GSO Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes
Friday February, 26, 2021 at 1pm (Zoom)

Chair: Patricia Arias Hunt (GSO Vice President, Communicative Disorders)
Present: Louisa Peng (Music), MaKensey Sanders (Psychology), Sarah Smith (GSO President)

Discussions:
Collecting graduate student feedback to anonymously report issues – through Qualtrics like at another university?

> Best if some minimal information is collected (like department of student) because otherwise it becomes too difficult to follow-up, that was one problem with the Advocacy Survey through Google in fall. Students would report "problems" that would be easily resolved by informing students of existing campus resources or policies, but there was no way to identify the students from their completely anonymous responses.

> Create a page on the GSO website as "suggestion box" or area for students to share their concerns?

How to support department representatives in communicating to students

> Some department representatives have said they cannot get a list of students they represent from department's Administrative Assistant or professors.

>> Is this a privacy issue? Can we ask Graduate School to provide reps with a list of enrolled students in each department? Without a list of students, reps may assume they only need to communicate with the students in their immediate cohort, and the department may have a lot more students at other stages of their degrees.

>> We may have the ability to email a lot of students at once through Engage, the student organization system, but it is unclear whether students are automatically added to the GSO org page (it looks like at one time there was a huge upload of students but that it is not being updated from semester to semester).

>> The Graduate School has said in the past that we can send messages to all graduate students through their email list. We would need to decide what we want to announce (last semester, it was the Advocacy Survey). Also, by channeling communication only through all of GSO, not at the department-level, we might be stripping reps of one of their duties (to get to know and communicate with *their* students who have unique concerns within each department).

> A Moodle for GSO? (We do have a Facebook and website) Encourage a Moodle for each department?

>> In one department, the GSO Rep is the TA for the Graduate Coordinator, which allows them to post GSO announcements in the department's Moodle page for students.

> Advocacy Committee can work with Communications Committee to get out "PSA" messages to students about underutilized resources on campus.

>> Examples:
- paid semester parking permits for GA lots are also night permits to park closer to your building for evening classes
- Campus Cupboard for free food and hot meals
- ask faculty to apply for STEP Grants when you don't have the technology you need in your campus spaces
- SGA Printing vouchers for graduate students to reload their PaperCut Balance
- Guilbeau Center has tech available to borrow/use (drones, cameras, Adobe creative suite)
- The Writing Center helps graduate students, not just undergrads
- Graduate students can be members of most (non-Greek) student organizations
- … most of these are resources we announced during our meetings, reminded reps of via email, and even posted about on Facebook in fall but maybe they should be repeated on a rotating basis each semester

Opening the floor to students in wider events

> Holding a large meeting with all graduate students, maybe twice a semester?

>> All interested graduate students *are* welcome to attend our GSO meetings and the information to join is made available online, however, students might not want to come to student-government-style meetings.

>> Previous efforts in fall 2020: GSO Tea & Talk virtual session in fall, no one attended. Grad Student Zoomba event, four students attended, three of whom were GSO reps. Grad Gather & Grow had wide attendance at some sessions but a lot of the attendees were faculty members.

Continuity within GSO when we have regular turnover from graduating representatives

> Suggestion to encourage "assistant reps" to shadow current representatives to be ready to take their place after graduation? (Unless we change bylaws, each department would get only one vote, even if more than one student from a department attends the meeting. Other universities operate under a representational model where each college/program gets a certain number of representatives – similar to SGA.)

> A few years ago there was a suggestion for "shadowing" executives but it became clear it would have to be a Bylaw change if implemented as an actual policy.

> Possibility of stipends for service as a rep or officer as with other universities' GSOs? Possibility of assistantship for GSO officers or president?

Varying quality of mentoring at the department level

> Some students explained in the Advocacy Survey that they have never met the professors in their department to later be able to form a committee for QPs. Students also said in some departments that they had little interaction with their cohort. Some departments seem to have handled "social" events for grad students better than others while remote.

> Most GSO funding requests are coming from a handful of departments which shows that some departments include conversations about GSO, our advocacy, and our funding opportunities as part of orientation in the department.

> Some students feel like they are left to "fend for themselves" whereas in other departments the structure of classes and commitment level of faculty for mentoring make students more set up for success.

> Helping students connect with professional organizations (and GSO helping defray membership dues?) might help students feel more supported.

Grad Gather & Grow recordings from fall

> Why have the recordings not yet been released? Sarah will again ask the Graduate School about the delay in releasing the videos.

Actions to take based on this meeting:
- Coordinate with GSO Communications Committee to get more admins added to Facebook page for a more active presence.
- Coordinate with GSO Communications Committee to design and schedule "PSA"-type messages that support GSO's mission for Advocacy.
- Work with Graduate School and SGA Graduate School senators to hold regular meetings to address Advocacy concerns.