

GSA General Assembly Meeting
Monday, February 10th, 2020
6:00PM, Watson Center (60 Sachem Street), Room A74

- I. Approval of minutes
- II. Approval of agenda
- III. Conversation with Stephanie Spangler (Vice Provost for Health Affairs and Academic Integrity, and University Title IX Coordinator)

Stephanie Spangler gave an overview of the results from the [AAU Climate Survey](#).

The behaviors reported are all problematic or negative, but may not meet the definition of “harassment.”

We distinguished between “quid pro quo” and “hostile environment” harassment complaints. In 2015, behavior and impact were grouped together. Now have asked this separately (partly as a concern that people weren’t engaging with the question as a whole). Not much of a decline in reports of offensive behaviors.

Women who experience offensive behaviors were much more likely to report an impact than men. It could be that the behaviors are different, or the environment may create greater impact for women. 18.8% of women and 8.7% of men experience harassment where the harasser is a faculty member. This has not changed from 2015.

These are concerning numbers. More and more students are reporting to the Title IX office, however; this is heartening. More students report familiarity with Title IX contact points/coordinators. Students were more confident that their concerns would be taken seriously. These are all positive things, but the report numbers are high.

Jacob Derechin (Sociology): In terms of prevention and mitigation in future, what are the plans/initiatives? **Stephanie Spangler:** We have much more data than 2015 (an exponential increase). Students with disabilities are much more likely to experience sexual misconduct, for example: this is something we didn’t have numbers for before. There’s more work to do with new data, which may lead us to more solutions in terms of prevention. **Jacob Derechin:** I shared data with you about the work recently done at Columbia, a 5-year study that leveraged the social scientists there. They found a lot of really interesting results; some were paradoxical. Their biggest recommendation is treating assault and harassment like public health problems—trying to get at the structural problems that create these incidents with public health approaches.

Stephanie Spangler: We’ve talked about diluting power imbalances: providing students with mentors not in the line of evaluation, and diversifying their committees, for example. We’re trying to get around the issue that reporting may result in retaliation. The thing that I find most promising is the movement where

departments or labs or local cultures are conducting conversations about what's happening in smaller communities. The medical school, for example, is creating a deputy dean position to look at leadership and professionalism. We spend a lot of time telling people what *not* to do, but we have to coincidentally create not just structures for reporting but structures that support emerging positive climates. Many academics come into leadership positions with no leadership training; we're also trying to ameliorate this as part of our response. We're talking with other institutions about how we check references on faculty who are looking for positions. This has some legal issues around privacy, but we are looking at possibilities. **Michelle Nearon (Senior Associate Dean and Director of the Office for Graduate Student Development and Diversity):** Dean Cooley is meeting with DGSs and department chairs to support and encourage this work.

Devan Solanki (Chemical and Environmental Engineering): The issue is, we all know offenders—the two or three “bad apples” in a department. And if you approach the DGS or Chair, there is no appetite to address this. Deans may encourage DGSs or Chairs to take action, but there are no methods to deal with offenders that seem to have teeth. **Stephanie Spangler:** The [Faculty Standards of Conduct](#) and related procedures exist. These have been in place for a year and a half. It has been made clear to deans that they have inherent authority to investigate in these cases and take action. Dean Gendler has appointed two individuals: Debra Fischer in Astronomy and Linda Mayes at the Medical School, to lead on this. We have many ways of supporting individual students: moving people to different labs, residences, etc. Hoping people find it worthwhile to approach us and explore with us how their situation can be addressed. **Michelle Nearon:** Furthermore, faculty are mandatory reporters. Faculty should be coming forward when they hear of these issues

Roxanne Morris (Microbiology): Is there a place for bystanders to do anything? **Stephanie Spangler:** There are many ways for bystanders to support, and to report. Over 1400 people come to us about sexual misconduct: that they have experienced, or that others have experienced. We have had over 60 procedures with the faculty standards of conduct framework. The SHARE Center is an important resource as well. **CJ Rice (History):** 60 faculty standards of conduct procedures? How many times has tenure been revoked as a result? **Stephanie Spangler:** This is a different process. Of about 100 formal cases through that process, there were 13 where the respondent was disciplined. In 12 of 13 there was a finding that there was sexual misconduct. One person had tenure revoked. There are 4 cases where the faculty member is not here anymore, and other cases had suspensions. Faculty have also been taken out of leadership positions, or prevented from teaching, or denied eligibility for honorifics.

Julianne Rolf (Chemical and Environmental Engineering): For faculty on the tenure track, is this kind of disciplinary action taken into account for a promotion? **Stephanie Spangler:** When you have an allegation with no due process, it's hard to include it in an official review process. When you have an allegation with a finding, that's easier. **Julianne Rolf:** How likely is it for a confirmed allegation to be taken into account? **Stephanie Spangler:** It depends on the case. **Julianne Rolf:** Are pay cuts one of the possible penalties? **Stephanie Spangler:** One way that this could happen is that someone could lose an administrative appointment that comes with extra pay. Every school across the university has different faculty compensation protocols.

Sarah Glenski (Spanish and Portuguese): In terms of restrictions placed on faculty: what is the transparency in terms of communicating this to students? What about in terms of assigning TFs? Who is informed in the department that this is happening? **Stephanie Spangler:** What I've done in some cases where for legal reasons I could not be more explicit is sit down with students and individuals and say, "Here are behaviors that should not be happening in your department." Public institutions can share information related to these cases and behaviors, but not private institutions. We are piloting a program where applicants for senior jobs have to sign a release that allows their last institution to release their records.

John Gonzalez (Biological and Biomedical Science): How many of those disciplined stay in higher education by moving on to a position elsewhere? What would you like to see happen in this regard? **Stephanie Spangler:** I'd like to see leaders of labs, departments, and schools make this an expectation of their faculty and their sub-leadership. I'd like to see a lot more focus on looking at the structural issues and at structures that create cultures. Global structural changes are hard to make with the same effectiveness. You can pick a small thing—making students sit at the front and faculty at the back instead of the other way around, for example—and start culture change that way. You have to make cultural change slowly. **John Gonzalez:** Where would you put the responsibility first in terms of starting this culture change? **Michelle Nearon:** Chairs and DGSs have the most contact with students, and are an obvious starting point.

Gadareth Higgs (MCDB): Is there a training protocol for faculty before they interact with students? **Stephanie Spangler:** There is Title IX training for all new faculty. **Michelle Nearon:** We also have a number of orientations; we are focusing on revising and adding to the material for these orientations. **John Gonzalez:** It seems that there can be a lot of "buffering voices" when a student reports: if you report to the DGS and they do nothing, for example, you've already done the labor of reporting but it hasn't gone anywhere. How can we empower students? Something I've heard from constituents is that they'd like to see DGSs elected by the student body, which would give students more ability to impact bad situations.

Maria del Mar Galindo (GSA Secretary; English): We appreciate the work that your office is doing, and I personally appreciate the fact that women are doing this work across the university administration. But I think what students are raising is that there isn't a sense that if we report something, action will be taken. It's not about giving the names of individual offenders: it's a culture of non-accountability. **Michelle Nearon:** When there is an offender and we have multiple people come forward, we can approach the person directly: that option is open to us.

Following the departure of the visitors, the Chair opened up the floor for comments.

Connor Williams (History): It's important to remember that the data points of "how many people have been fired for x?" might not be the best way to measure what is happening: processes can be underway, and may not be visible to students, or reportable for confidentiality reasons.

Stephen Breazeale (Nursing): When we have visitors, could we distribute answers to the questions we submit in advance, if they can prepare them? This would get the conversation going, and the exchange. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado (GSA F&H Chair; Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry):** The idea of electing DGSs that was brought up is great. At the same time, I want to note that it's important to make sure that not the same people are doing all the labor. Students would likely vote in the best mentors, who are doing most labor. **John Gonzalez:** Another way to empower students would be to have evaluations of DGSs, or other ways to input. **Lucy Armentano (GSA Chair; Psychology):** We can bring this up in Steering; we've been talking about DGSs with the Deans.

Da'von Boyd (Political Science): I want to take a moment to note that these discussions can amplify our feelings of powerlessness, as we offer our experiences and the institution pushes back. This is important work, and I want to thank fellow representatives for doing that labor. **Trevor Williams (Economics):** One question I had was: if the role of DGS is to help mediate these types of issues, what's the point in reporting to another mentor or office? They mentioned reporting to others in our department if the DGS is not a trusted interlocutor. **Connor Williams:** The DGS is meant to shape the academic structure of your program; it's primarily an academic role with this as one part of it. **Megan Kelley (GSA Service Chair; Neuroscience):** I think the point they were trying to highlight was that DGSs are mandatory reporters. **Roxanne Morris:** And the point is that reaching out to another person who is not your advisor but that you might feel comfortable coming to can be valuable. They can support you academically by supporting you to be safe. **Sydney Muchnik (Genetics):** And you don't have to go to DGS; any Title IX Coordinator is an appropriate person, and there are several. **Nathan Nguyen (Cell Biology):** I would like to have another conversation with administrators who are working on this. One thing to share is that when I reported my harassment case, I Cced everyone: the people involved, the DGS, my advisors, the deans. This worked. Dean Cooley emailed me back right away. They all knew about this as the result of my emailing everyone, which meant there was higher accountability.

Kristen Herdman (Medieval Studies): It might be helpful for them to prepare an email with the existing resources they mentioned: faculty standards of behavior, Title IX resources, and others. I don't know how well students know these. **Ambre Dromgoole (Religious Studies):** When appointing people to whom you can report, it's important that they take into account racial and class demographics. Comfortability around reporting is crucial, but it they should consider that the majority of the work and the labor is falling on certain groups.

Sydney Muchnik: Everyone in the Title IX office is wonderful, but there is only one full-time coordinator on campus. There are simply not enough resources to effect actual change. That's one place for us to think about applying pressure: we need more full-time people who choose to do this work. **Andie Berry (English):** The data that they presented was helpful. But a graph can be flattening. I wanted not only to see this data reported in a single graph but to make space for the vulnerable populations and see how they might be particularly affected. **Jake Spies (Chemistry):** I do not feel powerless against the faculty as a whole; it might be because our department is huge, but we also have tools: the climate and diversity committee, and GSA reps who are focal points, to name two. These things aren't easy to construct, but as a GSA rep, we can help build change and the kind of resources that are needed. We now have happy hours monthly in our department, self-funded by the department itself. That sort of interaction

with our student body has allowed us to pick up on things like this and amplify or support where needed. As a GSA rep, we can report for people, or support them in this way. The onus of change is on us as GSA reps. **Maria del Mar Galindo**: Would it be worthwhile to sometimes offer confidentiality or more off-the-record conversations so that we can have more vulnerable engagement with these administrators, and perhaps get less of the party line? I think there might be value in this in some instances, to have more meaningful engagement. **Lucy Armentano**: Thank you to all of you for these inputs. These conversation will continue, and we'll report back from Steering and other venues.

IV. Committee chair update

Zach Michielli (GSA PR Chair; Architecture): We've been working with Facilities and Healthcare and with Transit and Security. We want to do several things, but some key features that we'd like to see are:

- Street names on maps, so that the shuttle route is more understandable
- Put stops on maps, so that people know exactly where to stand (and make both of the above available on the shuttle eventually; maybe by next year)
- Prepare a transport pamphlet (for internal and external audiences); we're helping the university develop this.

Julianne Rolf: Another useful piece of data would be an arrow to indicate direction of travel of the shuttle. **Andie Berry**: And for the pamphlet, parking information for those driving.

Meaghan McGeary (GSA T&S Rep; Experimental Pathology): Met with Ed and Don Relihan and Ed Bebyn. This is one of several things on their radar: they've accumulated lots of information about ridership. We're moving toward fixing the Orange night line (which would hopefully include a bigger reach, and more stable routes). If anyone has thoughts on this, please let me know. It's a very incremental process to get the shuttle improved, but we are working on this, and they are aware it matters to us. **Trevor Williams**: One thing I've often seen is the Orange and Blue line traveling right next to each other, arriving at stops at the same time. This seems like the worst possible option—even worse than a random timetable. **Meaghan McGeary**: When this kind of thing happens, please take a screenshot on DoubleMap if you can and send them to me! This kind of data has been really helpful to show them what the issues are.

Nicolle Rosa Mercado: There is a new director of Mental Health and Counseling, Paul Hoffman. I plan to reach out to him once we've analyzed data from the mental health survey. A few other Yale Health updates: we've resolved the issue with Puerto Rican phone numbers, and are looking to see if it affects any other area codes. On Ophthalmology waits, Yale Health has decided not to make the Ophthalmology clinic available to Medicare retirees; this might improve wait times. On group therapy, we've raised the issue of student-TA overlap in groups and are working to ensure it doesn't happen. We've also talked about having more diverse representations in providers. On Housing, Aritra Ghosh is working on following up the report we received from Yale Housing about raising rents. We want to check if fees that are paid can be taken out over time rather than all at once.

Devan Solanki: Could you say more on the specific housing issues? **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** Some students currently have to pay fees for the semester at once. We want to alleviate this burden. **Tyler Hayward (East Asian Studies):** You can fill out a form where you can have it taken out every month, I believe. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** Yes, but this requires you to have a Yale stipend; what about those for whom this isn't the case?

Megan Kelley: The Service Committee also met today. We're working on developing our tax and finance anxiety survey. We've been talking more about relationships with New Haven and our possible New Haven summit; we've had positive progress. We're almost ready to distribute a survey on the experiences of students with disabilities; the SAS office will distribute it along with the Graduate Student Disability Association.

Kristen Herdman: Is that just going to go out to students who are already registered? Or to everyone?

Megan Kelley: SAS will be able to get it to every student who has been registered with them, even for temporary disabilities. We're aware of survey fatigue, but want to get as much data as possible. **Meaghan McGeary:** What are the dates for Tax Facts?

Megan Kelley: Tuesday, February 25th at 6pm for domestic students; Tuesday March 10th for international. Both in Watson A53.

Ryan Petersburg (GSA Vice-Chair; Physics): On Steering, we've had updates from the deans on several issues. UPass negotiations are ongoing. The state legislature has to allow private universities to buy in; Yale is talking to them about this, and there will be hearing. We also worked through the GSAS budget with the deans: the full budget is available to current students, through CAS access; there's also the [Yale Budget Book](#). We spoke about where money in GSAS is being allocated, and have been sharing some of our discussions on financial priorities. **Lucy Armentano:** Looking ahead to our next meeting, we hope to share the department engagement data we gathered at our last meeting with them, and to talk about Stipends and Funding.

Zach Marin (Biomedical Engineering): From the Advisory Committee on Accessibility Resources, they continue to work on how to make the school more accessible. An upcoming priority is creating better classroom spaces for undergrads with ADHD. **Maria del Mar Galindo:** ADHS is the priority? **Zach Marin:** There are no currently registered undergraduates with disabilities other than ADHD and testing anxiety. **Meaghan McGeary:** This is the same office that deals with all disabilities and access questions? They don't have anyone on crutches? **Zach Marin:** Currently there are no students with a mobile disability. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** It may be that people don't know that they can register for short-term issues.

Kristen Herdman: From the University Library Advisory Committee, we've been working on access to special collections and related questions. Our last meeting was not well attended, but we have another coming up. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** Is there a pre-set agenda? **Kristen Herdman:** Yes; we'll be discussing 320 York. Additional space is required for storage and screening for Film Studies in Sterling, and the Humanities Quadrangle planning has to take this into account. For anyone who is interested, please join the #librarypolicy channel on Slack.

V. Reflection on Nate Nickerson's GA visit

Chris Londa (Classics): I'd like it on the record that Nate Nickerson appeared before the Assembly in sweatpants and flip flops. It was deeply unprofessional and disrespectful. **Devan Solanki:** The impression overall was that he didn't care. **Megan Kelley:** He was also late, which did not help with this impression. **Ryan Petersburg:** What he shared with us, in my view, revealed what the priorities of his office are. He said Yale's communications want to emphasize that we're changing the world so that politicians and policymakers can support the university, as well as donors. This is an office that works at the President's level, which I understand, but as we were trying to heavily emphasize that he needs to get input and feedback from students, it didn't seem that that was where his headspace was.

Jacob Derechin: I can report that it's possible to unsubscribe from Yale Today now. **Stephen Breazeale:** To Ryan's points about the tenor of communications, I think we all understand that we're a private institution, and that what Nate Nickerson described is likely a large part of what we have to do. But there may be another type of "Yale Today": one that tells the stories of what our colleagues are doing. What's going on locally? **Maria del Mar Galindo:** Can April in the GSAS office support this? A broader point I'd make about our guests is that we want to emphasize that GSA is a serious body. Graduate students volunteer their time (often extensive amounts of time!), and come prepared and informed to meetings. We need our guests to understand that we are expecting that they will respond to our own professionalism by coming prepared and informed themselves.

Lucy Armentano: April can certainly help with this. Her office recently sent out an email, asking students to submit stories about graduate student work and perspectives. They have a new initiative on Instagram, "Three Questions," which profiles graduate students and asks them three things. They are also going to be thinking about a semesterly digest. GSA will certainly partner with her. We've created a form where you can nominate a peer—a fellow graduate student whose research or story should be shared more widely—and have her office follow up. You can nominate yourself, but we want to celebrate peers' work particularly. Ryan will send out a link in the Slack. April is very open to new thoughts about this, so do get in touch.

VI. Discussion of financial priorities

The discussion was tabled.

VII. Department meeting reports

A. European and Russian Studies

Ryan Petersburg: A very quick rundown; the EERS rep had to resign, but we have the report. There were two major issues: fostering diversity in the EERS program and department (both in the student population and within the program, in terms of scholarly focus), and that it is primarily a Masters student program; like other programs with this makeup, their primary focus is on serving Masters students, so they want to make sure all students are served.

B. History

Connor Williams: We had good attendance. On health, there were three main concerns: 1) healthcare provision at Yale Health, especially mental health and the degree to which there are people from

underrepresented groups working there; 2) wanting to see group therapy reserved for graduate students only (so you don't have your own students in your group; and 3) a general departmental desire to see Yale Health do more on mental health and other provisions.

Burt Westermeier (History): There were also several concerns about the move to the Humanities Quadrangle, including concerns about how much closed-door open space will be available. In terms of the offices designated for graduate students, will they only be available to be reserved by graduate students? Another question raised was the general lack of departmental support for teaching and professionalization. To give one example related to both: almost everyone at the meeting who had TFed had not been observed by the professor of the course. **Connor Williams:** We also had questions about external grants, and the idea that you essentially lose a semester of funding if you get a big grant; many historians travel and require these grants. There was a lot of support for UPass. **Burt Westermeier:** And a lot of students felt strongly about the desire for extended library hours. **Connor Williams:** They also want to recreate the Blue Dog cafe once the Humanities Quadrangle is open: a cafe that is subsidized, cheap, and open for more than three hours a day. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** Who is Humanities Quadrangle point person? **Maria del Mar Galindo:** Katie Lofton, Dean of the Humanities.

C. Genetics

Zach Marin: The biggest thing we heard about had to do with Mental Health and Magellan appointments; it takes a long time to get an appointment, and driving to a provider far away can be difficult. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** You can specify that you want to see a provider in the area. And it should only take a week to get a Magellan referral. **Zach Marin:** It may be that there is little information about the program. Students don't know what they're supposed to do. Students also raised the possibility of having a TapRide only for graduate students, given how slow it is. **Meaghan McGeary:** We're working on TapRid, including developing a cancellation policy that stops you from being able to request more rides if you cancel twice in one night. The cancellation rates are astronomical, which makes it very hard to schedule efficiently.

Zach Marin: Students also wanted to see more opportunities for academic development. On diversity, students wanted access to others working on diversity, people that they could network with. **Megan Kelley:** [The Yale BBS Diversity and Inclusion Collective](#) is a good place to start. **Zach Marin:** Students also raised the question of an Ombudsperson.

VIII. Resource spotlight

IX. Miscellaneous

Julianne Rolf: I spoke to Dean Gladney about the Women Faculty Forum. There seemed to be a sense that there wasn't enough of a push from graduate students for faculty diversity? So we may want to raise our voice on this.

Lucy Armentano: We have a small pot of money left over in our budget. If you have ideas on how to use this, email jeremy.gaison@yale.edu and lucylle.armentano@yale.edu. On February 24th, we'll have

President Salovey. We'll jump right into questions when he arrives; email us with any questions you have.

CJ Rice: The Humanities Caucus is having a pre-Peter Salovey visit meeting next Monday at 5pm in Watson. **Devan Solanki:** Could we put questions forward to the Chair so we're all not vying to talk?

John Gonzalez: Or have the Slack open so that you can read them out as they emerge? **Connor Williams:** The model of having written questions pre-submitted is a good one. Once we start conversation, I encourage everyone to limit themselves to one question to the president and hope that someone else will follow up if the answer is not sufficient. **Lucy Armentano:** We'll strategize on how best to tackle this conversation and get back to you.

Meeting adjourned at 8.08pm