Minutes for General Assembly
Location: Zoom
Time: 2:30pm
Date: Sept 23, 2021

Advisors/Graduate Student Life
Austin A Deray (Advisor, Graduate Student Life)
Julie Choe Kim (Advisor, Graduate Student Life)
Nikita Thadani (Graduate Professional Assistant, Graduate Student Life)

GAPSA Executive Officers
Steven Zhou (President)
Wai Ling Fong (Executive Vice President)
Dylan V. Scarton (VP of Fairfax)
Troi Dixon (VP of Arlington)
Marissa Howard (VP of SciTech)
Jane Aronds (Director of Communications)

Program Representatives
Aayushi Hingle (Communication)
Alamin Molla (Geography and Geoinformation Science)
Alexandra (Xan) Chen (Psychology)
Aleyah Dawkins (Mathematics)
Andrew Leisner (Physics)
Anna Tsybko   (MSM, School of Business)
Ashish Hingle (IT)
Christopher Russo (Economics)
Daniel Mark Harrison (Chemistry)
Dina Abdo (HAP)
Douglas Nedza (Atmospheric, Oceanic, Earth Sciences (AOES))
Drew Bonner (Sociology)
Emily Jeffries (MA,Public Policy)
Emily Richard (Psychology)
Esteline Marie Pascua (Real Estate Development)
Eunice Kim (English)
Greta Swain (History, PhD)

Haley Todd (Linguistics)
Hannah Abraham (Data Analytics Engineering)
Huy Phan (Social Work)
Ian Hamilton (Applied I-O Psychology, MPS)
Isaac Gibbons (Cybersecurity Engineering)
Jonathan "LJ" David Banse (History)
Jonathan Marine (English)
Kathy Klingenberg (Art History Graduate Association)
Kelsey Mitchell (Interdisciplinary Program in Neuroscience)
Kimberly Talley (International Security)
Krista Beran (School of Nursing)
Leslie Escobar (Higher Education and Student Development)
Lorne Epstein (Organizational Development Knowledge Management)
Melissa Schexnaydre (Arts Management)
Nia Pollard (Chemistry)
Nicole Patriarca (College of Education and Human Development)
Ninon Nelson (Global Affairs)
Oakley T Hill (Carter School)
Olu Aroke (Civil Engineering)
Peter McEachern (Psychology)
Piper Biery (Political Science)
Precious Ugwu (College of Health and Human Services)
Ramya Niveditha Kagitala (Information Systems)
Rishitha Eswarapragada (Computer Science)
Sarah Mong (MBA)
Shrishti Singh (Bioengineering)
Shuai Wang (Computer Science)
Susannah E Barnes (Economics)
Teri Edwards-Hewitt (Cultural Studies)
Yang Long (Statistics)
Zachary Machuga (Earth System Science)

Guest
Juliet Blank-Godlove (Associate Dean of Students)

Agenda
2:30 PM - 2:45 PM   Introducing the Executive Board
2:45 PM - 3:20 PM   Overview of GAPSA Vision, Goals, and Progress So Far
                                   View Slides Here
3:20 PM - 3:30 PM   Your Role as a GA Rep

Opportunity: Strategic Planning Committee Focus Groups
Joining Our Slack Channel
3:30 PM - 4:00 PM   Breakout Rooms: Specific Initiatives & Campuses
Financial Transparency and Graduate Student Funding (Steven)
Careers & Professional Development (Dylan)
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (Marissa)
Telling the Graduate Student Story (Jane)
Other Interests? (Wai Ling)

Minutes

1. For attendance keeping, all participants were requested to fill in a Google Form at the beginning of the meeting.
2. GAPSA Advisor and members of the 2021 Executive Board made a brief introduction. Participants were thanked for attending the meeting.
3. GAPSA President, Steven Zhou began the meeting by sharing selected presentation slides from the President's Planning Conference presented in August 2021. The slides are public on the Board of Visitors website. In this presentation, Steven curated selected slides to present to the General Assembly that were specific for graduate students.
   a. Mason currently receives about $150 million in external research funding, and the goal is to nearly double that amount in the next few years. This will ideally create more research opportunities and funding for graduate students.
   b. Some notable challenges include:
      i. Dr. Washington has noted that institutional funding for doctoral students is not as competitive with similar institutions in the state of Virginia.
      ii. Enrollment among graduate students is not as high as it could be and has been decreasing in recent years. As the university focuses on increasing graduate student enrollment, there also needs to be additional graduate student support for higher enrollment numbers.
   c. As part of the six-year academic plan, the university is invested in improving the graduate student experience here at Mason. This includes incorporating the Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence task force work into the graduate student experience, increasing research opportunities, and increasing graduate student enrollment and support.
4. Steven then proceeded to introduce GAPSA.
   a. GAPSA aims to engage with graduate students at Mason through intentional engagement and effective advocacy. GAPSA recognizes that Mason graduate students are a large body of over 10,000 students with diverse needs and perspectives. GAPSA wants to best represent these needs.
   b. With over 60 confirmed program representatives for the 2021 Academic Year, the General Assembly will be the main platform to capture the perspectives, challenges, and experiences of the graduate student body.

     c.   GAPSA supports Graduate Student Life in creating programming and engagement opportunities for the graduate student body at Mason. GAPSA is open and supportive of collaboration opportunities, and suggestions from all programs to reach the graduate student body.

     d.   GAPSA aims to be an effective advocacy body for the graduate student community at Mason.

         i.   The General Assembly will serve as a platform to vote on issues. Any outcome, insights, and discussions will be relayed to the university administration through GAPSA.

5. Specific Goals for GAPSA 2021

     a.   To build the General Assembly as the primary communication between program representatives, and graduate students.

     b.   To develop professional and career development opportunities outside the academic track.

     c.   To tell graduate student experience through the "A Day in The Life of a Graduate Student".

     d.   To reduce auxiliary costs such as graduation robes.

6. Steven presented on GAPSA highlights since the start of Fall 2021.

     a.   Gradstravaganza on August 21 had over 500 graduate student participants.

     b.   There are currently 63 confirmed student representations for the General Assembly for the 2021 academic year.

     c.   GAPSA has tabled at multiple club fairs week since the start of Fall 2021.

     d.   A Graduate Student Fellowships webinar was conducted on 9/15.

     e.   "What I Wish I Knew My First Year: Graduate Student Panel," a joint collaboration between GAPSA and CHSS, was conducted on 9/23.

     f.   GAPSA had worked with Transportation Services to handle a late night shuttle issue faced by a student.

     g.   Graduate student monthly lunches with the Dean of College of Science to be conducted over the semester.

7. Expectations of General Assembly representatives.

     a.   To attend monthly meetings. If unable to, representatives need to send a proxy and to notify Wai Ling Fong (wfong2@gmu.edu) ahead of time.

     b.   To stay in communication. Should GAPSA reach out to ask for knowledge/input, general assembly representatives will be reaching out to their respective departments for input.

     c.   All General Assembly members have been added into a Slack group. All updates and communication will be done here. To view Slack Communication Guidelines: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UksW1rUU2_UuMZ2S6yUSxuN9PSFN0QZAXlP5O8vZL7M/edit

8. Call for Interests: Participation in the 50 years Committee Strategic Plans

    a. GAPSA set out a call for interests for any students, general assembly members who may be interested to participate in the 50 years Committee Strategic Plans.

    b. The committee will be run by the Chief of Staff office.

    c. There is no confirmed time yet but commitment will be attending an online focus group setting for 1.5 hours

    d. Any interested members can put their name in Slack and the message, "Interest to participate in the 50 years Committee Strategic Plans".

9. Breakout room activities. All General Assembly representatives were invited to participate in breakout rooms to further discuss a topic of interest. These rooms are Financial/Graduate Student Funding, Graduate Student Professional Development, Anti-Racism/Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity, A Day In The Life of a Graduate Student (marketing), and Other Topics.