



2009 NAGPS Northeast Regional Conference Session Minutes/Notes

April 4th and 5th, 2009

MIT

Cambridge, MA

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Some topics of discussion are not covered, in part or in whole, in the minutes.

Activities – Boston University

Minutes prepared by Tim Neunzig, Brandeis University

- BU
 - G A&S – 2,000
 - Social Events (Pub Nights, etc.)
 - Lots of alcoholic related events
 - Looking for expanding those events to more non alcoholic
 - Educational Events as well
 - Taxes
 - The economy
 - Co-sponsored events as well
 - Expose students to clubs outside of their knowledge circle
 - Help with the PR
 - Month or two prior to the events to be approved
 - 500-600 dollars cap per event
 - travel grants
 - Centralized mailing list is key.
 - Department reps can be slow and inconsistent
 - Boston University Grad Society (BUGS)
 - Represents all BU grad. Students
 - Encompasses everyone
 - Big event at the *Roxy* on April 30th
- Most graduate programs can not use student funds to purchase programs (Tufts, Northeastern)
 - Only use campus catering and police
- Northeastern
 - Graduate student activity free
 - Tens of thousands of dollars for travel grants
- PR
 - Facebook
 - Events calendar in frequently traveled places
 - IBS world court
 - Heller Court
 - Grad. Student office
 - Open Houses
 - Screensavers on the screens of the computer, (IBS techn. Dept.)
- Alcoholic Events
 - Well attended but not for everyone
 - Apple picking I also done at Tufts University
 - Great for first year international students.
- Attendance
 - Attendance in board meetings and event planning decreases over time and towards the end of the semester.
- Help for Grad. Students on leave

Activities – Boston University

Minutes prepared by Lauren Nicoll, Northeastern University

- ★ BU has 10,000 grad and professional students
- ★ Right now each School has a grad council, but they are getting BUGS (Boston University Graduate Students) off the ground
- ★ Many activities are socializing events that use drink tickets at the on campus pub
- ★ They use a centralized email list
- ★ When they have off campus events, have to pay for police
- ★ Besides drinking events, have hiking trips, summer BBQ
- ★ The MBA association has many events like a back to school boat cruise, a holiday party, a spring gala, casino night where they rented a bus to go to Mohegan Sun, have Thirsty Thursdays at bars around campus, co-hosted by clubs, speakers, talks with the deans, etc.
- ★ Other events discussed: grad night at Tequila Rain, Charles River cleanup volunteer activity, apple picking trip, breakfasts with vice provost, awards for contribution to grad student life, coffee hours with students on different topics

Other discussions – Power that grad organizations have is bad publicity for universities. Use of school lobbyist/consultant to influence state. Some schools like Brandeis, Tufts, and MIT, and University of Miami have student members of Board of Trustees, didn't see real power in the role though.

Activities – Boston University

Minutes prepared by Kevin McComber, MIT

- BU's Thirsty Thursdays are hosted by student clubs
- Yale: speed-dating raises money
- Volunteer possibilities
 - Boston Food Bank (takes ~150 people 2x per day)
 - Charles River Consortium – cleanup
 - Walk for Hunger
 - Habitat for Humanity
- BU Graduate Society currently unfunded but hoping to change that
- Julia Mortyakova: NAGPS has grad student appreciate week (1st full week in April)
- CMU student council funded by \$80/student fee, also funds other student groups, fee taken out of pay checks pre-tax
 - Brandeis has \$30/year activity fee, but some scholarships don't cover the cost and those students complain
 - CMU's student fee is tied to inflation
 - Yale has had same budget for 30 years
- Brandeis: some complaints at events with alcohol by students who don't drink because they think they're not able to take full advantage of event
- Tufts: has office that is staffed by students, but they're cutting the staffing hours and enforcing staff attendance at meetings so the staff are aware of the events that are going on

Faculty/Student Relations – Harvard University

Minutes prepared by Tim Neunzig, Brandeis University

- Lots of grad students choose their school based on the faculty, often times they are not able to meet the faculty that lured them to the school in the first place.
- Harvard School of Public Health
 - o To promote interaction
 - Student-Faculty Lunches
 - 4x a year
 - Matching students – faculty if possible
 - Have to have a clear objective
 - Global chats
 - Weekly chats, varying speakers: students, faculty and external guests
 - First Thursday teas
 - Held every month for years
 - Faculty attendance was extremely low
 - Cancelled, and budget used for other activities
 - Committees
 - Student reps. On campus committee
 - Only for student government members
 - o Would rather meet faculty from other departments
- Tufts University
 - o Meet with advisors weekly
 - o Meet the deans event, once a year, food/beer/wine
 - o Monthly Dean's coffee hour
 - Coffee and Cookies
 - Discussion topics
 - Dean's of A&S and Engineering
 - o Research symposium, get faculty judges
 - o If you can get the funding, they will come
- Northeastern University
 - o More decentralized than graduate program
 - o Good relationship with pertinent faculty in departments that are small
 - o New president is about decentralization.
- BU
 - o MBA perspective
 - o Networking is such a huge part
 - Interaction with professors is a huge part of that
 - *Cheers with professors* weekly meet up
 - Bonus points for bringing profs.
- Cold-calling faculty
 - o Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't
 - o The school really should be in charge of fostering interaction
- The Dean
 - o Who really values interaction with the Dean
 - o Tufts, amazing Deans, really invested in maintaining communications with the graduate students.
- Yale

- Advisor meet up stimulation
 - Coffee coupons
 - Organized meet ups
- You can not just walk into somebody's office
 - People referred to assistants etc.
- MIT GSC
 - Central government, act as consultants
 - Split up in teams
 - Chairs meet up with equivalent administrators
 - Two ways to approach administrators

University Health Care – Brandeis University

Minutes prepared by Carlos Yopez, Brandeis University

- **Question. Is university health care a standard part of a TA/RA contract?**
 - Brandeis: All PhDs receive HC coverage regardless of TA/RA appointments. Master's students with TA/RA are not covered.
 - MIT: HC included as part of financial aid package.
 - BU: PhDs covered. Students can pay \$500 additional in order to obtain 100% claim coverage.
 - NU: Covers 100% of TA/RAs. No dental, no vision benefits.
 - SUNY Stony: Covers 100% of TA/RAs.
 - YALE: & SUFFOLK: Dental and Vision plans not included in basic HC program.
 - Harvard: Offers its own HC program for Grads and Undergrads.

- **Question. Is spouse & family coverage part of HC package options?**
 - Yes. All attending schools offer this option.
 - CMU: Spouse coverage is mandatory.

- **Dental plans**
 - MIT: Relatively new plan with Delta Dental started in 2007. Negotiated after conducting a campus wide survey with 2000 students (1/3 total population). Estimates of dental usage data for Grads.
 - Harvard: Optional Dental for additional \$150. Dental consultations worth \$70 with students and \$100 with professional. The dental services with the Dental school are offered to the public, no need for Harvard affiliation.
 - BU: Dental option of \$250 with the Dental School.
 - TUFTS: \$110 plan. Covers 2 cleanings, fillings. \$5 co-payment. No cap.
 - BU & YALE: Currently negotiating dental coverage.

- **Maternity leave**
 - BU, Brandeis: Offers and Ad-hoc maternity leave. Usually arranged with supervisor.
 - MIT: Offers a 2 month maternity leave.
 - Participants expressed further need to investigate if Universities are required to provide HC coverage to students on maternity leave once their current HC expires.

University Health Care – Brandeis University

Minutes prepared by Lauren Nicoll, Northeastern University

- ★ Grad students make up 1/3 of the student population (about 1500 people)
- ★ Their plan includes vision and dental
- ★ The old plan (2006) paid 15-45% off of vision and 50% off of dental in network
- ★ To change plans to get more value, they met with plan providers and had them present on their products.
- ★ Negotiations included the Dean of Student Life as well as the Brandeis Health Center.
- ★ Their key to success was that their students were informed (for example, they had a girl who studied health insurance policy asking questions of the providers and was knowledgeable about such things as profit to loss ratio)
- ★ So for 2007-2009, they negotiated a contract that would cost \$1,464 for an individual and \$6,138 for a spouse with Harvard Pilgrim (for Northeastern, the 2008-09 cost was \$1,975 for a student and \$4,940 for a spouse with BlueCross Blue Shield of MA with no vision, dental)
- ★ Their new plan covers 100% of an eye exam and has an optional dental plan at \$111/yr.

The lessons they learned:

- ★ Lobby with administrators at different levels. The Board of Trustees was on board with their concerns, as well as the Dean of Student Life.
- ★ Graduate students that were well-informed were key.
- ★ Timing is important. Start the process early in the semester before the new contract was signed.

Dental Insurance – Alex from MIT

- ★ MIT's Graduate Student Council negotiated to get Delta Dental coverage.
- ★ In December of 2007 they did a survey of 2,232 grad students out of 6,000 to get data about usage/potential demand.
- ★ They also found that there was a 4 month waiting list for graduate students using the MIT dental clinic.
- ★ First they went to Delta and used the information gathered to negotiate a coverage plan.
- ★ Then they went to the administration.
- ★ Their plan covers preventative and diagnostic care – 2 free cleanings a year. Discounts for restorative work (e.g., fillings).
- ★ Since it is not self-provided, MIT was open to the plan since it is no cost to there.
- ★ Opt-in program.
- ★ Some schools have agreements with BU, Tufts, or Harvard dental schools.

Family leave plans were a lobbying issue for a number of schools, including Tufts. At Yale, stipend-receiving graduate students received 8 weeks of paid maternity leave.

Graduate Student Housing - MIT

Minutes prepared by Tim Neunzig, Brandeis University

- 1/3 of grad students live on campus
- Division of Student life ~\$5m for undergraduate and graduate
- Dean for Grad. Educ. \$60-80k
- GSC funding board deals out \$120k to student groups
- New grad. Off-campus committee. Gets \$10-15k
- MIT would like a separate housing for graduate students.
- Northeastern has no real graduate student housing.
- Yale – Old housing, tells student to live off campus
 - o Majority of grad. Students live off campus
 - o Int. students and new students are not guaranteed housing
 - o Limited options for grad. Students with families
 - o \$1500 a month for a crappy apt. close to Yale
 - o Yale has a three-floor pub
- Univ. of Miami has no Graduate Student housing

Advocacy – Northeastern University

Minutes prepared by Lauren Nicoll, Northeastern University

P – Take community **P**ulse

R – **R**esearch the situation – get the facts, who's in charge

O – **O**pen discussion – schedule with useful parties

P – Submit memo with **P**roposal

S – **S**ustain discussion – Report on progress, refresh steps 1-4 if needed

Websites and Communication - MIT

Minutes prepared by Tina Penman, Northeastern University

Presentation Bullets

- Agenda of Presentation
- Why have a website?
- Important considerations
- Philosophies
- Joomla!
- Summary
- Questions

Minutes

BU: What do you use your website for?

MIT: Everything, tickets, payments...

BU: Do you keep track of visitors?

MIT: Average about 300 hits / day

MIT: We try to maintain a balance between flexibility and extensibility.

Tufts: We just went live with a new website. It's easy for eboard transitions and it's a Tuft's based system using HTML. We wanted to create a place where grad students could go for grad student resources (FB, Gmail, what's operating, contacts, forms, constitution, etc.)

NU: Do you have to adhere to any appropriate use or censorship policies seeing how it's through Tufts?

Tufts: No

BU: Is there a webmaster?

Tufts: No. Tufts handles the web server. They are really nice.

NU: Let's pull it up on the computer here in this room.

BU: Is there a charge?

Tufts: No. Some projects they do charge and some they don't. The designer made the top banner for us for free and they also trained us.

MIT: Has there been an increase in participation?

Tufts: Just went live last week. We need to put up a site meter.

MIT: Can you upload information onto the website?

Tufts: Yes, we plan on uploading a google calendar. Everything is coming along.

MIT: This brings up an interesting point. Do you organize your websites according to the organization of your association?

Some schools: Yes

Some schools: No

Unknown: Sometimes that format works well for those already involved with the organization but doesn't work well for outsiders.

Brandeis: We just changed our website to become uniform with the rest of the other Brandeis websites. There are 2 admins, cascade server, CIS, very easy to manage but at the same time, very limiting. We want to put up a google calendar and connections to Facebook. We pay a webmaster that gets a stipend for the semester. The webmaster also takes the minutes for the meetings.

MIT: Do you have an interactive website? Like can you sell tickets?

Brandeis: No, we just have a calendar, we can do some updates, and it's small. Usually we have found that just word of mouth works the best.

BUGS: Usually we just send an email to people. Our website has no functionality, it's free, it's good for posting events, but we get the best turnout just by using email. Does everyone have a webmaster position?

NU: No, ours is delegated under the Constitution for the VP for Media & Membership

Unknown: No, ours falls under the responsibility of the Vice President.

MIT: Yes, and it's a paid position.

MIT: Check out this idea bank. This is an interactive site where everyone can vote down or up items they feel should be cut by the budget.

Brandeis: How was the participation for that?

MIT: Good. It was a student led effort using new innovation techniques.

MIT: So what about communication? How does everyone best communicate with their members and the graduate student body?

Tufts [I think]: We use emails, but that relies on people having to actually read them. Otherwise, we do posters and flyers. We hit up departments with students that are known for participating in events. You know, some departments are well known for attending events and other departments are notorious for not attending. This is feasible.

Unknown: Tufts, how is your website doing? How are the stats?

Tufts: We just put the website up last week. It's awesome though. We have a ride board, a book swap, business stuff..

NU: So how do we maintain websites over eboard transitions? One eboard thinks their website is the best and the next eboard is sworn in, nixes the old website, and starts from scratch. Is there anything we can do to fix this problem?

Tufts: Well ours is neat because we can create individualized pages for a year. So the same layout will be used but the banners and design can be changed as needed. Also every year gets archived and there is a wiki that keeps track of the changes that are made on the website. Smooth transitions are important as well. Chances are if you have a smooth transition then they will be less likely to find problems with the website. Sometimes website maintenance is difficult- you just have to find someone who is properly trained.

MIT: Sometimes there is no continuity between eboards and everything gets lost and the new eboard goes back to something basic.

[Unknown]: Tufts, did you pay for your website?

Tufts: No, Tufts supports us, trains us, helps us, we use the SPARK system.

Discussion with NAGPS president, Julia Mortyakova

Minutes prepared by Lauren Nicoll, Northeastern University

- ★ NAGPS has 70 organizational members, representing 300,000 students
- ★ Main benefits are lobbying days, student health plan
- ★ Three platform issues this year were graduate student loans, health care for dependents, and visa reform for international students
- ★ Membership is \$300 for year or \$10,000 for life
- ★ President is volunteer as is rest of Eboard
- ★ Main expenses are DC Office - \$800/\$900 per month
- ★ Each region gets \$1000 for conference
- ★ Travel is reimbursed for Eboard
- ★ Northeast region hopes to reform – have set budget since right now money is unsure due to rolling memberships
- ★ National conference is in November this year in Nebraska

Regional Information –

- ★ Northeastern Region of NAGPS is different than BGLO
- ★ Elected Executive Board
- ★ Roles: President, VP – role is to interact with other orgs/find sponsors, Communications, Admin, Finance, Outreach – members and recruitment, and Regional Conference Chair

NAGPS Northeast Regional Voting Delegates Meeting #1

Minutes prepared by Alex Chan, MIT

Call to order 2:18pm

Voting Delegates: (received packet of voting delegates meeting documents)

- CMU – Jon (Voting Member)
- Chatham University – (absent) (Voting Member)
- MIT – AH Chan (Voting Member)
- BU – Julia Kim
- Brandeis – Edmund Walsh
- Northeastern – Jeff Rosenspan (Voting Member)
- SUNY Stony Brook – Jose Colmenares (Voting Member)
- Suffolk – Heather Northrop
- Tufts – Jason Heustis
- Yale – Sara Heitkamp

Intention to join (Statement of Intent by 12pm, April 5), and voting rights
Membership structure and fees

VDM overview:

Potential Officer Candidates

Executive Board Responsibilities Overview (President, Vice President, Director of Communication, Director of Finance, Director of Outreach, Director of Administration, Director of Regional Conference)

Elections:

term follows calendar year (for this year 2009, term will end at the end of Dec 2009)

elections of regional committee takes place in national conference

Vision:

Draw membership by lowering membership dues, and then use Northeast to create a strong organization

National Conference:

3 schools present at the Northeast Region at last regional conference, voted Chatham University Rep regional coordinator

Northeast Region:

Drafted constitution for NAGPS NE

Discussed budget (traveling expenses of board members, office rent)

Advocated for a discounted membership dues for first time membership (\$300)

Each region can propose changes to constitutions and bylaws to national association

Some Universities have already got budget planned out early (Brandeis), and plans set, NAGPS should plan its budget earlier

Statement of Intent not to be construed as a completely binding document.

Potential membership with intent to join could indicate intent and then take it back to their constituents for confirmation

Could one be a regional member but not a national member? technically possible in regional bylaws, but the national constitution and bylaws supercedes, there might be restrictions.

Should set the limit on how many positions one “member” could hold on the board in a way such that it is a limit on how many positions one “university” could hold, even if there are multiple organizations from one university

- how can we define the limits? universities? metro areas? states? If it’s “university” limit, it might still create a overrepresentation of certain cities (e.g. Boston)
- Should respect and take advantage of diversity of geographical representation
- Should put some thoughts into the drafting of the regulation about office holding limits

NAGPS President:

Due to nature of funding sources (sponsorships, membership dues), the current structure is not ideal, therefore hard to set a budget at national conference (Why not allow pro rate based on when universities join? e.g. joining mid-year only cost half annual fee) Difficult to change membership due structure is difficult because the one regional conference has already occurred and also the next board meeting is not coming up too soon (How to ensure organizational continuity?) A year ago, a webmaster was hired and did not deliver and was fired, therefore a lot of organizational documents were lost along with his departure. (Flexibility of deadline for payment of dues after statement of intent to join is submitted) agreed that there is no explicit deadline in the constitution and

bylaws

(Could the board decide on issues before the national conference?)Yes. (Jason: Seems like we should act on getting the financial part addressed ASAP.) (What happens if multiple student governance organizations wants to join? which one gets recognized?) We have not encountered this situation yet. (how about voting rights? and limits on how many positions could one school hold?) [Evans: the terminology is organization]

Voting Membership Rights

Record: Northeastern and SUNY Stony Brook are eligible voting members. Not on website of NAGPS, National Association should verify

Proposed Budget for NE Region

membership outreach (\$80), sponsorship solicitation (\$80), communication materials (\$40) – proposed membership fee of \$20
communication materials – depending on whether the material is going, effectiveness might be more or less than just emailing.

NAGPS Northeast Regional Voting Delegates Meeting #2

Minutes prepared by Alex Chan, MIT

Call to order 10:22pm

Voting Members/potential members: (received packet of voting delegates meeting documents)

- CMU – Jon Kowalski (Voting Member)
- Chatham University – (absent) (Voting Member)
- MIT – Alex H Chan (Voting Member)
- BU – Marc McGuigan
- Brandeis – Edmund Walsh
- Northeastern – Jeff Rosenspan (Voting Member)
- SUNY Stony Brook – Jose Colmenares (Voting Member)
- Suffolk – Heather Northrop
- Tufts – Jason Heustis (Voting Member)
- Yale – Sara Heitkamp (Voting Member)
- Harvard – Teresa Chahine

Rules of Order:

Robert's Rules

Budget:

Membership Outreach – to connect with schools with well recognized names (\$80)

Sponsorship – potential sponsor outreach material (\$80)

Communications (\$40)

Anticipated Dues: \$200

Funding from national board? will not come into effect until next fiscal year

Amount not substantial but it might appear to some as double charging

If membership be short of expectation, will we revise the budget?

Do other regions charge due fee? (NAGPS president) No, could request from National board

MIT has requested money from the board for travel support for out of state conference attendees

Questions about National Board Travel expenses – NAGPS President indicated that her own institution provided funding.

Midwest region is active but did not request funds from nationals

Motion 2009.3 (Proposed Amendments for NAGPS Official Documents)

7 voting members, 6 present, 6 in favor

Motion to amend bylaw Article iii Section 1. clause A:

remove last period mark and add “, but shall be reduced by the amount of money received from the Association split equally among the members. If funding received after the payment of dues, this may be applied retroactively.”

Motion did not pass

After more discussion, proposal tabled until later date to be set by regional president

Discussion of amendment of national constitution and bylaws; changes accepted as presented with the knowledge that exact details will be determined at the national conference

Election of officers:

President: Kevin McComber, MIT

Vice President: Jon Kowalski, CMU

Director of Outreach: Jeff Rosenspan, Northeastern

Meeting adjourned at 11:42 AM