Present: Sarah Pears (SP), Christine Peterson (CP), Clare Crosby (CC), Jeff O'Donnell (JO), Sam Parker (SPA), Bess Perry (BP)

Updates on Old Business

SP – Carolyn is checking on the situation regarding Aiken kitchen access for grads on evenings and weekends. Sarah also discussed RGSA storage with Carolyn. If we provide a tub for our supplies, Carolyn will find a space for it. SP is going to acquire a tub.

CC – Com-PIE-tition has been scheduled for Monday, April 7th from 11:30 to 1:00.

CP – Talked to Alan Strong about doing an RGSA Breakfast Hour. Alan thought it was a good idea. The Breakfast Hour is tentatively scheduled for February 20th from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in Aiken 103. Bagels, fruit and coffee will be served. It will be BYOM (Bring Your Own Mug).

SP – Let’s try to use the RGSA e-mail account for RGSA correspondence whenever possible. Sending e-mails from RGSA should help us build our brand.

Research Internship Recruitment Event

CP / JO – Around ten grad students have expressed an interest in participating. Anna-Smiles Becker will be there. The event is scheduled for Tuesday, February 18th at 5:30 – 7:00 in Aiken 103. An email will go out today asking interested grads to provide a brief description of the research and internship duties. RGSA will send a save the date e-mail to undergrads. We will send reminders to undergrads and grad participants on February 14th and 17th. SP – We will create flyers for the Event. SP – Asked if we should open up the event to undergrads in other departments? SPA – A good idea to open it up, since he’s had trouble finding candidates in the past.

Research Writing / Lit Review Panel Idea

SP – Robin Orr and Sarah Ford approached RGSA with a suggestion to consider organizing an informal panel on research writing and literature reviews. All agreed that this is a good idea. CP – Sarah Ford suggested to Christine that it would be helpful to bring experienced students together with newer students to exchange ideas and advice. SP – Suggested we talk with Carolyn to see what workshops she is planning. It’s possible that one of Carolyn’s workshops (like the proposal workshop held last year) could cover some of these topics. SP will check with Carolyn and report back.

Rubenstein Spring Lecture Series

Clare will attend today’s environmental problem brainstorming session. CP – Based on what Dean said at the faculty meeting students will be there to provide informal input on environmental issues of concern.
Mini-Grants
Call for applications will go out today. Mini-grants will be due February 10th. Exec Committee will review at the February 11th meeting and announce decisions shortly thereafter.

Mentoring Program
CP and BP are realigning the mentoring program for this semester. A call for new grad student participants has gone out. CP and BP also sent an e-mail to undergrads re: do you want to stay in the program?

BP sent out a survey to program participants aimed at assessing participant experiences with the program and how to make it better.

Other Business
CP – Attended the faculty meeting today. The Dean search was discussed. Grad students are encouraged to attend the open forums. RGSA Exec. Committee members will be in attendance. We will send e-mail reminders to grads re: the open forum dates.

CP – Some good news to report from the faculty meeting: Jason Stockwell landed a large NSF Grant. Also, a new Mac-Sten initiative will bring in 9 new PhD students.

SP – Talked to Carolyn about grad student stipends. Per Carolyn, stipends are set by the university. SP is interested in looking at our stipend levels vs. cost of living. Per CP, GSS has discussed stipend levels relative to cost of living in Burlington, but has yet to make any headway with the administration. GSS has been looking at this issue for some time. Unfortunately, UVM can do little about high rents. GSS has been pushing the university to increase university-sponsored grad student housing options for years; again, with little success. GSS is still a new organization, and grads make up a small percentage of overall students. BP – Said it was good for GSS and others to bring up these issues to see how students and the university react, either supporting or pushing back on certain issues. It’s good to keep the conversation going.