

# GSG 2008 ELECTION COMMITTEE

## MARCH REPORT

### MARCH 12, 2008

#### ABSTRACT

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This report details the election results for the GSG officers for 2008 - 2009. A number of concerns with the elections and suggestions for future elections are also presented. For more information, please see the minutes of the GSG Assembly from December 2007 through March 2008 and the GSG 2008 election website: <http://www.princeton.edu/~gsgelect/2008>.

The members of the Election Committee are Pablo Mosteiro, Giri Parameswarn, Daniel Raburn (chair), and Grace Wang. Jeff Dwoskin is the technical advisor.

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#### 1. ELECTION RESULTS

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##### 1.1 Summary

The GSG officers for 2008 - 2009 have been elected as follows:

Chair: Christina Hultholm - POL - hultholm@  
Parliamentary Secretary: Ashley Thrall - CEE - athrall@  
Corresponding Secretary: Jenna Losh - GEO - jlosh@  
Press Secretary: Anne Twitty - HIS - atwitty@  
Recording Secretary: Marina Paul - MOL - mnpaul@  
Treasurer: Emmanouil ("Manos") Koukoumidis - ELE - ekoukoum@  
Social Chair: Yi Wang - COS - yiwang@

## 1.2 Withdrawals

One candidate withdrew candidacy:

Ankit Gupta - ELE - ankitg@ withdrew candidacy for Corresponding Secretary on February 27.

## 1.3 Determination of Quorum

Quorum (for each office) is 10% of the number of enrolled graduate students. The total number of enrolled graduate students (as reported by Lisa Schreyer, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School) is 2374. Hence, quorum for each office is 238 votes. Quorum was met for each office.

The enrollment information received from the Graduate School was broken down into the following enrolled categories: [Blank] - normal (2067), ABX (17), DCE (215), GPLC (4), INAB (71).

We were not contacted by any post-enrolled students who wished to pay the GSG fee to be eligible to vote.

## 1.4 Voting Irregularities

There were a few small voting irregularities. The election committees feels that these irregularities do not compromise the integrity of the election.

### A. Quotation Mark Error

There was an error in the balloting websurvey during the first hour of balloting. This caused votes for candidates who had quotation marks in their names to go missing. It did not actually prevent an accurate vote count, as we know that the missing votes must have been for that candidate. The error is explained in the Appendix.

This error affected seven voters. Jeff Dwoskin identified the error during the first hour of voting, corrected the error in the balloting websurvey, enabled those seven voters to re-vote, and informed the Election Committee of the situation. Within an hour of Jeff informing the Election Committee, we informed these seven voters of the situation and asked them to re-vote. Everyone who was affected by this error did re-vote.

Jeff's assistance as technical advisor was essential for setting up the balloting websurvey, and he was the only one who had the capability to correct this error. So, while Jeff corrected this error without prior approval from the Election Committee, we believe his actions were well justified.

Jeff set up the system to allow these seven voters to re-vote any number of times until the closing of the polls despite the fact that other voters could not re-vote. This is not what the Election Committee

would have done, but we decided that it was acceptable. These seven voters were not actually informed that they could re-vote any number of times.

### B. Individual Technical Difficulties

During the voting period, we were contacted by three individuals who said that they were unable to vote using the balloting websurvey. We encouraged them to try using a University cluster computer or a friend's computer.

Two of these voters informed us before the end of balloting that they had voted successfully. The netids of all three voters are recorded as having voted, so we believe that the third voter was also successful.

## 2. Other Concerns

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The following concerns arose during the previous month. These are not included in the Irregularities section because the election committee believes these issues are too minor to be worth bringing up with regards to certifying the election results. The items are loosely listed in order from greatest to least importance.

### **2.1. Meet the Candidates Forum**

While the meet the candidates forum generally went well, it would have benefited from greater structure. See the suggestions section.

### **2.2. "Mistake" and Request to Re-vote**

During the fourth of seven days of balloting, we received an email from a voter saying that they had "made a mistake" in their voting and wanted to re-vote. We discussed the issue and unanimously decided to deny the request.

Re-voting has not been allowed in recent years. We informally discussed re-voting before starting the balloting, and decided to not allow it -- except, of course, in cases where there was a clear technological error with the voting system.

The GSG Assembly or future Election Committees may wish to revisit this matter.

### **2.3. “Disapprove of All Candidates.”**

The GSG By-Laws require that: For each Office with at least one candidate, the ballot will list all candidates as well as the option "None of the above". (See Article III. Officers, 5. Balloting by the Graduate Student Body, k. Ballot )

We strongly wanted to have the order of the candidates' names appear randomly for each voter. Due to technical limitations, this required having the “Abstain” and “None of the Above” options appear in a random order among the candidate names. Using the phrase “None of the Above” would be confusing as this option would frequently be listed before some candidates. The committee decided that it was acceptable to instead use the phrase “Disapprove of All Candidates”. (This vote was not formally held among the committee, but was decided by Daniel Raburn and Giri Parameswarn while they were helping Jeff Dwoskin set up the balloting websurvey.)

This concern could be addressed in a number of ways, but we feel that our actions adhered to the intent and spirit of the By-Laws .

### **2.4. Attempts to Vote Multiple Times**

We were informed that several individuals attempted to vote multiple times. To the best of our knowledge, this is not possible with the websurvey system. The total number of votes (883), is equal to the total number of unique netids who voted (883), so we are confident that no one voted multiple times.

These attempts were probably due to a small problem with the websurvey system. After voting and clicking the survey's submit button, for a period of about one minute, a voter could click the browser's back button and return to the survey form. The user could then re-vote. These votes would replace the original votes. It is easy to see how a user might think that these votes would be in addition to the original votes.

While we are confident that no voter was allowed to vote more than once, we hope that attention will be paid to attempts at voter fraud in the future.

### **2.5. Website Inaccessible for First Few Hours**

During the opening hours of the election (Friday, February 29, 11:59pm), all of the www.princeton.edu websites were buggy and generally wouldn't load. This included the gsselect website and candidate statements. The global announcing the opening of polls was not sent out until we were able to confirm that the gsselect website was working correctly, which was nine hours after the opening of polls. The balloting websurvey itself was unaffected.

Given that the balloting was held for seven days, the nine hour delay in announcing the opening of

the polls was deemed insignificant.

## **2.6. Giri Parameswaran & Facebook Groups**

During the election cycle, Giri Parameswaran joined several of the candidate's Facebook groups. His involvement in the groups was passive, and he joined every group that he was invited to join, including contesting candidates. The nature of his involvement was to encourage everyone to be involved in the election process rather than to advocate specific candidates. As such, the Election Committee found his actions to be acceptable.

The GSG Assembly or future Election Committees may wish to revisit this matter.

## **2.7. Jeff Dwoskin & Campaigning**

Jeff Dwoskin was our technical advisor but was never on the Election Committee. He had access to the gsgelect account for most of the election cycle -- this allowed him to read committee-confidential information and look at the ongoing vote counts. On the second day of balloting, he send out an email to several students encouraging them to vote for specific candidates. His access to the gsgelect account was revoked several hours later.

Once Giri Parameswaran and Daniel Raburn had independently confirmed the election results, Jeff's access to the gsgelect account was restored so that he could validate the integrity of the balloting websurvey system. He found nothing out of the ordinary.

Given Jeff's long commitment to the GSG, we are confident that he would never use his access to compromise the election. Revoking his access was primarily symbolic.

## **3. Suggestions for Future Elections**

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### **3.1. Meet-the-Candidates Forum**

The first part of the event should be a mixer, giving candidates and attendees an opportunity to eat, talk, and socialize. After that, the event should be more structured, focusing on one office at a time.

First, each of the candidates should be given an opportunity to speak; the order should be randomized at the event. Then the audience asks questions: each question should be addressed to a specified candidate, and the candidate to whom the question is being asked should cycle through the list of candidates. (The moderator would ask something like, "Are there now any questions for Daniel?" Cycling through candidates helps vary the questions and gives the candidates an equal opportunity to speak.) The candidates should not ask questions to each other, and the responses should be germane to the question. The candidates may then be given an opportunity to say closing

remarks.

The time limits and structure of the event should be decided by the Election Committee and distributed to the candidates at least three days prior to the event.

### **3.2. Balloting Website**

As in the past few years, balloting was done using the Princeton University Survey Facility at <https://websurvey.princeton.edu/>. This system was originally used because it is the only known free survey which can authenticate students by having them log in to their University account. The system has continued to be used because Jeff Dwoskin knows how to set up the survey and has continued to be involved with the GSG.

In the future, particularly after Jeff leaves the GSG, it may be better to abandon this system and pay the University's Office of Information Technology to handle the balloting website.

### **3.3. Re-voting**

We chose to not allow re-voting. Future elections certainly could allow re-voting up until the closing of polls. However, whether or not this will be done should be decided early in the election cycle.

### **3.4. Campaigning**

Given the rise in number of candidates, and, consequently, the significant distribution of campaign material and use of social networking groups, future Election Committees may wish to adopt policies as to what sort of campaign material is acceptable. We do not suggest requiring candidates to get material authorized by Election Committee. However, consideration should be given to allowing the election committee to be able to rule certain materials as offensive or inappropriate and order their removal (on pain of disqualification of candidacy).

## Appendix

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### **A.1. General Observations**

This year marked a substantial increase in the competition for the GSG officer positions. Two years ago there were two candidates and no contested office. Last year there were seven candidates and one contested office. This year there were seventeen candidates and five contested offices.

This is the first time in recent years that GSG officer candidates have publicly campaigned. Many candidates created groups on the social networking site Facebook and posted flyers around grad-student housing.

There was a very large voter turnout, 883 votes. The number of votes last year was 366. The number of votes two years ago was 1256 -- both the Election Committee and the Executive Committee had sent out a large number of emails encouraging people to vote so that there would be quorum for the referenda. The large voter turnout this year was probably due both directly to the number of contested elections -- which increases student interest -- and campaigning on the part of the candidates. We'd like to think that our masterfully designed globals and flyers also played a part.

### **A.2. Explanation of Quotation Mark Error**

Below is an explanation of the "quotation mark error," which affected seven voters.

Votes for candidates with quotation marks in their names were not recorded. The following hypothetical example illustrates the problem: say there are 5 total votes recorded for the office for Social Chair, with 3 votes for Yi Wang, 0 votes for Konstantinos ("Kostas") Aisopos, 1 vote for Disapprove of All Candidates, and 1 abstention. And, at the same time, there are 7 votes total for the office of Chair. Because the system required every voter to enter an option for every office, we know that there must have actually been 7 votes for the office of Social Chair as well. In this case, we know that there must have been 2 votes for "Kostas".

Since there was at most one candidate with quotation marks per office, it was still possible to infer the number of votes for the candidates with quotation marks.

This error was caused by having a quotation mark in the VALUE stored for the candidate, and was fixed by storing their name without the nickname as the value, while leaving the name displayed with the nickname and quotation marks.

Because the total number of votes is the same for each office in the final vote count, we believe that everyone who was affected by this error re-voted.

## Table of Complete Vote Counts

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Non-Abstaining</b>
Silvia Bulow	248	28.09%	43.66%
Christina Hultholm	299	33.86%	52.64%
Disapprove of all candidates	21	2.38%	3.70%
Abstain	315	35.67%	-
<i>Total</i>	883	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Parliamentary Secretary</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Non-Abstaining</b>
Approve (Ashley Thrall)	538	60.93%	94.72%
Disapprove of all candidates	30	3.40%	5.28%
Abstain	315	35.67%	-
<i>Total</i>	883	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Corresponding Secretary</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Non-Abstaining</b>
Approve (Jenna Losh)	547	61.95%	93.83%
Disapprove of all candidates	36	4.08%	6.17%
Abstain	300	33.98%	-
<i>Total</i>	883	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Press Secretary</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Non-Abstaining</b>
Stephanie Budijono	180	20.39%	25.90%
Kevin Collins	148	16.76%	21.29%
Hagar ElBishlawi	48	5.44%	6.91%
Noah T. Jafferis	60	6.80%	8.63%
Praveena Joseph-de Saram	55	6.23%	7.91%
Anne Twitty	189	21.40%	27.19%
Disapprove of all candidates	15	1.70%	2.16%
Abstain	188	21.29%	-
<i>Total</i>	883	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Non-Abstaining</b>
Tomiko Ballantyne	226	25.59%	44.40%
Marina Paul	262	29.67%	51.47%
Disapprove of all candidates	21	2.38%	4.13%
Abstain	374	42.36%	-
<i>Total</i>	883	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Non-Abstaining</b>
Andrew McElroy	140	15.86%	24.14%
Emmanouil ("Manos") Koukoumidis	304	34.43%	52.41%
Raghuveer K Vinukollu	112	12.68%	19.31%
Disapprove of all candidates	24	2.72%	4.14%
Abstain	303	34.31%	-
<i>Total</i>	883	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Social Chair</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Non-Abstaining</b>
Konstantinos ("Kostas") Aisopos	318	36.01%	46.90%
Yi Wang	340	38.51%	50.15%
Disapprove of all candidates	20	2.27%	2.95%
Abstain	205	23.22%	-
<i>Total</i>	883	100.00%	100.00%