

There have been a few substantial changes pursued this year to improve the methods followed in monitoring and controlling the GSC budget. When going over budgets from previous years, it was noticed that the rollover in all accounts but one was larger than anticipated. Unfortunately, this was due to the over-usage of GSC's Operational account and not utilizing the funds in GSC's other accounts.

This resulted in a deficit in the GSC Operational account and an excess in all other accounts. This deficit was paid for at the end of the 2007 Fiscal Year from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Education (DGE). The GSC financial administrator and I tracked down the mistake, discussed it with the Dean of Graduate Education and returned a predetermined sum of money to DGE.

In order to avoid making this mistake again, the financial administrator and I worked closely to come up with efficient ways to monitor GSC's funds. We transferred funds among the different GSC accounts such that every account had the sum that was determined in the GSC budget. I also worked with her to make sure the right account is used for our different expenses. It took a few months before these changes were implemented, since it took time for me to learn about the details of expenditures from previous years and for the financial administrator to join our group. Unfortunately, this means that the first months of the Fiscal Year 2008 are not as organized as the later months. I have had thorough discussions with the incoming Treasurer to make sure he understands the importance of continuing with an organized structure and avoid similar mistakes in the future.

GSC Committees

This report highlights some of the important financial operations for the purpose of brevity.

Executive Committee: The activities of the Executive Committee are typically repetitive from one year to the other. This year, we replaced the General Council Retreat with a Holiday Party during the December holiday time. We found this to be more useful in terms of bringing the Executive Committee together with the GSC representatives in a more informal setting that promoted discussions and social interactions. We also hosted an appreciation dinner near the end of our term to bring together all the volunteers that helped run our programs and thank them for their generous contributions.

The GSC President, Vice President, Treasurer and one of the Activities Chair participated in the NAGPS annual conference that took place in Austin, TX. This was a great opportunity for us to compare our services, find ways to improve our methods, and learn from and about our counterparts in other universities around the nation.

The Executive Committee Discretionary was used for supporting the Airport Shuttle Program (\$1,060), the Leadership BBQs in the fall and spring (~\$900), the Diversity Colloquium (\$1,000) and the Global Poverty Initiative conference organized by student groups on campus (\$500).

Publications and Publicity Committee: The main expenditure for this committee is the printing and mailing of the GSN. We tried to incorporate a coffee hour where students with concerns can meet with the GSC officers this year; however, we did not find it useful in reaching out to students. It is recommended to find other methods of publicizing the GSC and making the officers more reachable to the graduate community.

Association of Student Activities: The expenses of this committee are shared between the UA and the GSC. The main change for this year is the purchase of new lockers for student groups.

Activities Committee: The Activities Committee had a very eventful year. The Acoustic BBQ attracted over 250 individuals. The cultural and sports events, which involved selling subsidized tickets to graduate students to see a play or a game sold out. The six flags and Formula-1 events sold out as well. The Harvard-MIT mixer, which took place in Ashdown this year, attracted over 700 individuals both from Harvard and MIT.

The new \$2 Dinner series were extremely successful. All events sold out within a day or two after opening ticket sales. Each event had more than 200 graduate students come together over a very affordable meal.

The collaboration reward at \$4.5k is meant to encourage two or more student groups to work together to host an event; however, this year, the main users of this reward were dorms. We tried to publicize this reward through the Funding Board when the Funding Board could not offer funding to specific events, but some groups were discouraged to have to go through another logistical step, though direct and easy, to receive the funds they needed. This fund should be further publicized to make sure the smaller groups who usually need more funds for their events actually make use of this reward.

Finally, the Grad Gala, which involves over 700 students, has already sold out 10 days before the event. Students are sending emails to their departments and living groups in search for extra tickets, and the Gala committee has already started a waiting list. The Gala brings together graduate students with their friends and significant others in an elegant environment, where they enjoy dinner and dance to a live band. The dance floor gets crowded with both professional dancers from the MIT ballroom team and average graduate students exploring and demonstrating their dancing skills. The Gala was allocated \$40k this year, and the Gala committee secured ~\$7k in sponsorship funding to bring down the GSC's expenditure to \$33k. This is at least \$15k less than what was spent on the Gala last year. The Gala committee is constantly finding ways to reduce the cost of the Gala by optimizing the event and finding external sources of funding.

Academics, Research and Careers Committee: ARC held a variety of series, the academic and alternative career series, which were very well attended. ARC also supported the Urban Leadership Conference organized by DUSP in the fall, and had an informational session on filing taxes for residents.

The Travel Grant so far supported 14 students going to research-related conferences during the fall, IAP and the spring. The summer grants will be given out soon. The Diversity Colloquium brought in two speakers to MIT to discuss issues on diversity in work environments.

The Airport Shuttle was another successful event put together by both ARC and Orientation chairs. The program itself requires additional funding for it to run smoothly and help a higher number of incoming graduate students, thus the GSC will request funds from departments to increase the capability of the program next year.

Housing and Community Affairs Committee: This committee was very active this year. The chairs ran surveys to better understand the cost of living at MIT, analyzed the possibility of having a dental care plan for graduate students, and created a website (Rent Monkey) to help students find off-campus housing. The website shows where current MIT students live on an interactive map with personal comments from students living in these locations. The GSC continued its support to project Baby Beacon, which helps students with families find day care.

Orientation: This was yet another successful year for orientation. Most ticketed events sold out, and non-ticketed events were packed with enthusiastic students. In addition to the GSC's main events, the Orientation committee hosted the International Fair, which introduced incoming students to the culturally diverse student groups on campus. The GSC supported various events to cover outings, hiking, apple picking, parties, residence halls, spouses and partners, LBGT, volunteer work, etc. We also hosted a spring orientation dinner with the small number of incoming students then.

Miscellaneous: The GSC provided \$8.5k to the Public Service Center this year, just as we did last year. This money is used to sponsor three scholarships for graduate students involved in public service projects during IAP and the summer.

The GSC also started an Athletic and Performance Activities Grant to help graduate students who excel in non-academic activities and pursue them at competitive levels. The grant received requests for over \$40k over the four month period between when the grant was created and the end of the fiscal year. Through this grant, students who excel in sports, music, dance and various other talents and activities were able to travel and compete around the nation.

Funding Board

The Funding Board was allocated \$119k this year, which is \$19k more than the average \$100k given to the Funding Board. The board decided to make some changes over this year to better accommodate the needs of graduate students and the graduate community.

The Funding Board allowed for the first time the allocation of funds for off-campus events. We noticed how much students desired to explore the neighboring areas, and thus allowed for one off-campus event per group. This resulted in some promising events, such as the "Meet your professor" event hosted by one student group, where students go out to dinner with one of their professors, ice skating socials on the Frog Pond, trips to water-parks, Disney-on-Ice, circus, Boston cruises for both Eastgate and Westgate families, among other events. In fact, the Funding Board tried to pay close attention to the needs of graduate students with families by funding many children-friendly events throughout the year.

The Funding Board also started paying for speaker honoraria in the hopes of encouraging event diversity on campus, since it was noticed that most events were planned around food. This particularly helped student groups whose main theme is advocacy and cultural diversity.

One major goal for this year was to make sure small student groups that do not have the financial resources that are available to the larger groups receive the funding necessary to host their events. This was particularly useful to the small cultural and religious groups that do not have monthly or annual income from their constituency or their administration.

Groups had an average of \$600-\$800 per round, with four rounds during the fiscal year. On average, we were only able to provide ~50% of the total requests the first two rounds and close to ~70% for the last two rounds.

We also promoted the Medium Event Fund this year, which covers events that are larger than what the Funding Board usually supports, yet smaller than what the Large Event Fund administered by the ASA supports. This included events with over 100 participants and a budget close to \$1k. Unfortunately, this particular fund was not as competitive as we had hoped, and the applicants seemed to be mostly from the same groups who had the large constituency needed for the fund. An increase in this fund is not recommended. It would be better to have more funds for the regular applications to further support all student groups.

I provided at least seven group financial training sessions during the year, in addition to one-on-one trainings whenever necessary to help group treasurers understand how to apply for funding and how to use their funds in accordance with GSC policies. The Funding Board also provided optional meetings with groups before decisions were made to better understand group needs and inform groups of any inconsistencies in their applications. This tremendously helped avoid reimbursement problems during the year.

Finally, the Funding Board worked very closely with LEF/ARCADE to try and move applications from one to the other as necessary. LEF/ARCADE saw an increase in the number of applications this year, and many graduate groups who were not able to receive funding from LEF/ARCADE due to lack of funds were transferred to the Funding Board to help them host their events.

Conclusion

The GSC put together numerous activities during the year to help promote academic, advocacy and fun events to the graduate community. It takes a tremendous amount of dedication and hard work to volunteer and make all this happen. Many thanks to the GSC Officers, Executive Committee members, volunteers and administration who worked together to make the GSC succeed for yet another year. Special thanks to Dean Lerman for all his support and guidance. We would also like to thank the staff of the Student Activities Office, particularly Ky Winborn, Catherine Hursh, Kiley Noonan, Laurie Ward and Jed Wartman for facilitating all Funding Board transactions and helping with the financial training.