



ARTS & SCIENCES GRADUATE COUNCIL

Upcoming Plenary Meetings:

April 30

Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2019; 6:30 PM

301 Philosophy Hall

<https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/>

1. Presentation and Q&A with Columbia Residential (UAH)

a. Diego Rivera (AVP), Dion Keene (Director), Fabbiola Green (Leasing Specialist)

b. Presentation about some of the policy updates from the last year

- i. Docusign: students use to sign housing agreements in the housing assignment, now all online with Docusign, this will also apply for renewals as well, easier for students.
- ii. Move In Hours: Monday-Friday 9-3pm
- iii. Online Billing: Students who move into UAH will be billed through SFS, and can now offer payment plans specific to housing charges, initial enrollment fee \$25 per semester for payment plan (ie. pay monthly instead of full semester up front)
- iv. Couples and family compliance process: effort to make sure couples and families can renew and remain in their unit, have to sign compliance form, starting this semester any students renewing agreement in couple or family housing must certify their status to remain in that housing
- v. Self-selection: started last year, new way for transferring students to participate in self-selection rounds online to see what units are available when approved for transfer, can see whole list of what is available, submit top three, and will receive top offer that is available. Gives power to student to choose unit that best works for them.
- vi. Reservation fee: not a new policy, but any student who moves into housing pays \$1000. It's not a security deposit, student will not get it back, but it's applied to first semester billing.
- vii. Transfers: much clearer policies have been implemented.
- viii. Part-Time Enrollment Exception: new this year, previously had to be a full-time student, but now can arrange a one-time only stay in housing when enrolled part-time, must be enrolled for at least six credits, cannot be first or last semester
- ix. Short-term extensions: Implementing this semester for graduating students who otherwise have to vacate at end of their agreement, but will give them a little extra time to find new housing (maximum of 30 days) with 20% additional charge. (Please note, you do NOT have to pay the 20% surcharge this year. See Quality of Life Chair updates.)
- x. Communication: Trying to be more transparent, started meeting with housing liaisons, and sending a student newsletter (first sent March 15, 2019) and beefing up website to have all policies spelled out

- xi. Cancellations: If you move out before end of your agreement, you are financially liable through end of your agreement, but now there is a cancellation policy that clarifies when there is a penalty or when it can be broken. So no cancellation fee in December or May, but you are billed to the end of agreement. If you move out at other times, you pay \$1000 but rent is pro-rated to your move-out date.
- xii. Moving Out: have to supply 30 day notice that you will be moving, usually have to vacate 60 days after dissertation defense, and there is a fee for moving out outside of normal hours.
- c. Teachers College Housing: very limited number of spots available for GSAS students by approval from GSAS only. Student has to be over age of 21 and no subletting allowed.
- d. PhD Extensions: submit extension request through housing portal, which is reviewed by UAH and GSAS. PhD students automatically have up to five years, have to request for more time, one year at a time, up to seven years total, determined by GSAS.
- e. Questions:
 - i. Plenary: I can only pay rent via check, is there a move towards an online system? This is very inconvenient.
 - 1. Looking into a system to eventually move online, under process right now, might have something by beginning of next year
 - ii. Plenary: Is there anything in place to help students who can't make \$1000 deposit? For example there is a PhD student coming in this year to my department who didn't have \$1000 up front.
 - 1. We work with student and the financial aid office to find a solution, or to create installment plan etc. We never want to turn away a student who wants to accept housing.
 - iii. Follow-up: Is that clear on the website?
 - 1. When students ask for options, we explain. I believe it's on website that if they have a question they can reach out to us, to assess case individually. But it's not an actual policy, so they need to ask us.
 - iv. Plenary: There has been talk about free wifi being part of housing for months, but I still pay \$80 a month to outside internet company. What's the timetable?
 - 1. Don't have a timetable. We are working on it. There is a whole project in the works currently. But will try and get more information to you.
 - v. Follow-up: Will this cost I've paid in the past be credited?
 - 1. Different department than UAH, will follow-up.
 - vi. Quality of Life Chair: Monthly lease extension for graduating students, Dean Alonso said 20% increase won't happen this year.
 - 1. Correct, waiving fee across the board for this year, will apply next year. It costs us a lot of money to turn around apartments this quickly
 - vii. Quality of Life Chair: On couple recertification - do couples have to come in person? Several people only received notice this week, but it says we only have until the end of March. And what about couples where the partner might be abroad for research?
 - 1. We started the process in February and sent emails then, but received a lot of responses that our emails went to spam or was labeled as "threatening." But it was included in student newsletter and updated on our website. We are working with students who aren't here, subletting, or abroad, so we will schedule something for them. As long as you

contact our office, you won't lose housing. Our goal is that everyone can renew if they want.

- viii. Plenary: Follow-up on couples recertification. This is a very intimate request, relationships are complicated and can change, but we are supposed to notify housing as soon as relationship ends? This is also very complicated for families. The policy puts an added strain on couples and families to comply and certify.
 - 1. What's important is that couples and family housing is a very scarce resource, only 1-2% of our housing stock, so our goal is just to make sure that those occupying those units are truly eligible, because if they aren't it can go to a student who needs it. We will offer a transfer to a more appropriate or efficient unit when no longer in couple or family.
- ix. Plenary follow-up: How do you respond to special cases?
 - 1. Every situation is different, we want to know what's going on, and we want to work with you to find a solution. But what we found is a lot of single individuals were occupying couples housing for years, which is what we want to prevent. But we take every situation into account. Rules are there, but we are flexible to figure out a solution for a particular situation and assessing next steps.
- x. President: About the availability of units, if couples housing is 1-2%, what is difference the between "couples housing" and regular, single occupancy? Can anyone just live alone?
 - 1. Couple units are studios or 1-2 beds, and no roommates, and no dormitory style. Separately there is also a small stock of single-student occupancy.
- xi. Quality of Life Chair: According to our Quality of Life survey, 28% of students live with partner, so 2% is a low number of units to be offering, that will not meet the need.
- xii. President: Are there plans to increase couples housing stock?
 - 1. We have a problem that we need more housing overall, we have several schools with similar problems, trying to cater to all of the different student needs. Changing our stock is difficult, we are not able to house everyone at Columbia. Although we have a lot, it's not enough. For the academic year, for example, in the fall, we get over 6,000 applications for housing and we can only accommodate 2,000. So this is a bigger conversation.
- xiii. Plenary: What information is available for self-selection when transferring?
 - 1. It lists the address, room number, floor of apartment, if utilities are included, square footage of room and apartment, furnished or not, elevator or walk-up.
- xiv. Follow-up: Is there an option to see apartments once you select?
 - 1. Yes, you have 24 hours to see and decide whether or not you want to accept the one unit offered to you from your selection.
- xv. Communications Chair Follow-Up: What's the logic behind this transfer process? Why, in the general transfer, are applicants only offered one unit out of their three choices? And are you working on making photographs of units available?
 - 1. Working on how to improve transfer process, and self-selection process to make it more efficient, provide more information, maybe floor plans if we have them available. We get a lot of applications for transfers,

more than units we have available, you aren't the only person participating in the round, so the only way to be fair to everyone, we can only offer that one. That has always been the process. Only thing that has changed is you choose the unit, rather than us choosing.

2. Sign-in & Welcome

- a. **Vote to approve February minutes → Approved**

3. Presentation and Q&A with Columbia Food Pantry

- a. Michael Higgins: Co-founder and Chair of Columbia Food Pantry (michaelhiggins@columbia.edu)
- b. <https://thefoodpantry.studentgroups.columbia.edu/>
- c. Started as a beta project in May 2016 for GS, quickly became aware of a bigger problem. Became recognized student group in Spring 2017, went from two people to eight person executive board, and as of today we have 150-175 volunteers on our listserv. Last year we had 250 students, on track to surpass where we were.
- d. This is not a specifically GS issue, they have the highest usage rate, but all school use the Food Pantry to some extent. This is a University-wide issue. (see data: <https://thefoodpantry.studentgroups.columbia.edu/node/21>)
- e. As of the end of February, 59 recipients from GSAS have utilized the pantry.
- f. GSAS graph: <https://thefoodpantry.studentgroups.columbia.edu/content/arts-sciences>
 - i. As of last semester, these are all of the disbursements we've had this year. Not significantly high, but for example six students in October says something. There are several initiatives coming up to ensure that every student that needs access to food can get access to food. Not something we take lightly. We have the backing of several high-ranking people in the administration, and starting next year hopefully setting up satellite location at CUMC. There's a lot that we can do and I can talk about if you have any questions. All publicly available data on website, and we are working with School of Epidemiology helping us with heavier data gathering.
- g. Questions:
 - i. Plenary: How do you apply and what kind of food is available?
 1. Permanently located on fifth floor of Lerner Hall, as long as you can swipe into Lerner, you have access. No application, no paperwork. If anyone from any school with CUID can come Monday and Thursday 4-7pm.
 - ii. Plenary: Is this available all year round?
 1. Yes, we are open during all breaks. All of the dining halls are closed, so very important to be open during break.
 - iii. Plenary: Do you take donations?
 1. Yes, all year round, you can come to pantry when open to donate, also a bin outside of room you can donate in and we will collect next time we are open. Only non-perishables can be accepted by us, although we have a partnership with Corbin Hill Food Project at Riverside Church that provides perishables on every Tuesday afternoon at no cost. On short term we are subsidizing cost, but soon we will reach out to individual schools to get perpetual funding for the perishable food program. It's relatively expensive. We started in January. (<http://corbinhill-foodproject.org/riverside-church>)

2. This is not a socio-economic issue or requiring any other qualifications. Anyone who has hunger or need, is stretching to feed themselves, this is there for them. The grocery stores around here are very expensive, so even those who can afford food still don't know where to shop. We are working to educate people on where they can shop affordably and how to prepare food.
 - iv. Plenary: At the Riverside Church farmshare, do the staff know Columbia students will be there?
 1. They know in general students will come, but they don't know the individual. We are paying the full cost to maintain confidentiality, so we provide a voucher at the pantry for them to use at the farmshare.
 - v. President: Organizations like ours have leftover food after events. Do you work to direct people or collect that food?
 1. No, because of health reasons. We did try, but we can't due to food handling reasons. Even though the entire executive team is food handler certified, it doesn't matter, it's a safety concern. We found a work-around with the farm share so that we aren't touching the food.
- 4. New student group presentation and Q&A (Vice President)**
- a. **Quantitative Approaches to Social Research Society (QASR) → Approved**
 - i. President, Treasurer and Vice-President presented
 - ii. Main goal is to provide some workshops and other meetings so that students can understand and utilize quantitative approaches for social science research. Not only academic, also professional. In the past organized PhD panels and invited professionals for presentations. We had several workshops on a number of topics in the past, and we have collaborated with other orgs on a "Data-In."
 - iii. Questions:
 1. Plenary: Where is your info? Do you have a website?
 - a. Yes, our events are online.
<https://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/qasr/about-us/>
 - iv. Closed-door conversation
 - v. Vote: Approved, 1 oppose, 0 abstentions.
- 5. Announcements (President)**
- a. **April Plenary Meeting (Departmental Representatives Thank You Party)**
 - i. April 30th final meeting, will be followed immediately after with party, probably at Arts and Crafts. Food will not be served at regular meeting.
 - b. **Faculty Mentoring Award and Chinweike Okegbe Service Award (March 29 Deadline)**
 - i. Was announced in newsletter, please nominate faculty mentors and administrators and students who do excellent service work. Send notice to your departments. Links on our website.
<https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/content/chinweike-okegbe-service-award>
and <https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/content/faculty-mentoring-award>
 - c. **Time to start finding new Department Representatives for 2019-20**
 - i. If you know you will not be a rep for next year, but you know who is, let Communications Chair know. If you will continue to be the rep, confirm with her.
- 6. Vote to Amend Constitution (President) → Approved**
- a. It is proposed that: *(1) The Community Chair position be elevated to become the "External Affairs Vice President" (EAVP), and (2) the Community Committee be*

changed to “Advocacy and Community Committee” (ACC), and (3) the Vice President remains next-in-line for the “President”, should there be an unforeseen vacancy.

b. Full language here: <https://goo.gl/chE1yb>

- i. Announced at last month’s meeting.
- ii. Vote: 30 approved, 0 opposition, 0 abstentions

7. Election of New Board Members (except Master’s Affairs)

a. **The order of elections in March shall be: President, Vice President, Communications Chair, Finance Chair, Community Chair (or EAVP), Quality of Life Chair, Media Chair, Events Co-Chairs, Alumni Chair**

- i. President: No nominations
- ii. Vice-President: No nominations
- iii. Communications Chair: Milica Iličić
 1. Milica Iličić
 - a. Vote in abstention → Approved, 0 oppose, 1 abstention
- iv. Finance Chair: No nominations
- v. EAVP: Mike Ford
 1. Mike Ford (Approved, one oppose, one abstention)
 - a. 3rd-year PhD in Music, was Finance Chair this year, will capitalize on role as University Senator, will shape this new role and invite speakers, liaise peers at Ivy+ which he has attended in the past
 - b. Closed-door discussion
 - c. Vote → Approved, 1 oppose, 1 abstain
- vi. Quality of Life Chair: Audrey Amsellem
 1. Audrey Amsellem
 - a. 3rd-year candidate in Music, interested in community-based organizations and activism in general, leads groups “Re-thinking Music Hum” and “Core Reform,” used to hearing grievances from peers and communicating them, resolving issues. Priority would be to think about well-being of community through diversity, inclusion, mental health, decolonial pedagogy
 - b. Questions
 - i. Plenary: What do you hope to achieve regarding decolonial pedagogy?
 1. Important to have more diversity in faculty who decides what the CC courses are and practices in the classroom, we need to revise some of the materials.
 - ii. Follow-up: Can you name one thing to change for the core, and one thing you would change on quality of life survey?
 1. Needs to be more space for core instructors to express concerns on the survey, and would remove Western focus from the core.
 - iii. Follow-up: So your idea of academic diversity is more student instructors?

1. Yes and also changing idea that what students should be taking from the core is only Western ideas.
- iv. Follow-up: Can you be more specific? What specifically would you change about the Core?
 1. I don't teach the Core, I teach Music Hum, so I will speak to that. We have an imposed syllabus with only three women and three people of color, the rest are white men - we need to make it more inclusive than that, and also look to non-Western traditions. Music doesn't belong to a certain place, and we need to think of people who have been erased from the syllabus.
- c. Closed-door discussion
- d. Vote → Approved, 0 oppose, 3 abstentions
- vii. Media Chair: Rogério Shieh Barbosa
 1. Rogério Shieh Barbosa:
 - a. 2nd-year Music student PhD, responsible for creating the website, use Columbia sites platform, since I built the website familiar with all of the requirements on accessibility, menus etc.
 - b. Closed-door discussion
 - c. Vote → Approved, 0 oppose, 0 abstain
- viii. Events Co-Chairs: Pierre Devlaminck and Casey Libonate
 1. Pierre Devlaminck
 - a. 1st-year student in Chemistry Department, pleased with event offerings, but potential for improvement, want to use experience in events-planning, want to make events as broad as possible.
 - b. Questions:
 - i. Plenary: What kinds of improvements?
 1. Maybe numbers? A lot of Broadway and sports, want to push more cultural stuff, want to find more stuff. Also open to suggestions, available.
 - ii. Events Co-Chair Brandon: What are you more interested in, cultural or social events?
 1. More experience in social stuff, but hobby in cultural, open to either.
 - iii. Closed door suggestions
 - iv. Vote → Approved, 0 oppose, 0 abstentions
 2. Casey Libonate
 - a. 2nd-year political science, worked at a law firm for summer program, ran events all day everyday, in charge of other programs on campus so familiar with catering and purchasing, also grew up in New York
 - b. Closed-door discussion
 - c. Vote → Approved, 0 oppose, 0 abstain

ix. Alumni Chair: No nominations

8. Committee updates

a. Alumni & Career Development

i. **End of year alumni-student happy hour at Columbia's Startup Lab (WeWork Soho)**

b. Quality of Life

i. **QoL survey anonymity concerns: will find a way to make the survey fully anonymous next year, either by putting a link at the end or by using a survey platform other than Google Forms.**

1. Survey concluded at midnight, 336 responses, which is fewer than last year but lost 40% of constituents in GSAC-ASGC transition. Will have report to you soon.

ii. **20% rent increase for lease extensions *will not be applied this year* though they still plan to implement it next year. If you or anyone you know has a lease extension agreement that asks them to pay 20%, they should ignore that and pay only their regular rent amount for that month.**

iii. **Summer gym access now free for those teaching in the summer.**

1. Question from Plenary: Does this include TAs?

a. Yes, includes TAs. If you teach either session one or session two, you have access for the full summer.

iv. **HR info for Voluntary Retirement Savings Programs for graduate students has been added to the retirement section of the HR website, at humanresources.columbia.edu/retirement**

1. Emailed HR in October about this issue, they have now updated website.

v. **Provost said parental accommodations were now a union matter.**

1. Forwarded all of the information to the Bargaining Committee

vi. **Columbia registration emails are going to start including information about health insurance lapses.**

1. Some students lost health insurance for a about a month (January) without warning if they didn't register for a residency unit in November. This will continue to happen but they will now warn you.

vii. **Dean Alonso reached out to Melanie Bernitz in the uptown medical center about allowing Morningside people who are working uptown to access health services at CUMC, and vice versa. Melanie Bernitz had a lot of questions, so we are planning to circulate a separate survey, coordinating with our counterparts at CUMC. Her questions were: What are the number of people who would be interested? Would this be a matter of having access for weeks, months, or years? And would this include routine health appointments, urgent care, or both?**

c. Events

i. **Updates**

1. Events are happening. Watch out for Hex & Co event that's in the works.

d. Finance

i. **SIGs awarded: 11 groups applied, 100% funded**

ii. **Next travel grant deadline is April 26**

- e. **Masters Affairs**
 - i. **Recap from Kelly Ahn/CCE Meeting. Kelly wanted to highlight the following:**
 1. CCE does virtual career counseling meetings, if you live far from campus.
 2. If you don't have business attire for a meeting, you can rent clothing from the CCE Clothing Closet.
 3. See the Subscription Resources (under the tab Tips & Resources).
 4. LinkedIn Alumni, Columbia Career Connections, and CU There Alumni Groups
- 9. External Organization Updates:**
- a. **Health**
 - b. **Libraries**
 - c. **Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC)/Union**
 - i. Bargaining now, all welcome to attend bargaining session, information goes out via listserv which you can join through website (<https://columbiagradunion.org/>). Organizing meetings every Wednesday 6-7:30, 716 Philosophy Hall
 - d. **Interschool Governing Board (IGB)**
 - i. New executive board elected
 - e. **Disabilities (SSD)**
 - f. **ISSO**
 - g. **University Life Events Council**
 - h. **PhD Council**
 - i. Will be following up on PhD handbook and policies questionnaire.
 - i. **Executive Committee of GSAS (ECGSAS)**
 - j. **Students of Arts and Sciences Consortium (SASC)**
 - i. Within GSAS there are five schools, and this will be the first time all student councils will be getting together to advocate for things that matter for all of Arts and Sciences. More updates to come.
- 10. Senators' Updates (Andrew, Mike, Darold)**
- a. Mike: Andrew has been sending out Senator newsletters. A few points to highlight from most recent newsletter.
 - i. Undergraduate Romance Policy is in effect - anyone employed by University cannot have relationships with undergraduate students. If currently in a relationship with undergraduate student, it needs to be declared.
 - ii. Senate is working towards graduate relationship policy. General Counsel of University wants to have a similar blanket policy, but that wouldn't logistically work. Progress moving slowly.
 1. Questions
 - a. If a graduate student is dating someone in GS, does that need to be declared?
 - i. Yes, it needs to be declared to EOAAA. I have been assured things will be worked through on a case by case basis. But no relationships are allowed between supervisor and supervisee at all.
 - b. Does this also apply to Barnard?
 - i. Yes.

- c. Will there be a move towards more transparency in what happens if a relationship is reported?
 - i. I have asked several times, will keep asking
- d. What if it's a first-year PhD student who isn't yet teaching?
 - i. That's fine, but when they start teaching will have to be declared.
- e. Is this a case when relationships have to be grandfathered in? Or can new relationships start?
 - i. Unclear at this point.
- iii. Two pieces of outdoor art are being moved. Can ask Senators for PDF with more information.
- b. Darold: Celebration of CU Senate at 50
 - i. Senate turns 50 at May, new task force to look at what next 50 years will look like. Reach out to Darold with ideas.

11. New Business (Open Forum)

12. Committee Meetings & Adjournment (President)

ASGC plenary meetings are conducted in the style of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (10th Edition)*

Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to raise your department placard when the person speaking has finished. You must be recognized by the Chair before speaking.

- No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once.
- The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations. When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins and changes can occur.