

ASGC Plenary Meeting Agenda

February 25, 2020, 6:30 PM | Philosophy Hall 301 | <https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/>



ARTS & SCIENCES GRADUATE COUNCIL

Upcoming Plenary Meetings
March 31 - Elections
April 28 - Party at Arts & Crafts

Guest Presentation

1. Presentation: Leilani Reynolds, Nathalie Neptune

This month's presentation was given by Columbia Residential's Leilani Reynolds (interim director of CU leasing) and Nathalie Neptune. In the presentation, Leilani stated that the majority of students live on-campus (Columbia housing). She clarified that the housing newsletter contains information specific to the season, and will include policy highlights and other updates. The most recent newsletter in January included the express move-out box: students are not allowed to move out after hours, due to the furniture, and as such, tenants may leave with their personal belongings and drop off the keys in the move-out box. She also mentioned that illegal subletting is not allowed, and students may be charged up to \$7500. Leilani emphasized that students should follow the online process, which is usually approved, if they plan on going away for research. Furthermore, over the summer and winter break, the application does not require a reason for subletting. The only restriction is that the subletting must last at least 30 days. Failure to follow protocol may result in agreement termination, possibly within the same day. Nathalie also added that such students will be reported to student conduct. Issues such as this arise not just when Columbia Residential policies are broken, but when students break New York law.

Nathalie then commented that Residential is currently working with IT on automating the housing selection process, not relying on Residential to choose for the students. They hope to launch later this semester. She then updated the plenary on the cancellation policy: prior to this year, students were able to break the housing agreement without incurring a cancellation fee. However, this is no longer an option; although students may cancel at any time with the rate prorated, there will still be a cancellation fee. If students leave at the end of the agreement, they may leave without a fee. Otherwise, there will be a \$1000 fee.

Finally, Leilani and Nathalie gave two final updates: couples and family compliance will start in April, ie. any students living in couples or family housing must update their status and if they are no longer a couple, their housing must change, and Residential will be extending their hours, during the busy months the office will open from 8 AM - 6 PM on the weekdays and 8 AM - 2 PM on the weekends. Residential is trying to listen to student feedback and improve the students' experience living on campus.

2. Question & Answer Period

- a. Q: How did/does Columbia Residential find out if a student illegally sublets?

A: Leilani responded that there were many different ways and that the staff were trained to detect illegal sublets. For example, Residential checks Airbnb regularly, which was what prompted Residential to start this process.

b. Q: Would it be possible to scrap the 10% surcharge limit when subletting?

A: Leilani clarified that it is New York state law that you cannot charge over 10%. If Residential is fined, the fee will be passed along to the student. Further penalties may include loss of housing and reporting to student conduct.

c. Q: When a student cannot find a subletter, is Airbnb still a legal option?

A: Nathalie replied that the issue is not Airbnb, but rather the rental length as well as the charge. If someone is found on Airbnb after following the sublet policy, Residential will have no issues. She also reminded the plenary again to apply through Residential.

d. Q: Are students allowed to sublet to a different sex?

A: As long as ALL occupants approve, there are no issues. They also noted that when there is a vacant, unassigned room, students were not allowed to sublet to a different sex.

e. Q: If a student is looking to sublet in the summer, when should they start?

A: Nathalie stated that the application can not be approved until the agreement is signed. Afterwards, the application can be processed as soon as possible.

f. Q: In a situation where someone moves out and Residential assigns another student to the vacant room, is it possible for undergraduate students to be placed in the same housing as graduate students? This raises many issues as the graduate student may be teaching the undergraduate student.

A: Leilani stated that since the summer of 2018, once they started the self-selection process, students from GS were no longer allowed to choose any housing other than their own schools'. The coming automated process should help block any issues.

g. Q: Is there an option for students to apply to GSAS-specific housing?

A: Leilani stated that in the selection, students may specify.

h. Q: On the receiving end to the question above, if a roommate vacates for the summer, can the staying student specify that they would like to house with students from certain schools?

A: Nathalie mentioned that if the staying student had a friend who wanted to live together, there should be an option available. There will be an option to opt-in for notification for when a roommate moves out. Staff will also be coming to prepare the room for the new student. This process, while not complete, is almost there.

i. Q: In the selection process, a student picked the lowest priced option, but they ended up living in a dorm. Is there any way to specify that the lowest priced option is a dorm?

A: Leilani directed the students to the application, which states that it is a suite room. The new platform will look completely different and everything will be as clear as they can make it. She also stated that the students should read the information online to double-check that their option is correct. Nathalie added that they will include in the new website and link to it as much as possible. Their hope is to better orient the students to help prepare them before applying.

j. Q: The current website has no photography, and students are only given 12 hours to accept or reject the housing assignment. Is it possible to have information before entering the contract?

A: Leilani responded that as long as the unit is unoccupied, the student has 24 hours to view the unit. In other words, they can arrange to see the unit as long as it is unoccupied. However, students will only be allowed to choose one, in contrast to how Residential used to simply assign housing. Because of the limited housing, it will never be possible to choose multiple options. The final process is being tested next week, and the first rounds should begin in April to prepare for the incoming class. If there are floor plans available on the portal, it will be updated. Ideally, the number of available floor plans will increase. Unfortunately, because Residential may only take photographs of unoccupied units, which is very rare, it is unlikely to have photographs of many of the units online. However, Residential understands that the biggest requests from the students are the updated floor plans and the photographs of the units. Finally, because there are a little over 8000 units, the inventory is so large that they must be systematic in working on this project; this will require long-term funding and is not something they can do for 8000 units at once.

k. Q: Is there a renovation date?

A: They stated that they will look into it, but it is likely.

l. Q: Changing the furniture in a furnished apartment is very frustrating. Is it possible to change the current system?

A: Nathalie clarified that all apartments will be furnished unless there is a medical reason.

m. Q: In an apartment where both students do not leave at once, how do the common areas get refurbished?

A: Leilani replied that if the student is living somewhere that has not been refurbished in a long time, they can submit a request in which every roommate agrees.

n. Q: Why are all the apartments furnished? The current furnishing is not the most comfortable for students who will be here for a long time. Many of the students are not very satisfied.

A: Leilani responded that the main reason Residential furnishes the apartments is because it dramatically decreased the number of roommate arguments. For example, if they both buy furniture, who keeps what when they leave. Furthermore, there is a lot of turnover in the student buildings, which causes a lot of wear and tear, and PhD students comprise of around 20%. There is also a cost issue, and having furnished apartments may help students who cannot furnish the apartment themselves.

o. Q: Is it possible to create two groups for students who expect frequent turnovers? Maybe Residential can furnish apartments depending on the tenants' lifestyles. Why can Residential not allocate resources, as the furniture is very alienating for 5 years?

A: Nathalie sympathised with the student and mentioned that the conversation about furniture is taking place now. The issue is splitting up the inventory in a way such that the students who will remain for a long time with limited inventory is very difficult, especially if the residents live in specific housing. What Residential will take from this

question is that maybe they need to talk with partners and other staff at Residential to see what type of furniture they can include.

- p. Q: Regarding the inventory splitting, did Residential not already split? For example, Law students have separate housing from GSAS.

A: Leilani clarified that certain schools have purchased their own housing. For those buildings, there are a large number of units, on 115th for example, specifically for law students. The school owns the building, and Residential manages it. GS and SAS also have such buildings. However, these are usually very small and were implemented for MA students. The issue goes back to the school acquiring housing for them.

- q. Q: For students whose research years start in the fall and not the spring, ie. they may potentially leave in December, can they contact Residential to tailor the leasing agreement, as it is unfair to penalize such students?

A: Nathalie replied that if they canceled and were charged a fee, the student is allowed to submit a fee waiver. The directors review that and determine if there is a basis for waiving. Otherwise, if the student is at the end of their PhD, ie. leaving in the spring, they can only request until December. Leilani added that they can wave if there is a solid reason.

- r. Q: Is all that information available on the website?

A: Nathalie replied that the waiver information is on the website, the cancellation update was on the last newsletter, as well as the website.

Minutes from January Plenary - Approved unanimously

Constitutional Changes Proposed (See Appendix)

There were three constitutional changes proposed at the plenary: creation of DEI Chair, Alumni Chair responsibility redistribution, and general constitutional updates from GSAC.

1. After reaching out to key stakeholders such as the leaders of [SoCA](#), [WISC](#), and [IDEaS](#), the primary responsibilities proposed at the meetings can be found in the proposed constitution found below. One notable responsibility was the development of the Diversity Initiative Grants, which provides students and groups with additional funding if the program supports diversity in some way.
2. The Alumni Chair responsibilities were redistributed to the VP Administration, with the exception of maintaining the LinkedIn page which goes to the Media Chair.
3. The constitution contained GSAC-specific wording, which was cleaned up and finalized below.

Vote in March - Approved Unanimously

Advocacy Updates

1. Alex Cuadrado (ASGC President, asgc.president@columbia.edu) gave an update on cross-registration. The Regional Studies students, and any other students, wanting fair access to SIPA courses were invited to stay after the plenary to speak with Alejandra Teresa Vazquez Baur (atv2113@columbia.edu). Alejandra will be leading a brief focus group regarding cross-registration.

2. Alex also updated that the deans have listened to the request for increased MA writing support. This is the first year for many of the initiatives that are being offered, and they are hoping that this will only increase. Some of the programs available included ALP writing courses for international students not necessarily comfortable with English as a primary language, and MA-specific workshops, some tailored to MA writing.
3. The [Free Tax Prep @CLS](#) is still ongoing. The Law students invite GSAS students to come for aid! Information is included in the newsletter.

An attendee commented: "Last year, the program was not very helpful when it came to international and dual income issues". Audrey Amsellem (ASGC QoL Chair, asgc.qualityoflife@columbia.edu) mentioned that ISSO provides [free tax fill-out software](#) for international students. If the software is not helpful, let ASGC know!

Awards Nominations

1. The Chinweike Okegbe Service Award is awarded to students and non-students (not faculty). The nomination process will be given at the April plenary.
2. The Faculty Mentoring Award will also have a nomination process. There will be a committee that reads all of the nominations, and there will be an invitation next month. Alex invited any interested students to contact ASGC.

Elections for ASGC Executive Board Positions at March Plenary

There will first be a vote for the constitutional changes! There will also be a nomination period the week prior to the election. Any interested students are invited to talk to the board members. There will be a happy hour the Friday, March 27, before the plenary. Details will be announced in the newsletter. There will be 4 to 5 of the current board members running, and running against the current board is encouraged. Students who are not elected may run for subsequent elections! Mike Ford (ASGC VP External Affairs, asgc.vpexternalaffairs@columbia.edu) also noted that there is a \$1500 stipend per year. Will Plews-Ogan (ASGC VP Administration, asgc.vpadministration@columbia.edu) also commented that there are monthly meetings with the GSAS administrators, and officers learn a lot about how Columbia works from the inside. The meetings are very interesting and Dean Alonso takes it very seriously.

Committee updates

1. Tea Crnković (ASGC Finance Chair, asgc.finance@columbia.edu) updated the plenary that the [Student Initiative Grants](#) deadline was last Sunday. There were 13 applicants and the awards will be sent out by the end of the week. In contrast to the last semester, Tea needs to consider potential spending and grants awarded to groups in the previous semester. Certain departments will already have \$2000. For more information on where ASGC allocates its finances (annual spending, grants, etc.), refer to the [website](#).
2. Audrey Amsellem (ASGC QoL Chair, asgc.qualityoflife@columbia.edu) announced that the ASGC QoL survey has been extended for one week, until March 2nd. Thus far, there have been 384 submissions compared to the 310 last year. She also announced that the CoDE survey has had around 900 responses. The deans will use the results to think about how to improve all of the departments and programs. For example, how to be more efficient, how to improve the climate

and culture, policy of insurance, funding, etc. Students are encouraged to take the CoDE Survey! Only aggregated data will be sent to the departments, and it is a very important survey in improving the programs. Finally, she stated that QoL can come to your department to host a survey fill-out session. Students interested in hosting such a session are invited to contact Audrey.

3. Pierre Devlaminck (ASGC Events, asgc.events_cochair1@columbia.edu) listed some of the upcoming events: Cosi fan tutte on Thursday, NY Islanders vs Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday March 3, Six (a popular pop musical) on Friday March 13, ski trip on Saturday, happy hours on Friday, March 27, likely at Mel's where students can come and talk to the current board, and a wine and cheese event soon-to-be announced.
4. Mike Ford (ASGC VP External Affairs, asgc.vpexternalaffairs@columbia.edu) updated that SASC will be climbing one level in the administrative hierarchy and will be talking to the deans of the faculty of GSAS. Columbia will be sending 5 delegates to the NAGPS Legislative Action Days, including Mike: one student from physics, one student from the social sciences, one student from neuroscience, and one student from law. They will be meeting with congressional staff, and if there is an issue you would like to be addressed, ie. unions, Title IX, etc., contact Mike. Reach out with any legislative action you want them to take.
5. Salihah Evans (ASGC Masters Affairs, asgc.mastersaffairs@columbia.edu) announced that there will be three events. There will be free headshots on March 9 on the Amsterdam bridge, an alumni networking happy hour on March 26, and a paint and sip event on April 16. The times are tentative and will be included in the newsletter.

External Representatives Updates

1. Bhargav Gopal(Health Representative, bg2600@columbia.edu) updated that the established hotline has an option for coronavirus. However, the doctors are more worried about the flu than coronavirus. There is also a discussion about getting doctors notes to be exempt from exams, but it is still ongoing. Any concerned student can contact Bhargav.
2. Rahim hashim (Libraries Representative, rh2898@columbia.edu) announced that the libraries are working to build kindles as a platform. They are taking recommendations for how they should structure it, and any interested students are welcome to contribute to the next libraries committee.
3. Amelia Spooner (GWC Representative, ajs2144@columbia.edu) announced that the union is preparing for a strike. The first step is to vote for strike authorization. Columbia has recently retracted the proposal regarding mutual arbitrators, and the deadline to strike is April 6. Students interested in signing up for the newsletter can contact Amelia.
4. Frank Gutierrez (IGB Representative, fg2462@columbia.edu) commented that IGB has not met since the beginning of the semester.

Senators' Updates

1. Mike Ford (Humanities Senator, gsas.humanities_senator@columbia.edu) announced that in the most recent meeting of the student affairs committee, an issue regarding child care was brought up. Students interested in contributing and/or sharing personal stories regarding their struggles with child care can contact Mike (mlf2191@columbia.edu). He also noted that the report draws heavily on ASGC surveys conducted in past years and that the data is used!

There will also be two elections for the senator, Humanities and the Social Sciences. Mike emphasized that transparency is a very serious topic for the senate.

New Business (Open Forum)

1. Last semester there was a discussion with setting up a unified health plan. Are there any updates?
Alex responded that the next plenary guest will possibly be Columbia Health. The guest will be able to help.
The union is also aware of issues regarding health plans, and they discuss these issues.
2. A student asked whether it would be possible for students to ask questions beforehand and to pool questions, prioritizing important questions, as not every attendee was able to ask a question.
This will likely be implemented soon.
3. Mike also commented that the External Disabilities Committee has restarted. The GSAS representative position is opening up, and students interested may contact Mike (mlf2191@columbia.edu) for more information.

Adjournment

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.

Appendix: Proposed Constitutional Changes

Proposed to be voted on at the March Plenary.

These changes accomplish three things:

- Creation of a DEI Chair and Committee
- Redistribution of Alumni Chair duties to the VP, Administration and Media Chair
- Cleaning up obsolete wording regarding the transition from GSAC to ASGC (2018)

Description of the DEI Position

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Chair Responsibilities shall include

1. **Responsible for directing the DEI committee towards the goals of encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion for graduate students and across the university.**
2. **Act as a liaison between ASGC and DEI-focused student groups by attending their board meetings.**
3. **Convey student grievances to the ASGC Executive Board and the GSAS Administration.**
4. **Report on DEI-related advocacy and activities (including programs organized by student groups) at plenaries, Executive Board Meetings, meetings with GSAS Administration, and through the ASGC Newsletter.**
5. **Work with the Quality of Life chair to ensure that the annual QoL survey addresses issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.**
6. **Advocate for DEI issues at the GSAS and University-wide levels (such as the Diversity & Inclusion Task Force)**
7. **Administer Diversity Initiative Grants (which supplement, rather than replace Student Initiative Grants) to student groups and departments that sponsor DEI-related events.**

	Current	Proposed
Con. IV.1	The Executive Board shall consist of the following Offices: President, Vice President (Administration), Vice President (External Affairs), Communications Chair, Finance Chair, Quality of Life Chair, Alumni Chair, two Events Co-Chairs, Media Chair, and Master's Affairs Chair.	The Executive Board shall consist of the following Offices: President, Vice President (Administration), Vice President (External Affairs), Communications Chair, Finance Chair, Quality of Life Chair, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair, two Events Co-Chairs, Media Chair, and Master's Affairs Chair.
Con. IV.3	The Executive Board, except for the Master's Affairs Chair, term shall begin May 1st and end April 30th. Officers serving the 2017-2018 school year, will remain ex-officio officers to the new student group, ASGC, through the end of the 2017-2018 academic school year.	The Executive Board, except for the Master's Affairs Chair, term shall begin May 1st and end April 30th.
Con. V.2	Standing committees include: Community Committee, Budget and Finance Committee, Quality of Life Committee, Alumni Committee, Events Committee, Master's Affairs Committee.	Standing committees include: Finance Committee, Quality of Life Committee, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Events Committee, Master's Affairs Committee.
Con. VI.7	In March 2018, the GSAC Plenary will hold elections for the Executive Board of the Arts & Sciences Graduate Council (ASGC) in accordance with the ASGC Constitution & ASGC Bylaws. Positions include: President, Vice President (Administration), Vice President (External Affairs), Communications Chair, Finance Chair, Quality of Life Chair, Alumni Chair, two Events Co-Chairs, Media Chair, and Master's Affairs Chair.	[cut obsolete section]
Con. VIII.1	Should any external group request a representative of the academic graduate student body, the executive board shall discuss this request and shall decide whether to provide representation to the group in question. The Community Chair will inform the ASGC about their actions at the following ASGC meeting.	Should any external group request a representative of the academic graduate student body, the executive board shall discuss this request and shall decide whether to provide representation to the group in question. The Vice President (External Affairs) will inform the ASGC about their actions at the following ASGC meeting.
Con. IX.11	In the event of a vacancy in the Office of the President, the Vice President shall immediately become the President and the Office of Vice President shall become vacant.	In the event of a vacancy in the Office of the President, the Vice President (Administration) shall immediately become the President and the Office of Vice President (Administration) shall become vacant.
Con. X.17	Section 17: All current GSAC sponsored groups, including student interest groups and departmental government groups will no longer be recognized by GSAC as of March 31st 2018. All current GSAC sponsored groups must re-submit for recognition under ASGC's constitution to GSAC's vice president prior to April 1st 2018.	[cut obsolete section]
Con. X.18	Section 18: April 1st 2018, all remaining GSAC funds and GSAC property will be transferred to the Arts & Sciences Graduate Council (ASGC), this includes, but is not limited too, website access and ownership, mailing list access and ownership, officer email access and ownership, GSAC specific paraphernalia, and all Funds.	[cut obsolete section]
By-Laws I.3	Section 3. Vice President responsibilities shall include:	Section 3. Vice President (Administration) responsibilities shall include:
By-Laws I.10	Section 10. Community Chair responsibilities shall include:	Section 10. Vice President (External Affairs) responsibilities shall include:

	<p>Section 7. Alumni Chair responsibilities shall include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsible for directing the Alumni committee activities towards improving Alumni participation while fostering growth of future alumni relations with current students. 2. Coordinate an internal document of past GSAC and ASGC officers and DRs with up-to-date contact information. 3. Communicate the needs of graduate students to the Alumni Board. 4. Coordinate with the Alumni Board to plan events related to the professional development of graduate students, including alumni networking events and professional skills events. 5. Maintain ASGC LinkedIn Page fostering Alumni engagement with Current Students 	<p>[Alumni Chair position and Alumni Committee dissolved; items 1-4 move to Vice President (Administration); item 5 is already under Media]</p>
<p>New By-Laws section to be added that describe the DEI Chair:</p>		<p>Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Chair Responsibilities shall include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsible for directing the DEI committee towards the goals of encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion for graduate students and across the university. 2. Act as a liaison between ASGC and DEI-focused student groups by attending their board meetings. 3. Convey student grievances to the ASGC Executive Board and the GSAS Administration. 4. Report on DEI-related advocacy and activities (including programs organized by student groups) at plenaries, Executive Board Meetings, meetings with GSAS Administration, and through the ASGC Newsletter. 5. Work with the Quality of Life chair to ensure that the annual QoL survey addresses issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. 6. Advocate for DEI issues at the GSAS and University-wide levels (such as the Diversity & Inclusion Task Force) 7. Administer Diversity Initiative Grants (which supplement, rather than replace Student Initiative Grants) to student groups and departments that sponsor DEI-related events.
<p>New By-Laws section to be added that describe the DEI Committee:</p>		<p>Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chaired by the DEI Chair. 2. Communicate the needs of students to the ASGC Executive Board. 3. Maintain relationships with student groups and consider ways to promote DEI advocacy. 4. Evaluate and disburse Diversity Initiative Grants. 5. Maintain relationships with GSAS Administration and OADI. 6. Work with the Quality of Life committee to ensure that the annual QoL survey addresses issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
<p>By-Laws II.6 & 8</p>	<p>[Describe the duties of the defunct Alumni and Community committees]</p>	<p>[cut obsolete sections]</p>
<p>By-Laws II.12</p>	<p>Section 12. All current or past ad hoc committees voted on by GSAC will terminate March 31st 2018.</p>	<p>[cut obsolete sections]</p>

By-Laws IV.2	Section 2. The order of elections in March shall be: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Finance Chair, Community Chair, Quality of Life Chair, Media Chair, Events Co-Chairs, Alumni Chair.	The order of elections in March shall be: President, Vice-President (Administration), Vice President (External Affairs), Finance Chair, Communications Chair, Quality of Life Chair, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair, Events Co-Chairs, Media Chair.
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