As faithful readers of the Grad News know, the contract to provide next year’s student health insurance has been sent out for bids. The results of this bid process will significantly change coverage for those who use the university policy. The committee has awarded the contract to a new claims administration/underwriting team. The Chickering Group (Cambridge, Mass.) provides claims administration to over 100 universities, including Cornell, Chicago, Columbia, and now Johns Hopkins. The Chickering policies are underwritten by Aetna Insurance.

The change in provider will affect our benefits beginning August 15, 2001. The premium will be $865, which is a $26 dollar decrease over last year’s premium. Some of you are hoping for a significant price cut. The new rate, however, is much better than last year’s three percent increase, and the sacrifices we would make in benefits do not justify an extravagant cut. Next year’s policy will include the reinstatement of a prescription card (abandoning the unpopular reimbursement system.) It also includes a number of new options and benefits. The policy includes (1) a vision discount plan (providing discounts of 50 percent or more on the cost of frames and a 15 percent discount on Lasik surgery), (2) an alternative therapy discount program ($30 co-pays for acupuncture and chiropractic manipulation, $20 co-pays for each half hour of massage therapy), and (3) a fitness discount program that pays a percentage of the cost of gym fees. The policy will now cover testing and treatment of allergies (up to a $1000 annual maximum) and will no longer exclude allergy prescriptions. Finally, there is an optional dental discount plan in which policy holders can enroll at their discretion.

Some benefits were changed. The coinsurance rate for visits outside of the PPO network will now cover only 65 percent of reasonable and customary charges. This decision was made to encourage use of the network, containing costs and premiums over the long term. The $3 co-pay for students at the Student Health and Wellness Center will now increase to $5 for generic drugs and $10 for brand name drugs. This co-pay remains significantly cheaper (50 percent) than co-pays at pharmacies, which are still $10/$20. Students on the plan at other campuses (Peabody, SAIS, etc.) are not able to take advantage of the $3 benefit, and the change in the co-pay will help contain costs in the long run. Premiums are based on expenses over the previous several years. If we contain expenses, the savings will be reflected in our future premiums, especially when competitive bidding forces providers to quote reasonable prices. Finally, our preferred provider network will now be Aetna/US Health Care’s. The Alli-

(Continued on page 3)

A Roast of a Free Lunch
Mike Krebs, Mathematics

On Wednesday, April 4, approximately 150 graduate students gathered in the Great Hall of Levering to meet with several of Johns Hopkins’ top level administrators, ask them questions, and raise concerns. Stephanie Reel (Chief Information Officer and Vice Provost for Information Technology), Gary Ostrander (Chair of the Graduate Board and Associate Dean for Research at the School of Arts & Sciences), Susan Boswell (Dean of Students), Richard McCarty (Dean of the School of Arts & Sciences), Ilene Busch-Vishniac (Dean of the School of Engineering), and Mary Ellen Porter (Special Assistant to the Dean of Homewood Student Affairs) comprised the panel.

Health Insurance
More than half of the questions raised at the event concerned student health insurance. Several of the administrators on the panel expressed their strong commitment to reducing the burden of health insurance costs shouldered by graduate students.

Gary Ostrander talked about some of the legal roadblocks the university has encountered in attempting to change how graduate students pay for health insurance. Right now, we pay the insurance company directly for health coverage. If,
Restaurant Review

Chung King
Lance Allred, Near Eastern Studies

It’s clear when one enters the Chung King restaurant that it’s of the carry-out/process delivery rather than dine-in variety Chinese restaurant. The floor is missing some tiles, and the place generally appears to be rather untidy. Posted on the walls are a number of hand-written menu specials, some of which agree with the printed menu, others of which do not. A TV showing the latest quality programming (e.g. ‘Judge Judy’ and ‘Springer’) is there for the viewing pleasure of the patrons, as well as the cashier.

Besides the french fries, the menu fare is rather standard as far as take-out Chinese goes. There is pork, beef, chicken, and shrimp offered with broccoli, snow peas, ‘mixed Chinese vegetables’, and other items. Spicy ‘Hunan style’ and ‘kung pow’ meat dishes are available, as well as vegetarian offerings. All come with steamed rice. Various noodles (lo mein, chow mein, and yat gat), as well as egg foo young and friend rice are also offered. The standard selection of soups (e.g. egg drop, wonton, hot and sour) and appetizers (e.g. egg roll and fried wonton) also appear.

The wait for our order was longer than expected; what was estimated at thirty minutes turned out to be closer to forty-five. Additionally, the cashier was over-heard telling delivery customers to expect a wait of over an hour. For those waiting for their pick-up order, however, not all is lost. The extra time can always be spent browsing various antique shops and the like that line 36th street, taking in Hampden’s almost festive and inviting atmosphere.

Chung King’s food is entirely unspectacular. The roast pork wonton soup was the same as one could find at a dozen other Chinese restaurants, and the same could be said for a number of their other selections. Their chicken dishes, while providing rather generous portions of chicken, were of inferior quality. On a more positive note, the fried meat dumplings, one of Chung King’s specialties, were tasty not too greasy.

This isn’t to say that Chung King is bad, because it isn’t. It’s just not remarkable. The trade-off comes in the price. To put it simply, Chung King is cheap. Their standard entrees range from $6.00 to $7.00 for large portions, and just under $4.00 for half orders. The house specials typically run about one dollar more for large orders. What makes Chung King such a deal is the size of their portions; the smaller partial order is enough for a single meal in most cases, while the large orders make for a dinner plus breakfast in the morning. Chung King conveniently offers ‘combination platters’ where one gets a standard (half-size) entrée, plus fried rice and an egg roll, for less than $6.00. Lunch specials, similar to the ‘combination platters’ but without the egg roll, go for less than $5.00, and are available until 3 p.m.

If you’d like to have someone special over to your place for a quiet meal of sumptuous and authentic oriental cuisine, take-out from Chung King is probably not your best bet. However, if you’re looking to entertain a half dozen or so friends for a night of Survivor or some charades, you might want to consider it. The money you save is good for at least one more six pack. But be sure to call ahead early!

Chung King is located at 1103 West 36th Street in Hampden, and is open from 11:00 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and until 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Orders can be placed at 410-366-6627. Delivery is free with a $10.00 minimum.

Grad Student Listserv
The graduate student listserv provides information about events, issues, and concerns of importance to grad students. If you are not already on the graduate student listserv, email gro@jhu.edu to subscribe.
Health plan

(Continued from page 1)

ance network, (the network provided by MEGA Life), is very extensive in the local area. The Aetna network seems comparable in the local area and much better nationally. In addition, if there are problems with access to providers (i.e., providers to whom the SH&W and Counseling Center commonly refers students), Chickering has indicated that it will work to get these providers into the network, even contracting with them individually if they are unwilling to join the Aetna network.

Some people will be disappointed that the insurance premium did not drop. One of the most significant costs in our premium is maintaining a lifetime maximum coverage of $1 million for every illness/injury. Many other groups (e.g., NAGPS and various international student organizations) offer significantly cheaper premiums. These premiums carry lifetime maximums of approximately $100,000. If you, God forbid, had to be med-evaced to a hospital and spend some time in intensive care, you would owe a significant amount of money, in fact, you would pay any costs over $100,000. Similarly, recovery from an early-onset cancer would not only exhaust you physically, it would also exhaust you financially. These “cheaper” premiums carry no coverage for pregnancies, a seemingly foolish exclusion when one considers our life stage and the laws of probability. When you buy these cheaper plans, you are sacrificing coverage to raise funds for these organizations. Our insurance, considering the benefit levels, is cheaper and a better value than it seems.

We did try to work out a plan allowing multiple deductible levels, but the average savings (approximately ten percent) did not justify the required deductible increases to $500-$1000. We also investigated the possibilities of paying premiums via monthly installments. Insurers generally would not consider this without a significant premium increase and a commitment from the university to collect these premiums. The university is not ready at this time to make this commitment, and this commitment is outside scope of this committee. Consequently, no progress was made here.

One of the most important results of the bid process was the discovery of the origin of customer service problems: not all problems were MEGA Life’s fault. Some are attributable to the university. For example, last fall many students complained about not receiving insurance brochures on time or at all. This was used by the GRO to demonstrate the student’s incredulosity about the MEGA Life customer service promises. As it turns out, the Registrar’s office provides the insurance company with the list of addresses for mailing enrollment materials. Last year, many people were inadvertently dropped from the list (e.g., if you earned a masters degree in 2000 en route to a doctoral degree, you appeared in the system as having "graduated", and likely did not receive enrollment materials). Despite repeated complaints, this problem was not alleviated last fall. Further, the registrar claimed in one of the bid committee meetings that the brochure mailing had gone “flawlessly” this year. Another example involves the Student Accounts Office. When a student charges his or her insurance costs to a student account, the office cuts a check to MEGA Life for all students who pay their premiums this way. This year, that check did not reach the insurance company until January. As a result, some students experienced problems with their coverage and reimbursements. The university needs to uphold the business end of this contract. The GRO will continue to pursue this issue, working closely with the university to iron out problems on the Hopkins end.

In all, the process has been a positive one, though there remains a good deal of work. The premium costs have remained relatively even and our benefits have improved. With continued vigilance and university support, our customer service should also improve. Thanks to all members of the committee for their time and dedication. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at dbain@jhu.edu.
Grads Have Deans for Lunch

(Continued from page 1)

however, JHU were able to charge us for health insurance, we would be able to make monthly payments rather than pay the entire premium in one lump sum. Legally, however, this payment would be treated as taxable income (along the lines of a university-paid benefit), and implementing this system would cause the university to shoulder a great deal of new responsibility. Another possibility he mentioned is to have JHU cover the cost of graduate student health insurance. The university, he said, would have to raise about one million dollars annually to do so. If the university were able to use research grant (RO1) money (i.e., the type of funding a majority of researches at Hopkins receive) to pay for some of this insurance, then the figure would drop from one million to about six hundred thousand dollars annually. Current regulations prohibit the use of National Institutes of Health (NIH) research money to pay insurance costs, but Ostrander said that the university is working with the NIH to alter the agreement so as to make insurance an allowable charge. The panel emphasized that any financial help from the university would be equal across all Homewood schools, so as not to create “second-class citizens.”

Ilene Busch-Vishniac contested the claims of several students who voiced their opinion that a school of Johns Hopkins’ stature ought to be able to raise this amount fairly easily through alumni and corporate donations. Her view was that JHU is currently doing about as much as it can in the area of fundraising. She said that spending one million dollars on graduate health insurance would mean cutting costs in another area. However, she said, “that doesn’t mean we won’t do it.” Ostrander promised that he will have answers about the feasibility of subsidizing student insurance by early summer.

Several students wondered why student health care is not provided at facilities on the medical campus (for example, Harvard uses their medical school as the primary care facility in their insurance plan. Students do pay significant fees for this arrangement and do find it cumbersome when they need a specialist or emergency facilities off campus). Mary Ellen Porter observed that many Hopkins doctors are on the Aetna plan (the university’s new choice of health insurance provider, beginning September 2001). She and Ilene Busch-Vishniac pointed out that for many medical concerns, such as sports medicine and orthopedics, other hospitals (e.g., Union Memorial) are in fact better than Hopkins. Furthermore, health coverage for students at the Johns Hopkins Medical School is currently provided, for the most part, through Hopkins Hospital. Many doctoral students at the medical campus do not pay for it, and are nonetheless unhappy with their plan for a variety of reasons. This suggests that Homewood students would not be happy with a Hopkins Hospital plan, either.

One student at the luncheon noted, that unlike Johns Hopkins, many universities with associated medical institutions allow their students to use the medical facilities at a discounted cost, and she urged the panel to consider having this university do the same. (In fact, the insurance bid committee did ask the hospital/medical school for this type of arrangement, but the hospital neglected to bid during the recent bid process.)

Responding to a student’s question about dental coverage, Mary Ellen Porter mentioned that next year’s plan will include an optional dental plan, but that it would provide discounts rather than insurance (as is typical of optional dental plans).

Classroom Technology

Responding to a question about the need for more technology in classrooms, Stephanie Reel agreed that Johns Hopkins is currently under invested in information technology (IT) but plans to invest more in next few years. She stated that it was first necessary to get some infrastructure (e.g., internet access) in place. She also mentioned that the school is working to develop wireless networking capabilities.

Nonresident Student Fee

One student commented that the fee for nonresident students—ten percent of tuition—is unnecessarily onerous. Gary Ostrander pointed out that the ten percent figure may be an artifact of an era of lower tuition, and he assured the student that the Graduate Board would look into it this spring. On the other hand, he said, having the fee in place provides an incentive for students to complete their degree programs in a timely fashion. Some students responded that the fee forces many graduate students to seek additional employment, thereby increasing rather than decreasing the time to degree. Ilene Busch-Vishniac noted that nonresident students do enjoy many of Hopkins’ amenities, such as library and e-mail services, and GRO Chair Tony Stapon took the opportunity to remind nonresident students that they are now able to use the Student Health and Wellness Center without paying a fee. (Any nonresident student who experiences difficulties with the Health and Wellness Center should contact the GRO at gro@jhu.edu.)

Sexual Harassment Office

Another student asked about the Office of Sexual Harassment Prevention and Resolution, which is currently defunct. Susan Boswell announced that a new Vice Provost had recently been hired. This new administrator, Ray Gillian, will oversee the area of sexual harassment issues. He can be reached at extension 6-0296.

Social Life

Susan Boswell and Tony Stapon announced that momentum is building towards the opening of a “Grad Club” in the Hopkins Club to fill the role once played by E-Level. E-Level was the JHU campus pub, but was disbanded last year due to illegal underage patronage. Ilene Busch-Vishniac responded to a student’s concern about lack of social life by referring to the newly open Student Arts Center (open to graduate as well as undergraduate students), the hopefully-soon-to-be-open Grad Club, the Rec Center, and the Interfaith Center.

WGS Program

Replying to a prepared question, Richard McCarty stated that he absolutely supports a Women, Gender, and Sexuality (WGS) program. Another student wanted to know what efforts were being made to recruit female and feminist scholars, and what progress was being made in the
A More Civil War: Black and White in Baltimore

Keith Barbera, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology

Most of us think of chess as something that’s played by slow-moving old men smoking pipes. But Baltimore’s chess scene puts that staid image to rest. From outdoor blitz games in the park to hypermodern chess openings in cyberspace, chess is an action-packed game. Even in Baltimore market places (e.g., Cutz International (barbershop), Lafayette Market), chess has a noticeable and exciting presence. Nor are public libraries immune to its charm. Robert Erkes, a master, is a longtime chess organizer and promoter. For the past several weeks, I’ve seen him playing chess and offering free instruction at the Randallstown Library. In what follows, I’ll give a brief account of Baltimore chess. Chess has come a long way in Baltimore since 1827, when Charles Carroll, the last living signer of the Declaration of Independence, defeated the Turk, a chess automaton. (An “adjustment” to the machine—and to the position of the Turk’s queen, which otherwise could have checkmated next move—helped secure Carroll’s victory.) The human master lurking within the apparatus saved the day, and is just one instance of Bobby Fischer’s insight that “chess is life.”

One popular chess haunt is the Black & White in Fells Point. Open every day at noon (except Monday), B&W sells chess books and equipment. It also offers a place to play causal or rated games. Action quads—three games, thirty minutes each game—are held weeknights at 8 p.m. For a more leisurely pace (60 minutes per game) try the tournament at 1 p.m. on Saturdays. Owner Damon Norko has run chess shops at various Baltimore locations for about ten years. Things got a little rowdy at a Mulberry Street location a few years back, and he charged a “spectator fee” to restore order. Fortunately, the new shop at 1717 Aliceanna Street blends well into the community. You’re welcome to stop by and watch or play a few games. One B&W fixture, expert Wilbert Brown, is a good blitz (speed chess) player and is happy to talk and play chess with passersby.

Chess has also taken to the streets in Baltimore. Chess tables at the War Memorial Park are the scene of frantic blitz games. Practiced speed demons and masters of disaster hold court. I use “court” in the sense of basketball, since outdoor blitz reminds me of the rough and tumble of street basketball. The park is full of colorful personalities with such monikers as “Knight-Shift,” “Pawn Master,” and “‘Nator” (short for William “the Exterminator” Morrison, a strong senior master adept at pest control). ‘Nator even had Kasparov on the run during the champions’ University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) simultaneous exhibition in 1996.) These players don’t just walk the talk—they talk the talk. One player, as his hand escorted a pawn up the board to become a queen, enthused “I’m walking the dog!” Next game, he likened swindling his opponent out of a queen to “spanking the bitch!” He also observed as I was beating his fellow African-American (who had the white pieces), “you’re white—and you’re blowing it!” Partly for fun and partly to distract opponents, a wide range of color commentary is provided by players during the heat of battle. The park is lively and fun, but beware of hustlers who will try to entice you into a money game. (Some of these embrace the line cited in one chess book: “if you ain’t cheatin’ you ain’t tryin’.”) Unless you’re a strong player, draw—or you’ll be quartered!

One local chess powerhouse is UMBC. Their chess team, which includes one IM (international master) and four national masters, is now intercollegiate co-champion with the University of Texas, Dallas. Surprisingly, this may be a slight disappointment. UMBC has recently won this title outright four times, and has defeated MIT, Harvard, Yale, and Stanford in matches. In addition to offering generous chess scholarships, UMBC has promoted chess in numerous other ways. The school has tournaments, summer chess camps, and chess coaching seminars. Between 1995 and 2000 it offered Master Preparation courses through continuing education. (One byproduct of this is 88 class videos.) I enjoyed attending one of these in 1995, taught by UMBC student GM (grandmaster) Ilya Smirin, currently ranked fifteenth in the world. A chess club meets at UMBC on Fridays at 4 p.m. and the team trains with chess coach Igor Epshteyn on Saturday morning. Outsiders are welcome to attend both of these.

I recently spoke with Epshteyn about UMBC chess. I knew from his Master Prep lectures that he is passionate about chess and an excellent teacher. He pointed out that chess really benefits students academically. The game develops planning strategies, analytic thinking, creativity, and discipline. Not surprisingly, UMBC members are excellent students. And as Epshteyn notes, even principles of chess strategy (e.g., “the principle of two weaknesses” in the endgame) has wider resonance. In a debate, for example, it is advantageous to challenge your opponent on more than one point. Not only was it a pleasure to talk with Epshteyn about the beauty and value of the royal game, but I also found it refreshing that he sees an affinity between chess and education.

I can’t resist noting that the MSEL and chess are “bishops of opposite color.” (Boris Spassky once used this phrase to describe his and his first wife’s incompatibility. A player’s two bishops control different colored squares.) The library recently categorically refused to purchase any chess videos. According to one administrator, spending $30 each for these would open the floodgate to every crank on campus who also wants to make non-academic requests. I maintained in my response to a library letter that while MSEL can’t emulate Borges’ infinite “Library of Babel,” it shouldn’t be a “bastion of bureaucratic babble.” Despite receiving a more polished response from the highest echelon, I still have to conclude that there are better examples than chess of “a sad waste of brains.” To avoid library bashing, it bears mentioning that UMBC’s library has over 400 chess videos and a modest $15 fee to purchase a card.

Emmanuel Lasker (1868-1941), a world champion and one of the greatest chess fighters, can shed some light here. Denied a professorship in mathematics because he was Jewish, Lasker was acutely aware of the injustices of life, the realm where “we are all duffers.” He did, however, take solace in chess: “On the chessboard lies and hypocrisies do not survive long. The creative combination lays bare the presumption of a lie; the merciless fact, culminating in a checkmate, contradicts the

(Continued on page 6)
Booze, Freebies, and Grad Student Recognition: GPSA Week a Success

Allison Surtees, Classics

During the week of April 2-6, the GRO participated for the first time in National Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week, and it was an undeniable success. The week opened with the usual Monday Coffee Hour (3-4 p.m. at the Buzz). Grad students flocked to Gilman for the free coffee and were surprised with complementary mugs, coffee coupons and prepaid copy cards. Just the thing to help us stay awake as we photocopy yet another journal article in the library.

Tuesday’s happy hour at PJ’s was packed. Students who (I am sure) haven’t seen the light of day in three years came out for free food, cheap beer, and of course, green Mardi Gras-inspired beads with a Coors Light pendant. Tony kept us entertained with the periodic raffling of various prizes, which you had to be there to win. Three people at my table won about a half hour after each had gone back to their respective labs. Clearly, there’s a lesson here, and it says that we should all spend more time at the bar.

At noon on Wednesday, a record number of graduate students attended the Dean’s Luncheon. So many people showed up that we actually ran out of seats. Someone must have let it out that there would be more free copy cards and coffee coupons. The various Deans responded to questions from the students, whose biggest concern was health insurance. Certainly the large turnout sent an important message to the Deans that graduate students do have important concerns and we are willing to take the time to address them.

With the approach of the weekend, two final events remained: the Open Mic and the Booze Cruise. Thursday night the One World Café was full of graduate students having a few (or more) drinks and enjoying performances by their colleagues. The acts were varied, from classical guitar to some a cappella Sarah McLachlan tunes, and of course just some singing along with a guitar. By the end of the night it was just like hanging around in a friend’s living room, lounging on the couches and having a mildly drunken sing-along. Another thank you to everyone who performed and to the One World for letting us invade their café.

And now the grand finale. Friday night’s Booze Cruise was a sell-out. Two busloads full of eager students met behind Shriver Hall to be escorted to the boat. The tables in the dining room were a little crowded, but there was plenty of other space on the boat. Dinner included various hors d’oeuvres, roast turkey, beef and a pasta bar. It was delicious, and the serving staff very friendly. After eating (and a few glasses of wine) we toured the boat. DJ upstairs had the crowds dancing away and when that got too hot, there was space on the deck. It was a beautiful evening. Clear sky, warm air, nice breeze. And you could look out to all the lights of the city. From the deck of the boat, the city looked so pretty. Who knew?

There were some great people putting a lot of time into planning this week and they deserve our gratitude. But the week couldn’t have been such a success without the participation of all the students. It was great to see so many grad students come out and enjoy themselves. So now it’s back to the lab, or D-level, or wherever else you plan to bury your head until we all come out again next year.

Baltimore Chess

(Continued from page 5)

hypocrite. Our little chess is one of the sanctuaries where the principle of justice has occasionally had to hide gain sustenance and respite, after the army of mediocrity has driven it from the market place.”

Thanks to the explosion of internet chess, you can begin a game with just a few mouse clicks. The best site is the Internet Chess Club (www.chessclub.com), which offers a free trial week and only costs students $24.50 per year. You can watch others players there (including grandmasters) or join in the action yourself. I wouldn’t recommend playing it in MSEL, though. Not only does it violate library rules, the incredibly slow library internet connection dooms you in speed chess. For all the convenience of virtual chess, there’s still nothing like a real life game. The internet, however, can point you in the right direction for this. By logging on to the Maryland Chess Association (www.serve.com/mdchess), you’ll find helpful information on nearby clubs, tournaments, and chess teachers. And you can always contact Robert Erkes, mentioned at the outset of this article, at roberterkes@excite.com.

Like the quirky genius Salvador Dali, quite a few Baltimore locals can say “chess is me.” It’s well worth going out to see them and the fascinating game they play.

Online Chess Resources

Internet Chess Club
www.chessclub.com

Maryland Chess Association
www.serve.com/mdchess
Announcements

Be happy all summer long
GRO Happy Hours continue all summer at PJ’s Pub. Join us every Tuesday from 6 to 9 for discounted Bass and Guinness pints and free food.

Farewells
Two GRO officers, Tony Stapon and Erin Ackerman will be stepping down from their positions at the end of this school year. Tony has been our dynamic Chair for two years, and Erin has served as our Office Manager for the past semester. We’ll miss you, Tony and Erin.

Final Coffee Hour
The final GRO Coffee Hour of the spring semester will be held on May 7, 2001. Come out and join us for your last free gulp of liquid energy. We’ll be back in the fall!

GRO Volleyball
The GRO is organizing informal volleyball matches. If you are interested in playing, contact the GRO sports coordinator, Eugenio Culurciello (euge@jhu.edu), to be added to the volleyball mailing list.

Orioles College Night
Baltimore Orioles vs. Tampa Bay Devil Rays on Monday, April 30 on the Oriole Park Upper Deck Building Room. You can call their Box Office at (410) 685-9800 to purchase tickets for $5.

GRO Elections
GRO elections will be held on May 2 in the Clipper Room of Shriver Hall. Nominations, speeches, and discussions begin promptly at 6 p.m. Positions available are Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.
In order for a department to vote, a representative must have been present at two or more meetings during the 2000-01 school year. (To find out how to get a departmental representative, contact gro@jhu.edu.) Spectators welcome.

Dean’s Lunch
(Continued from page 4)
search for a WGS director. Dean McCarty pointed out that he can “add value” to departments in certain areas, such as Women’s Studies. He also mentioned that the Das committee (a committee, headed by Anthropology Professor Veena Das, that is looking into ways to revitalize the WGS program) report is on track to be completed by the end of April, and that he would look more closely at these issues at that time. Dean Busch-Vishniac noted that there is a standing committee looking at this subject. She also indicated that the School of Engineering may change its faculty search process to make sure that underrepresented groups are considered.

Grad Programs Online
One student wanted to know if the university had any plans to make graduate programs available online. Both Deans Busch-Vishniac and McCarty said that while they have no problem with having some resources available over the internet, they had no intention of putting entire degree programs online.

Tenure Process
Too many good faculty members are leaving Hopkins for other institutions where tenure is more readily granted, according to a student who asked the panelists if they felt that the tenure process here is too arduous. Ilene Busch-Vishniac concurred that this issue—what Richard McCarty referred to as the “Long Tenure Clock”—is indeed a valid concern. She pointed out that, in particular, the process makes it difficult for Hopkins to attract women who may be torn between starting an academic career and starting a family, and she said that the current procedure “can’t continue.” McCarty noted that on the other hand, because of JHU’s long tenure clock, there is little “dead wood” amongst the faculty. He also mentioned that both schools (Engineering and A&S) are undergoing strategic planning.

Dean’s Teaching Fellowship
One student praised the panel for implementing the Dean’s Teaching Fellowship program. The sentiment appeared to be widely held.

Dean’s Luncheons
Dean’s luncheons occur once every year. The next one will be scheduled during GPSA (Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation) Week of 2002.

A Special Thanks
The GRO would like to thank the many Homewood departments whose financial support of Graduate-Professional Student Appreciation Week helped to make it a success.

Biophysics
Chemistry
Classics
Electrical & Computer Engineering
English
German
History of Art
Humanities Center
Mathematical Sciences
Near Eastern Studies
Philosophy
Psychology
Writing Seminars

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One student wanted to know if the university had any plans to make graduate programs available online. Both Deans Busch-Vishniac and McCarty said that while they have no problem with having some resources available over the internet, they had no intention of putting entire degree programs online.

Tenure Process
Too many good faculty members are leaving Hopkins for other institutions where tenure is more readily granted, according to a student who asked the panelists if they felt that the tenure process here is too arduous. Ilene Busch-Vishniac concurred that this issue—what Richard McCarty referred to as the “Long Tenure Clock”—is indeed a valid concern. She pointed out that, in particular, the process makes it difficult for Hopkins to attract women who may be torn between starting an academic career and starting a family, and she said that the current procedure “can’t continue.” McCarty noted that on the other hand, because of JHU’s long tenure clock, there is little “dead wood” amongst the faculty. He also mentioned that both schools (Engineering and A&S) are undergoing strategic planning.

Dean’s Teaching Fellowship
One student praised the panel for implementing the Dean’s Teaching Fellowship program. The sentiment appeared to be widely held.

Dean’s Luncheons
Dean’s luncheons occur once every year. The next one will be scheduled during GPSA (Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation) Week of 2002.

A Special Thanks
The GRO would like to thank the many Homewood departments whose financial support of Graduate-Professional Student Appreciation Week helped to make it a success.

Biophysics
Chemistry
Classics
Electrical & Computer Engineering
English
German
History of Art
Humanities Center
Mathematical Sciences
Near Eastern Studies
Philosophy
Psychology
Writing Seminars
WGS Call to Action

Erin Ackerman, Political Science
Manon Parry, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology

The student led Friends of WGS issued a “Call to Action” on April 3rd, in support of the revitalization of the Program for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality (WGS). The event, held outside MSE Library, focused campus-wide attention on the program’s current status by featuring speeches by concerned graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and alumni, as well as statements from the Dean’s Office and a new committee charged with recommending steps for revitalizing the program. Chaired by Veena Das, the new committee comprises faculty from the humanities and social sciences. Professor Frances Ferguson of the English department is the only member of the new committee who also served on the previous WGS board.

As reported in the December issue of the Grad News, Friends of WGS was formed by undergraduate and graduate students following the resignation of the WGS Advisory Board last November. The mass resignation protested the lack of administrative support from the Dean of Arts & Sciences, evidenced by under-recruitment of female and feminist scholars to Hopkins. The structural vulnerability of interdisciplinary programs at Hopkins remains the central issue in the debate over the correct approach to the future management of WGS. The key post of Director is still unsupported, keeping some faculty and students unconvinced of the long-term success and survival of the program. The Call to Action was envisaged as an opportunity for staff and students familiar with running multidepartmental programs like WGS to explain these issues, and for the Das committee to showcase their proposals. Moreover, it provided a forum for students, alumni, and faculty to express their continuing support for such a program as an integral part of the Hopkins curriculum.

During the two-hour event, speakers from committees and numerous student organizations presented statements to an audience of press, faculty, undergraduates and graduate students. Felicity Callard, former Graduate Coordinator for the program, spoke of graduate student support for the new committee while reiterating the need to structure the program around a permanent full-time Director and Associate Director. Without these key coordinators, Callard argued, the program will lack the social and organizational resources to attract and retain scholars.

Speakers emphasized that, regardless of the framework proposed by the Das committee, several key institutional issues need to be addressed. Physical space and administrative support are required for communication with diverse parts of the campus community. One example of how the breakdown of communication has negatively affected graduate students is the incomplete dissemination of the Das committee’s first initiative—summer research grants. Mark Waddell (History of Science, Medicine, and Technology) regretted the inadequate distribution of information regarding this unique funding opportunity. “It seems symptomatic of poor organization, caused by the general confusion in the program’s interim period.”

Elke Hecknor, a graduate of the German department at Johns Hopkins and faculty member at the University of Oregon, was among the speakers at the Call to Action. She felt compelled to speak after receiving fundraising solicitation literature valorizing the WGS program which she knew to be in crisis. As reported in the previous article, many alumni have expressed concern about the current situation and are communicating their support for the program to the university administration. Friends of WGS Alumni Liaison Robert Palumbos is leading this campaign. As he states in his letter to the President, Provost, and Dean of Arts & Sciences, “my research in social history, for which I have since been widely recognized, was informed by discussions with WG&S professors... what Johns Hopkins students need is not less education like the kind offered by the program, but more.”

Alumni, undergraduates and graduate students alike have been anxiously awaiting the report of the Das committee, released April 18, which outlines further initiatives to revitalize the program. For your copy, and to register your reactions to it, contact the Friends of WGS mailing list via Emily Wentzell at eventzell@hotmail.com.