The Luminary

A Newsletter for Graduate & Professional Students

UNLV and the Battle of the Budget
Jessica Lucero

Since the last newsletter, your GPSA council and executive board has attended two Interim Finance Committee meetings testifying on behalf of higher education; we have hosted a “walk-out” of UNLV and NSC to encourage activism by students with legislators for higher education; and we have gathered thousands of signatures on the “Higher Education Pledge,” where students and faculty signed their names stating they would support leaders who support higher education. During all of this activity, the Governor called for a special session of the Nevada State Legislature. I along with GPSA Vice President, Kyle George, and Civil & Environmental Engineering GPSA Representative Vik Sedev travelled to Carson City with over twenty-five student leaders from UNLV, CSN, and NSC to combat the proposed 10% budget reductions to Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) (this was reduced from the original 20% number being floated around in the press before the special session). The “Higher Education Pledge” was submitted to both the Senate and the Assembly, with Kyle George, GPSA’s Vice President, and Nathaniel Waugh, CSN’s student-body President, testifying to the Assembly at the request of Speaker Buckley.

After a day of testimony by student leaders and talking one-on-one with many of our state’s leaders, the result was a 6.9% reduction to NSHE’s budget. While this number is nothing to cheer about—UNLV and UNR are currently in the process of figuring out which academic programs to cut—the clichéd phrase, “it could have been so much worse,” still rings true.

Research Forum
Roni Glover

Graduate and professional students participated in the annual research forum on Saturday, March 20th on the second floor of the Moyer Student Union. Over 100 students presented their research as either a poster or platform presentation. Many faculty supported the event by participating as judges or stopping by to observe the students’ efforts. The judges had a tough time picking winners among the many quality presentations. Monetary prizes were awarded for both the platform and poster presentations. Several honorable mentions were awarded as well.

Special points of interest:
- Fall 2010 registration begins April 12
- Get the latest news on the budget website http://www.unlv.edu/budget/
- Stay up to date with UNLV news—follow along on twitter
- Visit the Student Recreation and Wellness Center relaxation room with massage chairs
Amidst budget cuts, GPSA’s community service committee has come up with innovative ideas and projects to bridge the gap between the academic world and the community that makes our presence known. The committee of two members headed by Candace Griffith, GPSA Treasurer, collected donations during the past Holiday season for the Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army Christmas Drive had two parts. In the first half, the GPSA collected food to help over the Thanksgiving holiday and in the second half, the GPSA collected toys to be distributed for Christmas. The committee also had volunteers show up on days for distribution to help spread the goods collected to needy families in the Las Vegas Valley. The toy drive was relatively more successful than the food drive, and there were about 10 volunteers for the distribution of toys and food.

The committee does not need any funds to operate; it entirely runs on donations. The fliers (for the activity of the month) are distributed to all the departments through listservs, and everyone generously donates to the best of their capacities. In February, the GPSA Activities Committee hosted a karaoke night at Dino’s, a locally owned downtown bar. Apparently, graduate students are multi-talented folk! They collaborated with the GPSA Community Service committee and held a raffle (with great prizes like UNLV swag and a chocolate gift basket) to raise funds for the Gay & Lesbian Center of Southern Nevada. The committee raised $75 for their youth programs.

Candace Griffith mentioned that unfortunately we have not been able to collect as many donations as in past. The committee has looked into possible reasons for the lack of participation from the UNLV community. One of the major reasons is perhaps the stress due to the financial crisis the university is going through. There is also a possibility of the absence of the effective means of sending the information out to departments. Another reason the committee is looking into is the absence of a liaison between the student groups on campus. Fraternity and sorority societies have their own community outreach events with which the GPSA has to compete. Missing enthusiasm, budget cuts, or competition with other student groups, however, has not stopped the committee in its community outreach initiatives.

With the vision of soliciting more involvement, the GPSA Community Service Committee is working hard and is organizing a book drive for April. The upcoming book drive is to be run throughout the month of April and the GPSA hopes to donate the books to the Clark County School District (CCSD). They will collect books for all age groups to be distributed primarily to schools around UNLV.

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The most recent release of potential cuts to the University include the following programs:

Units To Consider for Elimination
- Educational Leadership
- Informatics
- Management Information Systems
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Recreation and Sport Management (including Professional Golf Management)
- Sports Education Leadership
- Teaching and Learning Center
- Women’s Studies

Subunits To Consider for Elimination
- Clinical Laboratory Sciences
- Construction Engineering Management
- English Language Center
- Entertainment Engineering
- Gerontology & Senior Theatre
- Landscape Architecture
- Urban Affairs Advising Center
- Urban Horticulture Program

Upon the release of this information, I sent out an email requesting council forward to their constituents. I am currently collecting any comments, questions, or suggestions regarding these potential eliminations and have asked graduate and professional students to contact me via email:

jessica.lucero@unlv.edu.

Also on the table again is tuition. The NSHE Tuition & Fee committee, of which I am a member, put forward a proposal, which does not include raising tuition for graduate students in the 2011-2013 biennium. However, Regent Jason Geddes has issued a proposal to increase tuition 7.5% more than what the committee recommended and includes raising graduate tuition. Both proposals will be voted on at the April Board of Regent’s meeting. The Nevada Student Alliance, composed of all student body Presidents from the NSHE institutions, just passed a resolution supporting the original NSHE Tuition & Fees recommendations and thereby opposing Regent Geddes’ plan.

The NSHE Tuition & Fees committee did put forward a Differential Tuition & Program Fee policy, which would charge more for high cost programs—generally courses. If approved by the Board of Regents in April, any program wishing to bring forward differential program fees would have to do so via committee made up of students, faculty, and administration. Additionally, if the program is also offered at any other NSHE institution, the proposal would have to be brought to the Board together in order to combat competitive pricing of programs.

This is the latest update on the Battle of the Budget—please email me any questions or concerns you may have.

Jessica Lucero