

News and Views

Graduate Student Journal

Published by the Graduate Student Organization at Stony Brook

December Issue

Whose Activity Center Is It Anyway?!

To: The Entire Student Body,

It is with great concern that we, the student representatives, write this letter. As we all know, the new Student Activity Center (SAC) is due to open in about one month. What exactly will this new SAC do for students? The new SAC planning and implementation has taken place with little input from its constituency, the students. The undergraduate and graduate representatives have encountered numerous difficulties in attempting to ensure that the student voice not be ignored or silenced by our Administration, and that the new SAC be more inclusive of both commuter and residential undergraduate and graduate students' needs. Unfortunately, SAC is being turned into a business venture that is less about the campus community, and more about the University's profits.

Issues:

- 1) Not accepting the meal plan in the new Student Activities Center (SAC): the committee deciding on this has only one student representative.
- 2) Only one room is allocated to the Graduate Student Organization (GSO), although they represent nearly one third of the student body. Initially, the GSO was forgotten until it was brought to the attention of administrators.
- 3) The student "unfriendly" design of the undergraduate Polity suite. The suite's design has raised concerns about the security and access to it after 5 p.m.
- 4) The closing of the Commuter Lounge in Melville Library.
- 5) Only 16 "desks" to accommodate over 150 student clubs, organizations, Fraternities, Sororities, and religious organizations. Absolutely NO space was allocated for graduate clubs and organizations.
- 6) Only one room to accommodate limited programming; which means NO parties and concerts.
- 7) Polity Print Shop, an entity that services ALL organizations at a premium cost, was allocated space in the new SAC, but, due to lack of storage space in the entire Center, an ample portion of the print shop was relocated to Aramark for use of storage.

Expenses:

Cost:

A) The cost of renovating the student "unfriendly" Polity suite with a receptionist desk and lobby area (which should have already been included)	\$2,484
B) Customizing the GSO offices to meet its needs	\$2,200
C) Polity Print Shop renovation, for the venting system (hvac ducts) as well as miscellaneous electrical work (lack of electrical sockets and flooring)	\$16,000 to 24,000
D) Adding locks for doors and purchasing door stoppers, because doors are designed not to stay open	not available
E) Incorporating a Coffee House (in place of Colours Cafe) that will be owned and operated by students for students	\$25,000
F) Storage space for Coffee House	not available
Estimated cost of renovations	over \$45,000

Overall, the new SAC is negligent of all students and will result in the use of your Student Activity Fee to pay for renovations that should have been requirements from the beginning. Both graduate and undergraduate student representatives are working diligently to ensure that all aspects of the new SAC are inclusive of students, and we will continue to do so on behalf of our constituency, the students.

The Graduate Student Organization (GSO)
The Student Polity Association
The Commuter Students Association (CSA)

Differential Tuition

WHAT IS IT?

Differential Tuition is a concept that would allow varying institutions within the SUNY system to set up different tuition rates based on the type of school and/or program. If this policy were in place, costs would be higher to attend University Centers or to be enrolled in professional programs such as engineering, programs offered at Health Science Centers, etc. Governor Potluri has appointed a Temporary Task Force on Variable Campus-Based Tuition which has no student representation! The task force has been discussing ways in which Differential Tuition may be implemented rather than whether or not it should be implemented. Students need to unite and take action. We must ensure that our voices are heard.

Differential Tuition is in direct conflict with SUNY's mission since it:

- * Broadens the Socio-economic gap that already exists, allowing for only the students that can afford the better programs to attend
- * Shifts responsibility to individual campus administrations which weakens their accountability to SUNY central
- * Moves away from the centralized University System's fundamental mission that is supposed to insure equal access for all
- * Would cause a tiered system which would result in varying degrees in quality of programs across the SUNY system

Students should be able to choose the SUNY campus which best meets their needs rather than the campus which they can best afford. This is a way to drastically downsize the University system, serving only those with the highest academic abilities and the ability to pay whatever the market will bear.

SUNY is one of New York's Greatest assets; however, state tax dollar support has dropped from 84% of the University's core operating budget to 49%

- * SUNY colleges consistently rank among the best in the nation
- * SUNY graduates add almost \$17 billion each year to the State's economy, while SUNY campuses add \$10 billion to local economies.

SUNY is the nation's largest and most diverse system of public higher education, but it is also one of the most poorly supported in terms of state tax dollars. State support will further decline in a system that can raise tuition at different rates. Thus in turn it will be harder for us to lobby for adequate funding for SUNY. colleges will be selling each other out as they compete for funds.

GSO Position on Differential Tuition (supported by a GSO Senate resolution)

by Hasan Imam, President GSO (as presented to the University Senate)

I am here to present the position of the Graduate Student Organization on Differential tuition:

GSO, in solidarity with the Student Polity Organization, takes a stand AGAINST differential tuition.

First of all let me state that we, at GSO, feel that the fates of undergraduate and graduate students at this institution and across the SUNY system are inter-linked. therefore all of the concerns of undergraduate students presented in front of you by the Student Polity President Keren Zolotov, are also our concerns.

In addition, let me state some of the principle reasons why the GSO is taking a stand against differential tuition:

- 1) GSO believes that differential tuition will inevitably lead to a tuition hike at the university centers which will negatively impact a majority of graduate students, unfunded ones in particular. And for your information, 60% of graduate students at the Stony Brook campus are unfunded.
- 2) The power to set differential tuitions between disciplines, a by-product of the overall differential tuition scheme, can be used by the administration to effectively target and shrink certain departments which it may view as "undesirable."
- 3) Differential tuition will deny equal access to the university centers, a principle the SUNY system was founded upon.
- 4) Differential tuition will lead to a reduction in diversity at the University centers by making it prohibitively expensive for students from certain economic classes. This is also in direct contradiction to the stated goals of SUNY.

The administration's assertion that measures will be taken by the SUNY board of trustees to maintain access to the university centers must be taken with a grain of salt. As recent events demonstrate, the current board of "trustees" cannot be trusted to do any such thing.

Therefore, I urge this University Senate and the administration to hear the voices of the graduate and undergraduate students and take a stand AGAINST differential tuition.

University Senate Resolution on Differential Tuition:

The University Senate of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, representing the faculty, staff, and students of the campus, strongly opposes any effort to institute differential tuition among the campuses of the State University of New York. To do so would fundamentally subvert the charter mission of the State University of New York to provide access to higher education to the people of New York on the basis of intellectual ability rather than on economic circumstance. Thus, it opposes differential tuition and all other attempts to substitute a market mentality for academic criteria as a basis for entrance into the appropriate campus in New York State's remarkable system of public higher education.

Administration's Position: Consideration on Variable Tuition

What is variable tuition?

- * Authority for SUNY campus Presidents to set campus-wide tuition within guidelines established by the Trustees.

Do other state systems have variable tuition policies for undergraduates?

- * Yes. Nebraska, Colorado, Wisconsin, Washington, California, Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, Virginia, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania

What values does a variable tuition policy imply?

- * Campus level responsibility and accountability for delivering the educational mission of the University
- * Unit-level responsibility, accountability and rewards for providing a quality education for students
- * Commitment to quality in the SUNY system
- * Retreat from state support of higher education

If variable tuition becomes a reality, how would access to quality higher education be preserved?

- * Maintain and strengthen the tuition assistance program
- * Use some tuition money to support scholarships for deserving students whose families cannot afford all or some of the costs of higher education
- * Trustees should ensure that the demographic profiles of University students do not change abruptly.

If variable tuition becomes a reality, how should it be managed?

- * All tuition should stay on the campus where it is collected
- * President should have the authority to lower or raise tuition within guidelines established by the Trustees
- * State should continue to preserve the balance between State, private and entrepreneurial support of SUNY campuses

Editor's Note

By Scott Budzynski
Editor

Welcome to the first edition of "News and Views" of the academic year. "News and Views" is a graduate journal funded by the G.S.O. I have recently taken the position of editor of the journal and am looking forward to getting input and material from graduate students to print. Ideally I would like to concentrate on graduate programs happening at Stony Brook and events in which graduate students are participating and students' views about graduate concerns in general. We are in a unique situation at the University in that there are so many graduate programs and such a high number of graduate students. This offers the opportunity to come into contact with students from a wide range of disciplines. Many of the departments hold colloquia and lecture series which I am especially interested in printing material about as well as about students presenting work at conferences. One event on campus I attended this semester and have written an article about was the concert "New Works by Stony Brook Composers." I was so involved in all the work specific to my program (and still am) that it was a good reality check to hear what the very talented music students on campus are doing.

If you are interested in contributing an article, you can bring it to the G.S.O. office in the Computer Science Building in room 2105, preferably on an IBM formatted disk, or you can let me know about an upcoming event by e-mail. my address is sbudzyns@ic.sunysb.edu. Money is available for articles printed.

Restructuring of the Graduate Stipends

Dr. Lawrence Martin spoke at the monthly G.S.O. Senate meeting on Wednesday, November 13 as was announced in that week's issue of the Statesman, but said first off that he was not there to propose a salary decrease of Graduate TA's to \$5,500 as had been stated. He wanted to make clear that the announcement had been a fabrication and the decrease was not something which he saw as viable. The reason that there was talk of cutting the stipends in the first place seems to be from discussions on how to improve enrollment. Although cutting stipends is not a good way to improve enrollment, the logic behind this would be to cut in some departments and give to others who are having problems competing with other universities offering larger stipends than Stony Brook is able to. The departments theoretically to receive the increased money for stipends being those ranking very high on the national level. At least this seems to be the theory to the cause of the commotion.

The real problem as understood from what Dr. Martin discussed is that of keeping up enrollment and the inadequacy of the current rate to attract the high caliber of student which they currently have and want to keep, but doing this

under the current budget. The Provost asked Martin to form a committee to look into this and that is what he is currently doing, that is looking into the matter, no decision about it has been made.

Possible solutions discussed were, for one, that which some departments have implicated on their own and that is using outside resources in the form of grants to pay increased stipends to students. This is a common practice at many universities and there are many outside funds which many departments have not tapped into. Another answer would be to increase the number of unsupported graduate students which would bring in more money to the school to increase stipends. The suggestion was put out that perhaps the admissions process should be made more difficult to lower the number of students and therefore making more money for stipends. Dr. Martin responded that the admissions standards to the graduate programs at Stony Brook are indeed high and that he does not feel that it should be impossible to receive a graduate education, but that the standards should be kept high and that the university wants to increase not decrease students. One student brought up the example of the Marine and Sciences department's professors tithing one month of their salary for more money.

The question was posed as to why we at Stony Brook are having this difficulty in comparison to other universities. Dr. Martin explained that Stony Brook has a very high percentage of graduate students to undergraduate students compared to most universities and that the cost is much more for a graduate student than it is for an undergraduate. It was brought up that since there is such a high percentage of graduate students here that it is a good opportunity for the graduate students to serve as mentors for the undergraduates and that there could be more interaction of this type.

The ideal situation to the whole problem of course would be to get more money from the state. Dean Martin was asked what more the university could do to increase state funding. He reminded students that last year Stony Brook organized a trip to Albany hoping to bring many students there to discuss these matters with the state officials and that very few students turned up for this event. He iterated that pressure at the state level is much more effective coming from the students rather than university officials, because university officials have a vested interest in the matter and are not listened to as closely by the politicians. The incident of Governor Pataki's visit at the beginning of the semester was then mentioned. This was one event that Stony Brook students could easily have attended but very little was done to alert the student body to it and many students suspect that this could have been deliberate.

In closing on the matter Dr. Martin agreed to involve the G.S.O. in the proceedings of the process which he had already been asked to do and was the reason for his speaking at the senate meeting. He and the committee are currently working department by department to figure out a solution and the lowering of the salaries of full time TAs is not an option.

One more matter that Dean Martin brought up was graduation. There has been concern that more attention is given to the graduate students than the undergraduate and a possible answer to this is to have two separate ceremonies, one for the graduate students and one for undergraduates. Dr. Martin said that this is feasible if that is what the students want and he would like to hear from students concerning the matter.

Stony Brook Composers

Last month I was fortunate to hear about a concert to be given of works by Stony Brook composers and even more fortunate to have attended. The concert "New Works by Stony Brook Composers" took place on Thursday, November 14, and consisted of compositions by graduate and undergraduate students from Stony Brook played by musicians from Stony Brook. The works of 11 different artists were performed and the concert lasted a total of three hours which although lengthy proved exciting through to finish when Daniel

Koonntz's expressive piece Anton von Webern spielt Clavinet auf der Hochzeit von alban Berg was played. He describes his piece in the program as "Webern loosening up at the reception and treating the crowds to this unrestrained, improvised outburst." Although the works represented a broad range of styles, all took this innovative approach to various musical themes or ideas. In his piece Sonata for Two Clarinets, Jason Durham takes traditional elements and brings them together in an original manner which he describes as "combining three different compositional interests: the wonderfully varied character of the clarinet's register, and exploration of synthetic scales and their resulting harmonies, and an attempt to playfully use the traditional sonata format."

I spoke with Jason later to ask him some specifics about the concert and some of the other activities of the music department. He explained to me the importance and uniqueness of this concert. The concert took form from a series of meetings between the composers and Daniel Weymouth, who helped along with John Tighe and Farran James to organize the concert, and involved the Stony Brook Contemporary Players. Most but not necessarily all of the composers featured are graduate and undergraduate composition majors at Stony Brook who are able to advantage by the high number of music students at the university interested in playing contemporary music. Stony Brook is rather unique in the aspect that there is a high degree of interest in contemporary music here in comparison to many other universities where although they may look at some contemporary music often shy away from playing new works, that is works composed in very recent years.

Jason stressed the word "new" when talking about the works performed as they are all new and this was the first time in which they were publicly performed which added to the difficulty to the musicians performing and to the importance of the performance to the composers. The performance was recorded and this recording will be used by the artists for competitions and applications among other purposes. "The piece isn't complete until it is performed," explained Jason. He talked about the importance for him of putting his music out and getting a reaction and the pressure on the musicians because they are the first to publicly perform the works and there is no precedent for them on how to perform the piece. It's very important for a composer to have a recording of his/her work to accompany the score when submitting it for applications and competitions. Stony Brook thus provides an atmosphere responsive to this need in that there is a large number of musicians in the department and a large number who are interested in performing new works. Besides having a recording of their work from such a concert, the composers also have the opportunity of having their pieces performed before a live audience and seeing how the piece comes off before the audience and getting feedback from the audience.

These concerts happen once a semester and the next will take place on April 3, 1997 at the Staller Center for the Arts. The concerts are well worth attending and offer a rare and unique opportunity to be the first to hear works of very talented composers and musicians. On top of that they are free of charge. There are other concerts by Stony Brook musicians which take place at Staller Center during the week and which are also free of charge as well as talks open to the public where faculty or guest speakers present material. Stop in the Music Department office on the third floor of the Staller Music Building or call 632-7330 for more information about those events.

News and Views

Editor:
Scott Budzynski

Published Materials do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the GSO or the editor of "News and Views." If interested in submitting work contact the editor at sbudzyns@ic.sunysb.edu

Art History and Criticism Lecture Series

As anyone who has already been to one of the previous lectures knows, the art history and criticism graduate students, along with a faculty advisor, organize and present a lecture series, inviting speakers to the Stony Brook campus. Each year seven to ten speakers present topics relating in some way to the general concerns of art history and criticism, but most often are of interest to a wide variety of disciplines. The speakers are in fact sometimes co-hosted by other, and in one case this year several, departments. Originally in the early eighties the series was in form of a colloquium, where many speakers came at one time to present topics, and has followed the current format of inviting speakers to talk individually throughout the academic year since the early nineties.

Topics this first semester ranged from Adrian Piper's "A Kantian Analysis of Xenophobia" to Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt's "Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Frescoes - Yesterday and Today." Piper was brought here with the additional support of the Philosophy, Women's studies and Africana departments and the Humanities Institute as a two-day fellow. She is a professor of philosophy at Wellesley College, and is a well known artist as well. She began as a part of the early conceptual movement of the sixties and exhibits her work at the John Weber and Paula Cooper Galleries in New York. She currently has a new book out entitled Out of Order, Out of Sight, focusing on modern and contemporary art. Her talk centered on exactly what the title states, "A Kantian Analysis of Xenophobia" which involved a discussion of the way that xenophobia is "hard wired" and how to realize and overcome it.

Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, a professor of art history at New York University and Permanent Consultant for Renaissance Art to the Vatican Museums, was able to give us first hand accounts as to the cleaning and restoration of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling and told a very interesting and enlightening history of the cleaning of the Ceiling throughout the centuries. Her talk was made possible with help from the Italian Studies Department, the Humanities Institute and the Friends of Staller.

As well as visiting speakers, the Art History and Criticism Lecture Series presents speakers from the Stony Brook campus as well. Professor Edward Casey from the Philosophy Department gave the talk, "Landscape and the Power of Place" this semester, taking a phenomenological look at landscape painting, and in the upcoming semester Professor Donald Kuspit from the Art History and Criticism Department will give his talk "The Psychoanalytic Construction of Art" on Monday, February 10, at 3:00pm in the Staller Fine Arts Center, Art Gallery.

This semester's half of the series was closed out with Kenneth Meyers' "Corporate Support for the Fine Arts in Jacksonian America: The Example of the Steamboat Albany Collection" giving in the course of discussion history as to the development of the structure of the art world in the earlier history of the New York City area. Also this semester Anna Chave professor of art history CUNY presented "Striking Poses: Eva Hesse's Absurdist Theatrics." Speakers for next semester include as well as Professor Kuspit, Catherine Sousloff from the University of California, Santa Cruz on Thursday, March 20 at 5:00pm and Darcy Grigsby from the University of California on Thursday, April 17 at 5:00pm. Sousloff's topic is "A Historiography of Technocriticism" and Grigsby will be presenting, "Delacroix's Massacre at Chios and the Risks of Heterosexual Conquest." Both lectures will be given in the Art Gallery of the Staller Fine Arts Center.

S. Budzynski

Health Insurance: Problems and Possible Solutions

The following concerns about health insurance were brought up at the latest GSO Senate meeting:

The current system for notifying students of the necessity to re-enroll in the health insurance plan (for example when switching between RA/TA/GA lines, missing the Aug-Sept deadline, falling out of the payroll even on a temporary basis, etc.), and for notifying them of the deadline for doing so, is ineffective, unofficial, and bound to cause problems again and again unless it is changed.

Problems:

1) ineffective and unofficial notification of when and how to re-enroll

Students are sent only a single general memo about health insurance enrollment, and this is sent to the graduate secretaries, but these are not necessarily forwarded or circulated to students). Students who for one reason or another do not receive the one memo at school get no notice of the health insurance meeting, of the necessity to re-enroll if they are switching between lines, or of the procedure for enrolling in a new plan.

2) no notification of insurance termination

No notice is sent (at least not for months) to students when they have been dropped from health insurance. Many students may continue to think they are covered when they are actually without health insurance.

3) enrollment is typically on a yearly rather than semester by semester basis

Suggested Improvements:

1) Notifying the student in an official manner when their health insurance contract needs to be renewed, and again when it is terminated. An official notice should be addressed specifically to the student, and be sent to their official address, that is, their home address.

2) Sending health insurance forms that need to be filled out to the student's department would also be a vast improvement. This would allow the departmental secretaries to ensure that all of their students were covered by the deadline.

3) Allowing students to enroll on a semester by semester basis, rather than simply on a yearly basis. Given that our appointments as RA/TA/GA's is typically on a semester basis, students should be allowed to enroll in health insurance on this same schedule. A student should not be barred from enrolling in the Spring just because they were not enrolled in the Fall.

Addendum: This suggests some additions to the above. Some of the points can be incorporated into the above by changes in wording.

Deadline

(The term Health Plan/insurance hereafter refers to the RA/TA/GA Health Insurance Plan)

1) The deadline for ending open enrollment be set with the following considerations:

a) The office of Human Resources has enough time to notify ALL registered graduate students whether or not they are enrolled in the current Health Plan.

b) After a), there is a period of at least two weeks when eligible, but unenrolled, graduate students have time to do the paperwork to enroll in the health plan.

c) Even after the deadline lapses, special considerations be given, on a case by case basis, to graduate students who, through no fault of their own, have fallen out of enrollment in the Health Plan.

2) If a graduate student is switched from TA-RA or RA-TA, he/she be individually notified that this will

effect his/her insurance coverage. This letter should state when the insurance coverage will terminate and by what date the student must file paperwork to renew coverage. A copy of the notification will be forwarded to the department secretary.

3) If a registered graduate student is terminated from payroll for any reason, between semesters or within a semester, he/she be notified in writing that this will effect his/her health insurance coverage. Again the letter should state the termination date and the graduate department secretary should be copied.

4) International students picked up by the foreign student health Insurance plan be notified individually. The notification must be sufficiently in advance so as to allow the individual to appeal/seek a waiver/correct the situation which lead to the RA/TA/GA Insurance plan.

Attention : International Students

Diversity Visa Lottery 1998

By Lynn K Morris

The Diversity Lottery is an opportunity to secure a green card through 'luck.' In the past, about 5 Stony Brook students a year have received green cards through this lottery. Applicants register for the Lottery. All the entries are put into a computer and names are drawn by chance. It is like the New York Lotto lottery, but the prize is a green card, not cash.

The registration period for the next Diversity Visa Lottery (DV-98) will begin at noon on February 3, 1997 and will end at noon on March 5, 1997. Any entries received before or after these dates will be disqualified.

The following refers to place of BIRTH not citizenship. Persons born in the following countries are NOT eligible for DV-98: Canada; China, including Mainland and Taiwan; Colombia; Dominican Republic; El Salvador; India; Jamaica; Mexico; Philippines; Poland; South Korea; Vietnam; and United Kingdom and its dependent territories. Persons born in Hong Kong and Northern Ireland are eligible to apply.

If you are in the United States, to receive written instructions on how to enter the visa lottery (DV-98), please call the U.S. Department of State's visa Lottery Information Center at 1-900-884-8840 and leave your name and address. You will be charged a flat rate of \$5.10 on your telephone bill (callers must be 18 or older) and the information will be mailed to you within three business days. Persons overseas may receive this information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

International Services in the Grad School has a limited number of information packets. First come, first served. Please ask Nancy for the packet. Packets are also available for graduate students from GSO in room 2105 of the Computer Science Building.

BEWARE OF LOTTERY SCAMS. There is no fee to enter the lottery. No lawyer is needed. If the winner files a successful application, he or she can enter the U.S. and exchange the immigrant visa for a green card. If the winner is in the U.S. already, he or she can get a green card from INS without leaving the U.S.

The Lottery occurs every year and every year dishonest people try to get people to pay them for unnecessary services. Some claims are fraudulent. Do not pay anybody a fee to help you. The instructions are very simple and very clear.

Ask your International Advisor--Dr. Morris, Mrs. Brown, Ms. Barnum--for information if you feel uncertain about the application.