Graduate and Professional Student Association

The Pennsylvania State University
315 HUB-Robeson Center
University Park, PA 16802
Email: gpsaoffice@gmail.com

GPSA 71st Assembly Meeting       Wednesday, September 29, 2021       6:00 PM       Zoom

Action Items:
• GPSA meetings will start being hybrid with the next regularly scheduled Assembly meeting, delegates please make sure to fill out forms to indicate hybrid attendance status
• Please fill out GPSA Survey on stress
• Publicize the GPSA RIDEPass survey: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdqh54qOsr9WcFDNmAtClmnb2DnpCrJbhUcsdRtrW1ihKNOxg/viewform

Business Conducted:
• Lillian Schaeffer was confirmed as GPSA Faculty Senator
• Tanveer Ahmed was confirmed as a Delegate for the College of Engineering
• Bill 71-10 (Tie Dye Class) was passed, which authorizes the Programming Committee to put on a tie dye class for students
• Bill 71-11 (PRIDE Brunch) was passed, which authorizes the Advocacy and Diversity Committee to organize a family friendly Pride Picnic at a local park in October, circumstances permitting
• Resolution 71-06 (GPSA Representation on Board of Trustees) was passed, which allows the Vice President to serve in the absence of the President on Board of Trustees meetings and committees

Agenda
I. Meeting called to order at 6:01 PM
II. Roll Call – See Appendix I
III. Adoption of the Agenda
IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes from 09/15/21: Approved
V. Open Student Forum
VI. Special Presentation: Damon Sims, Vice President for Student Affairs
   a. GPSA has benefited from very strong leadership in the past and has continued to build on that tradition
      i. The strength of this organization is only improving as is its impact
      ii. Very positive progress with the role of student government here
      iii. Recognition of a lot of time and energy put into student government work
   b. One concern in the past has been concern over student government being heard
      i. Specifically around resolutions and legislation being passed making statements about students’ views and positions
ii. Created a part time student worker role (Bryan Culler) working in my office to keep track of things happening in various organizations including student government
   1. Will help to work to identify actions that can be taken in response to resolutions that are passed
   2. Ways to more formally consider passed resolutions
c. From my vantage point the school year is off to a good start
   i. High vaccination rates, this week passed 90% for students living in the residents halls, overall 85-86% vaccination
   ii. Being in person has been valuable to everyone
   iii. At the same time additional accountability for those who did not upload vaccination data in terms of regular testing, suspending students who have not complied with the three stage process
      1. 117 initially suspended, now down to 55 in terms of vaccination data
      2. About 40% of the other 62 will stick with testing, and the rest have decided to get vaccinated
   iv. Current random testing shows no elevated presence in community, optimistic can continue to do so
d. Believe it is critically important to remain in person, a lot of students have come in this semester without ever having had an in-person class (essentially 2 classes experiencing their first year on campus)
e. However, recognize these circumstances have created enormous stress, for graduate students, especially those teaching and interacting with a lot of students
   i. Discussings with Schonn and Jalen about what more we can do to target these stresses
   ii. Believe there are a lot of programs that exist that can be used from CAPS and also health promotion and wellness, but also believe we can partner with GPSA for more opportunities and programming for stress relief
f. Members of this group also have an important role to play with the Student Fee Board because of the consideration of capital projects this year (ex: wellness center)
g. GPSA reflects the diversity you would hope most organizations would at this university, commend leaders for advancing DEI as important consideration
   i. Hopes that GPSA can also work with Brian Patchoski (AVP of DEI) to partner among student leaders to advance causes with DEI
h. Promotion of citizenship and democracy is also an important project that hopefully GPSA can consider
i. Questions and Comments
   i. Claire – For the role for Bryan (student assistant), do you anticipate this being a one-time role and will it always be a student or will it become a staff member
      1. Believes this is a role that ought to be sustained between student governments and other organizations
      2. The role needs to be recognized by the administration, communication across these organizations is important
      3. Bryan is a good start to see what this role can do and then can be further systematized depending on it plays out this year moving forward
      4. Hoping to actually interact with student government initiatives that they want to pursue, do more work with leadership to figure out strategies on how these efforts can be pursued
ii. **Schönn** – regarding existing programs for stress relief and burnout, are there plans to increase staffing at UHS/CAPS/Wellness
   1. We have dramatically increased staffing at CAPS over the last handful of years mostly due to student advocacy, to the extent that the Student Fee Board wants to expand it we are more than open to it
   2. We have some capacity and resource issues, but we need to have more conversations that includes student leadership about ways that we can tie services together and leverage relationships between the services
   3. Key part of Student Affairs strategic plan is focused on student wellness

iii. **Niladri** – Students do have a lot of things going on their lives and graduate school has a lot of pressures, what can the university do to remove some of the barriers (ex: insurance), if there are some ways CAPs can facilitate and make the process more streamlined and publicized
   1. We have staff that are essentially case managers, but I think what we need is to find some time to talk about this a little more carefully
   2. Have discussion with groups that include graduate/professional students, hearing more about the difficulties they face as well as the places where the program falls short based on their personal experiences
   3. This is something I believe we could partner with the GPSA on

VII. Executive Board Reports
a. President – **Schönn Franklin**
   i. Recently had meeting with GSAS and Dean Sarah Ades about ways to collaborate on professional development
      1. Both Niladri and David were praised for the work they are doing with current events (writing bootcamps) as well as planned events
      2. Do want to thank them and the professional development committee for their work
   ii. Round of interviews for the Graduate Dean, narrowed down to less than 10 candidates
   iii. Strategic Planning Oversight Committee meeting
      1. Presentation from Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Initiative for K-12 educators
      2. Discussion with Chief Diversity Officer about ways to reach sustainability goals by 2025, presentation will be publicized
   iv. Meeting with Brian Patchoski (AVP of DEI)
      1. Discussing ways we can structure DEI programming in a way that allows for quality control of programming for graduate/professional students, along with undergraduates, and also extend that to the commonwelath
      2. Also discussing representation that URM have on campus
   v. **Questions and Comments**
      1. **Travis** – what have been the overall priorities that have been pushed in the interviews?
         a. With the charge, what we are looking for is experience working with and managing graduate programs
         b. Ensuring or having them explain ways they have sponsored or assisted in producing graduate and professional programming
c. Had some experience teaching, working with administration, and faculty and staff members, familiarity with how PSU handles its graduate school

2. **Ali** – What was meant by quality control for DEI programming?
   a. Conversation that started last spring, a lot of DEI programs were created but no one at an administrative or student level reviewed to programs to see whether programs contradicted or overlapped with others, and also want to make sure that the people running these programs have expertise
   b. **Ali** – concerns of ways that could go wonky (requiring viewpoint neutrality, censoring, etc), curious to hear how that continues
      i. Agree, most of the DEI programs I have sat in on didn’t have much student involvement, so at the very least hoping that changes

3. **Claire** - is there going to be a public part of the Dean’s search?
   a. There will be a public part, some of them will speak with Schonn in confidence, some will speak with the GPSA, how this will work will be discussed in the next meeting

4. **Matt** – are there things you’re looking for as GPSA president during the Dean’s search? We are the workforce of the graduate school and we want to be seen as valuable in the eyes of the candidate
   a. There were 3 parts of the search (finding, narrowing, interviewing candidates), during each of these sections we had time to discuss what we are looking for
      i. During this I wanted to discuss that the next Dean should have experience with graduate student organizations, or have plans on how they want to support graduate/professional student government organizations
      ii. Also wanted to see how they interacted with sensitive subjects
      iii. Also with regards to DEI, how they interacted with faculty and staff

5. **Travis** – a theme that is very obvious is the stresses in graduate school and the mental health resources around it, but it would helpful in interviews to make it known that this is a big aspect of graduate school, ask candidates how they view the stresses of graduate school and what they plan to do to address that
   a. I’ll make sure that this is one of the first questions I ask because I have received so many notices of burnout or increased stress

6. **Travis** – from the DEI programming quality control, does this encompass department and college level DEI programs or is this outside of the academic structure?
   a. Part of the question will be about whether the structure should include academic programs and departments or should it be a student affairs oriented structure
b. Goal is to ensure we are not violating viewpoint neutrality, that the programs can’t be tainted by one person, to make the programs more sustainable

c. **Travis** – a little concerned because departments and fields are specialized, and want DEI programs to be tailored to the specialties, to make sure that expertise stays when discussing DEI issues
   i. With the quality control, my goal is to make sure that as departments are creating the program to make sure that student representation exists in those programs

vi. **In-Person Meeting Discussion**

1. **Schonn** – I think we should have in-person meetings, I think we are reducing our efficacy by not having an in-person meeting component
   a. We are the only one of three SG on campus not having in-person meetings, the other two have not had any COVID cases that have been reported through the University
   b. I think we can do this safely and effectively, and want to ensure that this does happen, but there are also alternatives we can look at

2. **Eli** – are we considering the possibility of doing hybrid meetings?
   a. **Schonn** – yes, previous “I don’t care” option is changed to hybrid

3. **Ali** – is this majority rules? How do you envision hybrid exceptions working?
   a. **Schonn** – anyone who wants an exception can get one, no explanation required, even if in-person wins

4. **Ashley** – If there are people who feel strongly about being in-person why is hybrid there? If this is purely in-person it would be an issue where I would have to find a replacement, but hybrid seems like a better alternative

5. **Claire** – do you think we could effectively do Robert’s Rules with hybrid?
   a. **Schonn** – Jalen and I will figure out a way that it can be done in hybrid
   b. **Jalen** – we could find a way to make it work

6. **Katie** – Something else to consider is that transportation would be an issue due to recent bus schedule changes, I think hybrid is a good option

7. **Claire** – If we vote for hybrid, could we have another vote to see who would come in person?
   a. **Schonn** - even if it’s only a few people, I think we should do hybrid, to make everybody happy

8. **Katie** – could the attendance form include whether you’re attending in-person or on Zoom?

9. **Sandeep** – pretty good idea to see approximate proportion

10. **Travis** – best to meet in-person because it makes GPSA more effective (can actually form relationships with each other)

11. **Alex** – if we go in-person/hybrid would it start with next meeting?
   a. **Schonn** – yes
12. **Schonn** – informal vote: 14 hybrid, 10 in-person, 7 virtual, on Friday, we’re going hybrid

b. Vice President – **Jalen Jeter**
   i. Legal and Compliance (BoT) meeting
      1. Foreign influence and increased legal and compliance obligations (intellectual property)
      2. Put a lot of emphasis on risk related to responsible conduct research and integrity
      3. Legal issues around anti-racism and racial justice
   ii. Meeting with Damon Sims
      1. Discussed mental health resources and COVID-19 vaccination outreach
      2. Initiative with GPSA and CCSG potentially to do a vaccine campaign
   iii. Questions and Comments
      1. **Schonn** – CCSG also will be working on a university wide vaccination-
      2. **Alex** – what are they specifically concerned about and what’s their policy when researchers are accused
        a. The big thing was making sure that students and researchers are in compliance and following protocol, there are protocols in place

c. Treasurer – **Matt Billups**
   i. In the OneDrive folder there is a subfolder labeled budget, with a folder called Treasurer information
      1. Includes PowerPoint about some of the information will be helpful
      2. Contracting process especially (ex: headshots, tie dye events)
      3. Look at that PowerPoint and see what you will need
   ii. Photography headshot contracting should be good to go after meeting on Monday
   iii. Questions and Comments
      1. **Niladri** – for professional headshots, you’ll give us a final update on Monday?
        a. Location is set based on reserved location

d. Secretary – **Alex Zhao**
   i. Please let me know if mispronouncing delegates’ names or if delegates enter the meeting after attendance has been taken.
   ii. Committee chairs please send him attendance records after each committee meeting.
   iii. Sending out the newswire tomorrow, please submit any event announcements or graphics by noon.
   iv. Let me know if you don’t want to be included in public recordings

e. Faculty Senate – **Ali Watts**
   i. Next Senate meeting is October 19th
   ii. Faculty Town Hall with Provost Jones (can be found at senate.psu.edu)

f. Graduate Council – **Claire Kelling**
   i. Nothing to report

VIII. **Confirmation of Presidential Appointment**: Lillian Schaeffer (GPSA Faculty Senator)
   a. 2nd year in SIA, did undergraduate here, have had first hand experience of student perspective here for a long time
   b. President of Speech and Debate Society, also have served with Blue and White Society
c.  Goal is to facilitate what the average student thinks, making these committees more accessible, continuing initiatives around DEI

d.  Questions
   i.  Claire – If you are appointed half of the executive board is from SIA, could you tell me how you would counteract that overrepresentation
      1.  SIA is very diverse in terms of what they want to do after graduation, what we bring to the table is different
      2.  One way to address this is just to be cognisant of that overrepresentation
      3.  Being aware there are other students out there

e.  Discussion
   i.  Claire – having all 3 of the big roles on GPSA exec board from SIA might be a big problem, why isn’t it?
      1.  Schonn – when I think about the faculty senator, I want them to have access to outside departments in a host of ways
         a.  Lillian was part of IST during undergrad, participated in 4-5 student organizations, and was on university-wide task forces, well rounded person
         b.  Also do want to balance the executive board, which is overwhelmingly male right now
   ii.  Claire – Is that recent involvement?
      1.  Schonn – yes, she remains the president of one of them (Speech and Debate) and resigned from the others to focus on faculty senate
   iii.  Schonn – Lillian has experience working across different departments throughout different colleges and effective results
   iv.  Travis – What could be done from the GPSA perspective to better advertise this position? What have we been doing to get other people to apply for this position?
      1.  Schonn – created flyers, opened self up to meetings, directly contacted college deans and student organization leadership, to student engagement teams about involvement, after all of these the response is very low, not sure could find another candidate as qualified
   v.  Niladri – Was she the only applicant? If not can you tell us about other applicants
      1.  Schonn – interviewed 2 other candidates (Eng and EMS), one of them can’t make the meeting times, the other one was just starting, didn’t review any of the responsibilities or roles
   vi.  Claire – was this advertising for Faculty Senate position specifically?
      1.  Schonn - Tasked communications with advertising it, will follow up
      2.  Alex – We have been advertising
         a.  Claire – not seeing it
   vii.  Shah – SIA is a big yet small schools, there are over 100 of us, not all of us are thinking the same, believe that she will be a great asset to GPSA and great representation of people, she is very goal oriented, believe we have a great
candidate

viii. **Katie** – with regards to her experience in speech and debate, one of the fundamental things that S&D taught is the ability to see things from alternate viewpoints and analyze things from different perspectives, it seems like she would be aware of her viewpoint

ix. **Niladri** – we have been looking to fill this position for a while, and we might need some consistency in advertising, however we should consider whether this is a good candidate on her own merits

x. **Schonn** – on balance, her positives outweigh her negatives in terms of representation, and it’s unclear to me if we will be able to get another qualified candidate

f. **Appointment Passed 19-1-4, see Appendix II for details**

IX. **Confirmation of Presidential Appointment: Arnab Chatterjee (EMS Delegate)**

a. 3rd year student in EMS, I have been at PSU for a long time and have faced many issues as a student, one of which is professional development and mental health (counseling)

b. **Questions**

   i. **Niladri** – committee preferences?

      1. Professional development and community outreach based on previous work

   ii. **Farhan** - what kinds of plans for promotional activities do you have for professional development?

      1. One big issue is trying to express what we understand, writing is one of the skills that we should try to help graduate students improve on

c. **Vote Tabled Until Later**

X. **Confirmation of Presidential Appointment: Tanveer Ahmed (Engineering Delegate)**

a. 1st year in Civil Eng at PSU, completed bachelor’s in Bangladesh, two years in government service as assistant engineer around trans boundary waters and resolution of international conflicts from water bodies, participated in common dialogue between neighbors

b. During undergrad was also on the executive committee on a number of student organizations, being part of student government and steering committees with regards to organizing and planning events, suitable candidate to serve on programming

c. As international student there are a number of issues I want to bring up (ex: mentorship program for international students), when international students first arrive they are faced with daunting culture shock and other challenges, definitely organize and plan different activities to help interational graduate students fit into the community

   i. Have seen enthusiastic students enter this program and face stress and mental health issues

d. **Questions**

   i. **Alex** – what was your program again?

      1. PhD in Civil Engineering

   ii. **Alex** – for Schonn, why did you nominate him?

      1. **Schonn** – previous experience in undergrad about programming and he has expressed interest in doing work on this front, would be great also in programming
XI. Resolution 71-05: Presidential Veto Powers

Bill 71-10: Tie Dye Class
a. Plan is to host a tie-dye event that will host where students can be taught how to tie-dye
b. Need to buy some supplies, would need to pay David as an instructor
c. Questions
   i. **Travis** – how do you plan to reach out to students to get them to attend them?
      1. Social media, but also welcome to other suggestions
   ii. **Matt** – when are you planning this to take place?
      1. No timetable set, Programming just trying to get a handle on current events, ideally before it gets too cold
   iii. **Katie** – is it possible to do this indoors?
      1. Yes but there will be more work (finding a space, cleanup)
d. Discussion
   i. **Claire** – friendly amendment to capitalize Programming Committee
   ii. **Farhan** – can we have 100 instead of 50?
      1. **Alex** – might be worth having two sessions
   iii. **Katie** – Given that it’s a new event might be good just to have 50 to start with
   iv. **Sandeep** – echoing Katie’s thoughts, Programming Committee is small right now, easy to increase it on paper, difficult to increase it in reality
e. Vote Passed 22-0-1, see Appendix II for details

Bill 71-11: Pride Brunch
a. Planning on doing this outside depending on weather, suggestions open for indoor places
b. Expecting between 15-30 people
c. Location Sunset Park, planned for Saturday October 16th
d. Will be discussing some of the on-campus and off-campus organizations for the LBGTTQ+ community for health and wellness needs, Shah plans on discussing this himself at this event
e. Questions
   i. **Claire** – is the “in the event” supposed to be for the Fall Semester?
      1. **Shah** - yes
f. Discussion
   i. **Claire** – friendly amendment to add “during the fall semester”, seconded
   ii. **Claire** – additional motion for friendly amendment to not capitalize graduate and professional, seconded
   iii. **Travis** – Pride Brunch or Lunch?
      1. **Shah** – brunch is the going title we’ve been using for the past month
   iv. **Matt** – what is our anticipated attendance?
      1. **Shah** – guaranteed attendance of 30 students
   v. **Alex** - $100 seems a bit low for pizza, would you want to amend it higher?
   vi. **Shah** – motion to edit pizza amount to $200, seconded
g. Vote Passed 23-0-1, see Appendix II for details

XIII.
a. In the constitution, it does not outline that constitutional amendments cannot be veto’d but the bylaws do say that, so this just aligns the two documents

b. **Discussion**
   i. **Claire** – motion to table until next meeting, seconded

XIV. Resolution 71-06: VP at Board of Trustees Meetings
a. Currently in the Bylaws, there is no replacement for the President on the BoT, this is just saying that the VP can attend the BoT in his spot

b. **Questions**
   i. **Alex** – would the VP be able to? That is would the meetings overlap?
      1. **Schonn** – this would allow the VP to take the place of the President for things like subcommittee meetings if they want a GPSA representative or are unable to attend a board function for example

c. **Discussion**
   i. Motion to approve by roll call

d. **Vote Passed 24-0-0, see Appendix II for details**

XV. Reports
a. **Speaker of the Assembly – Sandeep Krishnakumar**
   i. I want to give appreciation to the Programming Committee as well as Alex for hosting the GPSA Welcome Back Picnic on Sunday
   ii. Also wanted to remind everyone to fill out the absentee form if you will be absent for the meeting
   iii. In the past few weeks or so, we’ve had quite a few resignations from the GPSA, and it’s usually because of the obvious stresses of graduate school and research as well, our goal is to ensure that the GPSA is not a contributor of stress,
   iv. Sending out a survey about everyone’s stress levels and how GPSA is factoring into that stress, please fill that out as soon as possible
   v. **Questions and Comments**
      1. **Niladri** – do we get to know who resigned?
         a. **Sandeep** – not really except as required by committee chairs and executive board members, on the website

b. **Advocacy and Diversity – Shah Soligné**
   i. The RIDEPass survey is live, please make sure to publicize it to constituents, will be included in the newswire, no set timeline yet for when responses close
   ii. Had meeting with UPUA, VP Student Care and Advocacy, Housing and Food services, to discuss lowering food plans for all students on campus and those with housing insecurity
      1. Looking into having those eligible for EBT to have a discounted meal plan, looking to expand this as well

c. **Professional Development – Niladri Sekhar Mandal**
   i. Organizing the writing bootcamps since September 20th, want to thank Nora, Sherif, Hannah and Ram for their help to organize this event
   ii. Want to thank David and Ram for their continued support in committee, as well as Farhan for this experience in GPSA
   iii. We are learning from running this bootcamp and will be seeking feedback for this experience
   iv. Working on professional headshot event (target 2nd week of October), collaboration with Smeal got pushed back
d. Programming – No report at this time

e. Community Outreach – No report at this time

f. Internal Development – **Travis Russell**
   i. Nothing to report, next meeting is next Tuesday

**XVI. Liaison Reports**

a. Eli – Steering committee for module for tenant/landlord rights services with student legal services, educational module will be live soon, a 30 minute module on getting up to date on rights and responsibilities as tenants

b. Ali – SIAB meeting, originally doing a RFP for insurance, but have decided to stick with United Healthcare and negotiating with them, brought up trans-affirming healthcare resolution from last year, also brought up parental leave, discussion around people going on medical leave and losing insurance as a result

c. Farhan – Campus Rec Advisory Council, working to provide grad/prof students with more opportunities through Campus Rec and to better publicize for graduate/professional students

d. Frankie – University libraries advisory board met, mostly discussing how library employees working remotely have had on student access to resources, if there’s any feedback (positive or negative), would be happy to take that back in, board really eager to hear from graduate/prof students and researchers to make sure that library is accessible through COVID-19

**XVII. Judiciary – The Honorable Samuel Altland**

a. Nothing to report

**XVIII. Student Trustee – Schönn Franklin**

a. During BoT meeting (Sept 15-16) approved of long term investment pool spending plan rate of change (changing what money they pull to spend from and which they will save for the long term), approved request to legislature for 22-23 FY, approved sale of 2 properties, approved graduate apartment rates (no change in rates, decoupled parking passes starting next lease)

**XIX. Advisor – Adam Christensen**

a. Sexual misconduct climate results from 2018 are released and publicly available
   i. Long survey trying to give a good snapshot of the most important pieces of information
   ii. Moving quickly into thinking about next administration of the survey in spring 2022, will be doing outreach to student governments to provide representatives
      1. Conversations about what can be changed for the next survey
   iii. Not a lot of fluctuation for graduate/professional students
      1. Snapshot of culture, but does indicate that there is room for improvement
      2. Hope that we will have the capacity and resources to incorporate student feedback as well as make Penn State a safer place

**XX. Comments for the Good of the Order**

a. None

**XXI. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM**

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**Appendix I**

U= Unexcused Absence | E= Excused Absence | P= Present | L= Late | Proxy = Proxy
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<td>Faculty Senator (Graduate School)</td>
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Appendix II

Y=Yes | N= No | A = Abstain | Blank Cell = No Vote

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<th>Tanveer Ahmed (Engineering Delegate) Confirmation</th>
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Number of voters in Assembly: 25  Yes (Y)  19  22  22  23  24
Number of voters present: 25  No (N)  1  0  0  0  0
Abstain (A)  4  1  1  1  0
Veto  No  No  No  No  No  No