

GSA General Assembly Meeting
Monday, September 9th, 2019
6:00PM, Watson (60 Sachem Street), Room A74

Meeting began at 6.01pm

I. Approval of the agenda
Agenda was approved.

II. Conversation with Michelle Nearon, Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Student Development and Diversity, and Denzil Streete, Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Development and Diversity

The Chair (Lucy Armentano, Psychology) introduced Deans Nearon and Streete, highlighting that GSA would be working closely with them on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Dean Michelle Nearon: The Office of Graduate Student Development and Diversity has several new initiatives. GSAS has three primary goals for 2019-2020, which Dean Cooley has submitted to the President's office. Diversity is the first. As part of a university-wide effort, every Dean will submit a diversity plan. GSAS, as the second-largest school at Yale, will develop a diversity strategy that is very specific, all the way down to the department level.

I will meet personally with leadership in each department, helping them to develop a diversity strategy focusing on four pillars: recruitment, retention, development, and health and wellness. We'll ask 8-9 questions related to each, and based on these, we'll put together a strategy proposal, avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches. The hope is to have no more than one or two weeks of turnaround per department.

We are piloting this with a small group of departments. We'll gather data every year to develop recruitment initiatives that are data-driven. Some departments are particularly advanced on tackling these issues.

Sydney Muchnik (Genetics): What types of initiatives are you hoping to explore? **Dean Nearon:** To begin with: do departments already have a diversity committee? Do faculty actively engage in recruitment? When students decline Yale offers we ask for the primary reason; prospectives often reply that the research at Yale wasn't a good fit. We're hoping to expand information about the extent of the types of research that are being done at Yale. In terms of retention: do departments do check-ins with first-year students? What do departments do if there is an issue with writing or another key skill? How do you help students prepare for qualifying exams? Regarding health and wellness: what do you do to create an inclusive climate in your department? Are faculty familiar with mental health and other resources? Do they know what resources they can point their students toward?

Denzil Streete: OGSDD has produced a brochure highlighting efforts related to both prospective and current graduate students. We're trying to expand notions of diversity—which goes beyond issues related

to underrepresented communities—and partnering with GSA on getting a better understanding of how graduate students define diversity. We'll launch a postcard/poster campaign over the next few days.

We're hoping to expand and deepen this conversation on campus. OGSDD has student fellows and ambassadors. This year, incoming students will have to submit a diversity statement. The idea is to have the entire graduate school discussing diversity. I will expand this conversation through my own travels for recruitment.

Michelle Nearon: As a final note, our office is a resource office for all students—not just those from underrepresented groups.

Nicolle Rosa Mercado (Biophysics): How will you measure student engagement? **Michelle Nearon:** In the strategic plan for each department, we'll make sure they have assessment tools in place. The idea would be to work with a control group and identify touch points: what can we be doing differently/what should we be doing differently? We want to journey-map students' path through the program, and talk carefully to those who are thinking of leaving a program. I answer all emails and would be happy to take more suggestions.

Barbara Di Gennaro (History): What are some specific goals, and how are they time-bound? A lot of graduate student unhappiness that develops over time—how do we identify what's DEI-related and what's not? **Michelle Nearon:** I can share a sample strategic plan at a future meeting. The goals will be department-specific and set in the September-October meetings. In terms of unhappiness, we'll speak to people specifically who are thinking of leaving the program.

Ethan Perets (Chemistry): Chemistry recently had Dean Gladney come speak about faculty development and diversity. It's encouraging to see the university tackle this at all levels. One area that would have a large impact would be student participation in faculty hiring processes. Could this be a focus? **Denzil Streete:** Some departments already do this. We can share best practices as we encounter them.

CJ Rice (History): What will the pilot programs be? **Michelle Nearon:** This is not confirmed, but we are approaching Religious Studies, Chemistry, Geology/Geophysics, Sociology, and BBS.

Zach Michielli (Architecture): For departments that are housed within professional schools, will there be specific initiatives? **Michelle Nearon:** I've already reached out to assistant associate deans, and to the DGSes of the programs.

Megan Kelley (Neuroscience): What strategies are you putting in place to make faculty and the administration to think deeply about these issues? **Michelle Nearon:** This is another reason why this will be department-specific. We'll start with conversations with the Chair or DGS and have them present out to faculty to start developing an initial strategy. We hope some departments will invite us in to have more in-depth conversations. One-off sessions with faculty have not been particularly impactful, so we're trying other approaches. If you have other suggestions, we'll take them.

Ryan Petersburg (GSA Vice-Chair, Physics): Masters students tend to have a very different experience to PhD students. **Michelle Nearon:** We're posing questions for both PhD and Masters students to address that.

Stephen Breazeale (Nursing): There are some departments where diversity metrics might work in the opposite direction: in nursing, nationally 9% of the workforce is male. What kinds of metrics can you use comparatively? **Michelle Nearon:** We'll use some national metrics for programs, but each department will have to define its own relevant metrics to measure year-to-year.

Nicolle Rose Mercado (Biophysics): Biological and Biomedical Science hosts lots of departments, and their definitions of diversity range. Will the approach for BBS be global? **Michelle Nearon:** Pharmacology will be one of our pilot programs. Other programs will be approached individually.

Denzil Streete: As a final note, we have thirteen fellows who work in our office—all graduate students who interface with the student body. **Michelle Nearon:** We hope to come back and report some good initial results on our next visit.

III. Introduction to GSA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative for 2019-2020

Maria Del Mar Galindo (GSA Secretary; English): The GSA will be slotting its own work under the initiatives that have just been described. We'll use our reach into all departments to help OGSDD with its initial goal of defying diversity widely. We'll support reps to hold coffee meetings or informal conversations in their departments to gather information from constituencies about how they define diversity, and what obstacles, challenges, and potential objectives they can identify. As we gather this data, we hope to support a campus-wide conversation on these issues, as well as to shift the way in which GSA representatives are interacting with their constituencies. Once this data is gathered, we hope to partner with OGSDD to develop a tool, workshop, or a set of policy recommendations to take forward in the spring.

IV. Working session

The Chair invited reps to introduce themselves in small groups and have a discussion about what existing diversity initiatives or tools exist in their departments, as well as about the DEI initiative more generally. Groups reported back to the Assembly.

Megan Kelley (Neuroscience): Lack of diversity manifests in a lot of different ways, at different levels. Not just the tools and parameters students have to work with now, but the legacy of how those tools were designed. Some barriers can be hard to identify. **Jake Spies (Chemistry):** The stage at which diversity initiatives start also matters. In some fields, certain groups are excluded as early as high school. Outreach may need to happen at the undergraduate level, or even before. **Sydney Muchnik (Genetics):** Some departments have graduate students working in different locations. Any initiative should take this into account. **Andie Berry (English):** Significant questions can be asked in different ways. One way might be to ask graduate students what they say, emphasize, de-emphasize when working on outreach or describing their program. **Lucy Armentano (GSA Chair; Psychology):** We'll receive some further training from

OGSDD at a future meeting. **Megan Kelley:** It's also important to note that some institutions at Yale are militantly undiversified. There may be active pushback from them. **Lucy Armentano:** The Assembly will continue to have working and discussion time around these issues.

V. Elections

A. Elections Committee

The **Vice-Chair** gave a recap of upcoming elections and the duties of the Elections Committee. The Assembly elected, by unanimous consent, the elections committee that was proposed by the Summer Steering Committee.

Ryan Petersburg (Physics) was elected to represent the Sciences.

Maria del Mar Galindo (English) was elected to represent the Humanities.

Daniel Giraldo Páez (Economics) was elected to represent the Social Sciences.

B. GSAS Executive Committee

The **Chair** and **Service Committee Chair**, past members of the Executive Committee, explained the duties of the committee.

Maria Del Mar Galindo (English) nominated Andie Berry (English) to represent the Humanities.

Andie Berry was elected by unanimous consent.

Julianne Rolf (Chemical and Environmental Engineering) nominated Trevor Williams (Economics) to represent the Social Sciences.

Trevor Williams was elected by unanimous consent.

Louis Brown (Mathematics) nominated himself to represent the Sciences.

Gadareth Higgs (Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology) nominated Nicolle Rosa Mercado (Biophysics) to represent the Sciences.

Louis Brown was elected to represent the Sciences (27 votes in favor; 22 against; 4 absentions).

VI. Miscellaneous

The Chair provided general background on the Title IX Advisory Board and encouraged reps to apply. **Sydney Muchnik (Genetics)**, a past board member, outlined more specific duties and the ways in which student reps can contribute. She highlighted that representation on the Board is currently science-heavy and would benefit from representatives in the Humanities. Interested reps who want more information should contact mariadelmar.galindo@yale.edu.

The Vice-Chair reminded the Assembly, on behalf of the Facilities and Healthcare Chair, that the deadline for signing up for vision or dental care is September 15th. Reps should remind their constituents.

Meeting adjourned at 7.43pm.