

Graduate Student Association

University of South Carolina Student Life

Annual Report
2022-
2023



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Dear Graduate and Professional Students,



To say how it's being an incredible opportunity to be your President and lead-voice on issues of graduate and professional students this past year is an under-statement. The year has been one of a fulfilling honor for me and the rest of my team to provide different platforms for you all to engage; platforms on which many friendships have been formed hoping to last for a long time. On my part, it's been a joy getting to know some of you as change-makers and hearing the amazing works ongoing in and outside your research labs.

This year has been one filled with a lot of exciting changes beginning with welcoming a new university president and provost to starting to reimagine how graduate education should look like for the years to come through the Imagine Carolina. We

cannot also ignore the challenges especially those of rising cost of living fueled by the twin pandemics of CoVID-19 and Ukraine/Russia conflict. And within the nation, far reaching decisions such as the judiciary overturn of ROE vs WADE and most recently, a legislative expulsion of two African American lawmakers from the Tennessee House. Wherever your stance is on issues, know that your existence in these moments of history is not by mistake and that your voice matters! I see you and I see your great efforts. Importantly, I see your courage to stand for what you believe in but doing that with the Carolinian Creed at heart!

There were so many things we accomplished together that I wanted to highlight some.

Together we:

1. Advocated and achieved a raise in the minimum hourly wage by more than 55% beginning January 1, 2023
2. Implemented a comprehensive stipend and cost of living survey to better understand the funding support standing of students. This is being used in data-driving advocacy.
3. Secured support from the Graduate School to sponsor eight graduate and professional students to the Disney Walt Leadership Experience program over the Spring break.
4. Broadened communication and information flow through the creation of the Graduate Student Association Advisory Council
5. Visited and participated in different colleges/schools' orientation programs to present GSA and the opportunities therein.
6. Organized town halls with administrators to address heightened concerns including those of health insurance.
7. Supported graduate student organizations with over \$30,000 budget allocation.
8. Collaborated with different groups including the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), and the Provost Advisory Committee on Women's Initiatives (PACWI), with a grant funding from the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, to organize luncheons for different graduate and professional students' identity groups.
9. Visited the Capitol Hill in Washington DC, met with the SC congressional delegation and advocated on many issues affecting graduate students particularly here at USC.

10. Formed part of GRAD Coalition partners to reactivate the House bipartisan Graduate Research and Development (GRAD) Caucus.
11. Presented issues of international students and international education and ways to improve their experiences at the South Carolina Association of International Educators (SCAIE) conference.
12. Collaborated with the Graduate School to organize an orientation program.
13. Continued the traditional GSA social events, extravaganzas on Greene Street, mental health campaigns and breaks, professional development workshops, and professional headshots.
14. Served on different committees across the university and provided representation to issues of students on these committees.
15. Accomplished many more.

I cannot begin to mention all our collaborators this entire year as the list appears inexhaustible, however, I am indebted to my team of Cabinet Secretaries who worked every second of the year to make all these happen. Let me acknowledge that there is much work to be done, but I remain optimistic that the Andy Kramarchyk-led executive and team will continue the momentum and with your support, GSA will go places.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve you as your President and I look forward to the heights GSA will be reaching in the coming years!

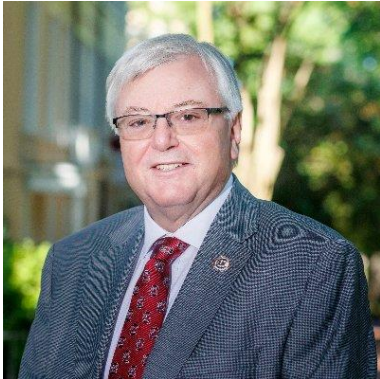
Forever to thee,



Maxwell Akonde

President, Graduate Student Association

A Word from the University President, Michael Amiridis



One of the first invitations I received as president of the University of South Carolina came in July 2022 from Max Akonde, president of the Graduate Student Association, offering an opportunity to meet with the GSA cabinet. Since our first meeting, Max and his fellow GSA leaders have kept me apprised of the issues and interests that affect our university's nearly 7,000 graduate and professional students. I applaud the thoughtful work GSA does on behalf of this very important segment of our Carolina community.

The Fall 2022 semester at USC introduced a new event – Imagine Carolina – that invited undergraduates to share ideas for a better student experience. Some of their key concerns – things like parking, mental health, and greater equity and inclusion – are important topics across our entire campus community. Recognizing that our graduate and professional students have unique concerns, we welcomed their participation in their own Imagine Carolina in February, which helped to broaden our understanding of the challenges they are facing. Over the past year, through its advocacy work, presentations, workshops, social events, a campus survey, discussions with campus administration, and other activities, GSA has made important strides in highlighting these needs.

[GSA's] key concerns – things like parking, mental health, and greater equity and inclusion – are important topics across our entire campus community.

I look forward to working closely with GSA as we continue to cultivate a strong living, learning and working environment for graduate and professional students at USC.



A Word from the Provost and EVP for Academic Affairs, Donna Arnett



Since beginning in my role as provost of the University of South Carolina in August 2022, I have been eager to work alongside the Graduate Students Association to better understand and enhance the graduate student experience at the university.

In collaboration with President Amiridis, we hosted Imagine Carolina for undergraduate students in the fall. Owing to its success in allowing us to ascertain the needs and desires of that segment of the USC population, I sponsored another Imagine Carolina event in February to incorporate the concerns of the graduate student population into our broader vision for the university. To achieve greater graduate student representation, an additional Imagine Carolina virtual session was hosted in early April, allowing for a clearer view of your priorities as graduate students.

At these retreats, I was pleased to learn that graduate students across the board are generally appreciative of faculty investment in their success, professional development opportunities, and the diverse experiences of faculty, staff and students. Going forward, I will work to address common concerns such as limited access to on-campus amenities (particularly for international students), the need for demystification of academia, and lack of deep alumni engagement.

Graduate and professional students play a crucial role in advancing the academic mission of the University of South Carolina, and I value your contributions immensely. You bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and critical thinking skills to our community, enriching our intellectual culture and driving progress in various fields.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Graduate Students Association to help build upon our culture of academic excellence here at the University of South Carolina.

A Word from the Vice Provost and Interim Dean of the Graduate School, Cheryl Addy



Two years ago, I wrote this message for the Graduate Student Association as your former dean of the Graduate School. At that point, I certainly did not anticipate returning as your dean, but when the provost approached me last August, I did not hesitate to accept the interim appointment. As I have said many times, graduate students are the heart and soul of any comprehensive research university, and the University of South Carolina is no exception.

Working with the GSA leadership has been my privilege this year as students challenged me to address longstanding concerns about campus resources to improve the graduate student experience. In addition to continuing full payment of the premium for student health insurance, the Graduate School has increased the minimum compensation for all graduate student employees. We are also working with the Division of Human Resources to minimize delays in payroll for those students with graduate assistantships.

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 more active involvement. 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.

A Word from the Associate Vice President for Student Life, Anna Edwards



It has been an incredible opportunity this year to support and work alongside members of the Graduate Student Association as they continue to advocate for the needs of graduate and professional students across campus. The group managed transitions in leadership and priorities extremely well and remained focused on the students at the university.

The team, led by Max Akonde as president, developed a robust and expansive strategic plan that addressed key priority areas. These priority areas were the foundation of the activities and programs supported by the organization throughout the year. As the university continues to navigate post-COVID student engagement, this plan gave purpose and organization to the graduate student focus and allowed students to advocate and address the needs and priorities throughout the year.

As associate vice president for Student Life, I served as an advisor (and mentor, I hope) to the leadership team of the Graduate Student Association. We conducted regular meetings to stay abreast of needs of the students, and opportunities for engagement at the university. With new and changing university leadership, these regular meetings were important to stay abreast of ongoing activities and provide consistent support to the students. There were ongoing conversations with Student Government and other student organizations on how to best support the needs of graduate students.

The organization continues to be led by strong students who are clear in their purpose and priorities. Student leaders met regularly with university administrators and other officials to share their priorities and work to address needs of graduate students from financial packages and stipends to student experiences, to trainings and workshops to mental health. As leadership changes evolve across the university, the voice of graduate students has never been more important than it is now. All students must continue to work together in a coordinated manner to see that the needs of students remain at the forefront of university administration.

It continues to be an honor to support the student experience beyond the classroom for graduate students. I am inspired by their vision and their commitment to improving the experience for graduate students and look forward to the continued efforts in the year ahead.

A Word from the Director of the Leadership and Service Center, Ambra Hiott



It has been an honor working closely with the Graduate Student Association this year as one of their advisors. This group of student leaders stepped up to rebuild GSA through advocacy, programming, and relationship building across campus.

Through their advocacy efforts, they committed to translating survey data from graduate and professional students into advocacy points for stipend and cost of living increases and basic needs resources both on campus and in Washington D.C.

Their programmatic efforts expanded their mentorship sessions to a variety of student populations across campus including but not limited to women, international, and black graduate and professional students. They also created opportunities for graduate students to connect and build community through socials in a variety of settings across campus and in the Columbia community.

Finally, this group of students helped onboard and welcome new university leadership including but not limited to our university president, provost, and vice president of student affairs. Their participation in Imagine Carolina and multiple meetings helped set the foundation to make sure graduate and professional voices were front and center. I wish these students nothing but the best and know the best is yet to come.

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 USC as we serve and advocate on behalf of the interests of nearly 7,000 graduate and professional students.

Graduate Student Association 2022-2023 Executive Board



President
Maxwell Akonde
Ph.D. candidate
Epidemiology



Vice President
Catherine Coates
MA/PhD Student
Linguistics



Treasurer
Rosie Sweetwood
Masters Student
**Higher Ed. and
Student Affairs**



**Graduate Council
Rep.**
Rajat Dus Gupta
Phd Candidate
Epidemiology



Graduate Student Association 2022-2023

President's Cabinet

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>School/College</i>
<i>Chief of Staff (President)</i>	Ekaterina Altman	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Chief of Staff (Vice President)</i>	Divine Nwanekezie	College of Social Work
<i>GSA Executive Board Advisor</i>	Maggie Carson	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of Data Management</i>	Alexander Barth	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Community Outreach</i>	Mayank Sakhuja	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of Graduate Assistantships</i>	Mahbub Alam	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of GSA Awards</i>	Gaurav Harshe	College of Education
<i>Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations</i>	Sweta Mandilwar	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of GSA Affairs</i>	Giovanna Morara	College of Education
<i>Secretary of Mental Health</i>	Emily Collie	School of Medicine
<i>Secretary of General Health</i>	Amanda Plyler	Student Health Services
<i>Co-Secretary of International Student Affairs</i>	Yu (Samuel) Cheung	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Co-Secretary of International Student Affairs</i>	Kenneth Aba	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Legislative Affairs</i>	Jack DeOliveira	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</i>	Christina Xan	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Professional Development</i>	Erin Looney	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of Veteran Affairs</i>	Andrew Kramarchyk	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Women's Affairs</i>	Caroline B. Hulett	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Disability Affairs</i>	Allison Blanks Coomes	School of Information Science
<i>Press Secretary</i>	Ashley McGraw	College of Arts and Sciences
<i>Secretary of Social Media</i>	Camryn Garrett	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Secretary of Transportation and Parking</i>	Iftakhar Ahmad	College of Engineering and Computing

2022-2023 Finance Committee

<i>Name</i>	<i>School/College</i>
<i>Rosie Sweetwood, Chair</i>	College of Education

<i>Sweta Mandilwar</i>	Arnold School of Public Health
<i>Joshua Holmstrom</i>	Darla School of Business
<i>Emily Boardman</i>	College of Education
<i>Morgan Hall</i>	Arnold School of Public Health

GSA Representation in University Committees

Committee	Name
<i>Bookstores</i>	Alexander Barth
<i>Blatt PE Center Advisory Committee</i>	Aba Kenneth, Yu (Samuel) Cheung
<i>FS Committee on Honorary Degrees</i>	Catherine Coates
<i>Religious Affairs Committee</i>	Allison Blanks Coomes
<i>Scholastic Standards and Petitions</i>	Jack DeOliveira
<i>Commencement</i>	Max Akonde
<i>Policy Advisory</i>	Max Akonde
<i>PACWI</i>	Caroline Hulett, Divine Nwanekezie
<i>Graduate Council</i>	Rajat Das Gupta
<i>Affirmative Action/EO/Diversity/Inclusion</i>	Max Akonde
<i>MUNGO Awards</i>	Gaurav Harshe
<i>FS Information Technology Committee</i>	Rajat Das Gupta
<i>FS University Athletics Advisory Committee</i>	Rosie Sweetwood
<i>Parking Appellate Court</i>	Iftakhar Ahmad, Allison Blanks Coomes
<i>Parking and Transit Advisory</i>	Iftakhar Ahmad
<i>Health Services Advisory Committee</i>	Amanda Plyler, Emily Collie
<i>Non-Campus Safety Committee</i>	Max Akonde
<i>University Libraries' Student Advisory Council</i>	Catherine Coates
<i>Curricula and Courses</i>	Erin Looney
<i>Environmental Sustainability</i>	Erin Looney
<i>Board of Student Publications and Communications</i>	Ashley McGraw, Catherine Coates
<i>Veteran Student Services Advisory</i>	Andrew Kramarchyk
<i>Freedom of Expression</i>	Christina Xan

The Graduate Students Advisory Council (GAC)

The GAC was started with the aim of bringing to the forefront graduate and professional student concerns at a departmental level and serve as a liaison between graduate and professional students and the Graduate Student Association. The GAC was chaired by the co-secretaries of the senate, Sowmya Raghu and Lee Augenblick. This was the first year of the council and membership included:

Representative	Program/Department
College of Arts and Sciences	
<i>Anderson Harris</i>	Philosophy
<i>Robert Gudea</i>	Geography
<i>Courtney Weber</i>	Chemistry and Biochemistry Ph.D. program
<i>Matthew Fryman</i>	Political Science
<i>Gwendolyn Hopper</i>	Chemistry and Biochemistry
<i>Dywane Thompson</i>	Criminology and Criminal Justice
<i>Edoardo Vergallo Gazzina</i>	Physics and Astronomy
<i>Erin Wilson</i>	Educational Psychology and Research
<i>Ailish Stein</i>	Biostatistics/statistics
<i>Karen Bassimer</i>	School Library.
<i>Kiera Vargas</i>	Library and Information Science
<i>Muhammad Hassan Tahir</i>	Phd Chemistry
<i>Dywane Thompson</i>	Criminology and Criminal Justice
<i>Jillian Chamberlain</i>	PhD in Criminology & Criminal Justice
College of Engineering and Computing	
<i>Jane (Mihyun) Waugh</i>	Biomedical Engineering
<i>Nolan Foreman</i>	M.S. Biomedical Engineering
<i>Chrisogonas Odhiambo</i>	Computer Science
College of Education	
<i>Priscila Jovazino Bastos Medrado Costa</i>	Instruction & Teacher Education / Language & Literacy
College of Pharmacy	
<i>Sarah Davis</i>	Drug Discovery and Biomedical Sciences
Arnold School of Public Health	
<i>Lougen Ajlani</i>	COMD
<i>Sarah Roberson</i>	COMD
<i>Kimanh Le</i>	HPEB 1st year
<i>Sweta Mandilwar</i>	MPH-PAPH First year
<i>Macayla Upright</i>	Environmental Health Sciences
<i>Katelyn Hastie</i>	Epidemiology MPH
<i>Pamela Magande</i>	Epidemiology
<i>Gazi Sakir Mohammad Pritom</i>	PhD - HPEB
School of Medicine, Columbia	
<i>Samantha Bouknight</i>	Pharmacology, Physiology & Neuroscience

Non-Degree
Susan Ajieh

College of Social Work
Tasnuva Reete

School of Nursing
Carly Few

Non-Degree

Social work

MSN AGACNP

The GAC held meetings twice a semester to discuss strategies on improving communication, facilitate exchange of ideas between departments and get the GSA President, Max Akonde and Dean of the Graduate School address concerns of students raised by representatives.



The GAC however, faced challenges including need to have stable leadership directing its activities and synchronizing its agenda and priorities as with the GSA to achieve the mission for which it was formed. In view of that, constitutional amendments were proposed for the Graduate Council Representative to chair the GAC.

These amendments will be handed over to the new administration for review and to conduct a referendum with the general student body.

Proposed amendments:

2. GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

- a) The Graduate Student Advisory Council, herein referred to as the Council, is tasked with bringing to the forefront graduate and professional student concerns at a departmental level and serve as a liaison between graduate and professional students and the Graduate Student Association.
- b) Professional and graduate students from all graduate colleges and schools can be nominated.
- c) The Graduate Council Representative (GCR) shall be the executive member responsible for the activities of the Council and all Council representatives.
- d) The Council shall consist of graduate or professional student representatives who will be assigned a constituency within the overall graduate and professional student body, apportioned by college/school and department, and reapportioned each year by the Executive Board.
- e) Each college/School shall have at least one representative to the Council
- f) The Council candidates shall be recommended by their department's Chair, their department's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), their department's Graduate Student Organization (GSO), or a fellow graduate student from their department.
- g) The GCR shall take steps to receive recommendations to the Council and shall cause it to be operationalized before the beginning of the Fall semester of the academic year.
- h) The GCR shall provide a Council report at each GSA Cabinet meeting.
- i) The Council representatives are responsible for communicating GSA information to their graduate and professional student constituency.
- j) The Council representatives are responsible for collecting feedback from their constituency, particularly at the departmental, and GSO level.
- k) The Council representatives shall make an effort to attend GSO meetings each semester for each GSO within their constituency.

GSA Engagement on Campus

Engagement with USC Administration

- The GSA increased its collaboration and communication with many entities on campus, including the Office of the President, Provost Graduate School, Student Life, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the new Office of Civil Rights & Title IX.
 - GSA held a farewell event for Dr. Tracy Weldon, previous Dean of the Graduate School on August 17th, 2022.
 - GSA executives met with 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 met with President Amiridis to update him on students concerns and to advocate for them to be addressed
 - GSA invited numerous higher administration staff to speak at the GSA Biweekly Meetings, including Interim Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the Graduate School Dr. Toby Jenkins, the Assistant Vice President for Civil Rights & Title IX Molly Peirano, Provost Donna Arnett, Chair of the Faculty Senate Dr. Audrey Korsgaard, Dr. Charlie Pierce from the Center for Integrative and Experiential Learning (CIEL), and more.
 - GSA executives welcomed and introduced themselves to J. Rex Tolliver, vice president for Student Affairs and Academic Support.
 - The GSA executives met regularly with Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Cheryl Addy, Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support, J. Rex Tolliver, the Associate Vice President for Student Life, Dr. Anna Edwards, and Director of the Leadership and Service Center, Dr. Ambra Hiott
 - GSA executive and secretary for Data Management, Alex Barth met with Dr. Angelina Sylvain of the Provost Office to discuss issues from the Graduate Student Needs Survey



- A delegation of GSA executive board and cabinet members, including President Maxwell Akonde, Vice President Catherine Coates, Legislative Affairs Secretary Jack DeOliveira, and Chief of Staff Katya Altman traveled to Washington, D.C. with the university lobbyist to advocate for graduate student needs.
- GSA President, Max Akonde and the stipend and cost of living committee met with Provost Arnett to initiate discussions on need for better student support



- GSA executives worked with Director of the LSC, Dr. Ambra Hiott to redesign GSA office and provide labels and the executive officers portraits on the wall dating back to 2020/2021 executive board.



- On November 16, GSA president and secretaries for transportation and parking and disability along with SG executives engaged the Transportation and Parking services on a comprehensive review of their services across campus
- GSA President participated in the departments of student life all-staff meeting on February 9, 2023, where he presented on the progress GSA has made in achieving the set priorities and the support needed from student life

- GSA president participated in the review of the libraries priorities, structures, budgets and staffing on March 3, 2023 discussions.
- GSA president participated in the 2023 South Carolina Association of International Educators Conference held on March 10, 2023, where he tasked the association to be more proactive in addressing the changing challenges of international students



Student Engagement

GSA Engagement with Graduate Student Organizations (GSOs)

Through the summer and into the start of the Fall 2022 semester, GSA President, Max Akonde and Graduate Council Representative, Rajat Das Gupta met with executives of different graduate student organizations to understand the needs of students within the GSOs and to help GSA realign its priorities for the year. Two separate engagement sessions were organized where issues related to student funding support, health insurance challenges, resource information sharing and funding for GSOs were raised. We thank the executives of the GSOs for always providing feedback to the GSA.

New Student Orientation at the Colleges and the Graduate School

At the beginning of the Fall semester, the GSA participated in new student orientation programs in seven different colleges such as the Arnold School of Public, Darla Moore School of Business, School of Music, School of Hospitality Retail and Sport Management, School of Medicine and College of Engineering and Computing and College of Education. Additionally, we collaborated with the Graduate School to organize the Fall 2022 orientation for graduate students ([link to orientation on YouTube](#)).

New Student Orientation Fall 2022

Date and time	College/School/Department	Venue	Remarks
July 26 th , 2:45pm to 4:00pm	Arnold School of	Virtual	Max
August 11 th , 11:00 – 11:10 AM	MSW Program	Virtual (Blackboard)	Max
August 15 th , 10:10am	School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management	Close-Hipp Building 602B	Rose
August 15 th , 11am	School of Medicine	SOM, room B-67	Rajat
August 16 th , 6pm	College of Education Social	Wardlaw College Courtyard	Shea
August 17 th , 8:45-9:00 am	Darla Moore MHR Program	RM135 in the DMSB	Rose
August 17 th , 9am	School of Music	School of Music RM006	Catherine
August 26 th , 10:00am – 12pm	Graduate School	RH theatre	Max

GSA Cabinet Orientation & Farewell to Dean Tracy Weldon – August 17, 2022



FAREWELL CELEBRATION FOR
DEAN TRACEY WELDON



AUGUST 17TH, FROM 5:30-6:30PM, IN
RUSSELL HOUSE 322



Register using the link:
<https://forms.office.com/r/WwTSFZRcXa>
or scan QR code

Uof SC Graduate Student Association
University of South Carolina

The Graduate Student Association held the 2022-2023 cabinet orientation event on August 17, that included guest speakers from across a wide variety of departments across campus, including, but not limited to: Director of the LSC, Dr. Ambra Hiott, Associate Vice President for Student Life Dr. Anna Edwards, Interim Vice President of Student Health and Well-Being Dr. Jason Stacy, Director of International Student Services Lauren Smith, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dr. Julian Williams, Assistant Provost for Academic Administration Dr. Mary Alexander, Assistant Vice President for Civil Rights & Title IX Molly Peirano, and President Michael Amiridis. Reedy Newton, Student Government President was in attendance to give remarks.

Discussions centered around DEI, graduate student engagement on campus, international graduate students, and the physical and mental health of graduate students.

The orientation was directly followed by a farewell event for the former Dean of the Graduate School Dr. Tracy Weldon. The new Interim Dean of the Graduate School Dr. Cheryl Addy gave her remarks, as well as Professor Emeritus Dr. John McFadden. Two of Dr. Weldon’s doctoral students – Archie Crowley and John “Spud” McCullough – also gave a farewell speech for Dr. Weldon. The event was a celebration of all the accomplishments that Dr. Weldon had achieved on the behalf of graduate students at USC, including, but not limited to healthcare coverage for graduate students and an increase in gender neutral bathrooms. Graduate students and faculty alike wished Dr. Weldon all the best in her future endeavors.

Uof SC Graduate Student Association
University of South Carolina

Cabinet Orientation: August 17th, 2022 at 3pm to 5pm
Goals: Developing a sense of community within GSA, planning for Fall 2022 semester, and orient cabinet to university resources.

Time	Activity	Notes
3:00pm	Welcome address by Max Akonde , President, GSA	
3:05pm	Self-introduction (Name, year, program/research interest, Secretary position, where you from: Fun-Fact) – Creative slide	
3:15pm	General Student Affairs with Dr. Ambra Hiott , Director, Leadership and Service Center	
3:20pm	GSA Executive Agenda 2022-2023	
3:30pm	Q&A on GSA	
3:35pm	Time with Dr. Anna Edwards , Associate Vice President for Student Life	
3:45pm	Time with Dr. Tracey Weldon , Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate School	
3:55pm	Time with Dr. Jason Stacy , Interim Vice President of Student Health and Well-Being	
4:05pm	Time with President Michael Amiridis	
4:15pm	Time with Lauren Smith , Director of International Student Services	
4:25pm	Time with Dr. Julian Williams , Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	
4:35pm	Time with Dr. Mary Alexander , Assistant Provost for Academic Administration and Chief of Staff, Office of the Provost	
4:40pm	Time with Molly Peirano , Assistant Vice President for Civil Rights & Title IX	
4:45pm	Time with Dr. Toby Jenkins , Interim Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	
4:50pm	Message from Reedy Newton , Student Body President	
4:55	Closing Remarks	
5:00pm	Socialize	

General Body Meetings

The general body meetings for 2022-2023 hosted a number of higher administration staff at USC in order for them to speak directly to graduate students about their positions and how their offices could better support graduate students.

GSA CABINET MEETING

Friday, Oct. 21 | 4 - 5:30 pm

This meeting's guest will be Dr. Arnett, UofSC's Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

DR. DONNA ARNETT



RSVP to attend here:



or by following the link in our instagram bio!

Join us in-person at the Russell House Leadership and Service Center or virtually on Teams!



GSA CABINET MEETING

FRIDAY, NOV. 4
4 - 5:30 PM

This meeting's guest will be J. Rex Tolliver
J.D., UofSC's Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support!

RSVP to attend here:

J. Rex Tolliver

or by following the link in our instagram bio!

Join us in-person at the Russell House Leadership and Service Center or virtually on Teams!

GSA had speaker from Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Civil Rights & Title IX, the Center for Integrative and Experiential Learning (CIEL), the Faculty Senate, and more.

GSA Meeting - Oct. 7

Join us at our meeting at
the Russell House LSC
(or virtually)
this Friday from 4-5:30 PM

RSVP using the
QR code!

Our guest will be Dr. Audrey Korsgaard,
Chair of the Faculty Senate

Fall & Spring Social Events – 2022-2023



On Thursday, September 15th, 2022 and Thursday, February 9th, 2023, the Graduate Student Association held their respective Fall & Spring Socials for graduate and professional students.



Both events were hosted at the Columbia Craft Brewing Co. and were a great opportunity for graduate students to come and socialize with their peers while enjoying food and drink outside of an academic setting.




Leadership Workshop & Townhall Event – November 16th, 2022

On November 16th, 2022, the Graduate Student Association hosted a townhall event with guest speakers Dr. Cheryl Addy (Interim Dean of the Graduate School), Dr. Julian Williams (Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), Dr. Anna Edwards (Associate Vice President for Student Life), and Dr. Jason Stacy (Interim Associate Vice President for Student Health and Well-Being).

The first half of the event served as a leadership workshop facilitated by the Leadership and Service Center. Graduate students learned how to be effective leaders inside and outside of their academic lives.

The second half of the event served as the townhall portion, in which graduate students had an opportunity to ask questions directly to higher administration staff concerning issues related to DEI, student life, health and well-being, and general graduate student concerns.

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION PRESENTS Leadership Lessons and Conversation with University Administrators Supported by the Leadership and Service Center	
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 16 04:00 pm-06:00 pm RUSSELL HOUSE ROOM 305	The event has two sections: <ol style="list-style-type: none">04:00-05:00 pm: Leadership workshop facilitated by the Leadership and Service Center.05:00-06:00 pm: Question and answer session with the following University administrators:<ol style="list-style-type: none">Dr. Cheryl L. Addy (Interim Dean of Graduate School)Dr. Julian R. Williams (Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)Dr. Anna Edwards (Associate Vice President for Student Life)Dr. Jason Stacy (Interim Associate Vice President for Student Health and Well-Being)
RSVP by: November 10, 2022 RSVP Link: https://forms.gle/iKE7woNpDau6o49u7	
QR CODE for RSVP 	
Snacks and Refreshments will be served!!!	Please contact Rajat Das Gupta (rajatdas@email.sc.edu) or Sweta Mandilwar (sweta@email.sc.edu) for further information

Graduate Student Appreciation Week – April 3rd-7th, 2023

The Graduate Student Association hosted a number of events during Graduate Student Association Week from Monday, April 3rd to Friday, April 7th. On Monday, April 3rd, GSA, in collaboration with the Graduate School, hosted a virtual wine and cheese hour for graduate students to drop by and socialize. On Tuesday, April 4th, the Graduate Student Association hosted their annual awards ceremony for graduate students across campus. On Thursday, April 6th, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion hosted the Celebration of Excellence Awards for graduate students. On Friday, April 7th, was Affirmation Friday, where graduate students could relax and get a morning boost.

Upcoming Events

Graduate Student Appreciation Week April 3rd - April 7th
 Check Out the List of Events for 2023

Monday	3	Virtual Wine & Cheese Happy Hour Register now to join our Virtual Wine & Cheese Happy Hour. Relax, meet new friends, and celebrate you. Starting at 5:30 pm. Register at https://bit.ly/40C4dN5 Flyer https://bit.ly/42uak8
		Nikky Finney Presentation Talk by Professor Nikky Finney on Natalie Diaz's "Postcolonial Love Poem" - Capstone Building starting at 6:00 pm. Sponsored by English Department.
Tuesday	4	GSA Banquet Awards Ceremony GSA Banquet Awards Ceremony - Russell House Ballroom from 6:30 pm. Light food will be served.
Wednesday	5	Graduate Student Potluck & Family Fun 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm Russell House Patio (in front of Student Health Center) Bring a dish! Bring your friends! Bring your family!
Thursday	6	Celebration of Excellence Awards 4:00pm Russell House Ballroom Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
Friday	7	Affirmation Friday Whether you need to relax, get a morning boost, or success reset, we will have something for you.

For more information: Contact GSA at sogsa@mailbox.sc.edu

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina

Collaboratively sponsored by the Graduate Student Association & the Graduate School

Graduate Student Appreciation week was a time for people both within and outside of the graduate student community to come together and recognize the value that graduate and professional students add to the USC campus.

GSA Advocacy

Washington, D.C. Advocacy Trip – February 1st-3rd, 2023

On February 1st, 2023, a delegation of GSA executive board and cabinet members (President Max Akonde, Vice President Catherine Coates, Chief of Staff Katya Altman, and Secretary of Legislative Affairs Jack DeOliveira) traveled with Dean Cheryl Addy to Washington, D.C. to advocate on the behalf of graduate students. Joined by the university’s lobbyist Steven Beckham, the delegation met with the Council of Graduate Schools, representatives from the Office of Senator Scott, Patrick Fox from the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, representatives from the Office of Senator Lindsay Graham, and a staffer from each of the nine U.S. House of Representatives of South Carolina. The delegation also met with a representative to discuss the possibility of renewing the Graduate Student Caucus.

The delegation focused their discussions on issues centered around DEI funding, mental and physical health funding, international student support, and general graduate school funding. The delegation also discussed the value that graduate students at USC bring to the state of South Carolina and the importance of continued federal support.

ONE-PAGE OUTLINE:

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION LOOKS TO RAISE AWARENESS TO THE FOLLOWING CONCERNS:

- Promoting D.E.I.J.A. Funding and Initiatives
- Mental and Physical Health Funding
- International Student Support
- Graduate Student Financial Support

The University of South Carolina is addressing the issues listed above in the following ways:

- Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Access Funding and Initiatives
 - Graduate School has increased underrepresented minority enrollment from 16.8% in 2018 to 21.0% in 2022.
 - SC resident underrepresented minority enrollment stands at 27.1% as of Fall 2022.
 - New grants created at USC that focus on underrepresented students.
 - Promotion of new services and spaces for underrepresented students.
- International Student Support
 - International students represent 16.1% of the graduate student population.
 - Increasing on-campus support for international students
 - Developing collaborations and exchanges with foreign Governments and Universities
- Graduate Student Financial Support
 - New graduate student health insurance subsidy structure (All full-time PhD students on Assistantships receive a 100% health insurance subsidy)

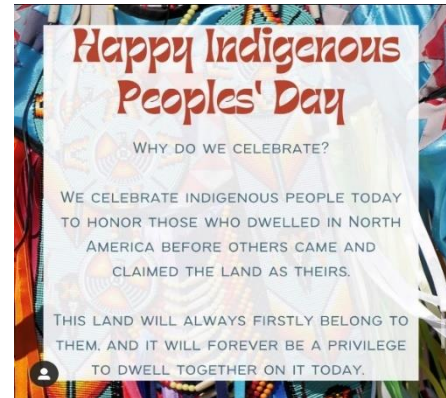
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OFFERS THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Promoting D.E.I.J.A. Mental & Physical Health Initiatives
 - Invest in **wrap-around services** for graduate students and postdocs, such as childcare, food security, housing, and respite for those also serving as caregivers.
 - Expand **broadband access** so that students and faculty can successfully participate in remote instruction.
 - Considering legislation to **cover graduate student health insurance** regardless of age.
- International Student Support
 - Maintaining the duration of visa status for F-1, M-1, and J-1 visa holders
 - **Maintaining** Optional Practical Training (12 months) and the STEM extension (36 months)
 - Expanding the number of H-1b visas available to holders of graduate degrees for U.S. institutions of higher education
- Graduate Student Financial Support
 - Continue support of the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN).
 - Enhance **tax credits** (e.g., the American Opportunity Tax Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit) to ensure the benefits can be used towards graduate education.
 - Strengthen employers’ ability to provide **tax-exempt tuition assistance**, by expanding monetary limits and allow it to include student loan repayment (e.g., Sec. 117).
 - Continue to exclude current tuition waivers and remissions from being included as **taxable income** and exclude future grant aid to students from being income taxable.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Graduate Student Association advocated on many issues surrounding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion over the course of the 2022-2023 academic year. Events included luncheons for Black graduate students, LGBTQ+ graduate students, and woman-identifying graduate students, acknowledging DEI-related calendar days, and a minority mentoring event. Please see the Secretary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Christina Xan's report for an in-depth review of these events. The Graduate Student Association, in collaboration with the Provost Advisory Committee for Women's Initiatives (PACWI), also held a luncheon for women-identifying students on November 1st, 2022.



The Graduate Student Association is dedicated to the development of a USC campus that is welcoming and supportive to graduate and professional students from historically marginalized backgrounds.

GSA Graduate Student Mentoring Month Kick-Off Presents:
 Graduate Student Association and Provost Advisory Committee for Women's Initiatives
 Lunch & Learn Mentoring Event

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER
1
 11a.m. - 12:30p.m.
 Russell House
 Ballroom Room 207B

Graduate Student Association (GSA) in collaboration with the Provost Advisory Committee for Women's Initiatives (PACWI) would like to invite women-identifying graduate students at the University of South Carolina to attend a lunch and learn with various women leaders across campus and disciplines.

Follow this [link](#) to RSVP by Wednesday, October 26, 2022. Spots are limited!
 Sponsored by the UoSC's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Inclusive Excellence Grant Fund

RSVP by October 26, 2022
 Please contact Caroline B. Hallett, CAPM, MPA
 GSA Secretary of Women's Affairs
 for more information at
 hallett@mailbox.sc.edu

For more information about these organizations, please click the graphics below:

UofSC GSA UofSC PACWI



Mental Health Advocacy

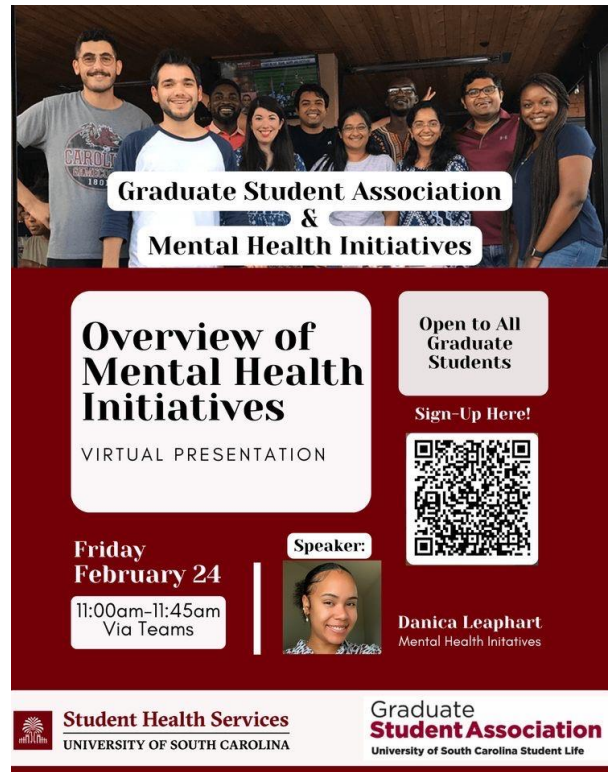
The Graduate Student Association is dedicated to advocating for the development of mental health resources for graduate and professional students across USC's campus. The Washington, D.C. GSA delegation pushed for more mental health funding for graduate and professional students and GSA hosted a number of mental health events during the 2022-2023 academic year, including, but not limited to, a mental health seminar and a Give Yourself a Break event, in which graduate and professional students could take a walk around the Horseshoe and discuss their mental health concerns. Please see the Secretary of Mental Health Emily Collie's report for an in-depth review of GSA's mental health initiatives.



Give Yourself a Break!




Join the GSA on September 23rd at 3 pm for socialization, light physical activity, and guided meditation!




Graduate Student Association & Mental Health Initiatives

Overview of Mental Health Initiatives
VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

Open to All Graduate Students
Sign-Up Here!



Friday February 24
11:00am-11:45am
Via Teams

Speaker:

Danica Leaphart
Mental Health Initiatives

Student Health Services
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Graduate Student Association
University of South Carolina Student Life

GSA Internal Stipend Committee – 2022-2023

In the Fall 2022 semester, the Graduate Student Association formed an internal Stipend Committee whose goal was to advocate for the increased wages of graduate and professional students across campus. The members were Vice President Catherine Coates (chair), Secretary of Data Management Alexander Barth, Chief of Staff Katya Altman, Secretary of Graduate Assistantships Mahbub Alam, and external member Morgan Boncyk.

Throughout the Fall semester, members worked on creating a stipend and cost of living survey to distribute to USC graduate and professional students. On December 16th, 2022, the survey was distributed to all graduate and professional students. The survey itself consisted of a series of questions related to stipend wages, stipend satisfaction, and each student's cost of living situation, such as rent, groceries, transportation, and medical expenses. The survey remained open until January 13th, 2023. The survey received 931 total responses.

In the Spring semester, the members of the committee worked on analyzing the results of the survey and how to best advocate for graduate students to higher administration. The committee met with Provost Arnett to present the results and Alexander Barth presented the results to the Graduate Council. A complete report of the stipend and cost of living survey is found [here](#) and you can refer to the report of Secretary of Data Management Alexander Barth for more details about the set-up as well.

The Graduate Student Association is committed to ensuring the well-being of graduate and professional students, which includes advocating for fair wages and ensuring that all graduate students are being adequately compensated for their work.

GSRA Winners

GSA congratulates all the 2022-2023 Graduate Student Recognition Award Winners!

Overall Doctoral Student Achievement Award

Judged by the Graduate School

Nancy A. Uriegas (Arnold School of Public Health)

Runner up: Sowmya Raghu (College of Engineering and Computing)

Overall Masters Student Achievement Award

Judged by the Graduate School

Nowrin Tamanna (Arnold School of Public Health)

Runner up: Jamie P. Jones (Arnold School of Public Health)

Outstanding Graduate Student Researcher Award

Judged by USC Libraries

Sarah Elizabeth Davis (College of Pharmacy)

Runner up: Sudipta Saha (College of Engineering and Computing)

Runner up: Thomas D. Cardaci (School of Medicine)

Outstanding Graduate Student Award for Entrepreneurship, Creativity, and Innovation

Judged by USC Libraries

Sowmya Raghu (College of Engineering and Computing)

Runner up: Tanya Parikh (Darla Moore School of Business)

Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Assistant Award

Judged by the Center for Teaching Excellence

Amadi Afua Sefah-Twerefour (College of Arts and Sciences)

Runner up: Ryan Patrick Dennehy (College of Arts and Sciences)

Exemplary Graduate Student Award for Service

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

Gazi Sakir Mohammad Pritom (Arnold School of Public Health)

Runner up: Christina Xan (College of Arts and Sciences)

Outstanding International Graduate Student Award

Judged by International Student Services

Sowmya Raghu (College of Engineering and Computing)

Runner up: Sudipta Saha (College of Engineering and Computing)

Outstanding Graduate Student Award for Excellence in Diversity

Judged by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs

Rajat Das Gupta (Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics)

Ruthanne Hughes (College of Arts and Sciences)

Runner up: Laurent Duverglas (College of Arts and Sciences)

Reports of the 2022-2023 GSA Executive Board

Report of the GSA Vice President – Catherine Coates

My time as the GSA Vice President for the 2022-2023 has been a memorable and exciting one. My tenure began with the planning of the GSA Fall Social, which took place on Thursday, September 15th, with over 75 students in attendance. The Fall Social was a great opportunity to meet with my fellow graduate students and discuss the unique problems that us graduate students typically face, including issues related to pay and recognition.

In the Fall of 2022, the GSA Executive Board began the GSA Stipend Committee, of which I served as the head member. The goal of the committee was to advocate for increased financial support for graduate and professional students across campus. With my fellow members, we created and distributed the Stipend & Cost of Living Survey to all graduate students. The survey received nearly 1,000 responses. With our results, the Stipend Committee was able to advocate for increased stipend support to Provost Arnett and present our findings at to the Graduate Council. Thank you to my fellow members Alexander Barth, Katya Altman, Mahbub Alam, and Morgan Boncyk. Fair graduate student compensation is one of my primary concerns, and it was a wonderful experience to work with such a dedicated and passionate team. It is my hope that the achievements of the Stipend Committee continue forward with the next executive board.

One of the highlights of my time with the Graduate Student Association was the Washington D.C. advocacy trip, which took place from February 1st to February 3rd. During this time, myself, Max Akonde, Katya Altman, and Jack DeOliveira had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. with Dean Cheryl Addy to advocate for graduate students. As a group, we met with the offices of the South Carolina U.S. State Representatives, as well as with the offices of the South Carolina Senators. We advocated for graduate student funding, graduate student mental health needs, and international graduate student needs. This trip was such a great opportunity to advocate for graduate students on a federal level and to ensure that the Graduate Student Association was representing our fellow graduate students at all possible levels.

Besides my own advocacy efforts, I have had a great time this year attending the Graduate Student Association meetings, discussing graduate student needs with higher education staff, and just socializing with my fellow graduate students. It has been a privilege to serve as the Graduate Student Association for this past academic year. Forever to thee!

Report of the GSA Treasurer – Rosie Sweetwood

Serving on the Executive Board for the Graduate Student Association has been a pleasure. I worked closely with university administrators and the GSA cabinet to execute multiple professional development events. I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to: Dr. Anna Edwards, Associate Vice President of Student Life; Ambra Hiott, Director of the LSC; 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. A lot of new events were approved this year post COVID-19 which has been a delight to see.

GSA Allocation Budget Summary

Organization Name	Event Name	Event Date	Allocated
Bangladesh Student Association	Banglafest	11/05/2022	\$5,000.00
College of Pharmacy Graduate Student Association	Pizza with Pi	11/16/2022	\$118.02
Student Personnel Association	Hooding Ceremony	05/04/2023	\$744.41
LLC	Dinner Night	11/11/2022	\$200.00
College of Pharmacy Graduate Student Association	Pizza with Dr. Matthews	01/18/2022	\$195.65
College of Pharmacy Graduate Student Association	Holiday Sweets & Sharing	12/03/2022	\$40.40
College of Pharmacy Graduate Student Association	Pizza with Pi	03/24/2023	\$227.14
College of Pharmacy Graduate Student Association	Welcome Back Event	02/11/2023	\$49.96
College of Pharmacy Graduate Student Association	Pizza with Dr. Hastings	02/24/2023	\$225.44
Black Graduate Student Association	National Center for Civil and Human Rights Cultural Emergent	02/25/2023	\$500.00
College of Pharmacy Graduate Student Association	Pizza with Pi	04/21/2023	\$228.14
Black Graduate Student Association	Demystifying Graduate School	03/29/2023	\$500.00
Pakistani	Bowling Event	03/15/2023	\$318.60
Muslim Student Association	Iftar	04/03/2023	\$248.28

Graduate Association of Biological Sciences	Symposium	04/15/2023	\$492.64
	Spent		\$9,088.68
	Remaining		\$23,944.71

GSA Operation Budget Summary

Event Name	Requested	Spent	Remaining
Travel for Advocacy Meetings in Washington, D.C.	\$3,000	\$2,627.61	\$372.39
GSA Welcome Back Social	\$1,400	\$1,340.53	\$59.47
GSA Executive Nametags and Business Cards	\$200	\$200	\$0.00
Mentorship Event / DEI Event	\$2,500	\$923.12	\$1,576.88
Fall and Spring Town Halls	\$750	\$70.54	\$679.46
End-of-Year Appreciation Luncheon	\$486.44	TBD	TBD
Emerging new priorities	\$700	\$203.74	\$496.26
Graduate Student Awards	\$500	\$38.94	\$461.06
GSA Cabinet Orientation	\$400	\$931.19	-\$531.19
Professional headshots	\$500	\$322	\$178
Total:	\$10,436.44	\$7,357.67	\$3,292.33

Report of the Graduate Council Representative – Rajat Das Gupta

Serving on the Executive Board for the Graduate Student Association as a Graduate Council Representative was an honor for me. Serving as the Graduate Council Representative in the Graduate Council and representing the graduate student is certainly one of the best learning experiences for me at the University of South Carolina. The Graduate Council is the governing body acting on behalf of the Graduate Faculty of the University. My responsibility in the Graduate Council was not only confined to act as a liaison between the Graduate Student Association and the Graduate Council, but also to represent all the Graduate Students in the Council.

I regularly attended the graduate council meeting. One of the top priority agendas of the Graduate Student Association for this year was to ensure a minimum livable stipend for the graduate and professional students. I advocated about the stipend issue to the graduate council.

I served as a student representative at the Faculty Senate IT Committee. The committee met twice every month. I advocated for inclusion of graduate students in the courses designed Centre for Teaching Excellence for the faculty and staffs on online teaching. I

also served as a member of the Constitutional Review Committee led by Mr. Andrew Kramarchyk (Veteran Affairs Secretary).

During my tenure, I organized a townhall on behalf of the Graduate Student Association on November 16th 2022 from 04:00 pm-06:00 pm. The first part of the townhall consisted of a workshop on leadership organized by the Leadership and Service Center at the University of South Carolina. Joshua Cauble, the associate director of the Leadership and Service Center facilitated the workshop. The second part of the townhall was attended by the university's leadership including



the dean of the graduate school (Dr. Cheryl L. Addy), the vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion (Dr. Julian R. Williams), the Interim Associate Vice President for Student Health and Well-Being (Dr. Jason Stacy) and the associate vice president for student life (Dr. Anna Edwards). Students' concerns were raised and addressed.

As the Graduate Council Representative of the graduate student association, I led writing the 'Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Grant' from the office of DEI. We were awarded with the grant in September 2022. We used this grant to support mentorship luncheon events for the graduate and professional students who are underrepresented groups in the academia including for the African American students, women, LGBTQ+ community and for the international students at UofSC. This initiative will help these graduate students and professional the opportunity to connect with other students, to share the individual challenges they face, to release stress through community, and to discuss strategies to become professionally successful.

I also served as a reviewer for the nomination at the 'Leadership and Service Awards' ceremony organized by the Leadership and Service Center. I acted as a reviewer for the 'Outstanding Student Volunteer Award' and 'Strom Thurmond/Steve Cannon Carolina Cares Award'.

I, along with Maxwell Akonde also represented GSA at the Student Organization BEAK (Bridging Experiences And Knowledge) Retreat (August 27th - 28th 2022). It was an amazing experience. The Retreat is designed for students in leadership roles to engage

with one another in both large group and small group breakout sessions. Student leaders will participate in workshops focusing on strengths, personality, inclusive leadership, building connections, and difficult conversations.

Apart from harnessing my leadership at the graduate student association, I mentored young and emerging student leaders at the campus. I mentored the 'Bangladesh Student Association' in organizing their activities (as a formal president). I acted as a voice of the international students in different issues. I regularly advocated for a mandatory university holiday on the Juneteenth. I also raised awareness among the graduate students about different resources available for them at the Leadership and Service Center. For example, in 2022-2023 the Leadership and Service Center allocated 16% quota for the Graduate Students at the 'Walt Disney World Leadership Experience'. I raised awareness about this opportunity among the graduate students.

The leadership and learning experience at the Graduate Student Association will certainly help me in the days coming forward.

Reports of the GSA President's Cabinet

Report of the Chief of Staff (President) – Ekaterina (Katya) Altman

I served as a Chief of Staff with the GSA President over the 2022-2023 academic year. Katya assisted with the daily operations of the GSA, helped with ongoing activities, and organized events for the graduate and professional student body. Katya also assisted with the work of the Stipend Committee and participated in the DC Advocacy trip.

The DC Advocacy trip took place on February 1-3, 2023 where GSA leadership and the Dean of the Graduate School, Dean Cheryl Addy, met with each of the seven offices of the South Carolina Congressional delegation to advocate for the needs of graduate students, including the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility (DEIJA), mental health, immigration reform, and stipends for graduate students and increased support for these initiatives on a federal level. In addition, Katya organized the GSA Spring Social event and worked with others on Professional Headshots and other opportunities.

Report of the Chief of Staff (Vice President) – Divine Nwanekezie

As we come to the end of the year 2023, I am proud to submit my report of accomplishments and achievements for the year. It has been a challenging and productive year, and I am pleased to share some highlights of our work together.

Working with the Vice President of the Graduate Student Association, during the year, I made it a priority to take detailed notes for every biweekly meeting. These notes were instrumental in ensuring that we remained on track and addressed all critical issues. By referring back to my notes, we were able to maintain continuity and ensure that the work of the office progressed seamlessly. These notes also provided a valuable resource for any follow-up actions that needed to be taken.

One of the initiatives that I was particularly passionate about was advocating for graduate students to be included in the Graduate with Learning Distinction program at USC. This program had previously been limited to undergraduates. Recognizing the value of extending it to graduate students, I brought the topic to the GSA for it to be handled appropriately by the right authorities. This led to a chain reaction of getting the members of the GLD to speak to us and answer questions during one of our meetings and even, with persuasion for members of the GSA, promise to organize a portfolio creation workshop for Graduate students in USC. even though the GLD program cannot admit graduate students at this time, This achievement has helped to expand opportunities for our graduate students, and I believe it will benefit our academic excellence in the long

run as the organization has promised to work hard toward being able to accommodate graduate students in the coming years.

I also worked closely with the Secretary for Diversity to organize a women's luncheon for the year 2023. This event takes place in the second week of April and is aimed to be well-attended and to feature several prominent speakers who will discuss the challenges and opportunities facing women in the workplace, and act as potential mentors to women in attendance. We cannot wait. I believe this event will help to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the workplace and hopefully, we receive positive feedback from attendees.

In conclusion, I am proud of the progress we have made this year and the strides we have taken to promote excellence and inclusivity within GSA. I look forward to continuing to assist GSA in any capacity that I can in the coming year and to helping the organization achieve its goals and objectives.

Report of the Co-Secretaries of International Student Affairs – Kenneth Aba & Samuel Cheung

Helping international students to adapt smoothly and healthily at USC is the primary responsibility of the secretary of international student affairs. Thankfully, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and its cabinet members have facilitated helpful and meaningful discussions regarding international student affairs with us over the year. As a result, we have made two accomplishments this school year.

In collaboration with International Student Service (ISS), we successfully launched and hosted the international student luncheon which was funded by the Officer of Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion, during international education week. As secretaries, we witnessed how international students cherished the opportunity to meet and share experiences with mentors and speakers who once studied as international students. As a result, most of their voices were heard not only by the officials of ISS and GSA but also by people who have overcome similar difficulties. Gracefully, 80% of participants that completed the evaluation survey rated the event as very satisfied while all participants thought that the event met their expectations. For this reason, listening to their collective voices and understanding their needs regarding studying abroad would be a prospering way to enrich their study experience at USC.

To understand the primary needs of international students, we also work in collaboration with other cabinet members to learn about how international students regard their housing experiences at the USC. Through the Graduate Student Needs Assessment

Survey, we learned that although more than half of the respondents indicated a preference against graduate student housing, only 18% of international students agreed with that. This indicated that finding an appropriate place to live in Columbia may be seen as an important concern, particularly for graduate international students.

Beyond these accomplishments, we were happy to be given the opportunity to advocate for better transportation service and better workshops tailored for international students. To conclude, our accomplishments and unfinished advocacies have paved the way for enriching the study experiences of the valuable international students at the USC. We look forward to achieving this goal in the future.

Report of the GSA Secretary for Legislative Affairs – Jack DeOliveira

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as the Secretary of Legislative Affairs for the Graduate Student Association for the 2022-2023 academic year. The theme for this year has been focused on improving the relations of the Graduate Student Association with our Federal and State legislators.

The key highlight from this academic year involved GSA's advocacy trip to Washington D.C. After forging a relationship with Steven Beckham, the University's Lobbyist, we coordinated a trip with several GSA representatives to discuss pertinent public policy issues relating to graduate students. From February 1st to 3rd, GSA representatives and Dean Cheryl Addy had the privilege to open a dialogue and share concerns directly with members of the South Carolina Congressional Delegation and their staffers. In addition to meeting with our Congressional Delegation, GSA representatives were able to meet with the Council of Graduate Students to discuss graduate student advocacy being done by other universities. During these meetings, we discussed graduate student funding, graduate student mental and physical health, ways to better serve international students, and the expansion of Pell Grants to graduate students.

Furthermore, I had opportunities to meet with the University's State Government Affairs Team (Craig Parks and Derrick Meggie) on multiple occasions, to discuss issues that are important to graduate students; and have been active with the newly formed Mayors Collegiate Engagement Council, which looks to promote better opportunities for college students in Columbia.

Report of the GSA Secretary for Graduate Assistantship – Mahbub Alam

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as the Secretary of Graduate Assistantship for the Graduate Student Association (GSA) at the University of South Carolina during the

academic year 2022-23. In this role, I have worked with the GSA executive board, cabinet members, and university administrators to improve the graduate student experience, particularly in the areas of stipends, resources, and recognition of achievement.

As the Secretary of Graduate Assistantship, I worked as a member of the GSA stipend committee to advocate for an increase in graduate student stipends and current inflation adjustments. We worked closely with university administration to review the current stipend levels, comparing them to the cost of living in the area and the increased expenses of graduate students by conducting an in-depth survey. We also reviewed the data from other universities in the USA to ensure that our stipend levels were competitive or not. We presented our findings and recommendations to the provost. I believe that we were able to make administrators think seriously regarding the urgency of an increase in stipend level and a current inflation adjustment.

I have also been a part of representing GSA at the Graduate Student Resource Fair as a part of Discover Carolina week. I represented GSA at this event, sharing information about our organization, our goals, and the various ways in which we support graduate students. I also encouraged students to get involved with GSA and participate in our various events and programs throughout the year. The event was a great success, with many graduate students learning about the resources available to them and how they could get involved with GSA.



I also served as a member of the GSA Award Committee. We worked on recognizing the achievements of graduate students at our university. We reviewed nominations and selected recipients for various awards, including the graduate student research award, the teaching award, the service award, and others with the help of expert reviewers/judges. These awards recognize exceptional contributions and accomplishments in research, teaching, and service, and it was an honor to be part of this amazing committee.

Overall, it has been an amazing experience and a great pleasure to serve as the Secretary of Graduate Assistantship for GSA at the University of South Carolina. I have enjoyed working with my fellow graduate students and other members of the organization to improve the graduate student experience. I look forward to continuing to work with GSA and contribute to the success of graduate students at our university.

Report of the GSA Secretary of Mental Health– Emily Collie

I am so grateful and honored to have served as the Secretary of Mental Health this past year. I have worked diligently in advocating for my peers and creating events and services to support graduate students. Over the fall 2022 and spring 2023 semesters, I have sat on the Mental Health Council led by Dr. April Scott. This council is comprised of various department leaders across the university and works towards brainstorming and developing mental health initiatives as well as cross-promoting services. The council is also a place where concerns specific to graduate students were raised and graduate students will be one of the target populations for services and outreach based on the new grant for Mental Health Initiatives. At the beginning of the semester, I took part in a meeting with Student Health Services and Counseling and Psychiatry Services leadership. During this meeting, we discussed graduate student concerns around mental health and general health services concerns. We also heard from leadership about new services and resources as well as clarification on parameters of use and considerations when marketing resources. I also had the honor of interviewing candidates for positions within Student Affairs and Academic Success and providing feedback.

I organized and led a graduate student event titled Give Yourself a Break! where graduate students gathered together and took a mindful walk with someone they had not previously met to facilitate social connection and physical activity. At the end of this activity, I guided my peers through meditation, and we discussed the importance of downtime, mindfulness, movement, and social connection to overall wellness. Another event I developed and organized was an interactive wellness workshop on the dimensions of wellness and goal setting. Within this workshop, graduate students learned about the eight dimensions of wellness, potential ways, and ideas for how to improve each dimension, and how to complete effective goal setting. Students created one SMART goal at the end of the session to take with them throughout the rest of their semester.

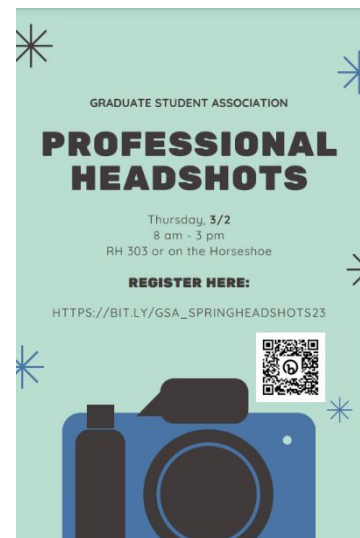
I worked with several departments on campus to foster partnerships for resources and events for graduate students. In the fall semester, I partnered with the Grad Hub who graciously planned and implemented a destress table during finals week as a space for graduate students to come learn about resources and get snacks as a break while studying and working. In the spring semester, I worked with a graduate assistant within the Mental Health Initiatives department who developed a graduate student-specific presentation on mental health and campus resources.

Campus and community events that I was a part of on behalf of the GSA include the Reconnect and Restore Mental Health Summit. I served on the student and fac/staff planning committees and worked to help with logistics on the day of the event. I also sat

on the panel as the graduate student representative and co-presented a session on graduate student mental health with Dr. Michael Walsh. I organized the GSA team for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Walk out of Darkness Community Walk in the fall semester and Campus Walk in the spring semester. I also attended with my peers as well as raised donations for suicide prevention. I organized a graduate student mental health table for the Spring into Mental Health Carnival hosted by Mental Health Initiatives in the spring semester and offered information and resources on graduate student mental health concerns. Lastly, I facilitated the GSA's partnership with the Substance Abuse Prevention and Education (SAPE) office to advocate for collegiate recovery. In this, we shared our support through social media and resources as well as marketing their Recovery Ally workshop.

Report of the GSA Secretary of Professional Development – Erin Looney

Over the 2022-2023 academic year, I was responsible for facilitating communication between the graduate student body and established professional development centers, including the Graduate Student Resources Hub and the Career Center. I played a central role in organizing GSA-sponsored events that provided graduate students with opportunities to develop professionally, both in academia and industry. One of my notable achievements during the year was the successful planning and execution of two professional headshot events. In total, 202 students registered and received professional headshots, making both events a great success! Additionally, I served on the Student Council for Sustainability as a GSA Representative. It was a fulfilling and rewarding experience to serve as the Secretary of Professional Development for the Graduate Student Association, and I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to help my fellow graduate students succeed.



Report of the GSA Secretary of Veterans' Affairs – Andrew Karmarchyk

In this past academic year my charge as the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs was to be a liaison between the GSA and the Veteran graduate student population across the Columbia campus. In this role I advocated for Veteran and Military affiliated graduate students and assisted them in promoting their outreach initiatives.

My efforts were greatly bolstered by the outstanding organization that exists within the university's Veterans and Military Services office. With a well-trained and dedicated

staff the office supports Veteran and Military affiliated students across the campus, as well as supports both a student veterans association as well as a veteran alumni association.

Upon meeting this team at an introductory meeting last August, I was soon invited to join their Military Affiliated Students Advisory Committee which met regularly throughout the academic year to lead a university-wide approach of enhancing services, programs, and policy changes for the 2000+ overall military-affiliated student population.

Activities in which I supported the Veteran graduate student population during the academic year included the 9-11 Memorial event at Davis Field, the 14th Annual Veterans Day Breakfast, and the Veterans Day 5K race. A novel outreach effort that I embarked upon, with the assistance of the International Student Services office, was an inaugural Military and International Students Roundtable. This event will bring together two important communities within the university graduate student population to share lived experiences and explore shared challenges and goals. Much of the planning was completed this year, with a goal to host the first event in the Fall of 2023.

Important accomplishments and accolades for the Military and Veteran community of the University of South Carolina this past year were the 2022 Military Times Best for Vets: Colleges where UofSC was ranked number one overall, and; from the Student Veterans of America two awards were received: the 2022 William Pearson Tolley Champion for Veterans in Higher Education award and the 2022 Student Veterans of America Chapter of the Year award to the UofSC Student Veterans Association.

Report of the Secretary of Data Management – Alexander Barth

As secretary of data management, I worked on several projects related to gaining information which could be used for graduate student advocacy. Early in the semester, I worked with Dr. Angela Sylvain and the GSA president to process results from the Graduate Student Needs Assessment. We received an early look at the results and worked to investigate topics of concern for graduate students. Using our early access data, I wrote a summary of the results which was presented to the GSA Cabinet meeting. These findings were then used to direct GSA advocacy efforts throughout the semester.

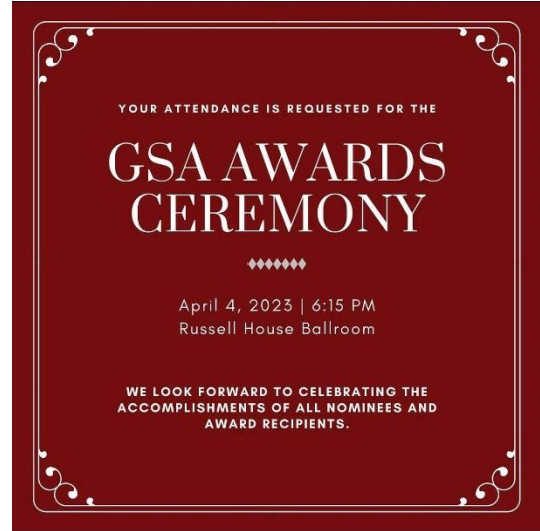
A large portion of my role was dedicated to the Graduate Student Stipend Committee. On this committee, I worked with other GSA members to develop a survey related to graduate student stipends and cost of living. We deployed this survey in the beginning

of Spring 2023. In total, there were nearly 900 respondents from several programs and colleges across the university. This data provided us valuable information as to the pay which different programs received and the average cost of basic necessities which different student had. With this data, I conducted a market analysis to assess the position of USC's graduate pay structure relative to other national universities. I developed several web-scraping tools to pull data from various sources which provided information as to the graduate pay from other universities. I also pulled information from the MIT cost-of-living calculator to standardize pay relative to university location. With all these data, our analysis indicated that graduate student pay was on average below the market, relative to cost of living. We also found that the basic cost of necessities exceeded the average reported stipend. I summarized all the findings in a report which I presented to the provost and Graduate Council. Additionally, I created an interactive widget to visualize the results of the market analysis.

To better process and organize results, I created a github organization dedicated to GSA. This organization hosts the repositories for all my analysis projects. On this repository, all data and code are made available. I hope that future GSA members working with data will be able to utilize this organization to store GSA projects in perpetuity. This org also hosts the docs for a static site which offers a portal for the GSA reports I wrote.

Report of the Secretary of Social Media – Camryn Garrett

I was fortunate to serve as the Graduate Student Association's Secretary of Social Media. In this role my key goal was to grow our social media engagement. This position serves a necessary function to communicate with graduate students in an additional and alternate format to traditional email communication. The informed social media marketing strategy that was implemented to supplement announcements made through the weekly newsletter were to: (1) create engaging and dynamic advertising materials, (2) advertise events 3-4 days before they occurred in efforts to serve as a reminder and increase attendance, and (3) intentionally post events to the association's profile page or as stories. Advertisements afforded a full post on profiles (i.e., Instagram, Twitter, Facebook) were those events hosted or sponsored by GSA (i.e., bi-weekly meetings, town hall, awards, social events) as well as recognition posts (i.e., Transgender Day of Remembrance, Black History Month). As the date of the related post grew closer it was re-shared through Instagram's temporary story function. Other advertisements were shared through stories to advertise other happenings on campus that graduate students might be interested in but that were not directly hosted by GSA. In employing this informed social media strategy, I was able to grow the GSA Instagram account from 687 to 778 followers.



Report of the Secretary of Community Outreach – Mayank Sakhuja

It was out of my interest in service that I decided to volunteer to take up the position of GSA Secretary of Community Outreach towards the end of this academic year. I joined this position in early February 2023. During these two months of my role, I invested most of my time in learning about my responsibilities and making connections to better understand various community service opportunities that graduate students can volunteer for. Since there was not much scope to plan additional activities in the midst of the semester, I rather focused on disseminating information regarding the already planned activities with the graduate students. This semester only one major event was planned for community service - The Big Event. I registered the GSA as a team and disseminated event details on GSA social media handles and through personal networks and invited graduate students to volunteer for the event. Despite the efforts, graduate student attendance at the event was low. During my 2 months of tenure, I have learned that there is a lot of scope in communicating information about community service events or Service Saturdays among graduate students so as to increase their knowledge and awareness about such events, which will eventually motivate more graduate students to volunteer.



Additionally, there is a need to have graduate student representatives from every school who will play important roles in disseminating information within their schools. I hope my learnings will help my successor in planning all future community service events for graduate students.

Report of the Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations – Sweta Mandilwar

Serving as the GSA Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations for the 2022-2023 academic year has been extremely rewarding! My primary goal as Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations was to become a liaison between graduate student organizations and GSA. As Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations, I updated the contact information for current graduate student organizations. Updating contact information allowed organizations to connect more easily. Additionally, I shared appropriate reminders and information with colleges and student organizations when necessary. In the Fall, I collaborated with several cabinet members to host the GSA Town Hall. The Town Hall had two sections. The first section focused on a leadership workshop led by the Leadership and Service Center. During the second half of the town hall, university administrators hosted a question-and-answer session. This session allowed graduate students to discuss concerns freely with university administrators.

In addition to my responsibilities as Secretary of Graduate Student Organizations, I was on the Finance Committee. As a member of the Finance Committee, I worked alongside the Treasurer and several graduate students to appropriately allocate university funds based on university and GSA policies. The GSA finance committee is responsible for reviewing funding requests from graduate organizations for events and conferences. In addition to acting as a liaison between graduate students and GSA, I voiced concerns, answered questions, and shared resources. I am extremely grateful to GSA and the Executive Board for this wonderful opportunity! Forever to Thee!



Report of the Secretary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Christina Xan

Black Graduate and Professional Student Luncheons

In both Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, the GSA hosted mentorship events for Black graduate and professional students with the goal of promoting a sense of community and providing mentorship.



The first event took place on November 3, 2022, and featured Dr. Todd Shaw and Dr. Deborah Hazzard as speakers. Each spoke on his/her individual experience as a Black academic in higher education and gave advice on how to maintain one's identity.

26 students attended this event, and according to the post-event evaluation, 100% of participants and speakers found the event to meet expectations, with 71% finding it exceeded expectations. Feedback included:

- "It was a much-needed event. I needed to hear some of the things spoken and have my experiences validated."
- "I felt very empowered and affirmed during the event."
- "It was very encouraging and uplifting."

The second event took place on February 23, 2023, and was co-hosted by the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), namely the President Gwen Hopper. This event was advertised as a mixer, with a variety of mentors being placed across tables, including Dr. Julian Williams, Dr. Toby Jenkins, Dr. Robert Rhinehart, Dr. Michelle Brown, Dr. Alissa Armstrong, Dr. Todd Shaw, Dr. April Scott, and Dr. Michael Wade.

47 students attended this event, and according to the post-event evaluation, 100% of participants and speakers found the event to meet expectations, with over half finding it exceeded expectations. Feedback included:

- "Really enjoyed the fellowship."
- "This is the second event I've been to so far that they have co-hosted, and it was a great experience both times. Looking forward to future events!"
- "I really enjoyed the event; it should be an annual program."



LGBTQ+ Graduate and Professional Student Luncheon

In Spring 2023, the GSA teamed up with the Queer Graduate Student Association (QGSA) to host a mentorship event for LGBTQIA+ graduate and professional students. At the time of this report, the event has not yet taken place and is scheduled for April 6, 2023.



Over 20 students have registered for this event a week before it is to take place, and it



has been marketed as a roundtable that provides queer emerging academics chance to find community with fellow queer graduate/professional students and to hear from a panel of faculty and staff at USC on their experiences of being queer in higher ed.

The speakers at this event include Dr. Kunio Hara, Brianna Newton, Dr. Liam Hein, and Samantha Bergold.

Women's Graduate and Professional Student Luncheon

Also in Spring 2023, the Secretary of DEI and the Chief of Staff for the Vice President (Divine Nwanekezie) began planning a luncheon for female-identifying graduate students to meet fellow women and receive mentorship from women in academia and higher-education here at USC.

Originally, this event was scheduled for March 28, 2023, and was to feature Dr. Ambra Hiott, Dr. Angelina Sylvain, Dr. Rushondra James, and Dean Cheryl Addy. However, this event had to be pushed back and is presently being rescheduled at the time of this report.

The event will have multiple small roundtables that students can move between in order to receive mentoring from several women leaders and to find community among several small groups.

All mentorship events have been made possible due to the gracious sponsoring of the Office of DEI.

Additional DEI Efforts

Minority Mentoring Event

In March 2023, the GSA was approached by Hector and Haidy Diaz of The Alliance of Latinx and Black Graduate Students about teaming up for a mentoring event that paired graduate students of various minority identities with undergraduate students of the same identities at a day-long event.

As of the time of this report, the Secretary of DEI is working with Hector and Haidy to see this event come to fruition before the end of the semester, with a tentative date of April 24, 2023.

Support for Graduate Students

In the 22/23AY, the Secretary of DEI has connected students with Title IX and DEI and set up meetings to discuss the following:

- The lack of gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, specifically in Sloan as brought to our attention by the SGSA (Sociology Graduate Student Association).
- Need for housing for a Black graduate student in the English Department facing housing discrimination in the Columbia area.
- The creation of a form, accessible via flyers around campus, that provide graduate students a virtual space to share experiences with discrimination and inequity on campus, which would then be used to create an informative event led by graduate students of various minority identities.

Overall, in the 22/23AY, via its DEI efforts, the GSA has led 8 events/conversations in relation to minority discrimination and community with the goal of remedying inequities and promoting mentorship and leadership on our campus.

Report of the Secretary of Physical Health – Amanda Plyler

Below are my GSA related accomplishments as the Secretary for General Health:

- Collaborated with Emily Collie, Secretary for Mental Health, to coordinate and plan the Interactive Wellness Workshop. Assisted in finding resources for graduate students related to health and wellness opportunities around campus.
- Represented GSA in the 2023 Midlands Heart Walk: University of South Carolina group. We raised \$363 for a great cause.
- Collaborated with the Primary Care department at USC to work on enhancing inclusivity in healthcare. A sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) patient satisfaction survey was created and posted. An advertisement is going out soon to help students navigate MyHealthSpace to update their pronouns in their health record.

Report of the Secretary of Parking and Transportation – Iftakhar Ahmed

As the secretary of parking of transportation, my goal was to make parking facilities easier for graduate students. I was able to attend meetings with the parking authority of the university and proposed some modifications to the parking rules that will help graduate students to avail parking facilities from the university more easily, such as reducing the cost of parking permits and giving graduate students access to more parking lots. The process is still ongoing, due to limited parking availability at USC campus, but it is important that the advocacy continues.

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 and professional students!



Best,

GSA Executive Board 2022-2023

Max, Catherine, Rosie, and Rajat

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