1. Call to Order and Agenda Review [1 min]
   1. Shane Arlington (Co-Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:03PM
2. Approval of Minutes from 10-19-2020
   1. Ben Taylor (Political Science): Motion to approve the minutes
   2. Stephan Kemper (Admin & Funding Chair) and Samantha Bell (MSEM): Seconded
   3. Vote: Yea:27, Abstain:3, Nay:0. The motion passes.
3. Elections for GRO Social Chair (Spring Term) [30 min]
   1. Voting link: [http://etc.ch/jHQD](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fetc.ch%2FjHQD&data=02%7C01%7CGro%40jhu.edu%7Ca428667a09914d25ce3d08d855ba4688%7C9fa4f438b1e6473b803f86f8aedf0dec%7C0%7C0%7C637353605817678767&sdata=q26k5zIDBHBnRBLirPnWVcf943Q3r32RdU691F0MzLg%3D&reserved=0)
   2. GC Representatives used the same access tokens as those used on 09/13 and 10/19
      1. GC Reps were asked to DM Shane or Eugenia Volkova (Secretary) if they were missing their tokens.
   3. Conor Bean (Co-Chair) acted as election official. Conor read the election introduction and rules.
   4. The Social Chair Position Description
      1. The Social Chair of the GRO Shall:
         1. Be responsible for the encouragement of the interdepartmental community through coordination of all aspects of the GRO’s social programming. This includes, but is not restricted to, the Orientation BBQ, Coffee Hours, Happy Hours, bus trips, and wine tastings.
         2. Manage the budget allotted for social events.
         3. Be paid for no more than 250 hours each per academic year (Note: The current allocated hours for Spring 2021 are 110. More hours may be allocated by a vote of the GRO General Council to facilitate further social programming).
   5. Nominees for Social Chair:
      1. Ece Ozdemir (Turkey, 1st Year PhD in the Hristova lab, Mat Sci Department)
      2. A speech by the candidate, Ece, and a Q &A session followed. Then the GC had a closed-door discussion session.
      3. A motion to vote was made and seconded.
      4. The poll was opened. Ece was selected as one of the Social Chairs for Spring 2021.
4. E-board Report (Shane & Conor) [45 min]
   1. Feedback on Prodensity
      1. Shane (Co-Chair): We have raised concerns regarding Prodensity tracking/warning to various levels of the administration.
         1. According to the administration, IT is working on solutions to the issue of those outside campus connecting to the wireless network.
         2. We have been told that until a solution is found, no warnings will be issues.
         3. Faculty & staff are also being given warnings for noncompliance – not clear what penalties they might face
      2. Eugenia (Secretary): The JHU 2020 Restart Student Advisory Committee received a message this afternoon that included the following information:
         1. Our colleagues in IT report that they have adjusted the Wi-Fi reach with new rules on Tuesday of last week. If any of you continue to experience the issue, can you please send your information to (link) so that IT can follow-up and continue to make changes.
         2. This link is not open to the full student body and is only open to the current committee. If you have any suggestions about locations we should test, please email Eugenia and she will run around to these locations to check whether she gets flagged as incorrectly being on campus.
   2. Administrative response to COVID-19 workplace concerns
      1. Conor (Co-Chair): Response sent to all grads on Tuesday, October 27th
         1. Promises of expanded testing, first for widespread testing for concerned asymptomatic individuals, eventually for community screening
         2. Discussion of safety ambassadors; increase in program by mid-December
            1. “We also note your concerns about inconsistency in JHU guidelines. Please let me know any specifics related to what you believe to be inconsistencies. It is our intention to have clear and consistent guidance, acknowledging that guidelines and policies evolve over time as our own understanding of the pandemic evolves. Of course, this goal of consistency does not mean that the exact same guidance will apply in all settings (e.g., labs vs. classrooms vs. offices)”
      2. If you have faced or are aware of inconsistencies in return to research policies, please reach out to Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs are trying to collate a response.
      3. Shane (Co-Chair): A number of the things that have been brought to us as inconsistencies are actually laboratory-specific or divisional inconsistencies that are going against university policies. The administration’s response to me suggests that they are unaware of how much departmental or lab policies deviate from official university policy. If you think that this is happening, this is also something we are very interested in. Please email this information to us.
   3. Discussion of KSAS funding opportunities under consideration
      1. Conor (Co-Chair): As announced at the last KSAS town hall, the central university is providing KSAS with discretionary funds it is using to fund grads with progress disruptions.
         1. Vice Dean Mary Favret says the amount is enough to cover ‘anyone who needs it’
         2. Dean’s Office is opposed to blanket extensions for funding, the Vice Dean said she recognized that 6th year funding is a longstanding issue but is not part of this
         3. Wants funding support tied to ‘worthwhile activity’, proposes:
            1. Increase in Dean’s Teaching Fellowships (DTF’s)/removal of cap
            2. Administrative fellowships to assist with institutional research (capped at 12-15 hours a week)
            3. Changing non-resident tuition policy
         4. Concerns Raised by GRO reps
            1. How to define who needs it
            2. Proliferation of busywork
            3. Need for dedicated PhD research semesters to regain time lost
      2. Jo Giardini (English): You’ve said that there is no time frame for how these things will be going, but given the university’s own policies and that the DTF’s application period has closed (end of Sept/beginning of Oct), this will not be viable for people who have not yet applied and people who need this will not have this opportunity. I also wonder if there is the option to raise the possibility of collaborative, cross-departmental classes that two graduate students could teach together (less busywork). I’m curious about what you said about the WGS program, can you say a few more details about that? I am the current graduate student departmental liaison for the program and can speak to how things have changed regarding WGS.
         1. Conor (Co-Chair): WGS fellowships have been restricted from 6 to 2 this year, that’s a good point. We will also talk more later in this meeting about another option to fill out more of these fellowships. DOSL office is interested in filling out a more diverse course load. But we can also raise this point at the Dean’s level to push both the point of putting the WGS fellowships on par with DTF funding and raise the number of WGS fellowships to the original number (6) prior to the cut.
      3. Perry (Anthropology): I will flag a few more things that came out of the meeting
         1. Concern of equity: Someone who is more behind will have to take on additional work to catch up and no clear response beyond acknowledging that this is inherent in mechanisms being proposed.
         2. It’s not clear how this fits into the needs of applying or accessing these resources. For this to be reframed as COVID relief, there is a lack of clarify on how those different competing/accessing relief are meant to be put together and to what extent it’s on individual graduate students to create or propose vs. creating them. How does finite number fit in with the question of COVID relief?
      4. Jo (English): I wonder if research fellowships or dissertation completion fellowships were raised in the meeting. This seems like something we have a paucity of compared to peer institutions. It seems odd that the university say that this would not be something that benefits the institution
         1. Conor: That was raised and I think that there is room to manoeuvre on that, especially given that the proliferation of need compared to actual useful teaching and admin fellowships it is understood that it will not be very likely that there is a 1:1 ratio of useful positions and student need. And the natural solution is a research fellowship that would supplement the other semester and would actually provide time for research and time to degree completion. In terms of framing the conversation, it was a brainstorming session and we are still going to be talking to them about how this unfolds and we will be tapping more GC reps to take part in these discussions as they take place.
      5. Conor (Co-Chair): I can also respond over email and talk offline, if anyone wants to raise anything.
   4. Conference grants awarded
      1. Shane (Co-Chair): 19 conference grants were awarded under the first application
         1. Had budgeted for up to 20/21 (due to the late program start)
         2. We will be having more cycles through the rest of the year. We were able to spend out most of the budget we allocated for this cycle.
   5. Funding provided for talk in Dept. of Comparative Thought and Literature
      1. Shane (Co-Chair): E-Board received a funding request for this event
      2. Name: Emily Nussbaum Talk
      3. Description: Pulitzer Prize-wining TV critic will be doing an interview and a Q&A session with students.
      4. How does this help the GRO mission: This will bring grad students together over a shared interest. They will broaden their knowledge by interacting with a leading name in the field.
      5. Logistics:
         1. Location: Zoom
         2. Date: 10/28/2020
         3. Time: 1:30PM-2:45PM
         4. Total expected attendance: 25 (10 grad students)
         5. Requested Amount: $150 (of $300 total for speaker honorarium, rest from dept. budget)
   6. Summary of Teaching Survey results
      1. Conor (Co-Chair): Tonight’s agenda email included a six-page summary of the teaching survey. These are just some of the highlights.
         1. Grads have reported continuing productivity concerns, many due to the lack of access of resources they rely on for research progress
         2. There are some very worrying trends in grads’ mental health, with common reports of anxiety, depression, and stress
         3. 80% of grads reported being comfortable with online instruction format
         4. Common concerns with online teaching include tech difficulties, increased workload, and difficulty in maintaining student involvement
         5. Most graduate students reported not being aware that, prior to the announcement of online classes, grads would have the option to not teach on campus for non-medical reasons, including discomfort (this is still the policy). The avenue is to go through Christine Kavanaugh (WSE) or Renee Eastwood (KSAS) if you would like to request this.
      2. Matthew Morgado (Philosophy): So, just to clarify, even before the pandemic, grad students could teach off campus for non-medical reasons?
      3. Conor (Co-Chair): No, this is the policy for Fall 2020 reopening during the pandemic. You could go to Christine or Renee and receive a non-medical exemption from teaching in person. This did not happen that much because there was little teaching in person, but this will be the policy moving forward as long as the pandemic is going on.
      4. Shane (Co-Chair): I think it may not be policy that you would be guaranteed such an exemption under normal times, but if there were some situation under normal times, Christine or Renee would be the correct person/people for finding a solution.
   7. PATH committee discussions
      1. Vishal Yadav (Health & Wellness Chair) Waivers for health insurance were made more broadly available to accommodate out-of-state and out-of-country students
         1. Rollover to the spring will occur as usual, but students may extend waivers
      2. There are child-care vouchers and a COVID-19 care-giving relief fund
         1. Open to all full-time doctoral/MD students; postdocs; interns; house-staff; residents & trainees
         2. Tax-free vouchers to pay for care of pre-K children under 6; based on income level; flexible in use locations including several across Baltimore
      3. TimelyMD, Silvercloud, and Calm
         1. Successful with respect to indicated satisfaction, repeat usage, and enrolment
         2. TimelyMD is limited in scope (number of visits capped at 6 per semester, 12 per academic year)
      4. Smoking/Vaping
         1. Expanding services for cessation assistance
      5. Flu vaccines
         1. Students must provide flu vaccination to JHU – participation in the Walgreens program (with voucher) auto informs
         2. There is a silver clip, which is only necessary for people who are entering into medical campus. Confusion with that, because there are so many students on Homewood and JHMI. Followed up on that with Kevin Shollenberger, the rule was always there so the PDF they are sending is not updated. They will let everyone know. You don’t need the flu clip for Homewood but you need it if you are going to JHMI. They will follow-up on this.
      6. The next meeting will be in January/February
      7. Conor (Co-Chair): Regarding TimelyMD, is there is still a soft cap per semester? I have it in your notes as 6 per semester?
      8. Vishal (Health & Wellness Chair): Yes, but it can be extended based on need. They just want to make sure there is a number so it is not for infinite service.
      9. Ambar (Computer Science): Just to clarify, if we are on Homewood and coming to campus intermittently, then we don’t need a flu vaccine necessarily?
      10. Shane (Co-Chair):\*in the text chat
          1. "This year, anyone who is currently spending time on a Johns Hopkins campus, including those living in campus housing or working in labs, will be required to have a flu vaccination or an approved exemption for the 2020–21 academic year by Nov. 20. This policy will continue to apply when we are able to expand campus activity in the future, so even if your classes and activities are completely remote now, you will likely find it helpful to get a flu shot and document compliance with the university, as described below. Students will not be permitted to engage in on-campus activities after Nov. 20 without proof of vaccination or an approved exemption."
          2. From an email titled "JHU flu vaccine program and requirements" sent on Sept. 24th
      11. Vishal (Health & Wellness Chair): No, the vaccine is mandatory
      12. Eugenia (Secretary): As of November 20th, or November 21st your Prodensity app will permanently be red if you do not complete the vaccine. This officially bars you from entering any campus buildings or campus in general. So you definitely do need to get the vaccine.
   8. Administrative response regarding Pass/Fail grading
      1. Shane (Co-Chair): Christine & Renee feel very certain that they never messaged anything about P/F grading in the Fall
         1. August 21st WSE email stated “Standard grading policies will apply in Fall 2020”
      2. The original text raised to the E-Board cited “S/U” grading, which we were emphatically told is never applied to graduate courses
      3. The Deans offices do not seem willing to consider making P/F a default option
         1. There should be lots of flexibility for grads to take courses P/F, though many departments have policies which make this challenging
         2. In Material Science, for core courses for PhD students, you need to achieve a certain grade in order to earn credit for this.
         3. Christine seems to think that there is a “grade equivalency” for this and that there is a value for a “Pass”
      4. Also, many departments have a limit to how many classes you can take as P/F and still graduate.
      5. We are requesting the Dean’s office override any divisional/departmental caps on number of P/F courses for graduation for courses during 2020
      6. Any individuals with specific concerns or questions should speak to faculty in charge of the class, or Christine Kavanagh/Renee Eastwood
      7. Grant Kitchen (Mat Sci): I talked to Jonah Erlebacher (Department Chair of Mat Sci Department), He had a talk with the first-year students and said that it doesn’t matter if they take the (core) classes P/F this year, they will still count this year. It seems like this is a departmental decision.
      8. Shane (Co-Chair): Unless a department says otherwise, every graduate student should be able to take any graduate course P/F. There were some temporary overrides allowed last semester (if you could only take 2 courses P/F and you took 3, that would be okay). What we’re concerned about is P/F cap rollover and allowance for this year.
   9. Update on Dean of Student Life coalition and diversity initiatives
      1. Shane (Co-Chair): Subcommittees reported to Dean Ruzicka regarding proposed initiatives, in particular:
         1. Training and education regarding diversity & inclusion for graduate students prior to instruction of undergraduates
         2. Graduate students hired as fellows to provide training/courses marked as satisfying a course requirement for diversity, with additional research semester as a means of extended support
            1. This is not an ideal solution but this at least something.
         3. Directing central university funding to programs like WGS and Centre for Africana Studies
            1. It was brought up that there should be more direct funding for these programs, not contingent on these initiatives.
            2. Dean Ruzicka mentioned the idea of a Center for Asian studies.
         4. Peer-led trainings (at the undergraduates or graduate levels independently)
            1. To be a true peer group, it should not be mixed undergraduate/graduate.
         5. Providing a selection of course/trainings on D&I with a core curriculum and requiring 1 to 2 courses, rather than mandating one specific course
            1. A core curriculum across the courses but some choice and flexibility. Students may be more likely to like the classes if they can choose them.
      2. Her response was very positive, but noted that timelines for implementation might be long (with the exception of the teaching fellowships for students)
         1. Undergraduates seemed very impatient. So, there has been a focus on some shorter-term and actionable suggestions and to define what the objectives of the training should be.
      3. Sub-committees renewed focus on short-term actionable items & defining scope/content suggestions
      4. Conor (Co-Chair): The division of labour in this coalition is split. Yuri and Shane are looking into the trainings and I am on the side that is looking into the proposal coming from undergraduate student groups. They would like to have, parallel to the writing-intensive requirement, a parallel tag for something involving Critical Study of Race, Gender, and Baltimore history. It would be a requirement for all undergraduates to take a course like this. The courses on offer now would not match the demand if students would be required to take courses like this. I believe the office of DOSL has more ability to actually directly implement by its own imitative the kind of training that the group is looking at. In terms of course requirements, what’s been fairly frustrating is that there is not a real indication of what needs to be done to make this an academic reality of undergraduate life at JHU because we would need the KSAS and Whiting Deans buy-in.
      5. Conor (Co-Chair): Regarding Jo’s earlier comment, it seems like the funding for WGS could come from the support of the DOSL office, but again this is much more aspirational than is admitted in these meetings. And there is going to be a long time before there is a kind of clearance and support before this is institutional for grads. Also, a separate course for grads but it seems near-impossible to understand how all departments would sign off on something like that.
      6. Yuri (Advocacy Chair): There is no exact timeline for the plans we will implement but we have decided on a number of factors, like requiring that grad students go to some kind of training and that they can chose whether they go to gender or race training. We may not be able to benefit from the implementation of this program. It may depend on when they can implement the program.
      7. Shane (Co-Chair): There was a clear consensus in the group that there would also be sections of the courses that talk about intersectionality. To Conor’s point: training can be introduced into the curriculum in a faster way than introducing this into the academic curriculum. For grads, this will be a hard sell for departments (unwilling to add additional academic requirements). But like research ethics is required for all WSE students, JHU has made sure that all students take it. I would hope that something similar occurs in this space.
      8. Wangui Mbuguiro (Communications Chair): I think it’s the teaching academy that puts on the training session that is mandatory for WSE TA’s before teaching a class, have you reached out to the teaching academy to check if they have any resources for this?
         1. Shane (Co-Chair): I have not personally, but I will reach out to them in the coming week. They would certainly be worth checking out.
      9. Jo (English): I’m curious to what degree these conversations have also gone into questions of faculty hiring, because that would be a necessary question of support, even if we are having grad students teaching questions in these areas. Even if we don’t (currently) have graduate students teaching classes in their areas, faculty support would be necessary for providing for graduate students who would be teaching in these areas. For example, in WGS for 5 years we have been planning on hiring a faculty member shared with the History Department, and this was some of the rationale for taking away some of the WGS teaching fellowships (4 out of 6). However, this hiring process was frozen due to the COVID-19 financial restrictions.
         1. Shane (Co-Chair): Our group has not talked a lot about it. I have noted that there needs to be faculty involvement in the development of these trainings and that I think we need faculty taking these required courses.
         2. Conor (Co-Chair): Jo, that’s another good point. That’s been pressed by a number of undergraduates. A concern with a lack of the university’s faculty hiring freeze and it’s unclear what will be done to resolve this. There needs to be a greater emphasis on hiring faculty for these courses and providing direct resources for WGS or Centre for Africana studies. We’ve been running into “Yes, that’s a great idea” without any semblance of follow-up. It’s unclear if who we are talking to have any direct communication to the people at the school level who would end up dedicating resources to the centres and programs in question. DOSL Ruzicka seemed interested to split support for Africana and WGS fellowships but no fleshed-out plan for what this looks like. DOSL wants to be very supportive right now in how it frames its approach and in terms of how it frames what students are supporting but difficult to get a framing of institutional support. I would be happy to talk more about who we should be tapping for this. Would be good for having some specifics about mechanisms lined up, it doesn’t seem like DOSL office is doing that research right now.
         3. Next full coalition meeting is November 18th
         4. Jo (English): Do we know where things are with the hiring for a centre for Africana studies director?
         5. Shane (Co-Chair): I have not heard anything
         6. Conor (Co-Chair): There was no mention in the latest meeting.
   10. Ona Ambrozaite (Graduate Involvement Chair): Just a really quick reminder to send out your October report if you haven’t already. If you don’t know how to send our emails to your department, reach out to your departmental administrators.
5. Open Discussion & Questions
   1. Eugenia (Secretary): Do we have any updates regarding the International Student Survey and what is its current status of circulation?
      1. Shane (Co-Chair) We drafted a survey to ask international students how they feel their interactions with OIS have been this year, particularly surrounding changes with ICE policies. The survey went through a number of revisions and the was stalled for a long period of time. It was finally confirmed that the Provost’s office would not distribute it either (as well as OIS). We are compiling lists of international students. Christine and Renee have already finished the lists for WSE and KSAS, respectively. We are currently waiting for Peter Espenshade (Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education at JHU SOM and GSA advisor) and Bloomberg School of Public Health Student Assembly (BSPH SA) to finish their lists. We will be working on the language of the letter and hope that distribution will occur next week.
   2. Eugenia (Secretary): Do we have any updates on the new offer letters for KSAS?
      1. Conor (Co-Chair): I have not heard anything and it hasn’t been brought up again in my department. But if anyone else has heard anything, please let us know. And we haven’t heard anything from either Mary (Favret0 in KSAS or our advisors about this.
   3. Eugenia (Secretary): What is the current status on the Coffee Hours at Carma and Common Ground? If there is a hold-up, where is it?
      1. Shane (Co-Chair): The holding point right now is purchasing the “gift cards” at Carma’s through. Those requests have been put through and Crystal Hooper (purchasing) and Laura are trying to expedite.
         1. Alex Helms (Social Chair): \*in text chat Waiting on SLI
         2. Isaiah Chen (Treasurer): I reached out tot Crystal late last week about this and she has still not gotten back to me about this. I will reach out to her tomorrow morning about this. Plan to make those submissions in the next couple of days.
         3. Shane (Co-Chair): If they can expedite the purchase of the cards, we can hopefully start (having coffee hours) in the next coming weeks.
6. Adjournment