

 Graduate Student Senate

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL  
**STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN AND REPORT**  
2020-2021



Washington  
University in St. Louis

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## ROSTER OF THE 2020-2021 GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

Marleigh Anderson (Classics), Co-President

Gabrielle Pfund (Psychological and Brain Sciences), Co-President

Marc Blanc (English and American Literature), VP of Communications

Wolfgang Zober (Physics), VP of Public Relations

Megan Wilson (Psychological and Brain Sciences), VP of Finance

### DEPARTMENT SENATORS

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Anthropology	Jake Funkhouser	jakefunkhouser@wustl.edu
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Biomedical Engineering	Zain Clapacs	zclapacs@wustl.edu
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Classics	Grace McIntire	gmcintire@wustl.edu
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Computational and Data Sciences	Joshua Landman	landman@wustl.edu
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Division of Biology and Biological Sciences	Emily Eul	eeul@wustl.edu
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English and American Literature	Marc Blanc	m.blanc@wustl.edu

Film and Media Studies	None	
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History	Kejian Shi	kshi@wustl.edu
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Physics	Valeria Villegas-Medina	Valeria.v@wustl.edu
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Psychological and Brain Sciences	Clarissa James	clarissa@wustl.edu
Rehabilitation and Participation Sciences	Allison L'Hotta	alhotta@wustl.edu
Romance Languages and Literature	Keenan Burton	k.burton@wustl.edu
Social work	Mia Vogel	miavogel@wustl.edu
Sociology	Garrett Pekarek	g.e.pekarek@wustl.edu

## COMMITTEES

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Members</b>
Diversity and Advocacy	Valeria Villegas-Medina (chair) Megan Wilson (chair) Melanie Bancilhon Alexis Carr Marina Gross

Graduate Research Symposium	Wolfgang Zober (chair) Jake Funkhouser Rocio Suarez
Graduate Student Health	Joshua Landman Rachel Martin Valeria Villegas-Medina Mia Vogel
Interpersonal and Sexual Violence	Grace McIntire (chair) Laurel Taylor
Legislative Concerns	Marc Blanc Tyler Gährs Jeremy Henry Clarissa James Garrett Pekarek
Off-Campus Housing	Keenan Burton Andrea Goltz
Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards (OFSA)	Emily Eul (chair) Payton Beeler Allison L'Hotta
Professional Development	Lisa Mumme (chair) Jeff Konrad Jenn Mabray Kejian Shi
Strategic Action Plan Editing Group	GSS Exec Board

## LIAISONS

Teaching Center Liaison: Zain Clapacs

Library Advisory Liaison: Sandra Weber

GPC Liaisons: Marleigh Anderson, Gabrielle Pfund, Wolfgang Zober, Marina Gross

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Founded in 1993, the Graduate Student Senate at Washington University in St. Louis serves as a student governing body for graduate students in programs granting M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. This governing body is comprised of a five-member executive board and approximately thirty senators that represent each program and department across the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, as well as the McKelvey School of Engineering and the Brown School of Social Work. The Graduate Student Senate provides a channel for communication both between graduate students of disparate departments and programs, and also between graduate students and the Graduate School along with other members of the Washington University community. In this role, the Graduate Student Senate encourages and facilitates interdisciplinary and inter-departmental academic, social, and governance opportunities.

Furthermore, the Graduate Student Senate represents and advocates for the interests of graduate students to the Dean of the Graduate School, the Graduate Council, the Graduate Professional Council, and others both within and outside the University whose actions and positions impact graduate students. The Graduate Student Senate receives generous financial and logistical support from the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, the Liberman Graduate Center, and affiliated staff. This financial support generally provides for the Senate's monthly meetings and operating costs, the annual Graduate Welcome BBQ, the Graduate Research Symposium, Travel Awards for graduate students attending academic conferences, legislative call-days, the Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards, and numerous other events and socials for graduate students.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**

The Graduate Student Senate first conceived and implemented the Strategic Action Plan and Report in the 2014-2015 academic year. This annual document creates a record of the Graduate Student Senate's efforts and activities along with its committees and members, and as such formally creates an institutional memory of the activities, accomplishments, and concerns of graduate students. Furthermore, while communicating the concerns of the graduate students within Art & Sciences, Engineering, and Social Work, the Strategic Action Plan and Report also operates as a method for creating continuity across years, committees, members, and leadership transitions of the Graduate Student Senate.

While this academic year was heavily affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the concerns identified in this Strategic Action Plan, both general and specific, are still aimed to engage the Graduate School and other institutional partners in productive dialogue. The recommendations proposed here by the various committees address these concerns in an effort to improve the experience of graduate students, as well as the larger campus community at Washington University. Thus, the Strategic Action Plan and Report is a collaborative effort from the Graduate Student Senate, with each chapter written by the individual committees to document their activities and then compiled into what is seen here by the Executive Board of the Graduate Student Senate. Members of the Graduate Student Senate then review and vote on the Strategic Action Plan and Report, with ratification requiring a majority of Graduate Student Senators.

While the Strategic Action Plan and Report may not be a comprehensive account of every issue and concern of the graduate student community, this document does represent a majority of the topics covered and addressed by the efforts of the 2020-2021 Graduate Student Senate. We hope that the next Graduate Student Senate with support from the Graduate School and larger graduate student community can work to address some of the concerns and topics discussed in this action plan to ensure the graduate student experience and community continues to grow and be enjoyable for all of its members.

This 2020-2021 Strategic Action Plan and Report was ratified by the Graduate Student Senate on May 4, 2021.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each section of the Strategic Action Plan and Report focuses on the specific goals and recommendations of the 2020-2021 committees of the Graduate Student Senate. Thus, the Executive Summary reflects the broader, overarching concerns and desires put forth by these committees' reports.

1. *Enhanced communication and transparency:* The Graduate Student Senate requests more transparent communication from the Graduate School as a whole, such as utilizing the Graduate School Newsletter to more effectively connect graduate students to University resources and opportunities. Furthermore, we hope for expanded communication between the Graduate Student Senate and graduate students at large to keep them in-touch with opportunities and information presented by the Senate and the University (e.g., Graduate Research Symposium, resources about off-campus student housing), as well as issues and concerns stemming from the University that may be of interest to them.

2. *Greater and more nuanced graduate student support:* The Graduate Student Senate requests a wider array of support from the Graduate School, such as more funding for the Senate and graduate student organizations, as well as greater financial support for graduate students to assure higher quality of living and to keep up with our peer institutions. Furthermore, we hope for more particular and specialized efforts in supporting graduate student needs in order to assure greater effectiveness in these causes (e.g., expanded resources for the transition to Washington University for international students).

3. *More diverse opportunities for development and professionalization:* The Graduate Student Senate requests more comprehensive and diverse training to prepare graduate students for careers both within and beyond academia. These opportunities should include diversity and inclusion training to assure students are properly equipped in their roles as future teachers, leaders, and current community members. Optional educational and professionalized opportunities should be put into place to prepare graduate students for careers beyond academia as well, and the University should examine barriers to entry for existing opportunities (e.g., The Graduate School's part-time employment policy, faculty advisors sometimes being unsupportive).

4. *Broader collaboration with the University and community:* The Graduate Student Senate requests more support and structures to foster collaboration between our senators and both the University and St. Louis community. Regarding the University, we hope for more collaboration with already developed University resources, such as University Libraries and the Career Center. This could look like more effectively activating and expanding the role of existing structures, such as the graduate student liaison at the Libraries, as well as creating new opportunities for collaboration, such as a graduate student-specific branch of the University Student Affairs Advisory Board. Regarding the St. Louis community, we request that the University help us better serve the St. Louis community at large, by creating support or incentives for graduate students to disseminate research locally and engage in more public-facing work. Enhanced collaboration with these various groups will be essential in achieving our broader goals.

5. *Greater recognition and consideration of graduate and professional students in campus-wide issues:* The Graduate Student Senate requests that graduate and professional students be taken into greater consideration by the University, especially when making important decisions that affect the entire Washington University

community. Recent data from the Graduate School reports that graduate and professional students (7,872) outnumber undergraduate students (7,666) at Washington University. However, graduate and professional students often report feeling like an afterthought at this University. This feeling was heightened during the 2020-2021 academic year when undergraduate students received regular COVID-19 surveillance tests, but graduate and professional students did not—despite the majority of graduate and professional students being very likely to have asymptomatic cases of COVID-19, and despite nearly all of our peer institutions offering regular surveillance testing to graduate students. We are grateful that the University eventually opened walk-in asymptomatic tests to graduate students; however, this decision came late into the Spring semester when much of our community was already vaccinated or about to be vaccinated, and we wish that the University had shown greater care for graduate and professional students from the beginning. We hope that the University will continue taking steps to better consider graduate student perspectives; recent positive developments in this area include graduate student representation on committees for University-wide strategic planning, important job searches, and the new University Student Affairs Advisory Board. Specifically, we request that the relationship between graduate students and the Division of Student Affairs be strengthened so that administration is better equipped to take graduate student viewpoints into consideration when making major decisions about campus life.

## **DIVERSITY AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE**

The Diversity and Advocacy Committee actively promotes diversity and cultural awareness while fostering an environment of advocacy and activism for social justice in the Washington University community. We seek to make the campus a more inclusive space, equip graduate students with the tools needed to be respectful members of their current and future communities, and advocate on behalf of students of all backgrounds. The Committee develops programming and events to address diversity issues broadly and as they specifically relate to graduate students of different communities. We advocate for the inclusion of graduate student perspectives on committees, advisory boards, task forces, etc. that involve diversity matters. The Committee strongly supports the Washington University Nondiscrimination Policy and endorses university-wide efforts to promote diversity by encouraging graduate student participation in campus-wide diversity initiatives and advocacy.

During the 2020-2021 academic year the Diversity and Advocacy Committee laid the groundwork for a culturally aware mental health speaker series in collaboration with the Graduate Student Health Committee. The purpose of the speaker series is to connect graduate students of color with much-needed resources and provide additional support for the slew of new challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest of 2020-2021. These phenomena highlighted the lack of culturally diverse mental health coping strategies available to the Washington University community.

The future work of the Diversity and Advocacy Committee will focus on advocating for and cultivating these necessary resources, so as to ensure students of all backgrounds have access to equally valuable wellness programs. Accomplishing this will require strengthening relationships with our Habif Health and Wellness as well as improving communication between the Committee, the Graduate School and other partners. In particular, the Diversity and Advocacy Committee expects to collaborate closely with the Graduate & Professional Advisory Council (GPAC) to the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI). These expanded efforts can lead to greater success among graduate students and further inclusion of broader graduate student perspectives on campus.

### ***Recommendations from the Diversity and Advocacy Committee***

1. We request the establishment of recurring workshops to provide mental health resources to graduate students of color.
2. We request comprehensive diversity training specific to graduate students in their many roles as teachers, students and community members.

## **GRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE**

The annual Graduate Research Symposium (GRS) brings together graduate and professional students from diverse backgrounds so that they may have the opportunity to present their research to a broader audience. The symposium provides a unique platform to encourage intellectual discussion among students, faculty, staff, and community members. The Committee is responsible for coordinating event details, recruitment of presenters, advertising, solicitation of volunteer judges, and hosting a preparatory workshop. However, the execution of the Graduate Research Symposium relies on collaborative efforts with the Graduate Professional Council (GPC) and Association of Graduate Engineering Students (AGES), both of which provide organizational and financial support.

This is an event that typically gathers good attendance and participation; however, due to the ongoing pandemic, the 25th Annual GRS was canceled and the 26th GRS was pushed into an asynchronous/virtual platform, with a symposium held over Gather on Thursday, April 8th, 2021, featuring 29 presentations from students representing many of the University's schools. These presentations were primarily posters, with an option for presenters to include a short discussion video that could be linked in the platform when the speakers were away from their virtual poster stand. These videos also provided the benefit of allowing students away from the University an opportunity to present. For the awarding of prizes, each presentation was judged by two graduate students, with points awarded for clarity, aesthetics, content, and presentation skills. The prizes were split between categories of Humanities/Professional work and the Science fields.

As noted by the later symposium date, there were a number of dates and deadlines shifted due to the University changing the spring calendar. This led to a decision to replace the traditional preparatory workshop with a set of video guides to detail methods in poster design, as well as pushing the symposium back from its original first week of March date. The new date was received well, and as such the committee may want to consider a permanent change to a later event date.

While noting that some of the ideas applied to a virtual symposium may not transfer well to an in-person event, attention was given to future events post-pandemic. Work was put into acquiring University library support for future GRS events. Plans were discussed for long-term hosting and archival of posters from the symposium in a similar manner to the Undergrad Research Symposium, as well as other ways the library could support the event, from event space and judges to advertising. The incorporation and implementation of these ideas are left to future committees.

The Committee should continue to pursue increased communication with the wider campus community to improve marketing, recruitment, and attendance. Among these initiatives is greater collaboration with the Writing Center for insights in preparing students for crafting their research into a poster and presenting it to a broad audience. The Committee will also expand out to graduate students in the humanities and arts disciplines, who continue to be underrepresented at the Graduate Research Symposium. This expanded advertising should also be directed towards the departments and faculty themselves, so that they can encourage their graduate students about the opportunity to present and hear about the research conducted by other graduate and professional students at Washington University.

## ***Recommendations from the Graduate Research Symposium Committee***

### *Short-term recommendations:*

1. That effort is immediately put forward to incorporate the GPC Vice President of Academic & Professional Development along with the University Library liaison (via GSS) near the start of the academic year rather than the start of spring semester. By performing this connection earlier on, this would allow more collaboration between the groups and therefore a better event. If the library is to play a role, they need an early notice.
2. An issue that arose from this past year, that were further highlighted by the need to shift to an online platform, is that this committee needs to be staffed with at least 5 people to function with ease. While it is possible to put on a Graduate Research Symposium with fewer people, it is not ideal. So, if the initial GSS committee survey is unable to gather that many members, the committee should be open to recruiting assistance from GPC and AGES.

### *Long-term recommendations:*

1. Effort needs to be put in to increase student participation, both on the presenter side but also on the side of the attendees. While this past GRS did have 29 posters, the vast majority came from the McKelvey School of Engineering and the Medical School. More encouragement needs to be given to students from non-science backgrounds such as Arts and Law for a true all-campus symposium. Relatedly, despite multiple updates about the event, it was not well attended, though that may be attributable to zoom-fatigue.
2. The Library liaison proposed incorporating short research presentations into the symposium as well as the idea of involving 3-Minute Thesis talks as an opener to the symposium. This idea should be explored as it may be more natural for some presenters to give their talk in this manner rather than a poster.

## **GRADUATE STUDENT HEALTH COMMITTEE**

The Graduate Student Health Committee (GSHC) addresses issues relating to graduate student health, including mental health, physical health, and campus facility use, and works to improve the health and well-being of graduate students through information gathering and advocacy.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the GSHC endeavored to learn more about what Student Health Services (SHS) actually covers via insurance and to better understand the services provided by SHS to students. The Committee contacted point people at SHS to discuss clarifying insurance policies and coverage with the end goal of developing a social media blitz for a graduate student audience to be launched either late in the Spring semester or early in the Fall semester for incoming and prospective graduate students. Next steps include gathering more information from students via surveys or interviews to better understand what students know about SHS insurance coverage to tailor the social media campaign in such a way as to more fully cover gaps in student knowledge.

Through research and coordination with other student groups, the GSHC identified numerous gaps or deficits in coverage and services provided by Student Health Services including, but not limited to: not all students having actual insurance; large out-of-pocket maximums (roughly 20% of student stipends); no access to tax-advantaged health savings or flex savings accounts; little and unclear coverage for vision and dental care; unclear policies surrounding prenatal care and childbirth; a lack of mental health counselors that speak languages other than English and Spanish; a lack of coverage for comprehensive trans healthcare and unclear policy regarding what is covered; the disabling of virtual, online scheduling for SHS appointments in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic; and high fees for adding dependent coverage.

### ***Recommendations from the Graduate Student Health Committee***

1. Develop and launch a social media campaign to provide current, incoming, and prospective graduate students with comprehensive information regarding general health resources, services, and coverage provided by Student Health Services.
2. Provide all graduate students with the option to obtain actual health insurance. This will help resolve numerous issues, not least among them seeking care outside of the St. Louis area during and following the pandemic.
3. Launch an additional survey to better understand the relationship between students across Schools and Divisions with their respective healthcare providers.
4. Clarify policy where unclear regarding the above enumerated issues.
5. Hire additional mental health counselors to serve the large international student population of Washington University.
6. Provide additional coverage to fill the gaps in healthcare outlined above.
7. Re-enable virtual appointment scheduling.

## **COMMITTEE ON INTERPERSONAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION THROUGH ADVOCACY**

The Committee on Interpersonal and Sexual Violence Prevention Through Advocacy's goal is to raise awareness about the unique and specific needs of graduate students at Washington University concerning sexual assault, harassment, and relationship and intimate partner violence.

This Committee contacted the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center (RSVP) in order to work together. In the future, the Committee should continue to pursue increased communication with the RSVP Center.

### ***Recommendations from the Committee on Interpersonal and Sexual Violence Prevention through Advocacy***

1. Advertise green dot bystander intervention training among graduate students by forwarding emails and creating infographics for the GSS Instagram.
2. Advertise trauma support group among graduate students by forwarding emails and creating infographics for the GSS Instagram.
3. Advertise RSVP to graduate students by forwarding emails and creating infographics for the GSS Instagram.
4. Invite a speaker from RSVP to talk to Graduate Student Senate (potentially about domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic and changes to Title IX).
5. Create a survey to gauge graduate student needs as related to Interpersonal and Sexual Violence.
6. Create an action plan to help graduate students' needs.

## LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS COMMITTEE

The mission of the Legislative Concerns Committee (LCC) is to inform graduate students on federal, state and local policy and legislation pertinent to academia and graduate students and to provide opportunities for graduate students to participate in advocacy and democratic engagement processes. The LCC encourages democratic engagement by organizing educational and advocacy workshops, as well as providing resources for contact between graduate students and elected officials. The LCC maintains communication with campus and community partners at the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement, the Graduate Professional Council and the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Legislative Concerns Committee hosted a non-partisan advocacy training and outreach event during the 2020 Georgia Senate runoff election to educate graduate and professional students on common barriers to voter access and to encourage voter participation. Throughout the Spring 2021 semester, the LCC has worked in conjunction with partners at the Graduate Professional Council and the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement to vision and initiate a forum for graduate student civic engagement, to be implemented beginning in the Fall 2021 semester. This forum will bring together Washington University graduate and professional students and other partners to discuss civic skills and legislative concerns, and to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and tools to serve as catalysts for community engagement, civic engagement, and policy advocacy in the St. Louis region.

Future efforts of the Legislative Concerns Committee will focus on expanding opportunities for graduate students to connect their research and teaching endeavors with legislative and community-facing enterprises. The LCC sees potential for future collaboration with the Career Center and career services programs to assist graduate students in connecting their skills to projects that support community engagement in the St. Louis region. The Legislative Concerns Committee also aims to increase awareness and knowledge within the Washington University community about local, state, and federal legislation and policy pertinent to the graduate student experience in particular and higher education in general.

### *Recommendations from the Legislative Concerns Committee*

1. Provide opportunities for graduate students to connect their research, teaching, and other skills with community-oriented learning and work experiences. This includes providing funding and other infrastructure for graduate students to support them communicating their research for community-facing publication or dissemination, boosting the visibility of the Graduate Certificate Program in Higher Education (GCPHE) and leveraging the experiences of students in this program, as well as expanding opportunities for students to complete a Mentored Experience in Higher Education (MEHE) in a role addressing graduate student-specific policy and advocacy.
2. Increase collaboration of the Graduate School and Graduate Student Senate with on-campus and community partners to ensure the inclusion of graduate and professional student perspectives in the development and sustainment of community-facing initiatives. The impacts and successes of graduate and professional students in their contributions to the University's core missions of research, teaching, and patient care can add to the university's engagement with the city, region, and state through initiatives such as Washington University's 2020 advocacy in favor of Missouri's

Amendment 2 to expand Medicaid in the state, or the ongoing work of the university's In St. Louis Project and Strategic Planning Process.

3. Expand the awareness of and access to resources and information supporting international graduate and professional students. The constantly evolving landscape of laws and regulations regarding international student visas and travel restrictions clearly illustrates the necessity of a robust set of resources and sustained communications infrastructure for graduate and professional students to inform, respond to feedback, and support them in their academic and career development.

## LIBRARY ADVISORY LIAISON

The Library Advisory Liaison (1 Person) serves as a link between the graduate student community and Washington University Libraries to advocate for graduate student needs in Libraries spaces, holdings, and programming. Ideally, the Liaison meets with Washington University Libraries staff and Vice Provost and University Librarian and attends the Libraries' advisory meetings.<sup>1</sup>

During the pandemic year 2020-2021, Washington University Libraries changed their operation to remote only. With the requirement of conducting all business via email and video conference, maintaining a productive dialogue with the Libraries administration and staff has been challenging. In response to the pandemic, the library has continuously adjusted their operation systems to accommodate students and especially assist graduate students (including fully remote students) in planning and executing their research projects. The year also saw various changes to the Library's online presence, most notably in the library acquiring an updated webpage for collection navigation.

In the future, the Library Advisory Liaison aims to continue advocacy for graduate student opportunities in the Libraries. The Liaison will also work to offer better communications and feedback mechanisms between the graduate students and the Libraries.

### *Recommendations from the Library Advisory Liaison*

#### *Short-term recommendations:*

1. Ensure to integrate the Liaison in an active communicative network with the University Libraries, for example by adding the Liaison to relevant list serves.
2. Ask the Library to inform the Liaison of important changes to the Libraries (for example, closing of library sections) in order to ensure a timely information network with the graduate student body.
3. Work with Graduate Student Senators in collecting Graduate Students' needs. While the Library is expected to return to regular operations, COVID-19 might still pose a great challenge to many members of the Washington University communities.

#### *Long-term recommendations:*

1. Work on a collaboration with Washington University Libraries and the Graduate Student Senate Research Symposium Committee to integrate and exhibit graduate student works and poster submissions on the Library's website.
2. Further opportunities for graduate student input on Libraries' spaces, programming, resources and collections which impact graduate students.
3. Expanded resources targeted at graduate students as they pursue research, teaching, and professional development.

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<sup>1</sup> There have not been any official advisory meetings to attend in 2020-2021.

## **OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING COMMITTEE**

The Off-Campus Housing Committee serves as a communication link between graduate students, Quadrangle housing, and housing regions near the Washington University campus. Graduate students live in the surrounding area from two to eight years, depending on their degree and department, and require stable living accommodations. The Committee seeks to provide an open discussion on housing topics such as safety, security, maintenance, customer care, University accessibility, and other concerns to improve housing situations. In 2017, the Committee generated a centralized website with an Esri Story Map<sup>SM</sup> that graduate students can use to find housing options near Washington University, including useful information about neighborhoods in the area. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the Off-Campus Housing Committee worked on editing and refining the Story Map and began developing a survey to distribute to graduate students. The Committee chair also organized a panel discussion for incoming graduate students.

In the 2019-2020 academic year, the Off-Campus Housing Committee abandoned the Story Map, which was limited in its description of the neighborhoods in which students live and did not include strategies for finding housing in St. Louis, thus limiting its use to incoming students and especially to international students. Instead, the Committee focused on creating and beginning to distribute a document with helpful advice for students seeking housing in St. Louis for the first time, including a timeline for finding housing. The Committee also sent out an anonymous survey to current graduate students through the GSS newsletter asking what neighborhood they live in, the benefits of living in their neighborhood what kind of accommodation they live in, and how they found housing. The survey had 32 responses.

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the Off-Campus Housing Committee started compiling and posting blog posts highlighting neighborhoods in Saint Louis. The contributions were from senators in the 2020-2021 class and aimed to provide personal anecdotes and stories about the areas in which they live. They included areas immediately near campus as well as some further away.

In the upcoming year, we recommend that the Off-Campus Housing Committee focus on the dissemination of its resources. First, we recommend that the Committee continue to add blog posts to the GSS website. In addition, the online presence of the Off-Campus Housing Committee should increase through advertisement of the posts on social media (in coordination with the Executive Board). Another short-term goal of the Off-Campus Housing Committee should be to develop a “Resource Wiki” for the graduate student community. This Wiki would compile suggestions from the graduate student community for restaurants, places to go, and beauticians, among other categories. The goal of the Wiki is to provide incoming students, particularly people of color and people part of the LGBTQ+ community, a basis for establishing a community and a routine without being put into potentially uncomfortable or unsafe situations. We envision the Wiki being hosted on the GSS website for senators to contribute to and edit. In the future, we hope that the Off-Campus Housing Committee will facilitate events and field trips to help connect current students with the Saint Louis community and incoming students with the existing graduate off-campus student community.

### *Recommendations from the Off-Campus Housing Committee*

1. Connect incoming students with existing resources to find housing. A safe and secure housing situation is vital for graduate student success, but incoming students do not have access to resources or support to help them find housing. The Off-Campus Housing Committee should interface with Washington University Deans and the Executive Board to include compiled resources in emails to incoming graduate students.
2. Compile information about transportation. Much of the work of this Committee has been focused on off-campus housing, but another key component of living off-campus is transportation. A future responsibility of the committee should be to compile transportation resources for students who may be unfamiliar with transportation in the area (or lack thereof). A centralized resource would help students take advantage of transit available in St. Louis.

## **OUTSTANDING FACULTY AND STAFF AWARDS COMMITTEE**

The Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards (OFSA) Committee is responsible for organizing and hosting the annual Graduate Student Senate's Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards event. Each year the event recognizes the hard work and dedication of Washington University staff and faculty members. The award honors staff and faculty members' contributions to graduate student quality of life, training, professional, and personal development. Award recipients are chosen by the Graduate Student Senate and their selection is based on the nominee's specific qualities, actions, and abilities that demonstrate their mentorship or service to Washington University graduate students. Award recipients, nominators and fellow staff and faculty members are invited by the Committee to the award presentation ceremony. This award allows graduate students across all campuses to recognize and celebrate the staff and faculty that have had a positive impact on their graduate experiences and life. This award and the ceremony strengthen the relationships between graduate students, staff and faculty.

The University offers the OFSA Committee infrastructure through the Graduate Student Senate and The Graduate School. Our relationship with The Graduate School has provided strategic and financial support to plan and organize the OFSA ceremony in conjunction with the Graduate Student Senate. This year, The Graduate School has been a great asset to the committee and has provided assistance for planning and advertising the award ceremony.

Due to the 2019 SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic and the subsequent implemented safety procedures, the 2020 OFSA award ceremony was canceled. To officially recognize the 2020 OFSA Award recipients, the Committee invited the 2020 award winners to participate in the 2021 OFSA ceremony. The 2021 OFSA ceremony celebrated the 2020 and the 2021 winners and formally honored the recipients for their hard work and dedication to Washington University graduate students.

### ***Recommendations from the Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards Committee:***

1. The support from the Graduate School was valuable and was pivotal for planning and coordinating the virtual event. We believe it will be beneficial to request the same level of support for future OFSA events.
2. To expand the marketing and advertising strategies for future OFSA events, in order to increase the awareness of the award and to promote the continued growth of the event and the diversity of nominations across Ph.D. programs and departments.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The Professional Development Committee exists to provide graduate students with resources to help them identify and prepare for academic and non-academic careers. In view of the current job market, the Professional Development Committee attends particularly to supporting graduate students as they imagine, retrain, and de-stigmatize non-academic careers.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Committee worked with Michelle DeLair of the Career Center to develop a seminar specific to job market preparation during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on mental health.

### ***Recommendations from the Professional Development Committee***

#### *Short-term recommendations:*

1. Collaborate with Michelle DeLair more regularly on promotion of Career Center opportunities. Dr. DeLair notes that participation increases markedly when a grad student organization is involved in an event, versus when the Career Center develops and promotes an event alone.
2. Continue to consider the role of mental health in job searches.

#### *Long-term recommendations:*

1. Coordinate with other professional development organizations on campus to avoid unnecessary replication of efforts and build coalition between different interest groups.
2. Investigate felt needs around professional development in the graduate community to make sure we are addressing needs and interests adequately.

## **CENTER FOR TEACHING & LEARNING GSAC LIAISON**

The Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) Liaison serves on the CTL Graduate Student Advisory Council (GSAC) to facilitate communication about the needs of graduate students in teaching-related professional development opportunities, to advise the Teaching Center on the needs of graduate students in their workshops and programming, and to offer graduate student-led pedagogy-focused events. The Teaching Center Graduate Student Advisory Council meets monthly to discuss the Teaching Center programming and to plan a monthly learning opportunity. These events are designed to avoid the standard seminar format to promote more engagement between attendees and experts.

During the 2020/21 year, the GSAC held exclusively online workshops and focused on issues including online and distance learning; diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom; and teaching-centric academic career options, among many others. The GSAC interfaced frequently with the CTL staff on the professional development seminars for graduate students and postdocs.

In the future, GSAC Liaisons would benefit from a way to inform a large student body beyond GSS meetings about GSAC and CTL workshop offerings. This would help improve awareness among the graduate student body of teaching-related professional development opportunities. Making GSAC events more easily found through official event calendars or distributed event notifications would likely also help increase the availability of these opportunities to the graduate student population at large.

### ***Recommendations from the CTL Liason***

1. Expanded communication of GSAC & CTL events to graduate student population at large.
2. Greater departmental level encouragement of graduate students to engage in education-focused professional development.
3. Continued financial support from the Graduate School, Liberman Center and other organizations for in-person events in the upcoming year.