

Informal Information on Meeting with Provost Arjun Appadurai regarding the Petition to Rename the Graduate Programs School Name

Date: November 21st, 2005

Attendance: Arjun Appadurai (Provost)
Christina Kiel (GPIA Student Government)
Alex Bell (GPIA Student Government)
Denis Fitzgerald (GPIA Student Government)

Further questions or comments? Contact the student government!

No news, I'm afraid.

We are still reconstructing how the name change came about. The Provost was actively involved since he started at The New School in January 2004. By then, the re-branding process had already begun.

- The final decision after many deliberations was taken by the president and the board. It will not be changed back.
- The name change was necessary, because our division name has often been confused with the university (something we deliberately do now, and are encouraged to do, in order not to have to use "General Studies").
- "General Studies" was the "least bad option", other options involved "adult" or "continuing" education, which yes, would have been worse. But we did not get an answer how the least bad option was good enough.
- According to Appadurai, there are divisions that are called "general studies" that are respected and he does not see the name degrading our program. He also does not think prospective employers will be looking at the name of the division we attended as critically as we do. He listened to our concerns that the new name will make recruitment more difficult, but he does not share them.
- While he is not completely against student participation in the decision making process at the school, he is not enthusiastic about it ("you are only here for 2 1/2 years, there are reasons why we have faculty, administration...") and did not say what it could look like. We will have to push for this (and the new Student Senate will be a good forum) so that in the future we can react earlier to significant changes.
- Why didn't we, the students, hear about this earlier?
There must have been an internal communication problem, but that is something the provost sees as an issue between us and our director (and maybe the dean). The branding process went on for a few years and Appadurai is sure that Michael Cohen was aware of the options on the table – and opposed them vigorously.

Again, we have to make clear to our faculty and administration that we need to get information about what's going on at the school. I don't want to overestimate our influence, but maybe together with the faculty we could have stopped "General Studies". Now it seems like we are stuck with it.

- The one good outcome of the conversation: Appadurai seems to support the idea of having "International Affairs" on our diploma.

We'll continue talking to the Dean and Vice-President and try to limit the negative consequences of the name change. We will also continue to bug the administration with our complaints.

Best,

Alex, Christina, Denis

- GPIA Student Government -