



Graduate Representative Organization

GC Meeting Agenda

Date/Time: 18:00 September 27th, 2021

Meeting Location: [Online, Zoom](#)

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- I. Call to Order and Agenda Review
 - A. Ona Ambrozaite (Co-Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.
 - II. Approval of minutes from September 13th, 2021
 - A. Tatsat Banerjee (Funding and Admin Chair) *IN TEXT* Motion to approve the minutes
 1. Alexander Helms (Co-Chair), Vinay Mahajan (Social Co-Chair) and Rashi Sultania (Social Chair) *IN TEXT* second
 2. Yea: 17 Nay: 0 Abstain: 3
 3. The motion passes
 - III. Visit from MSEL Library Renovation Team (This part is recorded with no objections from the GC)
 - A. Alex: The MSE Library will be undergoing some renovations soon. We hope to collect feedback from everybody. And we have been asked to record this portion of the meeting and we wonder if anybody has an objection.
IN TEXT No objection.
 - B. *RECORDED PART*

Chris Cannon: I am the Vice Dean for Humanities and Social Sciences in the Kreiger School, and am talking as the Co-chair of the Working Committee on the library redesign, which is made up of faculty, students, and library staff. Our job is to find out what people want in redesigning library. We had some town halls to collect suggestions from some groups. And we have collected survey from over 1,600 responses about how people utilize the library resource. We have also heard about most people want to have more space for individual and group study. However, we have not been collecting creative thoughts of what the library might like.

 1. Bill Sun (AMS): Do you guys know the Internet is bad at some part of the library.
Ryan Warwick (Classics), Rashi Sultania (Social co-chair), and Alex Yeh (ChemBE) seconded this suggestion.
Sayeed Choudhury: *IN TEXT* Speaking of internet issues, I manage Library IT. Could you say a little more about the issues? Is that you are dropped? Or that it's intermittent? Or the Wi-Fi isn't available?
Ryan: *IN TEXT* The signal is weak, I assume. The speed is low, it drops, and sometimes the Wi-Fi is not available. The whole hat trick really.

2. Michael Wilkinson (Robotics): The BLC is a modernized fancy part, however, when we go down to the lower levels, that part of library has the old library vibe, which may just be an aesthetic issue.

Jo Giardini (English): I feel compelled to defend the older areas of the library because I think that a push towards what we might think is more aesthetically pleasing at the moment might result in the kind of efficacy of the library space being compromised.

Ryan: I would like to see more book in the library – having modern campus architectural design that moves all books off site increase the difficulty of accessing those materials. *IN TEXT* I actually think that the BLC is heinously designed, no sound dampening, no space to sit and focus, no room to think really. It's all just sacrificed on the altar of the open plan.

Jo: *IN TEXT* second Ryan. Those spaces, even when they're supposedly quiet, can easily become social spaces, and without sound dampening that becomes a problem. This feels like a downriver problem of the lack of communal spaces elsewhere on campus. Further, the books which are offsite are often the books without details summaries, chapter lists, etc. So it's difficult to know when it's relevant to research or not.

Alex Yeh (ChemBE): *IN TEXT* I haven't been using the library too much since COVID, but I used to use the lower levels more as well when working individually.

Joseph Choy (Grad Involvement): *IN TEXT* Dedicated graduate student space would be nice to have to facilitate meetings and quiet working spaces without having to compete with undergraduates for space or volume.

Bill: We need to have spaces for both individual studies and social area. I can hear people doing Zoom meetings here and there in the library.

Ryan: *IN TEXT* An interesting trend here is that everyone has been discussing the addition of more private space to the library, not more public space. Perhaps this is because the way we socialize has changed, but I think it also speaks to the reckoning that "Library/Student Centers" are going to have in the near future. A year of isolation has revealed that *shocker,* libraries are places that should prioritize study.

Jo: *IN TEXT* I wonder if part of the problem here is that the library redesign is being asked to correct myriad problems with space on campus—where undergraduate students don't have focused social space, where graduate students don't have offices, and where many buildings close at night.

Jo: I also noticed that some books held off site were listed as being in the library, and I was not able to locate the books, which caused extra frustration.

3. Bill Sun (AMS): Some of the charging ports are not tight enough to hold the plugs.
4. Michael: As an engineering student, I think we need more whiteboard space. We need the whiteboard to writing things out, solving equations, making plots to analyze, and drawing physical representation for abstract ideas. A lot of students have to crowded in rooms with large whiteboard because the space is limited.
5. Vinay Mahajan (Social Co-Chair): *IN TEXT* The temperature control does not work in few of the group study rooms on B level in MSEL. B-54 is one such cabin I know of. It feels claustrophobic in that cabin
6. Jo: The library renovation was not brought to the student body at large because many people might not be plugged into networks for disability access on campus. *IN TEXT* But surely ADA compliance does not exhaust potential accessibility needs?
Ryan: *IN TEXT* I'm on a floor where none of the bathrooms are accessible to people with physical disabilities, so ADA compliance would be quite an improvement on that front. I do second Jo's point, however.

Chris: It was raised at the first town hall. We will make sure to add one group not only to the ADA Compliance but also accessibility needs of students and faculty. *Other team members* It is certainly a part of the designing, because that's our responsibility and our belief in the principles of universal design.

7. Alex Helms (Co-chair): We welcome people to submit any comments or concerns you have to GRO@jhu.edu.

RECORDING STOPPED

IV. E-board Report (Ona & Alex)

A. COVID-19 Relief Funding Report

Ona updated dissertation completion and travel/research awards report from the Provost's office: Total amount of funding between Dissertation completion award and Travel/Research Award mechanisms is \$841,345.33.

1. Dissertation completion awards: 29 students applied, 26 were funded. All funded as requested, except 3 students who requested tuition but are provided tuition by their program already. Requests included the following: a) Funded 19 for Tuition; b) Funded 20 for Health Insurance; c) Funded 22 for stipend.
2. Travel/research awards: 97 students applied, 87 were funded. Requested a total of \$608,407.33 with average of \$6,272.24. Funded a total of \$ 450,590.33 with average of \$5,179.20.
3. HEERF Emergency Block Grants: Offered to all Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral students across the university. \$4,438,600 distributed to Doctoral students (4,159 students), and \$3,075,500 distributed to Master's students (4,099 students).

Jo: I want to have clarification about the reason why three people were not funded.

Ona: Two students were discouraged by their advisor, three did not get funding because their programs got funded.

Jo: Why were the two students discouraged from applying, or did they apply, and their advisor refused to submit the collaborating statement?

Ryan Warwick: *IN TEXT* Did their advisors give reasons for not encouraging them to apply? Also, that means a total of 5 were not funded. I know I didn't apply because acceptance precludes any further funding from the university. This makes no sense as a "relief" policy.

Ona: According to the report, their advisor suggested them to wait till the next term.

Jo: That's suggests that they applied. So actually, five weren't funded.

4. Reasons for funding less than the amount requested:
 - a) Only part of requested budget was related to dissertation research/travel
 - b) Students requested funding for long-term lodging (e.g., greater than 6 months) when they were still receiving full stipend from their program
 - c) Students requested food expenses while traveling when they were still receiving a full stipend from their program or school
 - d) Students requested a travel budget that committee members believed did not accurately reflect the costs

Jo: The reason why I was provided less funding was actually the opposite in terms of funding of lodging. I suggested taking a number of short-term trips, and was told that I should plan to do a longer term trip with long term lodging to save money, even though that's not possible. Because my travel reasons for my recent travel for research would be to take a longer-term trip, which would mean that I wouldn't be able to teach, which I have to do, because the COVID relief funding does not provide replacement for teaching. So it strikes me that this report is actually not reflecting all the rationale for why they were withholding funding requests and in fact some of the rationale they're giving here conflicts with what I was told.

Ona: One of their main bullet points with this series was requesting funding for longer-term, greater than six months, housing because they say, they want a shorter-term housing in this report we sent before the GC meeting because this would likely be an additional cost that students would need to pay an addition to both more base housing at that time.

Ryan: *IN TEXT* Is...being able to afford rent not conducive to successful research outcomes?

Alex Yeh: Can you please speak on why, in particular, food expenses are not considered essential for travel budget.

Ona: So that's their reasoning is that the funding from your school or program is intended to cover your expenses while you pursue your studies. They think that the stipend will cover your food expenses.

Jo: The intent of this grant is to get people who have not been able to travel, due to COVID, whose research and travel funding has elapsed in some way. Why are they denying the need of extra funding used to purchase foods? *IN TEXT* Especially because travel accommodations wouldn't usually allow for one to make one's own meals.

Tatsat: For federal government funds conference traveling, they do not fund per diem costs for a lot of time. I do not think this is very fair, but the rule is in place for quite some time.

B. PAC Meeting (Ona) – completed while waiting for MSEL Library Renovation Team

Ona: In the Sep. 20th PAC Meeting, Alex and I are preparing for the cross-campus Town Hall ~~in~~ on Sep. 19th from 5:00 to 6:30 pm ET. The Provosts, Deans, and many professors will participate. It is a student-run town hall to which the administration are guests and can answer questions, and it is open to graduate students. Questions can be anything, for example, teaching modality, more funding.

The second round of COVID relief and dissertation completion funding are due October 1st. What students need to do is to prove that they can finish in the next term and have their advisor and program director ~~to~~ endorse it. All applied except two whose advisors suggested that they apply the next term.

In addition to the exit survey for graduating Ph.D. students, now we have an enrolled student survey that will be shared with Doctor of Philosophy Board that reviews Ph.Ds. The idea for this survey is to collaboratively provide a more holistic view of students' experiences. It will be sent out in late October/early November.

The new university ombudsperson, Annalisa Peterson, can start making appointments in one to two weeks. She will serve Ph.D.s and postdocs as they navigate through concerns and challenges and deal with systemic issues. She will be using software that is not controlled by JHU, and all our notes will be anonymous and deleted after the issue resolved.

Jo Giardini (English): I wonder if Co-chairs have discussed with the Dean's Office about the dissertation completion fellowships about the consequences of a student's not being able to complete their dissertation as expected. I also wonder why administrators ~~se~~ did not provide the full stipend amount for students who applied for fellowships.

Ona: We have been discussing with and pushing them with supporting more students and extending the award periods. The reasons for not providing the full stipend amount will be discussed shortly when I talk about the COVID-relief award report.

V. Advocacy Chair Update (Dani and Briana)

A. Counseling Center Survey

Briana: Dani, Vishal, and I met Kevin Shollenberger, Mathew Torres, and Jacki Stone, who is the Vice President of Wellbeing, the Counseling Center Director, and the Health and Wellness Director, respectively:

1. The glitches regarding the Citrix platform for online paperwork has been resolved by IT.
2. The initial intake paperwork is much shorter – long paperwork is needed only if students continue with the counselling center.

3. Students can get appointments with the counselor almost at the next day now-a-days
4. Counselors are state-specific as they are licensed in a particular state but there is a national effort to have national license for the counselors so they can virtually provide service in interstate level
5. During pandemic and till now, due to high volume of patients the outside providers don't have a lot of open slots which slows down the referral
6. Due to insurance regulations, students cannot access any Mental Health services if they are physically located out of the country. But they can use the 24*7 talk now service by TimelyMD
7. TimelyMD contract has been extended until June 2022
8. Crisis counselors are being hired for the Behavioral crisis support team (available 24*7). Hopkins security is the primary contact number for this service

Joseph: Could you follow up just to know whether the private police force will be involved with this primary contact thing because currently, the security is penciled in for a contact?

Briana: They have been set up security to be launched as crisis team for after-hours services. Once we follow up with Dr Shollenberger, as well as Torres and Jackie, we will be able to get more insight into this. For example, we have heard of concerns regarding primary contact for this crisis support team. Since, even nationally, no one should be able to talk about their mental crisis to a police officer.

Michael: To clarify on that point, from what I remember about the Counseling Center is that it's not set up for students to necessarily have repeated interactions with a given therapist. It is more meant to do like this kind of drop-in or one session, kind of check-in styles and then if they need to go back, they'll usually refer them out to a different national therapist. Am I correct on that? Why doesn't the counseling center allow for ... like ... continued visits?

Briana: You don't necessarily automatically get referred out. You can see a counselor multiple times. However, it's not for sure that you'll see the same counselor, which is an issue itself.

Dani: They emphasize a point very strongly that they are understaffed, and there aren't enough providers.

Michael Wilkinson **IN TEXT** Continuity of care is extremely important. I also think that is discourages students from going if they don't think they have access to personalized/consistent care.

Veronica Wallace: **IN TEXT** I was told they do not have the capacity for repeated visits.

Jo: The medical campus has a completely different counseling setup that is properly integrated with their student health, which means that students that take psychiatric medications, for example, can get care. Students need continuity of care if they're on psychiatric medications, some of which if you go off with them, there are some serious side effects. There is a sort of precedent for doing this in a slightly better way, but there is a reluctance to fully integrate the mental health services across both campuses. I also would like to just clarify that Kevin Shellenberger is not a doctor. He doesn't have a Ph.D., and he has no medical background. As far as I can tell, he's a counselor by training.

Briana: I know when I introduced myself since I'm a joint student on both campuses they're relatively interested in whether or not I'm able to get services at the School of Medicine as a primarily Homewood student, which I can't. And a lot of it is because of the different insurances that we have which is what I was saying, but they said that is not the case. A lot of services are just not offered to all students, which is not good.

Joseph Choy (Grad Involvement): **IN TEXT** Seconding Briana's point, lots of irregularities between the two schools especially for students on opposite campuses (e.g. Homewood students at SOM and vice versa)

Calvin: In terms of psychiatric medicine, I actually got it through the Counseling Center here on Homewood. I haven't had any problems getting refills on my prescription or seeing the same counselor through all COVID. I know that there are major problems within the Counseling Center. I do know that there are limited successes as well.

Brianna: We will be following up with them in about a year.

B. Upcoming surveys on Hopkins disability services and software purchases

1. Dani: Recently a student published an article in the JH newsletter detailing their experiences and concerns with JHU Student Disability Services (SDS). It prompted a meeting between the GRO, SGA (undergraduate Student Government Association), and various student advocates. We wanted to generate this survey for both graduate students and undergraduates to talk about all experiences with the SDS office. Kevin Shellenberger has voiced interest in wanting to discuss with us the outcomes of the survey and ways to move forward, which will be similar to what we had done for the Counseling Center updates. This survey is currently being constructed and GRO will have input and feedback when completed. SGA and GRO are commenting and putting in the survey, and the survey is hopefully going to be sent out in the next week or two. *IN TEXT* <https://www.jhunewsletter.com/article/2021/08/disability-isnt-taken-seriously-at-hopkins>

Harry Greenberg (Chemistry): Will this survey be targeted just to students who are registered with SDS?

Ryan: Could this also perhaps help with input for the library redesign?

Dani: It will be sent out to all students, and the response will be collected anonymously. One of the ideas is trying to get into the survey of some students who may not necessarily recognize that they require or that they need SDS accommodations. This could also help with the library renovation. So, the meeting will happen once we have the results from the survey.

Michael: Are there methods to disseminating information to professors on a wider scale? One of the big points of the article is not even just about the physical accommodations, but also about how professors are treating the accommodations and that might just be due to a lack of awareness information.

Dani: It would require discussion, especially after we have some survey results. It would have to start on the administrative side, hopefully, then we could kind of go with a top-down approach going forward so that is one successful implementation.

Joseph: As graduate students, the SDS is a mandatory part for TA training. I wonder if the same thing required for faculty?

Dani: I am not 100% sure. But I do think it should be a school-wide thing.

Alex Helms: *IN TEXT* We will follow up at our advisor meeting and ask if faculty receive SDS training.

2. Dani: We also have a survey aiming to identify some common program that are necessary for research but are currently being paid out-of-pocket for students, such as Adobe Illustrator. The survey will also focus on programs that the University does not provide, gauge if/how many students pay for these services out of pocket, and advocate to the administration for licensure of heavily used software. Hopefully we can work with the administration to see if we can cut down costs. For example, the University of Maryland cut by half the Adobe Illustrator price.

Michael: It may become a little bit tricky because of different OSs. And it is possible that you were either given a computer or you bought a computer that ended up not lining up with the software ~~it's~~ you ended up needing.

Joseph: *IN TEXT* Some grants held by PIs are also weird with computer expenses, so it'd be nice to have everything standardized on a school level.

Calvin (chemistry): *IN TEXT* Within the chemistry dept it took over 8 months to get necessary software for my Mac. legal and slow admin were the main reasons for the delay. so be aware that stumbling blocks may arise!

VI. Intercampus Chair Update (Louise)

A. Upcoming Intercampus Events

1. GRO Virtual Mixer: September 30, Thursday, 6:30pm-8:00pm. Hopkins's goodies will be distributed after the mixer for attendees including notebooks, portfolios, and face masks.

2. Patterson Park Bowling Event: October 22, Friday, 5pm-9pm

3. Patterson Park Ice Skating Event: Tentative date: in November (before Thanksgiving)

Matthew Morgado (Philosophy): Will bowling and ice skating be socially distanced?

Louise Chen (intercampus chair): For both events, we require all students to wear masks at the events

VII. GRO E-Board Elections

A. Floating Positions

1. Health & Wellness Chair

a) Position Description:

- (1) Be responsible to act as the graduate student representative on university committees (e.g., PATH, Wellness Working Group, other committees with OIE, etc.) related to student health and wellness.
- (2) Report on changes in the plan to the Executive Board and General Council, solicit opinions from the GRO on the health insurance plan, and act as a resource for students with questions regarding health insurance.
- (3) Engage with fellow graduate students and also the Rec Center, Counseling Center, OIE, and the Vice-Provost for Health & Wellness Office.
- (4) Develop programming (the scope of which is at the discretion of the chair) related to improving the health and wellness of grads. Some examples may be workout classes, hikes, mindfulness sessions, etc.
- (5) Be paid for no more than 25 hours per academic year.

b) Nominees:

- (1) Amoh Tontoh

c) Result of the election:

- (1) Amoh Tontoh were elected as the Health & Wellness Chair

2. COVID-19 Concerns Chair

a) Discontinued due to lack of nominees

Jo: Request that the window for nominations be extended to next GC meeting?

Ona: If there is are still no nominees, we will discuss it in the next GC meeting.

VIII. Open Discussion & Questions for Hopkins Police Department

Alex H: No major updates since last time. As many people now, they recently hired a new VP of security, who began to reach out to student groups. We are in the process of setting up an initial meeting with them.

Jo: In the fall of 2019, a GRO motion was adopted by that GC that the GRO would oppose the formation of a police force by Johns Hopkins on a quite a firm basis. Connor suggested at the last GC Meeting that the GRO might consider voting to affirm its opposition to the creation of the police force given that Hopkins has not paused its plans.

Alex H: The school is going for a PD given we have released the official statement and opposition to ~~for~~ it. So what are some of the next steps we can do?

Michael: I think Hopkins is going for it regardless of the survey because it believes that there is a need. So finding a middle ground of expressing our concerns of the PD but also acknowledging some possible benefits that they see in the PD.

Alex Y: I think this is against what they said to GRO last year. They said they would pause but abruptly had a hiring committee and a new director basically before a year even finished.

Ryan: *IN TEXT* I do not think that working with the administration precludes us being angry or having grievances about the lack of consistency and the refusal to listen to the evidence, as well as the community, about the harm a Hopkins police force will do.

Matthew Morgado (Philosophy): *IN TEXT* It seems almost certain that the police force goes through, at least without serious student protest. So perhaps the most feasible option going through is watchdog position while admitting that ideal would be no PD.

Michael Wilkinson (Robotics MSE Rep): *IN TEXT* I think I was more concerned as to how much they will listen to us properly if we do not demonstrate some give and take, even if that is annoying. I don't think we will lose a seat, but it could be a seat that isn't taken seriously if not treated tactfully

Jo: *IN TEXT* this is the announcement of the two years pause <https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/06/12/hopkins-pauses-jhpd-for-at-least-two-years/>

Alex Y: *IN TEXT* I understand wanting to keep a seat at the table, but I think we need to be strident in our opposition.

Jo: *IN TEXT* Also, we have one of the worlds experts on policing at Johns Hopkins—I wonder about getting him to speak to us? Professor Stuart Schrader

IX. Adjournment

- A. Announced the adjournment at 8:07 pm