Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

2008-09 Annual Report

Executive Board

Byron C. Kohut, President
Alex Braunstein, Vice President of Committees
Emily Stone, Vice President of Communications
Kelong Han, Vice President of Finance

Assembly Board

Arts & Sciences
  Zeynep Isvan
  PJ Dillon
  Marguerite Matthews

Biomedical
  Kim Payne

GSPIA
  Brian Bauer

Public Health
  Theresa Fanelli

Katz School of Business
  Clayton Youngs
  Phil Tedesco

Dental Medicine
  Arvind Petrie

Engineering
  Ian Bellayr

Health & Rehabilitation Sciences
  Danielle DeBias

Education
  Ryan Mays
  Chantee McBride
  Jessica Stocks

Information Sciences
  Michele Thomas

Law
  Rachel Rosnick

Medicine
  Clayton Lewis

Nursing
  Jennifer Stewart

Pharmacy - PharmD
  Steven Zona

Pharmacy – PhD
  Mark Donnelly

Social Work
  Amie Cande

ANKUR: Indian Graduate Student Association
  Shivayogi Hiremath

Chinese Students & Scholars Association (CSSA)
  Xiong Zhang

Grad Organization for the Study of Europe & Central Asia (GOSECA)
  Samantha Hryciuk

Pan African Graduate & Prof Student Association (PANAF)
  Nosakhare Griffin-El

Persian Panthers
  Amir Soltani

Turkish American Student Association (TASA)
  Mehmet Soytas
About GPSA

The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly is the umbrella governmental organization of the graduate and professional student body at the University of Pittsburgh. It oversees the fourteen (14) graduate student governments (GSGs) (one for each school) who are responsible for the graduate student organizations (GSOs) under them, and advocates on behalf of over nine thousand graduate and professional students at the University.

The mission of GPSA is to:

- Establish and maintain networks of communication between the GPSA Assembly and GSGs, among GSGs, between GPSA and the University committees, and between GPSA and individual graduate students.
- Provide graduate student representation on University committees.
- Serve as a resource for individual graduate and professional students, Graduate Student Organizations and groups, and GSGs.
- Act as an advocate for graduate and professional student’s concerns.
- Administer the student activity fee.

The GPSA Assembly, or Assembly Board (AB), is the governing body of the organization. It is comprised of at least one representative from each graduate and professional school. The Executive Board executes the resolutions of the AB, and through the guidance of the AB, sets the vision and agenda of the organization.

Accomplishments

New GPSA Website

With the help of Charles Kannair, a graduate student at the Katz School of Business, and personnel in the Computer Services and Systems Development (CSSD), GPSA developed a new website. The new site is more user-friendly and has increased functionality. The site was made live in late summer of 2008 and is now viewable at www.gpsa.pitt.edu.

Pittsburgh Graduate Student Consortium (PGSC)

This year GPSA helped create a consortium of graduate students in the Pittsburgh area that will serve as an organization that shares resources, knowledge, and networks that serves local graduate students. This year’s activities culminated with The Spring Event held at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial April 23rd from 5-9pm featuring guest speaker Bill Flanagan of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. This event brought students from all three schools together to meet, network, create relationships, and meet business and corporate representatives from various Pittsburgh companies and foundations.

New Graduate Student Assembly Board Group

GPSA accepted a new graduate student assembly board group into the Assembly with full voting rights. The new assembly board group is the Persian Panthers. The duties of the new assembly board group involve abiding to the GPSA by-laws and attending monthly GPSA board meetings. In addition, GPSA has awarded the Persian Panthers a $4500 operating budget for planning social events and maintaining an active role in the University community. With the addition of the Persian Panthers, GPSA now represents six assembly board groups and fourteen graduate school organizations.
Chatham Eden Hall Farm Retreat
On Saturday October 25, 2008 executive graduate and professional student assembly board representatives from Chatham University, Carnegie Mellon University, and the University of Pittsburgh gathered for a one-day planning retreat at Chatham University’s Eden Hall Farms. The purpose of the retreat was to discuss the possibility of holding a graduate student recognition day in the spring of 2009. The intent of inviting graduate student government representatives from the nearby universities and colleges would be to continue building what is slowly becoming a Pittsburgh graduate student consortium.

Pitt Lobby Day
GPSA would like to thank the University of Pittsburgh and the Governmental Relations staff for helping us to plan a trip to Harrisburg for participation in Pitt Lobby Day. For GPSA, this was a successful event and most likely will become an annual tradition. Graduate students actively met and lobbied Senators and Congressman in Harrisburg hoping to show Pennsylvania government officials the impact the University of Pittsburgh makes in the community.

University Senate Council Meetings
Because GPSA rarely reported on the activities of our various Graduate School Organizations, during the Senate Council Meetings this past year, GPSA highlighted the various activities performed over the months in the University community of at least one of our Graduate School Organizations or Assembly Board groups. Below are several examples of reports for our various student groups presented over the past year:

1. The Chinese Student and Scholars Association have been performing various fundraising activities and collecting donations for the recent earthquake relief effort that has disrupted life in parts of China. To date they have raised nearly $5000 and have sent the donations via the Chinese Consulate General in New York to the Red Cross of China. The CSSA has called for donations from the whole Chinese community through email and their website (www.pittcssa.net). The GPSA would like to thank CSSA for going above and beyond to help aid in the relief of those affected by the earthquake. CSSA’s outreach demonstrates the commitment University of Pittsburgh graduate students have for global awareness.

2. The History of Art and Architecture Graduate Student Organization (HAA GSO) within the School of Arts and Sciences sponsored a graduate symposium titled, History of Art and Architecture Symposium - Storytelling: Playful Interactions and Spaces of Imagination in Contemporary Visual Culture. This event was presented in conjunction with Life on Mars, the 55th Carnegie International, at the Carnegie Museum of Art. The graduate student symposium was designed to engage artists and students of contemporary art and film studies about the use of half-fictional, half-real narratives to raise awareness of political, social, and cultural realities.

3. Turkish American Student Association (TASA) students held an event to honor their native Turkey by holding a fundraiser in the Kurtzman Room of the William Pitt Union to raise funds for the establishment of a Turkish Nationality Room. The event was titled, Turkish Nationality Room Kick Off Party. The Nationality Rooms program of the University of Pittsburgh consists of 26 different nationality rooms situated in the Cathedral of Learning. Each year over 100,000 guests visit these museum quality
rooms representing cultures as distinct as the Armenian culture to the Japanese culture. Currently, there is no Turkish room in this collection. TASA is close to reaching their fundraising goal. They have successfully raised 90% of the needed funds.

4. The BioEngineering Graduate Student Counsel hosted a three-part guest speaker series presented around a breakfast meet and greet that they titled, Breakfast with Industry. For this series, local engineering executives met with engineering and business graduate students to discuss issues ranging from case studies of device to industrial job searches with biotech companies. This event was developed to inform students of the current state of affairs for startup companies in Pittsburgh and inform students of possible jobs available upon graduation.

Programs

Orientations
Beginning in July of this year, GPSA began visiting as many graduate school orientations as possible throughout the University to illustrate for our newly accepted graduate students the benefits and opportunities GPSA provides. It served as a powerful tool by advertising GPSA and its services to new graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh. Executive Board members created welcome gift bags containing various items to distribute at the orientations and spoke for about five to ten minutes about the many services GPSA performs throughout the year. Additionally, executive board members used this time to inform the students about the services their individual graduate school organizations provide in addition to GPSA. Lastly, executive board members reminded all graduate students that their continued involvement in GPSA is what makes GPSA active and strong.

Social and Networking Events
GPSA offered 13 social and networking events to graduate students in the fiscal year. GPSA sold or gave away free tickets to: Mattress Factory, Heinz History Center, Southside Works Cinema, Pittsburgh Pirates, Tailgate Prior to a Pitt Panthers Football Game, The Museum of Desire, Wine Tasting at Palate Partners, Michel Camilo Concert and Dinner, Nutcracker, Grad Student Happy Hour, Carmina Burana, La Boheme, and a End of Year Event at Soldiers and Sailors.

Finance

Budget
GPSA receives all of its revenue through the $20 per student/per semester activity fee. Operating off of the University’s fiscal year, July 1 to June 30, GPSA 2008-2009 divides its revenues into two parts: GPSA operating budget and the Graduate School Governments’ (GSG) operating budgets. Both divisions received approximately $171,000. The goal this year was to end the year with a carry forward of funds. This was accomplished by creating a budget early in the fiscal year that reflected the wants and needs of the GPSA.

GPSA switched from a lottery style ticket system to offering tickets for sale where students make a nominal contribution of $5 or $10, which we reapply to the budget for social and cultural programming. All of the events, except for one, which GPSA sold a limited number
of tickets sold out, suggesting that GPSA was meeting the needs and interests of graduate students.

The GPSA operating budget was distributed in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programming:</td>
<td>$107,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Grants</td>
<td>$67,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Funds</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Events</td>
<td>$36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Services</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly Expenses</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly Groups:</td>
<td>$23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Expenses:</td>
<td>$3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll and Officer Stipends:</td>
<td>$25,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$171,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two of GPSA’s largest programming expenditures are travel grants and supplemental funds.

**Travel Grants**

This year we allocated $67,500 in travel grants to over 300 graduate or professional students. The amount of the awards ranged from $100 to $200 depending on conference location and degree of student participation.

The following graph illustrates the allocation of travel grants among the graduate schools:
Supplemental Funds

In the 2008-2009 fiscal year, GPSA granted nine organizations a total of $4500 in supplemental funds out of $10,000 budgeted. Before requesting funding from the Assembly Board, student group members met with the Executive Board. These meetings functioned to discuss the request, answer any questions, and provide guidance on alternative sources of funding.

Although any graduate student organization could apply for the funding, the intent behind supplemental funds is to help organizations launch a new event reaching graduate students across the Pitt campus.

The following groups received supplemental funds in this fiscal year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Granted</th>
<th>Disbursed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of the History of Art &amp; Architecture</td>
<td>Symposium</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Studies Group</td>
<td>Romanian National Day</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Bar Association</td>
<td>Laughter is the Best Medicine: Movie Night</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Students &amp; Scholars Assoc</td>
<td>Spring Festival 2009</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioengineering Grad Student Council</td>
<td>Breakfast with Industry</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NABU: GSPIA PhD Student Org</td>
<td>1st Annual Graduate Student Conference</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Lawyers Guild</td>
<td>Will Potter of GreenIsTheNewRed.Com</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iSHRIC: Int'l Students for Healthcare Reform</td>
<td>Fundraiser for Catholic Charities Refugees</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Kino Club</td>
<td>Russian Film Festival</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Committees
We appreciate the University administration’s invitation for GPSA to sit on thirty-five different committees and boards. Below is a list of those committees with GPSA representation. We anticipate that many of these positions will become available towards the end of this semester as some of the representatives will complete their master or doctoral programs, or relocate from the Pittsburgh area.

**Senate Committees:**

1. Admissions & Student Aid Zhe Su
2. Anti-Discriminatory Policies Melanie Rodrigues
3. Athletics Chris Wermerson
4. Benefits and Welfare Seat Empty
5. Budget Policies Mary Gibson
6. Bylaws & Procedures Muthaiah Vairavan
7. Commonwealth Relations Mary Gibson
8. Community Relations Lauren Silva
9. Computer Usage Kalpesh Upadhye
10. Educational Policies Ali Ashraf
11. Library Patrick Fennel
12. Plant Utilization & Planning Nelson Totah
13. Student Affairs Matthew Stull
14. Tenure & Academic Freedom Brandi Neal
15. University Press Micelle Kirlay

**Provost’s Advisory Committees**

- Conflict of Interest Committee Nelson Totah
- Information and Technology Steering Kalpesh Upadhye
- Planning and Budget Byron Kohut
- Women’s Concerns Julie Hoggarth
- Zeynep Isvan
- University Council on Graduate Studies Byron Kohut
  Marguarite Matthews

**University Senate Standing Committees**

- Admissions and Student Aid Zhe Su
- Anti-discriminatory Policies Melanie Rodrigues
- Athletics Chris Wermerson
- Benefits and Welfare Chantelle Raub
- Budget Policies Mary Gibson
- Bylaws and Procedures Muthaiah Vairavan
- Commonwealth Relations Mary Gibson
- Community Relations Lauren Silva
- Computer Usage Kalpesh Upadhye
- Educational Policies Ali Ashraf
- Library Patrick Fennel
- Plant Utilization and Planning Nelson Totah
- Student Affairs Matthew Stull
- Tenure and Academic Freedom Brandi Neal
- University Press Michelle Kirlay
### Board of Trustees Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs/Libraries</td>
<td>Don Formoso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative Action</td>
<td>Christie Lawson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Ron Gerstenberger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>Seat Empty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Advancement</td>
<td>Jessica Radzio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Zhe Su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Byron Kohut</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Elections

This year’s election was conducted online on [my.pitt.edu](http://my.pitt.edu). Seventeen (17) candidates ran for four positions: president, vice president of committees, vice president of communications, and vice president of finance. Elections were held from March 23 to 27 and a meet-the-candidates session was on March 18th. GPSA publicized the election on the GPSA website and a mass e-mail announcement distributed through the AB representatives. Lindsay Weissberg chaired the Election Committee.

Approximately six hundred (660) graduate or professional students voted. Below are the election results.

#### President

- **President-elect:** Daniel Jimenez, A&S Neuroscience
- **Other candidate:** Ian Bellayr, School of Medicine, Biomedical Informatics

#### VP of Committees

- **VP of Committees-elect:** Marguerite Matthews, A&S Neuroscience
- **Other candidates:**
  - Dimitri Facaros, Law
  - William Fisher, Law
  - Shashi Sriram, Pharmacy
  - Galina Zapryanova, A&S Political Science

#### VP of Communications

- **VP of Communications-elect:** PJ Dillon, A&S Computer Science
- **Other candidate:**
  - Katherine Buchman, Public Health
  - Tara Capece, Public Health
  - Eamon Chory, Public Health
  - Jason Godlove, Engineering
  - Lauren Hassen, Public Health
  - Dazun Xing, Engineering

#### VP of Finance

- **VP of Finance-elect:** Chan Braithwaite, Law & Business
- **Other candidates:**
  - Matthew Miller, Engineering
  - Rachelle Stopczynski, Medicine