



**General Assembly Meeting**

February 13, 2026

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Zoom meeting

**GAPSA Executive Officers**

Nilima Mow (President)

Xiaorong (Sherry) Shan (Executive Vice President)

Aishwarya Bhondge (Vice President of Fairfax)

Eelma Ahamed (Vice President of Mason Square)

Asritha Lakshmi Bontu (Vice President of Science and Technology)

Aparna Shastri (Director of Communications)

**GAPSA Advisors**

Dr. Julie Choe Kim (GAPSA Advisor and Director, Graduate Student Life)

Muna Hashem Al Taweel (GAPSA Advisor and GPA, Graduate Student Life)

**Program Representatives**

<b>Graduate Program</b>	<b>Rep Name</b>
Applied Industrial and Organizational Psychology, MPS	Nora Bassa
Art History, MA	Lee Wilson
Athletic Training, MS	Lila Abu-saleh
Bioengineering, MS	Bao Yen
Bioengineering, PhD	Likitha Raja
Bioinformatics and Computational Biology, PhD	Emily Larson

Business, PhD	Bryan Timothy Sullivan
Civil and Infrastructure Engineering, PhD	Sumaiya Hussain
Climate Dynamics, PhD	Austin Reed
Computational Sciences and Informatics, PhD	Md Mahfuzur Rhaman
Creative Writing, MFA	Kale Beaton Connerty
Criminology, Law and Society, PhD	Hailey Khatchatourian
Cultural Studies, PhD	Luma Mousa
Data Analytics Engineering, MS	Harshal Rajendra Yeole
Digital Forensics, MS	Matteen Mahfooz
Earth Systems and Geoinformation Sciences, PhD	Alimurtaza Husain Kothawala
Economics, PhD	Daniel Kelly
Education, PhD	Anjusha Kasetty Ramesh Kumar
Electrical and Computer Engineering, PhD	Fardifa Fathmiul Alam
Global Affairs, MA	Justice Roney
Health Services Research, PhD	Dharmi Kalpesh Desai
Higher Education and Student Development, MA	Maureen Ashbrock
History, PhD	Savannah Scott
Information Technology, PhD	Hadeel Elyazori
Interdisciplinary Studies, MA	Kristin Metzger
International Security, MA	Jacob Boggs
Law, JD	Chase Masters
Law, JM	Kimmy Le
Linguistics, PhD	Giulia Masella Soldati
Mathematics, MS	Nicholas Lear
Mathematics, PhD	Nathanial Fink-Humes
Neuroscience, PhD	Natalie Erickson
Political Science, MA	Kenneth Mack Blankenship
Psychology, MA	Racquel Ritchie
Psychology, PhD	Christina Wheeler
Public Administration Program, MPA	Phoebe Martenson
Public Health, PhD	Julia Mandeville
Public Policy, MPP	Ballaion Cadet Joram
Sociology, PhD	Jeba Humayra
Statistical Science, MS	Tiffany Lin
Statistical Science, PhD	Yang Long
Visual and Performing Arts, MFA	Steven Luu
Writing and Rhetoric, PhD	Kelby Gibson

## **Guests**

Juliet Blank-Godlove (Dean of Students and Assistant Vice President of University Life)

Maria Carrillo (Physics, PhD student)

Pallavi Rai Gullo (Senior Director of Graduate Academic Affairs and Initiatives, Graduate Division)

Charlie Price (Graduate Academic Affairs Coordinator, Graduate Division)

Melissa Thierry (Director of University Life Regional Campuses)

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## **I. Welcome**

### **1. Opening Remarks**

- Proxy attendance must be reported to Sherry and GAPSA at least 48 hours before the meeting; otherwise, it will not be counted.

### **2. Meeting Overview**

- Eelma introduced as the new Vice President at Mason Square.
- Elected by the General Assembly in December.

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## **II. GA Paid Parental Accommodation Policy Draft**

### **1. Guest Speaker**

- Pallavi Rai Gullo
- Senior Director for Graduate Academic Affairs and Initiatives
- Graduate Division
- pgullo@gmu.edu

### **2. Policy Background**

- 2021: Graduate policy implemented allowing a semester pause for welcoming a new family member (birth, adoption, foster).
- 2022: Graduate leave of absence policy (medical leave).

### **3. Proposed Policy Highlights**

- Separate paid parental accommodation policy for Graduate Assistants (GA).
- Continuation of stipend for up to 8 weeks.
- Eligibility requirements:
  - Fully admitted graduate students
  - Full-time status
  - 9–12 month GA contract
- Leave timing:

- Discuss start date with advisor at least 3 months in advance
    - Case-by-case exceptions possible
  - Two parents in the same unit:
    - If both eligible, leave may be taken together with approval.
- 4. Discussion & Clarifications**
  - **Unexpected Situations**
    - Requires approval via memo through the college.
    - Short written explanation required for early leave.
  - **9-Month Contracts**
    - Leave may potentially be deferred to Fall instead of Summer.
    - Responsibility under discussion (program vs. college).
  - **Health Insurance**
    - Goal: maintain health insurance coverage during leave, even if not enrolled.
    - Still under administrative discussion.
  - **Policy Rollout (2026)**
    - Currently enrolled eligible students may qualify.
    - Advance notice (3 months) required.
  - **Spring vs. Fall Implementation**
    - If implemented Fall 2026, Spring leave options may exist.
    - Dependent on departmental budget.
  - **Leave Tracking & Reappointment**
    - Distinction between GA employment status and academic leave.
    - Oversight by OACC (Office of Access, Compliance, and Community) and HR.
    - Details to be specified in policy language.
- 5. Next Steps**
  - Representatives to provide feedback to Nilima before Graduate Council meeting (deadline: February 16).

### III. Housing for Mason Graduate Students

- 1. Guest Speaker**
  - Dr. Shannon Jordan
  - Chief Housing Officer
- 2. Housing Options Discussed**
  - Campus housing:
    - Townhouses at Fairfax
    - Beacon Hall (149 graduate beds; refurbished last year with positive feedback)
      1. Studio options at Beacon Hall
  - Masonvale (Fairfax)
    - Located next to Fairfax campus, but operated by third party
- 3. Future Considerations**
  - Potential mixed graduate/undergraduate housing in Fairfax.
  - Arlington campus planning for on-campus housing.

#### 4. **Eligibility & Application**

- Requirements:
  - Full-time student status
  - Good academic standing
- Application opening date: April 9
- Applications submitted via Housing Portal.

#### 5. **Discussion Points**

- Clarification needed on family housing options on website.
- Graduate housing demand:
  - ~10,000 graduate students
  - ~2,000 currently housed on campus
  - Waitlist exists.
- Housing affordability concerns:
  - Significant portion of GA stipends spent on housing.
  - Housing rates tied to university operational and debt obligations.
  - Mason remains among the more affordable options in the DMV region.

#### 6. **Survey Data (2024 Graduate Student Experiences Survey)**

- 27% relocated to attend Mason.
- 34.55% expressed strong interest in university-operated housing near primary campus.

### **IV. Updates**

#### 1. **Graduate Student Champion Awards**

- Nominations open: February 17
- Deadline: March 9
- Awards ceremony: March 27 (at Mason Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference)
- Volunteers from General Assembly needed for submission review (1–2 reviewers). Must be available to review submissions after March 9 and to participate in selection meeting March 16-18. Contact Dr. Julie Choe Kim if you are interested (ychoekim@gmu.edu).

#### 2. **Mason Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference**

- Call for volunteers
- Deadline: March 3

#### 3. **Open Talk with Leadership**

- Date: February 27
- Time: 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM
- Opportunity to engage with senior university leaders.
- Lunch provided for those who have registered.
- [add Mason360 link to register here]

#### 4. **Mental Health Resources**

- Center for Community Mental Health
- TimelyCare

#### 5. **Bites and Insights with GAPSA**

- Donuts event
- Date: February 23
- Time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
- [add Mason360 link here]

## **V. Communication Clarification**

### **1. Question Raised**

- Whether meeting content may be shared with departments.

### **2. Advisor Response**

- Content is not internal/restricted.
- Representatives encouraged to share draft policy with constituents.
- Feedback to be compiled by GAPSA officers and submitted to Pallavi.
- Deadline will be on Feb. 16th.