



## Graduate Representative Organization

### GC Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: 18:00 March 21st, 2022

Meeting Location: [Online, Zoom](#)

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- I. Call to Order and Agenda Review
    - A. The meeting is called to order at 6:06 pm.
  - II. Approval of minutes from March 7th, 2022
    - A. Matthew Morgado: \*IN TEXT\* Motion to approve minutes
      1. Christina McNerney: \*IN TEXT\* seconded
      2. Yea: 17, Nay:0, Abstain: 0
      3. The motion passes
  - III. Presentation from Annalisa Peterson from the Ombuds Office (20 minutes)
    - A. *Annalisa Peterson*: I'm the ombuds person for doctoral and postdoctoral students, fellows, and programs as of last September. I'm sharing information about how this office works and what its purpose is. I'm an attorney and a mediator, and I've worked as an ombuds person for a couple of different places, one in health care and one in the Office of Institutional Equity at the University of Minnesota, where I was one of 13 attorneys who have the responsibility to investigate sexual misconduct and discrimination concerns that arose there. Therefore, I'm happy to be at Hopkins and to operate in this capacity. The whole purpose of having an ombuds office is to have a confidential place where it's safe to come and raise concerns and to seek ideas about how you might move forward with that concern. The scope of this office is focused on doctoral and postdoctoral students, fellows, and programs. The only thing that falls outside of my scope is totally personal issue. We know that some people take advantage of the formal offices and processes to raise a complaint or grievance at a big institution like a university, but many people don't. And there's good reasons for that. We all know that retaliation is a real thing, even if there's a policy saying that it shouldn't happen. It's a real fear. And that's particularly true for folks who are in a position or a course of study where there's a significant power imbalance, like graduate students and postdocs experience. It's just a reality of navigating those spaces. I am do various things without identifying who was asking, for example, collecting information about certain policy. I can also talk through people about the hard conversation that they might have. Sometimes people are looking for support for actual facilitation and mediation. There could be accountability if things have broken down in terms of communication between for instance, a PhD student and

an advisor. I also take specific safeguards to ensure that people can't subpoena information from me. I don't email substantively with people. And I don't keep comings at records. But there are a couple of exceptions under Maryland law where I am required to report, which would be if I learned about child abuse or neglect, even if it was 20 years in the press, there's Maryland law that requires me to make a report so that the appropriate entity can follow up on it. Similarly, if I learned that somebody, either the person who's talking to me or somebody else is in danger of serious imminent physical harm to themselves or somebody else, that's something I must report to. The link to the office page is: <https://www.jhu.edu/ombuds-office/>. If you were looking for information about how to either make an appointment yourself to have a consultation with me or if you're trying to share that information with someone else, you can schedule the appointment right through the website confidentially, not through the university's servers or anything like that.

B. Discussion:

*Cyril Cook (Biophysics):* \*IN TEXT\* Yes, would you please give a hypothetical example of how your office is used by grad students?

*Annalisa:* Sometimes people have had concerns about what is being asked to them by a PI or advisor. They may feel that the expectations of that person for working hours are extreme and not reasonable and are having detrimental effects on their personal health and don't know quite how to navigate that. I've had other people who have had little time with PI advisors who are not reviewing their manuscripts in a timely way, and things are getting drugged out to the point where people are concerned about getting scooped or making progress or ultimately graduating without any publications. And in extreme situations, I've had people who've had a breakdown of communication with their advisor that it's become very difficult to make progress and, on both sides, so that there's a lot of frustration there. I've had folks who have been in a program for a long time and are feeling that there's not a kind of agreement between students and advisor about what it takes to get to the end. I've had situations where people are experiencing a toxic environment between fellow students in a lab environment and they're unsure how to navigate. It's not created that advisors are aware of it. And I've had concerns about policies. A lot of these things are not issues 99% of the time, but when they are, they're big issues.

*Ali:* Several fellow graduate students are in a toxic relationship with their advisors, and it's been very difficult for them because of the power imbalances. It's very hard for them to even come talk to anybody for that matter. How does ombudsperson keep the professors accountable? And how does ombudsperson make sure that students can feel safe?

*Annalisa:* It's such a hard position to be in and it's really upsetting the extent to which there's this attitude of that this is how academia is. It depends on the specific advisor or the specific lab or whatever environment you're talking about. A couple of thoughts in relation to your specific question about how perhaps the Ombuds Office can help keep an advisor accountable. First, it's going to depend on how safe the person who's coming to me feels having information shared with me, because I can't admonish someone. If students have concerns and they do feel

safe with me reaching out to someone within the program, we could talk about who they do have trust in, and I can give them my own feedback about who I have had good interactions with and who I trust. But there could be an opportunity for me to have a conversation with a program director, if that's something a student felt comfortable with, to see if they're aware of the type of concerns about that kind of toxic environment you described occurring. Sometimes people want me to reach out directly to the advisor and have a conversation with them about some hard things without identifying anyone individually. It really depends. And other times when people say, I don't want you to reach out to anyone because that feels too vulnerable, I'm going to honor that too. It depends on the situation and the comfort level of people involved.

*Ali:* Do you see that a student eventually comes back and gives you positive feedback about things are changed? Do you have any statistics to share?

*Annalisa:* Since this office opened in September, I don't yet have a set of reliable statistics to share. I do hope to put out a public annual report of sharing what I've seen within the next less than a year. It varies so much depending on the specifics of the situation. But what I have noticed and what I do think I can say with competence is that even when the behavior in question hasn't changed, I think it can be helpful in terms of coming up with a plan and formulating a plan for yourself, like what are my boundaries around this: can I stay in this environment and be okay? do I need to look for a different advisor or get a co-advisor? Do I need to seek out opportunities to do this work in a different way than I'm currently doing it to take care of myself? Some of the cases are real outliers, and those are the hardest ones to move. But I do think you can get support to identify resources to think about strategies that might be helpful to at least have a plan for how to move forward so that people don't feel like they're kind of just stuck and dealing with it on their own.

*Michael W:* \*IN TEXT\* When students have brought issues related to their stipend/benefits to you, how were those things typically settled?

*Annalisa:* To be honest, I haven't had a ton of questions about stipend or benefits. I've had a couple questions that I would say fall into that category. And again, it depends to some degree on the school that person is coming from. Do you have a specific situation that you're thinking of that might help me?

*Michael W:* One thing that we've been looking into is equity in stipends and benefits in general and there might be cases where students complain that stipend is not enough to live on. I brought the possibility of increasing it or getting a bonus to my advisor and they're not for it. I'm not sure what to do. I'm curious that was a real resolution there if this case came up.

*Annalisa:* I have not had that issue brought to me. I think this may come up on a more systemic level, especially as you mentioned, there have been concerns about equity in comparison between different programs, what those stipends look like, and how that feels when you might have comparison between different programs. However, I have not had that specific issue brought to me yet. I do think that this office can play an important role in. It's one thing for students to advocate on their own behalf. I'm going to tell administrators that these are themes that are important and ask them to let me know what's being done about this so that I can

bring that information back.

IV. E-board Report (Ona & Isaiah)

A. Regarding graduate students needing to repay money to departments

1. *Isaiah*: When we brought the issue, Christine and Kevin said that they were aware of students need to repay money to departments. And they said that is at the fault of individual departments from what they know. It's a processing issue where the department's overpaid for dental and vision insurance that graduate students have at Homewood. The refunds are to cover that vision and dental insurance. They said that if any specific students run into this kind of issue that the appropriate team should be contacted. WSE students should directly email Christina, while KSAS students should contact Renee. They do not have a specific date give to students because this is case-by-case.

2. Discussion:

*John Soltis*: \*IN TEXT\* FYI, they emailed people who do not owe them money too. Check first.

B. Possible funds to go towards JHU Spring Fair concert (Michael & Isaiah)

1. *Isaiah*: Student life at Hopkins will be hosting Spring Fair.

*Michael*: Spring Fair had reached out to the GRO asking if we would be willing to sponsor the Spring Fair, and we'll let the GC decide how much money we want to put toward it. We were looking at the different pools that we could potentially pull this funding from. The main account that we can pull this from is the Student Programming pool. There aren't any major events left for Student Programming till the end of this fiscal year, and we will lose the money if we do not spend it. So, we were thinking of using this \$2,570.65 to go toward that. There are two reasons that we wanted to bring this before the GC. 1. According to Article 5.2.1 a, any expenditure over \$2,500 has to be brought before the GC for a vote. 2. We had pulled from other accounts earlier in the year that we weren't using a lot, for example, from Happy Hours to Student Programming, because we weren't doing as many happy hours. But now we are having more happy hours, this money could go back to those various accounts. Therefore, I want to bring this to open discussion and vote on what we want to do with this money.

*Isaiah*: The only important thing to note is that we cannot spend this money on things without the GC's approval since it is above \$2,500. Another important point to note is that in discussions with Vittorio, he brought up that technically this money in principle is supposed to be spent on Homewood graduate students. If the money were to go towards Spring Fair, an event that is open to all students, it's possible that the event tickets are mainly purchased by undergraduates. He suggested that if we do commit funds, then we should establish some rules like graduate students get a certain percentage of the tickets, so that way we can be certain that there will be enough graduate students in attendance to validate the use of these funds on Spring Fair. Anyone can propose a motion to either approve the funding or divert a stack towards Happy or Coffee Hours.

2. Discussion

*Vittorio:* If we're restarting happy hours, do we have enough to pay for the number of happy hours that we want to hold?

*Isaiah:* I sat down with Social Chairs and had gone through based of costs from previous years to estimate how much do we need. It has been some time since happy hours have been hosted. We have estimates for how much we plan to spend. In theory, we have enough money to run the 5 Happy Hours that we have planned. But if we have more money in the budget, theoretically, we could add another one.

*Vittorio:* I think that's plenty.

*Matthew Morgado:* \*IN TEXT\* Has Spring Fair tended to attract grads? Or has it usually been dominated by undergrads?

*Vittorio:* \*IN TEXT\* Spring Fair as a whole is attended by the entire campus. But the concert has been mostly attended by undergrads. This is the first time since I've been here that we've been asked to fund the concert

3. Motion: *Vittorio:* \*IN TEXT\* I motion to provide the funds, provided we are guaranteed tickets for graduate students.

a) The motion is seconded

b) Yea: 13, Nay: 0, Abstain: 3

c) The motion is not passed.

C. Information on Spring Formal (Louise)

1. *Louise:* As you may have seen from the email that I sent out last week, our Intercampus Graduate Spring Formal event will be held on April 16, from 8 pm to 12 am. The ticket price will be \$26 per person, and the sale will start tomorrow. You can purchase tickets over Hopkins Groups. We expect around 435 people attending. When you check into the events, just bring your Hopkins J-card. If your J-card don't have date of birth on it, you have to bring your government issue ID, or also bring your vaccination card when you check in. Masks are highly encouraged for the whole time. And our dress code is a black tie or formal. Technically, you can wear anything formal. We will have for stations for food and drinks, and we have our dance floor and photo booth. All of this will be in separate rooms at the Engineers Club. To avoid crowds, we're going to divide people into batches to grab the food. For this formal, we invited all graduate students from all campuses. You can start checking in at 7:30 pm. We also have a coat check for you to leave your jacket. We also have a special event, called silent auction, to raise fund for non-profit organizations. We're still trying to finalize it.

2. *Veronica:* \*IN TEXT\* Can you clarify about the food batches, like you can only get food at a certain time and if you miss your time slot, no food for you?

*Louise:* \*IN TEXT\* Each attendee will be assigned to a number, the number serves as a guidance for you to grab food at a certain order. There wont be a strict enforcement on this as it's hard to check every single person's number. If you miss it, just follow the next batch. Since you pay for tickets that include food and drinks, you will get what you paid for!

V. Group Recognition:

A. Indian Graduate Student Association (IGSA)

1. *Sumayya*: IGSA has existed for quite some time and we became inactive in the last two years during the COVID pandemic. We have social events planned throughout the year. We aim to celebrate Indian culture and festivities and bring together the Indian graduate students here at Hopkins and exposed these traditions to the other graduate students. We also help the incoming graduate students with finding accommodation and socializing during the initial days of their stay here. We want to get back to that place where we can serve the incoming students. Since we are no longer recognized group at Hopkins, we cannot organize a lot of things.
2. Discussion  
*Heramb*: Do you have a list of events planned yet?  
*Sumayya*: Not yet. We have discussed among the newly formed executive body but we are totally new and are looking at the past events. We are aiming for the welcome event for the incoming students. If we get the recognition, I think we will also have another event before the summer break.
3. Vittorio: \*IN TEXT\* Motion to recognize the IGSA.
  - a) Veronica and Gargeya: \*IN TEXT\* Second
  - b) Yea: 18, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0
  - c) The motion is passed.
4. Matthew: \*IN TEXT\* Motion to allow IGSA to use the mailing list
  - a) Naveed and Christina: \*IN TEXT\* seconded
  - b) Yea: 18, Nay: 0, Abstain: 3
  - c) The motion is passed.

VI. Group Funding Request:

A. Johns Hopkins Graduate Muslim Student Association - Ramadan Iftars

1. Serene: I'm here to request funding for our eight events next month. Our goal is to create a safe space for Muslim students foster an inclusion environment and perform advocacy for our members. We also have the goal of bridging cultural divides and bridging divides between Muslims and non-Muslims at Hopkins. During Ramadan, Muslims begin fasting at dawn and end fasting at sunset. For us, fasting means no food or drink all day. The meal where we break our fast in the evening is called an Iftar. For next month, we plan on hosting iftars every Tuesday and Thursday for the full month of Ramadan. These Iftar events are important spiritual and cultural diversity events that strengthen community bonds and these community bonds are strengthened around the world where Muslims around the world break their fast together. I also want to showcase that we have that spirit here at Hopkins. These Iftar events help serve the mission of the GRO because these eight events provide a welcoming space for the Hopkins in Baltimore community. Although most of our attendees are Hopkins graduate students, our policy is to never turn anyone away regardless of their identity. I also saw on the GRO mission statement that



the GRO is supportive of the families of graduate students and so are we. In previous years, attendees would bring their spouse and kids to these Ramadan, and we will encourage attendees to bring their families this year as well. We have always had this event at the Greenhouse Cafe, which is a cafeteria at the School of Medicine. We expect 70 people per events based off the fact that pre-pandemic between 50 and 100 people at each Iftar event. We've budgeted \$12 of food cost per person. We have already posted our event on Hopkins scripts. And we are also using our WhatsApp group, our Instagram page, and our email list to advertise our events. We have already received over \$1,500 in community donations, and we're working on crowdfunding as well. We are expecting to spend around \$875 per event and we are requesting from the GRO \$360 per event, that would be \$2,880 for eight events.

2. Discussion

*Vittorio*: \*IN TEXT Did you also ask the school of medicine student government for funds?

*Serene*: Maybe we can get from \$1,000 to \$1,500. We are unsure about this.

*Matthew*: \*IN TEXT\* Do Homewood grads also attend the events?

*Mohammed*: According to previous years, we have at least 15% to 20%.

*Cyril*: \*IN TEXT\* Will these events be open and advertised to non-Muslims?

*Serene*: Yes. We will advertise this to everyone through Hopkins groups and GSA Newsletter. We encourage non-Muslims interested to attend.

*Michael W*: \*IN TEXT\* What will the \$380 per event be spent on/how did that specific number come about?

*Serene*: \$2,880 will fund 60 graduate students for four Iftars.

3. Motion: *Vittorio*: \*IN TEXT\* Motion to provide the funds in half the requested amount (1440).

a) *Ali*: \*IN TEXT\* Second

b) Yea: 17, Nay: 0, Abstain: 4

VII. Discussion I: GRO Summer Sports League (appointment of a coordinator)

A. *Isaiah*: In regards to starting up the summer sports league that the GRO used to hold prior to the pandemic, we want to bring to the attention of the GC and discuss the appointment of a coordinator to oversee that league. Based off current restrictions, I think we can expect that we would be able to hold a full summer sports league. The GC is allowed to appoint coordinators, essentially temporary positions that can easily determine their scope, purpose, and starting and ending dates. We can appoint a coordinator only for the duration of the league in the summer. This appointment may be over when the league is over.

B. *Michael W*: \*IN TEXT\* Motion to appoint a summer sports coordinator for 80 hours operating from April to September.

1. *Veronica and Matthew*: \*IN TEXT\* Second

2. Yea: 10, Nay:0, Abstain:0

3. The motion is passed.

VIII. Discussion II: Feedback on floating chair positions and upcoming elections

- A. *Isaiah*: We had sent out a list of the floating positions last week and in email for the agenda tonight. I want to check with the GC in regards to further feedback on those lists of previously appointed positions. I found one specific thing that I think needs to be changed and that's the hour requirement for the intercampus chair. It is way too low.  
*Michael W*: I am also concerned that we may not need COVID-19 concern chair for the incoming fall semester.  
*Vittorio*: \*IN TEXT\* We could always appoint a coordinator in the fall if needed.
  - B. *Isaiah*: \*IN TEXT\* Motion to increase intercampus chair hours to 100 hours
    1. *Michael W*: \*IN TEXT\* second
    2. Yea: 20, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0
    3. The motion is passed
- IX. Discussion III: Public Statement Regarding Support of Harvard Grads
- A. *Briana*: We got a request from one of the students who wanted us to write a letter in support of the Harvard graduate students. They wanted to file a lawsuit against one of the professors, John Komarov, who has unwanted sexual advances towards three students. And then there was backlash from the Harvard professors who were standing in support of John. So, students felt that they were not supported by their institution, and they wanted us to write a letter in support of those students. We've drafted a letter and we sent it to the students, but they also wanted us to write as Hopkins as an institution. We wanted to open that up for discussion for the GC and getting feedbacks so that we can figure out the best way to move forward with this.
  - B. Discussion  
*Vittorio*: \*IN TEXT\* I would appreciate some time to read about the case before we vote on a letter to send. Maybe this vote could be carried out via email later in the week?  
*Michael W*: I think we should mention the idea of not supporting this behavior. Maybe a stronger statement.
- X. Discussion IV: Proposed edits made to by-laws (Article II.4)
- A. *Isaiah*: For something is less severe, then it would follow the existing processes that were here before in regards to discussing with the co-chairs and possibly bring up to the GC. In terms of more severe action actions and how those are handled, I think they need to be discussed in regards to determining what constitutes severity. Next week, we'll have a policy review email sent out that has this full document that will request solicit feedback for everyone. If there's any comments or suggestions, please comment them here. You can see existing discussion that we've had about certain things and it's important that we solicit enough feedback from people before we vote on this and that we can have meaningfully discussions.
- XI. Open Discussion & Questions
- XII. Adjournment
- A. The meeting adjourns at 7:59 pm.
- XIII. Voting details



	3/21 GC meeting						
	Approval of 3/7 Minutes	Transfer money to spring fair	Recognize IGSA	Fund half requested amount of 1440	Access to GRO mailing list	Appoint a summer sports coordinator for 80 hours operating from April to September	Increase intercampus chair hour to 100
Anthropology							
Applied Mathematics & Statistics (AMS)				Abstain	Yea	Yea	Yea
History of Art							
Biology	Yea	Yea		Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Biomedical Engineering (BME)							
Biophysics	Yea	Abstain	Yea	Abstain	Abstain	Yea	Yea
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea		
Chemistry							
Civil Engineering			Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Classics	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Cognitive Science							
Computer Science							
Economics							
Electrical & Computer Engineering (ECE)	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea		
Engineering Management							
English	Yea	Yea	Yea			Yea	
Environmental Health and Engineering (formerly DOGEE)	Yea	Abstain	Yea	Yea	Abstain	Yea	Yea
EPS (Earth and Planetary Sciences)	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Modern Languages and Literatures (Formerly GRLL)							
History							
History of Science and Technology			Yea		Yea	Yea	Yea
Comp Thought and Literature							
Information Security Inst							
Materials Science & Engineering							
Mathematics							
Mechanical Engineering	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Near Eastern Studies (NES)							
Philosophy	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea	Yea
Physics and Astronomy	Yea	Yea	Yea	Abstain	Yea	Yea	Yea
Political Science							
Psychological and Brain Sciences							
Sociology							
Writing Seminars							
Robotics							