Dear Dr. Rubin,

Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend tomorrow's meeting, for which I apologize. Because the topics I understand will be on the agenda have generated significant discussion among graduate students, I would like to share my thoughts via email.

Regarding the academic matters discussed at last week's meeting, I believe that I'm not in a position to advocate one way or another on who should have approval of courses and programs or for the future of GFS. I simply don't know enough about how colleges with curriculum committees function or how interdisciplinary programs will be impacted if they are under the umbrella of one or more schools, rather than the Graduate School (or a Grad School analogue). The first two straw votes seemed fairly innocuous, but the question of degree and certificate approval seems above my pay grade. Ultimately, graduate students are concerned about being able to earn their degrees and do so in a way that serves their best interests (e.g. having access to needed classes, not having too much red tape, etc.). I don't know enough about GFS or the course approval process to say what policies will serve those interests best, but based on the meetings we have had so far, I believe the Task Force has the students' best interests at heart.

Regarding the proposed agenda items as listed on the tentative timetable provided at the beginning of this process, there are three items that I would like to weigh in on.

Students I have spoken to have unanimously expressed a desire for graduation to continue to be a cross-college affair. The feeling of these students (and a feeling I strongly share) is that we would prefer to graduate with our fellow graduate students than graduate with members of our colleges. The only division of graduation that has had any support has been this year's division between Ph.D. students and Masters/Ed. Specialists (which was very well received and supported by graduate students). This may seem like a minor issue to some, and I know that the Chancellor is in favor of graduation by college, but it has provoked some of the strongest responses among graduate students. We strongly prefer that graduation remain as it is now.

I believe that orientations should continue as they are conducted now, though I have not heard much from graduate students on this issue; this is merely a personal preference. It strikes me that graduate student orientation does a good job of capturing information that everyone needs to know while department-level orientations capture the rest. If orientations were to be split among colleges, I think it would be a case of reinventing the wheel with no extra benefit.

Finally, I have concerns about student leadership groups. More specifically, I have very serious concerns about the future of GSA. I don't think it is within the Task Force's or the University's power to dissolve GSA, because GSA is recognized by ORG as a student organization. However, unlike other student organizations, GSA is funded by the Graduate School and not by the ORG fee. Thus, the elimination of the Graduate School has the potential to render GSA essentially non-functional and without a budget. I don't know how GSA would be preserved (or even if anyone at the University wants GSA to be dissolved), but
I believe its preservation is vital. GSA is the only organization on campus with the explicit mission of representing the academic interests of graduate students. This is something outside of GPC's purview, since GPC is charged with representing the interests of all graduate and professional students, which may require us to advocate for something that would be good for the graduate-professional student body as a whole, but detrimental to graduate students. If something were to happen to GSA, graduate students would lose a vital advocacy organization, while Law, Med, and Vet Med students would continue to have similar organizations to advocate on their behalf. As a graduate student, this is the number one concern I have regarding the reorganization of the Graduate School. I know I've discussed this issue with you and Mannie in the past, but given that it is on the timetable for discussion, I think it prudent to reiterate my concerns.

I do not have the same concerns, I should note, about GPC. GPC is funded through its own student fee and is recognized by the University as the graduate-professional student government. So long as GPC is able to work with you, Mannie, and Hank Foley (and I know we will continue to do so), we will be able to represent and advance student interests at the Graduate School level.

Again, I apologize for having to miss tomorrow's meeting. If you have any questions about my email or want to discuss any aspect of it further, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Best,
-Jake

On 5/28/14, 3:29 PM, Rubin, Leona J. wrote:

Attached are the meeting notes from May 22. At the end of these notes are a list of recommendations we can make to GFS and/or faculty council regarding the discussions we have had regarding curriculum approval changes. I hope you have each had a chance to discuss these issues with your colleges or constituents and we can go another round with our comfort level at making these recommendations.

I believe such recommendations may impact more than just GFS or colleges. After reading the notes it appeared there would still need to be someone at the end checking before it went to system (GS, Provost or registrar) and that might mean more resources, not less. Right now, faculty of GFS do this for free and develop some expertise in the process that might be lost with turnover at the colleges with infrequent new proposals.

Leona

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"If nothing ever changed,
    There’d be no butterflies."

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Jake Wright, M.A.
Graduate Instructor, Elementary Logic
President, Graduate Professional Council