

# Graduate Student Association

University of South Carolina Student Life

# Annual Report 2019-2020



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## President's Farewell

Dear Graduate and Professional Students,

Serving as your President has been a very fulfilling honor. Though the COVID-19 pandemic halted our last few weeks of the year, we accomplished so much. Working with you all through meet and greets, serving on committees, and just everyday meetups on campus, have been one of the highlights of my graduate years at UofSC.

This year was a transitioning one for us. We started with a new President of the University and ended with our very first Black Provost of the University, a significant win.

However, in recent months, we have all witnessed and or participated in various protests of injustices across our nation. I want to use this opportunity to let you know that I SEE YOU! YOU MATTER!

Also, don't forget to be kind and spread love, because you do not know what your colleague, friend, or even stranger is going through. Hold the Carolinian creed high.

BE KIND.

### Notable accomplishments:

1. Created new cabinet positions to fill the need of the organization
2. Played a role in the selection of the First Black Provost in the history of UofSC, as a member on the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Search Committee
3. Introduced standard cabinet meetings with Senior Leadership including President Caslen, Dean Addy, and Dr. Anna Edwards – this was of particular importance as it helped foster a better relationship between GSA and administration
4. Advocated for an increase in GSA budget to enable us to fund more graduate organizations and events
5. Over 20,000 dollars were allocated to graduate organizations. COVID-19 reduced this number as future events were canceled
6. Revisited graduate stipends, which led to an 8% increase in the minimum wage for graduate students. Incremental increases were introduced for the next couple of years
7. Hosted successful events, including Bowling, Town Halls, and Meet and Greets. Graduate turnouts at all events were one of the largest in recent years.
8. Deepened our relationship with the Dean of Libraries, Dean Tom McNally, leading to a revamp of the graduate student lounge in the library, including new furniture, art, and technology.

**Revisited graduate student stipends, which led to an 8% increase in the minimum wage for graduate students**

9. Introduced work agreement between GAs/TAs and their bosses to ensure that both interests are protected, primarily, the graduate students'
10. Gave a talk at the Delegation Breakfast where congressional representatives from South Carolina were present, highlighting my experiences at Carolina
11. Played an active role in the admission application waiver for future veterans and supported creating a parking pass for purple heart students
12. Served on various committees across campus, including the University of South Carolina and Diversity and Inclusion Vice President Search Committee and Committee on Honorary Degrees
13. Actively participated in the President's Dine-In Lunch, which brings students, faculty, and staff together to discuss why diversity and inclusion are an important value and how we foster an inclusive campus community and where we can improve.
14. Hosted a successful Town Hall meeting to discuss issues and concerns facing graduate students and how these can be addressed
15. Participated in the Graduate Student Extravaganza, highlighting who we (GSA) are and what we do
16. Visited Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., to advocate on behalf of graduate students, specifically, those at UofSC
17. Introduced Parental Leave options which allow some flexibility and protection of new parent's positions (GA, TA, GRA) on campus
18. Deepened our relationship with Student Government, which was headed by President Luke Rankin
19. Developed a deeper reach with our graduate alumni
20. Played an active role in the discussion of our new Student Union on campus
21. Addressed direct student concerns, from HR issues to bursar concerns, which were all successfully resolved.

**Supported creating a parking pass for purple heart students**

All these notable accomplishments would not have been possible without a great executive team, cabinet members, and senior leadership support, including President Bob Caslen, Dean Cheryl Addy, Dr. Anna Edwards, and Jerome Scott. UofSC will ALWAYS hold a special place in my heart!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you!

Forever to thee!



Dr. Anna Cofie, MPH  
President, Graduate Student Association

## A Word from the University President, Bob Caslen



As one of the country's leading research institutions, the University of South Carolina generates more than a quarter billion dollars annually in external, competitive awards for research that advances our state, nation and world. UofSC is proud to offer 56 nationally ranked programs, including the No. 1 International MBA and the No. 1 Ph.D. program in Exercise Science. Our graduate students earn national recognition for significant contributions to their fields and are essential

to the university's research and academic excellence. In my first year as President of the University of South Carolina, I have witnessed the dedicated work of the Graduate Student Association, led by President Anna Cofie and the executive team. The GSA plays a key role at UofSC in their continued advocacy for our graduate students and the advancement of research and study at our university. I am proud to work alongside them at the highest levels of university decision-making, especially as we navigate the unprecedented challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. Congratulations to Anna, Nick, Moutoshi and Jennifer on a job well done! I look forward to working with the newly elected GSA officers Maggie, Maxwell, Christopher and Sudipta, and I have no doubt they will lead with excellence.

**The GSA plays a key role at UofSC in their continued advocacy for our graduate students and the advancement of research and study**



## A Word from the GSA Adviser and AVP for Student Affairs, Dr. Anna Edwards



The Graduate Student Association has had a productive year in identifying needs and priorities of graduate students and developing a plan to address them. The association was led by strong student leaders who were clear in their purpose and priorities. This was a year of many transitions, as the institution welcomed Robert Caslen, Jr. as the 29th president of the University of South Carolina. President

Caslen met regularly with the Graduate Student Association leadership to hear the needs of graduate students and understand their experience on campus. Additionally, high-profile institutional searches took place for Provost and Chief Academic Officer and Vice President for Diversity. Graduate students were well-represented on these searches from both the search committee perspective and engagement during campus interviews.

Throughout the year, the students initiated meetings with university administrators that had purpose and a focus related to their goals. They were diligent in follow up and bringing concerns of graduate students to the appropriate university staff person. There were coordinated efforts between undergraduate and graduate students today

**Throughout the year, the students initiated meetings with university administrators that had purpose and a focus related to their goals. They were diligent in follow up and bringing concerns of graduate students...**

to ensure that the needs of all Carolina students were addressed. The officers this year have been present and persistent – working tirelessly to advocate and improve the experiences for graduate students at Carolina. Although the end of the semester was changed by the impact of a global pandemic, the students continued engagement and operation in a virtual format. I have enjoyed getting to know the students and look forward to the work of the Graduate Student Association in the years ahead.

## A Word from the Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Cheryl Addy



Graduate students are the heart and soul of any comprehensive research university, and we are no exception here. My entire career at the University of South Carolina has focused on graduate education, but I have increasingly recognized the critical role of graduate students to the broader mission during my tenure as dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate Student Association provides advocacy and leadership for all our graduate students. This year that leadership has included key roles in at least two vice president searches and in the campus pandemic response and future planning process.

In February, I had the privilege of traveling with four GSA officers to our national capitol to visit the Council of Graduate Schools and staff for our state senators and congressional delegation. Campus advocacy includes promoting the need for better financial support for students, including health insurance, and for enhanced mental health services. Within the Graduate School, we depend on the GSA leadership to provide the student perspective in our governance and in our planning activities to enhance the graduate student experience. As the year nears its end, I look forward to working with next year's leadership team to continue this positive momentum and to promote additional opportunities for graduate students.



## Who We Are

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is the voice of the graduate student community at the University of South Carolina. Our organization is dedicated to the advancement and development of graduate and professional students at UofSC as we serve and advocate on behalf of the interests of more than 7,000 graduate and professional students.

### 2019-2020 Executive Board



**President**  
Anna Cofie  
*Ph.D. student,  
Health Services Policy and  
Management*



**Vice President**  
Christopher Eddy  
*Ph.D. student,  
Political Science*



**Treasurer**  
Moutoshi Saha  
*Ph.D. student,  
Civil and Environmental  
Engineering*



**Graduate Council Rep.**  
Jennifer Mandelbaum  
*Ph.D. student,  
Public Health*

### 2019-20 President's Cabinet

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>School/College</i>
<i>Press Secretary</i>	Travis Wagner	School of Library and Information Science
<i>Secretary of Data Management</i>	Maxwell Akonde	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of Alumni Relations</i>	Ryan Dastrup	College of Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management
<i>Secretary of Community Outreach</i>	Thomas Jones	School of Medicine
<i>Secretary of Graduate Assistantships</i>	Tyrone Satterfield	Darla Moore School of Business
<i>Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations</i>	Subrata Kundu	College of Engr & Computing
<i>Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations</i>	Sudipta Saha	College of Engr & Computing
<i>Secretary of GSA Affairs</i>	Radhika Ranganathan	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of GSA Affairs</i>	Michelle E. Harris	The College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Health</i>	Maggie Carson	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of Health</i>	Lindsay Decker	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of International Student Affairs</i>	Jingtong Dou	College of Education
<i>Secretary of Legislative Affairs</i>	Christopher Eddy	The College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Multicultural Student Affairs</i>	Archie Crowley	College of Information and Communications
<i>Secretary of Multicultural Student Affairs</i>	Monica Wade	College of Education
<i>Secretary of Professional Development</i>	Alexis Kiser	The College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Veteran Affairs</i>	Jeffery Yelverton	School of Music

## 2019-2020 Finance Committee

<i>Name</i>	<i>School/College</i>
<i>Moutoshi Saha, Chair</i>	Civil and Environmental Engineering
<i>Samantha McNeal</i>	Environmental Health Sciences
<i>Tim Koba, Fall 2019</i>	Sport and Entertainment Management
<i>Allie Silverman</i>	Social Work
<i>Sydney Arsenault</i>	Social Work
<i>Ali Iskender, Spring 2020</i>	Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management

## GSA Representation in University Committees

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>School/College</i>
<i>Diversity and Inclusion Vice President Search Committee, University of South Carolina</i>	Anna Cofie	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Search Committee</i>	Anna Cofie	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>FS Committee on Honorary Degrees</i>	Anna Cofie	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Professional Development Committee</i>	Alexis Kiser	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>University Safety Committee</i>	Alexis Kiser	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Health Services Advisory Committee</i>	Thomas Jones	UofSC School of Medicine
<i>Student Union Steering Committee</i>	Thomas Jones	UofSC School of Medicine
<i>Committee of Religious Affairs</i>	Jeffrey Yelverton	School of Music
<i>University 101 Academic Advisory Committee</i>	Moutoshi Saha	College of Engineering
<i>Committee on Academic Responsibility</i>	Moutoshi Saha	College of Engineering
<i>University Athletics Advisory Committee</i>	Ryan Dastrup	College of Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management
<i>Mental Health Initiatives Committee</i>	Lindsay Decker	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>M.J.M. Distinguished Professor of the Year Award C.</i>	Tye Satterfield	Darla Moore School of Business
<i>Non-Campus Safety Committee</i>	Christopher Eddy	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Committee on Instructional Development</i>	Christopher Eddy	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Committee on Curricula and Courses</i>	Jennifer Mandelbaum	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Grievances, Appeals and Petitions Committee</i>	Jennifer Mandelbaum	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Parking Appellate Court</i>	Monica Wade	College of Education
<i>University Libraries' Student Advisory Council</i>	Travis Wagner	School of Library and Information Science

## GSA Engagement on Campus

### Engagement with USC Administration

- The GSA increased its collaboration and communication with many entities on campus, including President Caslen, the Graduate School, Student Life, and Student Government:
  - President Casen often invited GSA executive and cabinet members to attend round-table style lunches or individual meetings to address student concerns.
  - Recognizing the importance of the graduate student body to the academic mission of the university, President Caslen attended numerous GSA cabinet meetings to directly engage with graduate students.
  - A delegation of GSA executive board and cabinet members, including President Anna Cofie, Nick Vera, Grad Council Representative Jennifer Mandelbaum, and Secretary of Legislative Affairs traveled to Washington D.C with the Dean of the Graduate School and the university lobbyist to advocate on behalf of the graduate student body.

**Recognizing the importance of the graduate student body to the academic mission of the university, President Caslen attended numerous GSA cabinet meetings to directly engage with the concerns of graduate students!**

### A word from the Assistant Director for Student Government Leadership, Jerome Scott II

Working with the Graduate Student Association for this year has been an amazing opportunity to learn about the needs of graduate students and how I can assist them in serving as advocates for their students. Since this was my first year working at the University of South Carolina, I was glad to be working with a team of students who each had different paths into the organization and backgrounds as people. Each of them brought a unique set of skills that prepared them for their roles in advocating for the students.

My proudest moments with the organization was when I was able to watch them bring up the experiences of their peers and advocate on their behalf to the university president, dean of the graduate school, and associate vice president for student life. I strongly believe it takes a developed active citizen to not only vocalize their own needs, but set their concerns aside for the needs of others. I continuously watched as the executive officers and cabinet secretaries brought up critical issues, all while giving up their time to meet at 5pm on a Friday.

I know that the work that was done this year to elevate the voice of graduate students will serve as a foundation for growth in the coming years and I look forward to the work they are able to accomplish in the future.

## Carolina Leadership Week – February 10-15, 2020

In collaboration with the Graduate School, members of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) prepared a series of blog posts and videos about leadership.

### Blog Posts

*“Leadership to me is the ability to find comfort in the most uncomfortable situations. Being a great listener, having the patience and endurance to understand people, treating others with respect, following the lead of others, understanding that just because it failed once does not mean it is not worth a second try and knowing your strengths and weaknesses.”*

**What Leadership Means to Me**, Anna Cofie – GSA President ([link](#))



*“The great thing about leadership is that it is not exclusive. Anyone can become a leader if they want. Leadership also comes in many forms, whether it is leading a class dialogue or organizing a community service event that serves others, this is leadership.”*

**On Becoming a Leader: Maybe You Already Are**, Nick Vera ([link](#))

*“We don’t need women to change how we lead; we need social norms to get with the times. Everyone has an obligation to speak out against prejudice and recognize the harm being done by the norms society traditionally assigns to gender and leadership qualities. The next time someone comments about a woman being “too emotional,” “not very caring,” or “difficult,” let’s correct the record.”*

**Let’s Talk about Leadership**, Jennifer Mandelbaum – GSA Grad Council Rep ([link](#))





*“Reflection requires preparation and commitment. Do the future leader in yourself a favor and start reflecting now! Effective leadership requires reflection.”*

**Let’s Talk about Leadership: Alexis Kiser**, Alexis Kiser – Secretary of Professional Development ([link](#))

*“A leader is a person who combines a set of people, preferably with common interest, and leads them towards achieving a goal... My leadership philosophy is to befriend the team members and uphold the team spirit inside the group. A leader must not distinguish him/herself from the members of the group..”*

**Let’s Talk about Leadership, Sudipta Saha** – Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations ([link](#))



*“I believe strong leaders are not only satisfied with the status quo but will also take risk seeking new opportunities and possibilities.”*

**Let’s Talk about Leadership, Jingtong Dou** – Secretary of International Student Affairs ([link](#))

## Student Engagement

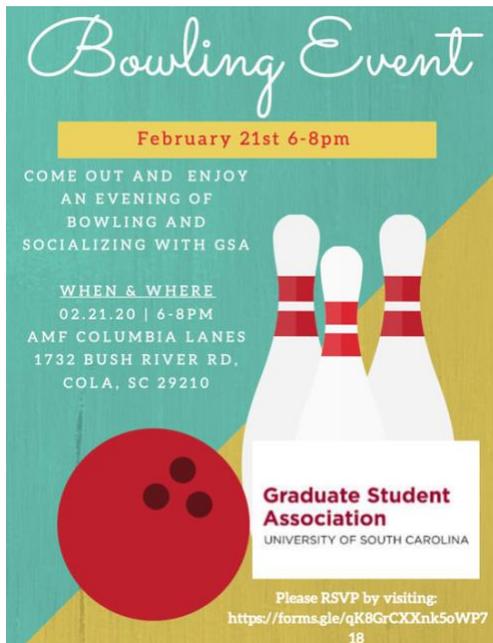
GSA Welcome Back Event – October 1, 2019



The 2019-2020 Welcome Back Event is an excellent example of GSA's continued growth and commitment to student outreach. Representing the largest turnout for any welcome back event hosted by the organization, this year's meet and greet packed Hickory Tavern to their maximum capacity. More importantly, the event was symbolic of an organization that is continuously expanding its reach and impact throughout the graduate student community.



Spring Bowling Event – February 21, 2020



The turnout for Graduate Student Association Bowling Event left no room to *Spare!* In total, we occupied seven lanes throughout the night, bowling in teams of 5-8. GSA provided pizza, finger foods, and drinks for all in attendance. At the end of the night, it was unanimously declared that our Secretary of Graduate Assistantships, Tye Satterfield, is the unrivaled GSA bowling champion. Although the event took weeks of hard work and planning, led by Secretary of Community Outreach, Thomas Jones, getting the graduate student community together (outside of classrooms and labs) is always worth the effort!



## Spring Town Hall Event – February 26, 2020



## Graduate Student Association Town Hall

When: **Wed, February 26, 2020**

Time: **4:30pm -6:00pm**

Where: **Russell House 305**

Contact: **Graduate Student Association, [sogsa@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sogsa@mailbox.sc.edu)**

*There will be free food and drinks!*

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Key issues that were brought up at the town include: Information transparency for tuition packages across disciplines/ units; How the university communicates about the cost of living, including a push for the Graduate School to provide more realistic and up-to-date information; Protections from funding changes or reductions when switching advisors; Providing information related to appeals to the graduate council for protections when students are subjected to violations of department or university rules; grandfathering graduate student pay at lower rates in college of arts and sciences; Health insurance subsidy updates; issues with fees from ISS for International students; and strengthening support from ISS and providing more transparent information for graduate students



Graduate Student Extravaganza – September 9, 2019



*Pictured above (from left to right) is Secretary of community outreach: Thomas Jones, President: Anna Cofie, Press Secretary: Travis Wagner, Secretary of Multicultural Affairs: Archie Crowley, and Director of Recruitment and Diversity Officer: Wright Culpeper.*

The Graduate Student Extravaganza was an excellent outreach opportunity where the Graduate Student Association has the opportunity to meet face-to-face with graduate students, listen to concerns, and provide information about GSA related events, meeting times, and key initiatives for the academic year. Many GSA cabinet members volunteered their time to work at the table and hand out GSA swag!

## Diversity & Inclusion (Dive-In) Lunch – October 22, 2019

The Dive-In Lunches are a series of events sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The stated mission is to bring students, faculty, and staff together “to discuss why diversity and inclusion is an important value, in what ways we foster an inclusive campus community and where we can improve.” During each event, 40 students and 5 faculty and staff members have lunch with President Caslen to generate a discussion and plan for future opportunities. During the October Lunch, the Graduate Student Association was proud to be represented by President Anna Cofie, Nick Vera, and Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations, Sudipta Saha. Attending these events provided GSA members an excellent opportunity to meet with administrators, advocate for graduate students, and socialize with other members of the UofSC community. We are grateful for President Caslen’s commitment to reaching out to historically underrepresented groups and discussing ways to address and overcome the existing inequities in our community. We look forward to continued involvement on this front, and encourage all graduate students to attend!



## GSA Advocacy

### Washington D.C Lobbying Trip Campaign – February 2-4

In addition to preparing our own legislative issues letter for the advocacy trip to D.C, the leaders from the GSA also met with the National Association for Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS) for a briefing on current legislative agenda items with the potential to impact graduate student communities. For example, the GSA delegation was informed on issues including: funding for higher education, educational policy, tax policy, student rights, and international student issues. Following the briefing with NAGPS, GSA leaders met with: a delegation made up of representatives from the offices of: Senators Graham and Scott, and Congressmen Cunningham (SC-1), Wilson (SC-2), Duncan (SC-3), Timmons (SC-4), Norman (SC-5), Clyburn (SC-6), and Rice (SC-7). The GSA leaders were also granted a unique tour of the Capitol before individual meetings with the offices of Senators Graham and Scott, and Reps Wilson, Duncan, and Timmons. Before heading back to campus, the leaders from the Graduate Student Association were also invited to attend a special luncheon with representatives from Rep. Clyburn’s office. In sum, members from GSA attending the trip spent their time advocating in back-to-back meetings on behalf of the UofSC graduate student body. In between meetings, however, GSA officers managed to squeeze in a tour of National Museum of African American History and Culture!

### Relevant Legislative Issues Affecting Graduate Students

Prepared by the University of South Carolina Graduate Student Association

#### Student Finance and Loan Repayment Support:

- H.R. 3334 – Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act of 2019
- H.R. 4545 – Private Loan Disability Discharge Act
- H.R. 4670 – Simplifying Student Loans Act
- H.R. 4674 – College Affordability Act
- H.R. 4749 – Student Loan Relief Act of 2019
- H.R. 4869 – Student Loan Default Reduction Program Act
- H.R. 5287 – Fair Student Loan Debt Collection Practices Act
- H.R. 5294 – Student Borrower Protections Act
- S.3055 – Student Loan Repayment Freedom Act

To ensure that student loan borrowers have strong protections from harmful lending and collection practices.

#### Updates to FAFSA

##### Support:

- S.2667 – FAFSA Simplification Act of 2019
- H. R. 4567 – FAFSA Translation Act

To decrease the length and complexity of the FAFSA.

#### Information & Transparency

##### Support:

- H.R. 4648 – Transparency in Off-Campus Housing Act
- H.R. 4587 – Truth in Tuition Act of 2019
- H.R. 4596 – Student Loan Advocacy Act
- H.R. 4662 – Accountability in Student Loan Data Act
- H.R. 4988 – Basic Assistance for Students in College (BASIC) Act
- H.R. 5148 – Higher Education Standards Improvement Act
- H.R. 5528 – Congressional Advisory Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics Act (CACIA) of 2019
- S. 3095 – Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education (AIM HIGH) Act

To provide accountability and transparency across a variety of issues directly affecting graduate students

#### Proposed Amendments to Title IX

##### Support:

- H.R. 5388 Prohibition on Regulations That Weaken the Enforcement of The Prohibition Of Sex Discrimination

To provide that the Secretary of Education may not issue or enforce certain rules that weaken the enforcement of the prohibition of sex discrimination applicable under title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

#### International Students

##### Crucial Goals:

- Maintain duration of status for international students with F, M, and J visas.
- Ensure timely processing of student visas to minimize interruption of a student’s academic progression.
- Allow international students who obtain advanced degrees to qualify for immigrant visas so that they may remain in the U.S. and work.
- Stabilize and end DHS’s fee hikes for international students

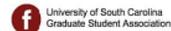
#### Commendations

##### Recent Achievements:

- H.R. 5363 – Passage of the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE)
- H.J.Res.76 – House Passage, providing for congressional disapproval of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to “borrower Defense Institutional Accountability”

Please feel free to contact us at [sogsa@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sogsa@mailbox.sc.edu).

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## Member Reports

### Report of the GSA Vice President, Christopher Eddy

Although my time serving as GSA Vice President was short –and made even shorter by the COVID-19 pandemic—it was a great honor and privilege to work alongside the GSA president, Anna Cofie, in fulfilling the mission of our organization. I accepted the Vice President position in February on top of my existing role as Secretary of Legislative Affairs because I believed I could assist the GSA in its advocacy efforts. It is my view that the Graduate Student Association’s primary responsibility is to advocate on behalf of the needs of the graduate student community. In so doing, members of GSA are often required to fulfill multiple, and times contradictory, roles.

On one hand, the *primary* responsibility of the organization is to listen to and address the many needs of graduate students. Doing so often requires strong and consistent advocacy, speaking with a clear and unified voice, and listening carefully to the concerns brought to the organization.

On the other hand, to effectively address the concerns of the graduate student body, GSA members must also maintain excellent working relationships with a variety of university officials and administrators. As has been made clear throughout this report, the President of the University, Dean of the Graduate School, and Associate Vice President for Student Life (just to name a few) consistently seek out input, feedback, and representation from the graduate student association and the many campus leaders that are actively engaged with our group.

**It is my view that the Graduate Student Association’s primary responsibility is to advocate on behalf of the needs of the graduate student community. In so doing, members of GSA are often required to fulfill multiple, and times contradictory, roles.**

While satisfying both the demands of the graduate student body and the needs of the university’s administration is by no means a simple task, it is perhaps the most rewarding and fulfilling duty that I have had the honor to work on behalf of.

Some of the notable accomplishments from my time served as Vice President include: facilitating the Spring Town Hall event, helping with the Bowling Event, and representing graduate student interests during the COVID-19 pandemic on the future planning group’s subcommittee for academics and research. I believe strongly that fulfilling the University of South Carolina’s mission for academic excellence *requires* a well-resourced graduate student body, and I look forward to continuing my involvement with the Graduate Student Association Executive Board next year as Treasure! Go cocks!

## Report of the GSA Treasurer, Moutoshi Saha

I, Moutoshi Saha, am a second year PhD student at the department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. It was a great experience for me to be able to serve the GSA executive team as the treasurer. I feel extremely honored for getting the opportunity to advocate for graduate students. I joined GSA in first year of my PhD and served president's cabinet as the secretary of Graduate Student Organizations. By working closely with GSA team and participating into GSA activities that year, I became interested to run for treasurer. As the treasurer, I got the opportunity to meet President Bob Caslen and Graduate School Dean Dr. Cheryl Addy with GSA team and to inform them about the needs of graduate student. It was an amazing experience to work on GSA finance with Dr. Anna Edwards, Associate Vice President of Student Life. It was great working with Jerome Scoot II, Assistant Director for Student Government Leadership, Mohamed Soluiman, Assistant Director of Finance from department of Student Life and Jamie K. Ayres, Student Organization Business Advisor from department of Student Life regarding GSA finance. This past year, I worked closely with the GSA team to organize different events and to improve the graduate student's experience.

As the treasurer, I served as the chair of GSA finance committee. GSA finance committee reviewed the funding applications from our campus's registered graduate student organizations (GSOs) for events, conferences, and competitions to evaluate the benefits of graduate students, GSO and university as a whole and made decisions on funding allocation as per the university policies and GSA funding guidelines. I would like to thank all members of GSA finance committee for their time and valuable input. In comparison to year 2018-2019, similar events had higher student participation and received more funding. GSA allocation budget summary is given below. Before the spring break, GSA finance committee allocated \$20,609.89 to fund 17 GSO events and \$9,390.11 was left to be allocated. GSA finance committee was reviewing funding requests for a total of \$4508.00 from GSOs for upcoming events which got cancelled due to COVID-19. While in spring 2019, GSA funded several on campus events and conferences happened during and after March, it was not the case in spring 2020 due to COVID-19. Due to COVID-19, all events scheduled after spring break got cancelled.

**There was an increase in student participation from graduate students across campus in these events.**

Further, this past year GSA organized events for graduate students to promote networking, inclusion, and sharing of ideas between them. There was an *increase* in student participation from graduate students across campus in these events. The GSA Operations Budget is also given below as a summary of the spending of the Graduate Student Association in support of our goals to improve graduate student life experience. Due to COVID-19, some events scheduled after Spring break were cancelled.

## GSA Budget Allocation Summary

Organization Name	Event Name	Event Date	Allocated
Taiwanese Student Association	Mid Autumn Festival BBQ	9/13/19	\$385.27
Carolina Flute Guild	Göran Marcusson, guest artist recital	10/17/19 & 10/18/2019	\$500.00
Indian Student Association	Jashn 2019	11/09/2019	\$4,563.00
Geography Graduate Student Association	Geography Awareness Week *UPDATED*	11/13/2019 & 11/15/2019	\$281.12
Black Graduate Student Association	Surviving Grad School	11/14/2019	\$339.00
Taiwanese Student Association	Southeastern U.S. Taiwanese Student Association Olympics	11/16/2019 & 11/17/2019	\$1,198.52
Rhetoric Society of America	Conference on College Composition and Communication - Milwaukee, WI	03/25/2020-03/28/2019	\$1,792.00
Rhetoric Society of America (cancelled due to COVID-19)	RSA National Conference - Portland, OR	05/21/2020-05/24/2020	\$1,764.00
Taiwanese Student Association	TSA Chinese New Year Event	2/15/2020	\$650.98
Black Graduate Student Association	Healthy Relationships: Supporting Black Love	2/12/2020	\$280.00
Rhetoric Society of America	Carolina Rhetoric Conference	2/28/2020	\$250.00
Bangladesh Student Organization	BanglaFest 2020	2/22/2020	\$4,351.00
Black Graduate Student Association (cancelled due to COVID-19)	BGSA Research Symposium	3/27/2020	\$332.00
Carolina Flute Guild	Flute Society of Kentucky Chamber Competition	3/20/2020-3/22/2020	\$1,300.00
LLC Graduate Students' Association	Conference Funding Request: 5th Annual Cultural Carolina Conference	02/29/2020	\$223.00
Graduate English Association	Travel Funding for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference (AWP) 2020	03/04/2020-03/07/2020	\$2,000
Indian Student Association (cancelled due to COVID-19)	Holi 2020	03/27/2020	\$400

## GSA Operational Budget Summary

Event Name	Event Date	Allocated
Hickory Tavern Welcome Back Event	10/1/2019	\$1,365.74
Travel for Advocacy Meetings in DC	2/1/2020	\$2,570.92
Welcome Back Event (Bowling)	2/21/2020	\$1,531.84
Town Hall	2/26/2020	\$353.75
Professional Development Event	Cancelled due to COVID-19 (budget \$2000)	\$0
Graduate Students Appreciation Event	Cancelled due to COVID-19 (budget \$575)	\$0
End-of-Year Appreciation Luncheon	Cancelled due to COVID-19 (budget \$300)	\$0
Executive Officer Wages		\$11,543.99
GSA Exec Nametags and Business Cards		\$251.28
GSA T-Shirts (GSA Group)		\$432.00
NAGPS Membership		\$556.74
Total Remaining		\$3,125.07

## Report of the GSA Graduate Council Representative, Jennifer Mandelbaum

Being part of the Graduate Student Association for the last four years has been one of the most fulfilling parts of my graduate school experience. As Secretary of Alumni Affairs, Vice President, President, and Graduate Council Representative, I've gotten to know many of the incredible students, faculty, and staff who make our university run. The Graduate Council is the governing body acting on behalf of the Graduate Faculty of the University. As a voting member of the Council, I attended regular meetings to discuss issues that may affect graduate students and served on the Grievances, Appeals and Petitions Committee. A major theme of the Council's discussions this year was transparency, and we covered topics including the pay lag and HR change; student advising and mentoring needs; working with the University Libraries on upcoming programs for graduate students; and the university's graduate assistantship policy. My goal in serving in this role was to be a voice for graduate students on the Council and advocate for their interests. I was proud to see some of our work from last year's stipend survey carry over to this year. In 2018-2019, GSA conducted a survey which highlighted many graduate students' concerns about working conditions and stipends keeping up with the cost of living. I am hopeful that the Graduate Council's recommendations will address some of the concerns about work schedule expectations, leave, and pay. This year on the GSA, I also served on the Provost's Advisory Committee on Women's Initiatives and the Faculty Senate Committee on Curricula and Courses, where I reviewed nearly 100 course update and proposals. On our executive officers' visit to DC to meet with the South Carolina congressional delegation, I emphasized the importance of federal research funding for graduate education and training. I look forward to seeing how the GSA continues to expand its collaboration and engagement with different campus entities to advocate on behalf of our graduate and professional community.

## Reports of the GSA President's Cabinet

### Report of the GSA Press Secretary, Travis Wagner

As the GSA Press Secretary for 2019-2020, I helped to streamline the process for the distribution of our monthly newsletter turning it into a more digestible, information forward piece of communication. This work also helped to better situate the newsletter alongside the continued growth of social media as a preferred venue for the distribution of information pertinent to graduate students at the University of South Carolina. Additionally, outside of my duties as the press secretary for GSA, I also served as a graduate representative for the University Libraries' Student Advisory Council. In this capacity, I advocated for increased funding for graduate student library-based resources, while also working towards expanded access to critical software for graduate-level research. While serving in this capacity I also joined with other GSA members to work with Dean Tom McNally to update the Graduate Student Study Room within Thomas Cooper Library to include new furniture, technology, and workspaces. This update was scheduled to occur in April 2020 but has since been paused due to extenuating circumstances associated with COVID-19. Aside from these roles I also worked in close proximity with the LGBTQIA+ Graduate Student Affinity groups operating within the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and was an active volunteer with GSA at events, most specifically the GSA Town Hall (February 26, 2020) and the Graduate Student Extravaganza (September 9, 2019).

### Report of the GSA Secretary of Data Management – Maxwell Akonde

I was involved in all cabinet meetings since my appointment and actively contributed to generating ideas and discussions on the floor. For example, I helped lead the discussion on the need to conduct a survey pertaining to stipend discrepancies of graduate students. This eventually ended in broader consultation and dialoguing with the President Bob Caslen, the Dean of Graduate School and Associated staff where steps are being taking to address some of the concerns that came out of the discussion. I also actively participated in the GSA Fall Social event at Hickory Tavern. I was involved with the publicity and personally inviting graduate students which saw a well-attended successful Fall Social event. I have been involved in all meetings of GSA and represented GSA in the meeting with then Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Finalist, Mr. Julian Williams on February 6th, 2020. I actively participated in the Bowling with GSA including doing publicity and outreach for the program. I also actively participated in the GSA Town Hall including doing publicity and sending out personal invites to graduate students. Finally, I have been leading discussions to organize a Mental Health Focus Group discussion. Initial consultation was done after a review of an intended survey on the experiences of Graduate students of the campus mental health in which we concluded on conducting a Focus Group Discussions.

## Report of the GSA Secretary of Alumni Relations— Ryan Dastrup

First, I would like to thank those that allowed me to participate and be a part of such a great group. I have been able to meet and make some great friendships, that I imagine will last a lifetime. It was important for me to be a part of this committee to help gather input and ideas and then to share that knowledge with others. I found my time as Secretary of Alumni Relations to be worthwhile and rewarding. My initial goal was to help connect people and to serve others. It was important to create and foster these mutually beneficial relationships between GSA and other groups on campus. One of the biggest achievements was being able to do a special alumni spotlight. We were able to spotlight Lisa Yanity who shared her experience as a grad student and how she is helping others in her community. Lisa was thrilled when she was asked to be a part of this initiative. It was so rewarding to see so many people working to help support GSA. Overall, this was a wonderful opportunity and I hope to be able to stay involved next year as we worked so hard on many great projects and ideas. GSA is a special group of people, who had shared visions of making an impact. It was an opportunity and experience that is truly helping make a difference.

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION  
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Hello fellow Gamecocks. My name is Lisa D. Yanity. I completed my BA in Broadcast Journalism, M. Ed. in Student Personnel Services and my Ed. S. in Counselor Education all at U of SC in 87, 89 and 94. During my time as a Grad student I served as a Resident Advisor, Tutor for the Athletic Department and worked as a Graduate Assistant in the Counselor Education Department. The opportunities I had as a Graduate Student enabled me to prioritize my time and how to work across a large spectrum of people.



The ability to work with others from different backgrounds served me well during my 21 years in the Army and two tours of Afghanistan. Perhaps the most important thing I learned during those graduate years was being part of something bigger than myself and helping others. This has been my professional and personal desire throughout my career. I encourage all Graduate Students to take time to find their passion or driving force while at U of S.

I am now retired and still give back to the University which I love. I am a lifetime member of the Alumni Association and a board member of the Veterans Alumni Council. I take part in activities on campus that encourage networking or just need an alumni perspective. I believe that it is important to always reach back and assist those coming behind us. I love my Gamecocks and attend as many sporting events as possible.

To wrap things up, I would encourage Graduate Students to enjoy your time on campus, learn from every interaction with others and share your love for Carolina and the knowledge you gained with others. Best of Luck! Forever to Thee.

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Lisa D. Yanity '87, '89, '94

A special thanks to Anna, and others who put in so much time and dedication for GSA. The University of South Carolina truly is a special place. Forever to thee. Go Gamecocks.

## Report of the GSA Secretary of Community Outreach – Thomas Jones

This past academic year was one of many ups and downs for the Graduate Student Association. The experiences I had in serving as the Secretary of Community Outreach have taught me many new skills as well as enhance some of my preexisting skills. Serving in this position allowed me many opportunities to become more involved on campus. Not only did I attend many of the GSA meetings during the Fall semester, I was able to participate in one of the Graduate school fall events, the Graduate Student Extravaganza, and let the graduate students who came to this event know who GSA are and what we can do for the graduate students as a whole. Not only was I able to participate in this outreaching event, I also had the opportunity to participate in the Student Leadership Center's Voter Registration Day events and give help in getting students registered to vote. Both opportunities allowed me to do some community outreach on campus and introduce myself and what I do with GSA. Aside from these outreaching opportunities, I also had the pleasure of sitting on two committees, the Student Union Steering Committee and the Student Health Advisory Committee.

Reflecting back on these committees, I had the chance of being a voice for graduate students in what may be good for us in our new student union and what health resources may be beneficial for us. Participating in these committees and being vocal about my concerns that either I have

seen or have heard from other graduate students will hopefully help these committees take graduate students into consideration when redesigning parts of the campus. Similar to sitting on these committees, I had the opportunity to be a voice for graduate students in meetings I had with Deans and President Caslen. These conversations will hopefully begin to have some positive change for graduate students as we are included more in the decision-making process. The meeting with President Caslen made it very obvious that he is willing to do what he can to help include graduate students.

During the Spring semester, I continued participating in GSA meetings and the committee meetings. With these responsibilities, I was also selected with other GSA members to be a graduate student representative during the Provost search where I met Dr. Tatum, Dr. Rapaport, and Dr. Wiencek. During these meetings, I was able to pose questions concerning minority populations on campus and research at the university. These meetings gave me the chance to continue the discussion of keeping graduate students in mind with decisions. Participating in these meetings also gave me some insight to what goes on during these type of search committees. These meetings were not my only bigger responsibilities throughout the Spring. The other responsibilities I had were being a part of the planning committees for GSA's Spring event and GSA's Town Hall. Planning these two events took a lot of patience on my end and teamwork skills. For the Spring event, GSA chose to host a bowling party. This event allowed graduate students to meet other students, meet the GSA board members and to have a good time. This event also just allowed students to get away for a bit and enjoy some fun. The Town Hall was an event that allowed many graduate students to voice their own problems and concerns and what GSA could do for them. I believe both of these events were a success and both will have positive impacts coming out of them and will continue on as GSA gets prepared for the new academic year.

My general feelings of this past year are positive, despite half of the Spring semester being cancelled. I hope for the future, GSA is able to do even more events and continues to be a voice for graduate students as we help advocate for our community.

#### Report of the GSA Secretary of Graduate Assistantships – Tyrone Satterfield

Throughout the academic year, I was heavily involved in the initiative to assess and increase the pay of all graduate students within the USC school system. In addition to my regular attendance at GSA meetings, I requested and received sponsorship to redecorate the graduate student lounge with new art and furniture. In supporting the graduate student association, I attended meetings with numerous Deans as well as potential future senior staffers within the USC system. During this time, I was honored to provide feedback and guidance on the members I believed would be excellent additions to UofSC. Lastly, I had the opportunity to serve on the faculty member of the year committee.

### Report of the GSA Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations— Subrata Kundu

I, Subrata Kundu, served GSA as the secretary of graduate student organizations in the President's cabinet of GSA for 2019-2020 session. My role was to advocate for the graduate student organizations, and in doing so I reached out to these organizations and informed them about funding opportunities and other resources available for them at UofSC. I worked to establish effective communications between GSA and graduate student organizations. During biweekly GSA meetings, I communicated with other GSA members to facilitate solutions for the challenges faced by graduate student organizations in their funding, health insurance and so on. In the meantime, I worked with Leadership and Service Center of UofSC and achieved an interactive system to enlist student organizations. In addition to these initiatives, I also volunteered for and participated in several GSA events. It was a great experience for me to work as part of GSA.

### Report of the GSA Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations— Sudipta Saha

I had a very exciting tenure as a secretary of graduate student associations of GSA for 2019-20 period. This was the first time I served in the GSA president's cabinet. I gained valuable experiences working with the executive committee and other cabinet members and contributed to the GSA agenda through dynamic participation and activities. This year there were two secretaries of graduate student organizations (Subrata Kundu and I). One of major task we have accomplished this year to update the graduate student organization list in our system. We partnered with the Leadership and Service Center to accomplish this task. Through systematic collaborative effort, we have been able to build a system to identify the graduate student members of the registered student organizations of UofSC. The system cross matches the enrollment information the members of the student organizations and provides the breakdown of undergraduate and graduate student information. This will help us to identify the graduate student community of the campus more comprehensively and effectively. This effort will hugely benefit the upcoming committee in their endeavor to reach out the graduate students of the campus.

I participated in a round table discussion with provost candidates for the university. It was a great experience to hear from the candidates and their goal and vision for the position. They also responded to students' queries on different aspects of the campus experience. As a GSA secretary I emphasized the need of addressing issues to improve graduate life experience in the campus. I also participated in the President's 'Dive-In' (stands for Diversity and Inclusion) lunch. We discussed how to promote the appreciation for diversity and inclusion in our campus and how both students and authority can work together to make our campus a better place for diverse student communities.

In summary, I have gained insightful experiences on leadership and teamwork by serving as a GSA secretary. I am glad that the executive committee led the organization in such a way so that every cabinet member is valued and their effort is appreciated.

## Report of the GSA Secretary of Affairs -- Radhika Ranganathan

Everybody, be they bright or dreary, would have sailed through knowledge transformation through a myriad of educational innovations as their route to success. Anything transnational, be it Science or Technology, is now in light of reach of everyone. When it comes to academics, for instance, pursuing an advanced degree takes arduous efforts if the language and culture are not native. As I write this, I reflect on the trail that led me to be a part of Graduate Student Association here at University of South Carolina. I realized that in addition to gaining academic knowledge, it is very important to learn from fellow students who are already possessing great leadership roles advocating for the welfare of graduate students here at the University of South Carolina. As a secretary of GSA affairs (Fall 2019 – Spring 2020), I had an opportunity to meet with all the executives of the GSA and was able to note down the important communications and report them to the president of GSA. Right from the issues of stipend, housing, professional development, placements & mental health, GSA has been first in place to represent graduate students and has been successful in bringing a beneficial impact to the student community. I found the team well organized and each secretary being quite responsible in taking up challenging responsibilities and would complete them with in a set time frame despite their compelling coursework. I learned a lot from GSA and its outreach activities & I would like to stay on to my contributions to GSA through any possible means that I could even after graduating from this University.

## Report of the GSA Secretary of Affairs – Michelle E. Harris

For the 2019-2020 academic year, I served as a co-Secretary of GSA Affairs. My primary responsibilities included generating and finalizing the cabinet meeting agenda, recording the minutes for cabinet meetings, and maintaining our meeting records in Garnet Gate. My primary goals for GSA were to assist with planning, facilitating, and moderating events planned for the year. To meet these goals, I worked to maintain open communication with cabinet and executive members, and work with Anna to formulate agenda items. On a personal level, I wanted to integrate into GSA to learn more about the graduate student body, ongoing student needs, and how students could address and drive change. Previously serving within a department-level graduate association, I wanted to learn about the ‘big picture’ across campus. By soliciting items for the agenda each meeting, I was able to communicate with other cabinet and executive members to get a ‘pulse’ for the direction that GSA was going. Recording and verifying meeting minutes allowed me to assist with future planning efforts while outlining next steps necessary for actions occurring within the organization. Maintaining records further allowed us to capture student presence through logging visitors that brought current ‘hot topics’ to the board for discussion. Although my service within the GSA was cut short, I felt that I was able to deliver a sense of order and transparency by maintaining records and communication. I thoroughly enjoyed the discourse between attendees to the cabinet meeting and learned about cross-campus initiatives. I enjoyed the ability to learn more about the graduate student body while

simultaneously addressing its needs and representing my department at the table. Go Gamecocks!

### Report of the GSA Secretary of Health– Maggie Carson

This year I was co-secretary of health with my counterpart Lindsay Decker. We worked together to tackle issues surrounding mental health specific to graduate students and access to student health services. In the fall semester we had many discussions both with GSA as a whole, individual students, and each other to decide how we were going to get a better understanding of what the graduate student perceptions and needs for mental health services on UofSC's campus. Through discussions, we decided that we were going to develop a survey, so Maxwell Akonde, secretary of data management, joined our team and helped us develop a survey. We brought our survey to GSA for discussion and took the comments and made edits. Once we had a more finalized survey, we decided to take our document to student health services to see their thoughts and see if they had any data that they had previously collected.

Lindsay Decker serves on the university wide mental health initiatives committee and so she has helped us connect with Dr. April Scott who is the Associate Director of Campus Mental Health Initiatives. We have been in communication with April Scott on the development of a potential survey published to all graduate students to collect data. After discussions with April Scott, we decided to move to a focus group method, as opposed to a survey. Additionally, April said that student health services would give us access to graduate student data that they have collected. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 and the campus shutdown, we were not able to conduct the focus groups this semester. However, we are hoping that the idea can move forward next year because I still see it as a great need. Many graduate students have expressed the need to evaluate the mental health services offered to graduate students and we hoped that these focus groups could help fill those data gaps, to help improve the graduate student experience on campus.

Additionally, I served on the Arnold School of Public Health's Dean Student Advisory Council (DSAC) to both represent the interests of GSA to the Arnold School, but also to bring information back from students in the Arnold School to GSA. Serving in this position helped Arnold School students have a bi-directional communication channel so that concerns and needs could be heard. For more general GSA tasks I helped with, I worked with Thomas Jones, secretary of outreach, to assist in planning, social support, and implementation of the spring town hall event and the spring bowling event.

## Report of the GSA Secretary of International Student Affairs -- Jingtong Dou

Being a secretary of International Student Affairs for the Graduate Student Association (GSA), my goal is to advocate graduate students' engagement at USC, especially to improve the campus diversity, equity and inclusion with a better understanding of the international students' needs. Thus, I have been working closely with the GSA president Anna Cofie, and other GSA members for this goal. We successfully made several accomplishments this year.

First, we had good communications with the International Student Services (ISS) Office regarding the suggestions and concerns for international student services. We communicated the intercultural understanding issues, grocery inconvenience, international students' visa concerns, counseling services, and assistantship opportunities. These suggestions that GSA members brought up during the bi-weekly meetings are valuable to help enhance the understanding and communications between students and university administrations. Second, I worked with the Graduate School on Graduate Students' Professional Development. I contributed blogs for the Graduate Student Appreciation Week. One of my blogs in leadership posted on the Graduate Student Appreciation Week Social Media. The article not only extends the traditional literature of what a successful leader is, but also compares the successful leaders in different cultural, social, and political contexts, which left a critical thinking and food for thought about how to serve the public good as a researcher, a practitioner, and a leader. These blogs are important topics for students' growth, especially leading students the correct directions of becoming successful leaders. Thirdly, I partnered with a campus organization Global Leadership Network Forum (GLNF). We sent out the flyers to USC diverse students body. We encouraged international students, and scholars to attend the leadership forums. My goal for being partnered with GLNF is to enhance students' intercultural understanding and community engagement within the cultural context of the US. The leadership forums helped our students from different cultural background embrace the world with an open-mind. Finally, I attended the dive-in lunches with the vice-president candidates. I presented the graduate students' voices. I asked questions and completed feedback serving as the search committee member.

By serving, organizing, and involving in these activities, I made my contribution to promote GSA's visibility as a strong organization. GSA is one of the most influential graduate students organizations at the University of South Carolina. I have also been successfully selected as the Civic Scholar serving the U of SC community in 2020-2021. These accomplishments make GSA a more competent, connected and important organization at the UofSC. GSA speaks to a larger community and context and continues to contribute to a strong Gamecock leadership team in the future. I am so proud of being a member of GSA!

## Report of the GSA Secretary of Legislative Affairs – Christopher Eddy

Throughout the academic year, I was honored to have the privilege of serving the graduate student association as the Secretary of Legislative Affairs. In accordance with the overall mission of the organization, I worked diligently to advocate on behalf of the needs of my community. I, along with other GSA officers, met with President Caslen on multiple occasions to ensure adequate representation of issues affecting graduate students. I helped organize the spring town hall event and facilitated the Q&A session, in which students were given the opportunity to raise any concerns related to their experiences at UofSC.

Most importantly, however, I led the charge on crafting an agenda to help guide the GSA officers on our trip to the nation's capitol. In doing so, I worked with the GSA executive officers attending the trip to prepare for our meetings with the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students and the SC congressional delegation. Every meeting was a learning experience as well as an opportunity to expand our repertoire of advocacy tactics. Meeting with staffers from Senators Tim Scott and Lindsay Graham's offices, as well as staffers from Reps. Jim Clyburn and Joe Wilson's offices each provided unique experiences to shed light on issues impacting the graduate student experience at the University of South Carolina.

Specifically, we voiced concerns around issues negatively impacting our international students and strongly emphasized the exceptional returns on investment associated with funding the graduate student experience. We noted that in addition to being an essential part of the state's economic activity, graduate student researchers play an essential role in acquiring research revenue for the university through their work on grant and research funding opportunities. Moreover, we highlighted the abundance of research showing that graduate students are far more likely to pay back the student debt that they accumulate while pursuing their degrees.

Having the opportunity to work directly with university administrators on behalf of the graduate student body has shown me the tireless effort that is required maintain our goal of academic excellence. I am especially thankful for the support and guidance provided to GSA from the Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Cheryl Addy, over our time spent in D.C., as well as for her exceptional work on behalf of students more broadly. To be sure, I feel that the mission of academic and research excellence at the University of South Carolina would be an impossible and unrealistic goal without the diligent and dedicated work from our graduate student community and those advocating on our behalf. It was my honor to represent the entire graduate student body, and I look forward to continuing my service in the future! Go Cocks!

## Report of the GSA Secretary of Multicultural Student Affairs -- Archie Crowley

### *Initial Goals:*

1. Connection: Increase participation and awareness of OMSA's LGBTQ+ Grad Socials
2. Accessibility: Continue working on conversion of all-gender bathrooms on campus
3. Education: Increase graduate student participation in Safe Zone Trainings

### *Results of these Goals:*

OMSA hosted 3 Graduate Student Socials in the Fall and 2 in the Spring (the final one has been canceled). Each LGBTQ+ Grad Social had between 5 and 10 participants. The socials were a place for connections and conversation, and there grew a strong core group of returning participants over the year. While I worked to spread the information to various networks, the main issue continued to be advertising and awareness. In that, utilizing the GSA email list and social media did allow for greater spread of the flyers and dates. Next year, the Grad Student Socials will become a part of OMSA's Affinity Groups, which I will be the facilitator for, and we will continue to meet once a month. In this new iteration, the Queer Grad group will continue to be a social group, but also hopefully have discussion topics around issues that face LGBTQ+ Grad Students specifically, such as disclosure and discrimination in the classroom or being LGBTQ+ on the job market. The plan for next year is to continue this program and to increase connections with LGBTQ+ faculty members for mentorship.

I had been working with Tracey Weldon, Dean of Diversity and Inclusion for the College of Arts and Sciences to push forward the conversion of bathrooms into all-gender bathrooms on campus. With the administrative change over, this project was put on hold for most of the year. There were five bathrooms in the Earth and Water Science Building that were converted, but there still remains a lot to do. This project is crucial to create a more accessible space for not only trans undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty, but also for disabled students and faculty, people with children, and many other community members.

This goal ultimately did not end up being a main focus for the year. This is still an important goal for the future to encourage all members of GSA to participate in a Safe Zone Training and to run some sort of campaign to encourage all Graduate Students (especially those who TA or teach) to participate in a Safe Zone workshop. In the goal of increasing education about LGBTQ+ issues on campus, in September 2019 I facilitated a workshop through the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) called "Trans Inclusion in the Classroom" which had 70 participants (in-person + online), about half of which were Graduate Students. This workshop was part of the "Teaching Towards Inclusive Excellence" Certificate Program, and I hope to facilitate this workshop again next year.

### Report of the GSA Secretary of Multicultural Student Affairs -- Monica Wade

Throughout my tenure on the president's cabinet, I attended the South Carolina Association of International Educators Conference, participated in interviews for Masters and Doctoral Programs, and created a mentorship program for middle school girls in DSS custody. Moreover, in serving the graduate student community, I met with President of the BGSA, reached out to graduate students about participating in GSA events, and volunteered at community events I also attended the Family Matters Forum and the Black Women in Higher Education Meeting.

### Report of the GSA Secretary of Professional Development – Alexis Kiser

This year I have had the honor of serving the graduate students at the University of South Carolina as Secretary of Professional Development for Graduate Student Association (GSA). At the beginning of the academic year I had one goal I wanted to achieve during my time on the GSA cabinet: *to increase the awareness of the inequalities in resources and services available to graduate students versus undergraduate students*. Every opportunity presented to me during my time in this position I sought to push closer to that goal. As Secretary of Professional Development, I was privileged to be a member of the Professional Development Advisory Committee. These committee meetings are held once a semester and consist of campus partners that are dedicated to providing quality professional development activities to graduate students. In these committee meets I advocated for more programs that are targeted to and catered to the needs of graduate students, as they are very different than those of undergraduate students. During this year I helped plan and execute Leadership Week and Graduate Student Appreciation Week. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances surrounding COVID-19 the latter was cancelled. We are still seeking to provide virtual opportunities during this week to graduate students. One event that was supposed to take place during Graduate Student Appreciation Week was Fresh Check Day. This event was sponsored by Student Health Services and would focus on mental health and wellness. I partnered with Lindsay Decker, Secretary of Mental Health, to participate in this event. Lindsay and I were members of the Fresh Check Day Committee where we helped to make the day possible. During Leadership Week I was charged with recruiting graduate students to write blog posts on leadership and submit leadership quotes to be used on The Graduate School social media (#GRADprofdev). I was able to submit a blog post myself during this week and I am proud of those who took the time to contribute. Additionally, I was able to meet with candidates for the position of Diversity and Inclusion and represented the needs of graduate students in this the selection process.

President Caslen was able to attend two Graduate Student Association meetings this year. The attendance of the University President at our bi-weekly meetings has not been done in the past and I would not miss the opportunity to speak with President Caslen directly with the inequalities in services offered to graduate students by campus partners. The more we remind senior leadership that these issues exist the more likely more financial resources will be diverted to fix the issues that negatively impact graduate students.

## Report of the GSA Secretary of Veterans Affairs – Jeffrey Yelverton

The first task I worked on during my tenure on the president’s cabinet was the successful Veterans Day 2020 event. The event included the Veterans Day breakfast, Veterans Day 5k, and Veterans Day Gamecocks Salute to service home game. Further, I am proud of my efforts to get Purple Heart parking spaces and reduce rates for parking for purple heart students. Broadly speaking, I worked to expand awareness of veteran students on campus. Examples include: working towards getting a new veteran student lounge in the new ROTC building, participating in VSSAC meetings to help coordinate events, access, and help for veteran students’ campus wide, and participating in SVA- Student Veterans Association.



## Going Forward: 2020-2021 Executive Board



**President**  
Maggie Carson  
*Ph.D. student,  
Public Health*



**Vice President**  
Maxwell Akonde  
*Ph.D. student,  
Public Health*



**Treasurer**  
Christopher Eddy  
*Ph.D. student,  
Political Science*



**Graduate Council Rep.**  
Sudipta Saha  
*Ph.D. student,  
Mechanical Engineering*

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