Graduate Student Association

University at Albany/SUNY, Campus Center 307 & 308, Albany New York, 12222

Strategic Plan
2016-2017

Last Revised August 26, 2016
ADVOCACY VISION STATEMENT

Maintaining a sustainable student organization through synergistic strategies has become the essence of the Graduate Student Association (GSA). Since its inception in 1990, the GSA has evolved into a community of scholars fabricated by a diverse set of academic passions and humanitarian values. The GSA will celebrate its local and national involvement and accomplishments through historical content that promotes ongoing evolvement. Every effective organization driven by synergistic strategies requires a forward thinking evolutionary process.

Supporting the GSA’s evolutionary process would mean making connections between fields that have not yet been realized. Innovation within this student organization would include and not be limited to expanding and increasing resources for students in accordance with their identified needs. With a mission to enhance student life through uncompromising advocacy efforts, the GSA has inevitably become a safe, welcoming and inclusive community with a solutions-based focus. Students are currently faced with detrimental deterrence’s towards academic freedom in the form of insurmountable student debt, lack of childcare for families, tangible resources for food insecure students, and effective supportive services for marginalized or underrepresented student communities. These are some examples of the supports needed based on the graduate student experience and historical GSA advocacy efforts.

In efforts to maintain a detailed oriented and focus driven advocacy agenda, the GSA will increase visibility within the graduate student community, the University as a whole, along with local and national communities at large. This will allow the GSA to expand the voice and vision of the graduate student by identifying core issues and executing value-based solutions. Enhanced branding and promotional efforts will encourage student pride through involvement fostered by the GSA’s “Your student fees at work.” campaign. Graduate students will become increasingly aware of the value in their student organization through effective, resourceful and attractive programming tailored to the culture of graduate student life.

Data driven systems will help close generational gaps between students and University institutions. Despite the level of student involvement or University collectiveness, the GSA’s institutional memory and synergistic strategies will spawn a self-sufficient and self-motivated organization. Understanding that the organizational health of the GSA and vitality to its constituent’s academic success further empowers the values of the University’s goal to enrich learning in the world within reach.

Jefferson Garcia
GSA President
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 Executive Board for the Graduate Student Association (GSA) hereby proposes a strategic design to inform the Assembly of Executive Board intent for the upcoming academic year, and to attest as to how the Executive Board intends to proactively facilitate the mission statement of the GSA.

The strategic plan is based upon: (1) advocacy, (2) professional development, and (3) service, as they relate to the graduate student population at the University at Albany/SUNY. This proposal is submitted to the Assembly as an outline of objectives, assessments, and resources needed to satisfy executive action.

While reading this document, the Assembly is encouraged to consider how student activity fee monies should be used to facilitate this organization. All members of the Assembly with questions and comments are encouraged to attend the first assembly meeting of this academic term to voice their comments for further discussion.

Note that this plan is not intended to circumvent GSA bylaws, but rather it is designed to allow the flexibility required to carry out advanced plans which may otherwise not fit into a specific job description. This allows the Assembly as a whole to actively participate in any portion of GSA activity which is of interest to them.

As the EI Chair, I have carefully reviewed the objectives within this document, and approve its contents and objectives. It is my personal belief that meeting these objectives are essential to the future of this organization, as they are aligned with promoting the core values of the GSA. I welcome discussion and suggestions pertaining to all aspects of this strategic plan.

Jaime Coffino

GSA EI Chair
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISION STATEMENT

The GSA’s professional development strategic plan consists of a few broad goals in order to provide influential and productive professional development. Events designed to build both academic and non-academic professional development will be held by the GSA. By combining both on campus and off campus resources we will more efficiently provide professional development techniques for our graduate students.

We will work on sponsoring events such as a Graduate Research Conference, Resume Workshops, and panel discussions about careers and how to apply your degree in non-academic jobs. Through funding we also will provide opportunities for RGSOs and departments to host professional development opportunities geared toward their specific fields in a manner that the GSA would not be able to fully implement on its own. By providing a blend of general professional development and field specific professional development graduate students will obtain skills to ensure professional success.

Dylan Card
GSA Vice President
President’s Agenda:

Advocacy-

Goal # 1: Campaign and organize for key advocacy efforts related to graduate student life.

- Support and continue the #GradsHaveDebt2 campaign. Engage GSA leadership and RGSO’s in advocacy efforts throughout monthly advocacy agendas. Collaborate with local and national student organizations for strength in increased support, such as NAGPS, SUNYSA and other Graduate Student Organizations throughout New York State.
  - Support the sustainability and enhancement of current student scholarship/grant programs, such as GTOP (#SaveGTOP) and the revitalization of former grant programs, such as TAP (#BringBackGradTAP).
- Maintain diligent advocacy strategies supporting Childcare services for graduate student families. Utilize the Senate team to present childcare issues to the University Life Council for further support around service delivery and implementation.
- Create tangible resources for students with food insecurities. The University is not considering the GSA’s food pantry proposal, continuing to explore viable efforts to eliminate food insecurities is vital to this objective.
- Collaborate with University supportive services for marginalized and underrepresented communities such as International Student Support Services (ISSS), Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC) and the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP). Empowering graduate students to lead and advocate for enhanced supportive services according to identified needs. RGSO’s and Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Chair will hold monthly advocacy campaigns pertaining to specific issues identified by marginalized communities, including international students, students of color, LGBTQ+/MOGII students and/or economically disadvantaged students.

Goal # 2: Increase the visibility of the GSA.

- GSA leadership and student supporter will attend departmental graduate student orientations in order to help graduate students become increasingly aware of the valuable resources provided by the GSA.
- The “Your Student Fees At Work.” campaign will help facilitate GSA’s efforts to help graduate students identify the benefits of their student organization with the support of RGSO’s. The Public Relations Director and Programming Chair will collaborate in these efforts for further support.
- The GSA will implement a SWAG budget with the support of the Treasurer. The SWAG budget will include funds particularly reserved for marketing, promotion and branding of the GSA.
Goal # 3: Maintain affiliation and strengthen relationships with local and national student organizations in order to increase the power of the GSA’s voice.

- Continue to develop a strategic affiliation with the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS). The GSA will ensure that students attend the NAGPS Legislative Action Day (LAD), Regional, National and Professional Development Conferences.
- The GSA will continue to support the State University of New York Student Assembly (SUNY SA) advocacy efforts. GSA will encourage graduate students to get involved by considering SUNY SA leadership opportunities. This will further enhance collaboration within the larger SUNY system student advocacy agendas.
- The GSA will develop connections and relationships with fellow Graduate Student Organizations within in New York State. This will lead to a larger cooptation effort as the GSA encourages new and current partners to become involved with our larger affiliate, NAGPS.

Professional Development-

Goal # 1: Develop and enhance the GSA’s institutional memory and data gathering systems.

- Collaborate with IT/Webmaster to enhance the GSA’s website in order to support increasing visibility efforts. Supporting the IT/Webmaster along with Public Relations Director to develop the GSA Mobile Application, which would include resources, events calendar and institutional memory content. IT/Webmaster along with Office Management team will develop an integrated software system for all GSA printers and computers, including Downtown, East Campus and Campus Center locations.
- Collaborate with Treasurer to maintain usage of the GSA cloud repository (Office 365 Group). The Office 365 Group is an online, University-based system specifically created for data gathering and sharing. RGSO’s will be encouraged to explore the benefits of utilizing this tool for their own institutional memory development.
- Collaborate with Office Management team to develop, support and enhance institutional memory (“Brain Project”) efforts and overall office cosmetics and filing systems. Office Management team will improve the appearance of offices, particularly the student lounge areas in order to create a comfortable and inviting space for graduate students.
Vice President’s Agenda:

Advocacy-

Goal #1: Empower RGSOs to advocate in the community.
- Help RGSOs partner with organizations advocating for similar goals.

Goal #2: Increase the visibility of the GSA.
- Attend departmental graduate student orientations informing incoming graduate students of the services and advantages of being active in the GSA.
- Host high profile events attracting graduate students and prospective graduate students.
- Encourage RGSOs to create events open to a wide variety of graduate students to promote the GSA.
- “Your student fees at work”

Professional Development-

Goal #1: RGSO reform.
- Implementation of streamlined RGSO guidelines.
  - Simplify purchase request process to make it easier for RGSO to hold events.
  - Make it easier for RGSOs to become trained and recognized.
- Reform RGSO budgeting process.
  - Create a process that allows long standing RGSOs to apply for larger budgets.

Goal #2: Professional Development Events.
- Assist RGSOs with the implementation of events that promote professional development within their fields or general professional development.
- Host a professional development event of conference.

Service-

Goal #1: Sustainable devolvement for RGSOs and the GSA.
- Create institutional memory for RGSOs as they transition.
  - Organize meetings between existing and future e-boards.
  - Provide resources for RGSO to create their own strategic plans.
Goal #2: Community Service.

- Create metrics and goals to track community service within RGSOs.
- Initiate possible RGSO community service requirement.

Treasurer Agenda:

Goal 1: Ensure GSA does not go bankrupt.

- Create Strategic Reserve.
  - Maintain a percentage of money with guidelines on how to access it.
  - Used in case of catastrophic event (i.e. GSA being sued or mandatory graduate fee being voted voluntary).
- Invest excess GSA money.
- Negotiate UAS contract.
- Look into alternate sources of income (with president).

Goal 2: Create internal processes/ institutional memory to smooth transition and day to day of GSA operation.

- Create internal log and checklist for credit card.
- Optimize PR process.
- Create a GSA cloud repository (Office 365 Group).
- Standardize all financial processes and create guidelines for future administration.

Goal 3: Look into assessing the effectiveness of the GSA.

- Use the finance committee to determine an effective method to assess what the GSA does for the graduate community.
- Bring in knowledgeable members of NAGPS to consult on this issue.

Equity and Inclusion Agenda

Advocacy

Goal #1: Increase the visibility of underrepresented students in the GSA through advocacy projects.
• Educate graduate students on the benefits of joining the GSA.
• Work with other campus programs to increase the diversity of the GSA.
  ▪ Collaborate with RGSOs to promote diversity and culture within the GSA.
  ▪ Serve as a liaison and advocate for all students in matters involving equity and inclusion.

**Goal #2: Determine and address the needs of underrepresented students in the graduate student community.**

- Educate more students, faculty, and staff about the needs of the graduate student community.
- Create a survey that will allow the GSA to have access to tangible data on the needs of the graduate student community.
- Provide information and obtain resources for graduate students, including but not limited to, food pantry locations and day care facilities.

*Programming*

**Goal #1: Generate more programming and events that promote diversity.**

- Use the Equity and Inclusion budget to generate more programming for students.
- Collaborate with RGSOs to create more equity and inclusion events that promote diversity and cultural issues.
- Extend funding (as appropriate by the bylaws) to RGSOs for programming relating to Equity and Inclusion issues.
- Invite speakers that can contribute to the community and raise awareness of different cultures and issues faced by minority students.

*Programming Agenda:*

**Advocacy**

**Goal #1: To expand the GSA’s advocacy efforts through effective, collaborative, and sustainable programming.**

- Work with student groups, RGSO's, and GSA e-board and other members with any advocacy programs
- Continue past programs with the Office of Sustainability
- Create programs that engage students in social and cultural issues
- Work with the counseling services, disability services, and other campus programs and services to engage more graduate students
Service

Goal #1: To continue serving graduate students and promoting all graduate student interests. Promote the GSA and expand the knowledge about our mission, goals, and efforts.

- Table in the campus center a few times a month to provide knowledge about the GSA and increase visibility
- Assist students in developing programs for their RGSO’s
- Be open and receptive to student advocacy efforts
- Continue GSA advocacy efforts from the past through programs and actions such as the State and National LAD’s, Sustainability Week, Ban the Box, etc.

Programming Events

Goal #1: To build upon the programming events from last year

- Speaker series highlighting a topic of interest to the GSA (e.g. sustainability, academic job market)
- Small to mid-sized graduate student event for the Spring semester
- Increase GSA visibility through graduate student advocacy projects and tabling
- Do at least one to two programs a month (budget allowing)

Grants Agenda:

Goal #1: Increase awareness

- Speak at new student orientation
- Takeaway flyers in printer room outlining grants basics
- Post about deadlines on social media

Goal #2: Update maximum amount available to PhD students

- Determine amount of Masters vs PhD students applying for grants
- Keep $1,000 lifetime maximum for masters students
- Update to $2,000 lifetime maximum for PhD students

Goal #3: Update grants paperwork

- Clarify room and board line (Albany not included)
- Cannot reimburse NY state tax. All other state taxes are reimbursable.
- Update grants application to ask what type of student (Masters vs Phd; program)
- Include information about professional development classes
- Clarify fall and spring deadline
Legislative Agenda

Advocacy

Goal # 1: Expanding and increasing resources for students in accordance with their identified need.

• Address Food Insecurities.
• Resolutions For Child Care.
• Blue Ribbon Implementation (Graduate Students and Contingent Faculty Wages and benefits).
• Continue GSA Efforts Ban The Box, Support #GradsHaveDebt2, #SaveGTOP, #BringBackTheTap.
• Increase GSA votes (Get Involved).

Service

Goal # 2: To enhance communication channels within graduate and professional student communities, RGSO’s, academic departments, and University administration.

• Student Representation Resolution (Follow Up).
• Establish an identity for the Downtown GSA office as an Advocacy Office.
• Community Engagement Agenda.
• Communication of Resources/Your Fees At Work.

Professional Development

Goal # 3: To facilitate opportunities for collaboration, networking, and professional development.

• Send representatives to take part in the NAGPS legislative action days (LADs) in the fall and spring to meet with congressional staff about student load rates, immigration reform, etc.