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President’s Farewell

Dear Graduate and Professional Students,

Serving as your President this past year was such a great opportunity and I have learned so much. My favorite aspect was having the chance to interact with graduate students across the university. Even aside from research, our graduate student body is extremely diverse. It was an enriching experience hearing from and working with a lot of you throughout the academic year.

Another highlight of my role was working with the members of the GSA Cabinet. Because of their hard work organizing events and collaborating with offices on campus, we have accomplished more than we set out to achieve in August of last year. These graduate students have devoted their time and energy to enhancing the graduate student experience at USC.

This Annual Report provides a breakdown of what the GSA leadership has accomplished during the 2014-2015 school year. Some of our top achievements this year were:

1. Enhanced visibility on campus and increased participation of graduate students. More graduate students are serving on university committees, and offices on campus are reaching out to the GSA when developing programming/events for students. Enhanced graduate student participation is evident in increased interaction on social media, more graduate students at social events than in years past, and more graduate students interested in serving on the GSA Cabinet.

2. Made strides in health insurance, including increased awareness of the need for health insurance literacy to the Board of Trustees, President, and Provost which resulted in the formation of the Graduate Student Health Insurance Task Force. The GSA also advertised to graduate students their health insurance options regarding the Affordable Care Act and university-sponsored health insurance. Finally, the GSA established a dialogue and wrote a letter to President Pastides recommending an increase in the graduate student health insurance subsidy.

3. Worked towards financial development for both the GSA and graduate student organizations. The GSA created a new Financial Resource Website that clearly explains the funding request process for graduate student organizations. In an effort to maintain financial transparency, the GSA budgets and any other financial changes were made available to the graduate student body. Finally, the GSA passed a Special Initiatives Resolution allowing more effective and efficient use of graduate student funds to benefit the graduate student body.

4. Worked to fill gaps where graduate students were not as well-represented on campus. This included establishing a graduate student track for the Professional Development Certification Program, developing an Intercultural Training Program specifically for graduate students, and significantly increasing the number of active graduate student seats on university committees.

As you can see we have come a long way and hope to only grow from here. I look forward to working with the next GSA leadership team to accomplish even more in the coming year. Your newly elected President, Andrew Fogner, is a true Gamecock having earned is undergraduate degree here and he is excited to represent the graduate student body this coming academic year!

Sincerely,

Brittany Walter, Former GSA President
ORGANIZATION ADVANCEMENT

• A restructuring of the GSA Cabinet, including new position descriptions, responsibilities, and yearly expectations to increase efficiency

• The GSA Office was moved from Russell House to the Graduate School on the 3rd floor of the Byrnes Building
  o Promoted communication and collaboration between the Graduate School and the GSA

• Increase in number of programs and projects offered to graduate students during the course of the year

• Establishment of new Cabinet positions, including
  o Professional Development Liaison
  o University Affairs Liaison
  o Social Media Coordinator
  o Community Service Officer

• Restructuring of the GSA Newsletter
  o New recurring sections
    ▪ Including “Did You Know” section, advertising campus resources not well known to graduate students
  o More comprehensive distribution to graduate students through the Graduate School’s listserv instead of Blackboard

• Creation of a year-long GSA Graduate Health Task Force
  o Formed to serve the graduate student body’s health needs more comprehensively
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- New application process to fill GSA Cabinet positions led to higher interest in leadership roles and an even larger active GSA Leadership Team
- Continued distribution of bi-weekly newsletters with events, resources, and opportunities specifically for graduate students
- Social Media:
  - Use of social media has led to an increased engagement with graduate students and a new ability to distribute timely messages to students.
  - Addition of Social Media Coordinator, Anais Parada to maintain various GSA social media pages
    - Facebook
      - Our first pathway into social media remains our most utilized
      - Over the past year we have increased “likes” by 60%
      - Increased interaction with other USC Facebook pages
      - www.facebook.com/uscgssa
    - Twitter: linked to our Facebook page and also used to share real time updates during university events, etc.
      - www.twitter.com/uscgssa
    - Instagram: continued use and ability to share photos with students in real time; working to build a following on this platform
      - http://instagram.com/uscgssa
    - LinkedIn: continued use of LinkedIn group to help foster professional connections between current and past graduate students across USC
      - https://www.linkedin.com/groups/University-South-Carolina-Graduate-Student-7449101/about
  - Google Calendar: continued use of an online interactive calendar regularly updated with upcoming GSA events
    - https://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=pjn1pbgt0hm5apf80ck6p72ag4%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/New_York
● Graduate Student Forums:
  o Forums held in the Fall and Spring, where important reflections from graduate students were collected, and students had a chance to interact directly with Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Jessica Elfenbein
  o Results of the forum discussions were summarized and shared in the GSA newsletter and in reports to The Graduate School
  o Plans to continue to hold these forums at least once per semester each year

● Engagement with Graduate Student Organizations
  o Organized GSO Luncheon to bring together the leaders of graduate student organizations for idea exchanges and collaboration
    ▪ Increased participation from GSO officers
  o Graduate Organization Liaison, Sara Rhodes, sent requests to all graduate student organizations to attend one of their meetings and provide information on the GSA and funding allocation systems
  o GSA Treasurer, Brianna Hughes, continued to liaise with graduate student organizations on their funding needs and offered two sets of workshops for treasurers, including a Fall and Spring series

● Engagement with international students
  o Continued to reach out the international student community and received increased engagement in GSA activities during the 2014-2015 school year
  o Worked with the International Student Services and the Graduate School to offer an Intercultural Training Program for graduate students
    ▪ Previously only offered to undergraduates and faculty/staff
  o GSA members made and served lunch to international students through the Columbia Council for Internationals
UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

- President Brittany Walter spoke on behalf of the graduate student body to the Board of Trustees
  - Graduate concerns were expressed, including increased awareness of graduate students on campus and graduate student health insurance literacy
- Increase in the graduate student inclusion on university committees
- A growing collaboration with The Graduate School has helped to create meaningful changes in programming and communication
  - GSA office now located in the Graduate School
  - Semesterly luncheons with the GSA Cabinet and Deans of the Graduate School for strategic planning
  - GSA Graduate Council Representative, Danielle Schoffman, provided monthly updates to the Graduate Council to aid in increased communication and engagement
- Hosted a Getting into Graduate School Workshop
  - Panel discussion by GSA members for undergraduates interested in applying for graduate school
- Continued collaborations with:
  - Student Government (SG)
    - Built on the relationship between the GSA and Student Government
    - GSA President, Brittany Walter, and former student-body president, Lindsay Richardson, created and successfully passed a collaborative resolution for an open access and open electronic resource initiative through SG Senate
    - Collaborated with SG to offer a Syllabus Bank to students, including graduate syllabi
    - Created the University Affairs Liaison, Andrew Fogner, who worked as the graduate student representative to SG; attended SG Meetings, included SG initiatives and events in the newsletter
    - Worked with SG to recruit graduate students to sit on University Committees
- Faculty Senate
  - President Brittany Walter attended monthly meetings
  - Graduate student included on the Ad Hoc IT Committee

- Counseling and Human Development Center
  - Co-sponsored a Suicide Prevention Workshop for graduate students
  - Co-sponsored a Stress Busters Event that offered healthy refreshments, an informational fair, presentation on how to cope with stress, and meditation/yoga session

- Career Center
  - Continued collaboration and new plans for future workshops
  - Co-sponsored $tart $mart workshops for graduate students

- University Libraries
  - Continued work with Dean McNally and Beki Gettys to develop plans for the Graduate Student Lounge in the Thomas Cooper Library, including a survey for student input
  - Inclusion of the GSA President on the Library Affairs Committee to offer student input in USC library system decisions

- Healthy Carolina
  - Continued collaboration with Jessica Johnston to engage graduate students in health initiatives on campus
  - Continued inclusion of graduate students on Healthy Carolina coalitions, including a new role on GSA for a representative to serve on many coalitions each year (GSA Health and Wellness Liaison)
  - Inclusion of the GSA President on the Healthy Carolina Steering Council to offer input on the future directions of health programming

- Student Health Services
  - Continued collaboration with Dr. Debbie Beck, Director of Student Health Services, to offer input on current services and provide suggestions for new offerings and informational programming
  - Developed plans for new informational materials about student health fees and student health insurance, specifically for graduate students
Collaborated with Lisa Money to offer a *Shopping on a Stipend Workshop* for graduate students

- **Center for Teaching Excellence**
  - Continued collaboration with CTE staff, including Dr. Michelle Hardee
  - Inclusion of GSA Cabinet members as TA Veterans for orientation to provide a contact for future questions and advertise for GSA
  - See below, *Professional Development*, for more details on specific programming

- **MyCarolina Alumni Association**
  - Inclusion of the GSA in graduation activities, including a services fair held in April, 2015 for spring graduates (undergrad and graduate students)
  - Plans to discuss future services for graduate students through MyCarolina

- **University Visitors Center**
  - Continued collaboration to advertise for and recruit graduate students to serve as *University Ambassadors* (tour guides for prospective graduate students)
  - Partnership to offer GSA specific materials and contact information to prospective graduate students

- **Veterans Student Services Advisory Committee**
  - GSA Military Affairs Liaison, Aubrey Sejuit, has continued serving on this committee as a graduate student representative

- **Provost’s Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues (PACWI)**
  - Graduate students continuously serve on this committee and the Women’s Graduate Student Subcommittee of PACWI

### GSA FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

- The GSA created a new [GSA Funding Resources website] that clearly explains the funding request process for graduate student organizations. The website also includes direct links to necessary documents to increase efficiency of the funding request process.
- In an effort to maintain transparency GSA finances, the 2015-16 budget was made available to the graduate student body before approval.
- The GSA Executive Officers passed a Special Initiatives Resolution through the Graduate Finance Committee allowing the allocation of graduate student organization funds for initiatives that would benefit the entire graduate student body.
• Treasurer, Brianna Hughes, drafted and published new language for the GSA funding bylaws
• An extremely active Finance Committee, chaired by Ryan LaMonica, with several members working as a team to allocate funds to various graduate student organizations
• Finance Committee members met bi-weekly

STUDENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• Certification Series developed enabling graduate student to attain tangible certification after attending training workshops
  o Trainings included Appreciative Advising, SafeZone training, Suicide Prevention, and Self Defense Training
• Professional Development Liaison, Nathan Cornwell, worked with Student Leadership to create a graduate student track for the Professional Development Certification program beginning next year.
• Intercultural Training Program for graduate students now offered through collaboration with International Student Services, GSA, and the Graduate School
• In response to requests from faculty and students, the GSA organized a graduate student specific Active Shooter Seminar
• Partnered with the Graduate School to offer an Intellectual Property Workshop by Zach Lukemire
  o Informed graduate students of their rights when it comes to research and publishing
  o Future workshops planned for the coming academic year
• Organized and cohosted a variety of programs to promote professional development workshops:
  o $tart $mart wage negotiation workshops
  o Teaching Philosophy workshops
    ▪ Co-sponsored with CTE
  o Panel discussion on career choices outside academia
    ▪ Cohosted by the Career Center
STUDENT ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Graduate Student Week:
  - In celebration of National Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week, the GSA held a week of events from April 6-10, including:
    - BBQ and Beer at River Rat Brewery
    - Staying Happy in Grad School Seminar
      - Associate Professor of Clinical Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science, Dr. Kenneth Phelps, talked with graduate students about successfully maintaining a good work/life balance while earning a graduate degree, including a question/answer session.
    - Trivia at World of Beer
    - Event Coordinator, Dominic Casali hosted a challenging game of Trivia with prizes!
    - Intercollege Food Drive Competition for Harvest Hope

- Health and Wellness:
  - Cosponsored a Stress Busters workshop with the Counseling and Human Development Center during exam time for graduate students
• Intramural Sports:
  o Continuation of GSA-sponsored intramural sports teams made specifically for graduate students, thanks to the efforts of GSA Event Coordinator, Dominic Casali
    ▪ Participated in softball for the Fall and Spring semesters
• Academics and Fun
  o Offered a *Grading and Writing Party* that provided a space for grading papers and writing papers with coffee and holiday treats
• Social Events:
  o *Welcome Back Event* at River Rat Brewery including a graduate student band
    ▪ Largest turnout in GSA history
    ▪ Plans to continue next year!
  o *Inaugural Football Tailgate*
    ▪ A great success and a lot of fun!
    ▪ Plans to continue this tradition next year
  o *Fall and Spring Happy Hours at Thirsty Fellow*
    ▪ With extremely high turn out rates
• Community Service:
  o Organized *Gardening at the Green Quad* service event for graduate students to participate in
  o Offered a Intercollege Food Drive Competition during Graduate Student Week to collect food for Harvest Hope
  o GSA members made and served lunch to international students through the Columbia Council for Internationals
  o Promote the service opportunities available through the Service Carolina department
Andrew Fogner, President

Andrew Fogner is a masters candidate in the Department of Epidemiology in the Arnold School of Public Health and has served as the University Affairs Liaison for GSA this past year. Andrew earned a B.S. in Chemistry and Spanish in 2014 from the University of South Carolina. His current research interests include global health and infectious disease. His focus is in international health disparities. He is currently a Graduate Assistant for the Department of Health and Environmental Control in the Department of Chronic Disease. He is a native of South Carolina and originally from the small town of Conway. Andrew has assisted the GSA with collaborative initiatives and communication between the GSA, the Undergraduate Student Government, and Student Life.

Aubrey L. Sejuit, Vice President

Aubrey L. Sejuit is a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. program and has served as the Military Affairs Liaison for the GSA for the last two years. Aubrey earned her A.A. in Letters, Arts, and Sciences in 2004, a B.A. in Sociology and a B.A. in History in 2007, and an M.Ed. in Teaching and Curriculum in 2009—all from Penn State. She earned her M.S.W. in Social Work in 2012 from Syracuse University. She deployed to Baghdad, Iraq with the 203D MI BN as an Intelligence Analyst during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Aubrey is a licensed master social worker (LMSW) in NY and a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor (CASAC). She is the Ritual Advisor for the Lambda Theta Chapter of Phi Mu, Doctoral Student at-Large of Chi Sigma Iota (counseling honor society), and Vice President of the Columbia Alumnae Panhellenic. Aubrey is on the Provost Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues, Disability Affairs Committee, Veteran Student Services Advisory Committee, and University Libraries Committee. She is a recipient of University of South Carolina’s Leadership Pin and Penn State’s Outstanding Young Alumni award. Aubrey’s research interests include military affairs, addictions, at-risk youth, educational attainment, and LGBTQI populations.
Mark VanDriel, Treasurer

Mark VanDriel is originally from Greeley Colorado, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of Northern Colorado in 2009. He came to the University of South Carolina in 2011 as a Ph.D. Student in History and was awarded a Presidential Doctoral Fellowship. His research examines the growth of consumer culture and a consumerism for newborn infants in the United States since World War II, and has broad interests in consumerism, family planning, and technology working in the family throughout recent history. He has served on the Graduate Finance Council, the Library Supervisory Council, and as president of the Graduate History Association student organization while a student at USC. For the last two years he has been the Graduate Assistant for the History Center. In his free time he enjoys racquetball, hiking, and cooking.

Brittany Walter, Graduate Council Representative

Brittany Walter is a fourth year doctoral student and Presidential Fellow studying biological anthropology in the Department of Anthropology. Her research interests include bioarchaeology, paleodemography, Medieval England, and forensic anthropology. Brittany’s dissertation research focuses on evaluating the effects of urbanization on the mortality of medieval London using paleodemographic and biochemical approaches. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Florida as a Florida Opportunity Scholar and her Master of Arts degree as a Deans Fellow from the University of Central Florida. Brittany has served as both the Graduate Council Representative and President of the GSA. While at the University of South Carolina, Brittany has also served as a member of the Graduate Finance Committee, several University committees, and has assisted with events and policies for graduate students at USC through the GSA. She was also chosen as a student spotlight in the No Limits campaign for USC.
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University of South Carolina Graduate Student Association