

Graduate Student Association

University of South Carolina Student Life

Annual Report
2020-2021



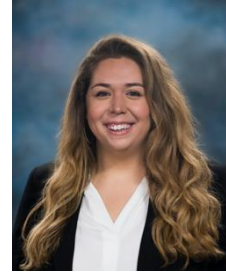
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GSA President's Farewell

Dear Graduate and Professional Students,

It was a great honor to serve as the President of the Graduate Student Association this past year. I never could've guessed what a challenge it would be navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, but I am so thankful I was given such an amazing opportunity to advocate on behalf of all the graduate students at the University of South Carolina. There is still much work that needs done and I looked forward to the future work of my successors, but I hope this year and the accomplishments that GSA made will help improve the graduate student experience at UofSC for years to come. Serving as GSA president was both an important milestone in my academic and professional career development and was an experience I will never forget. I am so grateful to each and every person who worked with me this year to help make progress for GSA possible.



During this past challenging and unique year of being a graduate student during the COVID-19 global pandemic, GSA tried a myriad of new methods to continue to try to stay as engaged with graduate students and make sure their voices were heard on campus, as much as a typical, in-person, year on campus.

Our accomplishments are shared in this report. I cannot cover all the events we did this year or the issues we worked, but here's a summary of the 2020-2021 year:

1. Increased our engagement and focused on building relationships with university leadership and campus offices to **help GSA become a major stakeholder** on The University of South Carolina campus. Making sure the graduate student body can share concerns/needs to affect timely change.
2. **Increased bi-directional communication** with students and the university through townhall events including university leadership, adding comment box to our website for student input, re-introducing bi-weekly newsletters, increasing social media engagement, opening meetings to all students, and attending orientations with graduate students across campus.
3. **Advocated for an increase in the graduate student health insurance subsidy** to 100% for graduate assistants and PhD students beginning in Fall 2021.
4. **Increased Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts across campus for all students** but especially graduate students. Making sure to help elevate graduate students to be recognized to join all conversations and tables for decisions that would impact us.
5. **Developed and Implemented first UofSC awards program specific to graduate students** to celebrate the amazing accomplishments we have on our campus.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me move the GSA forward, especially my executive board and cabinet. I look forward to work with the GSA next year as the graduate council representative under the leadership of our next president!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Carson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret A. Carson

A Word from the University President, Bob Caslen



At the University of South Carolina, our graduate students are an integral part of our campus community serving as researchers, instructors, and leaders.

As we navigated the COVID-19 pandemic this past year, our Graduate Student Association served as an essential part of our university-wide team that responded to COVID-19 and planned the return to campus while ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of our university community.

Our Graduate Student Association served as an essential part of our university-wide team that responded to COVID-19

Our graduate students continue to reflect the highest levels of academic and research achievement in all areas and are actively contributing to our campus-wide conversation about the values of our university.

I was proud to work alongside GSA officers Maggie, Maxwell, Christopher and Sudipta in this effort, as they have advocated for vital issues that affect graduate students across the university.

I look forward to continuing this work with the new GSA officers as we deliver on our academic and research mission.



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. It was a year that will certainly go down in the history books for the University of South Carolina, and for all students who were on campus during the COVID-19 pandemic. GSA president, Maggie Carson, and team were elected during an online voting period that occurred when the university was closed in April 2020 for the beginning of the pandemic. Upon election of the new officers, the executive group began working with Future Planning Groups to evaluate, strategize and plan for the reopening of the campus community. The response and involvement from the GSA leadership required effective leadership, open communication, and collaboration to every corner of the university. It was truly an incredible feat that took each leader to do their part in preparing for the year ahead.

The association was led by strong student leaders who were clear in their purpose and priorities. These priorities shifted throughout the year as needs and concerns from across our country played out on campus. There were protests and calls for racial justice, more support for international students, and a national presidential election season that illuminated deep divisions between the student body and our society. Our student leaders modeled the way by addressing issues head on, affirming support for people, justice, and fair processes.

The association was led by strong student leaders who were clear in their purpose and priorities. These priorities shifted throughout the year as needs and concerns from across our country played out on campus.

Throughout the year, the students-initiated meetings with university administrators that had purpose and a focus related to their goals. The university welcomed new institutional leadership in Provost William Tate, VP for Diversity, Julian Williams, and a new interim dean of the graduate school, Tracey Weldon. 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 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. This will be a year for the record books and the students who have served this year have left an impressionable mark on the university and the Department of Student Life. 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 Immediate Past Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Cheryl Addy

Graduate students are the heart and soul of any comprehensive research university, and the University of South Carolina is no exception. I write this message a few months after stepping away from the Graduate School, but my entire career at the University of South Carolina has focused on graduate education.



Over the past year in particular, I have increasingly recognized the critical role of graduate students to the broader mission of the university. The Graduate Student Association has provided advocacy and leadership for all our graduate students for many years, but this role has expanded as university leadership has increasingly

welcomed your active involvement.

In particular, it has been my pleasure and privilege to work with GSA leaders on several committees with both our COVID-response Future Planning Group and the university Strategic Planning Group, in addition to the Policy Advisory Committee.

The Graduate Student Association has provided advocacy and leadership for all our graduate students for many years, but this role has expanded as university leadership has increasingly welcomed your active involvement.

As my professional responsibilities evolve for more focus on faculty affairs and other institutional functions, I express my sincere appreciation to the Graduate Student Association and its leaders for their advocacy, engagement, and commitment to improving the graduate student experience and my encouragement to grow in these roles. I also offer my support and best wishes to all graduate students as they pursue their chosen educational and career goals.

Forever to thee.

A Word from the Interim Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Tracy Weldon



Since accepting the position of Interim Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Education on January 1, 2021, I have had the opportunity to engage with the Graduate Student Association and its leadership on several occasions to discuss how the Graduate School can best position itself to meet the needs of graduate students here at the University of South Carolina.

Such opportunities have been among the most fruitful and rewarding time spent in this new role. I am particularly guided by the discussion at a recent townhall event hosted by the GSA, during which graduate students, GSA officers, and senior leadership in the Graduate School had the opportunity to cover a wide range of issues, including stipends, health insurance coverage, international student support, diversity training, professional development, communication, parking, graduate student housing, and the EOP reporting system.

Over the past few months, we have also received valuable feedback from graduate students regarding mental health support, fellowship access, and career services.

Over the past few months, we have also received valuable feedback from graduate students regarding mental health support, fellowship access, and career services. And, of course, we remain cognizant of the enduring impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on all aspects of graduate student life.

The Graduate School has also been charged with addressing the priorities set forth in the university's new strategic plan, For South Carolina: A Path to Excellence, which calls for increases in graduate student enrollments, more degrees conferred, enhanced experiential learning opportunities, and a more robust diversity pipeline. While taken together, these form an ambitious and laudable agenda, I am optimistic that we can begin to move the needle on many of these goals over the coming year.

The Graduate School stands ready to team up with the Graduate Student Association, the graduate faculty and administrative staff, and our various campus partners, as we strive to provide graduate students at the University of South Carolina with the best possible experience in graduate education. We look forward to the year ahead.

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.

Graduate Student Association 2020-2021 Executive Board



President
Margaret (Maggie)
Carson
Ph.D. candidate
**Environmental
Health Sciences**



Vice President
Maxwell Akonde
Ph.D. student
Epidemiology



Treasurer
Christopher Eddy
Ph.D. student
Political Science



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



Graduate Student Association 2020-2021

President's Cabinet

Position	Name	School/College
<i>Chief of Staff</i>	Shauni Bernier	Darla Moore School of Business
<i>Secretary of Data Management</i>	Micheal Seidman	College of Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management
<i>Secretary of Community Outreach</i>	Katarina Merlini	The College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Co-Secretary of Graduate Assistantships</i>	Zach Jenkins	College of Education
<i>Co-Secretary of Graduate Assistantship</i>	Rebekah Turnmire	The College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations</i>	Victoria Armstrong	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of GSA Affairs</i>	Rachel Taylor	College of Education
<i>Secretary of Mental Health</i>	Genee Glascoe	College of Education
<i>Co-Secretary of General Health</i>	Rajat Das Gupta	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Co-Secretary of General Health</i>	Osasere Egheomhan	College of Engr & Computing
<i>Secretary of International Student Affairs</i>	Frances Hutchful	College of Information and Communications
<i>Secretary of Legislative Affairs</i>	Robbie Anderson	The College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Co-Secretary of Multicultural Student Affairs</i>	Molly Cameron	College of Information and Communications
<i>Co-Secretary of Multicultural Student Affairs</i>	Quin Cureton	College of Education
<i>Co-Secretary of Professional Development</i>	Tasha Childs	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Co-Secretary of Professional Development</i>	Justin Price	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Veteran Affairs</i>	Steve Wahle	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Student Government Liaison</i>	Kyle Radtke	Darla Moore School of Business
<i>Secretary of Student Life</i>	Sowmya Raghu	College of Engr & Computing
<i>Co-Secretary of College Ambassadors</i>	Philip Berry	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Co-Secretary of College Ambassadors</i>	Justin Smith	Darla Moore School of Business
<i>Secretary of Social Media/Press Secretary</i>	Katelynn Stewart	College of Arts and Sciences

2020-2021 Finance Committee

<i>Name</i>	<i>School/College</i>
<i>Christopher Eddy, Chair</i>	Political Science
<i>Victoria Armstrong</i>	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Zach Jenkins</i>	College of Education
<i>Abigail Hassett</i>	Political Science
<i>Makayla Gibson</i>	Psychology
<i>Ali Iskender</i>	Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management

GSA Representation in University Committees

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Name</i>
<i>Future Planning Groups</i>	Maggie Carson, Maxwell Akonde, Christopher Eddy
<i>Revision 2020</i>	Maggie Carson, Maxwell Akonde
<i>Bookstores</i>	Kyle Radtke
<i>FS¹ Committee on Curricula and Courses</i>	Christopher Eddy
<i>FS Committee on Honorary Degrees</i>	Kyle Radtke
<i>FS Committee on Instructional Development</i>	Tasha Childs
<i>Scholastic Standards and Petitions</i>	Saha Sudipta
<i>Commencement</i>	Maggie Carson
<i>Policy Advisory</i>	Christopher Eddy
<i>PACWI</i>	Katelynn Stewart, Frances Hutchful
<i>Graduate Council</i>	Saha Sudipta
<i>Affirmative Action/EO/Diversity/Inclusion</i>	Maggie Carson
<i>DIAC</i>	Maggie Carson
<i>Chemical Safety</i>	Sowmya Raghu
<i>IACUC</i>	Makayla Gibson
<i>Institutional Biosafety</i>	Makayla Gibson
<i>Professional Development Committee</i>	-
<i>MUNGO Awards</i>	Saha Sudipta
<i>FS Information Technology Committee</i>	Saha Sudipta
<i>FS University Athletics Advisory Committee</i>	Philip Berry
<i>Parking Appellate Court</i>	Quin Cureton
<i>Parking and Transit Advisory</i>	Molly Cameron
<i>Health Services Advisory Committee</i>	Genee Glascoe

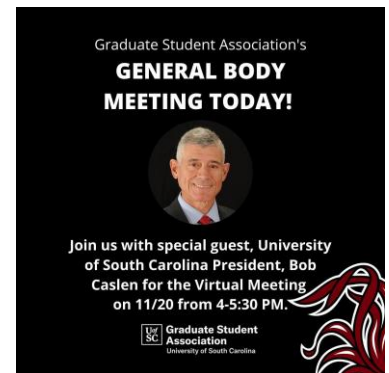
¹ Faculty Senate

<i>Mental Health Initiatives Committee</i>	Maggie Carson
<i>New Union Steering Committee</i>	Michael Seidman
<i>M.J.M. Distinguished Professor of the Year Award C.</i>	-
<i>Community Relations</i>	Maggie Carson
<i>Non-Campus Safety Committee</i>	Maggie Carson
<i>University 101 Academic Advisory Committee</i>	Maxwell Akonde
<i>University Safety Committee</i>	Maggie Carson
<i>University Libraries' Student Advisory Council</i>	Molly Cameron

GSA Engagement on Campus

Engagement with USC Administration

- The GSA increased its collaboration and communication with many entities on campus, including President Caslen, Provost Tate, Vice President of DEI Julian Williams, Dean of the graduate school- dr. Cheryl Addy and Dr. Tracey Weldon, University Health Services, the Graduate School, Student Life, Deans across campus, and Student Government:
 - Recognizing the importance of the graduate student body to the academic mission of the university, President Caslen attended numerous GSA cabinet/biweekly meetings to directly engage with graduate students.
 - President Caslen invited GSA executives to dinners whereby these served the platforms to discuss concerns of graduate students
 - GSA executives met with the Dean Addy at the beginning of the academic year to get abreast with what the graduate school was doing to address issues affecting graduate students
 - GSA executive also engaged Interim Dean Weldon when she was appointed to get to know the plans for graduate students and to lay concerns of students
 - GSA invited the Dean of Libraries, Dean McNally, to the GSA biweekly meetings, to address students concerns relating to the library and the use of the Graduate Students
 - GSA executives engaged with Provost William F. Tate and Vice President Julian Williams on assumption of their respective offices to put across students' concerns that needed attention
 - GSA executives met with Dean of the Graduate School and other representatives to discuss the need for an all-graduate student orientation for students across campus, due to the decentralized of graduate students and to mitigate disparities of knowledge across campus through departmental and college wide orientations. Development began and was implemented for the first time virtually in Fall 2021.
 - The GSA executives met frequently with Dr. Anna Edwards, the associate vice president for student life, and Student Body executives, in order to enhance communication and collaboration between GSA and Student Government.
 - A delegation of GSA executive board and cabinet members, including Vice President Maxwell Akonde, Chief of Staff Shauni Bernier, and Legislative Affairs Secretary Robbie Anderson engaged the offices of the South Carolina Congressional Delegation, with the help of the university lobbyist, to advocate on behalf of the graduate student body.



- GSA president, Maggie Carson participated and spoke about student engagement in meetings and through panel discussions when Ambassador Deborah Birx, M.D., who visited the University of South Carolina Thursday, September 10th to learn about our COVID-19 Response plan, including our risk mitigation strategies and community partnerships. She wants to understand what is and is not working and how the Federal Government can help.



- GSA president, Maggie Carson served on Presidential commission on University History. In 2019, President Robert J. Caslen created the commission to examine and address historic context at the university, from evaluating and re-naming university buildings to broadening acknowledgement of key groups and individuals that have

contributed to the university over time.

- GSA president, Maggie Carson was invited to participate in a COVID-19 Townhall with President Caslen and other leadership during the summer of 2020 to represent graduate students and make sure it was known that their voices were being heard in Future Planning Group meetings and in decisions being made about COVID-19 and being back on campus.

- GSA president, Maggie Carson was involved in the communication campaign development for the COVID-19 vaccine. GSA helped support the efforts through our communication channels.

- GSA president, Maggie Carson and GSA Vice President Maxwell Akonde served on the 2020 Revision Working Group. A letter written by students, undergraduate and graduate, to the university and it's leadership to affect change.

The working group came from this letter to help implement actions requested by letter. This led to the hiring of new graduate student specific person for career development and a new person specific to graduate student fellowships. Additionally, began the process for developing and implementing DEI training for all students, including graduate students- still in progress. Also, requesting increasing funding for the Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program and developing other opportunities for underrepresented graduate students.



2020-2021 Annual Report



○ GSA executive officers Maggie Carson and Chris Eddy along with other student leaders across campus and university leadership came together in the Spring of 2021 to participate in the University Leadership Retreat on Culture. During this time we discussed what we wanted the university to be and how we would shape that into becoming a reality.

○ GSA officers and cabinet members served on the Strategic Planning Groups 1-8. President, Maggie Carson served on Strategic Planning Groups (SPG) 1-The Best Students, SPG 2-World Class Faculty and Staff (along with Treasurer Chris Eddy), SPG 3- Outstanding Research, and SPG-8- Win with Character. Additionally serving on a special SPG breakout group for mental health for students.

- https://sc.edu/about/our_leadership/president/strategic_plan/index.php
- We worked in these groups to make sure the graduate student voice was heard and included in the decisions that are being made that impact the future of the university and therefore the future 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.

Student Engagement

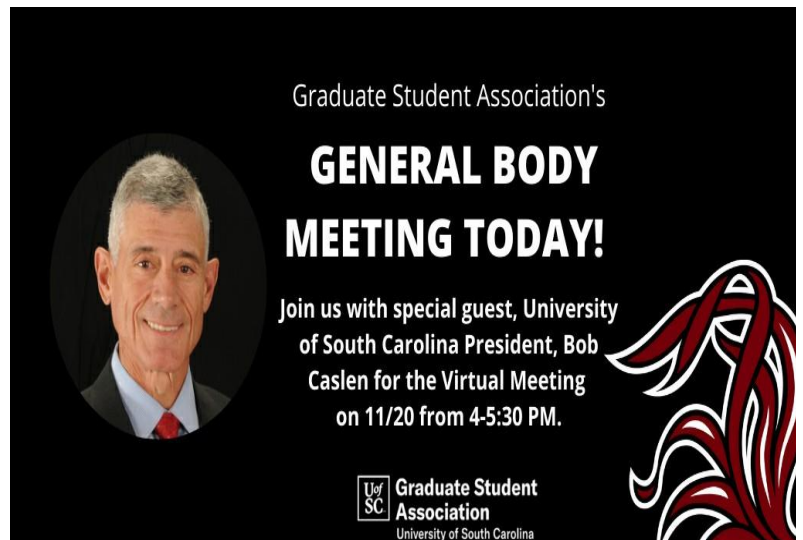
GSA Orientation, Retreat and Welcome Event – August 17, 2020



Owing to the pandemic, GSA’s orientation for cabinet and welcome event for 2020-2021 was virtual. The welcome event is symbolic of the continuous growth of GSA and its impact throughout the graduate student community. It is usually the largest event of the organization and this year saw President Caslen, former Dean Addy, Dr. Anna Edwards, Dr Judy Chontos-Komorowski of the Student Health Services, and Julie Medlin and Lauren Smith of the International Student Services, in attendance

General Body Meetings

The General body meetings for 2020-2021 was more participatory. Graduate students who were not cabinet members were made to RSVP and the link sent to them to join. Various respective administrators participated in the General meetings this year.



Time Management Event – September 3, 2020



The Time management event was a collaboration between the the Graduate Student Association and the Graduate School. The event consisted of President Maggie Caslen, Vice President Maxwell Akonde, Professional development Secretaries Tasha Childs and Justin Price as panelists with Mr. Wright Culpeper as the moderator.



Town Hall Events- 2020-2021

GSA held 4 town halls during the 2020-2021 year: two each in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. Key issues that were brought up at the town include: Information transparency for tuition packages across disciplines/ units; grandfathering graduate student pay at lower rates in college of arts and sciences; Health insurance subsidy; mental health issues; issues with fees from ISS for International students; and strengthening support from ISS and providing more transparent information for graduate students



Graduate Student Association Town Hall
Wednesday, November 11th
from 3:00-5:00 p.m.

with special guests
Dr. Cheryl L. Addy,
Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate School, and
Dr. Anna Edwards,
Associate Vice President
for Student Life



RSVP Here:
<https://bit.ly/3oGcaf>



 Graduate Student Association
University of South Carolina



Graduate Student Association Town Hall
Wednesday, March 10th
from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.



Dr. Tracey L. Weldon, Interim Dean of The Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Education, will be joining the Town Hall from 3-4 p.m.

RSVP VIA QR CODE OR LINK:
<https://bit.ly/3qpZix7>

 Graduate Student Association
University of South Carolina

International Festival on Greene – November 13, 2020

Global Carolina presents the
12th annual
International Festival on Greene



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2020, 11AM - 2PM

Join our campus in celebrating the
97 countries represented at UofSC!

go.sc.edu/iew

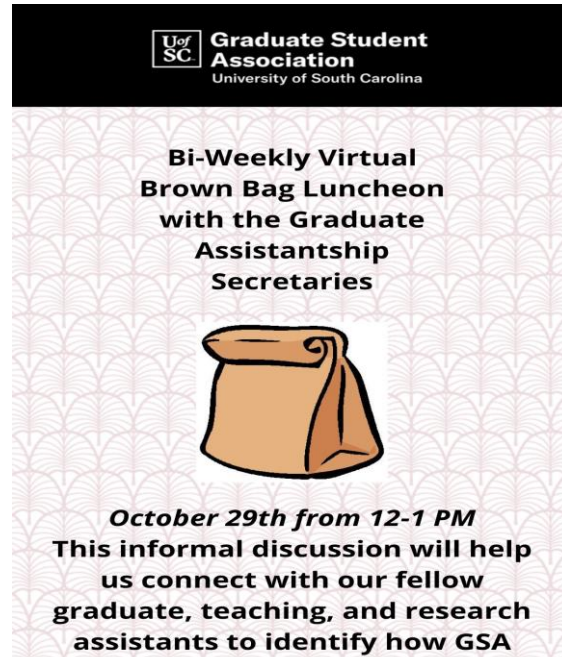


GSA participated in the International Festival on Greene organized by Global Carolina. This was an excellent outreach opportunity where the Graduate Student Association had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with graduate students, listen to concerns, and provide information about GSA related events, 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!



Brown Bag Luncheons

The Graduate Student Association introduced a biweekly brown bag luncheon through the Secretaries of Graduate Assistantship. This offered the platform for informal discussions and for graduate students to connect with fellow graduate students and identify ways to make GSA better serve their needs. We are grateful to Secretaries Rebekah Turnmire and Zach Jenkins for this incredible platform they created.



GSA International Coffee Hour – October 30, 2020



Created by the Secretary of International Affairs, this coffee hour brought together international graduate students to discuss issues of diversity, race, and diversity. Thanks to Secretary Frances Hutchful and all secretaries who supported this initiative. GSA brought together as many of the executive officers and cabinet members who were available to share with students about their programming and advocacy efforts for the school year. Additionally to be available to listen to graduate students needs and bring them to the proper channels to gain greater attention.

“2020 Graduation Recognition Ceremony”

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 commencement was moved to a virtual format, and president Caslen promised graduates they would be able to return and celebrate their accomplishments, so in May 2021 the 2020 graduation recognition ceremony was held in Williams Brice Stadium. GSA president, Maggie Carson was invited to speak to graduates along with Student Body President Issy Rushton (picture above).



COVID-19 Graduate Student Survey

In the Spring of 2021, GSA put out a survey for graduate students to assess needs and gather data about our population to help us better advocate for things like increase in stipends across campus, food insecurity, housing insecurity, childcare support, parking, student ticketing, and many more. Over 700 students participated, and we are going through the data and will issue a report after analysis. Thank you to everyone who helped develop, implement, and take the survey. This data is crucial to advancing our advocacy efforts.

GSA Advocacy

GSA Executive Agenda 2020-2021

1. **Communication:** Increase bi-directional communication between the University, the Graduate School, and graduate students.
 - Establish the graduate student community as a major stakeholder of the university
 - Create a platform for graduate students to interact and make voices heard throughout university including with administration
2. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Increase DEI education, provide more opportunities for students, work on the Revision 2020 plan, increase opportunities for underrepresented minority graduate students.
3. **Improve Graduate Student Experience:** Make sure all graduate students needs and concerns are brought to proper channels, centralization of data in the graduate school
4. **Graduate Student Mental Health Needs:** Working to address the specific needs of UofSC graduate student mental health and help the university recognize and develop programming specific to this population. Additionally encourage additional resources including mental health professionals specific to graduate students.

Meeting with South Carolina Congressmen – March 26, 2021

Each spring, members of the Graduate Student Association travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with the South Carolina Congressional Delegation to discuss pertinent policy issues that affect graduate students at the University of South Carolina. Unfortunately, due to public health concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings had to be held virtually. Prior to the meeting, Robbie Anderson, GSA Secretary for Legislative Affairs, contacted Steven Beckhan, the University's Lobbyist, to discuss policy issues that are of interest to graduate students. Robbie also held a meeting with the Government Affairs unit of the Council of Graduate Schools to be briefed on legislation debated in Congress that are of interest to the University of South Carolina Graduate School. On March 26, Robbie, along with Steven Beckham, Shauni Bernier and Max Akonde, met with South

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. 4679 – Simplifying Student Loans Act
- H.R. 4874 – College Affordability Act
- H.R. 4749 – Student Loan Relief Act of 2019
- H.R. 4989 – 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. 8687 – FAFSA Simplification Act of 2019
- H. R. 4967 – FAFSA Translation Act

To decrease the length and complexity of the FAFSA.

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

Information & Transparency

Support:

- H.R. 4648 – Transparency in On-Campus Housing Act
- H.R. 4587 – Truth in Tuition Act of 2019
- H.R. 4896 – Student Loan Advocacy Act
- H.R. 4862 – Accountability in Student Loan Data Act
- H.R. 4968 – Basic Assistance for Students in College (BASIC) Act
- H.R. 9148 – 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 HGH) Act

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

Proposed Amendments to Title IX

Support:

- H.R. 5288 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.

Comments

Recent Achievements:

- H.R. 5363 – Passage of the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act
- H.J.Res.78 – 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.

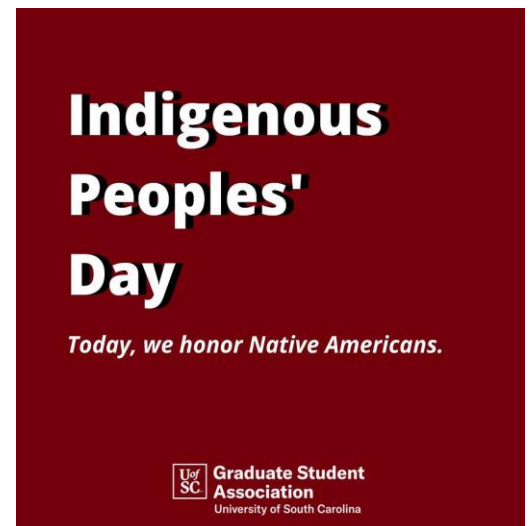
Carolina’s Congressional Delegation staff members in a series of three Zoom meetings. The morning session included the offices of Congressmen Rice, Wilson, Norman, and Mace. The noon session included the offices of Congressmen Clyburn, Timmons, and Duncan. The afternoon session included the offices of Senators Graham and Scott. In the meetings, we advocated for the expansion of Pell Grants for graduate students, COVID-19 relief, and immigration reform that considers the rights of international students. It was a productive meeting. Even though it was different from previous meetings, we had productive conversations, and our team was well received by the South Carolina Congressional Delegation offices.

Statements of Support

The Graduate Student Association advocated on many incidents that happened both within the University and outside. GSA issued statements highlighting: the need for the university to increase its diversity efforts with revision 2020, immigration issues affecting international students, recognizing indigenous people’s day, supporting the re-naming of buildings across campus, divesting in fossil fuels, and supporting 100% insurance subsidy for graduate students.

Indigenous People’s Day Statement

Below is GSA’s Indigenous People’s Day Statement Issued in Fall 2020 on our social media and through our newsletter going to all graduate students and administration.



“The Graduate Student Association of the University of South Carolina (GSA) condemns the continual celebration of Columbus Day and calls for its immediate replacement with Indigenous Peoples’ Day at the University of South Carolina, the City of Columbia, and in the state of South Carolina.

As of October 2020, at least 14 U.S. states and 130 U.S cities, have rejected Columbus Day, and replaced the holiday with one meant to celebrate all Indigenous people and acknowledge their collective history, Indigenous Peoples’ Day. **GSA urges the leadership of the University of South Carolina to join us in the celebration of Indigenous Peoples’ Day.** We need to learn from the past, acknowledge the Indigenous peoples’ whose land we stand upon, and move toward a better future together.

GSA condemns the celebration of a “European discovery” of a continent that was already populated by hundreds of indigenous nations, each with their own well-established culture. Instead, we want to celebrate and honor the histories, lives, and accomplishments of Indigenous People everywhere.

We will not celebrate Christopher Columbus, due to his orchestration of genocidal rape, mass genocide, dispossession of land, and slavery of Indigenous people. The acknowledgement of “Columbus Day” remains a painful reminder of the centuries of brutalization Indigenous people experienced and to continue to celebrate Columbus is to celebrate xenophobia, violence, and incompetence.

Today is a day to remember and recognize that we are all living on Indigenous land. Consider taking the time to learn the history of the land you live on and about the Indigenous nations across the country.

If we choose to remain silent, we are just as complicit.
Happy Indigenous Peoples’ Day!

The Graduate Student Association at the University of South Carolina”

SEVP Statement



7/7/20

Graduate Student Association
University of South Carolina Student Life

On July 6th, 2020, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency released new guidelines for international students under the “Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP).” While the new rules have the potential to impact students enrolled in online and hybrid courses, the situation is still developing and unclear on many fronts. Nevertheless, **The Graduate Student Association (GSA) stands in solidarity with all international students at the UofSC and across the country.** We understand both the unique challenges associated with studying in a new country and the extraordinary value that international students bring to the academic enterprise. We recognize that despite being a core part of our community, international students may struggle with feelings of alienation, loneliness, and other academic pressures impacting both general and mental health. For many, these challenges have been compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic and will be further exacerbated by the unconscionable and rash action taken by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency. Given the unprecedented emergency we find ourselves in, and recognizing the rapidly changing dynamics of the situation, **GSA demands that the University of South Carolina immediately take the following actions:**

- UofSC leaders must condemn this reckless act and take all necessary steps, including legal means, to protect international students
- The university must work with students to create flexible opportunities for “face-to-face instruction,” ensuring all international students can meet the criteria imposed by ICE
- Ensure that all thesis/dissertation preparation hours are (and will remain) classified as “F2F,” even if the University is forced to pivot to fully online instruction later in the term
- All Colleges & Departments must offer the necessary face-to-face requirements for international students, even if doing so requires the addition of new Independent Study opportunities
- ISS must continue responding promptly to all concerns raised by international students as the situation develops

Despite facing unique challenges, research shows that the diverse perspectives of our non-immigrant brothers and sisters enhances the general quality of the university learning and research experience, our community, and even the broader U.S. economy. International students play a vital role in the pursuit of scientific knowledge at academic institutions across the country, and the graduate student association will always advocate unequivocally for all members of our community. **We ask everyone to join us in our advocacy by contacting the members of the South Carolina Congressional Delegation.** You can find a statement prepared by the National Association of Graduate and Profession Students and the contact information for our representatives at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e_DekArzDrNhy-FEsT6m6LI4sKtemF3aqbU24Q3G-ic/edit?usp=sharing

Together, by simply forwarding the prepared letter, we can make our collective voice be heard.

Forever to thee,
The Graduate Student Association

Above, is GSA’s statement in support of international students at UofSC and across the Country.

Statement from GSA in Support of Divestment in Fossil Fuels

“Statement on the Recommendation to Divest the University of South Carolina From the Fossil Fuel Industry

Climate change has been affirmed by scientific evidence and because of this we believe that we need to do our part to mitigate impending changes best we can. Climate change has brought many negative impacts on the environment which will in turn continue to harm natural habitats, food production, infrastructure developments, human health, and economic conditions. We humans are exacerbating this problem.

According to the United States Energy Information Administration, 75% of greenhouse gas emissions are produced from fossil fuels. As companies continue to grow and increase their profits, they seemingly have ignored the ecosystem at large. While expanding operations may be corporate strategy, these initiatives have shown deliberate encroachment on endangered habitats, increased pollution levels, and consumed larger amounts of non-renewable resources.

The membership of the Graduate Student Association of the University of South Carolina joins the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association to recommend that the University Educational Foundation freeze financial investments earmarked for any purpose of promoting marketing and/or usage of fossil fuels. We believe the increasing financial risks of the fossil fuel industry will create volatility in efforts towards promoting biodiversity.

Supporting Revision 2020 Letter to University of South Carolina

June 19th, 2020

“To the University of South Carolina,

Five years ago, the Black students and leaders of the University of South Carolina demanded top-down systematic changes to our campus. They sought to create a more inclusive, representative, and diverse Carolina through focused, deliberate, and attainable changes. This set of demands was titled *2020 Vision*.

Today, 171 days into 2020 and 25 days after George Floyd’s death, we are invoking the past, recognizing the present, and advocating for a better future. It is time to address the requests made by the group of Gamecocks, who are now alumni, and recognize that their vision is still incomplete. While many changes were completed, we, as current students of the university believe it is time to revise their demands, and put forward some of our own.

Around 220 years ago, South Carolina College welcomed its first students. Since then, the university has steered a rollercoaster of great triumph and noticeable shortcomings in its inclusion and equity efforts. From the desegregation of the university on September 11th, 1963 by Robert G. Anderson, Henrie Monteith Treadwell, and James L. Solomon Jr., to leading the creation of the African American Studies department by key Civil Rights leader, Dean Wille Lloyd Harriford Jr, there are many triumphs to be remembered. However, the university has also been shrouded into shameful darkness by praising our most historically prominent alumni without addressing the horrors of their past. Without addressing the past, the university remains neutral in the judgement of these horrors. Since the university's founding in 1801, one constant has remained: our marginalized students are not safe from hate. This twenty-first century hatred has manifested itself on Zoom, Snapchat, and in daily microaggressions meant to chip away at our identities. We have worked in the past to improve the multicultural student condition on this campus. Following multiple attempts, students took a bold approach listing demands penned by the students -- students who still feel silenced. But as we look forward, we must first recognize what has changed since 2015.

The following have been completed since the first declaration:

- 1) The Multicultural Outreach Student Team (M.O.S.T.) and the Black Honors Caucus was created to increase attendance & maintain retention.
- 2) In 2018, the African-American graduation rate was 75% - a percentage more than twice the national average, and up 17% over the past decade.
- 3) Markers have been placed on the Horseshoe to commemorate the slaves that built & maintained the university.
- 4) The university appointed their first Vice President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.
- 5) The university will be introducing a new diversity training course that will be mandatory for all incoming freshmen as part of new student orientation.

Although progress has been made towards a more inclusive Carolina, there is more to be done. Carolina is home to us all, but we experience the university in different ways. This action plan is a way to ensure progress for our marginalized communities. As students, these actions are a necessity to the creation of a greater Carolinian experience for all.

Forever to Thee,”

Below is an action plan that we hold the university and its administration use to implement positive change within the Carolinian community. We demand the following:

- 1) We hold that the university revisit the Carolina Core requirements to include mandatory education for students focused on marginalized communities such as African-American, LGBTQIA+, and Latinx-based offerings. This includes but is not limited to:

- a) Diversified offerings to fulfill the required course categories of US. History, English, Sociology and/or Philosophy and Ethics.
 - b) Mandatory diversity education requirements through major/departmental curriculums.
- 2) We hold that the Office of Pre-Professional Advising takes responsibility in their role of supporting marginalized students through the process of moving from undergraduate to professional school. This includes but is not limited to: the application process, availability & acquisition of resources and aid, and/or overcoming other barriers to entry. In addition, we hold that the office:
- a) Complete a comprehensive research study investigating how many medical, law, and other professional school matriculants come from the University of South Carolina, by race since 2000.
 - b) Develop innovative methods within the Office of Pre-Professional Advisement (OPPA) to better connect with underrepresented and in-state students so that these students utilize university resources and become competitive applicants for professional school.
- 3) We hold that the university expand minority recruitment efforts in order to increase racial diversity on our campus by:
- a) The creation of a minority scholars program through the South Carolina Honors College, Capstone Scholars, and Top Scholars programs.
 - b) Increased funding to the *M.O.S.T* outreach program.
 - c) Increased funding to the Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program and expansion of funding opportunities specific to underrepresented graduate students, both masters & doctoral.
- 4) We hold that the Board of Trustees, as a governing body, take an intentional stance towards the renaming of all buildings on our university campus that have racially-charged backgrounds. This includes but is not limited to: having direct involvement with the ownership of slaves, the Confederacy, hate speech, and/or identity-centered violence. While we affirm the creation of the Presidential Commission on University History, the buildings we, as current students of the university believe must be immediately renamed are: J. Marion Sims Women's Residence Hall, Strom Thurmond Wellness & Fitness Center, and the Thomas Cooper Library.
- 5) We hold that the University expand the Graduation with Leadership Distinction in Diversity and Social Advocacy to include social justice work beyond campus.
- 6) On May 31st 2020, President Caslen held that all freshmen at the University of South Carolina would be required to complete a new diversity module as part of their orientation process. We hold that this training includes comprehensive and expansive diversity & inclusion modules including topics related to implicit bias, LGBTQIA+ education, and socioeconomic mobility. We also hold that this training be expanded to faculty and staff, and that each university department, including athletics, complete an annual report outlining their plans to promote diversity and inclusivity within their sector.
- 7) We hold the further establishment of on-campus gathering places that symbolize the multicultural history of the university, specifically through the development of the Woodrow Court & when enacted, the new university student union.

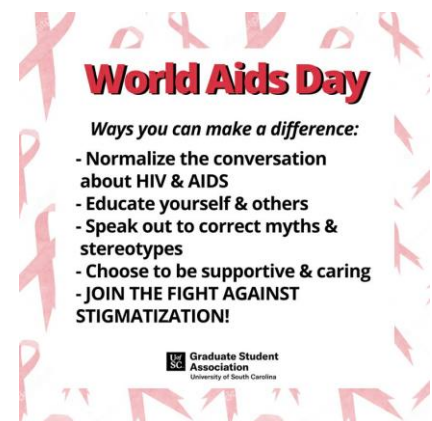
Report of the GSA Vice President, Maxwell Akonde

The year 2020-2021 will forever go in the history books of the world as one most memorable. This has been an incredible year right from the beginning. The electoral process that saw me elected as the Vice President was unprecedented given that the University of South Carolina was under lockdown due to the CoVID-19 pandemic. All activities were moved to virtual. The executive board on election assumed responsibilities in helping university administrators develop guidelines to ensure a safe reopening of the University in the Fall of 2020.

I served on the Future Planning Group 5, which was the Risk Management group, charged with assessing all possible ways of reducing the risk of the SARS- CoV-2 spread on campus. Few virtual meetings were held where I attended and advocated to include the concerns of graduate students.

As the vice president, I oversaw the internal affairs of GSA as well as serving on committees as need be. One key project was to review the constitution so that GSA can better serve the needs of graduate students. I put together a team of secretaries with the Legislative Affairs Secretary, Robbie Anderson, as the chairperson of the team. I had oversight responsibility and providing the team with direction and resources that they needed. The reviewed constitution received an overwhelming endorsement from graduate students on completion.

I worked with the graduate school on a time management discussion. With president Maggie, professional development secretaries Tasha and Justin, we discussed our experiences as graduate students on being effective with one's time. This was later shared with all graduate students as part of the professional development programs by the graduate school for the fall 2020. I coordinated the activities of the GSA health team that comprised of the Mental health secretary Genee Glascoe and General Health secretaries Rajat Das Gupta and Osasere Egheomhan where we implemented weekly updates on CoVID-19 situation, campaigning against stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS and organizing mental health round time discussions. Additionally, I worked closely with the Graduate student recognition awards committee, to implement the maiden awards ceremony to recognize the many accomplishment of graduate students. This ceremony can be described as successful with over 200 graduate students applying for 7 different awards categories.



One key advocacy for GSA has been increased diversity. I served on revision 2020 at the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I advocated for diversity issues of graduate students to be well looked at. This included increasing funding for ethnic minorities through the Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program (GJMPP).

All these activities and the many meetings held with university administrators to advocate for graduate students, were successful because we worked as a team. The 2020-2021 executive board and cabinet had energies to keep going and pushing for issues to be addressed whilst creating platforms for effective conversations. It is my hope that all the successes this team has choked will be maintained for years to come. One thing that is worth highlighting is the support the executive board received from various university administrators, including President Caslen, Provost Tate, Dean Addy, Dean Weldon, Vice President Edwards, Vice President Julian Williams, Assistant Director Jerome Scott, and many staff from the graduate school especially Wright Culpeper and the international student service office, Julie Medlin.

Forever grateful for the opportunity to serve and to work with all these amazing people.

Report of the GSA Treasurer, Christopher Eddy

Serving on the Executive Board for the Graduate Student Association throughout the COVID-19 pandemic was both an honor and a challenge. In fulfilling my responsibilities, I worked closely with university administrators and the GSA cabinet to execute multiple professional development events and our 1st Annual Graduate Student Awards Ceremony. I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to: Dr. Anna Edwards, Associate Vice President of Student Life; Jerome Scoot II, Assistant Director for Student Government Leadership; Mohamed Soluiman, Assistant Director of Finance in the department of Student Life; and Jamie Ayres, Student Organization Business Advisor from department of Student Life.

As the treasurer, I served as the chair of GSA finance committee. In doing so, I updated the finance committee guidelines to ensure the funding request process remained as efficient and transparent as possible. The GSA finance committee is responsible for reviewing the funding requests from our campus's registered graduate student organizations (GSOs) for events, conferences, and competitions 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. The GSA allocation budget summary is given below. It should be emphasized that of all the impacts COVID-19 had on the Graduate Student Association during the 2020-2021 academic year, the number of funding requests from GSO's is easily the largest and most noticeable. Many of the largest annual events traditionally funded by GSA did not take place given the stringent (yet necessary) restrictions on large gatherings and off-campus events. It is my full expectation that next year's GSO allocation budget will reflect the "old normal" as organizations resume hosting events on and off campus, attending conferences and competitions, and meeting the needs of graduate students.

GSA Allocation Budget Summary

Organization Name	Event Name	Event Date	Allocated
Environmental Health Sciences (ENHS) Graduate Student Organization	Dr. Susanne Moser Climate Change Communications Event	2/24/21	\$1000.00
Student Nutrition Group	Naudia Jones Urban Gardening Event	4/06/21	\$120.00
	Spent		\$1120.00
	Remaining		\$22,477.10

Spent:

\$1120.00

Remaining:

\$22,477.10

GSA operation budget summary

Event Name	Event Date	Allocated
Professional Development Event – “Leaving Academia: A Practical Guide” talk featuring Chris Caterine	2/5/2021	\$700 (GSA) \$300 (Library)
1 st Annual Graduate Student Awards Ceremony	4/16/2021	\$767.83 (Certificate Frames) \$154.38 (Certificates)
End-of-Year Appreciation Banquet	4/22/2021	\$863.83
Executive Officer Stipends		\$11,543.99
GSA Executive Nametags and Business Cards		\$251.28
Needs Assessment—Promotional Items		\$248.82
NAGPS Membership		\$525.25

Spent: \$15,055.38

Remaining: \$4502.82

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Graduate Student Association remained an active and productive force on the University of South Carolina’s campus. Doing so required us to reimagine, alter, or cancel some of the largest expected expenditures for the year. For example, by switching to a virtual modality for our “town halls” we were able to eliminate all associated costs while simultaneously increasing the number and quality of the events. Going forward, GSA will likely keep the virtual town hall format due to the convenience, quality of feedback, and increased attendance. Similarly, the advocacy trip to Washington DC for meetings with the SC Congressional Delegation was also replaced with virtual meetings. Despite the productive conversations that took place during the online meetings, it was clear to all parties that a virtual meeting simply could not replace meetings with congressional representatives in their offices. The “politics of

presence” is a necessary part of effective representation and I look forward bringing back the traditional advocacy trip going forward.

In addition to managing the finance, purchase, and funding requests for the Graduate Student Association, I was also honored to represent the graduate student community across a variety of university committees. Throughout the year, I served on: the Future Planning Group for Academics and Research, The Faculty Senate Committee on Courses and Curricula, the Policy Advisory Committee, and the Strategic Planning Group. **I also spoke at the Presidential Commission on University History to recognize the role our institution played in displacing Columbia’s Historic Ward 1 community and offered my support for the #AimtoRename Movement.** Notably, I was thankful for opportunities to meet with President Caslen, Provost Tate, and Dean Weldon to advocate for the full health insurance subsidy coverage, which was approved and announced at the end of the Spring semester.

Report of the Graduate Council Representative, Sudipta Saha

While the Covid-19 global pandemic has led us to cope with the ‘new normal’, the partnership between GSA and University leadership could not have been more crucial to deal with challenges that have been evolving every day. I am proud to be part of this year’s GSA executive team, working with the university offices and graduate students in this daunting time. I have gotten the opportunity to work with many of the incredible students, faculty members and key figures from the university leadership to make betterment of our graduate life experience.

Being part of the Graduate Student Association as the Graduate Council Representative has been one of the most fulfilling parts of my graduate school experience. The Graduate Council is the governing body acting on behalf of the Graduate Faculty of the University. As a voting member at University’s Graduate Council, my primary responsibility has been to work as a liaison between GSA and Graduate Council (GC). With communication and information transparency being one of GSA’s top agenda this year, my goal serving in this role was to be a voice for graduate students on the Council and advocate for their interests. Some of the major themes of this year’s graduate council have been promoting professional development program for graduate students, addressing pay/stipend discrepancy, and enhancing information flow between graduate school and the students. I highlighted how the decentralized information flow system has been hurting graduate students in many levels. Our advocacy efforts played crucial role in improving the communication efforts by university to the graduate students with better transparency and accountability. I also served on the academic Grievance Appeal and Petition (GAP) committee and university’s Scholastic Standard and Petition (SSP) committee.

In the Fall of 2020, I took the initiative to invite UofSC President Robert Caslen to the Graduate Council Meeting. This is the first time a university president attended GC meeting. President Calsen’s presence motivated and energized the hardworking efforts of the GC.

I have tried to extend the scope of the work of the Grad Council Rep. position at GSA by collaborating with other executive members and cabinet members. I led the GSA townhall subcommittee and organized 4 townhalls (2 in Fall 2020, 2 in Spring 2021) that provided a breeze of dialogue between graduate students and university offices. I worked closely to partner with the Graduate School Administration in the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 to organize GSA townhalls. These townhalls served as very productive platforms for communication between graduate students and the graduate school administration. I find myself fortunate to

In the past year, The Daily Gamecock covered multiple events by GSA which helped raised awareness and representation regarding graduate experiences on campus

work with both the former (Dr Cheryl Addy) and the current (Dr Tracey Weldon) deans of the graduate school, as well as other administrative members i.e., Dr Mitchell, Dr Jenkins, Mr. Moore and Mr. Culpepper. These townhalls enabled many concerns among graduate students to be addressed.

I had the opportunity working with Dr Thomas F. McNally, the Dean of University Libraries on how library resources can better serve the graduate students. On his invitation, I led a team from GSA to visit the 'Graduate Student Lounge' at the Thomas Cooper Library in the Summer 2020 when it was restructured following the Covid-19 pandemic. We provided insights and suggestion so that graduate students are better served and provided necessary spaces in a safe environment in the library.

I always believed that graduate students deserve better attention throughout our campus. As part of that I established connection with The Daily Gamecock so that GSA's activities and graduate students' voices are covered. In the past year, The Daily Gamecock covered multiple events by GSA which helped raised awareness and representation regarding graduate experiences on campus. I also contributed to in-house activities such as working with Jerome Scott to update our website on regular intervals, maintaining the Garnet Gate roster etc.

"Think Globally, Act Locally"—has been a mantra for me. As a graduate student at the College of Engineering and Computing (CEC), I felt a need to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within my college. So, I have been working with our Associate Dean of DEI Dr Csilla Farkas to include international and graduate representatives in our college DEI committee.

Working as a GSA executive member has been challenging, but also rewarding. It has been a great experience to advocate for the student community that plays crucial role in promoting the university's reputation and recognition.

Highlights of GSA Major Accomplishments 2020-2021

- 100% Health Insurance Subsidy for Graduate Assistants beginning Fall 2021
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training to begin Spring 2022 for Graduate Student
- Inaugural Graduate Student Awards in Spring 2021 with over 25 awards given across categories of 7 categories.
- COVID-19 graduate student impact survey, data will be used to better graduate student experience.
- Advocated for graduate student specific services across campus
- All graduate student orientation
- Creation of College Ambassadors program
- Increase communication across campus
- Increased efforts for GSA to become a major stakeholder on campus
- Advocated for hiring for graduate student specific person in UofSC national Fellowships office

Report of GSA Internal Committees

Report of the Constitution Review Committee

Robbie Anderson, Secretary of Legislative Affairs: Chairman
Members: Maxwell Akonde, Graduate Student Association Vice President
Shauni Bernier, Chief of Staff
Kyle Radke, Student Government Liaison
Michael Seidman, Secretary of Data Management

Beginning in October 2020, the Constitution Revision Committee was formed and was tasked to write a new Constitution to better serve the Graduate Student Association and the graduate student body at the University of South Carolina. The existing Constitution was very vague and inefficient. The committee first met in October 2020 and we met every two weeks, we reviewed the existing GSA Constitution and also reviewed the Student Government Constitution.

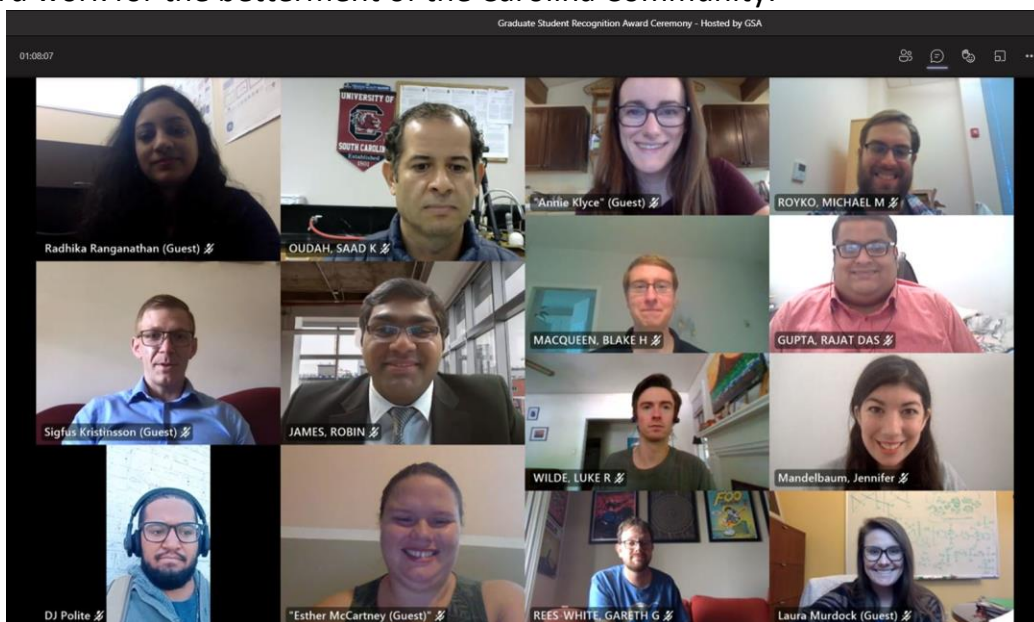
We sought feedback from Jerome Scott, the Assistant Director for Student Government Leadership for the University of South Carolina. With Jerome's help, we were able to put together a Constitution that establishes clear guidelines on how the Graduate Student Association is to be operated. The new Constitution outlines clearly defined roles for the Executive Officers and an Elections Commission. The new Constitution also outlines specific guidelines for GSA Elections, a line of succession for executive officers, a clearly defined process for the GSA President to appoint a Cabinet and establishes specific guidelines for impeachment and removal from office.

The new Constitution also outlines specific guidelines for GSA Elections, a line of succession for executive officers, a clearly defined process for the GSA President to appoint a Cabinet and establishes specific guidelines for impeachment and removal from office.

The Constitution was approved by the GSA Executive Board and Cabinet in February 2021 at the biweekly GSA Meeting. The Constitution was placed on the ballot for the March 2021 GSA Election and was approved by the student body **by a 96% vote**, an overwhelming endorsement of the new Constitution. **Following the Election, the new Constitution took effect on March 31, 2021.** I would like to take this time to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work and dedication, Jerome Scott for his support and feedback, the executive board for their support, and the graduate student body for their endorsement of the new document. The new Constitution will build the foundation to make the Graduate Student Association more effective in the student life of the University of South Carolina. Forever to thee!

Report of the Graduate Student Record Awards Committee

The inaugural edition of Graduate Student Recognition Awards (GSRA) was held virtually on April 16, 2021 in the presence of President Bob Caslen, Interim Dean Dr. Tracey Weldon, and Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Anna Edwards. We would like to thank all the dignitaries for their words of encouragement, motivation, and support to the graduate student community. This past year 2020-2021 has been a challenging year to students with drastic changes in learning methodologies and graduate students have been in the forefront leading by example. These awards were created to celebrate, thank, and motivate the graduate students for their immense contributions, remarkable efforts, and hard work for the betterment of the Carolina Community.



We received 238 outstanding nominations and applications from students, faculty and staff for Graduate Student Recognition Awards spanning nine different categories with 25 total awards. The categories included Research, Teaching, Leadership, Service, Diversity, International, Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship and Overall Doctoral and Master's; which encompassed a wide span of fields in which graduate students contribute.

GSRA would not have been possible without the immense support and motivation from The Graduate School, University Libraries, Center for Teaching Excellence, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, Leadership Service Center, and International Student Services, for judging the vast number of applicants and selecting the award winners. The awards subcommittee put in great effort with countless hours since January 2021 to make GSRA a grand success. Being the first time, it was an uphill task from researching the categories for awards, developing the applications, inviting the chief guests,

collaborating with various units across campus, assisting the collaborators in judging, advertising on social media. It was indeed a huge undertaking, and we are glad to have been supported by the exec team as we navigated through various hiccups and hurdles along the way.

GSRA has been one of the greatest achievements of GSA and the awards subcommittee hopes that to GSRA will be one of our signature events going forward. Forever to Thee!

GSA Awards Sub-committee (L-R)

Rachel Taylor, Secretary of GSA Affairs

Maxwell Akonde, Vice-President of GSA

Frances Hutchful, Secretary of International Affairs

Molly Cameron, Secretary of Multi-cultural Affairs

Sowmya Raghu, Secretary of Student Life



Daily Gamecock Article - [Graduate Student Recognition Awards](#)

GSA congratulates all the 2021 Graduate Student Recognition Award Winners!

GSRA Winners listed below by category:

Overall Doctoral Student Achievement Award

Judged by Mr. Wright Culpepper, Dr. Toby Jenkins – The Graduate School

Robin James

Jennifer Mandelbaum

Overall Masters Student Achievement Award

Judged by Mr. Wright Culpepper, Dr. Toby Jenkins – The Graduate School

Luke Wilde

Radhika Ranganathan

Outstanding Graduate Student Researcher Award

Judged by Ms. Kristina Schwoebel, Ms. Valerie Lookingbill, Jean Clenney – UofSC Libraries

Rajat Das Gupta

Jennifer Mandelbaum

Michael Royko

Outstanding Graduate Student Award for Entrepreneurship, Creativity, and Innovation

Judged by Ms. Kristina Schwoebel, Ms. Valerie Lookingbill, Jean Clenney – UofSC Libraries

Laura Murdock
Tiffani Brooks Hagan
Michael Royko

Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Assistant Award

Judged by Dr. Augie Grant, Dr. Michelle Hardee, Mr. Casey Carroll – Center for Teaching Excellence

Gareth George Rees-White
Annie Klyce
Karen Kai Yuan Yong

Exemplary Graduate Student Leadership Award

Judged by Dr. Ambra Hiott, Dr. Jabari Bodrick – Leadership and Service Center

Esther McCartney
Jennifer Mandelbaum
Blake MacQueen

Exemplary Graduate Student Award for Service

Judged by Dr. Ambra Hiott, Dr. Jabari Bodrick – Leadership and Service Center

Robin James
Rajat Das Gupta
Don S. Polite, Jr.

Outstanding International Graduate Student Award

Judged by Ms. Julie Carriker, International Student Services

Saad Kadham Oudah
Yiwen Shih
Sigfus Kristtinson

Outstanding Graduate Student Award for Excellence in Diversity

Judged by Dr. Kimberly Seibles, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs

Wendy Chu
Kyungjin Hwang
Don S. Polite, Jr.

Report of the Graduate Students' Needs Survey Committee

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year GSA and a subcommittee saw a need for a survey instrument to be developed to assess the needs of graduate students specifically. During the Fall 2020 semester, the subcommittee developed a comprehensive list of topics that were to be assessed including COVID-19 impacts on graduate students, were different areas of a graduate student's needs being met, and what were some of the top concerns of graduate students.

The survey was implemented online and sent out through the graduate student listserv and via our social media.

Report on the College Ambassadors Program

Inaugural program that we titled the "College Ambassadors Program" that was meant to help with our number one goal of increasing bi-directional communication across the campus. Our goal was to mirror what the faculty and staff senate programs do to communicate information coming from administration to the greater population. GSA Exec takes information to the cabinet, but we wanted even more people to have information, and to grow engagement of GSA with the student population we serve. This program was to better hear concerns of students and to gain an understanding of what graduate students at UofSC want and need.

In the inaugural and challenging year, where we were only able to meet virtually with our college ambassadors, we tried to get at least one person from each college. Overall we ended up with

Report of Town Hall Planning Committee

This committee successfully planned and executed four town halls. Two of these town halls featured representatives from the Graduate School. All four of these events were held on Microsoft Teams. The town halls which featured leadership and administrators were had significantly higher attendance than the ones that only featured GSA leadership and cabinet members. Going forward, the GSA will have to do more to educate graduate students on the value of town halls even if they do not include leadership and what the GSA can use to advocate for student needs.

Reports of the GSA President's Cabinet

Report of the GSA Chief of Staff – Shauni Bernier

Stepping into the new Chief of Staff position was both daunting and rewarding; here I was, new to UofSC, GSA, and with no experience in a CoS position. I remember researching what a CoS was supposed to do and taking rigorous notes about what a CoS does, what I wanted to achieve, and the exact line of questioning I would ask in my first meeting with the executive board.

Six months later, the CoS position came to be more than I could've imagined: weekly newsletters kept members of GSA informed and increased event participation and involvement, being a convenient point of contact between the executive board and cabinet members reduced communication inefficiencies and increased the good communication, and my inexperience with GSA allowed me to have a fresh perspective on things such as the GSA Constitution Revision project that I had the honor of contributing to (and that passed with overwhelming support!).

Looking forward, I hope the CoS position continues to improve the communication, activeness, and effectiveness of GSA so we can continue to better the graduate student experience at UofSC. As my final project with GSA, I am happy to be leaving behind a comprehensive guide for the next GSA cabinet so they can see what we have learned, our failures and multitudes of successes, and how far we have come during this challenging year. **In this, I hope the next generation of GSA is able to continue to build off the passion and devotion the 2020-21 GSA members have invested.**

Report of the Secretary of GSA Affairs – Rachel Taylor

As a first year Master's student at the University of South Carolina, I am thankful for my leadership role in the Graduate Student Association's Cabinet. **The organization serves as a platform to hear the concerns of graduate students and mobilize positive change.** Our team focuses on improving the graduate student experience, and our growing relationships with university administration and departments across campus are crucial to the implementations of our initiatives. In my role as Secretary of GSA Affairs, I spearheaded communication to fellow GSA members. I attended all required events to record minutes for later reference, including meetings, Town Halls, and other virtual events. For each bi-weekly GSA meeting, I created an agenda based on speaking points submitted by Exec and Cabinet, and I took notes from verbal elaborations on given topics. These meeting minutes were shared via Microsoft Teams, email, and Garnet Gate for easy access by all GSA members, as well as guests to meetings (graduate students and university administration representatives). Additionally, I collaborated on the GSA website structure to ensure efficient access to information about our student organization.

This year, I also served on the Graduate Student Recognition Awards Committee, where our end goal was structuring and hosting the inaugural awards ceremony. In addition to developing rubrics for application review and contributing feedback for structural components of the ceremony, I created graphics to share on social media for both outreach and recognition efforts.

Looking forward to the 2021-2022 year, I plan to optimize communications by improving the process of submitting information to be shared with others both within and external to the organization. It is imperative that graduate students are aware of the advocacy taking place through GSA, and increased attendance at meetings and Town Hall settings would expand the perspectives present when making decisions about GSA's voice on campus. We are looking to develop a Graduate Student Orientation centered on providing resources available to graduate students, so the committee is planning to recruit offices and survey current students throughout the year in order to build the most informative orientation possible for incoming graduate students. The shift back to in-person programming is a welcomed change for us, and I am excited to connect with even more students, faculty, and staff to collaborate on new ideas for the benefit of graduate students.

Report of the GSA Secretary for Legislative Affairs – Robbie Anderson

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as the Secretary of Legislative Affairs for the Graduate Student Association for the 2020-2021 academic year. The theme for this year has been focused on improving the culture of the Graduate Student Association and making it better for the future.

The key highlight from this academic year involves cultivating relationships. I have had the privilege to meet with the University's Director of Government Affairs, Craig Parks, on multiple occasions, to discuss issues that are important to graduate students. In November, I had the honor to serve as a voting representative on behalf of the University of South Carolina at the annual National Association of Graduate and Professional Students Conference. I also had the honor to chair the GSA Constitution Revision Committee, where I was tasked to write a new Constitution for the Graduate Student Association to better serve the graduate student body. **In the March 2021 Graduate Student Association election, the student body approved the new Constitution.**

I also forged a relationship with Steven Beckham, the University's Lobbyist. We discussed pertinent public policy issues relating to graduate students. On March 26, I had the privilege to share concerns with the South Carolina Congressional Delegation. We discussed COVID-19 relief, ways to better serve international students, and the expansion of Pell Grants to graduate students. As I will be graduating in May 2021, I look forward to the fruition that the legacy that this Graduate Student Association has left. As I leave the University of South Carolina, I can look back at the relationships formed and a new governing document that will better serve the Graduate Student Association for years to come. I know that the best is yet to come. Forever to thee!

Report of the GSA Co-secretaries for Graduate Assistantship – Rebekah Turnmire and Zach Jenkins

At the beginning of our appointments, we had a meeting to discuss our vision of what our positions could and should be. During that meeting, it was clear that we mutually felt that **we had a responsibility to amplify the voices of those whose voices are so often left out of the conversation. Additionally, we felt a strong conviction that graduate students should stand in solidarity with one another by building community and learning from each other's experiences.**

Our strategy for achieving our vision was enacted in the following ways. First, we sought to build community with our fellow graduate assistants by hosting a biweekly virtual 'brown bag' lunch session, where graduate students could come and discuss their concerns and build community with other graduate assistants. During these sessions we had graduate assistants share their diverse experiences and discuss what they had learned being a graduate assistant. These discussions were followed up with brainstorming on how to improve the graduate student experience. These sessions lasted until mid-Spring semester when it became clear that graduate students were "zoomed-out." Overall, we had roughly 5-10 students who attended the Brown Bag events over the course of the year.

Relatedly, we worked with Dr. Hardee in CTE to create a "Welcome to UofSC's TA/GAships" video for the Spring 2021 TA training orientation. The video not only introduced GSA, our position, it also, briefly, pointed to on-campus resources for TAs.

A second initiative was the creation of the GSA GA Podcast. We recorded four episodes that explored diverse graduate student experiences, which served as a space that they could give wisdom to the next incoming generation of graduate students.

Finally, we initiated a petition to address the pay-gap discrepancy among the College of Arts and Sciences. Although this effort is far from over, inadequate pay for graduate assistants has been a recurring theme of our tenure. **We believe the petition is a first step in addressing the lack of quality pay for graduate assistants at the university.** We feel that through our brown bag, GSA GA podcast, and petition initiatives, that we have admirably carried out our vision to the best of our abilities.

Report of the GSA Co-secretary for Multicultural Affairs – Molly Cameron

This year was a process of laying the groundwork for the success of future cabinets. My major project this year was to establish Peacock Press, a magazine for multicultural issues on campus and in the community. While the site has not yet launched as we ran into design delays, the foundation has been laid for this long-term, high-impact project.

Together, the DEI team has put together a calendar of important holidays and



**Hispanic
Heritage
Month
Virtual Q&A
with
Hector Diaz**



observances so that GSA can stay up to date with statements, acknowledgements, and celebrations for the many different people and events in our community. Building from this calendar, **we have issued statements on the impact of Columbus Day on indigenous populations, celebrated Hispanic graduate students, and within the week we will be addressing issues related to sexual assault.**

As part of the DEI team, the multicultural affairs secretaries met with the office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

to discuss the building name change commission, accessibility of name change documentation for trans students, and racial equity on campus among other things.

I also served on two subcommittees. The graduate students needs survey committee wrote and issued a large-scale survey to gather important data on the impact of covid-19 and the subsequent campus response on graduate students. The graduate student recognition awards committee developed a program for recognizing graduate student achievement in nine different categories, forging relationships with several prominent offices across campus in the process.

Why Indigenous Peoples' Day

We will not celebrate Christopher Columbus, due to his orchestration of genocidal rape, mass genocide, dispossession of land, and slavery of Indigenous People. The acknowledgement of "Columbus Day" remains a painful reminder of the centuries of brutalization Indigenous People experienced and to continue to celebrate Columbus is to celebrate xenophobia, violence, and incompetence.



Report of the GSA Secretary of Student Life – Sowmya Raghu

At the outset, I would like to thank the Executive Board of GSA for the opportunity to serve fellow graduate students as the Secretary of Student Life. Being a part of GSA, has given me a great platform to interact with fellow graduate students and administrators at UofSC. The primary objective of my role was to help GSA implement programs to enhance graduate student experience at UofSC.

In this unprecedented year, graduate students across campus have worked hard contributing not only to research and teaching but have been great service to the community during the pandemic and recognizing them was vital to celebrate their immense contributions and remarkable efforts. **One of the major achievements in this role, was planning the Inaugural Graduate Student Recognition Awards (GSRA)** with having President Caslen, Interim Dean Dr. Weldon and Vice-President of Student Affairs Dr. Edwards as our guests of honor. It was a large undertaking and with over 4 months of planning and coordinating, we had a very successful ceremony on April 16, 2021. As a part of the sub-committee with Maxwell Akonde, Molly Cameron, Frances Hutchful and Rachel Taylor; this monumental task of coordinating with The Graduate School, University Libraries, Center for Teaching Excellence, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, Leadership Service Center, and International Student Services, for judging the vast



GRADUATE STUDENT RECOGNITION AWARDS

Join us for the Virtual Recognition Ceremony!
Friday, April 16th at 1:30 pm

RSVP at bit.ly/GSRA-RSVP

GUESTS OF HONOR


Bob Caslen,
President of the
University of South Carolina


Dr. Tracey Weldon,
Interim Dean of the
Graduate School


Dr. Anna Edwards,
Associate Vice President for
Student Life

number of applicants (238), gave us an opportunity to amplify the students' achievements and need for such awards. Navigating through glitches and time constraints, we are humbled to have awarded 25 awards spanning a breadth of 9 different categories. I envision the GSRA to be a signature event of GSA in the years to follow while keeping with GSA motto of expanding recognition of the graduate students at our University.

I have also been part of the Town Hall sub-committee which gave me the opportunity to voice the concerns of the graduate students to university administrators. Being a part of the College Ambassador program, as an ambassador for College of Engineering and Computing, we have been fortunate to be able to disseminate information to fellow students in a timely manner. The bi-weekly cabinet meetings have been a great way to listen to various initiatives taken by GSA and interact with fellow graduate students to understand the need for successful graduate student experience. I hope to be an advocate for graduate students in the upcoming years by creating various successful programs to improve the visibility of various minority graduate students. I am

grateful to the Executive Board for this amazing opportunity and welcoming me to the GSA family. Forever to Thee!

Report of the GSA Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations– Victoria Williams

I, Victoria Williams, was the secretary of graduate student organizations for the 2020-2021 session. My primary purpose in this role was to be a liaison between GSA and graduate student organizations. This position is important in keeping the grad orgs in the know and involved with GSA planned events and more. The day-to-day activities involved updating the graduation student org contact document, keeping up with what the other cabinet members were planning and sharing the appropriate information to the graduate organizations. This position also includes sending reminder notifications to events that pertain to grad orgs as well as answering and/or directing emails to the correct individual(s). I also listened to and brought any issues, ideas or concerns from the grad school organizations directly to GSA cabinet members. The secretary of graduate student organizations is a great resource to other cabinet members as well, if they need to contact specific (or all) graduate student organizations about certain events. Lastly, being a member of the finance, graduate student orientation, and town hall committees allowed me to create an even more streamline connection between GSA cabinet members and the graduate student organizations.

Report of the GSA Secretary of Mental Health– Genee R. Glascoe

For the 2020-2021 academic year, I served as the inaugural Secretary of Mental Health for GSA. In this position, my primary purpose was to support graduate students' health and overall well-being at the university. My responsibilities included advocating for mental health resources, developing programming, and serving on committees that focused on mental health initiatives.

As the Secretary of Mental Health, I established a round table event during the Fall 2020 semester to allow graduate students the opportunity to discuss how they were handling their mental health throughout the semester.

Another round table was scheduled for the Spring 2021 semester, but this event was unable to occur due to unforeseen circumstances. It would be nice if ongoing GSA administrations could continue putting on this event to give graduate students the opportunity and space to discuss their mental health and identify beneficial resources.

I also served on the weekly Future Planning Group (FPG) for Mental Health, Well-being, and Emotional Committee. With the President of GSA, Maggie Carson, **we advocated on behalf of graduate students in developing initiatives and campaigns, such as “The Struggle Bus”, “Wellness Days Campaigns for Social Media”, and the “Weekly Covid Health and Wellness Survey” that benefited the USC campus.** In collaboration with the Co-secretaries of Health, we advocated for graduate students when talking with the staff at the university’s Health Services center, with campus organizations, and campus administration. It was my pleasure and honor to serve in this position for the 2020-2021 academic year with this GSA administration.

HEALTH TEAM PRESENTS:

LET'S FINISH THE SEMESTER STRONG!

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CURRENT CHALLENGES WE ARE FACING WITH FINISHING THE SEMESTER STRONG! TIPS AND TRICKS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND SELF-CARE.

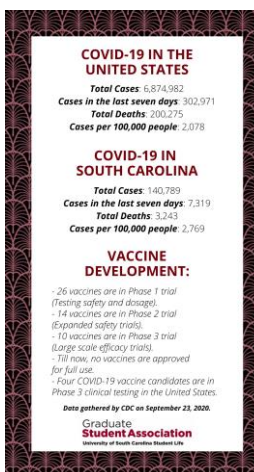
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH, 2020
5:30-6:30PM

Graduate Student Association
University of South Carolina

Report of the GSA Co-Secretary of General Health – Rajat Das Gupta

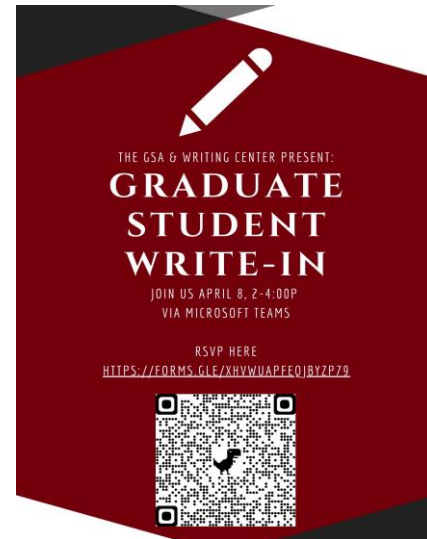
Activities done:

- Preparing weekly COVID-19 brief including the situation in US and South Carolina, and the global vaccination progress.
- Have meeting with mental health secretary and black graduate student association for planning various workshops/webinars.
- This is a small task but very important one. The RT-PCR test report in the University of South Carolina’s Student Health Centre did not include the term ‘RT-PCR test’. This is important for the national and international travel. After notifying them about this in last December, they included this in the report.



Report of the GSA Secretary of Community Outreach – Katarina A Merlini

COVID-19 presented a unique set of challenges for the Graduate Student Association as a whole and the Secretary of Community Outreach position in particular. As Secretary of Community Outreach, I navigated new territory by designing and facilitating remote and hybrid outreach activities including four town halls and a graduate student write-in. The work was largely solitary in nature, particularly towards the end of the academic year. As a result, I had the opportunity to further develop my own extant abilities with community activism and engagement as well as develop new skills related to social media, content development, and marketing. In the end, these five events were plagued by low attendance and technical difficulties, which is to be expected in a tumultuous and difficult year. This being said, I do believe remote and/or hybrid outreach opportunities are the future. The pandemic coupled with the University's shift to more online and remote learning opportunities have opened Pandora's box. I doubt we will ever see a return to the traditional in-person learning environment that existed prior to 2020. In the same way we've seen remote learning offering an alternative to a one-size-fits-all structure, the Graduate Student's Association's will have to adapt to a student population who may not be able to attend in-person events or meetings. Although this year was a trial by fire for my position, I believe I have done important work by setting a precedent for virtual town halls and virtual community building events that will echo into the future.



I am most proud of the two town halls that featured University leadership. One of the most common concerns I heard from students this semester was that they felt very removed from their learning community and University leadership. The pandemic created heightened urgency for graduate students: many had to teach online without training; labs were closed; research and graduation deadlines, financial aid, and visa status were jeopardized. The University of South Carolina routinely failed to communicate adequately with graduate students throughout this crisis. The town halls I facilitated offered valuable face-to-face time between graduate students, GSA leadership, and University leadership in an attempt to promote communication and understanding. Graduate workers are the backbone of the United

States higher education system and the communication between the Graduate School and the people it purports to serve should reflect this.

Report of the GSA Liaison to Student Government – Kyle Radtke

As Student Government Liaison, I was tasked to establish a working relationship with Student Government by networking with Senators and elected SG executives. My goal was to bolster efforts of advocating for change - especially those concerning graduate students, whose voices are seemingly drowned out by undergraduate concerns. It is a two-way street: GSA matters should be brought to SG's attention, and undergraduate concerns should be shared for relevant issues in which GSA may be engaging.

Unfortunately, due to a combination of my later appointment to the position in October and my physical location off-campus, I struggled in even building the desired chain of communication I envisioned. Furthermore, my first interaction with our SG counterparts was haphazardly assembled, which did not help in expressing how serious GSA wanted to collaborate with SG. Subsequent interactions were extremely limited, and I felt "stonewalled" by SG – either being ignored or not being provided timely information to share in either direction. Therefore, given the circumstances, I managed the weekly content of SG Senate meetings and communicated relevant items to both bodies as best I could.

Although a member of the Bookstore Committee and New Student Union Committee, I focused more efforts in undertaking the massive task of serving as the primary author when revising our GSA Constitution. Given my prior experience in undergraduate with modifying various student government documents, I was excited to undertake this responsibility. One problem I faced was that our Committee was relatively passive in opining on desired process and language to utilize. I wanted to incorporate as many opinions as necessary, but we had to meet deadlines to ensure the document was still "on track." I decided to write a few different versions of clauses and then open discussion during our weekly meetings. By doing so, I was able to gather feedback and then select what the group considered without commandeering the input process.

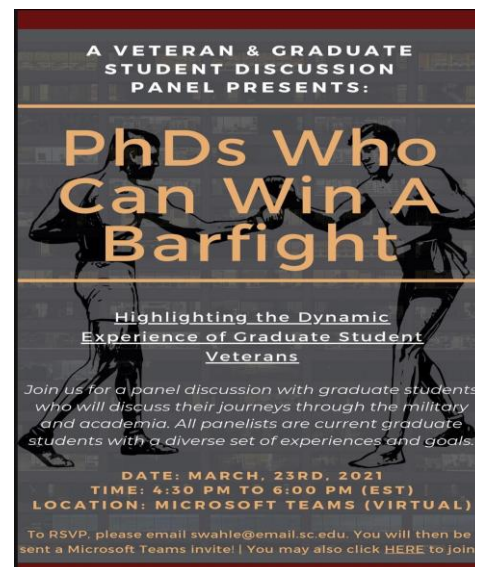
My advice to anyone who wants it: Your impact is what you make of it. The more you are involved, the bigger impact you [will likely] have! In terms of the role itself, I think persistence is key to ensuring grad students have a seat at the discussion table. I believe this position would function best with three conditions: 1) the appointment shortly after both new GSA and SG Executive Boards are installed, 2) the person in the role be in Columbia, and 3) the liaison should set up [bi]weekly meetings with designated SG representatives to openly address GSA/graduate student concerns.

In future years, I would like to work with interested Cabinet members and further enhance specific process guidelines (e.g., those surrounding Elections, Impeachment, Finance, etc.). I could foresee this liaison role being the responsibility of the Secretary of Legislative Affairs. As a Professional MBA candidate, my future goal is to travel to the regional sites, host open forums, and incorporate PMBA student's feedback for GSA-related issues and overall campus enhancements.

As I will be stepping into bigger shoes as the next GSA Treasurer, I am excited for the future of this organization. Forever to thee, Carolina!

Report of the GSA Secretary of Veterans Affairs – Steve Wahle

As the university works to increase the military affiliated student population on campus, my priority has been to increase engagement with those students already on campus. The first effort was to collaborate on a research project to ask student veterans about their experience at UofSC. This study has IRB approval, and a survey will be distributed by the end of spring 2021. Next, I have collaborated with the Veterans and Military Services staff, Veterans Student Services Advisory Committee, the Graduate School to implement improved tracking of military affiliated graduate student applicants. Finally, I moderated a panel of four student veterans in various graduate programs. Each student discussed their path to graduate school, education experience, and goals after education. More importantly, they shared stigmas they had encountered on campus and offered clarifications to these misunderstandings. I plan to continue these engagement efforts beyond my GSA tenure by collaborating with the Center for Teaching Excellence and the Green Zone ally training.



Report of the GSA Secretary of International Student Affairs – Frances Hutchful

In my own words, this position contributes to the overall mission of GSA in that, for Fall 2020, GSA was very big on DEI when I joined. International students are part of the minority groups in UofSC and my role seeks to bridge the gap between ISS/ISA under which all international organizations fall, and GSA. GSA also seeks to advance and

develop all graduate students. Segregation of groups will not accomplish that, Inclusion and oneness will, that's what my position contributes to the overall mission.

The day to day activities of this position is to get International events announced to the GSA Bring awareness of GSA's existence to the international community Hold events that teach students about inclusion in regards to international students Advocate for international graduate students in UofSC

Through the Fall 2020 semester, these were my biggest accomplishments: 1.Organizing the Intercultural Training for Graduate Students Hosting an International Coffee Hour as GSA where almost all secretaries presented and asked questions. 2. I got GSA to have a table at the International Festival on Greene Street for the first time.

CAROLINA INTERCULTURAL TRAINING FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Join ISS & GSA online on **November 18, from 2-4pm** for a discussion on cross-cultural communication and cultural differences.

You will be emailed the zoom link a few days before the event.

Please RSVP by November 17

<https://uscips.wufoo.com/forms/saigsz1dtpic2/>



CONTACT
medin3@mailbox.sc.edu
hutchful@email.sc.edu



When I first started my position, I was asked to create some goals for my position. Some of my goals stayed the same and others shifted over the course of the semester. My main goal was to serve as a bridge between GSA and ISS. I believe we have a better relationship. For advocacy, I also created a petition when there was a bill about to be passed concerning international students under the Trump administration.

There is only one 'I' in accomplishments, but there's a whole team of other letters helping to complete the word.

Report of the GSA Co-Secretary of Professional Development – Tasha Childs

As a co-secretary of Professional Development my focus was on the academic side of things. Although COVID-19 and social distancing recommendations made it difficult to host events for graduate students, Tasha Childs, GSA Co-Secretary of Professional Development, and Chris Eddy, GSA Treasurer, worked closely with Jason Ayer, a photographer, to ensure a safe and free headshot event could be held. On March 26th,

GSA hosted this first free professional development headshot event giving students the opportunity to get headshot. We set up in the Russell House Ballroom with no contact photographing, Jason was able to set up his camera on one end of the room and students prepared for their shot and were photographed standing at the other end of the room. Several graduate students registered for the event and 32 took advantage of this event! It was considered a great success given the limitations on both planners and students currently.



Report of the GSA Co-Secretary of Professional Development – Justin Price

As a co-secretary of Professional Development my focus was on the non-academic side of things. Helping graduate students with professional development that wasn't for someone focused on going into academia.

I had one major project I worked on each semester. In the Fall semester I created a professional development survey to better understand the graduate student PD needs and get contact information for graduate alumni working in non-academic fields. This was successful, finding that a great many student in traditionally academic career streams were interested in learning skills to enter into non-academic careers. I had sent the survey through most of the college of arts and sciences departments.

In the spring semester I organized an event with the library. The event was a talk with invited speaker Chris Caterine and it was attended by roughly 50 graduate students. Chris presented material from his book 'leaving academia' then followed up with a question-and-answer session. This was an excellent event that focused on the non-academic opportunities that some graduate students may be interested in.

Thank you for another great year making the graduate student experience at The University of South Carolina the best it can be. Let's continue to move forward and work hard for all graduate students!



Best,

GSA Executive Board 2020-2021

Maggie, Max, Chris, Saha

Going Forward: 2021-2022 Executive Board



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