University of Pittsburgh

Graduate & Professional Student Assembly

2010 - 2011

Annual Report
The Assembly Board

The Assembly Board (AB) is the governing body for the more than 10,000 graduate & professional students at the University of Pittsburgh. It is composed of students from all 14 schools as well as recognized cross-school GPSA Assembly Groups (GAGs).

**Schools of the University**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>Alexandra Oliver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kristopher Geda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shuangyan Xiong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katz Graduate School of Business</td>
<td>Kawa Shwaish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Jean Zamzow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>Maria Ferraro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Medicine</td>
<td>Lou Sabina</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>DeAnn Long Sloan</td>
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<td>Swanson School of Engineering</td>
<td>Dan McAdams</td>
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<td>Health &amp; Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS)</td>
<td>Nahom Beneye</td>
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<td>Information Sciences (SIS)</td>
<td>Hassan Takabi</td>
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<td>Law</td>
<td>Carsen Nesbitt</td>
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<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Alana Otto</td>
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<td>Professional Program</td>
<td>Chad Kimmel</td>
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<td>Graduate Program (BGSA)</td>
<td>Kafuli Agbemenu</td>
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<td>Nick Wytiax</td>
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<td>Professional Program</td>
<td>Mark Donnelly</td>
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<td>Graduate Program</td>
<td>Shilpi Oberoi</td>
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<td>Public Health (GSPH)</td>
<td>Bill Shuey</td>
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<td>Public &amp; International Affairs (GSPIA)</td>
<td>Jasmine Wilson</td>
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**GPSA Assembly Groups**

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<tr>
<td>ANKUR - Indian Graduate Student Association</td>
<td>Samannaaz Khoja</td>
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<td>Chinese Students &amp; Scholars Association (CSSA)</td>
<td>Junming Huang</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pan-African Graduate &amp; Professional Student Union (PanAf)</td>
<td>Eric Eghan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Panthers</td>
<td>Behdad Beheshti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkish American Student Association (TASA)</td>
<td>Tekin Kose</td>
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</table>
The Executive Board

GPSA’s Executive Board (EB) members are students elected by the graduate & professional student body to one year terms. Officers are tasked with executing the resolutions of the Assembly Board and representing the student body.

**Sudipta “Nila” Devanath**
President  
*School of Medicine, Professional Program*

**Qing Hu**
Vice President of Communications  
*Graduate School of Public and International Affairs*

**Melanie Rodrigues**
Vice President of Committees  
*School of Medicine, Graduate Program*

**Steven Ruperto**
Vice President of Finance  
*Katz Graduate School of Business*

Support

GPSA is advised by the Office of the Provost. The Office of the Provost and GPSA jointly employ a graduate student administrative assistant to coordinate office activities.

**Office of the Provost**
- **Dr. Alberta Sbragia**, *Vice Provost for Graduate Studies*
- **Stephanie Hoogendoorn**, *Assistant to the Provost & GPSA Advisor*

**GPSA Administrative Assistant**
- **David Givens**, *School of Arts & Sciences, Religious Studies*
About GPSA

The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) is the umbrella government organization of the graduate and professional student body at the University of Pittsburgh. GPSA represents over ten thousand graduate and professional students at the University of Pittsburgh comprising approximately 40% of the student body. It brings together the 14 schools of the University, each of which represent distinct educational and professional missions and distinct populations of students.

The mission of GPSA is to:

- Establish and maintain communication networks between all graduate & professional students, student governments, and University of Pittsburgh faculty & administrators.
- Provide graduate student representation on University committees and shared governance structures.
- Serve as a resource for individual graduate and professional students, Graduate Student Organizations, and Graduate Student Governments.
- Act as an advocate for graduate and professional students.
- Administer the student activities 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 (EB), and representatives from cross-schools, university-recognized GPSA Assembly Groups (GAGs). The Executive Board executes the resolutions of the Assembly Board, and through them, sets the vision and agenda of the organization.
President’s Report

“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”
- Henry Ford

In May, 2010, I came to GPSA as a freshly-graduated student at the University. Though new to graduate student life, I quickly recognized the silos of students at each school and sought to bring to GPSA what I had experienced during my undergraduate career at Pitt: a sense of community and shared progress.

The 2010-11 academic year proved to be an exciting time to bring graduate and professional students together amid the many challenges they faced in the public arena. From navigating the cuts in public transportation to their classes, work, daycare, and research labs, to speaking out against the proposed state budget cuts, our students rose to the occasion with sheer talent and ingenuity. Building on the success of previous years, GPSA took advantage of opportunities for growth on many fronts including scholarship, outreach, civic engagement, and service.

Recognizing Student Achievement and Scholarship

Pitt graduate students continue to reach high levels of recognition for their scholarship and service. Kakenya Ntaiya, a Ph.D. candidate in education and a 2010 National Geographic Emerging Explorer, won the $50,000 Diane von Furstenburg Award at the Women of the World Summit for her work educating young girls in Kenya. Kat Belenduiik, a Ph.D. candidate in clinical and developmental psychology, received the 40 Under 40 Award, sponsored by PITTSBURGH Magazine and the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project (PUMP), for raising funds for the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund. Brandie Taylor, a Ph.D. candidate in epidemiology, won a fellowship from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for her work on fertility rates following infection. Students Grace Lindsay, Noah Willumsen, Sara Nichols, and Lidio Meireles, and Ian Blecher won prestigious fellowships from the German Academic Exchange Service, and students Steven Balmert, William Barone, Catherine Fairbairn, Matthew Koski, and Naima Sharaf won awards from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

To recognize students for their achievements, GPSA held the Winter Student Appreciation Reception, Spring Student Appreciation Breakfast, and continues to work on University-wide graduate student award proposals (see Commitees and Communications Reports).

Increasing Outreach and Internal Reorganization

This year, GPSA reorganized its budget, communication strategy and officer duties to maximize services and opportunites for involvment for our students. With these changes, GPSA Travel Grants to students presenting their work at academic conferences increased by 25%, active membership by 60%, and supplemental funding to encourage student organizations to host networking events, lectures, and academic conferences across schools by over 200% (see Finance Report).
To deal more efficiently in the future with the enormous rate of growth GPSA experienced this year, a new position, VP of Programming, was added to the Executive Board during the 2011 GPSA Elections (see Elections Report).

Record-Breaking Student Voter Turnout

Hitting the ground running, the 2010-11 GPSA worked closely with the undergraduate Student Government Board (SGB) and the city-wide Pittsburgh Student Government Council (PSGC) to establish the first annual Student Civic Engagement Campaign (SCEC). The campaign served as a model for all major institutions of higher education in Pittsburgh to follow through with the “good faith effort” on student voter registration required by the federal Voter Registration Provision in Higher Education Amendments of 1998. The SCEC consisted of initiatives designed for students to reach out to the Pittsburgh community through political involvement and voting in the 2010 local, state, and federal elections. Through months of planning and weeks of organization, the 2010 SCEC registered almost 3,000 students, and on election day, almost half of those students voted, setting a new record for the highest number of students voting in a non-presidential election year in Pittsburgh.

Rebuilding Relationships with City Council

After the defeat of the Tuition Tax in 2009, GPSA aimed to reconnect with City Council to enhance the voices of graduate and professional students in the Pittsburgh community. As a result, City Council proclaimed September as “Student Civic Engagement Month” on Sept. 7, 2010, in coordination with GPSA and the PSGC. With the city home to approximately 85,000 students from more than 10 colleges and universities, students represent a substantial portion of Pittsburgh constituents and are extremely important to the “eds and meds” economy of Pittsburgh.
the city. The proclamation poured new energy into the SCEC and student involvement in local and regional politics. A reception followed at Pitt featuring Provost Patricia Beeson on civic involvement.

**Leading the City-Wide Student Voice**

GPSA was instrumental in the official establishment and growth of the PSGC, the council of graduate and undergraduate student leaders which formed in the wake of the 2009 Tuition Tax. GPSA worked with Duquesne’s Student Government Association to draft the PSGC’s official constitution, which was ratified on July 27, 2010, and in January, 2011, GPSA was elected to lead the council as the new chair.

Through the PSGC, GPSA advocated for increased funding to the Port Authority of Allegheny County, a system used by thousands of students to get to classes, work, and research labs. GPSA created an online city-wide petition, gaining 654 signatures, which sent e-mails to each signee’s state senator and representative. GPSA also organized the PSGC’s first annual lobby day in Harrisburg, where students from 8 colleges and universities visited members of the House and Senate Transportation Committees as well as the Governor on public transit issues. In total, the PSGC made around 40 in-person visits and left behind about 30 messages supporting increased funding at other offices. Through the PSGC, GPSA provided a forum for constituents of the city to impact decision-makers at the highest level.

**Opposing Proposed State Budget Cuts to Higher Education**

In March, 2011, Governor Corbett proposed a 50% cut to higher education funding in the Pennsylvania state budget. Eager to engage students, GPSA created an online state-wide petition along with a “take action” resource website to inform students, staff, and families of ways to contact their legislators effectively. GPSA collaborated with other universities across the state to form the Coalition of Pennsylvania Students (COPS), amassing a membership of 22,382 students across Pennsylvania. Through COPS, GPSA’s petition garnered 5,237 signatures from concerned citizens around the state. GPSA and SGB hosted the Student Advocacy Forum featuring Chancellor Nordenberg, who spoke on the importance of contacting legislators. The forum was the official kick-off to the Letter Writing Day, where Pitt students, staff, and faculty, stopped by the William Pitt Union to write letters to their state legislators free of charge. In total, over 350 letters were sent to Harrisburg opposing the cuts.
GPSC’s most successful and direct advocacy was saved for Pitt Day in Harrisburg, Pitt’s annual lobby day for students, faculty, and staff. A record-breaking 300+ students attended to share their stories with legislators. GPSA, SGB and Pitt’s Staff Association Council (SAC) met with Governor Corbett’s Chief of Staff Bill Ward on the impact the proposed cuts would have on southwestern Pennsylvania. Due to these efforts, the proposed cut was drastically reduced from 50% to 22% when the budget was finally approved in July, 2011.

2011 Recipient of the Good Government Award

The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh announced GPSA as one of 5 recipients of the city-wide Good Government Award in July, 2011. The award is given annually to the individuals or groups that excel in the promotion of civic engagement in the greater Pittsburgh area. GPSA was nominated for its civic activities, service at the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, and Pancakes & Politics series, this year featuring Congressman Mike Doyle, State Senator Jay Costa, and State Representative Jaret Gibbons. GPSA’s nominators included Congressman Mike Doyle, the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project (PUMP), the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE), Pitt’s Offices of the Chancellor, Governmental Relations, and Student Affairs. The winners, including Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato, will be honored at a fundraiser dinner on Oct. 27, 2011.

Building for the Future

With the help of the Department of Institutional Advancement, GPSA completed the groundwork for establishing the GPSA Travel Grant Endowment Fund. This fund will supplement GPSA’s current Travel Grant Program and encourage Pitt’s graduate and professional students entering the workforce to give back to the University and Pittsburgh community.

2010-11 GPSA’s Major Accomplishments

1. Receiving the 2011 League of Women Voters’ Good Government Award
2. Student civic engagement & advocacy on behalf of the University
3. Leadership in the Pittsburgh Student Government Council
4. Increased student involvement and recognition of their achievements
5. Groundwork for the GPSA Travel Grant Endowment Fund, promoting future scholarship and research

Sudipta “Nila” Devanath
President
School of Medicine, Professional Program
A committee is organic rather than mechanical in its nature: It is not a structure but a plant. It takes root and grows, it flowers, wilts, and dies, scattering the seed from which other committees will bloom in their turn. As Vice President of Committees, the liaison between the administration and graduate and professional students, I had the opportunity and the privilege to work with student representatives to the Senate, Provost and Board of Trustees Committees, plan GPSA outreach at new student orientations, chair the GPSA Bylaws Committee and organize the Winter Student Appreciation Reception.

New Student Orientations

With the commencement of the new academic year, I was assigned the responsibility of organizing GPSA outreach at new student orientations. The GPSA Executive Board and Administrative Assistant attended orientations at 10 out of 14 schools and spoke about services GPSA had to offer. We also met with students from the GPSA Assembly Groups such as CSSA and TASA. This endeavor helped us spread information to around 78% of incoming graduate and professional students at Pitt.

Student Representation

The beginning of the academic year also meant ensuring representation of students on every Provost, Senate, and Board of Trustees (BOT) committee. Applications for vacancies were publicly announced and students were assigned based on their curriculum vitae and statement of purpose. Following their appointment, orientations were held to familiarize representatives with the functioning of the committees with speakers Dr. John Baker, the Immediate Past President of the Senate Council; Stephanie Hoogendoorn, Assistant to the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies; and Dr. Jean Ferketish, Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Assistant Chancellor, on the Senate, Provost, and BOT committees respectively. Student representatives submitted reports following meetings and, for the first time, these were centrally recorded with an individual Google Document for every committee member. The start of such documentation into a central database will ease future collection of reports and inquiries into particular issues. Along the same lines, GPSA continues its representation locally with the Pittsburgh Student Government Council (PSGC) and nationally at the National Association for Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS).

Changes to the GPSA Bylaws

As Chair of the Bylaws Committee, I facilitated several notable changes in the GPSA Bylaws this past year. Currently, the GPSA budget directly funds groups with the status of GPSA Assembly Group (GAG). The process for withdrawal of such GAG status from a group was included in the bylaws, following an incident wherein a simple majority voted a GAG out of GPSA funding. The Committee also introduced bylaws for the distribution of supplemental funding to any graduate or professional student group recognized by the Student Organization Resource Center (SORC), the handling of
election disputes, and the role of the Administrative Assistant. The Committee also proposed splitting the responsibilities of the VP of Communications into two positions: VP of Communications and VP of Programming, the former handling dissemination of information regarding GPSA through the website and social media and the latter organizing GPSA’s social and cultural activities. With the AB’s approval, the Executive Board for the academic year 2011-2012 now comprises of four Vice Presidents in charge of Committees, Communications, Finance and Programming, in addition to the President.

**Winter Student Appreciation Reception**

To honor graduate and professional student leadership, GPSA held its annual Winter Reception in December with Chancellor Nordenberg delivering the keynote address. Student invitees included members of the AB and EB, students serving on Senate, Provost and Board of Trustees Committees, presidents of the individual schools’ Graduate Student Governments (GSGs), administrators, and the advisors/mentors of the students. GPSA would like to thank the 32 students and 13 administrators and faculty members for taking the time to recognize and appreciate graduate and professional student achievement.

**Recognizing Graduate & Professional Student Achievement**

GPSA is currently working on introducing a university-wide students’ award proposal at the Student Affairs Subcommittee of the University Council for Graduate Study. The proposed awards will be the highest internal awards for graduate and professional students at Pitt, as recognition for their merit in academics, research, teaching and leadership/service. This award aims to raise the standards of work displayed by our graduate and professional students, appreciate them for their endeavors, promote the application to external awards, and open up greater avenues for subsequent work.

In addition to my immediate responsibilities, I have thoroughly enjoyed working with members of the Executive Board and Assembly Board at meetings and various other social, cultural and political awareness events organized by GPSA. Before I knew it, students were contacting me regarding issues they were facing in their research, work environments and ventures they wanted to establish. Being able to help them and alleviate some of the problems has been a very rewarding experience.

The work GPSA has been able to bring about this year would not be possible if not for my fellow members on the Executive Board Steven Ruperto and Qing Hu, and especially Nila Devanath, the President and David Givens the Administrative Assistant. I would like to conclude by thanking all graduate and professional students at Pitt for giving me an opportunity to work as a part of this great team.

**Melanie Rodrigues**

**Vice President of Committees**

School of Medicine, Graduate Program
University Committees

GPSA advocates on behalf of students through representation within the University’s shared governance structure. The following are GPSA-appointed student representatives to University committees:

### Provost Advisory Committees

- Information and Technology Steering
- Provost’s Advisory Committee on Women’s Concerns (PACUP)
- Provost’s Award for Excellence in Mentoring Selection
- University Council on Graduate Study
- University Planning and Budget Committee
- University Research Council

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<th>Committee</th>
<th>Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>Information and Technology Steering</td>
<td>PJ Dillon (A&amp;S), Emily Bailey (A&amp;S), Marguerite Matthews (A&amp;S), Erin Schaefer (Law), Darcy Mandel (A&amp;S), Yanan Chen (A&amp;S), Sudipta “Nila” Devanath (Med - MD), Henry Goodelman (Edu), Daniel Jimenez (A&amp;S), Melanie Rodrigues (Med - PhD), Richard Oravetz (Edu), Steven Ruperto (Business), Hristina Dzhogleva (Business)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost’s Advisory Committee on Women’s Concerns (PACUP)</td>
<td>Alexandra Oliver (A&amp;S), Elizabeth Richey (A&amp;S), vacant, vacant, Natalie Arnold (GSPH), Marguerite Matthews (A&amp;S), David Givens (A&amp;S), PJ Dillon (A&amp;S), Jessica Yokley (A&amp;S), Shilpi Oberoi (GSPH), Nelson Totah (A&amp;S), Sudipta “Nila” Devanath (Med - MD), Miranda White (Social Work), Qing Hu (GSPIA), Sudipta “Nila” Devanath (Med - MD), Lacee Ecker (Law), Brian Rosborough (Med - PhD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost’s Award for Excellence in Mentoring Selection</td>
<td>David Givens (A&amp;S), Steven Ruperto (Business), Melanie Rodrigues (Med - PhD), Sudipta “Nila” Devanath (Med - MD), Qing Hu (GSPIA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Council on Graduate Study</td>
<td>Henry Goodelman (Edu), Emi Iwatani (A&amp;S), Nelson Totah (A&amp;S), David Givens (A&amp;S), Byron Kohut (Edu), Madalina Verez (A&amp;S), Mary Binker (Law), Dacia Denette Beard (GSPH), Jonathan Mark Livengood (A&amp;S), Josh McCauley (SIS), Xiong Zhang (Med - PhD)</td>
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### University Senate Committees

- Admissions and Student Aid
- Anti-discriminatory Policies
- Athletics
- Benefits and Welfare
- Budget Policies
- Bylaws and Procedures
- Child and Dependent Care Subcommittee
- Commonwealth Relations
- Community Relations
- Computer Usage
- Educational Policies
- Library
- Plant Utilization and Planning
- Student Affairs
- Tenure and Academic Freedom
- University Press
- University Senate Council

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<th>Committee</th>
<th>Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>University Senate Committees</td>
<td>David Givens (A&amp;S), Steven Ruperto (Business), Melanie Rodrigues (Med - PhD), Sudipta “Nila” Devanath (Med - MD), Qing Hu (GSPIA)</td>
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<td>Academic Affairs/Libraries</td>
<td>Henry Goodelman (Edu), Emi Iwatani (A&amp;S), Nelson Totah (A&amp;S), David Givens (A&amp;S), Byron Kohut (Edu), Madalina Verez (A&amp;S), Mary Binker (Law), Dacia Denette Beard (GSPH), Jonathan Mark Livengood (A&amp;S), Josh McCauley (SIS), Xiong Zhang (Med - PhD)</td>
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<td>Affirmative Action</td>
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<td>Health Sciences</td>
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<td>Institutional Advancement</td>
<td>Henry Goodelman (Edu), Emi Iwatani (A&amp;S), Nelson Totah (A&amp;S), David Givens (A&amp;S), Byron Kohut (Edu), Madalina Verez (A&amp;S), Mary Binker (Law), Dacia Denette Beard (GSPH), Jonathan Mark Livengood (A&amp;S), Josh McCauley (SIS), Xiong Zhang (Med - PhD)</td>
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<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Henry Goodelman (Edu), Emi Iwatani (A&amp;S), Nelson Totah (A&amp;S), David Givens (A&amp;S), Byron Kohut (Edu), Madalina Verez (A&amp;S), Mary Binker (Law), Dacia Denette Beard (GSPH), Jonathan Mark Livengood (A&amp;S), Josh McCauley (SIS), Xiong Zhang (Med - PhD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk and Compliance</td>
<td>Henry Goodelman (Edu), Emi Iwatani (A&amp;S), Nelson Totah (A&amp;S), David Givens (A&amp;S), Byron Kohut (Edu), Madalina Verez (A&amp;S), Mary Binker (Law), Dacia Denette Beard (GSPH), Jonathan Mark Livengood (A&amp;S), Josh McCauley (SIS), Xiong Zhang (Med - PhD)</td>
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Graduate & Professional Student University-Wide Events 2010 - 2011

- **May** • Summer Kick-Off Happy Hour at Doc’s Place • **June** • National Pitt Alumni Networking Day (with the Pitt Alumni Association and Pitt Metro Alumni Club) • **July** • Service Event at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank, July Happy Hour at Peter’s Pub • **August** • GPSA Day at Sandcastle Waterpark, Downtown Pittsburgh Walking Tours, Welcome & Welcome Back Picnic at Schenley Park • **September** • Pancakes & Politics with US Congressman Mike Doyle (with SGB), Student Civic Engagement Month Proclamation at City Council (with the Pittsburgh Student Government Council / PSGC), Proclamation Reception at Frick Fine Arts, Coffee with Congressional Candidate Dan Connolly, Annual GPSA Tailgate for Pitt Football Season Opener (with the EGSO), GPSA Goes to See the Phantom of the Opera at the Benedum, GPSA Alumni Association Happy Hour (with the Pitt Alumni Association)
• **October**  Phantom Fright Night at Kennywood, Pitt Make a Difference Day, The Masquerade Ball (with CSSA)
• **November**  Happy Hour Downtown at Las Velas, National Association of Graduate & Professional Students (NAGPS) National Conference, Harry Potter Screening & Social Hour  
• **December**  Winter Reception, Finals Relief Breakfast, The Nutcracker Ballet  
• **January**  Welcome Back Happy Hour at Hofbrauhaus, Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, Pancakes & Politics with PA State Senator Jay Costa (with SGB)  
• **February**  International Potluck Competition, Valentine’s Day Ice Skating & Dessert Hour, Ski Trip  
• **March**  Pancakes & Politics with PA State Representative Jaret Gibbons (with SGB), Student Advocacy Forum (with SGB), Letter Writing Day in Opposition of the Budget Cuts (with SGB), Tea Happy Hour (with The Oakland Teahouse), St. Patty’s Day Bowling (with ANKUR)  
• **April**  Pitt Day in Harrisburg, PSGC Day in Harrisburg, GPSA Goes to See the Pirates, Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Breakfast, 2011 GPSA Inauguration, End of the Year Picnic
Communications Report

The Vice President of Communications is responsible for planning all social events (see insert pages 11-12) and enhancing GPSA’s outreach to students. I had two primary goals: to engage more students across schools and to ensure better representation of international students. In creating the event schedule for 2010-11, I kept traditional and popular events such as the Hofbrauhaus Happy Hour and Alumni Networking Day while adding new events like the Masquerade Ball, which received enormous attention from the entire student body and drew higher participation from international students as well.

Electronic Documentation

To ease the documentation of attendees at our events, I decided to employ electronic sign-ins at all events in the spring semester along with Google Forms registration for larger ticketed events. Since then, I have had a better idea of how many people are interested in attending events and would potentially participate in each one. Therefore, I was better able to allocate GPSA resources based on estimated attendance to make each event a success. This not only engaged more students but also enhance GPSA’s communication to the student body. Along this same vein, I invited Vice Provost Dr. Sbragia and other school administrators to GPSA’s events throughout the year to enhance the connection between students and the school administration.

Event Planning Committee

In order to get more students involved in GPSA operations and decision-making, I created an Event Planning Committee (EPC) to help organize events due to the increasing demand for programming. The EPC is a voluntary committee with members coming from the Assembly Board. We held monthly meetings to discuss upcoming events more than one month in advance in order to ensure adequate preparation. Since then, we have received more feedback from students and the Assembly Board members, allowing us to provide students with a better quality of service.

My recommendations for the newly created position of VP of Programming next year are:

1) Increase the stakes for students to come to GPSA’s events — Charging a couple dollars instead of making all the events free increases participation and keeps the GPSA budget balanced
2) Issue tickets for all the events if possible — Aids in organization and allocation of resources
3) Organizing volunteer group to help out at each event — Helps with set up and clean up
4) Have 2-4 computers ready for students to sign-in at the events — Speeds the flow of entrance
5) Actively engage the EPC to organize events, assigning one member an event if there are several events in one month — Many hands make light work!

Qing Hu

Vice President of Communications
Graduate School of Public & International Affairs
Setting the GPSA Budget

In an effort to simplify the budgeting process, the Finance Committee met several times before presenting the budget to the Assembly Board for a final vote. GPSA carried forward over $34,000 from the prior fiscal year. Although the committee saw value in reserving some funding for unexpected expenses, a concerted effort was made to reduce the surplus. By creating a budget slightly larger than the expected income from the university student activity fee, the committee ensured that the carry forward amount would be lowered responsibly. Students would be able to receive the same level of GPSA programming for several years while the surplus was being lowered.

To assure an appropriate allocation of funding in this year’s budget, the Finance Committee met with each GPSA Assembly Group (GAG) individually to review each group’s plans for the upcoming school year. During subsequent meetings, the Finance Committee crafted the rest of the budget, with many allotments remaining similar to last year. The largest difference from last year’s budget to this year’s was the creation of a new line item, National Association of Graduate
and Professional Students (NAGPS) Membership. This line item was created to ensure that Pitt GPSA would stay connected with other graduate schools’ student governing groups by allowing Pitt to pay its NAGPS membership dues, send all Executive Board members to the national conference in November, 2010, and send two representatives to the regional conference in April, 2011.

**The Travel Grant Program**

The GPSA Travel Grant Program provides funding assistance to graduate students who are presenting or attending academic conferences. There are three levels of awards for which students may apply:

- $200 for students presenting research
- $100 for students attending a national conference
- $50 (to be applied to registration) for student conferences in Allegheny County

To ensure the most equitable distribution of grant money, funding for the program is divided into four 3-month cycles which are monetarily tiered to reflect demand based on data from previous years. Additionally, students are eligible to apply for up to one grant per fiscal year and no more than two grants over the lifetime of their academic careers at the University of Pittsburgh. Grants are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis, and students must claim their grant within 30 days of returning from their conference. If funding is not claimed, a student will be contacted from the wait-list, which is created once all available funding has been pre-approved for a cycle.

This year, the travel grant program was able to provide funding to over 500 graduate and professional students across all 14 schools. The number of grant requests coming from each school generally corresponds with the number of students enrolled at that respective school; however, some schools request proportionately more than other schools. By utilizing the Assembly Board Representatives

**2010-11 GPSA Travel Grant Disbursements by School**

- Arts & Sciences 33%
- Business 9%
- Education 9%
- Engineering 5%
- Law 2%
- GSPIA 4%
- Social Work 2%
- Information Sciences 3%
- Dental Medicine 1%
- Nursing 7%
- Pharmacy 5%
- Public Health 3%
- Medicine 13%
- Health and Rehab Sciences 5%
as promoters of the program, GPSA was able to increase the number of diverse applications to the Travel Grant Program, thus decreasing the disproportionate number of grants some schools have received in the past. Overall, the increased number of applications indicates the continued need and popularity of the program among graduate and professional students.

**Supplemental Funding**

Part of GPSA’s mission is to support activities which connect students from across the University’s graduate schools and foster the development of the graduate student community as a whole. By providing supporting funds, the Supplemental Funding Program aids graduate student organizations that sponsor events which bring together students from different academic programs. University-certified organizations are eligible to apply for supplemental funding up to $1000 per fiscal year.

Noticing that Supplemental Funds were being underutilized in the 2009-10 fiscal year, GPSA increased its advertisement of the program through the Assembly Board, GPSA website, and newsletters. The increased focus on the visibility of the program increased applications and ultimately led to the Assembly Board voting to fund 16 graduate student organizations for 18 unique and exciting events. In past years, less than half of the $10,000 budgeted for Supplemental Funding was utilized. This year, 78% of the budgeted funding was allocated (pre-approved) with two months remaining in the 2010-2011 school year.

![2010 - 2011 Supplemental Funding Overview](image)

**Steven Ruperto**  
**Vice President of Finance**  
*Katz Graduate School of Business*
2011 GPSA Elections

GPSA holds annual elections for its student officers, which are open to candidates and voting from all of the graduate & professional students at the University of Pittsburgh. These elections are managed by the GPSA Election Committee consisting of representatives from within the GPSA Assembly Board, GPSA Executive Board, and students from the general student body. The elections are independently administered by the University of Pittsburgh Computing Services & Systems Development (CSSD) department on the My.Pitt.Edu portal. The GPSA Bylaws describe the election process in detail.

This year’s elections were very close and undoubtedly demonstrated that every vote counts with a tie for the VP of Communications and a single vote win for the VP of Programming, a new officer position added to the Executive Board this year. Eleven candidates ran for five officer positions for the 2011-2012 school year. The tie was resolved through an Assembly Board vote during the AB meeting following the election. Both candidates and elected officers are pictured below.

The elections committee put significant effort into increasing the information communicated to the student population and determining the ideal course of action given the tie. The committee recommends that the 2012-2013 Elections Committee improves the process of candidate eligibility and develop an effective strategy to continue attracting a large pool of engaged and effective candidates for future years.

Kawa Shwaish
2011 Elections Committee Chair
Katz Graduate School of Business
Our recommendations to next year’s Assembly and Executive Board are as follows:

1. Continue to civically engage Pitt’s graduate and professional students with the Pittsburgh community through the PSGC and other venues. Without Pitt students voicing their opinions and concerns, situations like the Tuition Tax and state budget cuts on higher education are more likely to occur in these trying economic times.

2. Increase efforts to reach out to students across schools and recognize student achievement. Student representation is key to GPSA’s success, and recognizing the high quality of graduate and professional students will benefit not only students but the University’s external reputation as a whole.

3. Follow through with fundraising for the GPSA Travel Grant Endowment Fund. The fund will not only serve to further the academic success of our current students but will also create a culture of giving back to the University benefitting future students.

Thank you to all who have assisted GPSA in its tremendous rate of growth this year. Good luck to all of the future graduate and professional students at the University.

Respectfully submitted,

and

Hail to Pitt!

Sudipta “Nila” Devanath
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