



Faculty Meeting Report Fall 2020

Fall 2020 Report

The Graduate Student Association's (GSA) mission is to provide a student forum for discussion of common needs, cooperate with the faculty and administration to build a recognized and respected institution, and develop student fellowship. Since the last faculty meeting, GSA has successfully completely, continued, or launched several initiatives that align with our missions. These include:

GSA Peer Mentorship Program for First-Year Students (Continuing)

To help the first-year students settle down in Houston, GSA pairs them with current students based on research interests. The pairing begins in the summer to provide incoming students a point of contact to assist with their move to Houston and their transition to graduate school.

This year GSA retained interest from both current and first-year students in the midst of a reduced starting cohort this fall due to COVID.

Current students signed up for mentorship: **45**

First-year students signed up for the program: **38**

Mentors and mentees were introduced to each other during orientation week via email. They will be meeting virtually in one-on-one sessions while gathering sizes are restricted. In the fall semester, GSA hosts a social event for mentors and mentees, this year's event will be structured around COVID so as to maintain safety.

GSBS Housing Survey (Continuing)

GSA has conducted another annual anonymous housing survey among current GSBS students. The results of the survey are made available to both incoming and current students. This data helps students decide on living spaces in a well-informed manner and encourages students to foster the GSBS community beyond the walls of BSRB. This is also an opportunity for GSA to gather feedback from all students on the issues regarding UT Housing and recreational center. Our efforts in the housing survey have been well appreciated by the incoming and current students and have become a staple for the GSA. We will be conducting another survey in the Spring of 2021.

GSA Virtual Town Hall

The murder of George Floyd sparked worldwide protest and civil unrest. This unrest manifested within the GSBS student body in the form of concern for their fellow students and a desire to act. GSA answered the call from students by putting on a virtual town hall featuring black and brown students as a safe space to talk about racial dynamics within the GSBS and the challenges that students of color face in their daily lives. The town hall brought the student body closer together, alleviating anxieties about division. An article about the event was published by UTH.

<https://www.uth.edu/news/story.htm?id=79ab2b12-c300-44ce-8256-c7411ea12761>.

UTHealth Email Space Limit Issue

GSA sent out an anonymous survey regarding the storage space limit in our student UTHealth email account in response to concerns raised at the town hall with the Deans last year. This issue has been repeatedly brought up by students to GSA officers in our social events. GSA received **144** completed survey responses, and email storage has since been expanded for UTH students. Further concerns about storage have not been raised.

Mask Give Away

In response to growing COVID concerns, GSA set out to provide protective equipment for students. The idea was that masks would be provided to students for personal use outside of the TMC in order to boost morale and maintain a level of protection for students while away from the GSBS. Additionally, ensuring that students have a means of protection outside of the TMC improves the odds that students will stay healthy and the GSBS will remain without a COVID outbreak. We ordered **240** masks. **161** were given to students who claimed them, and the remaining **79** were given to incoming students during orientation. Students were very thankful to receive masks.

Future events

Given the evolving nature of the pandemic, we do not expect to be able to host any large, in-person social events this semester, as is our norm. Instead we will provide students with a combination of virtual events and support to maintain the GSBS student body's sense of community

October

GSA Fall Town Hall
Virtual Halloween Social

November

Mental Health Event (Pet Therapy, if possible)

December

Virtual Holiday Social
Tentative - Give Away

January

Qualifying Exam Q&A (Virtual)

February

Pet Therapy
Valentine's Day Social

March

Mental Health Week

GSA would like to thank the Deans, faculty, and GSBS staff for their continued support, assistance and encouragement. Together we will continue to make GSBS the best graduate school for our students. **If there are any recommendations for future events or initiatives, please email me at mmoses@mdanderson.org.**

Sincerely,

2020-2021 GSA Officers

President: Malcolm Moses
Vice President: Alexandra Cogdill
Treasurer: Rhiannon Morrissey