GSAC

SEMESTER REPORT

FALL 2015

STEERING COMMITTEE:

President: Whitney Cowell
Vice President Administration: Helen Janiszewski
Vice President Communications: Celia Eddy
Budget & Finance: Carolina Ferrerosa-Young
Quality of Life: Philip Rodenbough
Alumni & Career Development: Yuxi Lin
Culture: Billur Avlar
Social: Sarah Joseph
DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATION

VOTING SEATS: 60 (39 GSAS; 21 NON-GSAS)
  • Filled: 32
  • Vacant: 28

ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING & PRESERVATION (0/2)
  • Unrepresented: Architecture, Urban planning

ARTS & SCIENCES: BIOMEDICAL* (4/10)
  • Unrepresented: Biomedical Informatics; Genetics & Development; Cellular, Molecular & Biomedical Studies; Microbiology, Immunology & Infection; Neurobiology & Behavior; Pathobiology & Molecular Medicine; Pharmacology & Molecular Signaling

ARTS & SCIENCES: HUMANITIES (10/13)
  • Unrepresented: Art History & Archaeology, Classical Studies, Classics

ARTS & SCIENCES: NATURAL SCIENCES (7/9)
  • Unrepresented: Astronomy, Statistics

ARTS & SCIENCES: SOCIAL SCIENCES (2/5)
  • Unrepresented: Anthropology, Economics, Sociology

BUSINESS (0/1)
  • Unrepresented: Business

ENGINEERING* (1/10)
  • Unrepresented: Applied Physics & Applied Mathematics, Biomedical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering & Engineering Mechanics, Computer Science, Earth & Environmental Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering

INTERNATIONAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS (1/1)

JOURNALISM (1/1)

PUBLIC HEALTH (2/4)
  • Unrepresented: Biostatistics, Epidemiology

NURSING (1/1)

SOCIAL WORK (1/1)

MA PROGRAMS (1/1)

*The GSAS Biomedical programs and the Engineering programs are represented by GSO and EGSC, respectively. These two groups send at least one representative to our monthly meetings.
ADMINISTRATIVE

IVY+

In November, GSAC attended the Ivy+ conference held at Dartmouth. Each of the other Ivy League schools and MIT were present. We were assigned to give a presentation on termination policies at Columbia University. A major topic from the meeting is whether to expand Ivy+ to include the University of Chicago, who recently requested to join. We also discussed expanding to include NYU. The next conference will be held at Brown University. We also learned that the 2016 national NAGPS meeting will be held at Stony Brook University.

SENATE ELECTION

The GSAS Student Senator for the Social Sciences resigned over the summer term. In November we held a special election to fill this open seat. Two candidates were self-nominated, however, only one was eligible. Ashraf Ahmed, a 5th year student in the Political Science Department, was elected to fill the position with a vote of 1 (from the History Department Rep). We are currently having conversations with the University Senate regarding voting policies and are considering moving to an online election in the spring.

INVITED PLENARY SPEAKERS

- November 2015: ISSO
- December 2015: Student Health: Medical & Mental Health Services

STUDENT GROUP APPROVAL FALL 2015

COLUMBIA STATISTICS CLUB (September)
The Columbia Statistics Club is an organization for all students interested in statistics. The club aims to: 1) support members in professional and academic endeavors in the field of statistics through workshops, and presentations; 2) provide members with useful information in the field of statistics; and 3) hold events to bring together students, faculty and alumni in the field of statistics.

DEUTSCHES HAUS FILM FACTION (October)
The Deutsches Haus Film Faction formed in the fall of 2014 in order to cater to the filmic interests of the Columbia German department, as well as to introduce other members of the undergraduate and graduate community to contemporary German-language films.

CU ASIA (December)
The mission of CU-Asia is to promote mutual understanding and collaboration between the people of the United States and the Asia-Pacific Region, in areas across business, culture, education, science, technology, and policy through academic and cultural exchanges, forums and seminars, professional and peer networking, community services, as well as participation in all aspects of life styles on either side of the Pacific.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY NEUROSCIENCE OUTREACH (CUNO) (December)
CUNO is a student run organization that seeks to improve the educational training of scientists while promoting a lifelong interest in science in NYC communities. Graduate
students at all levels are encouraged to bring their expertise of the brain and the extraordinary resources of the university to the public. We train GSAS students to teach simple biological concepts and hold regular meetings to improve the curricula and develop lessons, which are shared as digital resources. CUNO volunteers use the curricula to teach lessons in local schools and host public science fairs. CUNO administrators are GSAS students who coordinate school visits, trainings and hold monthly executive meetings.

**BUDGET & FINANCE**

**STUDENT INITIATIVE GRANTS**

**APPLICATIONS**
Number of grants submitted: 21
- 6 requested funding for fall and spring semester
- 1 requested funding for spring semester only
- 14 requested funding for fall semester only

Total funding requested: $13,170
Maximum funding requested by one group: $1000
Minimum funding requested by one group: $50
Median funding requested: $600

**AWARDS**
Number of grants awarded: 16 (76% of applications)

Total funding awarded: $8745 (66% of total funds requested)
Maximum funding awarded to one group: $1000
Minimum finding awarded to one group: $220
Median finding awarded: $500

**TRAVEL GRANTS**

2 OF THE 3 FUNDING CYCLES FOR THE 2015-2016 ACADEMIC YEAR

**APPLICATIONS**
Number of grants submitted: 41
- Humanities: 11
- Social Sciences: 12
- Natural Sciences: 9
- Biomedical Sciences: 3
- Professional Schools: 6

Average funding requested: $500
Total funding requested: $19,899

**AWARDS**
Number of grants awarded: 22 (54% of applications)
• Humanities: 9
• Social Sciences: 5
• Natural Sciences: 3
• Biomedical Sciences: 2
• Professional Schools: 3

Average funding awarded: $295
Total funding awarded: $6479 (33% of requested)

QUALITY OF LIFE

NAGPS ADVOCACY SUMMIT & LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAYS
This semester the GSAC Quality of Life Chair attended the Advocacy Summit & Legislative Action Days hosted by the National Association of Graduate and Professional Schools in Washington D.C. This meeting provides student advocates an opportunity to directly interact with members of congress and was focused on four issues affecting graduate students: 1) loans/debt, 2) higher education funding, 3) open access, 4) student visas.

POLICY BRIEF ON UNIVERSITY STIPEND & HOUSING COSTS
This semester the Quality of Life Committee focused on closing the disparity between stipend increases and rent increases for graduate students living in Columbia University housing. The committee compiled a policy brief documenting these issues and recommendations for improving students’ living experiences. The brief was submitted to both the Office of Housing, to the GSAS Dean’s Office and to the Office of the Provost. An executive summary is provided here:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Over the past 10 years, rent charged to graduate students living in University Apartment Housing (UAH) has been increasing at higher rates than stipends offered to graduate students through the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. This is concluded from an independent analysis of data provided directly to GSAC by GSAS and Facilities (for UAH). In fiscal year 2007, humanities and social sciences students devoted on average 48.29% of their total stipend to rent. In fiscal year 2016, that number has risen to 52.80%. For bench science students, rent shares increased over the same period from 41.65% to 44.68%. These groups of students saw seven (and five, respectively) straight years when rent increases outpaced stipend increases, only to see a modest reversal to the imbalance of rate increase during the two most recent years. Overall, these out-of-sync changes are hurting students financially, for a reason no greater than a lack of coordination between offices at the University.

The Quality of Life Committee officially recommends to GSAS (which sets stipend rates) and Facilities/UAH (which sets rent) to communicate with each other and jointly coordinate their rate increases for students. These two offices should agree to not impose on students rent increases at higher rates than stipend increases. It is further recommended that, in future years, rent and stipend increase rates be shared with the Quality of Life Committee, which can in turn share with the graduate student body the good news that stipends are increasing more than rent.
CULTURE

MUSIC, CONCERTS & DANCE

FRANZ FERDINAND AND THE SPARKS
- Date: October 6, 2015
- Location: Terminal 5
- Tickets sold: 23/23
- Ticket purchase price: $1009.5
- Ticket sell price: $20
- Net: - $549.5

CARNEGIE HALL OPENING GALA WITH EVGENY KISSIN AND THE NY PHIL
- Date: October 7, 2015
- Location: Carnegie Hall
- Tickets sold: 18/18
- Ticket purchase price: $1636
- Ticket sell price: $40
- Net: - $916

JOSEMARIA DE NIRO
- Date: October 30, 2015
- Location: Carnegie Hall
- Tickets sold: 19/30
- Ticket purchase price: $0
- Ticket sell price: $10
- Net: + $190

ANNA GOURARI PIANO RECITAL
- Date: November 10, 2015
- Location: Carnegie Hall
- Tickets sold: 28/28
- Ticket purchase price: $0
- Ticket sell price: $10
- Net: + $280

ALVIN AILEY DANCE COMPANY
- Date: December 11, 2015
- Location: New York City Center
- Tickets sold: 23/23
- Ticket purchase price: $1462
- Ticket sell price: $30
- Net: - $772
SPORTS

SOCcer GAME- NYC foOTBALL CLuB VS. NEw ENGLAnd REVOLUTION

- Date: Oct 25, 2015
- Location: Yankee Stadium
- Tickets sold: 33/33
- Ticket purchase price: $1053
- Ticket sell price: $15
- Net: - $558

SOCIAL

ORIENtATION

US open

- Date: Sept 1, 2015
- Location: USTA Billie King National Tennis Center
- Tickets sold: 42/42
- Ticket purchase price: $1390
- Ticket sell price: $15
- Net: - $760
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
- GSAC volunteers required: 3

THE BEAst SPEEDBOAT

- Date: Sept 3, 2015
- Location: Pier 83
- Tickets sold: 42/42
- Ticket purchase price: $1029
- Ticket sell price: $10
- Net: - $609
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
- GSAC volunteers required: 3
- Description: A fast and exciting tour of NYC harbor by speed boat

MET scavenger HUNT

- Date: Sept 5, 2015
- Location: Metropolitan Museum of Art
- RSVP only, approximately 30 students attended
- Event price: $70 (prizes)
- Ticket sell price: free
- Net: - $70
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
• GSAC volunteers required: 3
• Description: A home-made scavenger hunt that took students around the museum.

FESTIFALL

- Date: Oct 10, 2015
- Location: Columbia University Ancel Plaza
- Attendance: GSAS estimate ~140
- Event cost (GSAC contribution): $3,300
- Ticket sell price: free
- Net: - $3,300
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
- GSAC volunteers required: 2
- GSAS administrative support: 2-3
- Description: free food, drinks, music, games and the opportunity to meet graduate students from schools across campus.

TEASE

SEPTEMBER - WELCOME HAPPY HOUR

- Date: Sept 4, 2015
- Location: The Parlour (UWS)
- Tickets sold: 245/245
- Event cost: $5000
- Ticket sell price: $5
- Net: -3775
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes, but not eligible for open bar wristband
- GSAC volunteers required: 5

OCTOBER - ALE HALLOWS’ EVE PARTY

- Date: Oct 23, 2015
- Location: Grace Dodge Hall, Teachers College
- Tickets sold: 95/96
- Event cost: $975
- Ticket sell price: free
- Net: -$975
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: EGSC and TC only.
- Description: Co-hosted with EGSC and TC. There was giant jenga, a photo booth, dancing, drinks, a costume contest and food.

NOVEMBER - THANKSGIVING EDITION

- Date: Nov 19, 2015
- Location: Harlem Tavern (116th & Frederick Douglas)
- Tickets sold: 95/96
• Event cost: $2089
• Ticket sell price: free well drinks for first 96 GSAC students to RSVP
• Net: -$2089
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes, but not eligible for drink tickets
• GSAC volunteers required: 3
• Description: The first 96 GSAC students received 3 drink tickets good for draft beer, wine, sangria, and well drinks. Hor d’oeuvres were available. Students were allowed free to bring friends and share their drink tickets with them.

DECEMBER - END OF THE SEMESTER HAPPY HOUR - CANCELLED
• Was originally scheduled for Dec 18, 2015 at Amity Hall downtown location. Tickets for a 3-hour open bar were available for $30 ($40 non-GSAS guests). We cancelled the event due to low interest.

OTHER

POKER NIGHT
• Date: Nov 5, 2015
• Location: Columbia University Shapiro-CEPSER 750
• Event cost: $175
• Ticket sell price: free
• Net: -$175
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: SEAS only
• GSAC volunteers required: 2
• Description: Co-hosted with EGSC. No reservationists/tickets, but space limited. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres served. Prizes include Amazon gift cards and movie tickets.

NY BOTANICAL GARDEN BAR CAR NIGHT
• Date: Dec 19, 2015
• Location: NY Botanical Gardens (Bronx)
• Tickets sold: pending, 48/48
• Event cost: $1500
• Ticket sell price: $15
• Net: -$780
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
• GSAC volunteers required: 2
• Description: Cocktails, beer, or wine at the botanical gardens after dark viewing of the Holiday Train Show. Also features ice sculptures and light performances by Cirque de Light.