Platform

I seek to support RGSO and Departmental Representatives to understand and harness the real power they have as those that comprise the GSA assembly. These individuals have a prominent role in shaping the experiences of graduate students here at UAlbany, but this power has thus far gone under utilized. Since I began as a Departmental Representative, a degree of GSA assembly member apathy became immediately apparent, which is related to representative turnover from academic year to academic year. Currently, there is a lack of transition training for reps from year to year. These trends speak to a broader struggle within GSA operations in that extensive work must still be done to inspire greater assembly member engagement and continuity of assembly efforts. Notably, representatives have not yet capitalized on their power to affect change on a variety of issues for graduate students at UAlbany. This presents an ideal opportunity for the upcoming Vice President of the GSA to help these representatives, a critical part of the GSA, access and exercise the power inherent within these positions. As the RGSO organizer, the Vice President is uniquely positioned to work with these individuals in order to build their legislative capacity to create tangible changes for UAlbany graduate students.

I will achieve these assembly development strategies through a series of workshops, in addition to the standardized RGSO training sessions held at the start of each semester. These workshops would provide RGSO and Departmental Representatives a clear understanding of UAlbany’s governance and administrative structures, and highlight the areas in which graduate students have the ability to influence decisions regarding their academic, social, and financial experiences at the University. In addition, representatives will learn about purview of the various committees of the University Senate in order to better understand areas in which graduate student experience at UAlbany can be improved. I will include leadership training into these workshops, and work with the assembly to develop a yearly strategic plan that sets reasonable goals for the assembly to affect change for graduate students.
Bio

My name is Kimberly Berg and I am a 4th year PhD candidate at the University at Albany, in the Anthropology Department. The 2016-17 academic year will be my 5th and final year. I hope to utilize my final year as a graduate student in a productive way, in order to make a lasting impact on the graduate student community at UAlbany. I have an extensive history of graduate student service, in my tenure at UAlbany. I began as a Departmental Representative for the 2012-13 academic year. Immediately following, I took on the role of Grants Chair for the following two years, from June 2013-May 2015. Additionally, throughout Spring 2015, I served as the graduate student representative on the President’s Panel for Contingent Faculty Concerns. Beginning in June 2015, I left the country for fieldwork in Argentina, and returned at the beginning of the Spring 2016 semester. I inquired the GSA president about ways I could become involved in the GSA mid year, upon my return. At this point, a University Senator position opened and I was able to fill this role. For the upcoming year, I seek to have a more direct leadership role in the association, building capacity with the departmental and RGSO representatives.

In addition to my academic and GSA experience, I also have state office experience with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC). At OPWDD, I worked in the Commissioner’s Office I analyzed data and developed follow up strategies to ensure some of our most important initiatives were maintained at our voluntary agencies. This role required me to maintain contacts with our voluntary agencies representatives and monitor accountability. At the DDPC, I work on an interagency initiative to reduce restraints and seclusions in the human services delivery system. In this role, I help develop work and implementation plans with agency representatives, in addition to building capacity of these agencies to employ restraint and seclusion reduction techniques through the use of a learning community. I plan to use a similar strategy, if elected, to build RGSO and Departmental Representative capacity.