

GPSG History

For over thirty-five years, some form of the Indiana University Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) has represented graduate and professional students at IU-Bloomington to the University administration, faculty, staff, and other student organizations.

In 1979, ten graduate students were appointed to advise Graduate School Dean Leo Solt as an ad-hoc committee each month during the academic year. During these meetings, the students raised issues important to graduate and professional students and they received information from the Graduate School that affected the graduate and professional student population. From 1979 to 1983, the ad-hoc committee (known formally as the Graduate Student Advisory Committee) also worked closely with the Graduate Student Advisory Council – composed of faculty, administrators, and two graduate students – to discuss and recommend changes to policies affecting graduate and professional students. The issues debated by both groups remain relevant today (e.g. AI training, stipends, fee remissions and working conditions; grants for conference travel and research; health care and insurance, etc.).

Sensing a need for broader graduate student representation in the University's governance, the Graduate School Dean authorized the creation of the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) in 1983. Like a student government, all graduate and professional students were members, and departmental representatives, elected or appointed, conveyed their interests. Special Assistant to the Graduate School Dean Sheila Cooper first advised the GSO. The purpose of the organization was to not only hear what graduate and professional students had to say but also to introduce them to colleagues in other departments who shared similar concerns and interests. The GSO's Executive Committee replaced the Graduate Student Advisory Council (GSAC) as the advisory committee to the Graduate School Dean. In the meantime, the Graduate Student Advisory Council changed its name to be the Graduate Council (GC), which continued to have two graduate students as members.

The three organizations together – the GSO, the GSAC, and the GC – all played a role in changing University policies regarding the extension of the library materials renewal period for graduate students and curtailing noise in the stacks while students were studying. The groups also began a conversation with University administration about providing better health care and health insurance for graduate students who worked for the University as teachers or researchers.

During the 1985-86 academic year, the U.S. Congress proposed to eliminate the federal tax exemption on fee remissions and stipends. The University's policy during the school year was to continue as it had and not withhold taxes in the hope the new tax reform act would again include the exemption. The large potential tax burden caught the attention of many graduate students who, through the leadership of the Graduate Employees' Association (a union of graduate student employees which was affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the AFT), presented to the University administration a petition with 800 graduate student signatures. The petition demanded the Administration reimburse the students for the additional taxes they could have to pay if the exemption was rescinded. Fortunately, the GSO, the Graduate Employee's Union, and the University joined with many others to keep the fee remission and stipend exemption. The exemption was added to the 1986 Tax Reform Act and the issue faded away.

A result of the controversy was the creation of G901 for the 1987-88 school year; a course designed for doctoral students who would have normally received fee remissions once their coursework was complete. Doctoral students are eligible to enroll in the course six times, receiving six credits in return each semester for a \$100 tuition payment. The GSO, along with the Graduate Employees' Association, lobbied the University hard for this benefit. Also, the GSO helped the University lobby Congress to retain the student tax exemption on fee remissions though stipends did become taxable income.

The GSO met with the University administrators about a host of issues (the most important being the proposed technology and health center fee increases). Finally, the GSO and GEA were successful in persuading the Bloomington Faculty Council to mandate subsidized health insurance protection for

student academic appointees – which included associate instructors and teaching and research assistants – to begin no later than the fall semester of 1990.

The Graduate School merged with the University's Office of Research and Graduate Development in 1989, creating Research and the University Graduate School (RUGS), now led by Vice-President and Dean George Walker. The GSO remained a part of the Graduate School. Early in the 1990-91 academic year, the GSO, the Graduate Employee's Association, and the Family Student Council cosponsored a "teach-in" to enhance University awareness about graduate student issues. The topics included presentations about the economics of being a graduate student, the importance of graduate students at IU, and the responsiveness of the University administration to graduate student concerns. The GSO also continued to fight against increases in the Student Technology and Health Fees, claiming these fee increases placed an unfair burden on graduate students. In addition, RUGS began to consider a physical location for the GSO offices, as the organization had no place to conduct business on the campus.

At the beginning of the 1991-92 school year, Special Assistant to the Graduate School Dean Sheila Cooper was assigned to be an Associate Dean of RUGS at IUPUI. Taking her place as GSO Advisor was Laura VerMeulen, an administrative assistant in RUGS for fellowships and merit awards. During the year, the GSO received office space from the Graduate School in a University owned house located at 1105 E. Atwater. The location of the Graduate House was later changed to 803 E. 8th Street because the cost of renovating the Atwater Street property was too high. The house was considered to be a temporary office space for RUGS offices until Kirkwood Hall was renovated as part of the Crescent Project. The GSO was also very active concerning the reestablishment of the Bloomington Delivery Service by the IU Library and the adoption of fair employment guidelines for SAA's by the Bloomington Faculty Council. This was also the first year the GSO belonged to the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS). Finally, the Graduate School added fellowship holders to the mandatory SAA health insurance plan.

During the 1992-93 academic year, one of the major accomplishments of the GSO was its advocacy for a change in student health insurance providers from Accordia (a part of Blue Cross/Blue Shield) to Mega Life and Health Insurance Company which is a specialist in student health insurance coverage. The students received better coverage at a lower price with better service. Also, the GSO reorganized itself. Since 1986, the organization had functioned with a five-member Executive Committee who had few formal responsibilities. In 1992-93, the GSO representatives approved a reorganization which gave it a constitution and bylaws for the first time.

In 1993-94, Ross Peterson-Veach was named the first Modertor (now known as President) of the reconstituted GSO. Assistant Dean of RUGS Cathi Eagan replaced Laura VerMeulen as the GSO Advisor in January 1994. The organization's focus during the year was gaining legitimacy with the IU administrators, faculty, the Trustees, and its own constituency; made more difficult by the search for a new IU President and no real budget for the GSO to pursue its agenda. There was little change during the 1994-95 school year; although, the GSO received its first budget (~\$7,000) from RUGS and the GSO became better known to the University community and its own constituency – primarily through social events and open-forum meetings on graduate student issues. Rebekah Brown succeeded Ross Peterson-Veach as Moderator in January 1995.

Rebekah Brown's tenure during 1995 saw additional and positive changes for the GSO. During this period, the organization received its seat on the Bloomington Faculty Council (BFC) and was very active on BFC and University committees. For example, GSO representatives were able to secure a more rigid educational record access policy. Also, the GSO was involved with the design of IU President Brand's Strategic Directions Charter program. Finally, the GSO developed its first webpage.

Marguerite Rippy succeeded Rebekah Brown in January 1996. Marguerite's tenure was marked by major events, which fundamentally changed the GSO's organization and operations. In January, the GSO had its first opportunity to meet with the IU Board of Trustees; during which several student representatives told the Trustees about the issues concerning them. At the meeting, a report was produced for the Trustees entitled "Graduate Students and the University." The Trustees heard the students, and University administrators responded to the report at a subsequent Trustees meeting in May. The greatest

Trustee response to the student's presentation was an idea to create a faculty fellow program for advanced doctoral students, who would fill-in for faculty at the regional IU campuses who were on sabbaticals or other approved leaves. This idea became a RUGS program in 1997-98. In April, the GSO organized the first Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week which consisted of receptions in departments and school across the campus, a proclamation from Governor Bayh, and the first Grad Garden Party.

Also in April, the GSO submitted to the Mandatory Activity Fee Review Board a request for funds. After much effort, the Board was convinced the GSO is an important organization, which deserved a portion of the fee – 35 cents per student per semester – or about \$25,000 per year. This amount, combined with RUGS funds, gave the GSO its first substantial funding ever. The organization moved to use the money for a graduate assistant staff member and programming which aids graduate and professional students while not forgetting the importance of serving everyone on campus. In September, Kevin Condit was named the organization's first permanent staff member.

During June, the organization's negotiators were able to effect a major change in the way the University funded its mandatory health insurance plan. Instead of paying a premium to MEGA Life and Health Insurance, IU would instead self-insure the students and use the MEGA Life and Health Insurance Company as its medical claims processor. This action could have potentially saved the University approximately \$1.5 million per year; however, the University decided to purchase loss protection from large claims. The insurance coverage was also adjusted to be more preventative than catastrophic for the students needing minor medical attention.

In November, the GSO proposed the addition of a new staff member to aid it in broadening its reach to other student groups through a Strategic Directions Center grant. A \$15,000 stipend grant was received in April 1997 and a student was hired in August. New computer equipment was also purchased with the grant funds.

In December 1996, John Clancy replaced Marguerite Rippy as the GSO Moderator. The year 1997 was marked by additional GSO growth. The GSO produced a quarterly newsletter, revamped its website, placed more students on IU committees, and began to pressure the University about its new Marketing plan. The GSO also significantly updated its Constitution and Bylaws and hired Greg Raisman (Coordinator) and Linda Anderson (Communications Coordinator) to work with Kevin Condit, who would train the students. In January 1998, Assistant Dean Cathi Eagan resigned as GSO advisor and Yolanda Zepeda (Interim Assistant Dean) was named her replacement. In May 1998, Kevin Condit retired from the GSO and left the two remaining staff members to coordinate the organization's work during the 1998-99 academic year.

There aren't any noted institutional activities or changes between 1999 and 2002. It is a missing segmenting GPSO history, but 2002 was a year of significant changes. A majority of the Spring semester was spent pursuing departmental ratification of the new constitution. Our "magic number" of necessary departments was hit on the last day of the semester, April 27. Soon afterwards, we received letters from Chancellor Sharon Stephens Brehm and President Myles Brand officially recognizing the GPSO as the sole governing body of the graduate and professional students at IU-Bloomington. During the Spring semester we also launched the new Travel Grant, and, with very little advertisement, we received over 160 applications. Additionally, the GPSO worked with several upper level administrators to prevent the revocation of GA & RA parking and to make sure that the doctoral hooding ceremony did not occur at a time when graduate students and their advisors could not attend. Finally, the GPSO was able to sponsor and host several very well-attended social events such as happy hours and the Garden Party. At the Garden Party, the GPSO awarded its first annual Faculty Mentor Award to Professor William Yarber of the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. In the Spring, the GPSO hired two new staff members, Drew Yoder (School of Law and SPEA) as the Office Coordinator and Erika Biga (School of Journalism) as the Director of Public Relations. Erika immediately redesigned the GPSO website to the immediate acclimation of the whole group.

The Summer of 2002 was spent principally in organization mode for the fourth annual Graduate School Orientation. Held at the new Neal-Marshall Center, Orientation had an attendance rate almost double from the previous year. By the end of the semester, the GPSO had hosted several more social

events, placed students on many high-level committees (including the Provost Search Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, and the Student Trustee Search and Screen Committee). Additionally, the GPSO executive committee spent a significant amount of time during the fall semester preparing the Fee Review documents for this bi-annual process. In October, the GPSO presented its documents to the Fee Review Committee; GPSO was interviewed by the committee in November. The last order of business for the year 2002 was to elect the executive committee for 2003: Matt Hottell (School of Informatics) – Moderator, Richard Stein (Education – IST) – Assistant Moderator, Matt Dreup (SPEA) – Treasurer John Johnson (History & Philosophy of Science) – Secretary.

In 2004, the GPSO sought to continue its organizational growth especially as it related to three critical objectives: to be a stronger representative and advocate voice for graduate and professional students, to promote a greater number and variety of social opportunities for graduate and professional students, and to increase graduate and professional student involvement in the GPSO. John Slattery, who became Dean of the Graduate School in November, 2003, worked directly with the GPSO leadership on many initiatives. Assistant Dean Yolanda Treviño continued as the GPSO's advisor and ombudsperson to the University Graduate School.

The GPSO participated in the President's Task Force on Graduate Education, President's Task Force on a Proposed Athletics Fee, Student Advisory Committee, BFC General Assembly, BFC Standing Committees, and SAA Health Insurance Committee. In December, GPSO leader met with Dean McKaig to express concerns about the process and procedures for the review of the mandatory student activity fee (MSAF), of which 42 cents per student goes to fund the GPSO. The health care coverage for graduate and professional students was improved. A new policy was purchased with a subsidiary of the Aetna network providing a larger network of physicians; the new plan represented a considerable improvement in coverage for graduate and professional students at IUPUI. The GPSO provided the administration with comparative data on dental insurance at other Big 10 Universities and encouraged IU to adopt a dental insurance plan for student academic appointees.

The GPSO made a concerted effort to increase the number of departments with active GPSO representatives. Attendance at GPSO General Assembly meetings remained consistent at around 35 individuals. The standing committees were productive with an active nucleus of involved individuals but attendance at committee meetings averaged about 15 individuals. With hopes of increasing activity, the GPSO repeatedly contacted department and program administrators and support staff. GPSO also contacted graduate and professional students via email and flyers, and met with other graduate and professional student groups (including Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), Latino Graduate Student Association (LGSA), and Asian Cultural Center).

In Spring 2006, IU sought to reduce the number of C parking slots and permits. GPSO, at the initiative of the Moderator, Paul Rohwer, spoke up on the issue, and the number of C parking spots was not reduced. Spring 2006 was the first time GPSO participated in the Relay for Life event; GPSO increased the graduate student presence and support for such community outreach initiatives. In March 2006, GPSO initiated a meeting of graduate student governments from several universities. Joe Link coordinated this event that took place at IUPUI. Representatives of student governments from Notre Dame, IUPUI and Bloomington were present.

In Fall 2006 the GPSO rented the GradPad to provide a permanent meeting, study, and presentation site for graduate students. The Location in the IMU ensures access of all students. GPSO gathered data and information from other schools regarding their family leave policy and used this information to support a similar policy implementation at IU. The policy was eventually implemented by COAS.

During Fall 2006 the GPSO intervened on the behalf of individual students to solve issues of tuition remission credit from the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) being accepted to cover credit hours in the School of Education. One particular student was invited to teach a language class outside of the school of education but then was unable to use the tuition remission in her school.

The Breaking and Entering - Peer Mentoring Program for new students was also started during the fall 2006 semester. Over 100 new students signed up, 30 became actively involved and about 15 remained through the end of the semester. The focus of the mentoring program was to familiarize students with

professors and peers outside their department. The program had mixed success: some students enjoyed learning more about other departments but some others wished to network more within their own departments and the program could not offer that benefit very efficiently.

Fall 2007 saw one of the highest attended GPSO Assembly Meetings as the Moderator Paul Rohwer was impeached. Ultimately, he retained his position in office, and the GPSO Executive Committee continued business as usual. GPSO representatives served on numerous campus and BFC Committees; though, by the Spring of 2008, most of those positions were filled by Paul himself. The GPSO continued to have very successful social events including a Valentines Dance in the IMU with a jazz band and a Grad Bash in the IMU with another live band (the Grad Bash was held instead of a Garden Party). Graduate Appreciation week was in April and had several events geared toward Graduate and Professional students; though, attendance has gone down since individual departments have begun to host similar events. Small stipends were added to reward the hard work of the various executive committee members, and the GPSO also resumed the Graduate Student Newsletter. In the Spring of 2008, Dean Wimbush of the University Graduate School announced that the SAA health insurance plan would begin to include dental coverage; this was something that GPSO had advocated for years and which Dean Wimbush brought to fruition.

In 2014, GPSO kicked off the academic year with a welcome week picnic for new and returning graduate students. GPSO Officers attended orientation events for departments around campus, hearing their feedback and asking them to stay involved. The Assembly meetings started strong, beginning work on a stream of resolutions that would be passed over the course of the year. Much of the Fall's advocacy focused on the issue of Divestment; the GPSO ardently supported the environmental movement to uninvest from fossil fuel companies. Throughout the Fall semester, GPSO continued to host well-attended programming events, such as GPSO Social Hours, a family-friendly Halloween outing, and several networking events.

In the Spring semester, GPSO shifted its programming focus to professional development events, helping students with negotiation, retirement planning, professional headshots, and interviewing. Social Hours continued to be a success. By the end of the Spring semester, the GPSO had been amended multiple times to keep pace with GPSO's changing missions. Furthermore, the GPSO passed 11 resolutions, focusing a range of topics from sustainability to campus safety. Ben Verdi was elected as GPSO's next president for the 2015-2016 academic year, and the Assembly voted to use the moniker "GPSG" (Graduate and Professional Student Government) going forward.

At the end of academic year in 2013, Brady Harman had been elected GPSO President for the 2013-2014 academic year, but several seats remained unfilled. At the first assembly meeting, representatives were asked to elect a Vice President and Treasurer. For the first time in over a year, GPSO committees began work on multiple resolutions for the Assembly's considerations. GPSO programming was successful, with graduate students attending Social Hours, Study Times, and a litany of other events. The end of the Fall 2013 saw the GPSO start its Divestment campaign.

By the Spring semester, all GPSO committees had produced resolutions that the Assembly passed. Brady Harman was reelected as GPSO's President, but this time, he had a full slate of elected officers by his side. At the end of the year, GPSO had to abandon its old 8th street home and move on campus to Kirkwood Hall. The new location housed GPSO, the University Graduate School, and the Graduate Mentoring Center.

During the two years Brady Harman was GPSO President (2013-2015), his two Executive Boards passed a record number of resolutions. Most notably, the Resolution Regarding Fossil Fuel Divestment and Carbon Neutrality gained momentum throughout the IU system, passed by nearly all of the student representative bodies of the satellite campuses and

IUPUI. Unfortunately, when brought to the IU Foundation, this initiative lost momentum but continues on through GPSO's advocacy for the inclusion of clean energy in the Foundation's investment portfolio. The GPSO Liaison responsibilities were transitioned to the Community Development Coordinator and the permanently established Diversity Officer position. In Spring of 2015, the GPSO Assembly passed a name change amendment to better reflect the advocacy work and role of the organization in general to become the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG).

GPSG started the 2015 year by moving to their new space with the University Graduate School and many of the grad student resources on the 5th floor of the Wells Library. GPSG's Diversity Officer advocated early on for graduate student access to all disability services that are already paid for with the student fee. The assembly voted to permanently establish a Health and Wellness Committee under the GPSG Vice President as a part of the GPSG assembly, recognizing the unique needs of graduate students to health and wellness resources and programs. They are currently working to establish a spousal ID to allow easier access to campus resources already available to them.