Monthly Meeting Minutes—January 19, 2015

The January monthly meeting of the Physics Graduate Student Council was held on January 19, 2015 at Panera in Harvard Square. Jae Hyo Lee, Arthur Safira, Olivia Millner, Joe Olson, and Anna Patej were in attendance. The present document summarizes items discussed, plans for the upcoming months, and division of responsibilities.

Summary

The Council began the meeting with the review of members’ activity during the month of December and early January.

• Jae:

1. Organized the meeting with the founder of the graduate council, in order to get a coherent narrative of the beginning of the Physics Graduate Student Council. All the discussions will be summarized in a document in order to preserve the history of the Council.

2. Begun planning for the information session on student mental health issues. Jae will meet with staffs with the student mental health services in order to plan for the session.

3. The faculty meeting will be held in early Spring. Jae will organize a practice run in order to receive feedback from other Council members as well as Jacob and Prof. Manoharan.

4. Wrote progress reports on issues the Council prioritized.

5. Wrote the agenda for the balance of the semester. Jae will discuss the agenda with Prof. Manoharan and inform the rest of the Council members of the time-lines of the initiatives and funding availability.

• Arthur:

1. Arthur decided to speak with a couple of students who have internship experience in the upcoming months. Based on these discussions, he will decide how to proceed on this front of professional development initiative—that is, greater accessibility of internship opportunities while in graduate school.

2. Couch for G1 area: Julian, G1, has been stalling on the project. It appears that this project may not be completed. The Council will discuss this item again in the future.

3. Alumni directory: Arthur procured the approval of Prof. Morii for the alumni directory project. Prof. Morii commissioned a couple of staffs, including Jacob, to work on the directory. Arthur will follow up on the progress of the project in mid-to-late January.

4. Winter gym hours: Contacting the person in charge of gym schedule has proven to be quite elusive. His interest in this project has waned and therefore abandon it for the moment.
• Anna Patej:
  1. Will meet with Jacob to discuss her ideas on the proposed seminar as well as the information session on beginning research.

• Joe Olson*:
  1. Begun on the tasks of organizing open houses for beginning students.

• Nick*:
  1. Has been continuing to organize social hour.

• Olivia*:
  1. Has been planning/organizing for the puppet show event to be held in February.
  2. Stress reduction events: Has the contacts for organizations that provide services for stress reduction events. She will organize these events in the spring.

For the rest of the meeting, the Council reviewed the agenda for the Spring 2015 prepared by Jae. Below is a summary of key items that were discussed.

• Letters to alumni: Jae will draft an initial draft of the letter and solicit feedback from other Council members. The letter will be used to solicit donations and various other supports for Council’s initiatives. Jae will reach out to relevant department staffs to discuss the best way to distribute the letter.

Arthur suggested that the letter should be concise. Anna mentioned that there already exists an alumni newsletter and that the Council may request the persons in charge to include a section about the Council’s activity and information about ways alumni can provide support. She also suggested that the Council can use an incentive scheme.

• Information session on beginning research: Anna Patej will be in charge of gathering and providing useful information to Jacob and Prof. Manoharan in preparation for the information session. For example, she might conduct a survey among G1’s and G2’s to inquire what kinds of information that would like to learn about before holding the session. She will meet with Jacob to plan for this event.

Arthur suggested that at the information session either the department or the Council remind students that 1) the problems in graduate school (such as finding a “good” advisor) should be seen in a broader perspective (that is, they are “first-world problems” and should not cause so much stress); and 2) if students are stressed about an issue in the program, they should feel free to talk to department staffs, the DGS, or the Council.

• Social events with older graduate students: Jae will recruit another Council member for this initiative.

• Election/constitution: Jae will prepare an initial draft of the constitution, which will be discussed among the Council members over the upcoming months leading to the election.
Plans and divisions of responsibilities

Below is the summary of the plans and division of responsibilities within the Council until the next monthly meeting, which will be organized during the second half of January:

- Arthur:
  1. Greater accessibility to internship opportunities: Arthur will talk with a couple of students who have internship experience. Based on these discussions, he will decide how to proceed on this front of professional development initiative.
  2. Alumni directory: Will follow up on the progress of the project in mid-to-late January.

- Anna Patej:
  1. Will meet with Jacob to discuss her ideas on the proposed seminar as well as the information session on beginning research to be held in the early Spring.

- Joe Olson:
  1. Will meet with Prof. Manoharan to discuss the availability of resources and other logistics for organizing open houses for beginning students.

- Nick:
  1. Update the Council on the progress of his projects.
  2. Will continue to organize social hour.

- Olivia:
  1. Puppet show: Continue planning/organizing for the puppet show event to be held in February.
  2. Stress reduction events: Continue to plan for and organize these events in the spring.

- Jae:
  1. Council’s history: Jae will meet with Jon Bitter in order to get a coherent narrative of the beginning of the Physics Graduate Student Council. Afterwards, Jae will summarize in a document the history of the Council until the present for institutional memory purpose.
  2. Mental health information session: Jae will meet with staffs from the student mental health services in order to plan for the session.
  3. Faculty meeting presentation: Jae will talk to Prof. Morii to determine the date for the presentation to be held in early Spring. Jae will organize a practice run in order to receive feedback from other Council members as well as Jacob and Prof. Manoharan.
  4. Alumni letter: Jae will write an initial draft of the letter and solicit feedback from other Council members. Jae will discuss with the relevant department staff to discuss the best way to distribute the letter.
  5. Spring agenda: Jae will discuss the agenda with Prof. Manoharan and inform the rest of the Council members of the time-lines of the initiatives and funding availability.
  6. Work on the website