation of the new position, the positions of Webmaster and Elections Chair (and Committee) be eliminated, and those positions’ duties and salaries be reassigned to the Director of Public Affairs. An additional sum of money will be added to compensate for additional duties, so that the final salary of the Director of Public Relations will be $2000/AY or $1000/semester beginning in the Fall 2010 term. One final recommendation is that a GSA Elections Code be written and submitted for approval to the Senate in the Fall 2010 term.

WHY GSA NEEDS A DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

This set of recommendations arises most of all out of an urgent need in GSA: the need for advertisement of our organization’s events, services, policies, protocols, and even our very identity. Many graduate students do not know who we are or what we have to offer, and those who do know who we are know us primarily as the organizers of Crabfest. GSA therefore needs to be a much more effective promoter of itself and its services in support of graduate students.

Originally the framers of our current committees and their standing rules thought that advertisement could be effectively accomplished by instituting policies that would bind committees or students to advertise their events as needed. So, for example, if one reads the standing rules of the Lectures Committee or the Social Committee, there are provisions in place to ‘ensure’ that events are adequately advertised. In practice, however, it is all the Lectures or Social Chair can do to keep up with their paperwork: they do not have time to advertise in addition to their other duties. The students who bring forth requests, moreover, are often inadequately prepared to launch any sort of thorough ad campaign, and are usually too busy to do so as well.

Because the current standing rules do not guarantee effective advertisement, the Graduate Student Association therefore needs to create a position for an individual whose sole duty it is to advertise GSA’s events and services. Because it will save GSA $1500/year, and because the new position will encompass the duties of the old Website Administrator and Elections Chair, we are therefore recommending that all of these positions and their
duties and salaries be merged into one position, and that the GSA Constitution be revised accordingly to include a Director of Public Relations.

PROBLEMS WITH CURRENT POSTS

In 2008 President Damian Lenshek moved to create a new website—www.cuagsa.org—whose establishment required a $1000 contract with Simmer Designs, the purchase of web-hosting ($142/2yrs.), and the purchase of a domain ($19.90 per year). In addition to this, the 2009 Constitution update included a salary of $1000/yr. for a GSA Webmaster, whose duty it was (and is) to update the Grad Association’s website. Since that time, however, Catholic University has updated its website templates and has provided GSA with a free domain (gradstudents.cua.edu), free hosting, and a user-friendly site-development tool called “Topaz.” GSA no longer needs to pay for hosting, a domain, or even a Webmaster whose duty in the past has been to administer a website hosted and developed independently of the University.

The Elections Committee and its Chair, as they now stand, are likewise of only marginal use to the Grad Association. The Chair of the Elections Committee sits on the Executive Committee year-round, for example, even though the duties currently assigned to that position are only enacted in March and April in a given year; and even when the duties of this post are enacted, the fairness of ballot-counting and voting regulations is in the hands of CPIT, the office on campus responsible for running elections online at vote.cua.edu. In sum, this means that the Elections Chair is paid $500/election to send out a few reminder emails and to solicit “bio’s” from candidates. The Elections Chair is essentially an elections publicist, having the primary duty of getting the word out; and as we saw in the 2010 elections, his jurisdiction includes all online content published by the Graduate Student Association.

Furthermore, even though all standing committees in the Grad Association have standing rules, the Elections Committee has no such thing; and even though undergraduate student groups at many universities have an elections code, the Elections Committee has no such thing. In the 2010 elections, the absence of standing rules and any elections code became a problem, as conflict of interest issues and a lack of any clear boundaries met a dynamic election with unfair resistance. This essentially created a situation in which one individual—or three at most—had complete control over elections material.

In short, both of the positions above—Elections Chair and Webmaster—are in need of substantial rethinking on the basis of new developments and the current needs of The Graduate Student Association.

VIABLE SOLUTIONS

If the Elections Chair is essentially an advertisement vehicle, and if the Webmaster is likewise an individual chiefly responsible for updating web-content for students’ benefit (i.e., web advertisement) and is implicitly at the service of the entire Executive Committee and, where elections are concerned, is submissive to the Elections Chair in particular, it would benefit the Graduate Student Association to (1) write a clear and
thorough elections code, (2) merge the duties of both Elections Chair and Webmaster, and (3) put those duties under the aegis of a new year-round position within the Executive Committee, a position whose duties would be expanded to include the multimedia advertisement of all sponsored lectures, events, socials, outings, retreats, conferences, policies, elections, rules, et cetera.

**Proposal**

**That the Graduate Student Senate adopt the following recommended revisions to the Constitution (textual revisions appear in bold; all excisions are spelled out):**

**Changes and Excisions**

Article IV.1: There shall be five appointed officers. The appointed positions shall be the Parliamentarian, the chairman of the Conferences Committee, the chairman of the Lectures Committee, the chairman of the Social Committee, and the Director of Public Relations.

IV.3: *Election of officers.* The elected officers shall be elected each spring semester in accordance with the GSA Constitution, the by-laws of the Senate, and the GSA Elections Code.

Excise Article IV.6.B. Chairman of the Election Committee shall be compensated $500 after the successful conclusion of GSA Spring elections.

In place of IV.6.B, the following: **The Director of Public Relations shall be compensated at a rate of $1000 per semester for a total of $2000 per academic year.**

Excise Article V, re-number subsequent articles.

VI.1: *Section 1. Procedure.* Nominations and elections of the elected officers of the GSA shall be accomplished according to a schedule which shall be made publicly available.

VI.1.B: **The Director of Public Relations may choose to publish a notice of elections in the Tower one week prior to balloting.**

VI.2.A: **Either the Secretary or the Director of Public Relations shall report on nominations, campaigns, elections, and associated matters to the Senate. Where both of those officers are running for election, a disinterested third party shall be chosen from among the Executive Committee or, if all officers are running for re-election, from among the Senate at large.**

VII.1: *Standing Committees.* The Standing Committees of the GSA shall be Executive Committee, Conferences Committee, Lectures Committee, and Social Committee. [Election Committee here excised.]
Article IX: Elections
Section 1. It shall be the duty of the Director of Public Relations to propose schedules for nominations and elections, and to ensure that approved procedures are followed in all campaigning and advertising. It shall also be the duty of the Director of Public Relations to publicize referenda and to report the results to the Senate.

Excise IX.3

Excise IX.4

Article XVIII: Referenda
Section 1. Definition. A referendum is a vote taken by the entire GSA membership on a specific issue.
Section 2. Requirements. A referendum may be initiated by a two-thirds majority vote of the Senate, or by petition of ten percent (10%) of the GSA to the Senate. A petition shall:
A. contain printed name, signature, and student ID number of each signing member;
B. be composed so as to ensure exact, clear wording and thorough treatment of the issue;
C. be valid if presented at least two weeks prior to the referendum vote. This time frame is intended to allow verification of the signatures by GSA’s four highest-ranking officers.
Section 3. Procedure. All referenda shall be conducted by the Director of Public Relations in accordance with the GSA Constitution and GSA Elections Code.
A. Written notice of the referendum shall be given to the GSA by the Senate.
Section 4. Effect. Each referendum is binding if it obtains a majority of all valid votes cast.

Additions

IV.7.G: The Director of Public Relations shall be responsible for keeping the website current and up-to-date, and for advertising there GSA-sponsored lectures, social events, student-run conferences, and all events, services, news, protocols, forms, governmental documents and policies as needed, and also advertising any of the above as needed in all media to which GSA has reasonable ease of access, including the following: flyers, posters, the internet, the door of the GSA office, the window-space in the GSA office, posting space in the University Center (i.e., the top guard-rail in the Pryzbyla Center and the GSA Pillar there), as well as via email and by any other medium deemed useful, fair, and feasible.