



GPSA President's End of Year Report  
Mitch Paine  
May, 2013

Dear President Skorton and the campus community,

The Academic Year 2012-2013 has been a productive one for the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly. Building upon the progress of previous years' GPSAs, we continue to push forward and represent graduate and professional students as best as we can. Cornell is lucky to have an active Assembly bringing ideas forward, passing proactive resolutions, and engaging in meaningful dialogues with administrators.

**Graduate & Professional Community Initiative**

The GPSA passed the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (GPCI) via Resolution 14 at the March 25th GPSA meeting. The GPCI introduced to the administration and the campus community a vision and a strategic plan to improve the graduate and professional student life at Cornell. The plan was developed in a collaborative, comprehensive, and strategic way.

At the first meeting of the year, the GPSA passed Resolution 1, creating an ad hoc committee to update the 2007 Graduate Community Initiative. This committee engaged the graduate and professional student community in a number of focus groups, town halls, surveys, and other meetings. After obtaining substantial input, the committee created 8 topic areas that formed the bulk of the GPCI:

1. Graduate student center
2. Career services
3. Mental Health & Well-Being
4. Diversity & International Students
5. Family Services
6. Housing
7. Transportation
8. Sense of Community

I presented the GPCI to the Board of Trustees on March 27th and will present to the Board's Student Life Committee in May. Additionally, the GPSA leadership worked with the administration to create the GPCI Executive Committee, which will help implement the recommendations in the GPCI. A number of groups across campus have already started to begin addressing the topic areas and specific action statements.

### **GPSA Goes to Washington**

On November 29th and 30th, five members of GPSA traveled to Washington, DC to meet with lawmakers from New York State, supported by Resolution 11. David Bunck, Kyle Albert, Darrick Evensen, Nicole Baran, and I made up the group of graduate students who went to Washington. The group went primarily to shine light on the impact on graduate students of the budget sequestration, a set of automatic cuts to federal agencies. We were concerned that a potential loss of \$43 million to research and graduate education, a \$10 million loss in financial aid, and an over \$1 million loss in federal funds to Cornell Cooperative Extension would be devastating to the graduate and professional student community.

On May 20th and 21st, a group of international graduate students and I will visit Washington, DC again to discuss comprehensive immigration reform. Part of the legislation currently being considered in the Senate includes language about reform for the H-1B “high skill” visa as well as green card provisions for STEM students. We will meet with lawmakers from across the country and discuss the importance of offering an option in our immigration system to let the international scholars that Cornell produces stay in the United States.

### **Dining Plan for Graduate and Professional Students**

At our September 24th GPSA meeting, we passed Resolution 4, which called for a graduate and professional student-oriented meal plan that provides reasonable discounts for on-campus purchases, allows money to be added in small increments, and discounts purchases for graduate and professional students at the Big Red Barn. Cornell Dining implemented this new meal plan in Spring 2013 and hundreds of graduate and professional students have signed up.

### **NAGPS & Ivy Summit**

During the first weekend in November, Nicole Baran and Yevgeniy Izrayelit represented GPSA at the Ivy Summit at the University of Pennsylvania and I represented GPSA at the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS) National Conference at Duke University. Nicole led a workshop at the Ivy Summit entitled “Emphasizing the Importance of Graduate and Professional Student Programming and Space.” I gave two presentations at the NAGPS conference entitled “Engaging Local Government” and “Strategic Planning for Graduate Student Organizations.”

Then, in March, Nicole and I went to the Northeast Regional Conference for NAGPS and we both presented about the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative.

Nicole, Yevgeniy, and I presented Cornell GPSA's vision and activities to a nation-wide audience. We found that GPSA ranks highly among graduate student organizations in terms of proactive student governance, our relationship with the administration, and the Graduate Community Initiative. We also took many lessons back from these gathering and will use those lessons we learned and the relationships we developed to better the GPSA.

### **Faculty Teaching, Advising, and Mentorship Awards Committee Formed**

Through Resolution 9, passed at the October 29th GPSA meeting, the Faculty Teaching, Advising, and Mentorship Awards Committee was passed and made permanent in the GPSA Bylaws. The Awards were held for the first time in spring 2012 to honor faculty who do extraordinary jobs teaching, advising, or mentoring graduate and professional students. The GPSA wanted to continue the tradition of recognizing outstanding faculty members every year.

At the May 7th Award Ceremony, the GPSA Faculty Teaching, Advising, and Mentorship Awards Committee awarded the following three professors:

- Andrew H. Bass, Professor, Department of Neurobiology and Behavior
- Aaron Sachs, Associate Professor, Department of History
- Lee Humphreys, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication

### **GPSA Town Hall**

The Student Advocacy Committee, led by Yevgeniy Izrayelit, held its annual Town Hall on November 15th in the Memorial Room in Willard Straight Hall. At the event, over 30 graduate and professional students, including members of the GPSA, discussed three main topics: career services, a sense of community, and mental health and well-being.

### **Housing, Transportation, and Family Services**

On April 22nd, GPSA passed Resolution 20 that builds upon many action statements in the GPCI and focuses on Hasbrouck and Maplewood graduate and professional housing complexes. The Resolution calls for a systematic focus on housing, transportation, and family services as they apply to graduate and professional housing including "residential parking" rates, prioritization of rooms for graduate/professional students with families, and more input from current residents. This is an unfinished topic and I leave it to next year's GPSA.

### **Sexual Violence and Bias Incidents**

During the course of the Fall semester, the Cornell community has been rocked by a string of sexual violence incidents as well as a number of racially charged bias incidents. A number of groups have reacted to the incidents and the campus has come together to

address the issues. The GPSA co-sponsored an evening vigil called “Cornell Caring Community: Illuminate the Night,” held in the evening on October 24th on Ho Plaza. The event was meant to gather students, staff, and faculty together to demonstrate the mutual responsibility and understanding about changing the campus culture toward a more inclusive campus. President David Skorton and Board of Trustees Chairman Bill Harris spoke at the event.

The leadership of the GPSA has been actively involved in the response to these incidents and have been a part of discussions with administration on the most appropriate actions to take. Two graduate students were active in the Incident Management Teams (IMT) that were created to respond to specific aspects of changing campus culture. The reports from the IMTs is due to come out in January. GPSA will continue to be a part of the dialogue moving forward.

### **Conversation about Divestment**

This year, there was a broad campus conversation about Cornell potentially divesting its endowment from the fossil fuel industry, largely initiated by the undergraduate Student Assembly and campus environmental groups. Resolution 13 was considered by the GPSA that calls for divestment, but ultimately was tabled indefinitely.

### **Dental Coverage in SHIP**

Paul Berry, a member of the GPSA Student Advocacy Committee, and Nicole Baran did some research into how dental insurance might be covered in the Student Health Insurance Plan, in which many graduate and professional students are enrolled. Their research was presented in Resolution 19 and suggested that the current optional dental coverage could be improved. A group of administrators is looking at this during the summer.

### **Inclusion of Graduate Students at Geneva and Cornell Tech**

GPSA passed Resolution 12 and then Resolution 18 to address the new graduate students’ representation in the shared governance system at Cornell. Resolution 12, approved by President Skorton, amends the charter to include one field representative from Cornell NYC Tech and one field representative from the Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva. Resolution 18 makes a recommendation on the Graduate and Professional Student Activity Fee to be set for the students at Cornell NYC Tech.

### **Creation of the Diversity & International Students Committee**

One recommendation in the GPCI was the creation of a GPSA Diversity & International Students Committee. The GPSA created this committee via Resolution 16 on April 8th and subsequently elected a chair at the committee chair election on April 22nd.

### **Communications**

The GPSA Communications Committee, led by Marcus Cerroni, continues to put out fantastic editions of the Buzz, GPSA's newsletter. Once a month, a distribution goes out to all graduate and professional students and on the alternate two-week cycle, an edition of the Buzz goes out to an opt-in list of graduate and professional students. The Communications Committee has been able to advertise various events and other important issues to the graduate and professional student community.

### **Space Use Study**

The GPSA was contacted in the summer of 2012 to assist the outreach to graduate and professional students as part of the Ithaca Campus Space Utilization Study. The GPSA formed an ad hoc committee through Resolution 8, passed at our October 15th meeting, made up of representatives from the various areas of the campus to assist Mary-Lynn Cummings, the director of space planning. Graduate and professional students participated in focus groups on November 28th and 29th to help the Space Use Study better understand the space needs of graduate and professional students.

### **Tompkins County Council of Student Governments**

In late October, I met with Adam Gitlin, President of the Cornell Student Assembly, Rob Flaherty, President of the Ithaca College Student Government Association, and Ignacio Saldana, President of the Tompkins-Cortland Community College Student Government Association to establish a stronger relationship between student organizations in Tompkins County. Many issues in the community affect students no matter where they attend college and having a group of student leaders advocate effectively on all students' behalf will strengthen the community climate toward the colleges and universities in Tompkins County. The Tompkins County Council of Student Governments was formed by Adam, Rob, Iggy, and myself. This spring, we have engaged the Ithaca Common Council on a change to the city charter regarding rental housing.

### **Resolution to Support Women's Professional Development**

On November 11th, GPSA passed Resolution 10, which identifies the fact that women face a unique set of challenges in navigating academia, the job market, and the professional world. Cornell has not made as significant progress on supporting graduate and professional student women's development as GPSA felt was necessary. Triveni Gandhi, a voting member from Humanities, Christine Yao, a field representative from English, Stephanie Masiello, a field representative from Food Science and Technology, and Jennifer Marotto, a member of the Committee on Women's Issues, introduced Resolution 10. Significant progress has already been made on the recommendations in the resolution including increased conversations about the needs

of graduate and professional students, an expanded between the President's Council on Cornell Women (PCCW) and the Graduate School, and the creation of a new umbrella women's organization, the Graduate & Professional Women's Network (GPWomeN).

### **Resolutions**

Here is a list of the resolutions GPSA introduced this year:

**Resolution 1:** Creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to Assess the Progress On and Update the Recommendations of the Graduate Community Initiative (August 27th)

**Resolution 2:** A Resolution Approving the GPSA Bylaws for the 2012-2013 Term (September 10th)

**Resolution 3:** A Resolution Approving the GPSA Internal Budget for the 2012-2013 Term (September 10th)

**Resolution 4:** A Resolution Regarding a Graduate and Professional Student Cornell Dining Meal Plan (September 24th)

**Resolution 5:** Budget for Graduate Community Initiative Ad Hoc Committee (September 24th)

**Resolution 6:** Amending the GPSAFC Funding Guidelines Appeals Process (October 15th)

**Resolution 7:** A Resolution Approving the Graduate and Professional Student Programming Board (GPSPB) 2012-2013 Charter (October 15th)

**Resolution 8:** A Resolution to Create the Space Utilization Study Ad Hoc Committee (October 15th)

**Resolution 9:** GPSA Faculty Teaching, Advising, and Mentorship Award Committee (October 29th)

**Resolution 10:** GPSA Resolution to Support Women's Professional Development (November 12th)

**Resolution 11:** A Resolution Calling Upon the US Congress to Support Higher Education Funding (November 26th)

**Resolution 12:** A Resolution to Amend the GPSA Charter to Ensure Representation of Students at Cornell NYC Tech and Geneva Campuses (introduced November 26th, voted on January 21st)

**Resolution 13:** A Resolution Calling for a Responsible Endowment (introduced March 4th, postponed indefinitely March 25th)

**Resolution 14:** A Resolution to Adopt the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (March 25th)

**Resolution 15:** A Resolution Calling for the Creation of a GPCI Working Group (April 8th)

**Resolution 16:** GPSA Diversity & International Students Committee (April 8th)

**Resolution 17:** A Resolution Regarding Graduate Funding and Tuition (April 8th)

**Resolution 18:** A Resolution Concerning the Setting and Allocation of the Graduate and Professional Student Activity Fee for Cornell NYC Tech Students (April 22nd)

**Resolution 19:** Student Health Insurance Optional Dental Plan (April 22nd)

**Resolution 20:** A Resolution Regarding Housing, Transportation, and Family Services (April 22nd)

It has been a true pleasure to serve as President of GPSA through the 2012-2013 academic year. I commend the work of all of our individual graduate and professional student members during the semester. Their hard work shows that the graduate and professional student community is moving forward on Cornell's campus.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitch Paine

President, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

mcp235@cornell.edu