



Graduate Representative Organization

GC Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: 18:00 March 7th, 2022

Meeting Location: [Online, Zoom](#)

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- I. Call to Order and Agenda Review
 - A. The meeting is called to order at 6:03 pm.
 - II. Nancy Kass, Vice-Provost for Graduate and Professional Education (15 min presentation followed by 15 min Q&A)
 - A. *Nancy:* I'm in the Provost Office. I moved to Baltimore to be a doctoral student at the School of Public Health, and I was on the faculty for 25 years before joining the provost office five years ago and had no idea about this office. So, I am starting with what is a Provost and what does the Provost's Office do in terms of the academic program, policies, and student services within the Krieger and Whiting schools. The provost is also known as the Chief Academic Officer of the university. All deans from nine schools of Hopkins reports to the provost. Provost has a responsibility to ensure that each school has appropriate academic quality, fiscal responsibility, policies, and to hold schools responsible for vision, goals, quality, improvement, appropriate policies, budget, and etc. I work for the graduate education office in the Provost Office. We track demographics of graduate students from different programs from, and we are increasingly trying to make a lot of that data transparent. We do a survey with PhD students when they graduate. We also have faculty and staff composition reports. I want to make sure that people know about this. One of the things that we were able to secure permission to do for the first time is to give these data back to students in their own program had a high enough response rate of more than 65%. The whole point of aggregating these data is so the programs know where they're doing well and know where there are concerns needing some actions. We produce this with the School Dean's Office every two years. The Doctor of Philosophy board is the PhD board for the university has a whole. It has three PhD student members and 12 faculties. It does a couple things, but one of its main responsibilities is it reviews every PhD program in the university about every six years. Every month, there's a deep dive into one program. Every review has a list of recommendations back to the program in the Dean's office. And they are asked one year later to give their own progress on the recommendations. I am also looking for students for the PhD student advisory committee. The students on this committee obviously are students who take time from their own life to try to make the lives of PhD

students better. We hope that we can spread the information out. With the Faculty Committee and the PhD Student Advisory Committee, we created a mentoring policy and it outlines mentoring expectations for the faculty and mentoring expectations for the PhD students. Another section on professional development is on the interaction style between the faculty advisor and the student. We also passed a policy on professional development which essentially says that every PhD program in the university has to have some process in place whereby there are annual formal discussions with PhD students not only their academic progress, but also to start to do career exploration. We also have a new ombuds office, which helps doctoral students and postdocs with problems that they cannot find proper people to talk, and it is 100% confidential.

B. Discussion

Amoh: Is there any programs for master students?

Nancy: I am only in charge of the Ph.D. and postdoc sides of work.

Conor: Could you briefly summarize any ongoing efforts to use the massive inflow of new financial resources from the universities in the past year to benefit graduate students?

Nancy: It is the responsibility of each of the schools to both fund their faculty and fund their students. And there are periodically special funds that are created for particular situations like the COVID Relief Fellowships that we have been able to make available. And there are also sometimes central parts for these initiatives that are intended to jumpstart or serve as Pilot programs. Some non-academic career planning that we've done such as the internship programs. A lot of the Diversity Equity Inclusion programming that is part of the roadmap 2.0 has items that are related to graduate students.

Michael W: *IN TEXT* Question about the recent survey. The minimum bar to hear back results was 65%, why was this number so high and was this on a school level or a department level? For example if MechE had >65% but WSE didn't would MechE hear back their results?

Nancy: The big challenge with doing survey work is having valid and reliable data. The higher the response rate, the more likely that the answers are accurately reflecting that program. We decided on 65% per program, not per school, for that program to get the results back. We are likely going to release some data that's aggregated at the school level. We tried many things to get the response rates up. And there were a lot of programs made it.

Alaa: *IN TEXT* I also have a question re the past survey— will there a mechanism to monitor the problems mentioned in the survey within the various departments? Like what results can we expect from that survey? Moreover, will the results be shared with students? If so, when? Oh, so data shared won't be departmental as well? Only school?

Nancy: The results will be shared with students if the response rate was higher than 65%. There's a deep dive and we have for the past several years only been able to rely on just survey data for both doctor philosophy board monthly reviews and for the Deans reports. The exit surveys are helpful. Some programs that have a long time to degree, we group exit surveys for the last three years and an exit survey that was completed two or three years ago from a student in a program.

There's a question about the quality of the curriculum that may reflect their experience from like seven or eight years before when there was completely different leadership. So, we're really hoping that this enrolled student survey will give us a much more accurate pulse on what's really going on right now.

Caleb Andrews (DMSE): What does it say about morale and student outcomes in departments with low response rates? Are they overworked to the degree they can't answer, their inboxes flooded, or that they simply don't believe it's of any value to their outcome?

Nancy: I want to distinguish a high response rate from a positive response. There's a lot of hypotheses about why there are high and low response rates. What's very interesting is that there are cultures by discipline in likelihood of answering these surveys. I don't think we can infer a meaning in terms of student satisfaction. But nonetheless, we're really concerned about bias. The lowest response rate of any program is about 48%, which is not terrible. There have been other surveys that the university has done, where people making drawing a lot of conclusions from surveys with 10 to 15% response rate. I appreciate your caution.

Veronica: For both response rate considerations and survey results, are departments that span different schools considered separately in each school, such as Biomedical Engineering and Environmental Health and Engineering?

Nancy: For Ph.D. program, Biomedical Engineering is awarded by the School of Medicine, so that is counted in Medicine School.

III. Prof. Michael J. Reese, Associate Dean & Director, Center for Educational Resources and Prof. Eric Rice: share background on the Provost's ad hoc Committee on Teaching Evaluations (30 min):

A. Help needed to recruit grad students for focus groups

Michael R: I am the director of the Center for Educational Resources, and we're going to change our name to the Center for Teaching Excellence in Innovation. I am also an associate teaching professor in Sociology. There is the provost has chaired to set up an ad-hoc committee on teaching evaluations. A committee of us are looking to collect feedback from several different stakeholders. The reason it was been set up is there's a second commission on undergraduate education called q2. It's essentially a strategic plan for the future of undergraduate education at Hopkins for the next five to 10 years. There are several programs that are being set up. First year seminars are the ones that are the most immediate. One of the recommendations was rethinking how we conduct teaching evaluations, what are current course evaluations. There's a lot of issues with course evaluations.

Therefore, there's an interest in trying to think more broadly about how we're going to evaluate our teaching. We want to talk to graduate students, because not only are you students in classes, but many of you also have an instructional role either as a TA or as an instructor of record. In depth focus groups, we hope to have 12 graduate students split into two groups, where we can talk in detail for about an hour on a number of different questions that that we've set up. Once we get to about the top of the hour, I'll then make the formal request for you all to submit members and peers of your departments to possibly participate in a focus group. We welcome you to make edits to the document shared. There are three reasons why we want to focus on course evaluations. 1. At least for faculty this is

used in their tenure track promotion and salary raises. 2. How can we get feedback on our teaching, so we can continually improve. 3. Historically, we've published summaries of the course evaluations, so students can make decisions about what courses they want to teach, or what courses they hope to take based on what instructor is teaching them. For many years from the late 60s until the early 2000s, it was a student run publication that was managed through the Undergraduate Student Government Association. Starting in the 2000s, for several reasons, they decided to contract a company to summarize them.

Links: <https://bit.ly/3sK4vIR>; <https://cer.jhu.edu/teaching/mid-semester-surveys>; <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=OPSkn-axO0eAP4b4rt8N7M39eE72nDZOkltNnP6KwMhUN1kwMU9QUIZYRk5ZWIBHVTVMsUNWUzBUVS4u>

B. Discussion:

Michael W: *Question lost due to Secretary's poor internet connectivity*

Michael R: We had two larger conversations in faculty before having this smaller focus groups. And faculty were sharing comments about how harsh students can be, but also to this point that they're reacting to their greed without thinking about what their role was. I highlighted that we want to prompt students to understand that when they're giving feedback, think about how much effort they put into it, and how much are they reacting to their grade, versus the actual facilitation of the course. Out of that conversation, one of the ideas was maybe crafting a script that all faculty will read, to remind students that this isn't just your chance to complain, but to give constructive feedback about what didn't work well, at least in your case.

Veronica: I was surprised to learn that it relates to promotion, tenure, and salary. I have one question about the instructors' teaching effectiveness and rating from poor to excellent. Maybe it is worth putting some specifications at the start of the survey so that even if students are reminded verbally in class by their instructor to respond constructively, when they open the survey, the first thing they see is your responses are used for these purposes. I think if I knew that my responses were influencing my professor's potential tenure or promotion that if I really liked this instructor, and I thought they were great. I would take more time to really emphasize that how great of an instructor I thought they were.

Michael R: It's incredibly influential for faculties on the teaching track.

Ryan Warwick: *IN TEXT* I just have a quick comment: I want to highlight how important these evaluations are to graduate student teaching assistants who are entering the job market. These should be easier to access for graduate students, and any new systems should be designed with this in mind as well.

Michael R: We have heard that regularly and we have advocated to the Deans offices sending standard message to faculty that their course evaluations are now available. We have added language that graduates TAs do not automatically receive these, and please forward the course evaluations to the TAs because they may never get that feedback. I don't know if there's other issues you've had as an instructor. Sometimes, graduate students teach smaller courses and if the course is less than five students, they don't run the course evaluations because they're worried about students' identity being revealed.

IV. E-board Report (Ona & Isaiah)

A. Voting on Michael's proposed voting tracking method (Isaiah)

1. *Michael W*: Esther shared the Excel sheets. The idea behind it is that the proper link that's sent out will be a Google sheet or something like that, which can be made editor access during meetings, but then we can close out it or access outside of meetings. The idea is that you vote in the Zoom chat during the meetings but can also record it on the sheet. The idea behind the sheet is that it can be made public.
2. Matthew Morgado: *IN TEXT* Motion to vote on this tracking method.
 - a) Veronica: *IN TEXT* Second
 - b) Yea: 20, Nay: 0, Abstain: 3
 - c) The motion passes

B. Parental and Period Care Initiative Updates (Ona)

1. *Ona*: We have received boxes of diapers for newborns of various sizes. We have wipe pouches, water, baby food organic, and multiple sizes of pads. We have eight different packs of tampons and reusable menstrual cups. All these items will be available at the GRO lounge by the end of this week.

C. Voting on budget re-arrangement (Isaiah)

1. *Isaiah*: The Deans of Student Life allocated us \$90,000 back in the summer before starting the academic year without explaining the rationale behind the total amount. Correspondingly, we cut all the budgets by a proportional amount so that we still adhere to this total and don't overspend. Unfortunately, this resulted in some drastic cuts of certain budgets so that we need to redistribute budget from events that was not happening due to the COVID restrictions. Based on E-Board member estimated hours and the pay rates we are about \$6,000 over what we have remaining, which needs to be reallocated from other budgets within this main allocation to make up for this. I propose that we take it from a few different places. 1. \$4,000 from the group funding budget that we've only spent about 15% of this budget so far. 2. \$500 from the office budget that I don't foresee any further charges to this budget. 3. \$1,500 from the meetings budget that is usually used to purchase food during E-Board meetings.
2. Discussion

Vittorio: The Maryland minimum wage went up on Jan. 1st. Is this new amount has been taking into account?

Isaiah: Me, Shane and Connor worked together to prepare a budget and at that time, the minimum wage was \$11 per hour. Our payroll request was based on that value and the number of hours that we additionally estimate based off of hours worked for previous year. The budget for this year does not take that into account and the university cannot commit to that because of how they pay us. We're not considered as student workers; they pay us as contractors. And I had spoken with Laura about this and asked about the apostasy requesting an increase to payroll to see if we could pay everyone above what is the proper minimum wage currently.

Unfortunately, she said that they cannot secure the funding for it. There's a lot of complicated reasons and that's just how traditionally they've paid the board records through contract work. Also, we are the only student group on campus that pays their members entirely.

Veronica: What will happen to the unused funds?

Isaiah: Return to the Dean's Office.

3. Conor Bean: *IN TEXT* I motion to reallocate \$4000 from group funding, \$500 from office, and \$1500 from the meeting budget to be put toward payroll for EBoard.
 - a) Michael W: *IN TEXT* Second
 - b) Yea: 24, Nay: 1, Abstain: 1
 - c) The motion passes
4. Conor Bean: *IN TEXT* I motion to tether E-Board hourly payments to the Maryland minimum wage
 - a) Vittorio: *IN TEXT* Second
 - b) Yea: 22, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0
 - c) The motion passes

V. Elections

A. Treasurer

1. Description:

- a) Facilitate all financial transactions of the GRO and maintain records of GRO financial accounts.
- b) Submit to the Chair a listing of all Executive Board expenditures to be included in the Executive Board Report.
- c) Facilitate all reimbursements and transfers of GRO funds to all individuals and groups per General Council or Executive Board approval.
- d) Assist in the preparation of the annual budget with Chair and Co-Chair, as laid out in Article V.1.

2. Nominees:

- a) Michael Wilkinson
- b) Jingbo Yuan
- c) Jingyi Huang
- d) Nicole Chen

3. Result: Michael Wilkinson is elected as the treasurer.

VI. Sending out the stipend survey email (Michael)

A. Conor: *IN TEXT* I move to distribute the stipend survey

1. Cyril: *IN TEXT* Second
2. Yea: 17, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0
3. The motion passes.

VII. Discussion I: GC members needed to provide input on revising sections of by-laws (together with dedicated E-board members)

A. Goals:

1. Setting clear expectations for all GC members and E-board members regarding organizational knowledge and community cohesion.
2. Ensure there are means to hold any member of the GRO accountable for

their actions and interactions.

3. Think through the procedures that are currently in place to raise impeachment/strengthen our internal rules and develop strategies to make the processes more clear.
4. Make the language more explicit and prescriptive.

II. Open Discussion & Questions

- A. *Isaiah*: Biology department overpaid students and asked them to pay back \$200. I wonder if any other department have similar issue?
- B. *Various responses*: English, EHE, Classics two years ago, Biophysics, Cognitive Sciences, Near Eastern Studies, and Political Sciences

III. Adjournment

- A. The meeting adjourns at 8:20 pm.

IV. Voting details

	Motion to vote on new tracking method	Reallocate \$4000 from group funding, \$500 from office, and \$1500 from the meeting budget to be put toward payroll for EBoard	Tether E-Board hourly payments to the Maryland minimum wage	Vote for sending out the survey
Anthropology				
Applied Mathematics & Statistics (AMS)	Yea	Nay	Yea	
History of Art				
Biology	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Biomedical Engineering (BME)	Abstain	Yea	Yea	
Biophysics	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering				
Chemistry				
Civil Engineering				
Classics	Abstain	Yea	Yea	Yea
Cognitive Science	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Computer Science				
Economics	Yea	Yea	Yea	
Electrical & Computer Engineering (ECE)				
Engineering Management				
English				
Environmental Health and Engineering (formerly DOGEE)	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
EPS (Earth and Planetary Sciences)				
Modern Languages and Literatures (Formerly GRLL)				
History				
History of Science and Technology	Yea			
Comp Thought and Literature				Yea
Information Security Inst				
Materials Science & Engineering	Yea	Yea		
Mathematics				
Mechanical Engineering	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Near Eastern Studies (NES)	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Philosophy	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Physics and Astronomy	Abstain	Yea	Yea	
Political Science	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Psychological and Brain Sciences	Yea		Yea	Yea
Sociology	Yea	Yea	Yea	
Writing Seminars				
Robotics	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea