

Minutes: October NPAC meeting
October 19, 2015, 1-2 pm

In attendance: Becky, Lauren, Lydia, Alejandro, Ryan, Chelsea, Anna, David, Megan (Jack for part via phone)

1. NPAC Constitution and registration as an official student group (David reports):
 - a. A constitution is one of the requirements to be recognized as an official student group by GPSC. This recognition opens up funding sources for events, etc.
 - b. David has drafted a constitution for the group and sent to NPAC reps via email. NPAC reps are asked to provide feedback on this document by Wednesday (10/21) evening. Ryan has written this kind of document before so he understands the requirements and will help to make sure we're meeting them.

[A note on email listservs - as a list admin you are NOT automatically signed up to receive emails from the list. NPAC chairs, have you been receiving nic-phds emails? Ryan will cross check to make sure everyone is signed up for the nic-phds listserv.]

2. PhD voice on the Strategic Planning Committee (Anna reports):
 - a. So far, 47 responses to the survey! Awesome!
 - b. Some of the comments have been about shorter-term stuff that may be relevant for us to think about now.
 - c. One thing that seems to be jumping out is that MSC students at the Marine Lab feel a lack of integration with the Nic School and hope that their program can be integrated as part of the strategic plan
 - d. More career planning for PhDs has also come up in the surveys so far
 - e. The survey will close on Monday, Oct. 26
 - f. A delegation from NPAC will meet with Martin Doyle, chair of the Nic School's strategic planning committee, on Oct. 30 to report on behalf of the Nicholas School PhD students

3. NPAC Townhall meeting (Lauren reported):
 - a. The first NPAC Townhall meeting will be held on Friday, October 23 at 4 pm.
 - b. There will be FREE PIZZA
 - c. NPAC considered inviting DGSA's to these meetings, but decided that we will keep the Townhall meetings for students only, and report back to DGSA's as relevant.
 - d. Lauren will draft an invitation email to Nic PhD students, which will be sent by each program chair to their respective programs this week.
 - e. At the meeting, we'll spend a short period of time to report to constituents on what NPAC has done so far and what we're currently working on, with significant time for students to ask questions and share their concerns and complaints about what's going on.

- f. We will also try to teleconference in the Marine Lab folks for this.
4. Career center information (Jack reported by phone):
- a. Jack tried to make an appointment with the Big Duke career center (which they boast has 4 dedicated staff for grad students including some for phds specifically) and was told he's not covered because he's in the Nicholas school.
 - b. Making an appointment with the Nicholas career center was not intuitive given that while all MEMs are automatically enrolled in their system, phds have to be added manually in a case-by-case basis. this was explained as an attempt to shield phds from retribution by PIs, which would probably work better the other way around if everyone was automatically enrolled as a smokescreen.
 - c. Jack eventually met with Rhonda, who was very helpful and they talked about some phd-specific issues. Her boss has a phd and is supposed to be the phd point person, this doesn't seem to be well-known.
 - d. Jack also found out that there is supposedly already a Nicholas PhD student who is the career center liaison but Rhonda forgot their name and her boss is out of the country for another few weeks. Also she says the big Duke career center should be allowing us into their programming despite what their guy told me. Basically the system has a lot of negligence and we're falling through all the holes.
 - e. The next steps will be:
 - i. Jack (and someone else TBD) will sit down with Rhonda and her boss (when she's back at Duke in a few weeks) to hash out exactly what's available to Nic PhD students.
 - ii. We will try to get all of the Nic PhD students signed up with the career center.
 - iii. At the meeting, we will find out who the PhD-Career Center student liaison is and try to connect with them.
 - iv. David will send this email

[A note from Ryan regarding health fees from GPSC: 1) The cost of gym membership is NOT going away and will likely get worse in future years. 2) Ryan has brought up the question about not having "automatic" opt in for students in their first 3 year, such that those who use the gym can opt in and those who don't can "free up funds" to pay for the people that do use the gym. He hasn't gotten a satisfying answer as to why this won't help solve the problem. 3) The issue arises because the per-student costs of health insurance, which is paid for by Duke, have increased dramatically, and Duke needed to find a way to pay for it. They determined that this was the way to burden the fewest people.]

5. Reimbursements and taxation (Lauren reported):
- a. The fund code entered into Duke@Work determines whether the reimbursement request is reviewed by the DGSA or not.

- b. Danielle recommends that students DON'T hit "Save and Submit" after entering their reimbursement information, but rather just "Save" and then ask their DGSA to review it. Some general but imperfect indicators:
 - i. if the fund code begins with "451" then it's safe and you SHOULD NOT be taxed if you are reimbursed from it.
 - ii. If the reimbursement comes WITH your monthly pay, you are almost certainly being taxed. If it comes separately, then you are almost certainly NOT being taxed (but it seems there are counterexamples to this...)
- c. Small grants (e.g. internal graduate school grants) are considered "gifts" and are taxed
- d. Larger research grants (e.g. DDIG) are in a gray area and can (and, in practice, are) treated either as gifts (taxed) OR as research funds (untaxed). If you get a DDIG, your PI should INSIST to the accountants that it is treated as research money, similar to any NSF grant, so that you aren't taxed on it.
- e. Reimbursements on stuff that you buy for the department should NEVER be taxed. Morally perhaps, nor should your research expenses, but this is an accounting gray area right now...
- f. ** We will consult with MSC people to see if there are any reimbursement specific issues and whether they have addressed them somehow.