Meeting began at 6.00pm

   I.   Approval of minutes
Minutes were approved.

   II.   Approval of agenda
Agenda was approved.

   III.   Committee chair update
Megan Kelley (INS; GSA Service Chair): There will be a Service Meeting on Feb 4th. If you did not receive an email, let me know. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado (Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry; GSA F&H Chair)**: F&H meeting on Wednesday Feb 5th, 6pm at Medical School; please also contact me if you didn't receive an email.

Ryan Petersburg (Physics; GSA Vice-Chair): A short Steering Committee update. We shared a report with the deans of the DGS survey from our last GA meeting. We particularly spoke about departments where the DGS doesn't appear to be doing enough. More broadly, we spoke about reaching out to all DGSs and encouraging them to stay in better touch with graduate students and to support student progress more systematically. We also raised the question of budget priorities—we've asked the deans to give us more detail to see what recommendations we can make. Another issue was the broad question of "TF troubleshooting" when people have issues: the deans shared that Howard el-Yasin and Pam Schirmeister are the focal points on TF issues. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: How accessible are these focal points? **Ryan Petersburg**: Accessible, but we need to make sure these access points are advertised.

Lucy Armentano (Psychology; GSA Chair): A brief look ahead: we plan to draw on the departmental engagement survey from last fall to start a conversation with the deans, and we are also continuing to press on department-specific advising guidelines and handbooks. Any thoughts on this or other issues, please be in touch with us.

   IV.   Conversation with Nate Nickerson, Yale VP for Communications
Nate Nickerson shared a brief professional history.

There are 37 people at Yale's Office of Public Affairs and Communications. Our work is highly decentralized. Most people who do communications at Yale do not report to me, but we do attempt to build some sense of cohesion. I had two big priorities in my first year: 1) trying to get better about understanding audiences that we're communicating with; are we understanding the people with whom we're trying to engage and capturing audience insights? and 2) can we make better communications

products? Additionally, we want to strengthen our capacities to handle things as they come up (crisis response).

Lucy Armentano: How is the university thinking about communications with and about graduate students? **Nate Nickerson**: It's not uncommon for graduate students at universities to feel "lost in the shuffle." I care a lot about the graduate student community—how it experiences communications, and also that it feels that we're communicating on its behalf. The more people understand the power of our research and the breadth and intensity of curiosity at a place like this, the more it makes a difference. The ways in which we wish to depict Yale as a whole involve fascinating stories that are not generalized, but specific: every graduate student has one, or is living one. **Megan Kelley**: What do you think OPAC's responsibilities are regarding events outside the university that impact Yale students, such as natural disasters or shooting incidents? **Nate Nickerson**: The question of when a president of a university comments on a given issue out in the world is a big one. My imperfect answer to your question is that sometimes the surest way forward is to try to identify where there is a place within our community where a lot of people are feeling pain, and then to identify whether there is an appropriate person—a dean or director—who can speak to that community. **CJ Rice (History)**: You mention that part of OPAC's remit is to promote the institution of Yale. In your view, what types of messages are most important for our university to be sharing? What role does OPAC play in deciding what these are?

Nate Nickerson: A few universities can say this: their people can make the world a better place. That's true for artists as well as scientists. When you think about institutions that have stood the test of time—not perfect places, but places that have produced people that can change the world—we know that the more people understand what those institutions are up to, the more two things happen: more people want to be part of that institution, and people who will never be a part of this community also respond to it, and to its role in the world. **CJ Rice**: In this vein, what stories has your office told recently that involve graduate students? **Nate Nickerson**: It's hard to tell what research stories we've told include graduate students, but many do.

Ethan Perets (Chemistry): I'm thinking of Felice Farnkel, the photographer and scientist at MIT—she has advocated for communication training as part of the scientific curriculum (training students to choose images when submitting articles, for example). The kind of work she was doing at MIT feels absent here. Does Yale plan to institute something like this? **Nate Nickerson**: Felice does incredible work. We're not doing anything formal right now for graduate students as such. OPAC can train people to be better at engaging the press, and we do some of this. But formalizing this as part of the curriculum—this is a great idea, but not doing this yet. When I was at MIT, we contracted Felice to do a large number of photographs. People want to see real life at places like this—they want less polished images. **Ethan Perets**: That's important work. But at MIT, a student could approach her to produce an image, or for help producing an image. Can we work toward having a resource like this?

Kristen Herdman (Medieval Studies): How do stories find their way to your office? **Nate Nickerson**: Some pathways are very well worn. Perhaps too well-worn. We've recently hired a new person to head up the writing of all of these stories; we want to be more deliberate about the mix of stories that we're trying to tell, and to have balance. When there is as much breadth as there is at Yale, it can be difficult to give

everyone space. Out of staff of 37, five of our staff are writers. But there are several other writers across the university, and we need to continue bringing their content in.

Jacob Derechin (Sociology): Is your office behind Yale Today? I've tried to unsubscribe from this six times now. Among other things, it's made me wonder what sort of decision-making process went into Yale Today, and who the target audience is. **Nate Nickerson**: The short answer in response to you having trouble with unsubscribing is that we use developing technology. We've developed a workaround knowing that some people would not want a daily; we recently launched a weekly newsletter. For something like ten years, there was a once-a-week email that went to everybody. 3.5 years ago, it increased to twice a week. We went to a daily partly because most of our peers were doing it; the best reason to do it is that given the amount of news we have, twice a week is quite a long list of stories per email. We thought that every day, we could have four to five items that would be quick to scan. **Ryan Petersburg**: What kind of feedback did you seek out making this change? **Nate Nickerson**: The feedback on the product has been highly positive. When it comes to frequency, we do know some people want less. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado**: Who is the audience for this product? And how are you gathering information from communities within Yale in terms of what kinds of information and communication communities want? Is there a mechanism through which you could have input from different stakeholders? **Lucy Armentano**: An idea we've had before is a kind of student advisory council, in which students can participate with some regularity. **Ryan Petersburg**: The Yale Health Advisory Committee might be a good model for this.

V. CTF discussion

Jo Machesky (Chemical and Environmental Engineering; CTF Director): The CTF makes up the largest part of GSA budget. We spend $120,000 throughout the fiscal year (July 1st-June 30). Each student is eligible for one CTF award, up to $750 for candidates and up to $500 for PhD students. Applications submitted through the Grants and Fellowship website. Applications are pulled in batches by GSAS and reviewed.

There are several rules: you cannot be funded by CTF and MacMillan for the same conference. The student must apply before the conference occurs; the student must be presenting in some capacity; the student must be in good academic standing; the student's advisor must support the student's attendance at the conference. If the application is rejected, the student is eligible to reapply during the same fiscal year.

We made some changes for 2019-2020: students are eligible for only one award per fiscal year (in 2018-2019, about 10% of the awards were second applications; MacMillan still awards second applications). The quarter application system was phased out in 2018-2019. Additionally, the CTF was first publicized to all graduate students in 2019-2020.

Some facts: with the current budget, if you funded only PhD candidates at the maximum amount ($750), this would total 160 awards. There were 220 awards (for about 190 students) in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, with an average award of $638.

With current enrollment, the current budget of 120,000 averages out to approximately $34 per student. If all awards were given at the full amount, about 4.5% of students would receive a CTF award (this is up from the previous amount, before MacMillan funding became available).

As of today, there is $20,436 left in the budget; we've used 83% of the budget in the first half of the fiscal year. At this point last year, we'd only used about 21% of the budget. After the email at the start of the 2019-2020 school year, we saw a huge spike in applications.

We've now established dates for when the application will open and close; this is now on the website.

There is no data for years before 2018-2019; the application and administration have both changed. To meet the need based on this year's numbers, we probably would need 300k. We are redirecting applications to departments that we know have funding, and we will have to continue to gather data on this so we can keep ensuring that the CTF is not serving students whose departments have good conference funding.

Ethan Perets: When the money runs out, will we let people know? This makes sense to do, but it seems like we also want to have good data on how many applications will come in spring, and if we announce that we are out of funds, we won't be able to measure this. **Jo Machesky**: I don't want people investing time and energy into an application that we won't award, but we are thinking about how to do this—we do need to measure this.

Here are the plans for the ad-hoc committee we established:
1. Understand need for conference travel funding
    a. Reach out to departments that have funding and log information
2. Prepare a report about the need for this fiscal year
3. Propose a structure for the CTF next year
4. Edit the application and CTF-related websites
5. Decide on how to publicize the CTF in 2020-2021
6. Propose that the CTF committee become permanent

John Gonzalez (Combined Programs in Biological and Biomedical Sciences): Once we have information on what departments have additional funds, can we add this information to the website, so that this is transparent (and students know to reach out to their own department)? **Spencer Small (Slavic Languages and Literatures)**: When it comes to international and non-international funding: can we also specify who exactly should be applying for each grant? If MacMillan funds international topics, is the CTF only for non-international work? **Jo Machesky**: Yes; clarifying this relationship is key. **Maria del Mar Galindo (English; GSA Secretary):** Once we figure out those departments that have independent funding, could we adapt the 4.5% figure you mentioned to know what percentage of those who depend on the CTF could be served by 120,000? **Da'Von Boyd (Political Science)**: Does a possible increase in the funds we have or could get also depend on what MacMillan does? **Jo Machesky**: MacMillan has more flexibility; they can choose to increase their budget slightly if needed. CTF has a hard limit, on the other hand. **Estella Barbosa de Souza (Physics; APD Chair)**: Would the university consider taking this

off the GSA's hands? Can Deans communicate with the development office that this is a need that may require endowed funds? **Chris Londa (Classics)**: This is a great idea. In Classics—previously we had lots of endowed funds to provide student travel. After the financial crisis, the university came in and took these endowed funds. These resources disappeared at the department level; they were presumably centralized, but it would be important to get clarity on how we recover this funding capacity. **Jo Machesky**: A positive of GSA running the CTF is that all changes need to be run by us and approved. The office of grants and fellowships is not really sure who would even be able to do what GSA currently does. MacMillan is handled by a director, who is also assistant director of fellowships at Yale.

John Gonzalez: If students are applying for individual grants, and they have a travel allocation within these, does the CTF/university know that? How is this reported? **Jo Machesky**: This and other questions are things we can to include in our ask to the graduate school as we look into this and make a request for funds for next year. We plan to edit the application to include things like, "How many conferences have you gone to this year?" and other questions that can help us gather more data. **Meaghan McGeary**: In terms of available funds in departments, or of what fellowships come with funding—as we build up the database, can we ask people to list what fellowships they have available? **Jo Machesky:** The application system is very old. Our initial changes may have to be simpler (we won't be able to radically alter the form), but eventually we can ask that the system be revamped more fully.

Dean Sleight will work with GSA to develop an ask for GSAS. We are hopeful that we will get some more funds, but it seems unlikely that the funds will be doubled. Once we gather two years' worth of data, we may have a stronger case for asking for an increase in funding.

John Gonzalez: Can we pull data from Workday, or from other systems across the university? **CJ Rice**: And looking as our limited data this year: what is the magic number? How much money do we need? **Jo Machesky**: I would say about 350,000. **CJ Rice**: That's a fraction of a single large university salary. We should frame this ask strongly. It's dereliction of duty not to fund the development of students who make money for the university, whose research propels what Yale achieves. **Jo Machesky**: GSAS is trying to figure out how to find this money. They are trying to identify priorities (is the moving stipend a greater priority, for example?). Some schools have stopped inflation increases with stipends and funneled this money toward conference travel funding; do we want to do the same?. **Stephen Breazeale (Nursing)**: How can we ensure that people applying later in the year have the same kind of opportunity to be funded as people applying earlier? **Gadareth Higgs (MCBD)**: Can we divide the application calendar per semester, or per quarter? **Jo Machesky**: This division was central to the old system. We could consider returning to it, but we should gather data. We need to figure out if the surge in applications this year varied by department or by any other factor, for example.

As we continue to work on this, please email ctf@yale.edu (rather than my personal email) with any questions, so we can create institutional memory.

VI.   Department meeting reports
      A. Spanish and Portuguese

Sarah Glenski (Spanish and Portuguese): We have 17 graduate students total, about 12 on campus. Only two are at the dissertation stage. We had four people in attendance at the meeting. Department-specific concerns included: updating and changing things in the department handbook. Our prospectus is quite a unique document; current writers depend on students further along in the program to figure this out, rather than on centralized information. For qualifying exams, students want the mandatory reading list shortened and adapted. The first semester of our third year we have a very heavy load—preparing for qualifying exams while also serving as PTAIs in a language class for the first time. Additionally, PTAI/TF loads vary hugel, but assignments are compensated in the same ways. Constituents want more transparency in teaching assignments, as well as more university-wide recognition of graduate student teaching (through prizes, and more development programs along the lines of Associates in Teaching). On T&S issues, we talked about building access, primarily access to dining halls and access to other centers and buildings, like the Good Life Center and La Casa. There were particular complaints about the Orange Line: at midday, there are not enough lines running. On F&H issues, generally students are happy with services they are receiving at Yale Health (such as the OBGYN and flu clinics), with the exception of mental health.

We spoke about the diversity initiative; there was frustration about the timing of the Town Hall (which was the week of exams). There was also a sense that the diversity campaign could have been presented differently: most of us already have an idea of what diversity means; students would like to see this as more of an action-driven plan. What can Yale do with its vast resources to make this institution a more inclusive place?

We spoke briefly about the Dean's Emergency Fund: only one first-year knew about the fund. Finally, there was continued frustration that the DGS and other department leadership don't have enough information (usually the response is "ask the advanced students").

Spencer Small: Regarding teaching assignments in the languages, we spoke to Pam Schirmeister last year. The overwhelming response that we got was that GSAS deans are not going to dictate to departments what they need to do regarding teaching allocation, compensation, recognition. But all Chairs and DGSs said they would be open to having conversations with graduate students about this: we could continue to press on this. **Nicolle**: When it comes to the cultural houses—can you let me know with whom you communicated about this?

B.   Germanic Languages and Literatures
Thiti Owlarn (Germanic Languages and Literatures): 11/22 students in attendance. This was our first GSA meeting in many years, as we haven't had a representative for some time. We gave an update about the Humanities Quadrangle and informed students about the upcoming Town Hall.

On questions of diversity—most people in the department agreed that we had good spreads across gender, nationality, race, sexuality and gender identity. Diversifying academic interests and research would be a positive development. On conference travel, we have zero support from the department.

We shared the GSA initiative to develop department-specific advising guidelines. Some students felt that advising guidelines are not the issue; the issue is communication between the language coordinator and instructors. At least one person wasn't sure who the DGS was or what they did. We spoke about the fact that the European Studies Council has travel grants for which we can apply—but there is a lack of information, and most people don't know that this exists. Students felt that all information about conference funding should be put on the department website. Finally, systems that are reimbursement-based present the challenge that they are not a good way to show that you have sufficient funds to travel to a conference, which several countries require as proof in order to award visas.

Anri Chomentowska (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology) On access to residential colleges for language tables and other activities, we've received the response that a single college doesn't want to be responsible for this. How can we frame this ask in future?

VII.   Resource spotlight

VIII.   Miscellaneous

Lucy Armentano: The Grad School Alumni Association and Dean's Office are hosting several admitted-student receptions. If you are interested in supporting these events, let me know. Paul Bosco from the Yale Alumni Association would like to work on this with us. Additionally, a lot of departments have admitted/prospective student events, and it would be good to have GSA presence at those events.

If you have a department handbook or department-specific advising guidelines, please send us a copy: GSAS wants to compile these.

There will be a fireside chat with Roni Beth Tower ("An Evolution of Identity: Traveling Through Graduate School at Yale") on February 12th. Please continue to advertise this.

Zach Marin: On DEI-related issues. There are students participating in the admissions process would like to know more about how they would fit in at Yale. I'll send out a spreadsheet on the Slack for those interested, and OGSDD can match you up.

Meeting adjourned at 8.05pm.