



GSO

THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR STUDENTS IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
FOR ARTS AND SCIENCES AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY
ADVOCACY | COMMUNITY | CAREER

GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

2019-2022 REPORT
2022-2023 PLAN

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Purpose

The purpose of the GSO is:

- To provide a forum for the discussion of matters about the welfare of graduate students at BU.
- To advocate on issues of concern to our graduate student community.
- To serve as a liaison between the graduate student body and the BU administration.
- To recommend graduate students to serve on BU committees for which graduate representation is necessary.
- To assist with the process of integrating new students into graduate student life at BU.
- To sponsor social activities and other events that encourage the development of the graduate student community.
- To foster effective communication and cooperation among undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, and other members of the community.

History

The GSO began in the Fall of 1997 as a group of graduate students interested in eliminating a teaching fellow pay disparity. That year, the administration instituted a policy of paying new students who were TFs in the Sciences \$11,500/year while all other science TFs were paid \$10,500/year. In the Humanities, new TFs made \$10,500/year while veteran student TFs made \$9,500/year. The administration's goal behind such a policy was to attract more new students to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GRS) at Boston University by offering a higher teaching fellow stipend. Unfortunately, they only increased the wages for new students, ignoring those who had anywhere from one to several years of experience in the classroom. Departments were made aware of the up-and-coming policy as early as the Spring preceding Fall 1997. In response, the English Department went so far as to refuse the increase in funding unless they could evenly distribute it to all their TFs. The administration refused and as a result, the English Department received no new funds at all. Also, during the time preceding the implementation of the policy, many graduate students learned of it, and, finding it insulting and unfair, began to organize towards its elimination.

Several individuals and representatives of departments sent letters to Dean Berkey, Associate Dean Whittaker, and the student newspaper (*The Daily Free Press*) decrying the policy and asking for all TFs to receive the higher wages. In addition, some petitions began to circulate campus-wide and within departments. The story was picked up by *The Daily Free Press* and an editorial was written in support of the TFs.

The first major event was an open meeting of graduate students that occurred on October 24th, 1997, specifically called to challenge the pay disparity and to begin forming an organization that would address the concerns of graduate students. Individuals and representatives from various departments across GRS attended and much of the success of the meeting can be credited to

the organizers. Graduate students reported on the prevailing sentiment in their departments and a strong consensus was reached in favor of forcing the administration to abandon their policy. Various courses of action were discussed including a letter-writing campaign, petitions, and a rally. Future meetings were scheduled to decide on which course of action would be followed.

As signatures began to be collected in support of a rally, and letters and petitions were being sent to the Dean's office, the administration abandoned their policy and agreed to increase the wages for all TFs at the start of the Spring semester. The memo announcing the change was distributed only two weeks after that first real meeting! Several students and faculty felt that it was the threat of public exposure, the overflow of letters inundating the deans, and the organizing abilities taking place among the graduate students which led to the overturn of the pay disparity.

After this initial victory, graduate students voiced concern over such incidents happening again and felt that it was paramount to form an organization to advocate on issues and concerns of the graduate student community. This led to the creation of the Graduate Student Organization (GSO).

In Spring of 2022, the Departmental Representatives of GSO voted in favor of opening the organization to allow for University-wide membership. The 2022 Executive Board is currently working diligently to make this a reality.

Membership

The GSO membership is composed of all full-time and part-time Masters and Ph.D. students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Boston University.

Member Departments and Programs

African American Studies	History
American and New England Studies	History of Art and Architecture
Anthropology	International Relations
Archaeology Program	Linguistics and Applied Linguistics
Astronomy	Mathematics and Statistics
Bioinformatics	Molecular Biology, Cell Biology, and Biochemistry
Biology	Musicology
Biostatistics	Philosophy
Chemistry	Physics
Classical Studies	Playwriting
Computer Science	Political Science
Creative Writing	Psychology and Clinical Psychology
Earth and Environment	Religious and Theological Studies

Economics
Editorial Studies
English

Romance Studies
Sociology
Sociology and Social Work

Constitution

In 2019, the GSO updated its constitution, which was first drafted in 2009. This new version encompasses many of the changes that we have made to the leadership and the running of the GSO. Please visit our website - www.bu.edu/gso - for the full details.

Leadership and Elections

Since its inception, the format of the GSO leadership has changed to match the needs of its membership base. Generally, it has always been composed of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and various committee chairpersons. Over the years, the GSO has added a Secretary position. Committee roles have also shifted and now are often implemented on an ad-hoc basis. Many of these changes can be seen in the leadership structures from the last four years and have resulted in a more effective executive board.

While individual programs decide on the selection process for their department representatives, our executive board officers and committee chairs are elected volunteers.

Elections are held at the end of each calendar year, rather than at the end of each school or fiscal year. This structure provides leadership continuity and stronger long-term planning between academic years. Furthermore, this election cycle allows outgoing officials, usually still at BU, to help advise the new officers. Even when students graduate or move away from Boston, most are still happy to offer their advice via email. As is evidenced by the leadership history below, the people who join the GSO leadership, especially the executive board, are dedicated to the organization as they tend to stay on for several years. This attests to the community and support system created by the GSO.

Leadership History Since Last Report

GSO Leadership 2019

Executive Board

President:

Diane Lebo, PhD Student, Biology

Vice President:

Paul Goldberg, PhD Student, Philosophy

Treasurers:

Jeanna Kinnebrew, PhD Student, History

James Aglio, PhD Student, Classics

Secretary:

Elizabeth Karnaukh, PhD Student, Chemistry

Travel Grant Committee Chair: Alexandria Yen, PhD Student, History of Art and Architecture
Social Committee Chairs: Brian Barone, PhD Student, Musicology
Jessica Garber, PhD Student, Anthropology

GSO Leadership 2020

Executive Board

President: Khadija El Karfi, PhD Student, Romance Studies
Interim, Diane Lebo, PhD Student, Biology
Vice President: Shannon Bewley, PhD Student, History of Art and Architecture
Treasurer: James Aglio, PhD Student, Classics
Secretary: Jessica Garber, PhD Student, Anthropology
Travel Grant Committee Chair: Alexandria Yen, PhD Student, History of Art and Architecture
Social Committee Chair: Ethan McCaslin, Master's Student, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

GSO Leadership 2021

Executive Board

President: Sobia Shadbar, Master's Student, Pardee School, International Affairs
Vice President: Ryan O'Dea, PhD Student, Mathematics and Statistics
Treasurer: Cameron Dixon, PhD Student, Molecular, Cell Biology, and Biochemistry
Secretary: Arcadia Ewell, PhD Student, Psychological and Brain Sciences
Travel Grant Committee Chair: Alexandria Yen, PhD Student, History of Art and Architecture
Social Committee Chair: Hector Grande, PhD Student, Materials Science and Engineering

GSO Leadership 2022

Executive Board

President: Arcadia Ewell, PhD Student, Psychological and Brain Sciences
Vice President: Monan Ma, PhD Student, Mechanical Engineering
Treasurer: Krishna Ammini, Masters Student, MSMFT
Secretary: Meghan Townes, PhD Student, American and New England Studies
Travel Grants Committee Chair: Joshua Fuller, PhD Student, Clinical Psychology
Social Committee Chair: Mekhal Raj, Masters Student, Business Analytics

International Student Relations Chair: Stan Debruym, PhD Student, History

Communications, Operations, and Archives

Organization Documents and Archives

The e-board (executive board) of the GSO shares a Google Drive that contains organizational documents. Each leadership position has its own folder maintained and updated when necessary by the current e-board. Crucially, these folders contain information on the positions' responsibilities and notes from predecessors ensuring the transition between different members is as smooth as possible. Google Drive also contains templates for meeting notes and collaborative, in-progress documents. In 2022, the GSO Eboard altered the current agenda and notes templates and incorporated the use of meeting powerpoints. AY 2021-2022 meeting notes and agendas for both leadership and general meetings dating back to 1997 is the GSO website, linked below.

GSO Meeting Notes: <https://www.bu.edu/gso/events/past-meeting-minutes/>

Administrative Involvement

Throughout the GSO's existence, the GSO President has maintained monthly meetings with the GRS administration. During these meetings, the President presents the administration with GSO plans for the upcoming semester and notes all relevant information for the GSO's smooth functioning. The President also takes advantage of these meetings to advocate for the GSO membership and to share graduate students' concerns with the appropriate administrative staff person. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, these meetings were temporarily postponed. Previously, the President met regularly with the following administrative personnel:

- Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GRS): The Dean serves as the main point of contact for the President to inquire about policies, resources, and opportunities available to graduate students. The Dean serves as the main liaison between the GSO and the administration by sharing our concerns with the appropriate departments and staff members. This position is currently held by:
Malika Jeffries-El
malikaj@bu.edu
- Graduate Services Associate: This person is our primary contact for requests relating to the GRS administration, including the GSO accounts, budget increases, etc. This position is currently unfilled.

Website

The official GSO website at <https://www.bu.edu/gso> provides in-depth information about the activities of the organization. The GSO routinely updates the relevant pages on the GSO website with information about scheduled meetings, travel grants, weekly newsletters, resources, and co-sponsored events. The website features the following pages:

- About: History, Current Officers, Department Representatives
- Get involved: Learn More, Representatives, Mailing List, Collaboration and Cosponsorship
- Newsletters
- Events: Events Calendar, GSO Events, Meetings, Past Meeting Minutes
- Travel Grants
- Helpful links

Communication

Newsletters

The GSO communicates regularly with its members through email. Bi-Weekly newsletters are sent to graduate students featuring information about the organizations' activities and other events/opportunities around campus. The newsletter is sent to the Graduate Services Associate who then forwards it to the graduate students' email list.

Email

The GSO President has access to the gso@bu.edu email address. The President uses this email account for all official emails and does not merge it with their personal email account. This preserves the record of GSO activities for posterity and ensures that emails intended for the GSO president reach the current president and not an unmonitored alumni email address.

Email lists:

Most people don't need to sign up for the mailing list as the President sends most announcements out through the GRS. It is only necessary for representatives to sign up to have access to scheduling polls and urgent announcements.

- People can subscribe/unsubscribe from the rep list here:
<http://www.bu.edu/gso/join-our-mailing-list/>

Social Media

Mailing Lists for Reps: people can subscribe/unsubscribe from our representatives mailing list by following this link: <http://www.bu.edu/gso/join-our-mailing-list/>

Facebook: There is a GSO Facebook group. The GSO President administers this group and posts about GSO meetings and events. In 2021, the GSO created a new Facebook Page to increase visibility.

Twitter: There is a GSO Twitter page. The GSO runs this page to increase its visibility within the BU community and to share information about planned GSO meetings and events.

LinkedIn: As part of our outreach efforts, the GSO LinkedIn page is used to improve our visibility on campus and distribute information about our work, meetings, and events.

Instagram: In 2021, GSO created its own Instagram account to better communicate events and messages to the broader campus community.

Activities

Meetings

General Meetings

The GSO holds 5 general meetings during the semester. About a week in advance, an agenda document is sent out and posted on the GSO website to ensure productivity and to solicit additional agenda items from representatives. The executive board manages a google form through which students can submit topics for meeting agendas. A couple of days before the meeting, a final reminder email is sent out. In that email, we include links to any co-sponsored event proposals that we will hear or vote on that day so representatives can review and submit their votes by proxy to the Vice President, if necessary. We usually also provide printed copies of the agenda at the meeting.

The executive board brings agendas to each meeting with topics of discussion, planning questions, and action-items for the departmental representatives to vote on. Typically, the GSO provides a light meal for those who come to meetings. Meeting times are set at the beginning of the semester through a polling app, typically WhenToMeet, in order for meeting times to be democratically set at a good time for the majority of attendees.

Following each meeting, the President updates the attendance spreadsheet on the website. and the minutes taken by the Secretary are posted online as a PDF document and saved in the GSO Dropbox.

Executive meetings

The executive board meets monthly or more often when necessary. At these meetings, the board makes long-term plans for the organization and discusses any upcoming agenda items.

Recurring GSO Events

Social

Yoga

Coffee Hours

Once per semester, coffee hours for four major student groups—women, LGBTQ+, underrepresented graduate students, and international students—on campus are organized by the Social Chair. The social chair provides coffee and other refreshments for students who self-identify as members of these groups and facilitates conversation in order to strengthen networking across departments and programs among graduate students. The Underrepresented Graduate Student Organization (UGSO) also often joins in advertising these events to the entire graduate student community. Each coffee hour attracts between 10 and 30 people.

Pub Nights

Throughout the semester, GSO hosts pub nights at Fuller's Pub. These events, which offer discounted drink tickets, are organized by the Social Chair. Pub nights allow for social and professional networking with other students in GRS.

Graduate Student Fair

In Fall 2021, GSO launched the first annual graduate student fair. The goal of this event is to gather graduate student organizations and University departments at the beginning of the academic year to help incoming graduate students learn about what resources are available to them.

Virtual Paint Nite

GSO was able to mail out paint kits to interested graduate students for a virtual paint class of the Boston skyline.

Informal projects

Housing Survey

GSO is currently collaborating with fellow graduate student organizations in Boston to better understand the housing needs of students in the city

Professional Development

Tax Webinars

Beginning in 2021, the GSO sponsors two tax-webinars each spring. During these webinars we hire a CPA to coach domestic and international students through the process of filing their tax returns.

LinkedIn Headshots

GSO hosts a free LinkedIn Headshot Photoshoot at the end of each semester. We hire a professional photographer to capture professional headshots at no-cost to GRS students.

Collaboration

Co-Sponsored Events at Boston University

In 2017, the GSO started regularly collaborating with other student organizations to run social events. Frequently, the GSO collaborates with Graduate Women in Science and Engineering (GWISE), Student Association of Graduate Engineers (SAGE), Underrepresented Graduate Student Organization (UGSO), Translational Research in Biomaterial, and others. Organizations can also submit applications for the GSO to co-sponsor events on the GSO website. The GSO website also contains a partial list of the events co-sponsored by the GSO dating back to 2008.

Co-sponsorship consists of a variety of support modes including financial support, publicity, planning, and administrative support. Co-sponsorship enables distinct organizations to pool resources to provide better and more diverse social engagement for their members that benefit the entire graduate student community. Co-sponsorship across student organizations is becoming increasingly common and encouraged within and outside of the GSO.

2017 – Holiday Party – GWISE, SAGE

2018 – Holiday Party – GWISE, SAGE

2019 – Underrepresented Graduate Students Coffee Hour: Students of Color – UGSO

Halloween Party – UGSO

Holiday Party – GWISE, TRB, SAGE

2020 – GSO and GWISE collaborated on decorations for the GRS Winter Social

2022 - Marathon Monday Watch Party with BU Health Promotion & Prevention

Boston Federation of Graduate Student Governments (Mass Fed)

In January 2019, the graduate student government of MIT reached out to colleges in and around Boston to establish the Boston Federation of Graduate Student Governments.

Representatives from MIT, Boston University, Boston College, Brandeis, Babson, UMass Boston, and Tufts gathered several times during the spring semester. The representatives from MIT had two goals in mind – to collaborate and to do some policy work. In previous years, the MIT graduate student council wrote policy statements concerning issues such as climate change, sexual harassment, and voting rights. They then spent a day at the statehouse presenting their statements to government officials. During 2019, they extended this opportunity to the local colleges.

As a group, we decided on four policies for which bills had been presented: clean energy, sexual misconduct on college campuses, the Global Entrepreneur in Residence (GEIR) program, and same-day voter registration. For our part, BU graduate students met several times to develop the statement on clean energy. Once each statement was developed, it was presented to the GSO representatives for support. In the end, we were able to support each document, thus using our 2000+ voices to support each of these bills.

In 2021-2022 the Boston Grad Federation has focused its efforts on understanding housing costs for graduate students in the city of Boston.

Travel Grants

The GSO disperses an average of 150-200 travel grants per year to Ph.D. students in GRS.

Rules for application. There are three grant cycles with due dates of December 1st, April 1st, and August 1st. On average, 60 applicants from across GRS departments apply. We award two types of grants - conference grants and research grants - each at \$500. Conference grants are given to graduate students presenting a paper or poster, participating in a discussion panel, or

chairing a discussion or paper session. Research grants are given to graduate students planning to visit an archive, attend a training workshop, or use a research facility. We receive 50-60 conference grant applications and 12-20 research grant applications per cycle?. The awarding of these grants is organized by the Travel Grant Committee chair and the Travel Grant Committee. This consists of four to six Ph.D. students from different departments in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. For all further information, consult <https://www.bu.edu/gso/travelgrants/>

Financial and Budgets

Past Budgets

2018 – 2019

Starting Balance (+rollover)	\$43,339.68
Meeting Expenses	\$1,827.18
Social Events	\$3,550.26
Co-Sponsored Events	\$2,006.50
Professional Development	\$236.37
Travel Grants	\$32,103.18

2019 – 2020

Starting Balance (+rollover)	\$38,616.19
Meeting Expenses	\$1,850.00
Social Events	\$4,300.00
Co-Sponsored Events	\$3,800.00
Professional Development	\$500.00
Travel Grants	\$27,500.00

2020-2021

Starting Balance (+rollover)	\$51,616.19
Meeting Expenses	\$1,000
Social Events	\$2,500
Co-Sponsored Events	\$3,800
Professional Development	\$500
Travel Grants	\$22,000

2021-2022

Starting Balance (+rollover)	\$65,411.35
Meeting Expenses	\$2,000
Social Events	\$5,000
Co-Sponsored Events	\$4,000
Professional Development	\$1,000
Travel Grants	\$34,000

Proposed Budget 2022-2023

E-Board Stipends	\$6,800
Travel Grants	\$33,000
Meeting Expenses	\$2,000
Internal Events (Social/Professional)	\$3,000
External/Co-sponsored Events	\$6,000
Outreach	\$1,000
Advocacy	\$1,000

(2022-2023) Strategic Plan

Goals

- *Open organization membership to support all graduate-level students at Boston University*
- *Build the GSO archive of past photos and documents to aid in the planning of future events.*
- *Increase GSO presence on campus through outreach to different departments and attendance at departmental orientations.*
- *Increase collaboration with other BU organizations.*
- *Increase GSO presence within the city of Boston*
- *Improve advocacy and support initiatives specific to international students.*

Proposed Activities for 2022-2023

- 55 Travel Grants Awarded
- Linked In Photo Shoot Event
- 3 social events per semester
- Collaborations with the Boston Grad Federation
- Collaborations with other student organization at Boston University
- Coffee Hours
- Graduate Student Fair Event