



**MINUTES**  
**Graduate & Professional Student Assembly**  
**September 8, 2014**  
**Bache Auditorium, Malott Hall**  
**5:30 – 7:00 P.M.**

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**I. Welcome and Introductions**

**1. Introduction of voting members, 1 min.**

R. Walroth called the meeting to order at 5:36pm.

Voting Members Present: J. Bergfalk, P. Berry, C. Best, A. Finley, A. Gardner, W.

Nicholson, I. Small, T. Snider, A. Thomson. R. Walroth, L.

Voting Members Absent: J. Goldberg, K. Weng Wong

**II. Approval of the Minutes**

**1. April 21, 2014, 1 min.**

Minutes were approved as written.

**III. Presentations**

**1. President Skorton, 30 min.**

R. Walroth introduced President Skorton and Susan Murphy, Vice President of Student and Academic Services. President Skorton thanked the GPSA for inviting him to the meeting and asked S. Murphy to share any updates related to graduate students. She shared the continued work on GPCI (Graduate and Professional Community Initiative), which was initiated last spring and was presented to trustees. She explained B. Knuth and her have been continuing work on its key components such as diversity, housing, and mental health. The administration will have a meeting in early October to perhaps get the document approved. She asked all new members of the GPSA to become conversant with it. The floor was then opened to questions.

A. Miller asked for any status updates on the NYC Tech Campus. President Skorton shared some numerical data such as number of faculty members and students. It is the first institute to offer a dual degree in technology and media. He also discussed projected estimates. Google has donated space to Cornell Tech where classes are currently in session. He will send the GPSA leadership a formal report. Faculty recruitment for the Jacobs Technion and the Cornell institute continues. S. Murphy added the facility project continues and is on track to open for 2017.

J. Bergfalk briefly introduced the divestment resolution, R.8, proposed last semester. Harvard and Stanford passed a similar resolution. He asked if a similar project is possible for Cornell and where Cornell stands on the divestment. The question focused on fossil fuel and carbon neutrality particularly.

President Skorton shared Cornell is one of the first large campuses to become coal free (4.5 years ago). The power plant runs on natural gas. One of the proposition of the resolution that came through the faculty senate is that Cornell campus become carbon neutral by 2050. President Skorton said the campus aims to become carbon neutral 15 years earlier in 2035 and is expected to reach there soon. The campus has reduced carbon footprint by 1/3 over the past decade. However, there's still a long way to go. There is an official proposal for achieving that goal which includes several individual decisions regarding transportation as well as control of light and thermostats. The next step in this process would be use of new technology that drastically reduces consumption. He encouraged students to delve into sustainability research.

President Skorton said the university would not be interested in divesting since the University's financial margins are very low and divestment is a probable risk. It is not known how divesting will affect the finances but the University's needs are too broad and the margin is too narrow to consider it.

J. Balaes asked about any opportunities on the Runway program for Law internships and work. President Skorton said he will get back to him.

K. Herlman asked if the University would make the cost-benefit analysis of the proposed divestment public before making a decision. President Skorton said he will connect the department of Geological Sciences to the experts who are currently dealing with the decision analysis.

P. Berry inquired about the progress of the insurance resolution from the spring. President Skorton informed the GPSA Dean Knuth would present the official report but she is not ready to present yet. She will at a GPSA meeting soon to talk about it since there has been a lot of discussion about it. Berry followed up with a question about graduate students and President Skorton redirected him to Barbara Knuth.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **1. Election of masters voting members, 10 min.**

R. Walroth explained the elections are initially open to voting members and if there are no nominations, it opens to field representatives. He asked for nominations and since there were none, the seat became an at-large seat. Hanes Roberts and Ashley Jones nominated themselves and T. Snider seconded their nominations. They introduced themselves - Roberts is a Hotel Administration masters students doing his 3<sup>rd</sup> masters degree and Jones is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student in ILR with an undergraduate degree in Business. N. Baran clarified both field representatives and voting members can vote in elections. They were unanimously elected voting members since the election was uncontested.

##### **2. Election of Programming Board Committee Chair, 5 min.**

The responsibilities of the Chair include coordinating gradate ball and other graduate student events. Same rules as previous election apply. A. Finley explained the Board helps with monthly events at the Big Red Barn and facilitate graduate community. She said it

was a great experience. I. Small nominated A. Possinger but she turned it down. There were no other nominations and election was tabled.

**3. Election of Diversity and International Students Committee Chair, 5 min.**

The committee was created as part of GPCI to address the needs of International students. No nomination amongst voting members. K. Herleman nominated herself, seconded by T. Snider. She's a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student in Geological Sciences and has a diversity fellowship. She was elected chair after a proposed motion to vote by affirmation.

**4. Election of UA Representative, 5 min.**

UA staffs committees that deal with issues across campus such as parking, infrastructure, judicial, code of conduct, and compensation. Each assembly has a representative. It meets once a month and is a great networking opportunity. Meet once a month. There were no nominations and the election was tabled. T. Snider clarified the representative will not be working by himself and will be accompanied by the other rep, C. Best.

**5. Final exam schedule, 4 min.**

R. Walroth informed everyone of an SA resolution regarding student input in final exam schedule and are seeking volunteers to meet between 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>. The graduate and undergraduate students are hoping to coordinate and endorse one scenario out of the 3 possible. S. Balik invited people to attend SA meeting on Thursday to discuss schedule. The decided schedule will be presented at the next meeting.

**V. Breakout Session**

**1. Learning about GPSA committees by division: Humanities, Social Sciences, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Professional Schools: 25 min.**

R. Walroth broke up the room based on fields and department. Committee chairs were requested to talk to the members and recruit people to work on their committees.

**VI. Open Forum, 4 min.**

N. Baran, a member of the GPSA for 6 years, introduced herself as the Chair of the NAGPS (The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students), a student-run national organization that discusses pressing graduate student issues such as student debt and immigration reform. She discussed the Advocacy Summit and Fall Legislative Action Days, where individuals learn about current issues, are trained to speak to congressional representatives and advocate their issues to the reps for 2 days.

Another upcoming event is the NAGPS National Conference that is an opportunity to meet other student leaders to discuss pressing topics in the field of higher education. Contact her if interested.

I. Small informed everyone he will be contacting them individually to discuss the budget.

R. Walroth adjourned the meeting at 6:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Aastha Wadhwa