



April Report to University Community – April 14, 2025

Through intentional efforts to Build Back Better, I am happy to report that FY 2025 has been a Season of Success for the Graduate Student Association:

- **During FY25, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) has directly engaged 48 graduate and professional students from 42 academic programs/pathways who served as representatives to advance the goals of advocacy, collaboration, and engagement for and amongst the 10,000+ graduate and professional students at UGA.**
- The Graduate Student Association played an important role in organizing 9 major events or initiatives that welcomed new graduate and professional students to UGA, facilitated connections and community amongst graduate and professional students, and/or provided graduate and professional students with important resources (e.g. guidance on career planning, financial planning and tax preparation services, and leadership development). All of these programs were provided to students at no additional cost!
- Through student-initiated engagements, the Graduate Student Association became more familiar with multiple university units and departments. We even partnered with some of them for programs previously mentioned. It's been a pleasure to work with students, staff, faculty, and "professional friends" in Engagement, Leadership and Service, the UGA Graduate School, the Office of Global Engagement, UGA Human Resources, the Tull School of Accounting, the Volunteer Income Tax Program, Development and Alumni Relations, The UGA Dean of Students, Vice President of Student Affairs – VP Cook, the Student Government Association, Staff Council, and many others.
- Through the Graduate Student Association, the perspectives of graduate and professional students were considered in multiple areas of university governance including but not limited to University Council, the UGA Graduate School, the UGA Division of Student Affairs, the UGA Alumni Association, Enterprise Information Technology Services. There was also UGA graduate student representation on a system-wide committee regarding student health insurance. I have heard word that representatives have learned a great deal about student fee revenues and expenditures, governance of the curriculum, and academic policy development.
- GSA's Council has approved and advanced a resolution regarding benefits and compensation for graduate assistants. However, we are not strangers to the current malarkey. So, next year's team will be looking forward to working with administrators at the Graduate School and beyond to improve transparency regarding benefits such as tuition remission, health insurance subsidies, pay rates and other important nuances of "pay" for graduate assistants.
- At the request of 2 Deans, graduate and professional student leaders were dispatched to provide feedback on concerns at the college level. Additionally, a group of graduate and professional students actively provided feedback regarding candidates for the recent VPR Search.

Finally, given my research interests in organizational administration, development, and management, I strategically appointed 2 ad-hoc committees to address some pressing organizational challenges. One committee was tasked with reviewing and revising GSA's Bylaws and another was tasked with formulating a communications and marketing strategy for GSA. As the organizational remnants of my term as President, I am excited to share:

- After a long process of review and evaluation, revisions to GSA's Bylaws were approved by an overwhelming affirmative vote of Graduate and Professional Students at UGA. The Bylaws were modernized to increase organizational continuity and engagement amongst more UGA Graduate and Professional Students.
- Through the Graduate Student Association's marketing efforts, graduate and professional students were provided information about the organization and multiple pre-existing opportunities, programs, services, or workshops in multiple units such as the UGA Pride Center, the Career Center, the Fontaine Center, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and several resources provided by UGA Libraries. Students were also connected to programs hosted by academic departments. Social media metrics are tricky to record, however...preliminary data from Instagram tell us that:
 - From September 10 - December 8, the Association's Instagram account received 26,681 views and had reached 7,345 accounts (a 628% increase in reach!)
 - From Jan 15 – April 14, the Association's Instagram account received 19,245 views and has reached 4,487 accounts (a 103.8% increase in reach!)
- **The GSA has had its most competitive and engaging election since 2022.** This year, we received 17 self-nominations for 5 positions and conducted run-offs for 2 positions. No candidate ran unopposed and we saw a significant increase in the number of students who participated in the election. We have successfully elected 5 new officers who are excited to build upon what I hope is a steady foundation.

Invitations & Requests

- Send kind congratulatory notes of retirement to Will and current officers (will.walker@uga.edu) who are excited to get back to research and other exciting personal and professional endeavors.
- Send kind congratulatory notes of support and guidance to the incoming officer team that will be led by Emerson Moon (gsa@uga.edu), a master's student in the Public Administration program at the School of Public and International Affairs.

It has been a pleasure to work with you all, and I hope that our paths cross again in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Will Walker, Jr.
President, Graduate Student Association