GSA General Assembly Meeting
February 29, 2012

Report from the “Academics and Professional Development Committee”

By Oliver Bunn (item 1) and Ksenia Sidorenko (item 2)

1. Review of the Activities of the Committee in 2011-2012

✓ Reports on Graduate Education at Yale by Dean Pollard
  o Our committee created a summary document of the graduate student responses to the reports, as they have been collected at the GSA-sponsored Departmental Meetings (26 total meetings in 2011-2012).
  o The summary file has been approved by the General Assembly and is now available online on the GSA webpage together with the reports.
  o Dean’s office was very appreciative of the summary document and of the GSA’s efforts in general to gather responses from the graduate students (Brown Bag lunches).

✓ Common Grounds
  o Our committee has created a coffee voucher program as another element to foster the mentoring of graduate students.
  o It enables students to invite a faculty member to four different Café locations on campus (KBT Café, Bass Library Café, Blue Dog Café, Marigold’s).
  o Each voucher is worth $6.
  o The program went into effect in April 2012.

✓ Dissertation Progress Report (DPR)
  o We played in integral role in the revision of the Dissertation Progress Report in collaboration with Dean Harper-Mangels.
  o Many of our suggestions have been incorporated in the revision.
  o The new DPR was officially launched in April 2012.

✓ Connections to Offices in McDougal Center
  o We have reestablished very good working connections to the various offices in the McDougal Center, in particular the Teaching Center, Graduate Career Services, and the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.
  o We have appointed advocates to liaise with each of the three offices, which has been perceived very positively. Thanks to Jan van Treeck for being the Graduate Teaching Center advocate, to Kevin Fogg for being the Graduate Career Services advocate, and to Ksenia Sidorenko for being the advocate of the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.
  o The Teaching Center and Graduate Career Services have also been invited to General Assembly meetings as guests.
- We have met with the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to think about potential collaborations.

- **Library**
  - Kevin Fogg has been appointed as the GSA’s representative on the university-wide Library Committee, which has been very active this semester.
  - Our committee has been consulted as a focus group for renovation of the nave of Sterling Memorial Library.

- **Graduate Mentoring Award**
  - We have created a webpage for the Graduate Mentoring Award, containing the winners for the previous ten years and the winners’ praise for the past few years.
  - We have also helped advertising the award, which led to double the amount of nominations compared to the year before.

- **Teaching Fellow Program**
  - Our committee has met with Judith Hackman and Howard El-Yasin from the Teaching Fellow Program to discuss teaching assignment and responsibilities.
  - In response to the meeting, we have created a summary document about the situation of teaching graduate students and about the problems and concerns that they face.
  - Some issues, like the assignment of teaching positions in other departments or electronic feedback for teaching graduate courses have already been resolved. Other issues are currently addressed by the Teaching Fellow Program in collaboration with the Dean’s Office.
  - Problems related to teaching languages still persist and our committee is in the process of collecting information from the GSA representatives of departments that teach languages. This particular topic has also been addressed in our conversation with the Center for Language Studies.
  - We have helped the Teaching Fellow Program to advertise the Teaching Verification Survey as an opportunity for graduate students to raise concerns about their teaching assignment. Our advertising has dramatically increased the number of responses to this survey.
  - The Teaching Fellow Program has been very appreciative of the close collaboration with the GSA, and especially our committee, this year.

- **Center for Language Studies**
  - Related to our discussions with the Teaching Fellow Program, we have also met with the Center for Language Studies.
  - The report from this particular meeting can be found below.
Compass

- We have rewritten the sections of the Compass pertaining to Academics and Professional Development.
- We have tried to establish a more informative structure and more neutral tone. Moreover, we needed to update some of the information and we added new information not present in the previous version.

2. Meeting with the Center for Language Study (CLS)

On Wednesday, April 11, 2012, members of our committee met with Nelleke van Deusen-Scholl, Suzanne Young and Angie Gleason from the Center for Language Study. Below is a summary of our discussion from this meeting.

I. Introduction to the GSA

- Oliver Bunn talked about who we are and what we do.

II. Introduction to the CLS

- Nelleke van Deusen-Scholl introduced the CLS and its specialized language programs, which supplement courses offered through individual language departments.
- Directed Independent Language Study (DILS) gives students the opportunity to study and do research in languages that are not offered as courses at Yale.
- Fields gives students the option to pursue advanced language study for academic field work.
- The CLS is looking for better advertising connections to make graduate students aware of the resources, and promote their events. The GSA could prove useful in this capacity – we can relay information to fellow students.

III. Language Teaching and Language Training

- The CLS is in the process of creating language teaching certificates in consultation with Bill Rando from the Graduate Teaching Center. See the following link: [http://cls.yale.edu/certificate-second-language-acquisition](http://cls.yale.edu/certificate-second-language-acquisition)
- The CLS organizes mandatory introductory pedagogy workshops for graduate students at the beginning of their language teaching; these instruct graduate students on how to design in-class activities, what to accomplish in the first week of teaching, and how to maintain an engaged classroom. They also cover the use of multimedia materials in the classroom, and integration of language and literary texts.
IV. Additional CLS Resources for Graduate Students

- In addition, the CLS runs series of courses in the fundamentals of language teaching, to improve graduate students' language teaching skills.
- Language teaching is very demanding, and can be burdensome during crucial stages of the PhD program. It also varies among the departments; hence the involvement of the CLS varies from department to department, although the general aim is to collaborate with the language coordinators (and, occasionally, department chairs). The CLS staff are aware of the tension between teachers-in-training and the language coordinators, and try to confront this issue in workshops; however, the CLS cannot legislate methodological choices in individual departments.
- The CLS is responsible for letting candidates going on the job market know that grammar-intensive syllabi are no longer optimal, and tries to make syllabi more in line with current pedagogical principles and classroom practices, which sometimes puts the center at odds with individual departments.
- Graduate students language teachers have too much on their plates; many aspects of the workshops do not feel applicable, there is not enough room for negotiation – students are still tied to the syllabi. A structural reduction of the workload would be needed for students to be able to make room for the CLS' ideas.
- A conversation is in process with Dean Hackman to rethink the philosophy of language teaching. We need to address the issue of working hours potentially exceeding visa allowances for international students.
- The CLS' role in departmental hiring: if invited by departments, CLS staff take part in hiring committees. Could the CLS act as a database of potential hires?

IV. Additional CLS Resources for Graduate Students

- English as a Foreign Language: the CLS provides a number of resources to help improve TOEFL scores, including English Language Program (ELP) courses, SPEAK assessment, Oral Performance Assessment, audio and video materials, individualized instruction, and professional development workshops based upon specific language skills.
- The CLS is currently working with the Law School and the School of Management to develop an English language program for professional communication purposes.
- Would the CLS consider developing a foreign language proficiency test for graduate student language teachers? The CLS cannot impose this, but it would make sense. At present, the hope is that all future language teachers will be brought to the CLS for training.