



OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

Approved by the GRO Executive Board: 5/13/2020

To: General Council, Graduate Representative Organization
Homewood Graduate Student Body At-large

From: GRO Executive Board
GRO Co-chairs Eugenia Volkova & Elliot Wainwright

Date: 12 May 2020

Subject: Summary of GRO Initiatives and Actions, Academic Year 2019-2020

Purpose: This purpose of this document is to provide the Homewood graduate student body with a concise overview of the major actions, initiatives, recommendations, votes, and policy changes that were achieved by the GRO this academic year. These items have been grouped into four umbrellas, including graduate student groups, advocacy, social & community building, and professional development, and are focused on specific votes made by the General Council (GC) and actions surrounding said votes.

Graduate Student Groups:

The GRO formally recognized the following graduate student groups:

- Johns Hopkins Quantitative Finance Club
- Socialists at JHU
- Women of Arts and Humanities (WOAH)
- Chinese Cuisine Club at JHU
- Saudi Student Association at JHU
- Graduate Queer-Straight Alliance (GQSA, reactivation)
- Black Graduate Students Association (BGSA, reactivation)
- Organization for Science, Technology, and International Affairs at JHU (OSTIA JHU)
- Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering Graduate Student Liaison Committee (GSLC)
- Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers
- Iranian Graduate Student Association at JHU
- ECE Graduate Student Association (ECE GSA)

After nearly a decade, the GRO has update some internal guiding documents:

- Newly ratified [GRO Constitution](#)
- Newly ratified [GRO By-Laws](#)

The GRO awarded a number of travel grants for graduate students based on a robust lottery system:

- 38 total grants were awarded, 26 to KSAS students and 12 to WSE students

The GRO helps fund graduate student group events. This year, some example events that were funded by the GRO include:

- Anthropology Annual Graduate Student Conference
 - IGSA Diwali
 - Facebook Libra Move Developer Workshop
 - 4th Annual JHU Philosophy Graduate Student Conference
 - “Creating Art in the Context of Oppression” Workshop – Anthropology
 - JHGCC Fall Case Competition
 - KGSA Academic Networking Night
 - CEGA/MEGA Thanksgiving Get Together
 - Joint Atlantic Seminar in the History of Biology – HOS
 - CSCFJH Thanksgiving Gospel Event
 - East Asian Studies Graduate seminar
 - Lantern Festival Gospel Event
 - Women in STEM Symposium
 - Nowruz (Persian New Year)
 - KGSA Bowling Night
 - ANSHE Lecture
 - Maryland General Assembly Science Poster Session
 - GQSA Gayme Night
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Advocacy:

Advisory & advocacy committees across the university with direct GRO participation:

- Provost’s Advisory Team on Healthcare (PATH)
- Vice-Provost’s PhD Advisory Committee (PAC)
- Student Security Advisory Committee
- Sexual Violence Advisory Board (SVAC)
- Homewood Student Center Advisory Committee
- Homewood Graduate Board (2 GC Members)
- Parental Concerns Working Group
- Wellbeing Working Group
- Suicide Prevention Awareness, Response and Coordination (JH-SPARC)
- COVID-19 Research Restart Students and Postdocs Subcommittee
- COVID-19 Crosscutting Workgroups Student Advisory Group

The GRO advocated for the following issues on behalf of graduates students:

- The GRO advocated for clarity regarding summer and intersession course contracts, including writing letters to Dean Sean Recroft and getting written confirmation of course selection changes and course planning stipends.
- The GRO signed the Teachers and Researchers United (TRU) petition and distributed statements regarding the potential change to the NLRB’s (National Labor Relations Board) stance on graduate students which threatened graduate students’ designation as ‘employees’ under the National Labor Relations Act. This designation is important both for rights for discussion with co-workers related to pay, health insurance, unionization, work-related issues, i.e., with NLRB recognized status, you cannot be fired for discussing those issues.

- In collaboration with the WSE and KSAS Deans Offices, the GRO drafted and distributed a Basic Needs Survey, which gathered information on food, housing, and clothing security for graduate students.
- The GRO distributed a survey on electric scooter parking zones on campus to help determine where those zones should be.
- Based on the results of the [AAU campus climate survey and annual report of the Office of Institutional Equity](#), the GRO pushed the administration for more in-person, repeated, and thorough training regarding sexual violence, including bystander intervention training. We summarized these documents and distributed an executive summary to the General Council. We generated a survey for members of the LGBTQ community which reported significantly higher rates of sexual harassment, to determine what can be done to help the community (both the GRO as well as the LGBTQ Life office). We augmented our [website to include OIE resources](#) related to these issues.
- The GRO wrote statements supporting the reinstatement of WGS Teaching Fellowships, and advocated for the departments affected by the changes to the Vice-Dean of KSAS.
- The GRO strove to enhance diversity in JHU graduate programs based on information to be released in a forthcoming university-wide diversity report. As a result, we advocated at all levels of the administration for the removal of the GRE as a requirement for graduate admission. In addition the GRO helped plan, create, and integrate a second-look day for admitted prospective underrepresented minority (URM) and first-generation low-income (FLI) students. We also pushed for the administration to consider different admission models through the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) for enhanced diversity through recruitment and retention.
- The GRO met with the undergraduate Student Government Association (SGA) to discuss collaborations including on SGA wellness week and through campus initiatives like Hopkins Votes, SGA Wellness Week, the Women and Gender Minorities Caucus (WGMC), and consistent communication between the two bodies.
- The GRO assisted in the hiring and feedback process for the new Deputy to the Dean of Students.
- The GRO, in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar, distributed a survey which helped determine a new, more convenient, start time for graduate course registration.
- The GRO co-signed and distributed a letter provided by the Garland Sit-In organization, condemning punitive action that was taken against graduate students who participated in the Garland Sit-in and were promised amnesty. More generally we advocated for continued amnesty, clarity on policies on free speech, and for consistency and transparency in policies regarding conduct violations.

The GRO also focused on specific GRO COVID-19-related Advocacy:

- The GRO and Teachers & Researchers United built a broad coalition of graduate student groups, including our own organizations, the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA, Medical School), and the School of Public Health Student Assembly (SA) in order to advocate for the concerns that COVID-19. We have worked with this graduate student group coalition to advocate for a list of fundamental principles that Hopkins as a university should uphold in response to COVID-19. Such principles could serve as a guiding document to the various schools to use as a template for their response moving forward.
- The GRO meets regularly with administration from both WSE and KSAS in order to advocate from within the schools themselves about issues we have been hearing that are school-specific.
- We supported a [TRU petition](#) and letter writing campaign regarding COVID-19.
- The GRO helped to distribute important messages on topics including internships, mental health resources, and general FAQ information from the WSE and KSAS Deans Offices.
- We have drafted and distributed a survey regarding hardships faced by the graduate population due to COVID-19 which will help quantify areas of acute need to the GRO and the administration.
- The GRO has advocated for clarity and commitments from the administrations at all levels on the following issues:

- Extending financial support for graduate students affected by COVID-19. This is a complex issue which will become more complex the longer the COVID-19 shutdown continues. We have been pushing for extensions of stipends and healthcare coverage, particularly for PhD students.
 - Ensuring no student faces departmental or institutional penalty for research delays connected to the COVID-19. This would include no retribution for missed research deadlines and leniency for students who are currently on probation.
 - Providing options to delay graduation or support PhD and masters students who are graduating, including advocating for waiving (or ideally eliminating) non-resident tuition, prioritizing hiring of current students for postgraduate research and non-research positions, and pushing for the dissemination of information regarding or internships and co-op programs to replace those that were delayed or canceled.
 - Eliminating the GRE as an entrance requirement for this upcoming year (and hopefully beyond).
 - Integrating graduate students more deeply into the decision-making process of the university, particularly for those decisions related to COVID-19. This could include feedback mechanisms for new policies or funding decisions with current graduate students before they are finalized and published.
 - Pushing for continued mental health and wellbeing resources and their transition to a remote environment. This includes the counseling center and how the associated translation to an online interface can be optimized and reach the most students possible.
 - Development of online social programming to help graduate students continue to feel a sense of community and connection.
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Social & Community Building:

The GRO continued to have its weekly coffee hour and fortnightly happy hour events (until the COVID-19 shutdown). In addition, we also had off-campus happy hours at:

- Max's Taphouse
- De Kleine Duivel

The GRO had (and will continue to have) virtual social events during the COVID-19 shutdown:

- Weekly Trivia Night
- Game Nights

Community Engagement:

- Weekly drink/food specials for grad students at PekoPeko Ramen
- Visit from Friends of Wyman Park Dell

GRO-sponsored events:

- LGBTQ+ SafeZone training sessions for graduate students
- Free F45 Classes for graduate students in November
- Free pizza giveaway during Lighting of the Quads for graduate students

Supported and Co-Sponsored Events:

- Community and Workers Barbecue and Potluck
- TRU Work-in
- Hopkins Votes: Absentee Party

Inter-campus Events:

- University-wide graduate bar crawl at Power Plant Live

- Roller Skating Night at the Shake N' Bake

1st Semester: Orientation & Welcome Events

- Wrote a [welcome letter](#) to incoming graduate students
 - Tabling and lawn games during orientation
 - Happy hour for incoming students at De Kleine Duivel
 - Walking tour of Mt. Vernon with meet up at Brewer's Art
 - Hopkins Trivia Night
 - Gaming night for new grad students
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Professional Development:

The GRO was able to participate in the hiring/interviewing process of the new PHutures Office (Located within the Life Design Office):

- Meet [Roshni Rao](#), the new Director of PHutures

The GRO (in collaboration with PHutures) hosted a few virtual professional development webinars, including topics in data science careers and a PhD internal student career chat.

We participated in the planning and execution of the inaugural [Homewood Graduate Student Resource Day](#), which was a full-day event with seminars regarding professional development, wellness, information on health insurance and taxes, headshots, massages, and a tabling resource fair happy hour, funded by the GRO.

Events Unfortunately Cancelled by COVID-19 Shutdown:

- Hopkins Votes Mayoral Interview Project
 - Intercampus Formal
 - Intercampus Monte Carlo Night
 - Intercampus Speed Dating Event
 - GPSA Week, with over 5 events contained therein
 - Paint Night Wellness Event
 - Acoustic Night/Talent Show
 - Spring Fair Graduate Happy Hour
 - Symphony Orchestra Concert at Peabody for New Grads
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General Information:

Website & repository of GC meeting minutes and documents: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/gro/>

2019-2020 Academic E-Board Composition:

Eugenia Volkova, gro@jhu.edu, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, Co-**Chair**

Elliot Wainwright, gro@jhu.edu, Materials Science & Engineering, **Co-Chair**
Shane Arlington, secretary.gro@gmail.com, Materials Science & Engineering, **Secretary**
Swetha Kumar, treasurer.gro@gmail.com, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, **Treasurer**
Maansi Vatsan, mvatsan1@jhu.edu, Applied Math & Statistics, **Social Chair (½ term)**
Pranav Mehta, pmehtha12@jhu.edu, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, **Social Chair**
Jack Magann, jmagann1@jhu.edu, Electrical & Computer Engineering, **Social Chair (½ term)**
Jaime Martinez Grundman, funding.gro@gmail.com, Biophysics, **Administrative and Funding Chair**
Timothy Nickels, tnickel2@jhu.edu, Biology, **Advocacy Chair**
Lauren Mushro, advocacy.gro@gmail.com, German and Romance Languages, **Advocacy Chair (½ term)**
Adeshola Lawal, adeshola.lawal@jhu.edu, Computer Science, **Advocacy Chair (½ term)**
Daniel McClurkin, dmcclur9@jhu.edu, English, **Welcome & Guide Chair**
Benj Shapiro, healthconcerns.gro@gmail.com, Computer Science, **Health Concerns Chair**
Stephanie Saxton, stepsaxton1111@gmail.com, Political Science, **Security Concerns Chair**
Weichen Liao, wliao7@jhu.edu, Geological & Environmental Engineering, **Professional Development Chair**
Tara Ghazi, [tara.ghazi@jhu.edu](mailto: tara.ghazi@jhu.edu), Psychology, **Graduate Involvement Chair (½ term)**
Sebastian Link Chaparro, slink7@jhu.edu, Sociology, **Graduate Involvement Chair (½ term)**
Vittorio Loprinzo, vittorio@jhu.edu, Applied Math & Statistics, **Intercampus Coordinator**
Parijat Banerjee, pbanerj5@jhu.edu, Physics, **Wellness Coordinator**
Wesley Yon, yon@jhu.edu, Biology, **Summer Sports Coordinator**

2020-2021 Academic E-Board Composition:

Shane Arlington, gro@jhu.edu, Materials Science & Engineering, **Co-Chair**
Conor Bean, gro@jhu.edu, Political Science, **Co-Chair**
Eugenia Volkova, secretary.gro@gmail.com, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, **Secretary**
Swetha Kumar, treasurer.gro@gmail.com, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, **Treasurer**
Alexander Helms, ahelms@jhu.edu, Engineering Management, **Social Chair**
TBD, **Social Chair**
TBD, **Administrative and Funding Chair**
Katiana Kontolani, kkontol1@jhu.edu, Civil and Systems Engineering, **Advocacy Chair**
Yuri Chia, ychia6@jhu.edu, Engineering Management, **Advocacy Chair**
TBD, **Welcome & Guide Chair**
Maya Monroe, mmonro10@jhu.edu, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, **COVID-19 Concerns Chair**
TBD, **Health & Wellness Chair**
Ona Ambrozaite, oambroz1@jhu.edu, Chemistry, **Graduate Involvement Chairs**
Tatsat Banerjee, tatsatb@jhu.edu, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering **Intercampus Chair**