1. Call to Order and Agenda Review
   1. Shane Arlington (Co-Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:03PM.
2. Approval of Minutes from 11-2-2020
   1. Elmer Zapata Mercado (Biophysics): Motion to approve the minutes.
   2. Ben Taylor (Political Science): Seconded.
   3. Vote: Yea:23, Abstain:3, Nay:0
3. E-board Report (Shane & Conor)
   1. Ona Ambrozaite (Graduate Involvement Chair): Discussion of how to improve participation in sending departments updates on GRO activities
      1. The number of departments who provided updates increased from 5 for September to 12 for October. But we need to have every department receiving the GRO report every month.
      2. Incentivization
         1. Ona: Idea of a raffle at the beginning of each month. What kinds of gifts or things would you want to see as part of an incentive program?
         2. Ashley Keiman (ChemBE): are these gifts to representatives or the department?
            1. Shane (Co-Chair): To the GC representatives
         3. Shane (Co-Chair): Gift cards are problematic because the university thinks that all gift cards are taxable wages. So, you need to submit a W2. This is counter to the sprit of this. We could get around this by giving actual prizes instead.
         4. Wangui Mbuguiro (Communications Chair): Would representatives like Hopkins swag (e.g. t-shirt, moleskin, tote) for consistent engagement?
            1. Shane (Co-Chair): That’s a good question. We can arrange this more readily by partnering with the bookstore. Our goal is to enhance communication between graduate students and the GRO. Your attendance is necessary for being eligible for travel grants, but the major perk of free food is absent this year.
            2. Tom McCoy (Cog Sci): +1 for Hopkins swag
         5. Makaela Nartker (Psychology): We have an alternate rep in my department. But our alternate cannot make it to the meetings whenever I am not here. This expectation to have us send out the updates (to our department) for every meeting, would it be okay for us to send out the minutes? To what extent are we responsible for the content of these updates?
            1. Ona (Grad Involvement Chair): Summarizing the GC minutes would be a good idea.
            2. Shane (Co-Chair): I thought that we provided templates already for what should be included in the emails, is that not the case?
            3. Ona (Grad Involvement Chair): That is accurate, but I think the question is “What do we do if none of the representatives were present at the meetings?” “Do we send the updates then?”
            4. Makaela (Psychology): What I was thinking about a little bit, is that the issues that are most important to all of our individual departments are the same as the issues important to all departments. So I feel like the minutes might be a good way to share this. So the template you provided, Ona, was helpful. But how much overlap is there on what people are interested in knowing from each meeting and how much does it make sense for us to send that out?
            5. Ona (Grad Involvement Chair): We could see if minutes vs. summaries are better. But I don’t know how to gauge that. And our minutes are lengthy.
            6. Makaela (Psychology): I agree that people might not read the full minutes
         6. Shane (Co-Chair): Linking to the published minutes might be very valuable. This could save time for you, as a GRO GC rep, and you can say “you can reach out to the GRO E-board” as well. You can always refer to the E-Board and particularly the Co-Chairs. We are really here to hear student concerns, regardless of what department you are from
         7. Ona (Grad Involvement Chair): Linking the minutes is a good idea, people can look at them that way.
         8. Conor Bean (Co-Chair): Especially if we are thinking of summaries, we often have requests for soliciting information or points of information, we should highlight this in the summaries/minutes because then the departments may see this clearer.
         9. Amy Vasquez (Earth & Planetary Science): Gift idea: Stationary like pen/pencil sets, planners, journals, etc.
         10. Jo Giardini (English): Is there any reason to not send out the minutes though?
         11. Conor (Co-Chair): to Jo's point: the meeting minutes are posted on the GRO website, but an important part of communicating with departments could be letting them know where to find these for reference: https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/gro/about/general-council-meeting-minutes/
         12. Ona (Grad Involvement Chair): Reminder to send out the November report for the last two meetings by our next meeting.
      3. Tie into funding eligibility (this was not discussed)
   2. COVID-19 policy inconsistencies and questions: updates and request for reports from students
      1. Shane (Co-Chair): Summary of the first round of emails with the Executive VP Stephen Gange and our most recent follow-up with the Provost’s Office
         1. Their statement seemed to take our concerns more lightly than we would like. They emphasized “Testing would be available in the future” and generally treated inconsistencies as growing pains. They asked us to make aware of any inconsistencies/problems. We asked for feedback from GC and when we sent the response to all grads, we asked them to forward all concerns to us. We got 2 substantive ones that we received and sent as anonymous as possible.
            1. COVID-19 case in a lab, followed approved research plan (infected researcher required to notify the PI and start a 14-day quarantine). Lab followed approved protocol properly. PI was chastised by central administration. Our research plans have flaws according to the administration. Inconsistencies of what the call centre tells people to do. 4 calls led to 4 different answers (can they return to work? Are they approved for testing?).
            2. Institute in WSE: Several labs are approved to use multi-occupancy office spaces for experimental downtime. As far as we can tell from the Restart plan, that is not allowed. Some labs have been led to believe that the occupancy for these offices are higher than for research spaces. Highly problematic. This doesn’t make sense that laboratory-based researchers have access that is inaccessible to non-laboratory-based researchers.
         2. Ashley (ChemBE): multiple occupancy office space for experimental downtime has been allowed for months...
            1. Shane (Co-Chair): Can you point to where this is in the Research Restart Policy documents?
            2. Ashley (ChemBE): I am speaking about my lab. We built the lab opening plan based on the official guidelines. And they have 5 exceptions (wet lab downtime, computational students who can’t do analyses at home, so on). I will see if I can find the link and attach it.
            3. Shane (Co-Chair): I would appreciate that. Because we can’t find this information. What I was going to get to is that the Provosts ignored this issue and thought we were talking about research spaces. They ignored what the policy actually is about office spaces. We sent a clarification email earlier today and we will provide a response once we get that.
            4. Shane (Co-Chair): The wording that we quoted was from p. 20- p. 21 of the return to research guidelines.
            5. Elmer (Biophysics): Some of these rules have been applied in a non-consistent way across the board.
            6. Shane (Co-Chair): If this was a divisional rule that overruled the university rule, that is exactly what we are looking for. We have seen that some policies have not been applied uniformly across multiple divisions.
            7. Elmer (Biophysics): I am in INBT as well and we recently updated our COVID plan as well and we had to put that no one can be in the offices at all. To that point, we always followed the rule but other professors have students living in their offices. My advisor did not get approved when we tried to get an office space for more than 1 student at a time. These rules are being inconsistently applied and that’s not okay when the groups that get these passes/waivers are higher up in the leadership in the university.
            8. Ashley (ChemBE): Yeah, I’m a little confused. A lot of people have been complaining about the applications of these guidelines. In my lab, we have had multiple people in the lab as the guidelines say. I don’t want people to say that we have been given advantages by my PI, because this came from my lab captain. We had 5 people in my lab meeting multiple times a week going over these policies and trying to figure out how we could make this work.
            9. Ashley (ChemBe): <https://covidinfo.jhu.edu/assets/uploads/sites/10/2020/06/Research_Restart_Guidelines_Phase_1.pdf>

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* + - * 1. Shane (Co-Chair): I also don’t see anywhere in that document where it is allowed. If it is true that the same proposal is being approved for some labs but not others, that is problematic. If people are reading these documents and getting different ideas of what is allowed, that is very inconsistent/frustrating.
      1. Shane (Co-Chair) \**this text was on the PowerPoint, it was not spoken but was referred to indirectly*: The response was not satisfactory. And for the second case, the Provost didn’t read our statement and so we sent a clarification. We didn’t get any substantive responses to that.
      2. Shane (Co-Chair) \**this text was on the PowerPoint, it was not spoken but was referred to indirectly*: We will provide further clarifications from the VP and Dean’s level as we find out more about this.
      3. Jo (English): Page 4 of that document Ashley shared says explicitly, no shared office us at all until phase 2
      4. Rishi Bhandia (Physics & Astronomy): going through that document, I see no where it addresses multi-occupancy offices. On page 19 only refers to “Enforcing that faculty, postdocs, and graduate students are assigned single office spaces that are not shared. If only shared office space is routinely assigned, DBOs will be responsible for establishing rules 21 and procedures (e.g., shifts) to ensure single-occupancy of each office” As far as I can tell they’re saying that office spaces that are normally multiple occupancy should be single occupancy.
      5. Ashley (ChemBE): the multi-occupancy office space guidelines were linked in this email from July 16th:
         1. wait idk how to attach a photo
      6. Shane (Co-Chair): If you email it to gro@jhu.edu we can show it later
      7. Ashley (ChemBE): email titled "allowing on-campus research outside of laboratories"
      8. Jo (English): 20-21: “Enforcing that faculty, postdocs, and graduate students are assigned single office spaces that are not shared. If only shared office space is routinely assigned, DBOs will be responsible for establishing rules and procedures (e.g., shifts) to ensure single-occupancy of each office”
      9. Jo (English): And on page 4 the table reiterates that no shared office use is permitted until phase 2
      10. Ashley (ChemBE): Sorry this took me a while to find. On the bottom of page 20 of return to research guidelines: "safety guidelines continue to be in place … In a shared environment, everyone will use face coverings and keep a 7.5 ft diameter to provide approximately 44p. ft. per person as per the return to campus instructional guidelines. Current city and state policies allow for lower-density use of office space on campus at this time."
      11. Jo (English): Wouldn’t the JHU policy against shared offices trump the acknowledgement of city/state policy?
      12. Ashley (ChemBE): I think JHU's problem is inconsistency, they say no shared offices in phase 1, but I've also seen this updated guidelines document referred to as phase 1b
      13. Jo (English): The updated document you linked to continues to say no to shared office space until phase 2 though. (page 4)
  1. Coffee Hour - soft launch & future steps
     1. Conor (Co-Chair): I hope that people saw today, around noon, Coffee Hour is back and it does involve actual coffee. We’ve discussed many of those details in the past. Hoping to expand to Hampden and Mt. Vernon. Already have a high-degree of signups.
     2. Alexander Helms (Social Chair): Pretty successful, 40 signups within 4 hours. Students have already asked about whether they can still signup/waitlist. Right now, everything is going smoothly. I will be checking in with Carma and seeing how things go and hopefully they will go smoothly.
     3. Conor (Co-Chair): Important to note, this is meant to be a trial period. At least the immediate results. We will see Tuesday and Wednesday how this plays out. Hope to continue this into the future with possibly more sites. Does anyone else have more questions regarding this?
     4. Elmer (Biophysics): Hey Alex, I made a comment about Mt. Vernon, if you want to check: Dooby’s, Baby’s on Fire, and Bun Shop if you want to reach out to them. I think they will be very happy to set something up for you. Baby’s on Fire is my personal favourite and I would recommend going with this route.
     5. Shane (Co-Chair): I look forward to hearing about how this goes and getting metrics on the utilization of this.
  2. GRExit statement submitted to Homewood Graduate Board
     1. Shane (Co-Chair): After extensive committee revisions and full executive board review, the statement was finalized this past Friday and given to Renee Eastwood to feature on the agenda of the Homewood Graduate Board’s meeting on Thursday.
        1. Statement was distributed to grads this morning.
        2. The Doctor of Philosophy Board recently made a similar endorsement:
           1. *Based on the growing literature suggesting that 1) other admissions metrics have equal or greater predictive value regarding PhD student success than the GRE, and 2) the bias of GRE outweighs its potential predictive value, the Doctor of Philosophy Board formally recommends that PhD programs at Johns Hopkins reevaluate their use of this test as an admissions metric.*
           2. *The Board also recommends that the Provost work with other universities to encourage U.S. News & World Report to cease using GRE scores in PhD program ranking calculation. Including the GRE in ranking metrics contributes to its perceived validity as an unbiased metric of student success and provides a strong disincentive to schools and programs to stop using the GRE for admissions*
  3. Updates from the Dean of Student Life (DOSL) Coalition
     1. Conor (Co-Chair): Another update coming from the coalition being convened by the DOSL. The group itself is divided into 2 subgroups.
        1. Group 1: Implicit bias training and mandatory training.
        2. Group 2: Diversity course requirements. Graduate students would have to pass a certain number of diversity courses, like writing intensives. There has been a frustrating absence of focus on what this would mean for graduate students, to make this requirement a reality.
        3. This Wednesday the Coalition will meet again to finalize a draft proposal for a new course requirement necessitating student’s enroll in two courses (for undergrad, grad level still unclear) focused on race, gender, and/or Baltimore history. Coalition is mainly being driven by undergraduate students who are very interested in making this happen.
        4. Key provisions as it affects grads: providing more funding for programs like WGS and Center for Africana Studies, creating fellowships, possible requirement for grads to enroll in courses meeting this requirement
        5. Administrators from Dean of Student Life Office are hoping for final, submittable version of the proposal by December 2nd, with respective student groups signed on
        6. Still unclear who this will be sent to, or how its development will be negotiated.
        7. Unclear who this proposal is being sent to. With the Group 1, it’s clear who this will be sent to. With this, this would require really heavy lifting and this is a necessary step.
        8. Personal note (Conor): I’ve been frustrated that we haven’t been given a target audience yet in terms of who is being asked to decide these things. Some people who work in DOSL are supposed to find the right place to send things. Would provide more funding for programs (WGS and Africana) to offer more courses and also hire more faculty. Teaching and research fellowships for graduate students so that they can teach more of these courses and get a research semester after that. Some talk, at the end of these meetings, of making a similar requirement for graduate students to take this to graduate. Path for this is very unclear. Departments are territorial about this issue.
        9. Final draft of this proposal is to be adopted by December 2nd and they are asking different groups to sign on. We can’t unless we get a draft and hopefully by Wednesday, we will have more information about this Hopefully we can bring it back for either an E-Board or GC vote (more heavy lifting, what they want)
     2. Jo (English): Who is this proposal being submitted to? What will the funding (structure, but also literally) be?
        1. Conor (Co-Chair): Uncertain. Once the proposal is final, we will have an opportunity from DOSL to develop a strategy of shopping it around to relevant offices. But it sounds that there are a lot of stakeholders and the ball is not rolling on this.
     3. Jo (English): What qualifications for grads to teach these courses?
        1. Conor (Co-Chair): Mostly this takes the form of increasing funding for WGS and Africana Studies and have them focus on doing the right thing with these resources because they will be the programs best equipped to do this and they have had fellowships in the past.
     4. Jo (English) Have the leadership been involved?
        1. Conor (Co-Chair) The programs have not yet been contacted, as best I know. The way that the office of student life is envisioning it is that we have a fully sealed proposal, get signatures, and then the office thinks they will have clout to move things. But to my knowledge, they haven’t contacted these centres and programs.
     5. Conor (Co-Chair): Good questions, they are all outstanding
     6. Shane (Co-Chair): The other side of the coalition is talking about student-led training sessions. UG’s want a peer-led approach. Unclear what will happen with this coalition, will there be a set of requests where both of these options/groups are brought to light. (Different method to going through the formal academic structure). I will note that the half of the coalition that Conor has been working on is more active and may have more structure to their plan but there are still a lot of holes in that structure.
  4. Intercampus speed dating event summary
     1. Shane (Co-Chair): Very successful, multi-session event – some sessions speed dating, some were mixers.
     2. Total of 341 registrants from 7 schools of the Unviersity
        1. Increased interest from other divisions to host further collaborative events
        2. Hosts/co-hosts of individual sessions from 5 divisions
     3. Total attendance >200
     4. Very positive feedback from attendees & from other organizations who provided some logistical support, including requests for repeat event in the Spring.
     5. Tatsat Banerjee (Intercampus Chair): I just want to mention that I got a request from the students to plan to do another mixer or game night in Gathertowns. But that is in the nascent stage.
  5. Spring 2020 planning student advisory committee - new contact address: [planningsac@jhu.edu](mailto:planningsac@jhu.edu)
     1. New email address: [planningSAC@jhu.edu](mailto:planningSAC@jhu.edu)
     2. The student compact that we discussed at a prior GC meeting is being overhauled
        1. Subcommittee of four of the students from the SAC are involved, along with others
        2. New document is meant to be for all members of the JHU community
        3. A feedback/comment form has already been sent to undergraduates to solicit input – we are working to get the same to distribute to grads
  6. Spring Semester Reopening: Communicating with grads
     1. Conor (Co-Chair): We will be distributing three emails this week to grads:
        1. Email explaining teaching in-person accommodations
           1. According to C/R no grad student will be forced to teach in person. You can get an accommodation from their office directly. We want to make sure if, for any reason, grads feel uncomfortable teaching in person, they communicate this with their departments and C/R. Ideally this would move the needle a little bit on whether in person classes happen. We are not getting any information about what metrics are being used to assess whether or not it’s safe to have UGs back on campus. It’s very hard to read behind the scenes what the decision-making process is on this. We want to make sure that grads reach out and can make accommodations immediately.
        2. Email soliciting more reports of COVID-19 guideline inconsistency
           1. Making sure that we can present these to the Provost’s office as many times as it takes
        3. Email sharing updates from the Doctor of Philosophy Board regarding residency exemptions due to the pandemic and their recommendation of re-evaluating the use of the GRE in admissions
        4. Given the last survey’s results, reflecting that many students are unfamiliar with accommodation policy, we are hoping to widely broadcast information on how to avoid teaching in person in the Spring
        5. Question for the GC: How have your departments reacted to the reopening news?
           1. Jo (English): To my knowledge, in English everything is being scheduled to be taught online. My DTF is automatically remote. It’s good to know that for departments where that’s not the case, people are able to exempt themselves from in-person teaching. Is there any policy for extending this for course work requirements for graduate students? If people what to take some classes in person but are unable to,

Conor (Co-Chair): At least in what I’ve seen, it’s more publicized that students should be able to avoid any in-person learning and classes in-person should have the ability to be taught online. But when it was announced the focus was on undergraduates. So, the category used in the communication was “student” which should include graduate students doing coursework but we are often the afterthought. So, it is worth it to have more explicit guidance and follow up on this. We did recommend to Christine and Renee that they have a grad student specific reopening page. Because they have to reach out and figure out what the undergrad pages mean for them.

* + - * 1. Benjamin Taylor (Political Science): This is kind of cynical question but at the start of last semester we had a similar case. Is JHU lying through its teeth and is just trying get undergraduates not to drop.

Conor (Co-Chair): They are being very upfront about this just being their proposal for what we would like to do. They are planning for this to still happen but they are not still being so strictly bound to this plan.

* + - * 1. Eugenia Volkova (Secretary): Based on the meetings that I’ve had with the student advisory committee, and some other things I’ve seen and heard, it does feel like the university is very eager to open back up for Spring 2020. But I’m limited in what I can publicly disclose.
        2. Jo (English): I’m a little bit, why exactly are you limited in your ability to speak to this? I’m concerned by that middle part of wat you said.
        3. Eugenia (Secretary): I can say that all the Student Advisory Committee meetings are classified and I’m not allowed to disclose most of the information we are told in them, usually because it is preliminary and they are trying to assess how students feel about things. As to why I think that the university is intent on students coming back, the speed of the construction of the tent on the main lawn (freshman lawn?) is worrying to me. It feels like it’s picking up a very determined pace.
        4. Shane (Co-Chair): Actually, I basically wanted to pick up where Eugenia left off with regards to what the kill switch is. This is something that Conor and I raised with administrators as far back as May and no one has been willing to give metrics as to what that line is. The problem is that we get some clout from writing things as a large representative organization but ultimately, they end up writing a response that does or does not address our concerns and then moves on. Maybe conveying how concerning this is to students would be best by mass of students/grassroots. Sometimes the administration likes to believe that we don’t represent all students. But we can continue to push for that but we can continue to push this from TRU/GSA/GRO and how they are determining whether or not its safe.
        5. Conor (Co-Chair): Part of the animating reason for this point, we want to know what people in different departments feel? Are people ambivalent? concerned? scared? We want to know how these conversations are taking place and what the general sense of the GC is. If we are moving beyond informational policies, we need to know where grad students are sitting on this.
        6. Matthew Morgado (Philosophy): If we register for online courses now, are they guaranteed to be online come Spring?

Samantha Bell (Engineering Management): Yes

Conor (Co-Chair): That’s a good question. I don’t know if they can change that.

Shane (Co-Chair): Do courses currently list if they are in person or hybrid? Yes? Okay, so my guess is if they are saying online now, they will be online regardless. But we will follow up on this and we would be against this changing after students registered.

* + - * 1. Ben (Political Science): without speaking for my department as a whole, reopening strikes me as incredibly irresponsible given the current COVID numbers, and I can’t imagine feeling any better about the administration’s decisions given their absolute obscurity regarding their reopening criteria.
        2. Paige Paulsen (Near Eastern Studies): I think my department hasn't quite decided yet how to react - would you like GC reps to solicit feedback from graduate students or also talk to the chair?
        3. Conor (Co-Chair): One thing that would be helpful going forward is, before the next GC, we would like to get a feeling how departments are feeling about this. Yes, Paige more feedback when we return from Thanksgiving break would help us do some broader discussion and planning on how we want to move forward on this.
      1. Conor (Co-Chair): To Paige’s question: I am mostly considering talking to other graduate students.
      2. Shane (Co-Chair): Getting opinions from different faculty members would be useful as well but we care the most about what graduate students are feeling. Generally, faculty feel similarly to how we do.
      3. Soumyajit Ray (Electrical & Computer Engineering): So this is probably a question for Eugenia, how flexible is their planning?
         1. Eugenia (Secretary): I will say that it is very flexible, very flexible indeed.
      4. Wangui (Communications Chair): Are they considering changing the modality in the middle of semester?
         1. Eugenia: Yes, they are considering everything.
      5. Shane (Co-Chair): Along with any information you’re getting from your departments, you can also direct anyone to provide their concerns or feedbacks to the Co-Chairs directly. Anyone who has requests for accommodations, please reach out to Christine and Renee but if people are just concerned to the semester, reaching out to those two would also make a clear communication to that level of the administration that students are concerned.
  1. Flat Blue Jay Project (taking flight?)
     1. Jessica Flores (Social Chair): Wooden cutouts will be provided to students who are interested in participating, and students can take a photo of their decorated cut-out, and send the photo to us. It took a while to get everything approved. Last week Isaiah let me know that everything has been purchased and is on its way. So now, because everything is purchased, Ona is going to work on an interest form to send out to students so anyone who is interested in participating in this project can let us know. My request is, when you send out your departmental updates about what is going on in the GRO, this can be something you let people in your department know about.
     2. Ona (Grad Involvement Chair): We will be shooting to get the photos back (of decorated cut-outs) by Christmas so that I can send it out when the cheerful season comes around.
     3. Shane (Co-Chair): Apparently, getting the university to order anything from Etsy is very challenging.

1. Open Discussion & Questions
   1. Jo (English): So this is to return to the very beginning of the conversation, it was mentioned that there are templates for departmental reports somewhere. Is it possible to have those uploaded to some central place (possibly uploaded somewhere in the minutes) so we don’t need to go hunting through our inboxes?
   2. Shane (Co-Chair): We will figure something out, possibly a google drive link.
   3. Maya (COVID-19 Concerns Chair): Going back to the confusion about the safety guidelines and looking into single occupancy/multiple occupancy offices and shared environments,
      1. I think in both these instances, someone might come to the conclusion that multi-occupancy offices would be allowed. It’s ambiguous that they are referring to multi-occupancy offices. And it seems like “no multi occupancy offices” is the more official position and the policy has been interpreted differently and applied differently in different labs it is indicative of issues we are tyring to bring to the Provosts. What we’re trying to figure out is whether it comes down to unclear communication from the administration and we’re trying to get clarification and have them make more clear guidelines and clarify the language so that we don’t have these inconsistencies. If this is occurring in your lab, we’re not trying to scold you or shame you, this is just indicative of the confusion that leads to inconsistencies.
   4. Shane (Co-Chair): As a clarification, this report was a culmination of reports from students from different labs in the institute. This is no way is meant to be targeting a single laboratory. Our concern here is whether the policies are clear and how they are bingo implemented.
   5. Ashley (ChemBE): I don’t think they have been applied unequally but I think they have been communicated unequally.
   6. Shane (Co-Chair): We are aware that some labs have been denied office space use.
   7. Ashley (ChemBE): Were those labs told “no” because multiple occupancy was not allowed?
   8. Shane (Co-Chair): I don’t know, I believe that it was shut down at the departmental level and not at the Dean’s level, and I am not sure if a rationale was provided.
   9. Ashley (ChemBE): At least in my building, you need to pass INBT and then the Dean’s office to get approval.
2. Adjournment