

GSA General Assembly Meeting
Monday, January 13th, 2020
6:00PM, Watson Center (60 Sachem Street), Room A74

Meeting began at 6.05

Lucy Armentano (Psychology; GSA Chair) welcomed representatives back for the semester.

I. Approval of minutes

The minutes were approved.

II. Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved.

III. Committee chair update

Nicolle Rosa Mercado (Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry; FHC Chair): Follow-up regarding health communications with Puerto Rican area codes (787): there was an issue with some calls being blocked to prevent fraudulent calls, and this was only an issue on phones covered by one of Yale's phone service providers, but this has been corrected.

Lucy Armentano: A Steering update: we have asked the grad school to look into extending the Dean's Emergency Fund to Master's students, and the deans have said they will look into those logistics. We've also been looking into streamlining getting spousal ID cards. We also want to see what programs have grad students who aren't the modal program in their department to see if there are groups falling through the cracks. Moving forward, we're continuing to push on U-Pass, as well as trying to get the grad school's thoughts on the most recent town halls.

IV. Department meeting reports

A. BBS

20 out of 120 students attended. There was some discussion on work/life expectations for first-year students. Another concern was lab safety and possibly having EHS have trainings with individual labs. For APD, we'd like to get some sort of alum mentoring program set up. T&S concerns echoed what others have said with regard to shuttles and tap rides not being very dependable, and bike share locations being somewhat limited. U-Pass was supported. We talked about there being a lack of diversity among faculty, and poor faculty retention for diverse faculty. For recruitment, some students weren't invited to the diversity weekend when they wish that they had been. Some students also didn't know what the *Compass* was, and wondering if it could be advertised at the BBS orientation itself. There was also a discussion about the high upfront cost of moving to Yale, and that other schools have moving stipends, and that this would be helpful for students coming from lower income backgrounds. **Jonathan Dow (BBS)**: We're working with Denzil Streete to help with diversity recruitment efforts, and we're trying to help with some of these. **Tyler Hayward (East Asian Studies)**: Have there been specific ideas about an alumni effort? Or was it more of a discussion. **Rebecca Starble (BBS)** We had more general discussions.

Ethan Perets Chemistry): With regards to lab safety, we have a pretty good program and we can share some of those details with you.

V. Department meeting report priorities (continued from 2019)

A. Access to dining halls/spaces on campus

Meaghan McGeary (Experimental Pathology; T&S Chair): There are two things we want to gather: what locations people would like to have access to (e.g. the Divinity School Library, a building where your advisor's office is located, or a dining hall where you can use your meal plan), and what issues people have had. Please let us know if you know of more specific locations you or your constituents want access to. We've also found out there was some work being done to establish a database to help, so please share this information with us. **Jacob Derechin (Sociology)**: We'd like to have access to Grace Hopper since one of our departmental functions is in there. **Tyler Hayward**: We'd also like to get access because there are language tables there. **Alicia Strong (European and Russian Studies)**: Our department also uses residential dining halls for language tables, but these are not always in the same dining hall each semester. **Thiti Owlarn (Germanic Languages and Literatures)**: We also use dining halls a lot in our department, and Hopper is used a lot in particular. **Meaghan McGeary**: Just for reference, each dining hall's door access is governed by the individual heads of house, and it is not done collectively.

B. Communications with students

Lucy Armentano: We want to talk about communications to students, which includes communications from yourselves to your constituents, from the GSA to students or reps, or from the grad school to students. What kinds of things should GSA be communicating? **Max Scalf (Cell Biology)**: I think it's important for each GSA committee to send out their main goals each semester. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: As well as what we've done last semester. **John Gonzalez**: I think it's good to send out emails more frequently, because even if someone thinks it's spam, someone will likely read it.

Lucy Armentano: What are people's thoughts on something like a newsletter? **Jacob Derechin**: I like the newsletter format, because people can choose not to subscribe to it. **Devan Solanki (Chemical and Environmental Engineering)**: On the other side of that, having specific emails sent out can be better at getting people to read an email instead of deleting a regular newsletter. **Kristen Herdman (Medieval Studies)** I think having engaging subject lines will help. **Gadareth Higgs (MCDB)**: I second that as a useful thing to do.

Lucy Armentano: I've been hesitant to send out a lot of emails so as not to cause email fatigue, but it seems like there's a desire to have more communication. **Julianne Rolf (Chemical and Environmental Engineering)**: Having something like a semesterly email will help encourage constituents to go up to reps to talk. **Gadareth Higgs**: For groups who have had good turnout for their departmental meetings, how have you had effective communication? **Emily Davidson (Public Health)**: We had our DGS send out our email announcing the meeting. **John Gonzalez**: I generally agree that sending out more emails is better than not, like sending out an email with our

passed resolutions. This can help engage with students better. **Jonathan Down:** I agree with the idea of having reps communicating with constituents ourselves, even if it's just by being given some bullet points to forward out, but allowing us to be more personal with those communications. **Roxanne Morris (Microbiology):** I like the idea of having emails with more actionable items instead of just reviews. **Andie Berry (English):** I also think big things like U-Pass should be sent out immediately to celebrate our achievements

Lucy Armentano: On another note, there's a new daily newsletter coming out of the grad school; what were people's thoughts on that? **Rebecca Starble:** It went to my spam folder. **Ethan Perets:** Who thought this was a good idea? **Julianne Rolf:** As an alum, I got it twice. It would be nice to not have to get that.

John Gonzalez: As far as emails to constituents, would it make sense to make an email address for each department's reps to maintain some consistency across years? **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** I think it's helpful to have GSA-specific emails to help display our difference from GPSS. **Jonathan Dow:** I prefer having emails coming from individuals so it doesn't look like spam. **Meaghan McGear:** I think having reps send out their own emails can help us tailor messages to their departments. **Spencer Small (Slavic Languages and Literatures):** What would we do for departments that don't have reps in the GSA body? **Lucy Armentano:** Maybe we can have Zach follow up on this issue as an update to the Assembly; let's move on for now. Also, please let me know if you didn't get an email from me today as the GSA Chair.

VI. Discussion of Directors of Graduate Studies

- A. Working time with survey
- B. Discussion

Lucy Armentano: We want to get some data with regards to DGSs and how effective they are in your department. We'd like to get some data for our next meeting with the Deans.

Spencer Small: What are different departments' histories in terms of tenures of DGS? **Chris Londa (Classics):** We have a lot of turn-around from semester to semester as people rotate through the position. **Sydney Muchnik:** We've had the opposite effect, in that we've had a single DGS the whole time but he's not very accessible. **Andie Berry:** Our DGS had been running for 4.5 years, and it's at the service of the Chair, so the DGS and Chair usually come as a pair. Having a single DGS for a longer stretch of time has advantage and disadvantages. **Anri Chomentowska (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology):** We've had people for 3 years in a more intensive role, and that's been working well for us. The Chair is also on the same cycle. **Sarah Glenski (Spanish and Portuguese):** In my time here we've had several DGSs who are outside of our department, and that's been helpful. Especially in smaller departments like ours, it can be hard having a DGS in your department since you're more likely to interact with them in the program. **Knar Abrahamyan (Music):** It would be helpful to have a formal definition of a DGS role to help with expectations, and to also have a survey after a DGS' first year to evaluate how they're doing.

Lucy Armentano: The only formal definition I could find was that the DGS is there to support graduate students. **Knar Abrahamyan:** And are there more details regarding the role? Like do

they get extra compensation? **Devan Solanki:** It seems like to some people it's an obligation that they feel like they need to take on sometimes. **Gadareth Higgs:** I agree. **Andie Berry:** For us, the DGS sets up your qualifying exam.

Victor Bass (MCDB): Our DGS has only sent one email out in the last several years, and they're already better than the last person we had. **Thiti Owlarn:** I think one important role the DGS should have is that they should have an active role in the formation of departmental guidelines. **CJ Rice (History):** My understanding is that a DGS gets course releases as compensation. **John Gonzalez:** I think it's frustrating if DGSs aren't getting properly compensated; how can they be expected to budget their time properly if not? **Lucy Armentano:** Yes. We want to get a sense of the way that GSAS is emphasizing and valuing the work being done by DGSs.

VII. Alumni and professional development

Lucy Armentano: I attended the Alumni Association's board meeting last fall, one request I received was to gather data on what grad students want out of alumni for professional development. **Emily Stewart (Geology and Geophysics):** I know we run into a lot of issues with diversity with regards to alumni, and having extra resources for pairing students from minority backgrounds with similar alum would be great. **Meaghan McGeary:** Availability for informational interviews, and having a more affirmative access point. **Ethan Perets:** One thing that's good to put on a CV is giving talks at other institutions, and it would be nice to have alums from other institutions invite current Yale students to give talks elsewhere. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** My undergrad institution invites people to give talks on their career trajectories, and there are opportunities to meet and ask questions.

Zach Michielli (Architecture; PR Chair): Princeton's Art History and Archeology Department forces their students to go through the whole interview process as practice. It would probably be beneficial for us to be able to see some interview processes, especially for non-academic positions. **Roxanne Morris:** At my undergrad, they brought alums back for a panel of non-academic jobs, and it would be nice to have people come back and give panels about interviewing. **Devan Solanki:** It'd also be good to let alums know that even if they haven't "made it" we want them to come talk as well.

Sarah Glenski: I imagine there's a database for alum contacts, which could be better advertised. Also, often department histories and databases only include their academic alumni. **Stephen Breazeale (Nursing):** Most of us in my program are nurse practitioners and it'd be nice to talk to alum about how alumnos have balanced academics and practicing clinics. **Lucy Armentano:** Would there be an interest in having departments bring back specific alums from their department to give talks? (Many reps indicated this would be desirable)

Devan Solanki: There are some accidental returns, alums who are willing to come who are invited back often. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** But many of those talks are academia-specific. **Gadareth Higgs:** Some groups like BGN have brought back people to give talks; I don't know if that was through the alumni association. **Nathan Nguyen (Cell Biology):** OCS works with student groups almost exclusively, and not often with departments themselves. One thing we want to work on is Humanities professional development. If people want to develop those skills, please let us know at OCS that you're interested, and how we can help. **Julianne Rolf:** For some

industries, travel is covered. That could help departments get more interest in getting industry speakers. **Nathan Nguyen:** For STEM, it could be helpful to work with the Data Science Career Fair in the fall. **Stephen Breazeale:** We've applied for and gotten doctoral colloquium grants, and we had a panel of junior faculty talk about their transitions into faculty positions. This year we're having a panel of a wide range of post docs.

VIII. Resource spotlight

The Yale Film Study Center has a very extensive collection of films, most available for students to check out.

IX. Miscellaneous

Lucy Armentano: Roni Beth Tower is coming on Feb 12th at 5pm to give a fireside talk about her career path, and the way in which her graduate student experience helped shape it. She'll talk about the intersections of her identity as a grad student and how this progressed and changed after graduation.