GSA General Assembly Meeting
Monday, December 16th, 2019
6:00PM, Watson Center (60 Sachem Street), Room A74

Meeting began at 6.05pm

I. Approval of minutes
Minutes were approved

II. Approval of agenda
Agenda was approved

III. Committee end-of-semester debriefs
    A. APD

Estella Bartosa de Souza (Physics, APD Chair): Recently we have been working on experiential learning opportunities for graduate students: at Yale (in administrative positions), external, and alumni-guided workshops (on campus or online). The hope is to expand the number of high-quality opportunities that students have to prepare for the market outside of academia. This has involved close work with alumni to see what kind of mentoring or direct experiences they can offer.

    B. F&H

Jenette Creso (Biomedical Engineering, outgoing F&H Chair): As you all know, I have to step down from my position, but I will still be around via email and by phone, and I will rejoin regular meetings in the spring. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado (Molecular Biophysics and Biochem, APD Chair)**: We have been focusing on Yale Health communication issues. We've had 24 respondents to our survey; 12 having issues, and 9 of those reported a 787 area code (Puerto Rico). One had an international phone number, and the other two were unrelated issues. We will keep working with Yale Health. Next semester, we'll be focusing on equal access to spaces and services for all graduate students, as well as analyzing the data of the mental health and wellness survey. Finally, working with SAS to work on accessibility issues and issues related to medical leave. **John Gonzalez (Biological and Biomedical Sciences)**: Do we know what the issue is? Some Puerto Rican numbers seem to have no issues. Is this reflected in the survey? **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: Survey was directed to people who had issues, so people with no issues may not have replied. For me, issues didn't start when I arrived at Yale—only two semesters later.

    C. PR

Zach Michielli (Architecture, PR Chair): Ask-the-Dean initiative has been developed in the background for a while. A series of answers to questions now online; as you submit new questions, you will get an individual response, and repeated questions will appear on the website. Next semester, a video from the dean will be added. In addition to this, we've been working on upkeep on the website, Instagram, Facebook, and other social media—our webmaster Syndi Barish has been integral to this effort. Most recently had a meeting to reinitiate the podcast. We'll be polling GSA reps for people within departments that might be interesting to interview. **Maria del Mar Galindo (English, GSA Secretary)**:

Who will answer Ask-the-Dean questions? **Zach Michielli**: The Dean's office itself. **Lucy Armentano (Psychology, GSA Chair)**: Please feel free to pass on any questions through GSA leadership, as well.

      D. Service

Megan Kelley (Neuroscience, Service Chair): We held two Relax and Chill events, and organized a really successful toy drive with GPSS. We continue to host Ask-a-Lawyer; Victor Bass has taken point on this. In partnership with the Department of Housing Services, we visited a New Haven citizen to do yard work. We want to continue doing this work in the community, and hosting events. We are starting to organize a push across campus for prison divestment. Additionally, we want to partner with Dwight Hall on more of our work. Finally, we want to start a green initiative within GSA to reduce waste--please bring your own dishes and cutlery to our next meeting. **Knar Abrahamyan (Music)**: At the recent meeting on the endowment, Yale representatives said Yale does not invest in private prisons. **Megan Kelley**: The university currently doesn't invest in "private prisons," but they refuse to say they won't invest in future—it seems they want to keep that option open. They also invest in companies that benefit from prison labor.

      E. T&S

Meaghan McGeary (Experimental Pathology, T&S CHair): We are working on improving TapRide for handicap users. Yale Shuttle Twitter is continuing to be updated, now with a fitting profile picture.. We are also developing pictorial guides for where to stand for the shuttle. Yale Shuttle always needs improvement to routes and timing; we are hoping to implement some changes next semester to the grocery line, particularly. On biking on campus—we want access to more bike racks, and more weatherproof racks. We also want to keep working on traffic safety. A broad initiative relates to access on campus: residential college dining halls, Good Life Center. We have been working with the Dean's office to improve the process for getting spousal IDs. **Ethan Perets (Chemistry)**: I recently had a family member come visit; they utilized Yale Shuttle from the train station to downtown. They noted that teh demeanor of the shuttle drivers was very unfriendly. **Knar Abrahamyan**: We should all be aware that drivers don't work for Yale, but are subcontractors. We should advocate for them to be paid better and have better working conditions. **Maria del Mar Galindo**: Having shuttle route maps on buses might be helpful too? People who don't use the shuttle regularly don't know where it's headed. **Meaghan McGeary**: Yes. Good signage and a guide to using the shuttle are on our list. **Zach Michielli**: It would be great if we could get drivers paid better. Until 2014 shuttle drivers were paid by Yale; they recently made that switch and it may be a battle to get them to reverse it. **Jacob Derechin (Sociology)**: Another thing that might be helpful on the shuttle itself would be a poster saying to download DoubleMap.

      F. CTF

Jo Machesky (Chemical and Environmental Engineering; CTF Chair): Our new ad hoc committee is helping to gather information on use and applications. Work is underway but will be starting officially in January. Funds are starting to run low, so we want to have a plan in place for requesting funds. We're also working with MacMillan to try to understand where students should go for clarification about referrals between us and them. January. We'll provide an update to the GA next semester on where the funds are and who has used them. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: How complicated would it be for eligible students to submit to both CTF and MacMillan? **Jo Machesky**: To some extent they already do this. Once referred

by us, students have to apply to MacMillan separately to be in the system. **Estella Barbosa de Souza**: Are we still accepting applications even though funds are low? **Jo Machesky**: Yes. We'll go back to the deans on this; we also raised this in the Board of Trustees meeting.

G. Steering

Lucy Armentano: We plan to give a brief overview of the work of the Steering Committee going forward—Ryan will give an update on the last meeting, and I will give a preview for the next meeting. You can reach out to us with any questions or suggestions. **Ryan Petersburg (Physics, GSA Vice-Chair)**: Major themes this semester included: clarifying language on the Dean's Emergency Fund webpage to ease application process; facilitating spousal ID process. As a result of our advocacy the deans are working with both ID center and registrar's office. Steering was also one of the primary update spaces for 320 York. We also worked on getting access to results from the doctoral survey; from early in the semester we asked the deans to push Directors of Graduate Studies to share results with departments. A final thing that we are hoping we can have a deeper conversation about in this meeting is the question of faculty misbehavior. There seems to be a need for processes somewhere between doing nothing and activating formal grievance procedure. A lot of students are frustrated with advisors who commit minor offenses, and we are hoping to provide support. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: Where do the deans stand on including Masters students in the Emergency Fund? **Lucy Armentano**: That's our first topic for the meeting tomorrow. We want a conversation about how Masters students fit in to GSAS frameworks in general. If anyone has thoughts or perspectives, please share them with us.. **Emily Davidson (Public Health)**: Worth highlighting that in some departments (such as Public Health, where MPH students are considered Masters students) PhDs actually get far less attention. Other departments might be in the same boat—perhaps forestry. **Lucy Armentano**: That's important. We also plan to have a follow-up from last week's diversity town hall. What are the next steps? **Ryan Petersburg**: Finally, on spending and fund allocation and reallocation, we want to ask what our role can be as GSA to redirect funds to graduate student priorities.

IV. Department meeting reports

A. Forestry and Environmental Studies

Laura Logozzo (Forestry and Environmental Studies): We have 300 Masters students; 70 PhD students. Most of our meeting focused on forming a PhD student government. Current student government focusing on meeting Masters students' needs. We discussed funding for student events, building community (a challenge because we are spread out). On Academic and Professional Development, we discussed problems with TFs. Masters of Environmental Management (MEMs) tend to be given the TF positions (MEMs take more classes, know more professors, current teaching allocation is word of mouth). We want a more robust online system that says which classes are available, particularly as it relates to TF10s versus TF20s. Masters students get paid double for TF20s; PhDs don't. There is no standardization for TF positions and how much work should be put in. There is one current situation in which a PhD student is TFing for free and for no credit, because their advisor wanted a TF in a class with too few students. **Zach Michielli**: The situation is similar in the Architecture School. I've been told it ultimately breaks down to Masters students paying tuition and PhDs not doing so. What is your relationship with your Dean? In Architecture, we have a liaison who works on PhD interests particularly. **Laura Logozzo**: Our PhD student body is not unified. We are very rarely together or able to have

conversations together. We work across six buildings on campus and our program involves extended fieldwork. The Student Affairs Committee focuses on Masters students; we want to make a push fo ra similar body. **Sara Misgen (Religious Studies)**: A similar situation at religious studies—most of us wind up at Yale Divinity School. Religious Studies has a written contract about how many TFships they should allot to PhD students, though; I can look into that model for you. **Laura Logozzo**: That would be great; we have talked about different models we can use. We are only required to take two classes as a Forestry PhD student, which limits our capacity to know faculty beyond our advisors. **Gadareth Higgs (MCDB)**: Two questions. You mentioned that some FES students TF an instrument--what does that mean? **Laura Logozzo**: We help to run specific equipment that is in heavy use at FES and assist users. **Gadareth Higgs**: My other question: how many on board with creating a new PhD government? **Laura Logozzo:** We have 30 or so signatures on a proposal, with 10 or so already on the joint student government. **Emily Davidson**: All our issues at SPH go through our DGS. They're pretty good at advocating for PhD students. Not sure if your DGS can play this role? **Laura Logozzo**: We gave this signed document to our DGS; they were supportive but then retracted that support. **Roxanne Morris (Microbiology)**: We have adjacent issues in our department: for Microbiology, only a few classes are offered. We'd like to TF these relevant classes as PhD students, but enrollment is too small for TFs. Is there anything that can be done about departments like ours? **Jake Spies (Chemistry)**: In Chemistry, there was a class that was too small for three TFs but too large for two TFs. The compromise was hiring two TFs and a grader. Can these kinds of models be used? **Lucy Armentano:** This discussion brings up a broader point about thinking about TF assignments. **Maria del Mar Galindo**: English employs a lot of humanities students. Is there an equivalent department in the sciences? **Roxanne Morris**: There may be, but the issue is that this particular class in Microbiology would be beneficial for us to teach for professional development. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: I wonder if the CTL has resources that would help address some of this. **Laura Logozzo**: A final notes is that we had a question for Facilities and Healthcare at the meeting—health insurance for spouses quite expensive; does Yale offer resources for finding other health insurance? The academic calendar can cause issues with healthcare for spouses who need coverage year-round.

V.   Department report semester wrap-up

Ryan Petersburg: We wanted to offer a summary of department meeting reports from the semester, to begin thinking about questions and solutions for key issues. I'll share a list of what we've identified. **Lucy Armentano**: As Ryan goes through this, if anyone sees something you'd like to work on, let us know—we could establish groups for working together.

Accountability for bad advising
John Gonzalez: Are there guidelines for advisors? **Ryan Petersburg:** There are general GSAS guidelines. Lucy, Estella, and I are going to a meeting tomorrow to talk with Anne Gaylin in the Dean's office about department-specific advising guidelines. **John Gonzalez**: Can we evaluate our mentors? **Ryan Petersburg:** The DPR provides an opportunity. **Meaghan McGeary**: The DPR doesn't kick in until candidacy, though. **Devan Solanki (Chemical and Environmental Engineering)**: In some departments, students are reliant on advisors for funding. I would never negatively evaluate my PI. **John Gonzalez:** I wonder if we could ask different questions that would not suggest you are evaluating your advisor negatively per se, such as, "Do you have a sense of what is expected from you?" **Emily Davidson**: In SPH, the DGS becomes the person that holds the faculty accountable. This is dependent on

the DGS being good, however, which ours is; our DGS mediates meetings when there are advisor problems. This direct, mediated approach can work if it's done well. **Emily Stewart (Geology and Geophysics)**: For a lot of people, the idea of saying something negative about their advisor publicly is extremely difficult. To me, there are two possible solutions. There are people in my department who regularly fail female students at their qualifying exams year after year, for example, which brings up the issue of data—even if the students can't say, what does the data say? There are also ways to design surveys that allow for safe reporting. There are experts on this--can Yale get one? **Syndi Barish (Genetics)**: Don't know how many people would be comfortable approaching their advisor in a direct way. If you report an issue with your advisor in a small lab, it would be obvious who is reporting.

Gadareth Higgs: I have experience with this, as I had serious issues with my previous advisor and eventually had to reach outside of the department. I developed [GradPI](#) in response. Feedback is anonymous, and only users can access data. This is an external resource, but internally we need to have some kind of formal advising guidelines. **Laura Logozzo**: In Forestry, most people who have problems with their advisor will go to the DGS. The DGS is then in charge of mediation, and more generally they are responsible for measuring that students are making progress. When progress isn't being made, advisors are not assigned new students. **Roxanne Morris**: For Microbiology, during rotations, you fill out evaluation forms for each rotation, but that never happens again throughout the program. Good to have evaluation as you go. In our department, word of mouth is how people find out who good advisors are. There are people who just don't have students, but the concern is that there are no consequences for those people. **Ryan Petersburg**: If the graduate school were to say more publicly, "This advisor cannot/should not take students," do you think this would help? **Roxanne Morris:** Perhaps. But sometimes people who are known in the department to be bad advisors are very well regarded by the graduate school. **John Gonzalez**: Could we create larger sample sizes to deal with some of the problems related to reporting and anonymity? I asked my department to officially back Grad PI as a resource for students. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: Endorsing grad PI could be a good option. I know that a lot of people don't feel comfortable expressing problems with their PIs, so providing as many resources for students to provide feedback as possible would be good. In Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry, you meet privately with the rest of your committee before conferences to talk about your PI. For some people, this is a good resource **John Gonzalez**: During the extensive GSAS orientation, could we add something about how to manage these issues? This could give people a sense from the start that they can get support and are entitled to get good advising **Maria del Mar Galindo**: Can we as GSA push bottom-up for department-specific advising guidelines as GSAS pushes top-down? **Thiti Owlarn (Germanic Languages and Literatures):** Who writes these department-specific guidelines, though? If it's just students who are writing them, how are these binding? **Lucy Armentano**: The idea would be for faculty, students, and leadership to work together. If we have recommendations on this as an assembly, GSAS may be willing to push this. **Andie Berry (English)**: If GSAS is dragging its feet on department-specific guidelines, division-specific guidelines may be helpful. Advising from a PI is very different to advising by committee in the humanities.

Burt Westermeier (History): In addition to advising on research, the other question seems to be teaching. In History, instructors do not come to oversee their TFs teaching. A quick fix for that may be to have some sort of checklist for instructors that includes, "Have you observed your students teaching this

semester?" **Syndi Barish**: We discussed in Genetics the possibility of making contracts between a PI and advisee when a student joins a lab. **Jonathan Dow (Combined Programs in Biological and Biomedical Science)**: It seems key to have an advocate among the faculty—a person independent of the DGS. If there were a larger structure to advocate for students, this would take the pressure off individuals. **Ryan Petersburg**: This opens up the conversation about the Ombuds office. This office would open up doors for students who are struggling to get help within the department. Guidelines could help as a starting point, however. **Sara Misgen**: For those of you who have comments about Teaching Day at Yale, please come talk to me! I will be helping to organize this in the spring. **Meaghan McGeary**: A lot of these things come back to the purpose of the DGS. It seems a lot of people don't feel comfortable raising things with their DGS, or there's no link of accountability between the DGS and the faculty. If the DGS is officially accountable for the wellbeing of their students, in a way that is actually functional, this would address many issues. **Ryan Petersburg:** In upcoming meetings, we plan to have specific agenda items in to cover some of these other topics that we have not discussed today. **Lucy Armentano**: We will also follow up once we have the meeting with GSAS on advising guidelines.

VI.   21CP Resolution

Megan Kelley introduced the amended resolution to the assembly.

*"**Whereas** the Graduate Student Assembly advocates on behalf of graduate students on issues relating to safety and security at Yale and in New Haven.*

***Whereas** the Yale Police Department (YPD) is committed to "protect[ing] and serv[ing] the campus"[1], and to "being fully transparent with the University community"[1] and to "maintaining the highest level of trust and honesty with those [they] serve."[1]*

***Whereas** transparency in YPD policy is important for building trust between YPD and those they protect and serve, including graduate students.*

***Therefore be it resolved by the Graduate Student Assembly** that 21CP Solutions should include in their final report a recommendation to make the report public, with minimal necessary redactions.*

***Be it further resolved** that YPD should release to the public the report compiled by 21CP Solutions, with minimal redactions.*

***Be it further resolved** that the Graduate Student Assembly should be made aware of future external reports/audits, and that YPD should adopt a formal policy for public release of future external reports/audits, in line with their stated values of transparency and honesty with those they serve."*

Emily Davidson: Should we be more specific about 'minimal' information? **Gadareth Higgs**: Are the last two clauses redundant? **Zach Michielli**: I'm our rep on the Community Policing Committee. We've had one meeting so far, and I can share that this is the fourth external report created for the YPD in the past five years. According to that committee, they consider this routine and not something that is of

---

[1] "Yale Police Department." *It's Your Yale: Yale Police Department*, your.yale.edu/community/public-safety/yale-police-department.

primary interest to the Yale Community. We may see this report as exceptional in a certain way; they do not. **Megan Kelley**: Have they made any of those past reports public? **Zach Michielli**: They have not. They consider this routine upkeep for their department. We all have the events that took place in mind, but they think of this as an external review of their management strategy. I'm willing to take this resolution to the next meeting and present it as well. But my sense is they will consider this something not to be shared with the community. **Roxanne Morris**: As part of their consultation, I spoke to 21CP with other four students. We asked them directly whether they thought anything in the report could harm officers' safety. They said no. We asked if they thought the report should be released, and they said yes. **Megan Kelley**: I asked them if they would be willing to make this recommendation for release public, however, and they didn't reply. **Stephen Breazeale (Nursing)**: I work in a field that is externally audited with regularity. I see the YPD's understanding of these reports as being unexceptional—these reports are often perceived this way . But they should be made public, and I would propose an amendment to make future reports public. **Megan Kelley and Meaghan McGeary**, bill sponsors, accepted this friendly amendment.

Emily Davidson: For clarity: this review was kicked off in response to the shooting, correct? **Roxanne Morris**: Yes. There are two evaluations: one as a response to the shooting, and another on broader community policing policies. **Ryan Petersburg**: The resolution is referring here to the latter. **Maria del Mar Galindo**: Does anyone know if other PDs make these reports available? **Emily Davidson**: From previous professional experience at the state level, I know this is the case sometimes. Reports are released to individuals, redacted, under the Freedom of Information Act. **Zach Michielli**: We have every right to request this from them; they can respond as they see fit. **CJ Rice (History)**: I agree with what Zach is saying. There's no muscle behind any resolution that we offer, so we should be as forceful as possible. I suggest we are a lot more direct with the last clause, and encourage the Yale Police department to adopt a formal policy of releasing future reports. **John Gonzalez**: I'm concerned that there might be a disconnect between the people that we represent and us, in that we have these issues very present in our minds but many students don't. Couldn't we also send this resolution to the student body, as a way to say this is happening? **Lucy Armentano**: Normally we only send resolutions to the recipients, and publish them on website. We could think about sending out a message related to this, however. **John Gonzalez**: A lot of what we do relates to what comes up in department meetings, so it would be good to share this work more widely. **Jonathan Dow**: Would being more explicit in our language about what's motivating this resolution be helpful? Following the incident earlier this year, there's a sense that trust has been broken: can we emphasize this? **Meaghan McGeary**: There are two approaches here. On the one hand, we can make the language as strong as possible to condemn behavior. But we also hope to encourage change, and transparency in future. Constructive language might help. **Emily Davidson**: Could we have an external person look at this? Someone who is familiar with the operation of police departments? **Megan Kelley**: We could reach out to 21CP for advice on this. **Stephen Breazeale**: My sense is that coming out of the gate a little more adversarial harms the long game. We should be constructive **John Gonzalez**: A final point: do we know if the undergrads are interested in this? GPSS? **Megan Kelley**: We plan to send a copy of this to GPSS if it goes through, and can also reach out to undergrad colleagues.

The resolution passes, with a vote of 32 for and 4 against.

VII.   Resources Spotlight: Ivy+ Notes
Lucy Armentano: We just want to share a few highlights from our discussions at Ivy+. Ryan is putting the link to these Notes in the GSA Slack.

VIII.   Miscellaneous
Lucy Armentano: A further reminder about the enrolled student survey—if your department has shared results with students, please share them with us. **Maria del Mar Galindo**: If anyone wants to share information for 2020, please send it to me by email so we can include it in the first emails of the year. **Gadareth Higgs:** I'm very interested in follow-up from the Diversity Town Hall.

CJ Rice: I wanted to let the Assembly know that there will be two meetings about 320 York in the spring; more information to come. **Megan Kelley**: Service is organizing a meeting on financial and tax anxiety--please share any thoughts on this!

Meeting adjourned 7.56pm