GSAC

SEMESTER REPORT

FALL 2017

STEERING COMMITTEE:

President: Lisa Kahl
Vice President Administration: Andrew Hsu
Vice President Communications: Abigail MacBain
Budget & Finance: Sarah Arkebauer
Quality of Life: Milica Ilicic
Alumni & Career Development: Frank Cusimano
Culture: David Mejia
Social: Sarah Joseph
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DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATION

VOTING SEATS: 53 (42 GSAS; 11 NON-GSAS)
- Filled: 46 (48% increase)
- Vacant: 7
MA Programs (3/3)
- Unrepresented: none
ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING & PRESERVATION (1/2)
- Unrepresented: Urban planning
ARTS & SCIENCES: BIOMEDICAL* (9/10)
- Unrepresented: Neurobiology & Behavior
ARTS & SCIENCES: HUMANITIES (14/14)
- Unrepresented: none
ARTS & SCIENCES: NATURAL SCIENCES (10/10)
- Unrepresented: none
ARTS & SCIENCES: SOCIAL SCIENCES (4/5)
- Unrepresented: Sociology
BUSINESS (1/1)
ENGINEERING (2/10)**
INTERNATIONAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS (1/1)
JOURNALISM (0/1)
- Unrepresented: Communications
PUBLIC HEALTH (3/4)
- Unrepresented: Epidemiology
NURSING (0/1)
- Unrepresented: Nursing
SOCIAL WORK (0/1)
- Unrepresented: Social Work

*The GSAS Biomedical programs are represented by GSO through at least one representative.
** The Engineering PhD programs are no longer represented through voting seats in GSAC. This change took place through a constitutional change, effective since the vote at the October Plenary Meeting. Formerly, all 10 engineering department with PhD programs sent representatives to GSAC meetings. All engineering students are now represented through the EGSC interschool chair.

Our department representation has nearly doubled since last academic year (from 29 to 46), even when considering the loss of the SEAS departments (which removed 10 voting seats, 2 of which were filled) and the increase of MA representatives from 1 to 3. This increase is largely due thanks to our email campaigns in September and October to
unrepresented departments. We have also attracted a crew of approximately 5-7 active MA students who attend our meetings and several of who participate with operating committees or as external representatives to other bodies within the Columbia community.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

<table>
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<th>Month</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance sign-in is predominantly composed of Department Representatives, but some External Representatives and MA Representatives (although not all) also sign in. Within a few days of the meetings, all Department Representatives are notified of the minutes being posted and reminded of meeting highlights and deadlines that they should share within their departments. Representatives are also emailed the day before each meeting to remind them to either come or find proxies. In addition, attendance of the 3 University Senators who are part of GSAC has also increased due to GSAC’s efforts in contacting the senators prior to upcoming meetings. This has allowed GSAC to be better informed about the work of the University Senate.

NEWSLETTER AND WEBSITE

For the 2017-2018 year, the GSAC steering committee determined that newsletters would maintain its weekly frequency and go out every Tuesday at 1:00 pm. In mid-September, the newsletter layout format was updated with plenary meetings and application deadlines highlighted at the top. We also reached out to outside departments to advertise their events and departments within our newsletter, which CTL and CCE have taken advantage of. In October, we switched from using a listserv to relying upon the mailing list integrated into our newsletter site. In addition to complying with this site’s terms of service, this shift also permitted students to more easily enrol and remove themselves from our newsletter. By becoming paying subscribers, we can also track how many recipients open the newsletter and which links they most often click on. The website has remained largely the same, but some changes have been made to improve clarity and order, especially with the list of department representatives, the newsletter archive, and the first page.

ADMINISTRATIVE

UPDATES

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION- REMOVAL OF EGSC (October)

VERBIAGE:

Article VI

Section 3. All PhD students in engineering departments that are represented by the Engineering Graduate Student Council (EGSC) shall be represented by one EGSC
interschool representative. The EGSC interschool rep will not be entitled to a vote, but act as a liaison between GSAC and EGSC by providing information on ongoing program and initiatives.

Article I
Section 1. GSAC shall be composed of 8 officers of the Steering Committee, 3 University Senators, at least one student representative from each GSAS PhD department and doctoral subcommittee (except for PhD programs administered through SEAS), and at least three student representatives to represent the GSAS MA programs collectively. The departments and subcommittees are in accordance to Appendix I. Student representatives to PhD departments and subcommittees and MA departments shall be known as the Departmental Representatives (“DRs”).

Bottom of Constitution
As of October 10th, 2017, GSAC no longer represents PhD graduate students in the following doctoral subcommittees:
Biomedical Engineering; Chemical Engineering; Civil Engineering & Engineering Mechanics; Computer Science; Earth and Environmental Engineering (Henry Krumb School of Mines); Electrical Engineering; Materials Science and Engineering; Electrical Engineering; Industrial Engineering & Operations Research; Mechanical Engineering. These PhD graduate students are represented through their own student government, the Engineering Graduate Student Council (EGSC).

IVY+ SUMMIT
In October, GSAC attended the Ivy+ Summit 2017, held at Harvard University. Delegates from the constant members (each of the Ivy Schools and MIT) as well as from UChicago were present. The organizing committee facilitated three break-out sessions (Planning & Communications, Advocacy & Inclusion, and Collaboration), each of which was divided into three discussion groups on specific sub-topics. Columbia’s delegates (Lisa Kahl, Andrew Hsu, Frank Cusimano & Milica Ilicic) attended all discussion groups and learned a lot through reciprocal exchange of experience with the other delegates. A major break-through was the unanimous agreement to establish a constitution for the Ivy+ group. This was triggered by disagreement about whether UChicago will be allowed to join the Ivy+ group as full member in the future. The new Ivy+ constitution will be voted on in Spring 2018 and come into effect before the next Ivy+ Summit 2018, which will be held at Cornell University.

REORGANIZATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN GSAS
The GSAC Steering Committee has been aware of an inherent inconsistency between the make-up of its members and the supply of its funds. In GSAC’s constitution, it is outlined that GSAC’s member body comprises all graduate students in GSAS (PhD & Masters students), as well as all PhD students whose programs are administered by other schools at Columbia (CBS, CUMC – P&S and Public Health, GSAPP, Journalism, Nursing, SEAS, SIPA, Social Work). This structure was instituted in order to foster greater solidarity and bonds across Columbia’s many schools and campuses as well as create channels of communication between all students in GSAS with the Dean of GSAS
Since GSAC’s funds are supplied through Student Activity Fees which are contributed only by students in GSAS (PhD and Masters students) it seemed unfair to GSAS and the GSAC Steering Committee to charge GSAS students more in Student Activity Fees for programming that is open to students who do not contribute to GSAC funding. Hence, the GSAC Steering Committee has been working on a restructuring of graduate student representation (in GSAS and of PhD students) in order to make programming only available to students who pay into GSAC’s funds, while keeping open all channels of communication between the students and the Dean of GSAS/Vice President for Graduate Education.

To this end, GSAC voted in an Ad Hoc Committee at the November Plenary Meeting to work out the details of this reorganization. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee are: Frank Cusimano (Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee/ GSAC Alumni & Career Development Chair/ GSO Co-President), Lisa Kahl (GSAC President), Andrew Hsu (GSAC Vice President), Nicholas Giangreco, Jennifer Reynolds-Strange, Claire Palandri, Osasumwen Virginia Aimiuwu. The Ad Hoc Committee presented their general plans for restructuring at December Plenary Meeting. The plans outlined the splitting of GSAC into a new GSAS-only graduate student government and a PhD-specific council. The Ad Hoc Committee will present a detailed proposal, which it will put up for discussion at the January Plenary Meeting. The final reorganization will be voted on during the Spring semester, such that the new forms of graduate representation in GSAS will take effect for the start of the next academic year in Fall 2018.

ACTIONS AGAINST PROPOSED SECTIONS OF THE US TAX REFORM

During the second half of the Fall semester, GSAC was carefully observing tax reform proposals by the US Congress, specifically the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, proposed by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady on November 2nd. There were multiple provisions that could have negatively affected graduate students, but the most serious of which was Sec. 1204, which would have repealed several portions of the tax code directly related to graduate students, including Qualified Tuitions Reductions (Sec. 117(d)), Employer-Provided Educational Assistance (Sec. 127), Interest Payments on Qualified Education Loans, Tuition and Related Expenses, and Interest on United States Savings Bonds. This change would have substantially raised graduate students’ (especially, PhD students’) tax bracket to such a rate that an inordinately large percentage of stipends or incomes would have been spent on taxes.

GSAC was in constant communication with GSAS and NAGPS (National Association of Graduate-Professional Students) because of the potentially negative effects for graduate education. GSAC joined the consolidated effort, led by NAGPS, to contact university administration and state officials to voice graduate student opposition. We organized two Tax Reform Action Days, where students could call their representatives in Congress to voice their opposition to these provisions in the proposal. GSAC provided information, call scrips and contact details, as well as snacks for the participating students. We also
gave a regular update about tax reform proposals in our weekly newsletter and, via our online and social media sites, we encouraged students to voice their opposition. The final version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act did not include Sec. 1204 and was signed into law on December 22nd, 2017.

INVITED PLENARY SPEAKERS
- September 2017: The Food Bank @ Columbia
- October 2017: Center for Career Education
- November 2017: Arts Initiative
- December 2017: Title IX Coordinator

GSAC PLENARY MEETING ROOM LOCATION ISSUES
Before the Fall 2017 semester, Casa Hispanica was used as the plenary meeting location. However, due to ADA concerns and that some of our departmental representatives have difficulty walking up and down the stairs, we aimed to change meeting locations to Lerner Hall for 2017-2018.

Given that our meeting time and day of week conflicts with GSSC (General Studies), the Satow Room in Lerner Hall was occupied, forcing GSAC to occupy multipurpose rooms (outfitted for dance practices, etc.). In September, we used 569 Lerner Hall but found it too small for the 40+ departmental representatives and interested students who attended our first meeting.

In October, we switched to 477 Lerner Hall, an even smaller room. This time, we also had issues with UEM and CUIT not delivering the technology on time (laptop, projector, projector screen, etc.), forcing our guests from CCE to improvise their presentation. We brought this up with GSAS administration, who suggested that we utilize the Graduate Student Lounge (301 Philosophy) to conduct our meetings. The main concern was the Espresso Bar & Café Nous will be forced to close early and that the Graduate Student Lounge would be closed during its “open hours”.

In November and December, we switched to 301 Philosophy, and the meetings were very successful, given the continued increased attendance of representatives to our plenary meetings. GSAC has booked 302 Philosophy (meeting room) for those wanting to work in the lounge during the time of the plenary meetings. In addition, Nous was more than happy to close early to accommodate us, even closing earlier than we had requested. It was determined that for the Spring semester, we aim to continue using 301 Philosophy for our plenary meetings.

Pictures:
STUDENT GROUPS

APPROVAL
New approved student groups: 1
Unapproved group applications: 3

Columbia University Science Policy Initiative (CUSP) (September)
Columbia University Science Policy Initiative is a group of passionate students and postdoctoral fellows that aims to give scientists and science supporters the tools to insulate science from the current state of political and societal upheaval. Understanding the world around us is an integral part of our humanity; science is a principal tool human society uses to parse its existence. CUSP—through education, outreach, and direct political action—aims to influence policy with scientific principles and to empower scientists of all backgrounds and locales to get involved in the conversation.

UNAPPROVED
Rejected Group Applications & Reasoning
Augustine Club: The constitutive membership of the Augustine Club was not majority GSAS. They were suggested to contact IGB for formal recognition as a student group on campus.
Society of Graduate Physics Students: The constitutive membership was to act as a student government for the Physics Department. Existing GSAC policies dictate that student groups may not be department-specific or take the place of student government for a department.
MESAAS Graduate Student Association: Same reasoning as above.

STUDENT GROUP SUSPENSION
The following GSAC recognized student group is permanently suspended and is officially derecognized:
CU- Asia
CU- Asia was permanently suspended as a GSAC student group due to lying to campus administrators, not acting in good faith with campus partners such as UEM and Public Safety, serving primarily people outside of the Columbia University community, and being suspended for 1 year just a couple years prior. CU- Asia was also permanently suspended due to suspicion of continued involvement of a faculty member in SEAS (previously GSAS graduate student) who was a founder and past President of CU- Asia.
STUDENT INITIATIVE GRANTS

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<thead>
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<th>APPLICATIONS</th>
<th>AWARDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of grants submitted: 17</td>
<td>Number of grants submitted: 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total funding requested: $13630</td>
<td>Total funding requested: $13630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum funding requested by one group: $1000</td>
<td>Maximum funding requested by one group: $1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum funding requested by one group: $250</td>
<td>Minimum funding requested by one group: $250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median funding requested: $1000</td>
<td>Median funding requested: $1000</td>
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TRAVEL GRANTS

Due to high demand, the GSAC Steering Committee decided to increase the total amount for travel grants to be allotted in the 2017-2018 academic year to $24,000 (from $20,000 in the original budget). The increase funds were relocated from carry-over funds.

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<th>APPLICATIONS</th>
<th>AWARDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of grants submitted: 62</td>
<td>Number of grants awarded: 42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departments represented: 30</td>
<td>Departments represented: 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average funding requested: $476.40</td>
<td>Average funding awarded: $285</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total funding requested: $29537</td>
<td>Total funding awarded: $12000</td>
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QUALITY OF LIFE

RESOURCE GUIDEBOOK

Following up on last year’s Quality of Life survey, the QoL committee has been in close collaboration with the GSAS Dean’s Office, in the effort to improve the transparency, usability, and availability of administrative resources currently available to students. To that effect, the committee has done an extensive overview of existing policy documents across Columbia’s administrative institutions, and communicated its recommendations on the expansion of the GSAS resource guidebook to the Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, Mr. Richard Slusarczyk. The committee then followed up with an annotated copy of the existing GSAS Resource Guidebook, marking all points where
information needs to be clarified or expanded upon: this copy is due for submission with Dean Slusarczyk on December 15th 2017.

PLANS FOR SPRING 2018
In Spring 2018, the committee intends to continue working closely with the Dean’s Office to produce an improved version of the resource guidebook. In addition to that, the committee will organize a small series of focus group luncheons, with the goal of gathering qualitative data from underrepresented groups of students (parents, LGBTQ+, students with disabilities, etc.) that would supplement the quantitative data collected via annual surveys. We expect this type of data to provide better insight into the actual use of existing policy, and highlight areas where future advocacy is most necessary. The annual Quality of Life survey is also currently in production, and is planned for release on February 15th, 2018.

ALUMNI & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

LINKEDIN WORKSHOP AND HEADSHOTS
Description: Co-sponsored with EGSC & CCE. Attendees were provided a LinkedIn tutorial, followed by an opportunity to have professional head shots taken by the Columbia Photography Association.
  • Date: Nov 2nd, 2017
  • Location: CCE Conference Room
  • Number of attendees: 42
  • Net Cost: -$300 (2 photographers for 1 hour, $150/hour/photographer)

ALUMNI VIRTUAL NETWORKING
Description: Co-sponsored with EGSC & CCE. This event was a one hour networking event providing students the ability to meet virtually with alumni from across the world and across departments/industries.
  • Date: November 10, 2017
  • Location: Online - Brazen
  • Number of attendees: 19 Alumni, 38 Students
SOCIAL & CULTURE EVENTS

PERFORMANCE ARTS - CONCERTS, DANCE, & THEATER

GSAC @ GROUNDHOG DAY THE MUSICAL
- Date: September 14, 2017
- Location: August Wilson Theater
- Tickets sold: 27
- Event price: $1485
- Ticket sell price: $35 - $40
- Net: - $495
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
- GSAC volunteers required: 2
- Description: Groundhog Day the Musical event.

SLEEP NO MORE
- Date: October 4, 2017
- Location: McKittrick Hotel
- Tickets sold: 40
- Ticket purchase price: $99.50
- Ticket sell price: $45 (GSAC Member), $55 Guest
- Net: - $1900

JOSHUA BELL PLAYS BERNSTEIN’S “SERENADE”
- Date: October 25, 2017
- Location: New York Philharmonic
- Tickets sold: 19
- Ticket purchase price: $47.50
- Ticket sell price: $25
- Net: - $475

PERGOLESI’S STABAT MATER
- Date: November 2, 2017
- Location: Lincoln Center
- Tickets sold: 9
- Ticket purchase price: $102.50
- Ticket sell price: $35
- Net: - $710

“THE ROUTES OF SLAVERY”, BY JORDI SAVALL
- Date: November 15, 2017
- Location: Lincoln Center
- Tickets sold: 14
- Ticket purchase price: $75
- Ticket sell price: $35
- Net: - $490
**ORIENTATION**

**NY YANKEES**
- Date: August 28, 2017
- Location: Yankee Stadium
- Tickets sold: 49
- Event cost: $1250
- Ticket sell price: $13
- Net: - $613
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
- GSAC volunteers required: None
- Description: Orientation event at a Yankees Game.

**WAITRESS: A NEW MUSICAL**
- Date: August 31, 2017
- Location: Atkinson Theater
- Tickets sold: 29
- Event cost: $1770
- Ticket sell price: $35
- Net: - $755
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
- GSAC volunteers required: None
- Description: Orientation event at the musical Waitress: A New Musical.

**WELCOME SOCIAL @ THE GIN MILL**
- Date: September 1, 2017
- Location: The Gin Mill
- Tickets sold: 99
- Event cost: $2500
- Ticket sell price: $5-$10
- Net: -$1930
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
- GSAC volunteers required: 1
- Description: Open bar for 2 hours with a buffet of appetizers for Orientation.

**GSAC @ THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**
- Date: September 2, 2017
- Location: Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Guests Attended: 50
- Event cost: $0
- Ticket sell price: $0
- Net: $0
- Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
- GSAC volunteers required: None
- Description: Scavenger Hunt or open time at the Met for Orientation.
VOLUNTEERING & COMMUNITY-BUILDING

TAX REFORM ACTION DAY WITH GSAC & GWC
• Date: November 15, 2017
• Location: 301 Philosophy Hall
• Tickets sold: Open Event
• Event price: $42.18
• Ticket sell price: $0
• Net: -$42.18
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
• GSAC volunteers required: None
• Description: Students met and called their House of Representatives about the Tax Reform bill with snacks.

VOLUNTEER EVENT
• Date: November 16, 2017
• Location: Bronx Choice Pantry
• Tickets sold: 5
• Event price: $26.50
• Ticket sell price: $0
• Net: -$26.50
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
• GSAC volunteers required: 1
• Description: Students met at Columbia and received Levain Bakery for breakfast and then volunteered at Bronx Choice packaging groceries for 2 hours.

TAX REFORM ACTION DAY PART II WITH GSAC & GWC
• Date: November 27, 2017
• Location: 301 Philosophy Hall
• Tickets sold: Open Event
• Event price: $43.95
• Ticket sell price: $0
• Net: -$43.95
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
• GSAC volunteers required: None
• Description: Students met and called their Senators about the Tax Reform bill with snacks.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES & HAPPY HOURS

MYSTERY ROOM
• Date: October 13, 2017
• Location: Mystery Room
• Tickets sold: 37
• Event price: $1028
• Ticket sell price: $16-$22
• Net: -$400
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
• GSAC volunteers required: 1
• Description: Two groups split into two different rooms at two different times (7PM and 8:30PM) to try to escape the room.

**GSAC/EGSC GAME NIGHT @ HEX & CO.**
• Date: November 9, 2017
• Location: Hex & Co
• Tickets sold: 23
• Event price: $450
• Ticket sell price: $2
• Net: -$400
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: No
• GSAC volunteers required: 1
• Description: An event co-hosted with EGSC (total 50 students) for a game night at Hex & Co. and food.

**TC SENATE AND GSAC UNITE FOR PUERTO RICO**
• Date: November 17, 2017
• Location: Harlem Tavern
• Tickets sold: 13 + direct donations at the door
• Event price: $540
• Ticket sell price: Donations to Puerto Rico
• Net: -$540
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
• GSAC volunteers required: 1
• Description: Students donated to Puerto Rico to receive entry into Harlem Tavern which gave them food and drink tickets. Each donation meant more drink tickets. All proceeds went to United for Puerto Rico.

**HOLIDAY PARTY @ THE ATTIC**
• Date: December 15, 2017
• Location: The Attic
• Tickets sold: 98
• Event price: $6588
• Ticket sell price: $10-20
• Net: -$5048
• Non-GSAS guests allowed: Yes
• GSAC volunteers required: 1
• Description: 2 hour open bar with sliders at The Attic.