Meeting Agenda
February 20, 2018; 6:30 PM
Philosophy Hall, Room 301
http://gsac.columbia.edu/

1. Sign-in

2. Approval of January 2018 Minutes (President)

3. Announcements (President)
   1. Faculty Mentoring Awards, Service Awards — think of people want to nominate, will select 2 faculty mentors
   2. Service award: students or administers - people who have been very committed to building a stronger community in GSAS, something great for Columbia community — more information in coming weeks

4. Changes to GSAC Constitution (President)
   1. Recap: Objective is 1) have open floor objective discussing changes → disbandment of GSAC and formation of ASGC and the formation of the PhD council; 2) vote on proposed changes for GSAC bylaws (allowing for vote of new group/disbandment); 3) Vote for ASGC constitution — private vote on placard, but voting record will be public; 4) Updates of PhD council — probably still will happen even if GSAC dissolution vote doesn’t go through; 5) Elections at next plenary meeting (for either ASGC or GSAC)
   2. Proposed changes - posted on website for a month, had 2 Town Hall meetings, met individually with Journalism school; IF the proposed changes pass but the dissolution does not pass, then will propose changes to revert to former Constitution → will be voted on next month
3. **Proposed ASGC membership:** all GSAS PhD and MA students; programs do vary by length (especially MA); up to 30 PhDs and 47 MA representatives

4. **Discussion:**

   a) **Q: for ASGC members, the voting department reps - 1 per program, so more MA votes?** A: As of right now, yes; about 30-47% vote; we assume that this will change (it would be hard to have full MA involvement, so it might not actually occur); currently MAs only have 3 votes; going to change drastically in terms of percentages, but that was to give everyone a fair shot. For some votes, just majority is ok; for others, 2/3

   b) **Q: What about travel grants, SIG, etc…** A: All of those will still be in the new group, new Finance Chair → still available for ASGC members. Would have better proportion and accessibility to money compared with current situation. Q: Dean Alonso didn’t talk about reducing budget given fewer students? A: No, budget stays the same.

   c) **Q: What about people about medical center and GSO?** A: Frank and Mike have been working on developing new programming and organization up there; currently GSO students lack social, cultural, alumni events as well as travel grants and resource; So, trying to add to GSO and increasing the number of board members, so it’s not just a few people doing the majority of the work. Also, Office of Graduate Affairs has agreed to try and increase budget (hasn’t happened in a while) → hopefully will allow to support more, plus shift budget to do more travel grants, etc… Q: What about Public Health? A: We are not including Public Health.

   d) **Q: Will the students uptown lose representation in the senate?** A: As of right now, we have talked to the Senate and said that Senate representation isn’t appropriate because the people underrepresented are natural sciences and biomedical → has been shifting between uptown and downtown. However, it’s not appropriate because issues are different between uptown and downtown. We told the senate that we think there should be 2 separate seats for uptown and downtown. They are amenable but haven’t agreed yet. If they don’t move in the next month, we will elect senators as we have previously, but during that 2 year term, they can transition to give Biomedical students uptown their own seat. Q: But there’s no guarantee? A: There could a guarantee; for example, if the Senate doesn’t want to accommodate the Biomedical campus, then ASGC and PhD advisory council can work together to make sure there’s equal representation and so there will be a senator for Biomedical who can report to them and therefore still make sure they are represented. Q: But ASGC will be huge A: Yes, but natural sciences is small (about 11 groups), and that’s who it would affect (Biomedical = about 10)

   e) **Q: How will GSO report future issues?** A: we will go to 2 groups for issues → Dean Alonso for academic issue, elsewhere for housing, etc… Q: For certain students at medical campus, they have their labs down here, so some of their issues are down here (example: gym access), so what happens then? A: We did deal with the gym access issue (accessibility on Morningside campus for uptown students) → for those sorts of issues,
still start with students themselves, bring to administrators’ attention, and then they sort out. Also, PhD Advisory Council can work on those sorts of issues. Q: can those students access medical services on Morningside campus? A: Not sure if they can or if they will be able to; that issue hasn’t come up before. But that’s not entirely what we’re aiming for → by dividing and aligning with the administration’s own divisions, we are in a better position to lobby. We see it as being stronger to have 2 student government with distinct issues that they represent and could work together to go to administration and thereby be stronger

f) Q: Comment from current uptown student - appreciate the hard work and the technical work. I disagree and stand in opposition to this resolution strongly and philosophically. I think that one of the largest failures of Columbia is an overburden of bureaucracy - noticed over the length of 5 years here. By fracturing the student body, divides and hurts the voice. Also, one of the reasons came here instead of going to more medically-specific program is because of the collaborative and broadly academic environment. One of the strengths of the PhD program and graduate school is this GSAC body. I think it’s sad that it’s splitting and fracturing this way. Also, I think it’s a lose-lose from both perspectives. We lose travel funds and program grants and social events. GSO has put together some events uptown and yes, should pay fair share, but that should be done collectively with administration. Also, GSAC loses the biomedical informatics, etc... position and their voice. What about their part in social events? This is a moment in which have a decision to make either to build bridges or tear apart. Philosophically, do you want to split or not? A: Rebuttal - agree with split aspect and probably why a lot of people got involved, because they are fed up with it. And going into GSAC and board, realized that while represent all these people and all these issues, but face roadblocks because liaising with administration and can’t promote certain things because of special situations. But with muddling through the bureaucracy and figuring out who is responsible for whom, we realized that in this way, we can start to collaborate better if we have 2 governments coming together. Biomedical students have great opinions, but we can’t liaise for them because administration says that those are uptown issues, etc... By doing this, we can prop up small student governments and hopefully eliminate some roadblocks. The idea is that eventually, we would bring all of smaller governments together under a huge government, but for now it’s a step by step government. This proposal will actually lessen the bureaucracy. And yes, non-GSAS programs will lose, but those programs are also not contributing to those programs. So, it’s fairer, but it does look like we’re fracturing. But I think it will put us on track to collaborate more.

Q) Is it the case that there have been issues that students outside of GSAS had and you couldn’t resolve them? A: Yes. Also, GSAS is the office that funds us. Also, it’s important that out of the $130k budget, about 45% is paid for by MA students who pay this out of their own pocket, but 33-45% of students who use those funds don’t pay into them, and
that’s particularly unfair to the MA students. They definitely don’t get their fair share out of the student government that represents them.

Q) Comment from an MA — only reason know about GSAC is because know a PhD who told her. Never mentioned in orientation. We’re half of GSAC, but there are a lot of problems as an MA student but there’s a feeling that no one listens. Also, the idea of only 1 MA representing an entire discipline (Humanities) feels totally wrong. So, we have to support more MA students because we have issues too, and we want to be represented, even though program is shorter. A: There will be more information provided for MA students in new ASGC government to help them understand what their student government is.

Q) Is there a guarantee of increased funding for GSO? A) There isn’t currently, but that’s because we don’t pay student activity fees at all, except for medical campus; asked Mao if $25/semester could be collected for activities, etc… He said they’d try to get additional funding first, but there are no guarantees.

Q: Where is funding coming from now? A: It’s all coming from PNS office - they give funds directly to office of graduate affairs for biomed PhD students; there’s no equation to make it proportional to student numbers, just an allotted fund.

Q: Will there be programming to provide for connections between student governments? A: There is the Columbia Graduate Council (puts on FesOfall and some additional events), but there is a hope for more additional connections. There will be the PhDC, but there’s no funding for that - just representations and such.

Q: Did you try to collect fees from the uptown students? A: We considered that option a year ago; first reached out to Engineering, since they were the biggest subgroup — they were very against it. They already had all of their funds set in their own budget. But even if these students pay into the pot, then we still couldn’t represent them well with their Dean, because GSAC can’t liaise with their deans. In order to actually represent all of these students, we’d need access to all of these deans, which we can’t do. Q: But isn’t that a tractable problem? Why not reform the board instead of breaking up the group? A: That’s what the PhD council is for. Also, those groups don’t always show up to plenary meetings.

**Vote:** Changes to constitution to GSAC: 27 in favor, 7 against; abstain 1 → *passed*

**Vote (ballot):** dissolve GSAC: 32 in favor; 6 against; abstain 2 → *passed*

*Frank points out that with GSO, he does feel that issues get ignored, and this is a way to improve*

5. **Vote on Reorganization of Graduate Student Representation (President)**

1. ASGC Vote
2. **Updates on PhD Council**: contacted all schools; not all responded, but those that did don’t have great organization or functioning student governments right now. PhDC can help with setting those up, work with deans. Question about whether or not to include TC ~ fairly independent. There would be 11 programs included.

**Q** So, Arts & Sciences would have only 1 rep? Who would that be? **A** We feel that it should fall to the president or chair — whoever is in charge of those student governments should appoint or find a member to represent the entire student body ~ each school decides how they want to appoint someone. Six meetings - 3 in fall, 3 in spring

**Q** So, meetings will be very 2 months? **A** Roughly, Sept-Nov in fall; hard to say exact months because programs start at different times, so 3 meetings/semester so that a year doesn’t go by with only 1 meeting

**Q** Who will be the PhDC rep for AGSC? **A** For now, we think the president should sit on there, but it can change

**Q** When is first PhDC meeting? **A** We think as soon as possible. March? We

**Q** Would attendance still be required with ASGC? **A** Yes. We will be working with MA reps in the future. Could combine some reps later on, but yes, want reps from all. Q: My department may only have 1 or no MA students; would they be obliged to be the rep? **A** If it’s only 1 person, then either they’re representing themselves or they don’t want to get involved. Q: But we could lose our rep? **A** No, the PhDs would still have their rep.

6. **Steering Committee Positions**

11 positions; (current positions)

* **president** - tie everything together, meetings, committees are on track, etc. liaising on every part to make sure that goals are being worked on; all encompassing role, it’s a big time commitment, but also rewarding.

* **vice president** - support president, keep track of student groups

* **communications chair** - send newsletters, take minutes, track attendance and communicate with representatives

* **finance chair** - SIG applications, travel grants, oversee budget, asking for more money, etc... (also, deadlines coming up soon - all currently recognized groups are still eligible for SIG groups and GSAC groups are eligible for travel grants)

* **quality of life** - talk to dean about stuff that’s awful and push for changes

* **alumni chair** - work to build up alumni, including database of all student reps’ information so there is a healthy collection of alumni ~ build up GSAC alumni groups and events

* **merged social and culture chairs into 1 role but 2 people**: still culture and social events, 1 budget
new roles:

* **media chair** - takes weight off of communication and social — facebook, twitter, website
* **community chair** - more involvement internally and externally within Columbia environment
* **MA Affairs Chair** - MA student who understands needs of Masters’ students and makes sure the MA voice is heard in executive meetings

7. **Recognized Student Groups (VP Admin)**
   1. **Updates**

8. **Committee updates**
   1. **Alumni & Career Development**
      1. *Career Meet up for Master’s Humanities & Social Sciences, CCE, Feb 28th, 6-8pm* (note: this date has changed to April 5)
      2. *Virtual Networking Hour, GSAS Students & Alumni - Interest Vote (5)*
      3. *Alumni & Student Boat Cruise w/Social, April 19th*
      4. *GSAC & ASGC Alumni Database*
   2. **Budget & Finance**
      1. Next application deadlines: 2/23 SIG; 3/23 Travel
   3. **Culture** (sold out)
      1. *Farinelli and the King, starring Mark Rylance, Feb 22, 7PM*
      2. *The Band’s Visit, March 6, 7PM*
      3. *NY Flamenco Festival: Rosalía y Raúl Refree, March 23, 9PM*
      4. *Turandot at the Metropolitan Opera, April 5, 7PM*
      5. *NYC Ballet - Balanchine Black and White, April 24, 7PM*
   4. **Quality of Life**
      1. *GSAS/GSAC resource guide for students* - GSAS has taken over the rewrite, but they have embraced GSAC’s edits; currently monitoring what they’re doing
      2. *Quality of Life Survey, February 15 - March 15* — please ask everyone to fill in survey → this is the data we bring to the dean. They are most responsive to numbers. Questions about the union, about stipends, rent, housing, disabilities, international students, etc… (note: deadline extended until 3/18)
   5. **Social** (sold out)
      1. *World Wildlife Day Screening and Panel- 3/1/18*
      2. *Gin Mill Social- 3/2/18*
      3. *Dear Evan Hansen-3/7/18 2PM*
      4. *Alumni and Student Boat Cruise with Alumni and Career Dev, 4/19*
Dear Evan Hansen 4/25/18 2PM

9. External Representatives Updates:

1. Health (Morningside, CUMC)

2. Libraries — temperatures - most people say libraries are too cold, especially Avery. Facilities knows the issue, but there are multiple systems in Avery and they don’t function together. The key takeaway is to call Facilities’ number (212) 854-2222 → they do listen and will respond; also, Stack Hours are expanding after Spring Break, either 1 or 2 in the morning (pilot program)

3. Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC)/Union - Nora and Kate; questions about potential strike. Legal timeline and organizing timeline — legally, in December were certified by National Labor Board ~ overruled Columbia’s objections, and so Columbia had a legal requirement to bargain, so refusal to do so is breaking the law. Provost’s email said they were appealing, but there is no appeal that they can post right now. NLRB will state that Columbia is breaking the law by refusing to bargain. Anticipate NLRB will find that Columbia is breaking the law. At that point, Columbia could appeal that ruling and go outside of NLRB with hopes that federal courts would rule in their favor. That could take up to a year. On organizing side, issued statement with representatives cover 82% of student body stating that they will organize to vote on strike. Strike vote has to be 66%. Bargaining committee can’t afford to call for a strike if they won’t win. Bargaining committee will do its best that if we come to a strike, it’ll be one that we can all participate in. But, most strike authorization votes don’t end in a strike, like in three recent cases. Hope that the strike authorization vote would be enough to get Columbia to bargain. The higher the turnout, the greater pressure on administration. So, please come out and vote yes. Date of vote hasn’t been announced yet, because have to make sure organizing game is solid, but expect to be this semester.

Q) Is there a quorum? A) No, no quorum, but goal is a strong majority (well over half of all graduate students voting). Q) If a student votes yes, is there a feedback way to say that strike wouldn’t suit well… could they not strike? A) It’s not legally binding; no one will know how you voted and no one can force you to strike. Still hope you would strike if choose to call one. That sort of feedback is already happening. If you don’t know who your department organizer is, email Nora and Kate. gwc.bargaining@gmail.com → for feedback and information about how this works, how make it workable for you. Still working out how this will
be organized. If vote for strike, probably would have a strike survey about how go about it.

Q) You don’t have a mode of strike in mind yet? A) No. Q) Wouldn’t that help with organizing? A) Yes; still figuring out. Also, retaliation for striking is illegal (can’t lose job), but Columbia can choose not to pay us. Also, it’s extremely rare for universities to stop paying graduate students, because then it would be acknowledging that we’re workers. But that’s the power that they have. Probably they wouldn’t do that without a lot of prior threats (same as threat of strike vote). Also, questions about international students and how vulnerable they would be. Want to reassure them that international students have gone on strike in the past and nothing bad happened. Best that lots of people strike, especially if there is any retaliation → more protection. Also, clerical staff if unionized, so who would do that work (to stop paying us)?

4. Office of University Life Events Council
5. Disabilities
6. ISSO - Tax Workshops: Feb 22, March 13, March 29; also, nothing done with Kent office despite talking about it last year

10. Senators’ Updates (moved earlier):
   1. Academic Freedom resolution passed in last plenary; resounding support and only few changes from faculty affairs committee
   2. Currently working on second freedom of expression statement; not just confined to campus ~ freedom of expression on campus. Probably introduced on senate floor on Friday.
   3. Update on Lerner Hall renovations proposed last year: some enacted
   4. in future, revisit student-faculty romantic relationship policy; handed down from trustees — should take up over course of semester. Particularly fraught for students ~ welcome input from community on

11. Updates on Unionization and GSAC’s position
   1. Showed GSAC position from newsletter;
   2. reiterate statement of neutrality, but open to discussing; neutrality works well because: a) represent ALL of GSAC students, including those who doesn’t agree with one side or the other, want them feel free to come to us and not feel alienated, b) different role from from the union, so good to stay neutral, c) good to keep these channels open

12. New Business (Open Forum)
13. Committee meetings & Adjournment (President)