A Message From the GSA President

CAITLIN JANISZEWSKI, PRESIDENT OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Dear Fellow Graduate Students,

Since we began the GSA Purple Paper in the Fall of 2013 I have written you a message once or twice a semester addressing the transformations the Graduate Student Association has been experiencing. With a bulk of structural reform behind us I am pleased to move into a conversation about the state of our University, particularly the way our University is contending with social challenges of our day. I recently attended a critical conversation regarding social justice with students, faculty, staff, and administrators on February 11; during which several very interesting themes emerged. I would like to share them with you as members of the graduate student body to ensure the broadest access possible to the conversation we had in the ballroom that morning.

The structured conversation and panel discussion dove right into the heart of racialized violence surrounding the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Gardner. But the structure also facilitated a pathway to discuss the UAlbany community and how we are to contend with the same social forces.

As groups reported their discussions and a panel of faculty commented on these issues, a few critical themes seemed to emerge very clearly. First, there was a consistent and yet minimized (at least through the language used) sense that there is a critical distrust between students and authorities of the University. Both the groups and the panel evoked the need for programming, research, and curriculum to address modern racist tactics such as micro-aggressions, reduction of race to class, and especially our deeply rooted habit of ignoring power and privilege, particularly white privilege.

Among the concrete steps that the groups produced were revisiting the general education requirements to ensure our students are exposed to even the rudimentary history of race in the United States or abroad. Others evoked the role of the humanities on campus especially the arts.

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as central to dealing with issues of racism.

Access and representation threaded nearly every report in some form. Inclusion of the student voice and empowering the faculty were themes that seemed to be implicitly embedded in the project to develop identity as a publicly engaged University. Student debt and shifting job markets were weaved into the conversation of inequality and access. But of course, in the span of two hours only so much progress could be made.

What now? It was clear that the President’s Office, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Division of Student Success will be taking the feedback from the program to figure out the steps to come. But I wondered as I left about not only what role the GSA needs to play in this conversation, but more basically how to ensure that the conversation continues. It seemed to me that programming, research, inclusion, and the conversations of access and representation are only sustainable when an identity which embraces these elements is structurally facilitated and nurtured. So in my final months as President of the Graduate Student Association, I intend to do everything I can to generate desperately needed momentum which drives us towards a social justice identity. As we continue our campaign in conjunction with the Education from the Inside Out (EIO) to promote Ban the Box which seeks to remove barriers to higher education for the formerly incarcerated, I will also push us to look inward in the GSA to consider the role access, representation, privilege, and power play within our own student government functioning.

I have long argued that white and class privilege is almost a necessity for those who wish to be President of the Graduate Student Association because of the flexibility, financial support, and intensity of expectations that the position involves. It is no surprise then that the last three presidents of the GSA (including myself) have been white and middle class. This is an access problem, a representation problem, a problem of power and it is our problem to fix. In our coming election do not be surprised if you find a series of constitutional amendments on the ballot beginning to address these issues the most basic of which would be changing the name of our “Multicultural and Affirmative Action Chair” to “Equity and Inclusion Chair”. And please, keep your eyes on the listserv for notice of an open forum regarding GSA’s internal social justice challenges. Feel free to come and ask me the tough questions such as why our office staff is almost always entirely female while our Senate team is entirely male, and why the majority of the Executive Board white? While I stand by my hiring and appointment decisions, I will not run from a discussion of the structural inequality with which I am complicit. The critical conversation had among faculty, students, and administration emphasized an environment of professionalism and sense of comfort through accepting discomfort.

With so many constituencies in the room I agree it is critical to establish an environment of mutual respect. But within our smaller constituency in the GSA and among graduate students, it’s time to us to get a little uncomfortable. It is just too easy for us to use our disempowered position as a graduate student constituency to forget the hierarchies within our own community.

UALBANY GROW GREEN PROMOTING GARDENING AT UALBANY

A heritage garden is one that is designed to honor the cultural and natural heritage of an area while utilizing sustainable gardening practices. UAlbany Grow Green is a student group that has spearheaded the effort and established garden beds on campus behind Indian Quad. The goal of this project is to educate the campus and surrounding community on the natural, cultural and historical background of Albany while demonstrating environmentally sound gardening. The garden will be an example of utilizing our campus as a living, learning lab that incorporates our academics, research and operations to illustrate sustainable and reflective practices. It will also serve to unite a diversity of students, faculty, and staff as well as groups and organizations in the broader community under a common purpose to promote cooperation and understanding.

This semester the group will be planting in the garden beds for the first time and working to raise student awareness and involvement in the garden. There are a number of events that are scheduled for this semester (listed below).

April 10 at 3:00pm: Social permaculture workshop with Pandora Thomas, an Environmental Educator, Permaculture Teacher, speaker and writer from California. She co-founded Earthseed Consulting LLC, a holistic consulting firm whose work expands the opportunities for sustainable living for diverse communities. Her current projects include the Black Permaculture Network, Pathways to Resilience-a permaculture and social entrepreneur training program for men and women returning home after incarceration, and working with Toyota to design and serve as a coalition member with the Toyota Green Initiative, which supports African Americans and Historically Black Colleges and Universities in fostering environmental leadership for its students. **The Graduate Student Association is co-sponsoring this event! Your GSA Funds at Work!**

April 22 at 3:00pm: Kay Olan, a Mohawk storyteller will be giving a traditional greeting in light of the new Heritage Garden that is in place on campus. We will also be planting for the first time, weather permitting! **UAlbany Graduate Students for Sustainability is co-sponsoring this event, Your GSA Funds at Work!**

April 23: Plant Sale - We will be selling a variety of low maintenance herbs and flowers on Earth and Wellness day that students can purchase and grow in their dorm rooms and apartments.

**The Graduate Student Association is co-sponsoring this event! Your GSA Funds at Work!**
EVENTS HAPPENING AROUND CAMPUS

A Conversation with Goldie Blumenstyk: American Higher Education in Crisis?
Tuesday, March 24, 2015, 6:00pm in University Hall 110

Is American higher education in crisis?
Disinvestment by states has driven up tuition prices; students and their families worry increasingly about debt. Some are questioning the worth of a college education, even as study after study shows how important it is to economic and social mobility.

Goldie Blumenstyk, one of the nation’s most respected higher education journalists, is a long-time reporter for The Chronicle of Higher Education. Join the conversation as she and Dr. Kevin Kinser, Chair of the Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, explore themes of the book. Copies of the book will be on sale at the event and a book signing will follow the discussion. All are welcome!


A Celebration of the Life and Work of Barbara Smith – Panel Discussion,
Tuesday, March 31 – 7:30 pm, Milne 200 (Downtown Campus)

Barbara Smith, pioneering activist, will discuss Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around: 40 Years of Movement Building with Barbara Smith (2014). Edited by Alethia Jones and Virginia Eubanks, the new book combines historical documents with new interviews to uncover the deep roots of today’s “identity politics” and serves as an essential primer for practicing solidarity and resistance. Writer, organizer, publisher and UAlbany professor, has played key roles in multiple social justice movements.

Albany Consortium for Research in Instructional Design and Theory (ACRIDAT) Learning and Instruction Forum

Thursday, April 2, 2015, 12-1:30pm in Education 346

Professor Brett Levy will speak on ‘Fostering democratic participation among youth through online activities.’ Everyone interested in theory, research, and practice related to learning and instruction is welcome to attend. Bring a lunch and enjoy the lively conversation!

Critical Race Theory and Postcolonial Studies Program presents a Discussion with Nimu Njoya

Friday, April 10 – 3:30-5 pm, Rockefeller College

The Critical Race Theory and Postcolonial Studies speaker series proudly presents a discussion with Nimu Njoya on the topic of “Autonomy after Postcolonialism: Gendered Representations of the Unbounded Self.”

Assistant Professor Njoya is a faculty member in the Department of Political Science at Williams College.

Wanted – Off Campus Ambassadors

Are you interested in a paid, part-time position that looks great on your resume, has flexible hours and provides you with the opportunity to have an impact on your neighborhood? If yes, then you may want to consider applying to be an Off-Campus Ambassador (OCA)!

Neighborhood Life is currently looking to hire students who are interested in building community in their neighborhood, enjoy programming and have a desire to help educate others on issues off-campus students face. OCA’s will work approximately 5 hours per week and responsibilities include hosting a program once a month, bi-weekly walks through their assigned neighborhood and attending 2 community meetings each semester.

Minimum qualifications for applicants include being a UAlbany graduate or undergraduate student of at least Junior status with a minimum GPA of 2.5 and no active judicial sanctions. Applicants must also reside off-campus throughout the course of their employment.

Remuneration will include a stipend of $8.75 per hour. Prospective applicants can submit their application by logging into MyInvolvement.org with their NetID & password, searching for the Neighborhood Life page and clicking on forms.

The deadline to apply for this position is March 31st. Questions or concerns can be directed to Luke Rumsey (Assistant Director of Neighborhood Life) by calling 518-442-5501 or e-mailing Neighborhoodlife@albany.edu.
UNIVERSITY SENATE UPDATE:

From April 1st to the 8th the university voting faculty will vote on a Bylaws amendment which, if passed, would remove voting privileges from individuals such as the President who are named as ex-officio members of the Senate by virtue of their administrative position.

The amendment was written and approved by the Governance Council of the Senate on December 15, 2014, presented to the Senate Executive Committee on January 26, 2015, and reported to the Senate on March 9, 2015.

Passage of the amendment is by 2/3 affirmation. For the purposes of this vote, quorum is defined as 30 percent of the Voting Faculty.

Faculty Bylaws Amendment No.: 1415-01

UNIVERSITY SENATE

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Introduced by: Governance Council

Date: March 9, 2015

Amendment RE: Voting for Ex Officio Members of the University Senate

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

• That the proposed amendments of the Faculty Bylaws below be adopted

• That these amendments go into effect immediately

Current Bylaws

Article II. Section 2 — Composition of the Senate

2.1 The ex officio voting members of the Senate shall be the President, the Provost, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Vice President for Research, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Vice President for Finance and Business, Senate officers, the University Senators to the Faculty Senate of the State University of New York, the dean elected by the deans of the schools and colleges, the president of the Graduate Student Organization, the president of the Student Association, and the chair of the Student Association Senate.

Article II. Section 4 — Executive Committee of the Senate

4.1 Composition:

The President of the University, ex officio;

The Provost of the University, ex officio;

The Chair of the Senate (who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee), ex officio;

The immediate Past Chair of the Senate, ex officio;

The Vice Chair of the Senate, ex officio;

The Secretary of the Senate, ex officio;

The Chairs of the Senate Councils, ex officio;

The representatives to the SUNY Senate, ex officio;

The President of the Graduate Student Organization, ex officio, or a graduate student Senator designated to serve for the year

The President of the Student Association, ex officio, or the Chair of the Student Association Senate or another undergraduate student Senator designated to serve for the year.

Proposed Revision to the Bylaws:

Article II. Section 2 — Composition of the Senate

2.1 The ex officio non-voting members of the Senate shall be the President, the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, the Vice President for Research, the Vice President for Student Success, the Vice President for Finance and Administration, and the dean elected by the deans of the schools and colleges. The ex officio voting members of the Senate shall be the Senate officers, the University Senators to the Faculty Senate of the State University of New York, the president of the Graduate Student Association, the president of the Student Association, and the chair of the Student Association Senate.

Article II. Section 4 — Executive Committee of the Senate

4.1 Composition:

The President of the University, ex officio non-voting;

The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost of the University, ex officio non-voting;

The Chair of the Senate (who shall serve as Chair of the Executive Committee), ex officio voting;

The immediate Past Chair of the Senate, ex officio voting;

The Vice Chair of the Senate, ex officio voting;

The Secretary of the Senate, ex officio voting;

The Chairs of the Senate Councils, ex officio voting;

The representatives to the SUNY Senate, ex officio voting;

The President of the Graduate Student Association, ex officio voting, or a graduate student Senator designated to serve for the year

The President of the Student Association, ex officio voting, or the Chair of the Student Association Senate or another undergraduate student Senator designated to serve for the year.

Rationale:

The proposed amendment to the Faculty Bylaws addresses a request made to the University Senate by President Jones in his letter of November 14, 2014, that the Senate consider amending the Faculty Bylaws and Charter to remove voting privileges from individuals who by virtue of their administrative title hold ex officio positions on the Senate and its Councils and Committees. In affirming his commitment to the notion that faculty, professional and student constituencies are independent partners in shared institutional governance, President Jones also urged the Senate to retain the ex officio administrative positions,

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arguing that administrative participation offers “the two-fold benefit of helping inform discussion of issues under review while helping to keep University leaders aware of the University community’s perspective on critical issues.”

In its consideration of the President’s request, the Governance Council notes that the proposed amendment formalizes the recommendation articulated in The University at Albany Senate Handbook that “in order for the actions and recommendations of the Senate and its Councils and Committees to reflect as much as possible the voice of the Faculty and other members of the Senate, ex officio members of the Senate and its Councils who are members of the administration should abstain from voting on bills or other recommendations.” The Governance Council acknowledges that administrative participation in the Senate is valuable, but recommends removing voting privileges solely from ex officio administrative members because we believe it is redundant. Retaining voting privileges for non-administrative ex officio members such as the presidents of the Graduate Student Association and the Student Association would acknowledge and strengthen the faculty’s autonomy in exercising its advisement, consultation, and recommendation actions, as well as maintaining the essential inclusion of professional staff and students.

The first change in article II, section 2.1, splits the ex officio members of the Senate into two groups: ex officio voting, and ex officio non-voting.

The change to article II, section 4.1, inserts the terms “non-voting” and “voting” next to the appropriate ex officio members of the Senate Executive Committee to remain consistent with article II, section 2.1.

The amendment also updates the language of the Bylaws to reflect official changes to administrative titles and to the name of the organization representing graduate students since the document was first written.

Not Your Run of the Mill Library Databases: PolicyMap and Sage Research Methods

By ALEX HOAG, Grad Student in IST, and ELAINE LASDA BERGMAN, Associate Librarian

We’ve all used the library databases to locate abstracts and full text of scholarly journal articles or other references for a paper. The libraries are branching out – we’ve got two new social science databases that provide information and resources beyond articles: PolicyMap and Sage Research Methods.

All About the Viz: PolicyMap

Useful for anyone interested in public policy, sociology, public health, or any number of other related subjects, PolicyMap allows you to look at a wide range of data about subjects ranging from demographics, income and spending habits, housing, lending, education, health, and many more.

You can even adjust the ranges displayed to suit your needs. PolicyMap also provides other types of charts and graphs to visualize the data when a map is not the appropriate display.

This Is How We Do It: Sage Research Methods

Do you have an idea for a social science research project? Sage Research Methods (SRM) can help you execute your study using an appropriate methodology.

Also great for getting a leg up on those Research Methods classes, SRM contains the full text of numerous basic reference books, detailed books, articles, the “Little Blue Books,” the “Little Green Books,” and even videos to help you identify, understand and use various techniques and methodologies for social science research.

A screenshot of the Policy Map software.

But this isn’t just some database full of dry lifeless numbers. PolicyMap gives you the ability to visualize the data you want to look at.

Interested in the demographic makeup of Albany? What about the availability of affordable housing? PolicyMap can overlay that information on a map of the city and give you a good clear look at the differences.

You can swap out data sets easily from drop down menus, and the data will appear as either shaded overlays or points on the map, depending on which is more appropriate.

The data covers the whole country, so by zooming in and out you can see how different states, counties, or even cities compare to each other.

The content extensively covers the most basic to highly complex types of studies, and other nuts-and-bolts type of best practices including: appropriate data collection techniques, protection of subjects, understanding statistical information, sampling, analysis, just to name a few.

Sage Research Methods will be very helpful to the gamut of social science grad students, as both a research reference and an instructional tool.

If you are interested in learning more about either of these databases, drop by the Reference Desk or contact your Subject Librarian (http://library.albany.edu/subject/leaders/).