



## **Graduate Student Representative's Report to the Board of Trustees**

Executive Committee Meeting, June 7, 2013

Patrick Neary, President of the Graduate Student Organization

I am pleased to provide you with my first report as the new President of the Graduate Student Organization. As Melissa Kizina Motsch, our outgoing President, mentioned at the board meeting in May, I was previously our organization's Internal Vice President. I had the privilege of meeting many of you during the Trustees events last month and look forward to working with the Board to continue improving the graduate student experience at Syracuse University.

The GSO made significant progress in a number of areas over the past year under Melissa's leadership. Some of these areas include: advocating for improvements to campus safety through installation of electronic locks on all classroom doors; streamlining many of our internal processes by redesigning our website and cleaning up our online forms; increasing the services the GSO provides to graduate students by contracting with additional service providers; expanding our travel grant program and creating a research grant program; and conducting a large-scale survey of graduate student income, expense, and benefit levels.

In the coming year the GSO intends to continue supporting and expanding the services we already provide, while exploring additional ways we can improve life for graduate students at the university. As President, my priorities for next year include:

### **Analyze Survey of Graduate Teaching and Research Assistants**

The GSO conducted a comprehensive survey of wage and expense levels, as well as childcare issues, amongst teaching and research assistants at the university. We look forward to analyzing this data in relationship to regional living wage statistics. This data will also give us insight into the competitiveness of Syracuse graduate programs that support TAs in comparison with our sister institutes, in stipend level, benefits, and family leave dimensions. We will use this data to advise the administration on future graduate stipend levels amongst other TA and RA issues.

### **Advocate Creating a Campus-Wide Family Leave Policy for Graduate Students**

Through the data gathered from our survey, we will examine current department-level and college-level family leave and general childcare policies. Initial data gathered suggests that while many departments provide generous support to graduate students with families, others are not as supportive. To aid individual departments in handling these issues, and to create standardization across the university, the GSO will be advocating for a unified graduate student family leave policy. Currently, faculty and staff are covered under unified policies, setting an example for a similar policy for graduate students.

### **Implement Research Grant Program**

Last year, the GSO spent \$65,000 on various travel grant programs, supporting graduate student travel to conferences and research locations. These programs have seen continuous and extensive growth over the past four years. This year, we have budgeted a combined \$100,000 toward our travel grant programs and our new research grant program. Over the summer we will be finalizing the details of this new program's administration. We look forward to directly supporting graduate students' research goals in addition to their professional and academic travel needs.

### **Organizational Improvements**

The GSO has grown and improved in numerous ways over the past five years. We look to cement in these improvements and encourage further growth by implementing a number of internal organizational changes. We have set ambitious new goals for student participation in our Senate, as well as in our system of committees. We will be conducting an extensive review of our governing documents, updating them as appropriate to bring them in line with current initiatives and to streamline our future operations. These will be coupled with extensive marketing campaigns to raise awareness of the GSO amongst graduate students, ensuring that our full constituency is invested in the organization.

The Graduate Student Organization looks forward to an exciting year, working with both the Trustees and the administration to effect positive change for graduate students. I know I speak for the entire graduate student body when I say thank you for your continued support of graduate education at Syracuse University.