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Introduction

The Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) was founded on January 10, 1973 by Dean of Students Alfred Moyé to provide graduate and professional students with an opportunity to organize their interests, advocate for changes, and a channel to voice concerns. The GPSG was first led by Co-Chairs Lenny Klavonic and Norman Sanger and advised by Mr. McLinden.

Today the GPSG serves as the umbrella government organization of the graduate and professional student body at the University of Pittsburgh. The primary role of the GPSG is to foster a sense of community among nearly ten thousand students across 14 schools at the University of Pittsburgh. The GPSG advocates and represents the student body, provides essential services and programming, and gives students the opportunity to participate in shared governance.

Mission of the GPSG Executive Board

• 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 on 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

This report serves to document the progress of the 2017-2018 GPSG Executive Board in building opportunities for students, facilitating collaboration, and serving the graduate and professional student community at the University of Pittsburgh.
2017-2018 Long Range Plan

Graduate and Professional Student Government

2017-2018 Long-Range Plan

Mission Statement of the Executive Board

To empower Pitt’s graduate and professional students to maximize their opportunities and impact by fostering a sense of community both within the University of Pittsburgh and the local community.

Goals

Developing career-conscious graduate and professional students who are equipped to make immediate and consistent impact in industry, academia, and society.

• Launching recurring personal and professional development opportunities for graduate and professional students

Raising awareness and support for the equality and empowerment of the University’s diverse populations

• Encouraging campus-wide unity through social interaction and engagement
• Offering targeted programming for underrepresented demographics
• Increasing diversity and representation on university-wide committees

Enhancing communication between GPSG and graduate and professional schools

• Effectively market and disseminate information of GPSG services
  • Form partnerships with school-specific governments to increase participation and awareness of GPSG events and services
  • Promote interdisciplinary work between graduate and professional schools

Christopher Staten  
President

Caitlin Sniezek  
VP of Committees

Srilakshmi Kavikkal  
VP of Communications

Shreyas Vamburkar  
VP of Finance

Clarissa Leon  
VP of Programming

Sarah Mahan  
Executive Administrator
The Assembly Board

The GPSG Assembly Board is the governing body of the GPSG. It is comprised of at least one representative from each graduate and professional school student government, the members of the GPSG Executive Board, and representatives from university-recognized Graduate Student Associations. The Assembly Board meets at least once monthly to discuss happenings within the graduate and professional student community and to propose and vote upon resolutions. The Executive Board reports to the Assembly Board on their work and serves to execute the resolutions of the Assembly Board setting the vision and agenda of the GPSG. Meetings of the Assembly Board are chaired by the GPSG President.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>Amber Griffith</td>
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<td>Sebastian Garayroa</td>
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<td>Changrui Xing</td>
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<td>Zoe Kaufman</td>
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<td>ANKUR – Indian Graduate Student Association</td>
<td>Sourabh Acharya</td>
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<td>Junyi Yang</td>
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<td>Shuai Liu</td>
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<td>GOSECA – Graduate Organization for the Study of Europe and Central Asia</td>
<td>Amy Karabowicz</td>
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<td>Katie Pompeani</td>
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<td>ISA – Iranian Student Association</td>
<td>Yashar Aucie</td>
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<td>Amir Mostafaei</td>
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<td>TASA – Turkish American Association</td>
<td>Elif Ercan</td>
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The Executive Board and Administrative Support

The GPSG Executive Board is elected by the student body to serve one-year terms beginning on May 1st of each year. The Executive Board serves to execute their duties as prescribed by the Bylaws and as delegated by the President. The Executive Board also has the duty to execute the resolutions of the Assembly Board and represent the student body to the administration of the university.

2017-2018 GPSG Executive Board

**Christopher Staten – President**
Katz Graduate School of Business, MBA

![Christopher Staten](image1)

**Caitlin Sniezek – Vice President of Committees**
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, MPA

![Caitlin Sniezek](image2)

**Srilakshmi Kavikkal – Vice President of Communication**
Katz Graduate School of Business, MBA/ MS

![Srilakshmi Kavikkal](image3)
Clarissa Leon – Vice President of Programming
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, MFA

Shreyas Vamburkar – Vice President of Finance
Katz Graduate School of Business, MBA

2017-2018 GPSG Executive Board Administrative Support

Sarah Brooks – Executive Administrator
School of Social Work, MSW
Jennifer Walker - GPSG Advisor
Assistant to the Provost for Academic Affairs - Office of the Provost

Dr. Nathan Urban - Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
Office of the Provost

From left to right: Christopher Staten, Jennifer Walker, Clarissa Leon, Sarah Brooks, Caitlin Sniezek, Dr. Nathan Urban
President – Christopher Staten

As I think retrospectively, the 2017-2018 was a year full of growth of GPSG’s “brand”, partnerships with departments at Pitt and external entities, and political advocacy for graduate & professional students at the University of Pittsburgh. As an Executive Board, we wanted to ensure that the 10,000 graduate & professional students at Pitt were aware of the resources that were offered by GPSG as many of our offerings such as supplemental funding, travel grants, and free legal consultation were underutilized. In August of 2017, before GPSG’s orientation we launched our campus outreach campaign where we spoke at over 30 orientations for respective graduate programs. I unofficially titled this campaign as our “Campus Tour”. The results of our efforts were a dramatic increase in travel grant and supplemental funding applications. Along with building the “brand” of GPSG we have launched GPSG’s professional LinkedIn page to increase our digital presence.

GPSG joined the Student Advocates of Graduate Education in the Spring of 2017. The Student Advocate for Graduate Education is a coalition that represents over 140,000 graduate and professional students at the leading public research universities across the country. With assistance from the Office of the Provost, Pitt GPSG hosted the Student Advocated for Graduate Education Fall Summit from October 26-28th, 2017. Nine membership schools from the Association of American University were represented by over 20 graduate & professional students from across the nation. We shared best practices from each graduate & professional student board, lobbying strategies, and discussed legislation that can affect graduate & professional students. The main issues we covered were research funding, student debt, and more recently more of the discussion has been around the reform bill that can directly affect graduate & professional students, TA and GSRs. GPSG also partnered the Pitt Program Council and Pitt Arts to offer graduate and professional students free/subsidized ticketing to programs and events around Pittsburgh.

In late September, in wake of the Tax Reform provisions, GPSG assembled a Community & Governmental Relations Task Force to strategize and execute resistance against potential laws that are detrimental to graduate & professional students. Our efforts were joined by hundreds of thousands of graduate & professional students and higher institutions across the nation. We were successful, and the negative provisions were excluded from the final bill. Moving forward, The PROSPER Act, which could endanger the graduate & professional students across the nation, will be reviewed by GPSG and the Community and Governmental Relations staff.

The pleasure of serving as president of GPSG is an experience that makes me grateful for the diligent work of past executive and assembly boards, appreciative of my supportive vice presidents and assembly board representatives, and optimistically expectant to see the success of our newly elected 2018-2019 Executive Board.

Hail to Pitt and God Bless!
Vice President of Committees – Caitlin Sniezek

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the VP of Committees position experienced success by having all of the committee representative positions filled by September, ensuring representation on university-wide committees. There were 35 university-wide committees, which were filled by 43 graduate and professional students from 12 schools across campus. Despite some turnover between semesters, GPSG was able to maintain 100% fulfillment throughout the entire academic year. To prepare these committee representatives, GPSG, in conjunction with the Office of the Provost, hosted two orientation sessions in September before committee meetings began.

GPSG continued to maintain representation on committees including University Senate standing Committees, Provost Advisory Committees, Board of Trustees Committees and University Special Committees. In addition, GPSG was pleased to extend graduate and professional student representation on three new committees this year: Calendar, Year of Healthy U and Sustainability. The Calendar Committee was assembled to look at the University of Pittsburgh’s academic calendar, considering items such as extending the winter break schedule. The Year of Healthy U Committee was formed to explore a core focus of the University for this academic year. Specifically, it looked at studying and recognizing good health practices, with an overall goal of advancing Pitt’s understanding of health. As environmental issues continue to impact the world in which we live, the Sustainability committee was formed to look at Pitt’s sustainability efforts and ways that Pitt can improve sustainability education and initiatives on campus.

Outside of the committees, the VP of Committees, with the assistance of her GPSG Bylaws Committee, amended to Bylaws to modify attendance and add a communication plan. The attendance was modified as a way to ensure representation of GSAs and GSOs at all GPSG Assembly Board (AB) meetings. GPSG voted to add a communication plan to the Bylaws. With this communication plan, AB representatives will now submit a written plan of how they will disseminate information to their respective constituents. This addition to the Bylaws serves to guarantee that AB constituents are getting information about the services and programs that GPSG provides to all students across the graduate and professional community. These changes were part of the yearly review of the Bylaws, with modifications enacted to improve the practices of GPSG, which first and foremost, works to serve students.

Overall, the VP of Committees worked to ensure that the voice of graduate and professional students heard across campus. Student representation on university-wide committees benefits students who were not directly serving on committees, as reports were assembled and posted on the GPSG website for other students to access and stay informed. Additionally, this position was used to amend the GPSG Bylaws to better serve GPSG’s constituents. I would like to thank those who served on GPSG and as a committee representative; your hard work is appreciated and continues to shape the graduate and professional experience at the University of Pittsburgh.
I would like to thank all of the members of the Pitt community who truly appreciate the ideas and opinions of the graduate and professional students across campus. Committee representatives receive invaluable leadership experience by interacting with the faculty and staff across campus, who sincerely want to hear what students have to say. GPSG looks forward to not only continuing these relationships in the future, but also expanding and building new ones. Moving forward, GPSG would like to achieve representation from each of the graduate and professional schools; we currently have 90% of Pitt schools represented. The VP of Committees will continue to oversee the Bylaws in a way that guarantees that GPSG is adhering to the rules and regulations of the University and serving the graduate and professional student community in a way that maximizes their student experience while at Pitt.
Vice President of Communication – Srilakshmi Kavikkal

One of the main goals of GPSG this year was to improve communication and reach of important programming information and resources to the graduate and professional student body. To this end, I focused on several new marketing and communication initiatives throughout the year along with the support of my fellow Executive Board and the Public Relations Committee members.

Digital and social media strategy has been one of my priorities this year. The website was updated over the summer to reflect all the information regarding the various services offered by GPSG. This year’s orientation was marketed with better print and digital flyers and the event resulted in a lot of student sign ups into the various committees including the Public Relations committee. I increased the frequency of the e-newsletter to twice a month to ensure that all the announcements and campus news reach the graduate community in a timely manner.

Social media posts and frequency has considerably improved last year especially on Facebook and Instagram. The number of followers and the number of posts on Instagram have more than doubled from last year’s count. I also created a new LinkedIn page for GPSG which will be useful to foster more connections and reach within the professional network platform in the future. One of the main concerns that we have heard repeatedly is that the students are not aware of who their representatives are. I introduced a student spotlight series on Facebook with the aim to recognize the student leaders on the AB and to make their information available to the student community. This definitely has more potential and I would love to see GPSG take this initiative forward next year.

Currently, GPSG is responsible for developing its own communication channel with graduate students. GPSG relies on the Assembly Board(AB) to a great extent to disseminate the information to their respective schools. However, some of these representatives do not have the ability to contact their graduate community directly or prefers one communication channel to other and this has led to a disconnect in communication across the different schools. As a solution to this, AB will be required to submit a communication plan in the beginning of every year that outlines a communication strategy that is best suited for their respective schools. The Bylaws have been updated and passed to reflect this change from next year onwards.

The 4th annual TEDxUniversityofPittsburgh event was held on Saturday, March 31st from 11 am to 4 pm at the William Pitt Union. TEDxUniversityofPittsburgh is an independently organized TED event that features live talks that motivate and empower its audience through knowledge and offers a platform for Pitt students and community members to engage in meaningful discussion with the speakers and other audience members. It is run by the GPSG and SGB and involves both undergraduate and graduate and professional students. This year’s event hosted local speakers from different fields who gave their perspective on a wide array of topics, curated towards how Pittsburgh is the perfect place to re(think) what you know and think you know. The speakers included Jasiri X, a hip-hop artist, Konstantinos Pelechrinis, Associate
professor at the School of Computing and Information at the University of Pittsburgh, Andrew Schwartz, Distinguished Professor of Neurobiology at University of Pittsburgh, Satvika Neti, a Digital Social Justice Advocate and Dan Lockton, Chair of Design Studies at Carnegie Mellon School of Design. Since the event has been growing since its inception, there are plans to make it a separate student organization registered under SORC in the future.

Overall, it was a great year with a lot of improved efforts in communication and outreach to the graduate and professional student community. This wouldn’t have been possible without the support from my fellow Executive Board members and I want to thank them all. I enjoyed my role as the Vice President of Communications and I wish the GPSG all the best in its future endeavors.

Hail to Pitt!
Vice President of Finance – Shreyas Vamburkar

The focus of the Finance Committee and the Vice President of Finance in the current year was to administer the travel grants program, evaluate supplemental funding applications and maintain the budgets for GPSG. We also collectively worked towards improving the travel grant and supplemental funding programs to ensure that the available budget is utilized in the most appropriate and efficient manner.

This year was a challenging one from a finance perspective because the budget allocated to the GPSG decreased as compared to the last. Despite that, we were able to finance all the GPSG initiatives and events and were also able to make funds available for new partnerships such as the one with the Pitt Program Council.

The hard work and input of the Finance Committee was instrumental in helping me perform my duties as the Vice President of Finance for the GPSG. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Finance Committee for their contribution throughout the year.

Travel Grants Program
The travel grants program is one of the most successful initiatives of the GPSG. In the current year, the Finance Committee processed close to 200 travel grant applications which is a significant increase over the number of applications received in the last year. The applications were received, and grants were awarded for a diverse mix of schools and programs. Following is a snapshot of the travel grants awarded in the current year:

Supplemental Funding
Supplemental funding is utilized to make funds available to organizations who do not have sufficient budgets to fund the programs they wish to consider. Each supplemental funding application undergoes comprehensive review from the Finance Committee. In the present year, the Finance Committee approved four applications for supplemental funding amounting to $5900.
The Event Planning Committee and I planned 5 events during the 2017-18 school year. The total attendance for these events exceeded 1700 students. We aimed to provide a range of events, from smaller hands-on workshops to large socials. We also aimed to plan events that would facilitate student interaction, so students would be able to easily meet other students from different programs. The Event Planning Committee members all spent significant time and energy planning these events, and none of it would be possible without such a wonderful group of students!

Events

1. Hofbrauhaus Welcome Back Social: 700 attendees
2. Fall Formal: 250 attendees
3. Row House Movie Night: 5 attendees
4. Spring Formal: 550 attendees
5. Pirates Game + Tailgate): 200 attendees
Executive Administrator – Sarah Brooks

The GPSG Executive Administrator primary responsibilities include supporting all members of the Executive Board in their roles and endeavors while coordinating all communications with the representatives of the Assembly Board. The Executive Administrator maintains the GPSG office and serves to answer all inquiries regarding GPSG to students, staff, and faculty.

In addition to the day-to-day duties, the Executive Administrator coordinates the elections and transitions for the incoming Executive Board. This year, 12 candidates ran for office, surpassing last year. A formal dinner and the first inaugural ceremony was held to induct the incoming Executive Board. A formal day of transitions and training was also hosted to minimize any gaps in information and ensure a smooth transition between officers.

The Executive Administrator also manages and executes the Leadership and Service Awards. This award seeks to recognize graduate and professional students for their exceptional leadership and service to the University, community, and world. This year, we received 18 applications – the most applications ever received since the award was initiated in 2014. This year’s awards were presented during the March Assembly Board Meeting to four outstanding students for their exemplary contributions. The ceremony served to honor and applaud these individuals and to inspire similar contributions by the graduate and professional student population.

Overall, the primary efforts of the Executive Administrator this year were to increase communication between the Executive Board and Assembly Board representatives, serving as a liaison between members and assisting this year’s President to enhance the brand of GPSG to all graduate and professional students. In addition, significant efforts were made to continue fostering institutional memory of the Executive Board and the Executive Administrator role. Existing documentation was continually updated and added to, to ensure that future Executive Administrators are equipped with all resources, contacts, and necessary knowledge to effectively perform the job.

This academic year was a rewarding and enjoyable experience. As the Executive Administrator, it was exciting to work with students and staff to promote GPSG’s efforts and it was an honor to serve the University of Pittsburgh.

Hail to Pitt!
Elections for the 2018 – 2019 GPSG Executive Board

Congratulations to the 2018 – 2019 Executive Board! We are excited to see great things from this talented team!

2018-2019 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: **Rachel Coombs** (79%)
VP of Committees: **Jennifer Enriquez** (72%)
VP of Communications: **Crystal Taylor** (45%)
VP of Finance: **Spencer Edelstein** (50.3%)
VP of Programming: **Alison McIntosh** (100%)

From left to right: Spencer Edelstein, Amanda Leifson, Rachel Coombs, Jennifer Enriquez, Crystal Taylor, Alison McIntosh
2018 Leadership & Service Awards
In 2014, the Graduate and Professional Student Government sought to create an award that recognized the hard work, dedication, and leadership that all University of Pittsburgh graduate and professional students possess. Four years later, we are still honoring those individuals who show an excellence in leadership and service. The Leadership and Service Award aims to make service by our students more visible and valued on campus and to honor those who have shown exemplary leadership and service to the University of Pittsburgh, our community, or to the world at large. All of this year’s applicants showed great initiative and dedication in their work, but this year’s winners truly went above and beyond the call of duty, demonstrating great innovation, boundary breaking outreach, and dedication to the continuation of service.

On behalf of the Graduate and Professional Student Government, the 2017-2018 Executive Board would like to thank this year’s GPSG Leadership and Service Award winners for their work.

From left to right: Dr. Nathan Urban, Francisco J. Bonilla Escobar, Michael Chiang, Kenrick Fernandes, Victoria Humphrey, Christopher Staten
GPSG Advisor – Jennifer Walker

Serving as Advisor to the GPSG is such an enjoyable part of my job. In my role, I aim to help the Executive Board navigate the University, make connections, use their graduate student voice, build communication skills, and seize leadership and professional development opportunities. These intentions naturally align with the long-range plan of the 2017-2018 GPSG Executive Board. Among many other examples, I am particularly thankful for the opportunity to participate on the professional development committee assembled by Chris, and to connect them with the University Council for Graduate Study subcommittee who share the same focus.

On behalf of the Office of the Provost, we thank the GPSG for your collaboration and effort to execute another successful New Graduate and Professional Student Orientation. This event has grown to be an integral part of starting the new academic year and a warm welcome to the newest members of our Pitt community.

Caitlin, Chris, Clarissa, Shreyas, Sri, and Sarah – I would like to thank you for your hard work. I was rejuvenated by your excitement at the beginning of your term and am proud to reflect on your accomplishments. It has been wonderful getting to know you and a pleasure working with you. I send my best wishes to you all as you take your next step.
Long Range Plan Goals – Action Steps

Developing career-conscious graduate and professional students who are equipped to make immediate and consistent impact in industry, academia, and society

- October 10th, 2017 - GPSG Professional Development Committee launched, assembling Pitt Career Services Consortium and graduate and professional students who were passionate about spreading career readiness tools to graduate and professional students.
- November 8, 2017 - Dr. Darlene Zellers presented to the GPSG Assembly Board about professional development opportunities offered by Office of Academic and Career Development.
- February 2018 – Collaborated with Holger Honck, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research at the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, concerning professional development curriculum at the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences.
- February 26, 2018 – Launched our Free Headshot Initiative in partnership with Dr. Cheryl Finlay, Kent Weaver, and Adam Gaus of Student Affairs.

Raising awareness and support for the equality and empowerment of the University’s diverse populations

- August 2017 – Greeted incoming international students at Office of International Services welcome luncheon
- November 2017 – Christopher Staten represented the Executive Board at the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences Committee of Diversity of Inclusion round table about microaggressions and issues facing underrepresented minorities in higher education.
- April 8th, 2018 – In partnership with Student Affairs and the Center of Urban Education, Christopher Staten hosted the University of Pittsburgh’s first Black Men’s Summit
- March 18, 2018 - Sara Goodkind, Associate Professor of Social Work, Sociology, and Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, presented on marginalized youth and the inequities they experience at TEDxUniversityOfPittsburgh salon.

Enhancing communication between GPSG and graduate and professional schools

- August 2017 – Launched “Campus Tour”, presenting at over 30 orientations to communicate the resources GPSG offers
- February 2018 – Launched GPSG LinkedIn page
- March 2018 – Amended bylaws to fortify communication stream from the Executive Board to Assembly Board.