

GAPSA General Assembly

November 12, 2020

Meeting Notes

- Guest Speaker: Rose Pascarell
 - From a perspective of health safety re: COVID, we've been pretty successful!
 - Remember we are going fully online after Thanksgiving
 - University is doing a lot of work on post-election resources. There's also a lot of post-election events coming up that will be announced shortly.
 - Questions?
 - Why do you think Mason has had better COVID-related results than other institutions?
 - Probably our strong protocols in place; also, this region has a good amount of compliance
 - One big challenge is balancing engagement/community with health and safety
 - Will we see an increase in the Spring?
 - Hard to tell! But hopefully not.
 - What about academic success of grad students in the online environment?
 - Some surveys suggest that graduate students are more satisfied than undergraduate students, which is very surprising
 - We're working on providing resources. We recognize grad students need different resources than undergrad, but we're focusing on undergrad at the moment. But we have a few events, such as "Maximizing Productivity" with online course strategies.
 - Can we record and post some of these online sessions?
 - Yes, we'll do more of the recorded content.
 - Will there be another pulse survey, more recent than last Spring?
 - Yes, one should have been sent out two weeks ago. Looks like not everyone received it though! We'll be getting results soon.
 - Can we get any workshops offered during winter break?
 - Good idea, we'll look into do some in January before Spring begins.
 - Some MBA students were concerned about safety on campus late at night.
 - We have a "cadet" program where we will have University police students-in-training come walk with students upon request.
 - But, we'll look into this!
 - Unfortunately, the service is only upon request, so it's hard to use. We need to do something more than this - ideally, something regular.
 - Many of us would like some professional development workshops.
- American Association of University Professors (AAUP) - David & Shauna, PhD students in Cultural Studies
 - Mission: promoting economic security of faculty and teaching grad students
 - We have chapters in most universities; GMU has an advocacy chapter (non-union)

- Example issue: AAUP's investigation into the company that GMU hired to administer the test kits for covid-19. GMU responded by requiring school nurses to handle the testing.
- We now have a graduate student chapter to help promote graduate student issues.
- A summary report will be sent out after this call
- Questions?
 - Where can we find information on benefits to joining AAUP?
 - Here's a start: <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/gmu-aaup-chapter-page>
 - What can AAUP do to help graduate students in abusive research environments?
 - We currently do not have anything specific for this; we just have general workshops for graduate students. If you have a specific issue, please bring it to our attention and we may be able to take it up as a campaign in the future.
- National Association for Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS)
 - The org has been around for a while, we've had varying involvement in NAGPS. They offer programming, insurance discounts, and other workshops. See link here (<http://nagps.org/benefits>). Their benefits mostly have to do with discounts on health insurance. Also, they have workshops and events, and if GMU is a member, we would get a small discount on the events (they're still going to cost money though).
 - We've been a charter member since 2009
 - This year, NAGPS voted to make membership a paid membership. We need to vote on whether or not we want to remain a member (for us, it would cost \$577.50). We do have the budget for this.
 - Questions?
 - Do the benefits overlap with other services and resources?
 - A little bit. For example, insurance discounts are only helpful if you don't have access to insurance through Mason.
 - How many students have used these benefits in the past?
 - A lot of these benefits are new, so we don't have this information.
 - Can we do a better job advertising these benefits if we use them?
 - Yes, definitely!
 - What are other options for health insurance that grad students can access?
 - Mason has a program that any student can enroll in.
 - How much is the discount?
 - We don't know, it's tailored for each specific student.
 - **Vote delayed until next meeting**
- Graduate Council
 - Historically, Lili is a non-voting member of the Council. We are looking to get a voting member of GAPSAs. We also want to add another non-voting member.
 - The Graduate Council will consider this on November 18. Please email Lili if you have any questions or thoughts that she should incorporate.
- Committees
 - Next meeting, we will have a committee update from each!