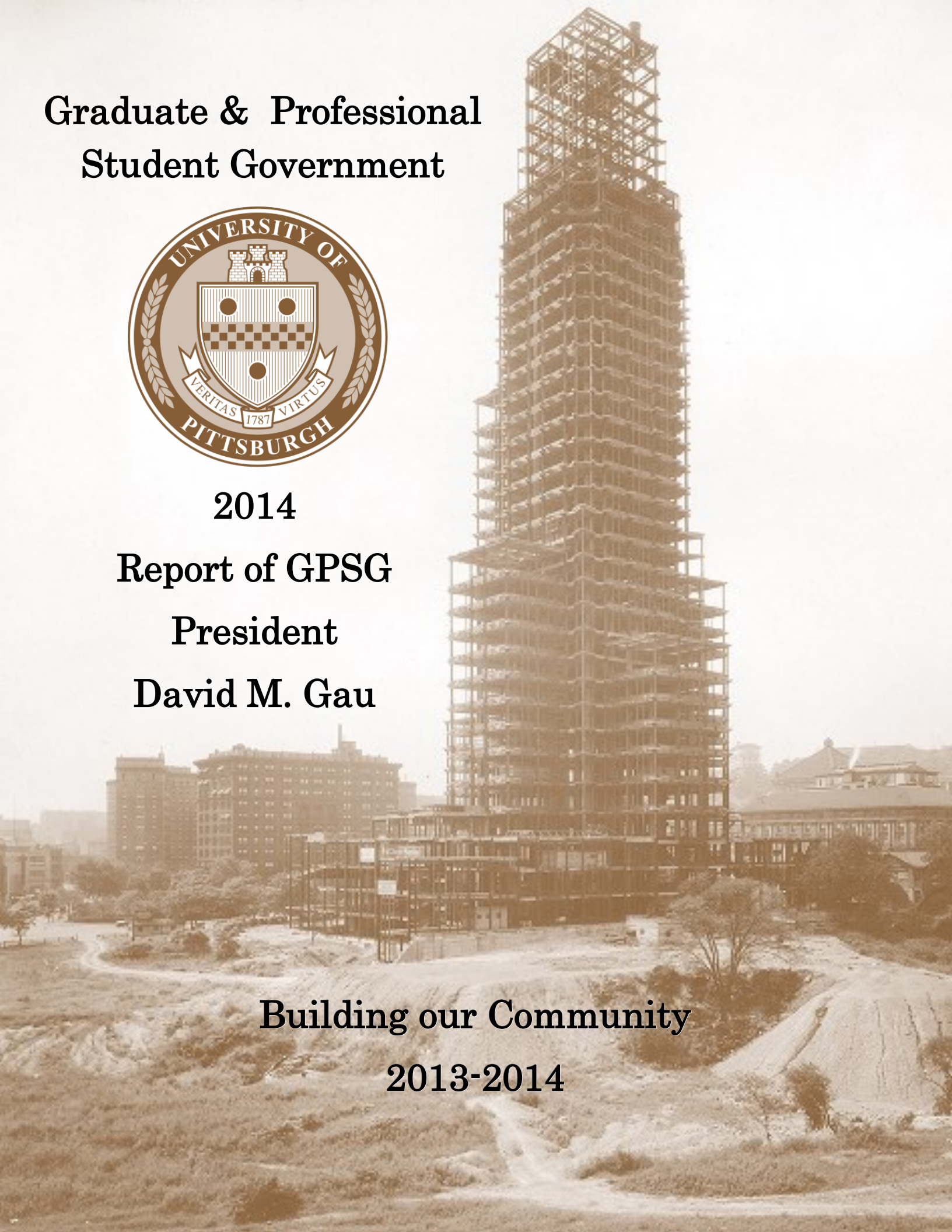
Graduate & Professional Student Government

2014 Report of GPSG President David M. Gau



Building our Community

2013-2014

What is GPSG?

The Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) was founded as the umbrella government organization of the graduate and professional student body of the University of Pittsburgh. GPSG represents over ten thousand graduate and professional students at Pitt and brings together the 14 schools of the University, each which represent distinct educational and professional missions with their own unique populations of students.

The mission of GPSG is to:

- Establish and maintain communication networks between all graduate & professional students, student governments, and University of Pittsburgh faculty & administrators
- Provide graduate student representation on University committees and shared governance structures
- Serve as a resource for individual graduate and professional students, Graduate Student Organizations, and Graduate Student Governments
- Act as an advocate for graduate and professional students
- Administer half of the student activities fee

The Assembly Board

The GPSG Assembly, or Assembly Board (AB), is the governing body of the GPSG. It is comprised of at least one representative from each graduate and professional school, the Executive Board (EB), and representatives from cross-schools, university-recognized Graduate Student Associations (GSAs). The Executive Board executes the resolutions of the Assembly Board, and through them, sets the vision and agenda of the organization.

Members of the Assembly Board

- The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences
- Katz Graduate School of Business
- School of Dental Medicine
- School of Education
- The Swanson School of Engineering
- School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
- School of Law
- School of Medicine
- School of Nursing
- School of Pharmacy
- Graduate School of Public Health
- Graduate School of Public & International Affairs
- School Social Work
- School of Information Sciences
- ANKUR - Indian Graduate Student Association
- CSSA - Chinese Student & Scholar Association
- PanAf - Pan-African Graduate & Professional Student Union
- Persian Panthers
- TASA - Turkish American Student Association
- GOSECA - Graduate Organization for the Study of Europe and Central Asia

The Executive Board

GPSG's Executive Board members are students elected by the graduate & professional student body to one year terms. Officers are tasked with executing the resolutions of the Assembly Board and representing the student body.

2013-2014 Executive Board Members

David Gau
President
Swanson School of Engineering

Ryan DeCaro
Vice President of Finance
Katz Graduate School of Business

Mitali Patil
Vice President of Committees
Swason School of Engineering

Martha Merrill
Vice President of Programming
Swanson School of Engineering

Monica Kohli
Vice President of Communications
Graduate School of Public Health

GPSG is advised by the Office of the Provost. The Office of the Provost and GPSG jointly appoint a Graduate Student Assistant to be GPSG's Administrative Assistant who coordinates office and organization activities.

Office of the Provost

Dr. Alberta Sbragia
Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
Stephanie Hoogendoorn
Assistant to the Provost & GPSG Advisor

GPSG Administrative Assistant

Michael Lipschultz
Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences

GPSG Support

Unity

President's Perspective

In 2006, I arrived to Pitt as an undergraduate at the University of Pittsburgh. Even before I arrived, I got the sense of the Pitt Spirit. My passion for this institution grew along with my number of credits. I felt a great sense of community as an undergraduate and one that compelled me to give back to it after I finished.

After returning to Pitt as a graduate student from my year abroad, I sought for that Pitt community again on the graduate level. While some sense of community exists on the graduate level, I was convinced that more could be done to develop that Pitt Spirit in the graduate and professional student community. It was then that I ran for President of GPSG and was elected along with my four other Vice Presidents, Mitali Patil, Monica Kohli, Ryan DeCaro,

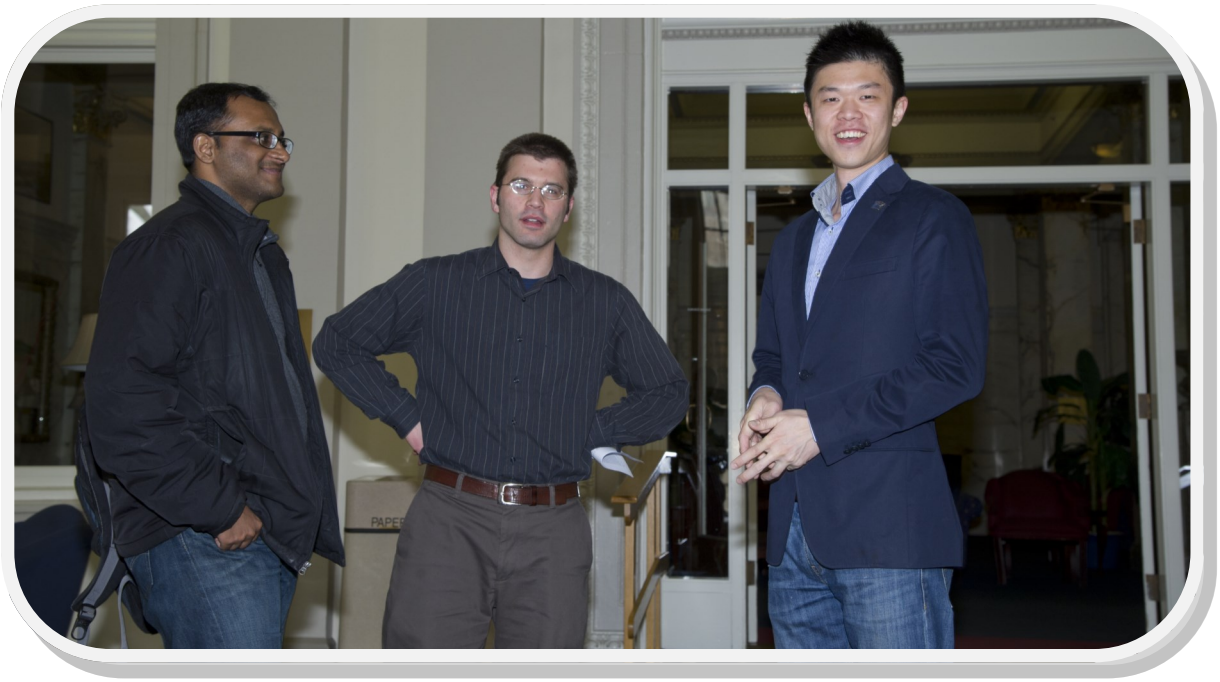
For the past few years, the graduate student body has been making a shift towards creating a more cohesive student community. This can be seen by the previous efforts of the student body in previous years with the formation of the Vice President of Programming position, creation of the External Affairs committee, and the re-branding to GPSG from GPSA (to avoid confusion with other organizations with similar acronyms). With this in mind, the 2013-14 GPSG board set to lay the infrastructure for the graduate community.

Graduate and Professional Student Orientation 2013

One of the major initiatives of our year (and something that we pursued very early into our term) was the initiation of a University-wide orientation for new graduate and professional students. With the assistance of the Provost Office, we held the inaugural Graduate and Professional Student Orientation at the O'Hara Student Center. We received many positive remarks from both students and administrators. The orientation was an informal marketplace which gathered University resources, community organizations, and student groups into one building for new students to explore and learn about. We hope that this will become a tradition for our new graduate students for years to come.

GPSG Travel Grant Program

Each year, GPSG offers small travel grants for graduate and professional students to attend conferences. GPSG understands that funding assistance varies greatly from school to school and attempts to assist students in their travels. The goal of the travel grant program is not to provide funding for the entire trip, but rather to enable students who could not have traveled prior to receiving the award. In this academic year, we awarded 241 travel grants to students to conferences around the world.



Nursing - DNSO
(Doctoral Nursing Student Organization)

The Doctoral Nursing Student Organization (DNSO) is a vibrant and active student group within the School of Nursing. In addition to providing a spirit of cooperation and unity among doctoral nursing students, the DNSO is quite effective in providing a channel of communication and representation between doctoral students and the faculty of the School of Nursing. In the 2013-3014 academic year, members of the DNSO continued to excel in scholarly works. During the past year, students received grant funding and/or fellowships from a variety of sources including the National Institute for Nursing Research, Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service F31 Award, Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania, Veterans Affairs VISN 4 Mental Illness Research Award, the American Cancer Society, the Pittsburgh Foundation, Oncology Nursing Society Foundation, Eta Chapter Sigma Theta Tau, the Jonas Salk Fellowship in Health Careers Future, as well as a number of University funding sources within the School of Nursing and University wide. Students have presented their work at conferences such as the Eastern Nursing Research Conference, Greater Pittsburgh Nursing Research Conference, International Society of Nursing in Genetics, Oncology Nursing Society Conference, and the Society for Critical Care Medicine. DNSO students continued to publish their work with most students having multiple publications. In addition to these scholarly achievements, the DNSO also continued its longstanding tradition of community service by participating service projects such as Operation Troop Appreciation and the Tubie Friends project for pediatric patients at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. A DNSO student also ran in the Boston Marathon raising funds for cancer research and victims of the Boston Marathon. Our goals for the next year include expanding our community service to include a clothing drive for Sojourner House or Healthcare for the Homeless, in addition to continuing our work with Tubie Friends.

Assembly Board
Highlight

Graduate Student Advocacy

GPSG coordinated several events throughout the year which brought together graduate students across the institution to Harrisburg and DC to talk with our representatives about higher education. Our efforts in Harrisburg highlighted graduate student research and what it means to PA. I had the opportunity to attend the AAU/ AAAS CASE Advocacy Workshop along with a fellow graduate student, Nathan Glasgow, PhD student in Neuroscience, where we learned about student advocacy and the importance of generating a new class of citizen scientists. We set the groundwork for working with the AAU on coordinating graduate student advocacy in the various AAU schools for the coming 2014-15 academic year.

Events Held by GPSG in 2013

- Star Trek: Into Darkness Midnight Movie Premiere
- Pirates game and tailgate
- Phipps Conservatory "Party in the Tropics"
- Lion King, the musical
- "Girl Rising" movie screening
- Cookies and Colloquium professionals series
- Creepy Carnival Ball Fall Formal
- Ice Skating in Schenley Park
- Scavenger Hunt and Spring Formal Reveal Party
- Wicked, the musical
- Around the World Study Break
- "Pirates of the Monongahela" Spring Formal
- "Blood Brother" movie screening

Pitt Trailblazers

Near the end of the Fall semester, GPSG introduced a new resource for prospective students, the Pitt Trailblazers. This is a group of currently over 20 graduate and professional student volunteers from across campus. The Trailblazers offers campus tours to prospective students and help out with activities from campus visits to open houses. This past year, the Trailblazers have coordinated over 60 campus visits. The service is free and open to any graduate and professional program. Modeled off the Pathfinders, the Trailblazers hopes to establish itself as the graduate and professional ambassadors of Pitt. Their website can be located at www.trailblazers.pitt.edu.

GPSG Leadership & Service Award

Four years in the making, the Leadership and Service Award seeks to recognize current University of Pittsburgh graduate and professional students for their service or leadership to the University of Pittsburgh, the surrounding community, and to the world at large. By creating this award, GPSG aims to make service by graduate and professional students more visible and valued on campus, to contribute to or spark discussions about what constitutes good leadership and service by graduate and professional students on campus, and to help graduate and professional students prepare professionally for careers after graduation. In the Spring 2014 semester, four graduate and professional students were recognized for their leadership or service. Each winner was awarded a certificate, a trophy of the Cathedral of Learning, and an opportunity to receive $200 towards academic, leadership, or service purposes.

Ben Moreno, Katz School of Business

Founding board member of Young Professionals in Energy, where he helped create North America's largest energy business case competition to date, helping to put the university on the radar for large energy firms moving into the region.

David Givens, Religious Studies, Dietrich School

David has served as president of the Graduate and Professional Student Government, served as chairman of the Pittsburgh Student Government Council, and helped found the Nightlife and Harm Reduction Workgroup in Pittsburgh.

Saik-Kia Goh, Bioengineering, Swanson School

Founder and organizing chair of the Pitt Health Innovation Case Competition, where he talked with local start-up companies to identify health-related issues they would like consulting on. He then organized this competition, bringing together students from multiple schools to form groups to study these problems and offer practical solutions.

Sheila Grab, School of Pharmacy

Organized student volunteers for events, including Victory Summit for Parkinson's, "So You Want to be a Pharmacist Day" (a highschool outreach event for pharmacy), and food collection drives.

From left to right:

David Gau, Ben Moreno (Katz), Saik-Kia Goh (Swanson), David Givens (Dietrich), Sheila Grab (Pharmacy), Provost Patricia E. Beeson

GPSG Budget (2013-2014)		
Inflows		
Total	$199,500.00	
Outflows		
Office Supplies		2.2%
	Allocated	
Parking	$1,000.00	
Photocopying	$1,000.00	
Supplies	$2,000.00	
Telephone	$500.00	
Total	$4,500.00	
Executive Budget		46.9%
President	$7,000.00	3.4%
VP of Committees	$1,000.00	0.5%
VP of Communications	$5,000.00	2.4%
VP of Finance	$1,000.00	0.5%
VP of Programming	$70,000.00	33.7%
Administrative Assistant	$7,000.00	3.4%
Total	$91,000.00	
Payroll		13.4%
President	$3,500.00	
VP of Committees	$3,000.00	
VP of Communications	$3,000.00	
VP of Finance	$3,000.00	
VP of Programming	$3,000.00	
Administrative Assistant	$12,000.00	
Total	$27,500.00	
Travel Grants		22.5%
Cycle I: Jul-Sep	$14,000.00	
Cycle II: Oct-Dec	$12,000.00	
Cycle III: Jan-Mar	$10,000.00	
Cycle IV: Apr-Jun	$10,000.00	
Total	$46,000.00	
Supplemental Funding and Assembly Groups		12.5%
Ankur	$2,500.00	
CSSA	$3,000.00	
Pan African	$0.00	
Persian Panthers	$1,500.00	
TASA	$1,500.00	
GOSECA	$2,000.00	
Open Supplemental Funds	$15,000.00	
Total	$25,500.00	
Misc. Expenses		2.4%
Pitt Arts	$2,000.00	
Legal Services to Students	$1,500.00	
Assembly Expenses	$1,500.00	
Total	$5,000.00	

Student Activities Fee

Following the recommendation of the Assembly Board, GPSG initiated a student-wide survey to increase the student activities fee. For our records and future GPSG boards, I have included the resolution and background statement below and on the following page. This was a major undertaking on the part of the Assembly Board to gather students to voice their opinion on the matter. The resolution was passed by the Board of Trustees on June 20th, 2014.

RESOLUTION OF THE
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
RECOMMENDING INCREASING
THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT ACTIVITIES FEE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

WHEREAS, since Fall 2004, the graduate and professional student activities fee has been $20 per semester for full-time students and $10 per semester for part-time students, and

WHEREAS, the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) Board and graduate student school governance boards, each receiving 50 percent of the fee, use this fee to enhance the student experience at the University of Pittsburgh, and

WHEREAS, the current fee is not adequate to support the increased demand for GPSG and school resources in programming, travel grants, and supplemental funds for student organizations, and

WHEREAS, an increased fee will greatly enhance the capabilities of each school's graduate student governance organization and GPSG, and

WHEREAS, the Assembly Board of GPSG recognizes and endorses the increase of $10 per semester for full-time students and $5 per semester for part-time students, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pittsburgh endorses the recommendation of the GPSG to increase the graduate and professional student activites fee to $30 per semester for full-time and $15 per semester for part-time students, effective for the Fall Term 2014, and recommends its approval by the Board of Trustees.

Student Activities Fee cont.

BACKGROUND STATEMENT
TO THE RESOLUTION
OF THE STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
RECOMMENDING INCREASING
THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT ACTIVITIES FEE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Since Fall 2004, the graduate and professional student activities fee has been $20 per semester for full-time students and $10 per semester for part-time students. The fee collected is split halfway between the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) and the graduate and professional school governance organizations. The request to increase the fee was raised for several reasons:

- To provide a sustainable allocation to the graduate and professional school governance groups and GPSG since current funding is inadequate for the growing demand and number of students;
- To provide university-wide programming that allows students from all schools to participate and build visibility of the graduate and professional students;
- To provide students more avenues to advocate on behalf of graduate and professional students on the state and federal level;
- To provide higher quality academic and professional activities that will better serve graduate and professional students.

By comparison to other member institutions of the Association of American Universities, the University of Pittsburgh's graduate and professional student activities fee contribution per semester is low. Out of a random sample of eight universities, student activities fees were as high as $100 per semester.

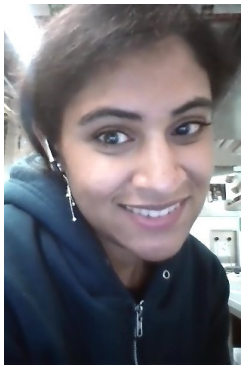
In September 2013, the Assembly Board of the GPSG supported the proposed increase. In addition, a poll open to all graduate and professional students was conducted in November 2013 through which 55 percent of students voted in favor of the increase. The GPSG Executive Board of the University of Pittsburgh has recommended increasing the graduate and professional student activities fee by $10 per semester for full-time students for a total of $30, and by $5 for part-time students for a total of $15, effective for the Fall Term 2014. This fee will provide graduate and professional school governance organizations and GPSG adequate funding to meet the increased demand for their services.

This fee will provide graduate and professional school governance organizations and GPSG sustainable funding to meet the increased demand for their services. GSPG services are geared towards all graduate students; both part-time and full-time students can equally participate in programs and services.

The Next 2014-15 Executive Board

Each year, we host GPSG election events beginning in the Spring semester leading up to the GPSG elections in March. Below is a summary of the newly elected board and administrative assistant for the 2014-15 academic year.

David Gau
President
Swanson School of Engineering



Mitali Patil
Vice President of Committees
Swason School of Engineering

Ravi Choudhuri
Vice President of Communications
Graduate School of Public Health

James Dalton
Vice President of Finance
Katz Graduate School of Business

Jessica Brubach
Vice President of Programming
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

Michael Lipschultz
Administrative Assistant
Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences

President's Recommendation for the Next Executive Board

Work closely with Graduate Student Associations and the Office of International Services: These student groups represent a cross-discipline network of mostly international students. A large part of the graduate body is international; making sure these students transition well is vital.

Develop innovative communication methods: I think the best way to improve our communication network is to start working on a grass roots level. Meet students immediately as they enter Pitt or build a network within departments/programs . There are many students out there who are willing to help but we have to find them first.

Community-orientated events: We must continue developing community opportunities for the student body. By getting students more involved with what the city has to offer, we can help them feel that Pittsburgh is a home to them. Pitt and Pittsburgh sporting events are one example, but I feel that there is can be more done on the community service aspect for GPSG.

Meet new people: Don't be afraid to meet new people! Reach out to a random program or department, get to meet some fellow graduate/professional students. The best way to communicate with the student body is to truly be a part of them as a whole.

Closing Remarks

This academic year was quite the learning curve for the Executive Board. We learned quickly though and achieved much I think. Some of the greatest challenges we faced this year revolved around the GPSG budget and communication with graduate and professional students. While the budget situation has been handled by both an activities fee increase and restructuring of funding mechanisms within GPSG, communication still holds as a major challenge to GPSG. I have no doubt that our board has increased the number of students connected to GPSG, however, there is still much work to be done.

Our board has created many new initiatives which will need to be sustained down the road. I have been a part of many student organizations in my time at Pitt and one critical challenge with all organizations is turnover time. Most leadership positions last only one year on the student level which makes institutional memory a problem. One resource we have and should always appreciate to help with our operation is the advice and support from the Provost Office, in particular, from Dr. Sbragia and Stephanie. For future boards, do not be afraid to seek their help and listen to their recommendations. They have been advising our organization for a long time and can help GPSG with background and allow us to hit the ground running.

It is my personal resolve to ensure that our initiatives continue and to continue developing our community here at Pitt. We end the year more united as a graduate and professional student body. While the infrastructure of a community has been established, we must now utilize the momentum to build upwards and build visibility of our community.

I look forward to serving as GPSG President again for the 2014-2015 academic year. A lot of time has been spent this year building our collaborative network with the Office of International Services, the Career Services Consortium, and the Postdoc Association. We have many new goals and initiatives for this coming year which we are very excited to work with our new and future friends. While I am sad to hear Chancellor Nordenberg stepping down, I do understand that all good things must come to an end. I look forward to working with Chancellor-elect Gallagher and I'm sure that GPSG will still have an opportunity to work with Chancellor Nordenberg down the road!

"*They shall find wisdom here and faith — in steel and stone, in character and thought — they shall find beauty, adventure, and moments of high victory*" - Chancellor Bowman

Graduate and Professional Student Orientation 2014

Open to all incoming graduate and professional students! Current graduate and professional students, and postdoctoral candidates are welcome to attend

Monday, August 18th, 2014

2 pm - 5 pm

O'Hara Student Center

- Informational Marketplace with The Writing Center, Pitt Arts, Office of International Services, Parking, and more
- Opportunities to interact with student and community organizations
- Food & drinks along with plenty of SWAG
- Take a campus tour with the Pitt Trailblazers
- Join us for a tailgate and Pirates baseball game after!

RSVP @ GPSGorientationpiratesgame2014.eventbrite.com

In collaboration with the Office of International Services and the Center for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Career Development

To receive more information, go to:

www.gpsg.pitt.edu/welcome
www.facebook.com/pittgpsg

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
GPSG
GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT GOVERNMENT
engage • experience • enhance

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