



The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Graduate Student Association 2018-2019 Annual Report

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Prepared by:

Kyle Cavagnini, GSA President 2018-2019

In Memory
Maria del Carmen Vitery

In January of 2019, we lost an exceptionally vibrant and dedicated member of our student body: Maria del Carmen Vitery. Maria, originally from Peru, was a third-year graduate student in the Cellular and Molecular Physiology program. Maria was a kind and caring person who shared a profound warmth and empathy with all who knew or met her. Maria had an inspiring passion for research, and her graduate work resulted in two publications, in both *Science* and *Neuron*, months after she passed. In addition to her studies, Maria was also committed to serving her community and played an active role in organizations dedicated to student wellbeing. More recently, this was demonstrated by her tireless work as Public Relations Chair of the 2018-2019 Biomedical Scholars Association executive board. Maria also served on the 2017-2018 Graduate Student Association executive board as the Vice President of Policy and Programming. As the first person to hold this newly created position, Maria molded it into an indispensable part of the GSA's mission to represent student interests and welfare across the university. In May, Maria was awarded her PhD in Cellular and Molecular Physiology, the first doctoral degree to be granted posthumously in the history of Johns Hopkins.

I. Statement from the GSA President

The 2018-2019 Graduate Student Association (GSA) term was markedly productive. Our academic year began with a clear mandate from the 2018 GSA Survey and the GSA general council to direct our efforts towards strengthening institutional and GSA student support structures, expanding access to University resources, advocating for equity within the School of Medicine, and increasing institutional and GSA transparency.

The effort put in by our students made possible this year's GSA achievements. Working collaboratively with student group leaders, GSA graduate program representatives, University offices, and administration, many of our goals have been met. The full report on our action items can be found in *Section II*. To briefly summarize selected highlights:

- Formal mentor training guidelines and a mentoring evaluation system have been drafted (with student input) and is set to phase in over the next academic year.
- The GSA worked with the Office of Institutional Equity to make the online reporting process for harassment and discrimination more accessible.
- Graduate students now have access to childcare vouchers, a multi-year advocacy item.
- Formation of a GSA Diversity & Inclusion Committee to coordinate advocacy efforts across student groups.
- Launch of the GSA Peer Collective, a new group to support student success, wellbeing, and mental health.

The year included more than new policies. We hosted many social events, from apple picking to duckpin bowling. GSA Week, complete with our annual awards (*Section VII*), was once again a hit with increased attendance at all events. We also expanded our GSA volunteer day programming.

This report is an overview of what the GSA accomplished just in the past year. If any topics spark an interest, the final message I want to communicate to graduate students is to please get involved with the GSA. The work of this organization is possible due to the students who are willing to volunteer their time to improve their peers' wellbeing. The demands of graduate school are not small, and both myself and the rest of the executive board are immensely grateful that many of you commit to being a part of the GSA.

Thank you to the graduate student body for the opportunity to serve as the 2018-2019 GSA President. I have spent three years working with this GSA, and observed first-hand the central role this organization plays in building a better learning environment for current and future students. It has been a highlight of my graduate career, and I look forward to observing the future accomplishments of the Graduate Student Association.

Kyle Cavagnini, Department of Biological Chemistry

II. Review of 2018-2019 Action Items

Every year, the GSA employs feedback from student leaders, GSA program representatives, and the student survey to draft a set of action items for the upcoming term. The items are presented at the August GSA meeting for discussion, followed by a vote of approval by GSA program representatives. In the 2018-2019 year these items were grouped into four categories: student welfare and equity, campus and student resources, GSA improvements, and community engagement. The GSA is pleased to report it has wholly or partially addressed the majority of these goals. Below is a summary of the action items and the progress made towards their completion. Items pertinent to additional sections of this report are noted.

A. Student Welfare and Equity

1. Ensure student representation and input on mentor training and drafting evidence-based criteria by which to evaluate mentoring.

- In the 2017-2018 academic year the MA/PhD Committee, which governs the School of Medicine graduate programs, voted unanimously to design and implement a mandatory mentor training program for all faculty who mentor graduate students. This vote dove-tailed with new NIH policies for T32 training grants, which now requires that graduate programs receiving NIH training funds have 1) mentor training, 2) assessments of mentoring quality and outcomes, and 3) formalized mechanisms for conflict mediation between mentors and mentees. A working group was formed in fall of 2018 to draft these measures.
- The GSA provided input to this group by two mechanisms: First, the GSA president sat on the committee, and was able to convey comments from the GSA executive board and council (which were solicited in GSA general meetings). Second, the GSA hosted several focus groups to review materials drafted by the committee for mentor training and assessment. School of Medicine administration plans to phase in the trainings and assessment over the next academic year. The GSA will continue to have an active voice in the launch process.

2. Ensure student representation and input on mentee training.

- In the 2017-2018 academic year the MA/PhD Committee discussed a mentee training program to parallel the mentor training. The plan is currently on hold while the mentor training is rolled out. The GSA hopes that a working group is convened in the next 1-2 years. We will advocate for topics such as learner mistreatment, gender harassment, supportive work environments, and self-advocacy.

3. Work with the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) to improve harassment reporting procedures, and provide feedback on policies relevant to graduate students.

- The GSA provided feedback on the new OIE website design to clarify and ease the reporting process.

- This past winter new changes to Title IX were proposed. A GSA working group met with members of OIE to discuss concerns on how those changes could affect our campus. The working group then drafted a statement on the Title IX policies, which were submitted to OIE and to the US Department of Education via the open comment portal. The statement can be found in [Appendix C](#).
- In 2018 Hopkins launched the It's On Us campaign to survey the sexual climate of the campus. The GSA made repeated requests for a report on this information during the fall and winter of 2018-2019. A university report was released in March 2019.
- Following an extensive discussion at the February 2019 GSA general body meeting, we provided comments on the proposed Personal Relationship Policy that has since gone into effect as of July 2019. The comments can be found in [Appendix D](#).
- The GSA is actively working with OIE and the Office of Graduate Biomedical Education to bring a satellite OIE office to the East Baltimore campus. We hope this project is completed in the upcoming academic year.

4. Submit a formal proposal for a graduate ombudsperson program to administration.

- During the summer and fall of 2018 GSA leadership drafted a proposal for a graduate ombudsperson program, drawing on existing Hopkins infrastructure and best practices at other institutions. This document went through several cycles of revision with administration throughout the academic year.
- In spring of 2019 the GSA was notified that at the direction of Dean Rothman and President Daniels a larger University-wide effort was underway to establish an Ombudsperson Office that would have purview over all Hopkins educational programs. The GSA will continue to actively follow up with University officials and pass along pertinent information to the graduate student body. We hope this office will be established in the upcoming academic year.

B. Campus and Student Resources

1. Obtain a satellite GSA student lounge on the west side of the medical campus.

- A space for a new graduate student lounge in CRB-I was identified in spring 2019. Lounge design was conducted in collaboration with the GSA executive board. The GSA anticipates the new lounge will be ready by the end of the 2019.

2. Improve health care resources for students.

- Improve LGBTQ+ healthcare resources: The GSA representatives to the University Health Services governing committee, together with representatives from the Postdoctoral Association, made requests to

implement LGBTQ+ healthcare trainings for UHS providers. The 2019 GSA survey included demographic questions on sexual and gender identity. These data will be used to further advocate for our LGBTQ+ community in the coming year.

- Improve the OB/GYN services at UHS: Requests were made to expand OB/GYN services at UHS, including access to an in-house OB/GYN physician. Little progress was made, and the GSA will continue to advocate for this student need.

3. Improve mental healthcare resources for students.

- This year UHS saw a dramatic increase in student requests for counseling and psychiatric care. As of summer 2019 a new therapist and part-time psychiatrist have been hired, and a search is underway for additional professionals to meet this important need.
- The GSA worked with JHSAP and the Wellness Office on several events throughout the year, including Be Well Wednesdays.
- A happy hour for first year students was held in January 2019 to distribute resources on mental healthcare, career resources, UHS benefits, and GSA activities.

4. Advocate for graduate student access to childcare vouchers.

- Childcare costs can be incredibly burdensome on graduate students with children. To help lessen that load, the GSA has advocated for graduate student access to childcare vouchers over the past three years. In November 2018 the University announced that graduate students will receive access to childcare vouchers and counseling on best childcare options for individual situations.

5. Hold semesterly Dean's Lunches.

- The GSA Dean's Lunches are an opportunity for students to share a meal with members of Hopkins administration. This is a chance to get to know Hopkins leadership and raise any pertinent questions or issues. It is also an opportunity for our administrators to solicit student input. The fall 2018 lunch was held with Dr. Roy Ziegelstein, Vice Dean for Education. The spring 2019 lunch was held with Dr. Paul Rothman, Dean of Medicine.

III. GSA Improvements

1. Convene a GSA diversity committee to integrate inclusion efforts across student groups and advocate for common causes.

- The GSA diversity committee was convened in fall 2018 by our Vice President of Diversity & Inclusion. Composed of representatives from student organizations dedicated to campus equity, this group researched initiatives to improve campus climate and student support systems. Proposed actions included a) calling for departments to have equal representation across seminar speaker demographics, b) advocating to remove the GRE from program admissions criteria, and c) expanding

administrative support for graduate student diversity and inclusion efforts such as hiring personnel specifically tasked with those duties in the Office of Graduate Biomedical Education. See *Section IV* for additional information. The GSA hopes to continue pursuit of these goals in the coming term.

2. Begin a new student support group: The Peer Collective.

- The GSA sought to revitalize our existing peer mentoring committee. The group formally launched in May 2019 under the guidance of Ruchama Steinberg. The GSA is excited to see how this new resource can support student success, wellbeing, and mental health. See *Section IV* for additional information.

3. Institute a more efficient and transparent system to track student group finances and reimbursements.

- The GSA is happy to report that this year's finances were transparent and efficient. Previously voiced student concerns on time to reimbursements were reduced. The Vice President of Finance took care to ensure that all steps in the reimbursement process were relayed to students awaiting funds.

4. Make the GSA website more easily navigable and accessible.

- This year the GSA took several steps to re-organize our website to make it more easily navigable. This includes expanded lists of student resources, information about the GSA travel awards, and consolidated GSA policies.

5. Begin an annual report on GSA accomplishments and survey data.

- In an effort to be more transparent with our advocacy efforts and better inform students of our work, in June 2019 the GSA passed a new amendment to our constitution mandating annual reports on GSA accomplishments and the annual survey be drafted and distributed to the student body and members of administration.

6. Make structural improvements to the GSA Lounge.

- New computers were obtained and installed in summer 2019.
- Chromecast has been installed for computer projection to the TV.
- The GSA closet has been cleaned out to better meet the storage needs of our student groups.

IV. Community Engagement

1. Sponsor regular GSA community service events.

- First GSA Volunteer Day occurred on 12/1/18 with Baltimore Food Not Bombs.
- Second GSA Volunteer Day on 3/2/19 with Chesapeake Habitat for Humanity.

- Third GSA Volunteer Day on 6/22/19 with Chesapeake Habitat for Humanity.

2. Provide resources for students to connect with local volunteer and community organizations

- Starting in 2018 new student orientation packets now include a list of local volunteer opportunities.
- Community organizations were invited to the annual student activities fair.
- A new community engagement section on the GSA website is under construction.

III. Statements from GSA Vice Presidents

The work of the GSA would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of its executive board members. Below are statements regarding the work they have completed this past term:

Kaitlin Wood, President-Elect

I used my position as President-Elect to carry out projects in 3 main categories: administration and programming, structural updates to the GSA lounge, and coordinating events. In the first category, I was in charge of administering the annual GSA student survey. This year we worked to introduce more comprehensive demographic questions for students to self-reported ethnic/racial identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability status. These questions provide a new degree of insight into the diversity of identities represented by the student body. The findings of the 2019 GSA Student Survey are summarized in *Section V*. A full report can be found on the GSA website.

Another exciting project I worked on was to assist in bringing an OIE Satellite Office to the East Baltimore Campus. This proposal gained momentum throughout the spring, including a strong push following the April Dean's Lunch with Dean Rothman. The new satellite office will open in Reed Hall in Autumn 2019.

The structural updates to the GSA lounge notably include improvements to resources available to student groups. The GSA closet has been newly organized to allow for more group storage space. We also obtained an industrial coffee maker, which saves money for both the GSA and student groups who no longer have to buy from a vendor. Additionally, the lounge computers were upgraded with new iMacs.

Throughout the year I coordinated three GSA Volunteer Events. In December a small group volunteered with Foods Not Bombs to prepare and subsequently serve meals within our community. In February and again in June, I coordinated volunteer events with the Chesapeake Habitat for Humanity to assist at construction sites in the Sandtown neighborhood. These volunteer events provided an opportunity for graduate students to connect with other students outside of their training program as well as members of the wider Baltimore community.

Marah Wahbeh, Vice President of Diversity & Inclusion

This year I established and served as the chair for the GSA PhD Diversity Committee, which includes a representatives from each of the following student and trainee organizations: GSA, Gertude Stein Society, Women of Whiting, Biomedical Scholars Association, and the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science. The role of the PhD Diversity Committee is to integrate related efforts across student groups to ensure that the School of Medicine provides equity and opportunity to all students and trainees, and to advocate for diversity and inclusion. More information about our activities can be found in my committee report in *Section IV*.

My time in the GSA has been great. I appreciate the opportunity I was given to contribute to such an active group of passionate individuals. I learned so much, got a chance see firsthand how much student effort and commitment goes in to assuring

representation and support for the graduate student body, and thoroughly enjoyed working with the student groups on the diversity committee as a step to creating a more inclusive culture among the PhD programs.

J.P. Llongueras, Vice President of Events

This year saw a wide variety of events sponsored by the GSA. In addition to regular coffee hours and movie nights, we had a fun seasonal activities that included apple picking, the annual Halloween costume contest, subsidized tickets to the Rocky Horror Picture Show at Creative Alliance, and duckpin bowling. To show the GSA's support of our first years I coordinated the annual post-Genetics exam donuts and a first year happy hour that included handouts from University offices including JHSAP, UHS, and the PDCO.

Vincent Guo, Vice President of Finance

My main task throughout the year was to streamline our student reimbursement process and increase financial transparency. I'm happy to report that our average time to reimbursement for student group purchases decreased over the course of the year. I also oversaw GSA travel award review and distribution.

Peter Chianchiano, Vice President of General Affairs

My duties included distributing agendas for GSA meetings, taking minutes, and ensuring all relevant GSA materials were posted to our website in a timely manner. As part of this, I made GSA meeting minutes "live", with anyone able to access them in real time during a meeting. I also pushed to have the GSA meetings go paperless, a motion that was passed by the general council in spring 2019. Perhaps my most significant undertaking this year was revamping the GSA website. I worked to make the website more easily navigable by organizing the GSA policies and documents, making the GSA travel awards more accessible, and categorizing our resource lists. The last item included adding sections that specifically provide tips and links to University resources on mental and physical health, including guidelines for accessing University crisis support. Finally, I aided the VP of Public Relations to help plan the new satellite GSA lounge in CRB-I.

Miriam Akeju, Vice President of Policy & Programming

In this position I was tasked with coordinated the GSA program representatives and GSA members of University committees. This included organizing regular meetings, collecting reports, and disseminating that information to the GSA. I also served as a representative to the MA-PhD Committee.

Carli Jones, Vice President of Public Relations

This year I worked to advertise events on campus, both GSA and non-GSA sponsored. I coordinated with the VP of Events to advertise events he planned. I also collected information about activities all around campus held by different organizations and compiled them all into the weekly GSA Digest emails. Thanks to work by our VP of General Affairs, the events in the digest are synced to the GSA calendar displayed directly on the GSA website homepage.

One of my larger projects was helping to plan a new satellite GSA lounge in the CRB-I building. I am very happy that this idea is coming to fruition! Blueprints were presented to the GSA general council at the June 2018 meeting, and I am excited to see construction of the new space begin.

I had a great time serving as a member of the GSA executive board this year, and I am excited to see even more improvements made by future executive boards to make Hopkins a better place for graduate students.

IV. Statements from GSA Committee Representatives

The GSA coordinates student membership on a variety of University committees. These positions allow us to advocate for students by providing trainee perspectives on University policy issues. The GSA also has several internal committees to support our overarching mission of providing resources for student success. Below are statements summarizing committee business this past term:

Marah Wehbeh, GSA Diversity Committee Chair

I was tasked with creating the GSA Diversity Committee in fall 2018, with the goal of integrating across student groups to build a more equitable and inclusive environment for our students. The committee created a comprehensive proposal that made requests for more diverse seminar speakers within graduate programs (including standardized data collection), transparency regarding publication rates for underrepresented/minority students, and creating a free-standing trainee diversity office for the SOM. While this project did not reach completion during my tenure, I hope the GSA can build on that foundation in the next term.

Ruchama Steinberg, GSA Peer Collective Chair

In fall 2018 I was tasked with re-vamping the GSA's peer mentoring program. The result is the GSA Peer Collective, which launched in May 2019. The GSA Peer Collective acts as a bridge connecting students with their peers, across year and program, to foster a community of individuals uniquely equipped to provide support, encouragement, understanding, and inspiration through shared experiences. The goal of the GSA Peer Collective is to help support the general health and well-being of each student, physically, mentally, emotionally, and academically in order to foster their personal and academic success. We offer a family-style support system and bi-monthly events to provide students an outlet to voice frustrations, accompanied by workshops to build resiliency. Finally, we put out a regular newsletter that will feature personal stories, comments on student life, advice for lab and personal difficulties, and events on campus.

Ashley Stewart, Faculty Senate

The Faculty Senate is a forum in which faculty and trainee representatives provide formalized input on School of Medicine governance. Topics discussed this year include the University Personal Relationships Policy, faculty salary equity, and tenure guidelines. Towards the end of the year the faculty senate debated new mentor-mentee conflict resolution procedures that would be enforced across all graduate programs. The debate is ongoing, and the GSA hopes the Faculty Senate will pass this important policy in the coming months.

Kaitlin Wood & Miriam Akeju, MA-PhD Committee

The MA-PhD Committee is composed of the Registrar, Vice Dean of Education, the Associate and Assistant Deans of Graduate Education, the directors of the graduate programs, and two student members. This Committee governs the graduate programs in the School of Medicine. Discussions this year included language surrounding

voluntary leave-of-absence to ensure that students position within their research lab is guaranteed upon their return. A new program within the Functional Anatomy and Evolution department was approved to debut in Fall 2019. This will be an MA program focused on preparing students to teach anatomy at the university level. In addition, the Committee began discussions about whether to remove the GRE from graduate program application materials. Several programs waived the requirement this year, and the question will be revisited in the fall using reflections from the past application cycle.

Katie Marshall, PDCO Student Liaison

In this position I worked to help the PDCO identify new programming for student career services. My primary focus this year was increasing awareness and knowledge about Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures, which gives opportunities for graduate students to become involved with the entrepreneurial ecosystem. I also worked with the Johns Hopkins Postdoctoral Association to put on workshop about postdoctoral opportunities in Europe.

Kaitlin Wood, Provost's Graduate Student Advisory Committee

This body is overseen by the Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education, and is comprised of students representing the seven schools within JHU that grant doctoral degrees. This committee is a mechanism for student feedback on university level policies, as well as forum to discuss what contributes to a successful PhD education. Topics discussed include the personal relationships policy (see [Appendix C](#) for the GSA comments on the proposal), off-campus events to connect doctoral students across schools, and Mentor-Mentee Guidelines to be followed by all schools with JHU.

Mary Soliman, Selena Guerrero-Martin, & Maria del Carmen Vitery
University Health Services Committee

In this position we advised the UHS governing committee on student needs and concerns regarding health services. A primary concern this past year was the long wait times for services at University Mental Health Services due to a three-fold increase in appointment requests. This spring UMHS hired a new therapist, and is in the process of hiring additional therapists and a psychiatrist to meet this need. The committee was also alerted to student concerns about LGBTQ+ health care. The GSA has asked that safe-zone training to be implemented for UHS providers. This year's student survey queried student sexual and gender identity. ~20% of graduate students reported an LGBTQ+ identity, further underscoring the importance of training and services. Additionally, UHS is hiring a new Wellness Coordinator to help expand Wellness Office programming across the East Baltimore campus.

Chirag Vasavda, Welch Library Committee.

In this position I relayed issues and comments brought to the GSA's attention regarding Welch Library services. This included problems students were having regarding access to journals and articles from the new Welch website; these issues were resolved quickly by the library. We also worked to identify new graduate student study areas in Welch, an ongoing search.

V. GSA Survey 2019 Overview

The GSA conducts an annual survey of all graduate students (MA and PhD) across SOM Departments. The first GSA survey debuted in 2013. Since then the GSA survey has served as a valuable tool to assess student needs, identify trends, and collect data to inform policy decisions within SOM graduate programs. In accordance with the GSA Survey Policy, design, distribution, and analysis of the GSA Survey is the responsibility of the current MA-PhD Committee student representatives. The Office of Assessment and Evaluation assists in survey design and implementation. The active GSA Executive Board and GSA Council provide feedback on survey topics and a final draft of the survey is approved by the GSA President.

Below is an overview of select findings and the survey structure. The results of the 2019 Survey will direct the GSA Action Items for the upcoming academic year. Please visit the GSA website to find the full survey report and 2019 GSA Action Items.

Key Findings

For a full review of the collected data, please see the 2019 GSA Survey Report. Notable results from the 2019 survey included:

- 22.5% of graduate students identify as LGBTQ+.
- 15% of graduate students describe having a mental health disorder.
- Management style is a top contributor to stress in mentee-mentor relationships.
- Learner mistreatment contributes to a student's decision to switch faculty mentors for 1 in 25 of all SOM graduate students.
- The majority of learner mistreatment goes unreported.
- Only 70% of graduate students would be able to afford a \$500 emergency expense with their current available funds.
- 15% of graduate students are actively paying student loans.

Survey Question Topics

The questions on the GSA Survey encompass a range of topics relating to the graduate school experience of students at the SOM. Described here is an overview of the broad survey topics our questions addressed. To see the full collection of questions, including the display logic, please email kaitlin.wood@jhmi.edu.

Demographics

In this section of the survey we asked students to describe their identities. We emphasized collection of demographic data so that we could identify if any discrepancies existed in the graduate school experience between different identity groups.

Student Support

In this section we assessed how well included and supported students felt within their lab environment, their training program, and the university.

Learner Mistreatment

In this section we assessed;

- The rate of mistreatment experienced and/or observed by graduate students
- Source(s) of mistreatment
- Frequency of mistreatment
- Whether mistreatment is reported
- Satisfaction with the result of reporting mistreatment

Mentorship

In this section we assessed;

- Sources of stress between students and their faculty mentor
- The number of students who had changed faculty mentors
- Reasons why students changed faculty mentors

Housing, Transport, & Safety

In this section we assessed;

- Where students live
- How students commute to campus
- Student opinions on campus security
- Use of campus security resources

Finances & Benefits

In this section we assessed student financial wellbeing including;

- Student savings
- Student debt
- Caregiver status

Professional Development

In this section we assessed;

- Top career choice(s)
- University resources used for career exploration
- Student publication rates
- Rate of student conference attendance and presentations

VI. University and GSA Policy Updates

Several policy updates and changes have been made both within the GSA and at the University level with GSA input. Below is an update on policies of interest to the graduate student body. Several items refer to more in-depth explanations or statements in the Appendixes:

University Policies:

Graduate Ombudsperson Proposal

For the past 2 years the GSA has worked on a draft proposal for a formal graduate ombudsperson. This was done in consultation with the Associate and Assistant Deans of Graduate Education. The goal of the graduate student ombudsperson is to provide a support system that will provide informal advice to students, ensure mentoring needs are met, and address issues of discrimination, harassment, and learner mistreatment. At this time the GSA proposal has been shelved while the University pursues a school-wide ombudsperson program. We will continue to provide input as this process unfolds.

Harassment and Discrimination Policy

The Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) is responsible for ensuring the University remains free of discrimination and harassment. OIE drafted and implemented new policies for reporting and investigating harassment and discrimination during the 2018-2019 academic year. The GSA discussed the proposal at a general body meeting and provided feedback to the Vice Provost for Institutional Equity. The GSA statement can be found in [Appendix B](#). The new policy can be found at the Office of Institutional Equity website.

Leave of Absence Policy

Upon return from a voluntary leave of absence students are now ensured a position within their original research lab. If a student intends to switch labs upon returning, program directors will be made aware before the student takes leave in order to ensure a smooth transition back. Additionally, the Registrar will take over managing reminders sent to students on leave. At the one-year mark from taking leave, students will need to contact the school to either extend their leave for another year or to officially withdraw from their studies. The new policy can be found on the School of Medicine Policy Finder.

Mentoring Guidelines

In spring 2018 the MA/PhD Committee unanimously adopted a motion to draft guidelines on conflict resolution, mentor training, and mentoring assessment that would be adopted by all graduate programs. A working group has produced policies on all three fronts. The GSA hopes these three initiatives will augment the learning environment and support the mentoring relationships that all students share with their PI.

The mentor-mentee conflict resolution protocols provide a pathway for mediation between students and their mentors, with an eye towards responsible oversight of mentoring practices. These measures are currently waiting on final approval from the Faculty Senate and the Advisory Board of Medical Faculty. The group also drafted a mentor training program that will be mandatory for all faculty who instruct students. The training includes both online and in-person discussion, and will address topics which include fostering student independence, constructive student feedback, cultural competency and harassment, and career support. This training will debut during fall 2019. To ensure that the above measures will have meaningful impacts on the student experience, as well as identifying trends and areas of concern, the group drafted a mentoring competency assessment that we hope will be taken by all students annually. Part of these guidelines is ensuring confidentiality of these responses, including limiting who has access to the raw data. The mentoring assessment will be rolled out in the 2018-2019 academic year.

Personal Relationships Policy

The new Personal Relationships Policy provides guidelines to ensure the integrity of the learning environment, protect students against harassment or situations where institutional hierarchies impact consent, and conflicts of interest. Following a discussion by the GSA general body, we drafted a statement to the Provost's Office regarding the proposed regulations. The statement can be found in [Appendix C](#). The new policy can be found on the University Policies and Statements webpage.

Title IX Changes

Changes to Title IX were proposed in winter 2018-2019 by the US Department of Education. The GSA unequivocally states that the ability of victims of sexual harassment to receive justice must not be limited, and that any regulations that hinder the investigative process have no place in our University. These regulations are not yet in place, and the GSA remains in dialogue with the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure our students remain protected from harassment. The GSA submitted a statement to the Department of Education during their open comment period in January 2019, found in [Appendix D](#).

GSA Policies:

Constitution Update

The Constitution was amended to add an XDBio program representative to the GSA council, update the duties and requirements of program representatives, and mandate an annual GSA report.

Budget Policy Update

The policy for drafting an annual budget and allocating GSA funds to student groups was streamlined.

Attendance Policy Update

Program representative attendance requirements were updated to ensure consistent representation for all graduate programs in the GSA.

VII. GSA Award Recipients

Every May the GSA recognizes student leaders who have contributed the wellbeing of the student body by issuing awards for: program representative of the year, student group leader of the year, and GSA citizen of the year. The first two awards are selected from nominations provided by the student body. The last award is decided upon by the GSA executive board. Additionally, the GSA holds an annual poster competition with awards given in two categories: 1st/ 2nd year students, and 3rd+ year students.

The GSA awards an annual Faculty Teaching Award to a professor in the School of Medicine who is an exemplary mentor and educator. This faculty member is recognized at Convocation.

Maria del Carmen Vitery was a Cellular and Molecular Physiology student who passed in January 2019. She was an active volunteer in the community, a dedicated member of our student body, and a member of the 2017-2018 GSA executive board. The citizen of the year award has been renamed in honor of her memory and service.

Junghea Park was a Cellular and Molecular Medicine student during the 2008-2009 academic year who passed away unexpectedly in December 2008. She had a strong passion for science and aspired to positively affect humanity by making a difference through her research. It is in this spirit that CMM sponsors the 1st/2nd year poster awards.

Maria del Carmen Vitery Citizen of the Year

Ruchama "Roo" Steinberg

GSA Program Representative of the Year

Makeda Stephenson

Student Group Leader of the Year

Molly Gordon

Faculty Teaching Award

Dr. Caren Freel-Meyers, Associate Professor of Pharmacology and Molecular Sciences & Director of the Pharmacology Graduate Program

GSA Poster Awards

1st + 2nd Year Junghea Park Memorial Awards

- First place: William Mills (PI: Mollie Meffert)
- Second place: Jordan Mark Barrows (PI: Erin Goley)

3rd+ Year Awards

- First place: Elizabeth Park (PI: Andrew Holland)
- Second place: Allison Daitch (PI: Erin Goley)

VIII. Closing and New GSA Board

From the Peer Collective, to mentor training, to expanded mental health resources, the 2018-2019 academic year was a markedly productive one for the GSA. Our executive board is grateful for the chance to serve the student body. We hope that our work has contributed in some way to the success and wellbeing of all students.

The GSA would also like to extend a heart-felt thank you to the graduate student deans: Drs. Roy Ziegelstein, Peter Espenshade, and Damani Piggot. These three have been instrumental in ensuring the GSA has a seat at the table, working with us to revise and refine policy proposals, and advocating for the wellbeing of our student body.

We are further excited to welcome the 2019-2020 executive board. The new team is:

President: Kaitlin Wood

Vice President of Diversity & Inclusion: Shantel Angstadt

Vice President of Events: Katie Conlon

Vice President of Finance: Ale Trujillo

Vice President of General Affairs: J.P. Llongueras

Vice President of Policy & Programming: Makeda Stephenson

Vice President of Public Relations: Madison James

The new executive board is planning fantastic new initiatives that aim to improve student access to existing resources, develop new resources for un-met student needs, and strengthen interpersonal support for students. It is their hope that these efforts will not only promote the welfare of the graduate students, but also strengthen our broader Hopkins community.

Appendix A: 2018-2019 GSA Graduate Program Representatives

<i>Art as Applied to Medicine</i>	Alisa Brandt
<i>Biochemistry, Cellular, and Molecular Biology</i>	Jonathan Augustin
<i>Biological Chemistry</i>	Chris Mahone
<i>Biomedical Engineering</i>	Makeda Stephenson
<i>Cellular and Molecular Medicine</i>	Selena Guerrero-Martin
<i>Cellular and Molecular Physiology</i>	James Osei-Owusu
<i>Functional Anatomy and Evolution</i>	Aneila Hogan
<i>History of Medicine</i>	James Flowers
<i>Human Genetics & Molecular Biology</i>	Elizabeth Partan & Heather Wick
<i>Immunology</i>	Brandom Lam & Alana MacDonald
<i>Neuroscience</i>	Jarred Hinkle
<i>Pathobiology</i>	Pan-am Chaisawangwong & Lionel Chia
<i>Pharmacology and Molecular Sciences</i>	August Li
<i>Program in Molecular Biophysics</i>	Lauren Que

Appendix B: GSA Comments Regarding the Draft of “Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures”

March 2019

A week prior to the March 10th GSA General Body Meeting the policy draft was sent out to all graduate student at the School of Medicine with a request for student feedback and questions. Subsequently, at the March 10th GSA General Body Meeting the executive board presented an overview of the draft policy and solicited student feedback.

Aside from critique of the definition of “hostile environment” we did not receive feedback critiquing the language within the draft policy. Overall the student feedback we received suggests satisfaction with the intent and scope of the policy. However, we did receive some questions and concerns from students regarding application and enforcement of the policy. Please find below a synopsis of student comments regarding the draft of the policy.

In *Section III: Policy Definitions* the following definition is presented (emphasis added):

Hostile Environment: A “hostile environment” results from unwelcome and **discriminatory conduct** that is so severe, pervasive, or persistent that it unreasonably interferes with, limits, or deprives a member of the community of the ability to participate in or to receive benefits, services or opportunities from the University’s education or employment programs and/or activities. A hostile environment can be the result of acts committed by any individual or individuals, including any member of the University community.

A concern raised by students was the inclusion of **discriminatory conduct** in the definition of a hostile environment. By restricting the definition of a hostile environment in this way we foresee two potential issues stemming from the fact that conduct can generate a hostile environment without evident discrimination based on an individual’s protected status. First, hostile environments that stem from personal conflicts or non-discriminatory behavior still impact individuals of the University community and ought to be addressed. Second, there are members of the University community who belong to multiple protected classes, for these individuals parsing out why they were being discriminated against can present an added burden in reporting misbehavior. Due to these issues, students raised concern over the inclusion of **discriminatory conduct** in the definition of a hostile environment.

The scope of the primary concerns voiced by students focused on the application and enforcement of the policy. For example, in *Section VII: Procedures for Investigation and Resolution of Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Cases* section A states “Violations of no contact orders and failures to comply with other interim measures may result in disciplinary consequences pursuant to applicable policies and procedures.” As

students within the School of Medicine we can appreciate the difficulty in defining policy that applies to all affiliates across the schools of Johns Hopkins University; however, language such as this doesn't clearly delineate at which level of the institution (i.e. program, school, university) has authority to execute disciplinary consequences.

Overall the student feedback highlighted overall satisfaction with language of the policy and procedures concurrent with questions regarding how applied practices will enforce the policy.

Appendix C: GSA Comments on Policy GEN001 ("Personal Relationships")

March 2019

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) at the School of Medicine is composed of representatives from our 14 graduate programs, student members of University committees, and student group leaders. During our February general body meeting I presented the relationship policy options and led the subsequent discussion. While the line between student and faculty seems clear (though not completely, as mentioned below), there are grey areas of interaction that need further clarification. It is at times difficult to predict when a relationship between equals becomes hierarchical due to new collaborations or promotions. This is further compounded by the various flavors of trainees, research staff, clinical staff, and teaching staff positions within our research environment, as well as the sheer size of the University. The primary takeaway from our discussion is that graduate students feel there is heightened ambiguity within our personal relationships for the reasons outlined below. While there was no strict consensus, options 3 and 4 emerged as the clear preferences.

The policies proposed in GEN001 are geared towards the entire University. The training environment in biomedical research is unique, with fluidity in the hierarchy between non-faculty trainees and employees in a manner that is not necessarily applicable to other academic settings. *For this reason, the GSA requests that an appendix be added to the Personal Relationship policy that does a deeper dive into the particulars of our workspace, or that a supplemental policy be drafted that is specific to the School of Medicine.*

1. The driving philosophy of this policy must be to protect students and minimize the worst-case personal and professional harm that may be arise in these relationships. A relationship with a power imbalance (such as that between a faculty member and a graduate student) has the potential to turn coercive-implicitly or explicitly.
2. There is consensus that a strict ban should be enacted for relationships between students and research faculty who have direct supervision over that student's training. These include a research advisor, thesis committee, or faculty member of the student's department or graduate training program.
3. Arguably the most repeated comment in the discussion is the need for clarification on how this policy applies to student-postdoctoral fellow relationships. Relationships between these trainee populations are not uncommon. Both options 3 and 4 contain wording that could suggest these relationships are prohibited.
4. Clarification is needed for the line between students and staff, and between students and a clinical faculty member that is not covered by #1.
 - a. Clarification of the former: A large question is who counts as staff. Do postdoctoral fellows fall under this category? Do we draw a line between lab-mates, or department colleagues? What about research technicians?

- b. An example of the latter: one of our students started dating a resident several years ago. That resident has since gone on to become one of the chief residents within a hospital. That student believes this is technically a type of faculty position. How would this policy affect their relationship, or similar types of relationships in the future? Biomedical graduate degrees routinely take 5-6 years, ample time for a resident (or other medical staff) to be promoted to a supervisory position within their department.
5. Many, if not all, trainees hold some sort of training position during their time at Hopkins. I suspect this can be said of postdoctoral fellows, staff scientists, clinical fellows, and other University employees. We would like to see clarification on what counts as a training position: formal coursework, instruction at the research bench, a student visiting a lab to learn a specific skill set, a student visiting another department for instruction or collaboration management (including East Baltimore and Homewood crosstalk).
6. The same point stands for supervisory role, including clarification on what counts as a supervisory vs a teaching role, and any policy consequences from such a distinction.
7. The ambiguous power relations for the various populations mentioned in #3-7 argue for a mechanism to have a case-by-case review for situations that are not between a student and a faculty member.
8. Some students are in favor of a blanket policy on no relationships between students and faculty, including those outside of their field (i.e. someone from the Pharmacology Department at East Baltimore and the Anthropology Department on the Homewood campus).
 - a. Academia is a small world, especially within the same city, and there is potential for professional consequences. For example, a relationship between a biomedical student and a sociology professor goes south, and that faculty member then (maliciously or not) makes derogatory comments about that student to colleagues in a casual social setting. This is not a hard scenario to imagine.
9. Even with this policy in place, there is still great concern over how a student can rebuff advances if the faculty member has influence over educational and professional opportunities, reference letters, and career networks. Part of this policy rollout might include a statement regarding this concern, the policies the University has in place to prevent these situations, and guidelines on how to obtain guidance and help if a student is faced with this situation. I know much of this is part of the sexual harassment guidelines within OIE, but it would be helpful to explicitly reference those policies in GEN001.

Appendix D: GSA Statement on Proposed Title IX Changes

Submitted to the JHU Vice Provost for Institutional Equity &
the US Department of Education via open comment
January 2019

The Department of Education (DOE) recently released changes to Title IX Regulations that raise several areas of concern for students. These include but are not limited to:

Section 106.44e proposes a more limited definition of sexual harassment to "unwelcome conduct on the basis of sex that is so severe, pervasive, AND, objectively offensive that it denies a person equal access to the recipient's educational program." This section also contains ambiguities about guidelines for a formal report about Title IX violations to the University ("actual knowledge"), calling the mandatory reporting system into question.

Section 106.45(b)(4)(i) Standards of evidence changing from the "preponderance" of evidence to "clear and convincing evidence."

Section 106.45(b)(3)(vii) mandates a live hearing for accusations of Title IX violations, including sexual misconduct. This also includes a requirement that each party be allowed to cross-examine the other, including raising questions of credibility.

Section 4c, with Executive Orders 128996 and 13563, states the framework of these proposed regulations have an aim to reduce the financial cost of Title IX complaints, which appears to be by reducing the number of complaints, and therefore investigations, that qualify as protected under Title IX.

The ambiguity of the proposed changes make the process make for addressing Title IX violations, including sexual harassment, more difficult to resolve. They also place a higher emotional and administrative burden upon students who report mistreatment to our own Title IX office. The ability of victims of sexual harassment to receive justice must not be limited.

GSA Report Note: Representatives of the Graduate Student Association met with the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) to express these thoughts. They shared our concerns on these areas and said they would consider our input when submitting comments to the Department of Education to ask for clarification about the proposed regulations.