



# GSS

— *est. 1977* —

**KENT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE  
*ANNUAL REPORT*  
**2019 – 2020**



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**GSS**

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE CHAIR

This has certainly been a year of transition and advancement, not only within the Graduate Student Senate but throughout the entire university. With the appointment of President Todd Daicon, the changes in structure of other university leaders, and the immense shift in our daily lives with the repercussions of COVID-19, we have faced many obstacles but have also grown substantially over the year. The Graduate Student Senate has completed updates to both our Charter and Bylaws. We have been involved in a number of groups to structure graduate expectation policies and mental health initiatives, have consolidated our offices, restructured the administrative assistant position, and moved our award reimbursement process online.

Thanks to a combined effort of the Executive Board and the labor of the Senate at large, we oversaw a combined budget of over \$560,000 for the 2020 fiscal year. That we provided \$445,000 of this in direct support of graduate student organizations, travel, research, and presentations across 500 plus grad students stands as a testament to the core mission of the Graduate Student Senate.

This support would not have been possible without the commitment of President Todd Daicon, Vice President for Research Paul DiCorletto, and Interim Provost Melody Tankersley, whose combined contributions to the Senate totaled \$51,000 this past academic year. These commitments to graduate students and research-at-large at Kent State show the continued effort to strengthen our status as a university, the relationship between the different factions across the university, and the recognition of efforts made by graduate students. These awards allow for increased exposure of Kent State research, greater chances of graduate student publication, and seed moneys for national and international grants.

While I write this letter, we are in a state of great uncertainty. COVID-19 has brought us to a crossroads between two domains: the running of our university and student body as we have known it in the past; and our new future of Zoom meetings, heavy reliance on emails, and in-face social interactions that are limited to virtual video calls. Even when we see people in the world, we continue to be at a distance of six feet and cover our faces with masks. However, I have found that this very distance is what has united both our community in Kent and the global community as a whole; even as we are physically divided, we have seen people coming together in monumental ways.

Our university has stated that we are in the middle of a 20% budget cut across the board. University funded travel has also been suspended until further notice, and we will not be allowed on campus for the foreseeable future. Such realities have impacted many of our graduate students in ways which we never thought possible prior to this pandemic. As graduate students, we are worried about our job security, pay cuts, cuts to research funding, and even our inability to finish research in labs or abroad—factors that have stunted graduation for many. Those who are set to graduate this year are similarly left uncertain about their ability to find employment elsewhere. Though I wish I knew what the future holds, there are unfortunately many questions that at the present moment remain unanswered. My hope is that by the time you are reading this those answers will be not only be available, but will involve little impact to the graduate students who are vital to the university and its continued global impact.

A statement we continue to hear from our university leadership throughout this time is “Flashes Take Care of Flashes.” I implore the university to think about this statement not only during these times of uncertainty, but into the coming future. Graduate students are a staple of the university. We are more than just students: We are teachers. We are researchers. We are leaders. And we are very much an integral part of Kent State. We need to know our place in the university, and we deserve to know that we will be protected by the very people who have promised us a quality education, quality experience, and quality treatment.

Best,



Anna M. Solberg  
 Doctoral Student, Geography  
 Executive Chair, Graduate Student Senate  
 2019-2020



# SENATORS

## **Anthropology**

Melia Romine

## **Applied Engineering, Sustainability & Technology**

Surejya Prakash Gowda

## **Architecture**

Zuzana Kubisova

## **Art**

Richard Agbeze

## **Biological Sciences**

Liz Aulino

## **Biomedical Sciences**

Timothy Niepokny

## **Business Administration**

Eric Curley

## **Chemistry & Biochemistry**

Morgan Stilgenbauer

## **Communication & Information**

Matthew Mullins

## **Computer Sciences**

Irvin Cardenas

## **Digital Science**

Jianfeng Zhu

## **Economics**

Joy Hu

## **English**

Muhammad Farooq

## **Foundations, Leadership & Administration**

Alyssa Mazey

## **Geography**

Erik Tyler Smith

## **Geology**

Kortney Cole

## **Health Sciences**

Sarah Kearney

## **History**

Dante Basista

## **Lifespan Development & Educational Sciences**

Brittany Halstead

## **Advanced Materials & Liquid Crystal Institute**

Tim Ogolla

## **Mathematics**

Mirjeta Pasha

## **Modern & Classical Language Studies**

Ahmed Elhuseiny Bedeir

## **Music**

Mason Smith

## **Nursing**

Shadi Kanan

## **Philosophy**

Griffin Werner

## **Physics**

Head Baza

## **Political Science**

Megan Odell-Scott

## **Psychological Sciences**

Charlie Fitzsimmons

## **Public Health**

Joud Roufael

## **Sociology**

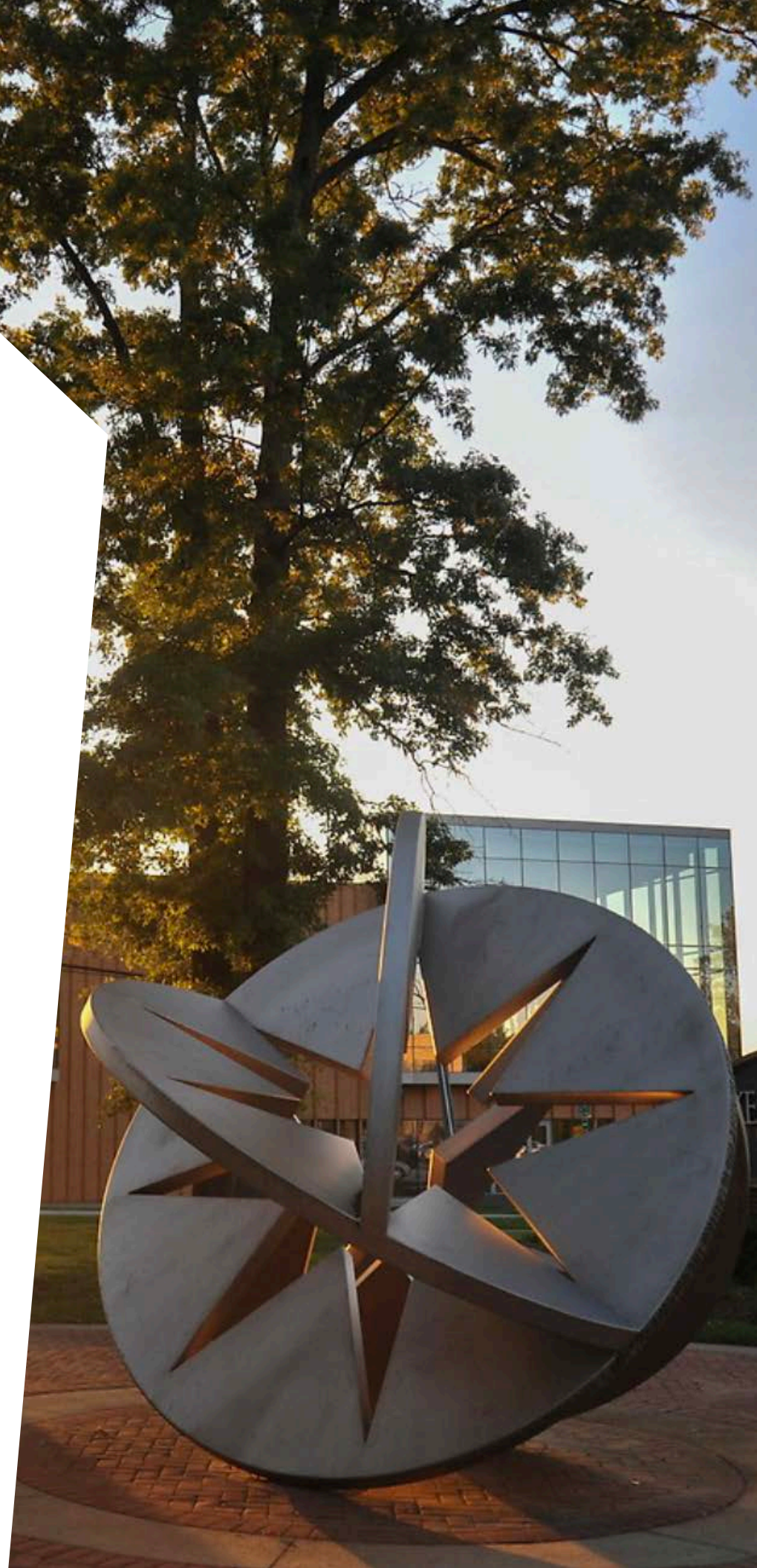
Matthew Pfeiffer

## **Teaching, Learning & Curriculum**

Andrea Menger

## **Theater & Dance**

Lana Sugarman



# EXECUTIVE BOARD

## EXECUTIVE CHAIR



**ANNA SOLBERG**  
Doctoral Student Geography

## VICE-EXECUTIVE CHAIR



**VICTORIA REYNOLDS**  
Doctoral Student Sociology

## SYMPOSIUM CHAIR



**SRIJANA BHANDARI**  
Doctoral Student Chemistry & Biochemistry

## INFORMATION SERVICES CHAIR



**GRACE MURRAY**  
Doctoral Student Educational Psychology

## FINANCE CHAIR



**XIN HONG**  
Doctoral Student Geography

## ADVOCACY CHAIR



**A.J. GIORGI**  
Doctoral Student English

## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES CHAIR



**JENNIFER MANI**  
Doctoral Student School of Lifespan Development & Educational Sciences

## ADVISOR



**DR. CYNTHIA STILLINGS**  
Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

## VICE EXECUTIVE CHAIR: VICTORIA REYNOLDS

The Vice Executive Chair’s responsibilities primarily include: 1.) Providing representation at the university level on a number of committees across Kent State and 2.) Administering the selection of International Travel Award (ITA) recipients.

### COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

This year, GSS appointed representatives to 13 active committees throughout the university. The Executive Vice Chair is responsible for the coordination of representation. Once appointments are made, the representatives then attend all committee meetings and report back to the Executive Vice Chair and Senate. This allows for information discussed

within each committee to be disseminated to the graduate student body through each Senator. This process provides the most direct and concise method for the distribution of pertinent information to all graduate students at Kent State University, and allows graduate students to be visible in the Kent State University Community.

#### ACTIVE COMMITTEES WITH GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATION 2018-2019 AY:

Committee Name	Primary Graduate Representative
Advisory Committee for Academic Assessment	Nicholas Adams, Hend Baza
College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee	Sarah Sternbach
Committee on Administrative Officers	Anna Solberg
Educational Policies Council	Morgan Stilgenbauer
Faculty Senate	Anna Solberg
Intercollegiate Athletics Committee	Chris Willer
University Libraries Advisory Committee	Annaleise Lessick
Public Safety Advisory Committee	Winnie Bush
Student Media Board	LaKysha Robinson
Transportation Advisory Committee	Tierra James
University Diversity Action Council	Shadi Kanan
University Council on Technology	Surejya Prakash Gowda
University Teaching Council	Andrea Christoff
University Accessibility Committee	Alyx Weaver
Women’s Center Advisory Committee	Kayla Cagwin

#### MATTER OF NOTE REGARDING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION:

As per the Graduate Student Senate Bylaws, all Senators are to serve on at least one GSS affiliated committee per Academic Year. These committees can include temporary or permanent Graduate Student Senate committees, or any University Committee that includes a graduate student representative.

## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AWARD

The GSS International Travel Award (ITA) is a competitive award that offers up to \$1,500 for travel outside of the contiguous United States and Canadian provinces and territories not adjacent to Ohio. The ITA is offered for Fall, Spring, and Summer travel.

This year, there were two application periods in which Full- and part-time graduate students whose departments are in good standing with GSS were able to submit an ITA application. The purpose of the award is to promote the

professional and academic development of Kent State University’s graduate student population, to support diversity by giving students the opportunity to experience foreign cultures, and to extend Kent State University’s recognition on an international level. Funding supports individuals presenting, performing, or actively participating at professional conferences, competitions, festivals, performance tours, internships, or workshops related to their academic program or specialized interests.

AWARD PERIOD	TOTAL COMPLETE APPLICATIONS	FUNDED APPLICATIONS	TOTAL AWARDED
Spring/Summer 2019	20	8	\$12,000
Summer/Fall 2019	29	22	\$32,757
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>\$44, 757</b>

**MATTER OF NOTE REGARDING THE ITA:** Students are allowed to receive the ITA once per academic year.

# INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AWARD RECIPIENTS

## YEAR 2019-2020

**NASHRAH AHMAD**  
Biomedical Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
Austria

**LAUREN BALDARELLI**  
Biological Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
South Africa

**MAXIMILIAN BARCZOK**  
Geology  
Conference Presentation  
Hawaii

**SRIJANA BHANDARI**  
Chemistry & Biochemistry  
Workshop Participation  
United Kingdom

**IRVIN CARDENAS**  
Computer Sciences  
Conference Attendance  
United Kingdom

**RACHEL CORRIGAN**  
Biomedical Sciences  
Conference Attendance  
Netherlands

**MELISSA DYER**  
Public Health  
Conference Presentation  
Greece

**ERIC DYNE**  
Biomedical Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
Netherlands

**PAUL GEIS**  
Foundations, Leadership, and  
Administration  
Conference Presentation  
Scotland

**ALICIA HALL**  
Lifespan Development and  
Educational Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
New Zealand

**SUSANNA HARRIS**  
Art  
Conference Presentation  
Puerto Rico

**XIN HONG**  
Geography  
Conference Presentation  
France

**SAGUN JONCHHE**  
Chemistry & Biochemistry  
Conference Presentation  
Hawaii

**ZOLTAN KARASZI**  
Liquid Crystal Institute  
Conference Presentation  
Portugal

**RAISSA MARQUES MENDONCA**  
Biological Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
South Africa

**ANNA MIKA**  
Anthropology  
Other  
Israel

**DAMON MULLEN**  
Anthropology  
Other  
Israel

**TIMOTHY OGOLLA**  
Liquid Crystal Institute  
Conference Presentation  
Portugal

**DAVIDA PANTUSO**  
Health Sciences  
Conference Attendance  
England

**LAINE SELIGA**  
Political Science  
Conference Attendance  
Hawaii

**HYO WON SEO**  
Philosophy  
Conference Presentation  
Estonia

**SASAN SHADPOUR**  
Liquid Crystal Institute  
Conference Presentation  
Portugal

**NICOLLE SIMONOVIC**  
Psychological Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
Israel

**CHELSEA SMITH**  
Biological Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
South Africa

**ABIGAIL STEBBINS**  
Teaching, Learning, and  
Curriculum  
Conference Attendance  
Barcelona

**STACI TESSMER**  
Lifespan Development and  
Educational Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
Puerto Rico

**SENAYUSTUNEL**  
Liquid Crystal Institute  
Conference Presentation  
Portugal

**ANGELO VISCO**  
Physics  
Conference Presentation  
Portugal

**KAI WANG**  
Biological Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
South Africa

**CAROLINE WEST**  
Psychological Sciences  
Conference Presentation  
Australia

**COMRUN YOUSEFZADEH**  
Liquid Crystal Institute  
Conference Presentation  
Portugal

### Funding Increases for the Summer/Fall International Travel Award:

Due to a decline in DTA applications in the Spring 2020 semester, the Graduate Student Senate was able to increase the total number of International Travel Award granted in Spring 2020 by \$15,000. This led to a total of 22 graduate students receiving ITA funds during this Spring semester compared to the 15 awards originally allocated and the 8 graduate students who received the ITA in Fall 2019.

## FINANCE CHAIR: XIN HONG

### DOMESTIC TRAVEL AWARD

The Domestic Travel Award (DTA) is a noncompetitive award that supports academic presentation from Kent State University graduate students. Students who apply for and receive the award are required to present research (oral, poster, or round table) and must travel within the continental United States and Canadian Provinces adjacent to the continental US. Full and part-time graduate students whose departments are in good standing with GSS are eligible to receive one DTA per academic year. Students can apply for the

award every semester, but priority will be given to students who have not received a DTA in the previous semester.

Additional awards for previously awarded students, will be chosen in a second round of selection, based on availability of funds. The award is disbursed at a flat rate of \$300, minus any taxes based on the student's residency status, after successful completion of the reimbursement packet showing proof of presentation and attendance.

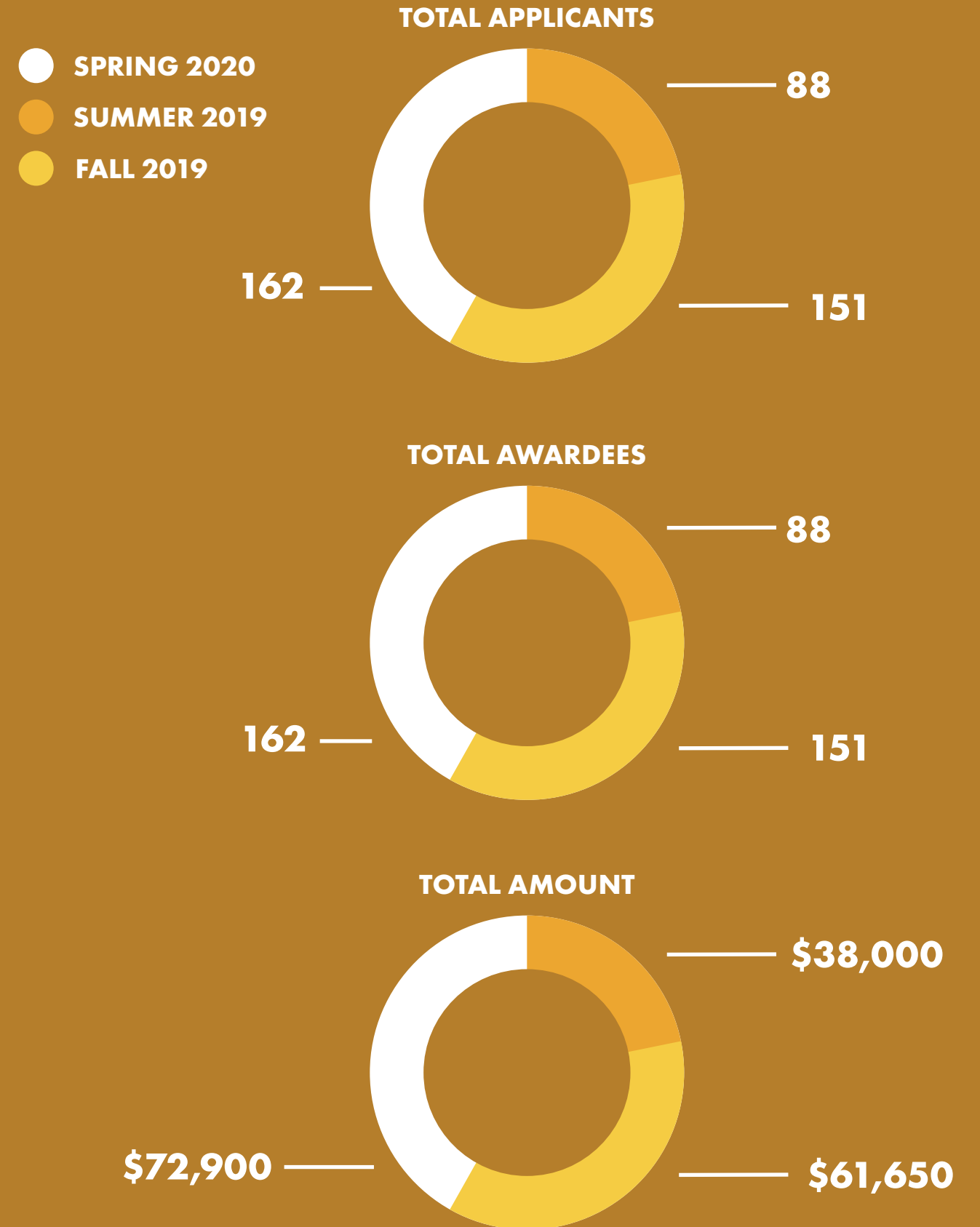
**Thanks to the generous support of the Research and Sponsored Programs (RASP), the DTA was increased to \$450 per awardee for Fall 2019 through Summer 2020.**

	TOTAL APPLICANTS	TOTAL AWARDEES <sup>1</sup>	FUNDED AWARDEES <sup>2</sup>	TOTAL AMOUNT
Summer 2019	88	88	76	\$38,000
Fall 2019	151	151	137	\$61,650
Spring 2020	162	162	162	\$72,900
Summer 2020	<i>In progress</i>			\$39,600
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>\$174,150<sup>3</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup> Students eligible for the award.

<sup>2</sup> Students who successfully submitted reimbursement packet.

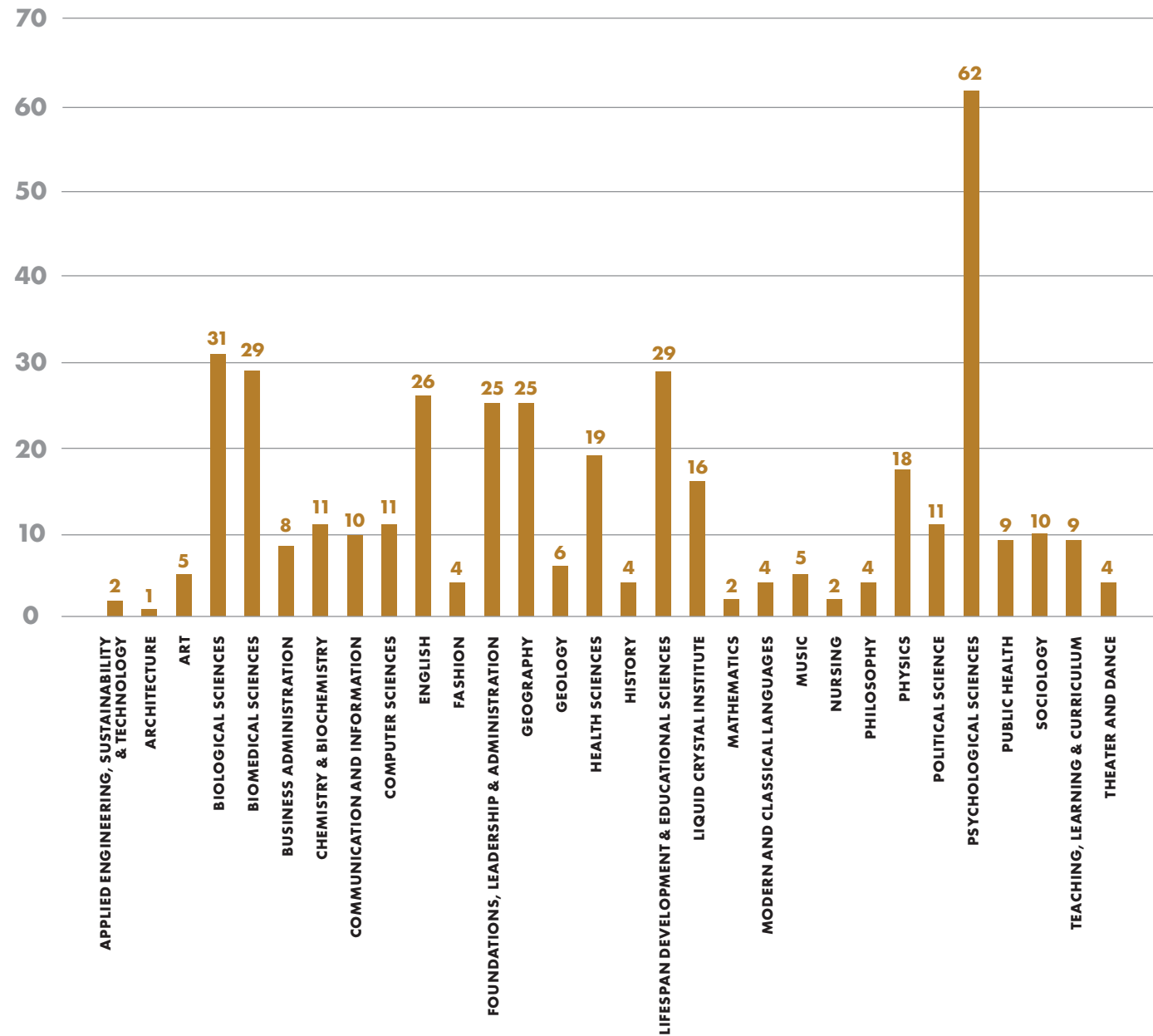
<sup>3</sup> The total award for academic year 19-20. The sum does not include summer 2019.





# ACADEMIC UNIT BREAKDOWN OF AWARDS

## TOTAL AWARDEES OF SUMMER 19, FALL 19, AND SPRING 20



### SPECIAL CONTINGENCY AWARD

The Special Contingency Award (SCA) is a competitive award that offers a maximum reimbursement of up to \$1,500 of approved student-incurred expenses. The funding is used for costs associated with the active generation and/or dissemination of the applicant’s primary graduate work. Final amount

will be determined by the SCA Review Committee based on extenuating circumstances of the application. The award is offered on a rolling basis, with applications due for review by 11:59PM three weeks prior to any GSS general meeting.

# ADVOCACY CHAIR: ANTONIO GIORGI

## RESEARCH AWARD

The GSS Research Award is a competitive award offered in the spring and fall semesters to all graduate students from departments in good standing with the Graduate Student Senate. Its focus is to fund graduate student research, ongoing or future projects, important for the completion of an MA, MS, MFA, or PH.D, and it is one of the principle ways that the Graduate Student Senate reinvests in graduate students and their work.

The 2019 – 2020 academic year was a period of transition and change, but despite many unforeseen obstacles, the Graduate Student Senate persisted in its dedication to graduate student research. A total of 43 research awards were funded during this time, and recipients came from a variety of disciplines ranging from chemical physics and neurobiology to art education and creative writing.

AWARD PERIOD	TOTAL COMPLETE APPLICATIONS	FUNDED APPLICATIONS	TOTAL AWARDED
Fall 2019	20	15	\$23,000
Spring 2020	46	28	\$50,426
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>\$73,426</b>

## PHILANTHROPY

During the 2019 – 2020 academic year, the Graduate Student Senate participated in several outreach opportunities brought to us by fellow graduate students. In the fall, the Graduate Student Senate collaborated with the Undergraduate Student Government in planning Hunger and Homelessness Awareness

Week, a week-long series of events designed to provide food and clothing assistance to the Kent community. The Graduate Student Senate also planned to continue local outreach in the spring by partnering with Kent’s Habitat for Humanity chapter, but events were tabled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## GENERAL STATE OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

In years past, one might label the graduate student life as a trial of endurance and mental fortitude, but no academic year has so thoroughly tested our mettle as this one. Where in previous years one might find themselves fighting to find answers while in the confines of a comfortable academic space, maybe in a familiar lab or office with colleagues and PIs within easy reach, we now face our trials alone, struggling against distance, isolation, technology, and the stress of contagion being beyond our doorsteps. We were persistent in our fight to have the university administration consider the unique challenges of graduate students, to see our mental health needs and offer something designed specifically for us, but despite their new interest in

our burdens and offers to improve them, we are now met with a challenge that appears from outside these realms: how do we continue during a pandemic? The key is different for everyone. Routine is helpful, the ability to adapt, a must, but unproductive days are unavoidable and allowed. For many, this year ends with being forced to learn and teach in new ways, a period of discomfort as we rely more on technology to communicate, but when the laboratories are back open, the libraries allow us back in our favorite spots, and the far-off corners become accessible for our fieldwork once again, we will run to them with glee. It is most important, now, to assess our needs and to continue pressing forward whenever the time permits it.

## RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENTS FALL 2019

**NOEL-MARIE PLONSKI**

Biomedical Sciences

**YOUSSEF MOSADDEGHIAN  
GOLESTANI**

Chemical Physics

**KAITLIN SHVACH**

Biological Sciences

**SOHINI DUTTA**

Biomedical Sciences

**MICHELLE RIVERS**

Psychological Sciences

**TIEN HONG STANLEY SEAH**

Psychological Sciences

**MOHAMMED ENAMUL HOQUE**

Chemistry & Biochemistry

**MOHAMED RUSHDHI**

**MOHAMED RAUFF**

Chemistry & Biochemistry

**IRVIN CARDENAS**

Computer Science

**SUDESHI MADUSHANI**

**ABEDEERA LIYANA**

**PATABENDIGE**

Chemistry & Biochemistry

**JAMES NORRIS**

Anthropology

**KATHERINE MANNING**

Biological Sciences

**CHRISTIAN BULLION**

Biological Sciences

**TSUKURU KAMIYAMA**

English/TESL

**CLAIRE BOWMAN**

Print Media & Photography

## RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENTS SPRING 2020

**MORGAN CHANEY**

Biomedical Sciences

**MARY LE ROUGE**

English/LRSP

**GRACE MURRAY**

Educational Psychology

**ELIZABETH AULINO**

Biological Sciences

**SARAH HARVEY**

Sociology

**MEGHAN BLACKSON**

Architecture

**JOHN MILLER**

Biological Sciences

**RICHARD AGBEZE**

Art Education

**CHELSEY KIRKLAND**

Public Health

**JORDYN STOLL**

Biological Sciences

**SANDRA BEMPAH**

Geography

**KUMUDIE SHAMALA  
JAYALATH ARCHCHIGE**

Chemistry & Biochemistry

**KESHAV GC**

Chemistry & Biochemistry

**MONICA GHOSH**

Biomedical Sciences

**YU LI**

Cultural Foundations

**ELIOTT ARROYO**

Exercise Science

**DAMON MULLEN**

Anthropology

**TEJ NAKASHE**

Biomedical Sciences

**LAUREN BALDARELLI**

Biological Sciences

**BRITTANY HELMICK**

English/NEOMFA

**FRED ROSE**

Theatre & Dance

**TERENCE**

**CRANENDONK**

Theatre & Dance

**BRIAN CHANDLER**

Theatre & Dance

**HEEJU NOE**

Fashion

**ZACHERY KNAUSS**

Biomedical Sciences

**ANNA SOLBERG**

Geography

**SHELLY EVANS**

Prevention Science

**CHARLES  
FITZSIMMONS**

Psychological Sciences

## SYMPOSIUM CHAIR: SRIJANA BHANDARI

Every year the Graduate Student Senate hosts Graduate Research Symposium during the spring semester, which features oral, poster, and fine arts presentations and performances of graduate students from every discipline at Kent State University. Faculty serve as judges for groups of presentations sharing similar themes or representing common areas of study. The symposium generally runs for two days and features a keynote speech from a distinguished invited speaker. The symposium is concluded with an awards luncheon, which features a keynote address and presentation of awards to the winning graduate students. Each awarded graduate student receives an award certificate and a monetary prize.

The symposium offers benefits for students with any range of presentation experience and skills. For those with minimal presentation experience, the symposium provides an opportunity to speak about research and receive interdisciplinary peer and faculty feedback. For those in their later stage of graduate life, the symposium also provides a platform to boost the confidence needed in job talks. The multidisciplinary nature of the event is one of its key features of the symposium; GSS is dedicated in fostering the multidisciplinary nature of the event, welcoming all forms of scholarship, from empirical research to works of art.

### 2020 GRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Due to the exceptional circumstances brought to us by ongoing Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic, unfortunately, we could not have the expected outcome of the symposium this year. Nevertheless, the plan and the preparedness were there.

This year, I continued the two-day Symposium model for the Graduate Research Symposium. The 35th Annual Graduate Research Symposium, "Nurturing Students' Research, 35 years and beyond" was planned for 9-10 April 2020. I had invited Paul Joseph Anderson, M.D., Ph.D. to be our Keynote Speaker for the event.



#### PAUL J. ANDERSON, M.D., PH.D.

K. Frank Austen Professor of Medicine  
Harvard Medical School

Chief Academic Officer and Senior Vice President  
of Research & Education  
Brigham and Women's Hospital

As we were close to the symposium, we were incredibly excited to see an increased number of registrants (>360) for the Graduate Research Symposium. While we had been working on the planning of the event, per the measures that the university community has been advised to take regarding COVID-19, Kent State University has suspended all in-person classes, meetings and large gatherings, and university-funded travel for the rest of the semester starting at mid-March. Consequently, with a heavy heart, we had decided to call off the 35th Graduate Research Symposium. Although our outcome was not as expected, all of the help I got from the board members, senators, fellow graduate students, professors, and administrative personnel was overwhelming, and I very much appreciate that.

213

REGISTERED POSTER  
PRESENTATIONS

6

REGISTERED FINE ARTS  
PERFORMANCES

141

REGISTERED ORAL  
PRESENTATIONS

52

REGISTERED FACULTY  
JUDGES & MODERATORS

In all, considering what we had prepared before COVID-19, the event was set to be highly successful, particularly considering a boasting registration of 213 poster presentations, 141 oral presentations, and 6 fine arts performances. Our 2020 Graduate Research Symposium Presenter Registration had 360 submissions from nearly every college and academic unit

### 2021 GRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The 2021 Graduate Research Symposium will take place on week of April 5, 2021 (exact day(s) yet to be decided). The KSC hall and equipment reservations are on process. The incoming Programming Chair, Payel Datta, will have more details about registration, schedule, and theme later in the planning process.

It was a pleasure to serve as the GSS Symposium Chair for 2019-2020 academic year, and I am confident that our incom-

(shown in the bar graph). Furthermore, 52 faculty members were registered for judging, moderating, and facilitating the event. Recruiting and maintaining judges for each session remains a perennial issue. The number of faculty registering as judges slightly increased compared to last year.

ing chair will continue to preserve and prosper this event and space for celebrating and emphasizing graduate student work at Kent State University.

Once again, I am thankful for all the support I have had throughout the year and I wish a Good Luck in the successful organization of next year's research symposium!

## INFORMATION SERVICES CHAIR: GRACE MURRAY

Over the 2019-2020 academic year, we amassed 914 total followers on our Facebook page. Insights from its Facebook account suggest approximately 58 percent of followers are women with 34 percent of them coming from the 25-34 age range. The 25 to 34 age range is the highest percentage for males as well with 24 percent of all males falling within that range. This makes sense given the typical age range of graduate students on Kent State University's campus. The majority of GSS followers on Facebook are from the United States (725 total followers), but interestingly, we have India (22), Iraq (13), and Jordan (11) as the next closest countries. In the coming years, it would be beneficial for GSS to continue to expand the number of followers, including international graduate students.

GSS accumulated 630 followers on its Twitter account during the 2019-2020 academic year. Over the last 28-day period (February 20 to March 19, 2020), GSS tweets earned over 3,000 impressions and a total of 68 separate profile visits, indicating followers are engaging with GSS content on Twitter. This is exciting to see, as other social media sites, including Instagram, are beginning to eclipse Twitter (Statistica, 2020). Significant effort has been put into developing the necessary materials to begin a GSS Instagram account to keep up with trends within the social media sphere. The Information Services Chair has started collecting photographs that can be shared via Instagram, such that GSS can have a consistent schedule of content as it begins to develop its presence on that platform.

Throughout the year, GSS was able to share various accomplishments via social media, including Facebook, featuring a number of first-author publications from graduate students and presentations from around the country. Social media be-

came one of the main sources of communication, as the University transitioned to online during the COVID-19 pandemic. GSS was able to interact with a large number of their constituents as well as share various resources, such as information about how to transition traditional courses to online, via social media. Facebook and Twitter also allowed for a continued sense of community within Kent State University's graduate student population as the country as a whole focused on social distancing. Social media allowed for connections and conversations to still be had despite the physical distance between graduate students and campus. GSS continued to also work with the Division of Graduate Studies as well on social media in sharing campus-wide events and accomplishments made by graduate students.

Additionally, GSS hosts monthly social events for graduate students during the semester. Grad Fest in previous years were mostly held at local bars, but this year, GSS expanded the locations in which Grad Fests occurred to open the events to individuals who may not be able to visit a bar due to personal, religious, or cultural constraints. The December Grad Fest on Ice was a huge hit within the graduate student community with graduate students from a variety of disciplines leaving their desks and throwing on a pair of skates to blow off some end-of-the semester steam. Research On Tap events had been planned for the end of the semester in which graduate students from a variety of disciplines share their research at a community venue; however, Research On Tap had to be canceled given the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2019-2020 executive board hopes the incoming board will continue these events in the subsequent years.





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