An Open Letter to the Members of S.A.A.P.

March 10, 1998

Up-front I must apologize for this letter since it would be unnecessary had I spoken up at our recent meeting at Marquette University. Unfortunately, a few issues remain outstanding which I believe too important to ignore. The purpose of this letter, then, is two fold: both to rectify an omission and to clarify some decisions. As to the omission, along with the need to thank all out-going members of the executive and other committees of SAAP for their recent service, I would like to make special mention of the efforts over the past two years of the Graduate Student Coordinator, Robert Talisse (CUNY-Grad). Rob has taken a position still in its infancy and helped solidify its status within SAAP. Of this all graduate students now and in the future are beneficiaries. Furthermore, I wish all good to his successor, Glenn Kuehn (SIU-Carbondale). This then leads to my clarification on a point brought up by a graduate student at the business meeting in hopes that my statements will gather renewed support by all members of SAAP for graduate student-based activities within the conference. During the meeting, the statement was made that the graduate student paper session felt like being at the "kids' table" for Thanksgiving dinner. Now, without wishing in anyway to downplay those sentiments, I want to make clear (as Ken Stikkers briefly attempted) the motivations behind the development of the session. In 1993, I was privileged to become a student member of SAAP. It was during that year's conference that I first encountered this genuine community of scholars, activists, and friends. I was struck by the positive and long-standing nature of the relationships among the faculty along with their inclusive openness to the graduate students in attendance. It occurred to me after that meeting that my experiences with this group 20 years down the road would be greatly enhanced by sharing experiences with other graduate students (who would themselves become the faculties of tomorrow) in the present. Over the next 3 years working with many wonderful people (from John Lachs, Thelma Levine, Joe Betz, Charlene Haddock Seigfried, and of course, Ken Stikkers, to other then-graduate students across the country like David Hildebrand, Pat Shde, Roger Ward, Cornelis de Wal, and Rob Talisse), I put forth an effort to begin the process of community-building among graduate students. In a letter to the Executive Committee, I outlined 5 goals to be pursued. The earliest to bear fruit was the graduate student paper session. Now, in light of my desires, the paper session was designed to be by and for graduate students in order to provide a formal environment which would foster face to face communication and cooperation among the graduate students at the conference. It was intended to be a place to exchange ideas and, quite simply, meet each other. Of course, this is no exclusive club. It has always been the case that faculty have been encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion. (Anecdotally, the first session was better attended by faculty than graduate students with the presence of Beth Singer, Charlene Haddock Seigfried, Judith Green, and John Ryder among others.) However, the use and placement of graduate students in the roles of reviewers, readers, and commentators was purposeful in the hopes that (1) this would encourage more students to participate in the conference and (2) this would build community among the future scholars of American philosophy. Whereas it is not uncommon to have faculty respond to student papers in the conference sessions at-large
(as well as vice versa), the graduate student session was designed to foster a particular communication among a ever-growing group who will be "advancing" American philosophy in the future. This said, several observations remain at this point. First, I believe it is a mistake to cut students off from the rest of the group, but I also believe the paper session is best viewed not as a separation or exclusion from SAAP at large, but as an extension of the SAAP community. Second, I do not wish to imply by what I have said that any graduate student activity (the paper session included) should not continue to change/grow/evolve in response to the desires and needs of current graduate students in SAAP. Clearly, they should. Finally, however, it is important to note the conspicuous lack of attendance to the graduate student paper session by graduate students themselves (the student who raised the initial concern must, ironically, be included in this critique). I realize that the papers presented may not always match the interests of all students and that the draw towards other sessions is strong, but maybe it can help to view the graduate student paper session as a chance to learn not only about other eminent philosophers and philosophies but about fellow graduate students themselves. Let me conclude by saying that SAAP has always shown a strong commitment to support the energies of its graduate student members, and I know that we will continue to value students as a uniquely contributing community within the society's membership. Shalom!

D. Micah Hester

**Douglas Greenlee**

Those who come to SAAP meetings encounter the name of Douglas Greenlee through an annual prize given in his honor to a promising young scholar. Few, I suspect, know anything more about him.

My memories of Douglas Greenlee are not drawn from SAAP meetings, but from a course in American philosophy that he taught when I was an undergraduate at Temple University in the early 1970s. When I took his course, I was a senior who had been exposed to an extraordinary array of useless material posing as philosophy: duck-rabbits and chicken-sexing and the uncertain whereabouts of the ubiquitous Brown. The mood was one of cleverness; wisdom was for the most part a forgotten goal. In Greenlee's class, however, it was instantly clear that we were dealing with thinkers who were engaged with the richness of human experience and who were offering systematic analyses to guide further thought and action. The content of this course was a bit Peirce-heavy -- he was at that time working on his volume, Peirce's Concept of Sign (1973) -- but we also studied James, Dewey, Santayana, Whitehead, and his teacher, Justus Buchler. It was because of Douglas Greenlee that I went to Stony Brook to study with Buchler; and it was because of the wonderful American philosophy community there that I was drawn into SAAP.

Douglas Greenlee was one of the founding members of SAAP. As the Society was growing, he was dying prematurely. He was able to play only a modest role in the actual past of SAAP; but he plays an ongoing role in its development.

James Campbell

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