



ARTS AND SCIENCES GRADUATE COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

ASGC EXECUTIVE BOARD:

President: Alex Cuadrado

Vice President, Administration: Will Plews-Ogan

Vice President, External Affairs: Mike Ford

Finance Chair: Tea Crnković

Communications Chair: Gihyen Eom

Quality of Life Chair: Audrey Amsellem

Alumni & Career Chair: Matthew Morales (through Nov. 2019)

Events Co-Chairs: Pierre Devlaminck & P.J. Robinson

Media Chair: Rogério Shieh Barbosa (through Dec. 2019); Davida Rios (since Jan. 2020)

Masters Affairs Chair: Salihah Evans

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COVID-19 & ASGC

The spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year will be remembered for the extraordinary mobilization of resources and effort on behalf of all members of the Columbia community. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent displacement of students, the advocacy and programming work of the Arts & Sciences Graduate Council shifted considerably into uncharted waters. By fielding student concerns, ASGC was able to identify advocacy channels and resources to help those students most in need. Through our collaboration with GSAS, we co-sponsored an Emergency Fund that redistributed resources to students facing economic hardship. Through our advocacy with Columbia Residential and other offices on campus, ASGC helped pave the way for the loosening of otherwise stringent policies.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

“Good Standing”

Due to confusion across departments and administrators, ASGC passed a constitutional amendment to no longer use the phrasing “good standing” to refer to those departments whose students are eligible for ASGC grants. Under the new wording, a department is “active” or “inactive” based on attendance and committee participation and therefore “eligible” or “ineligible” for ASGC funding.

New Executive Board Position: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair

Informed by the results of the 2019 Quality of Life Survey Report and inspired by our peer Ivy+ institutions, ASGC held a series of conversations this spring to discuss creating a new Executive Board position focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. ASGC consulted with student leaders from the three ASGC-sponsored affinity groups (SoCA, WISC, and IDEaS) to create the position description:

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.

The position was approved by the plenary and added to the constitution in March.

ELECTIONS

2020-2021 ASGC Executive Board

Elections for the 2020–2021 ASGC Executive Board were held during the March Plenary Meeting. All three divisions are represented.

President	Alex Cuadrado (Italian)
VP, Administration	Laura DiNardo (Italian)
VP, External Affairs	Bhargav Gopal (Economics)
Finance Chair	Tea Crnković (Chemistry)
Communications Chair	Emily Paull (French & Romance Philology)
Quality of Life Chair	Dara Huggins (Psychology)
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair	Arden Lee (Chemistry)
Events Co-Chairs	Pierre Devlaminck (Chemistry) and P.J. Robinson (Chemistry)

Master's Affairs Chair	Meave Sheehan (Oral History)
Media Chair	Davidia Rios (Chemistry)

2020-2021 GSAS Senate Elections

In Spring 2020, Mike Ford (Music) and Andrej Arpas (QMSS) were elected to the Humanities and Social Sciences GSAS Senate seats, respectively. Weitao Zhu (Mathematics) is the Senator for Natural Sciences.

AWARDS

Faculty Mentoring Awards

ASGC continued the tradition of presenting a faculty mentoring award annually during convocation to two members of Columbia University faculty to recognize excellence in mentoring GSAS students. This award is a student initiative; selections were made entirely by graduate student representatives from GSAS and affiliated schools based on student nomination letters spanning across all disciplines. The recipients of the 2020 awards are:

Professor Abosedo George, Associate Professor of History and Africana Studies at Barnard

Professor Ana Maria Ochoa, Professor and Chair of the Music Department at Columbia

Chinweike Okegbe Service Award

ASGC also presented three Service Awards to a combination of graduate students and/or non-students in recognition of their service to the Columbia graduate community. This was the second year the awards were presented under the Chinweike Okegbe Service Award name, and the first year they were presented by ASGC. The recipients of the 2020 Chinweike Okegbe Service Award are:

Sharon Kim, Senior Program Manager in European Institute

Elise Myers, PhD Candidate in Earth & Environmental Science

Cat Lambert, PhD Candidate in Classics

COMMITTEE WORK

As President, I served on several committees at Columbia, including the Executive Committee of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, the Educational Policy and Planning Committee of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences, the PhD Council, the Students of Arts & Sciences Consortium, and the Student Libraries Advisory Council.

ADMINISTRATION

Will Plews-Ogan

INVITED PLENARY SPEAKERS

September 2019	Kate Daloz, GSAS Writing Studio
October 2019	Kelly Ahn, Center for Career Education [no-show]
November 2019	Mark Hawkins & Jane Hojan-Clark, Student Financial Services
December 2019	Samantha Lu, International Students and Scholars Office
January 2020	Joseph Greenwell, Office of University Life
February 2020	Leilani Reynolds & Nathalie Neptune, Columbia Residential
March 2020	Dr. Melanie Bernitz & Dr. Michael McNeil, Columbia Health Gaspere LoDuca, CUIT
April 2020	Presentation of Awards

STUDENT GROUP RECOGNITION PROCESS

New approved student groups: 1

Rejected student groups: 0

Columbia Physics Graduate Council (CPGC) (October 2019)

“The CPGC was founded to promote physics (and other physics-related interdisciplinary fields) to any student who is interested and to provide a platform for scientific communication, to give career guidance for aspiring scientists and to encourage a healthier lifestyle for current graduate students.”

NEW INITIATIVES FOR SPRING 2019

GSAS-ASGC Emergency Fund (COVID-19)

Beginning in March 2020 during the onset of the COVID-19 crisis in New York City, ASGC convened and jointly agreed to put forth \$25,000 in their existing funds towards relief of a variety of student needs emerging from the COVID-19 crisis. ASGC developed a range of options for how to use these funds and presented the options to GSAS Deans, Associate Deans, and administrators in early April, 2020. GSAS generously offered \$25,000 in GSAS funds and agreed to help raise more from departments and alumni. GSAS and ASGC leadership decided to create a jointly-administered Emergency Fund. Three students—Will Plews-Ogan, Audrey Amsellem, and Salihah Evans—and three GSAS administrators formed a committee to review applications, and conducted two rounds of reviews and disbursements totaling roughly \$100,000 throughout the months of April and May to meet student needs on a case-by-case basis.

Volunteering Opportunity Coordination

Beginning in March 2020, Will Plews-Ogan and ASGC networked to create a list of volunteering opportunities on campus and around the Morningside/NYC area related to the COVID-19 crisis. This list was vetted with GSAS leadership and distributed to GSAS students in early April. One of these opportunities was a tutoring program that garnered 1,500 volunteers in the first month and served the families of essential and medical workers in need.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Mike Ford

ON CAMPUS

SASC

ASGC collaborated with various student governments on both policy and programming issues. We continued calling the meetings of the Students of Arts & Sciences Coalition (comprising the student governments of GSAS, SPS, SoA, GS, and CC), which resulted in a meeting with the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. In the fall, we met with Interim EVP Maya Tolstoy; in the spring, with EVP Amy Hungerford. GS and CC withdrew their participation from both meetings. CC did, however, send a representative to the welcome dinner SASC hosted for EVP Hungerford.

ASGC & EGSC

We strengthened the fraternal bonds with the EGSC with collegial dinners in the fall and spring from which several collaborative efforts emerged.

CoDE Survey

Along with the President and Finance chair, I made several recommendations on the survey sent by the FAS Committee on Doctoral Education. I also represented GSAS on the PhD Council.

Senate Elections

Finally, in my role as EAVP and University Senate Elections Commissioner for GSAS, I collaborated with the leadership of the GSO of the Biomedical PhDs Uptown in running the election of the GSAS Natural Sciences Senator. After the recent reapportionment of the University Senate, the biomedical PhD students will fall under P&S, rather than GSAS. Due to a conflict of interest, the GSAS Humanities and GSAS Social Sciences Senator elections in the Spring were run by the ASGC President. ASGC and the GSAS Senators will continue to working closely together.

OFF CAMPUS

IVY+ Graduate Student Summit

We led a delegation to the Ivy+ Graduate Student Summit, held at Princeton University, October 18–20. Alex Cuadrado (President) and I represented ASGC, and brought along colleagues from SEAS, SPS, and the Law School. We exchanged ideas with our peer student governments, particularly around inclusivity and mental health. In the spring, representatives from the schools met virtually to discuss and compare student government responses to COVID-19 and resultant policies.

NAGPS

I also represented Columbia at the National Conference of the National Association for Graduate-Professional Students, held at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, November 7–10. The event also included a Leadership Academy. During the business meeting of the conference, I was elected Director of Legislative Affairs for 2020 (I resigned from the position in March 2020). The NAGPS adds two forms of value: sharing of best practices (much like Ivy+) and raising awareness around legislative issues. With regards to the latter, ASGC intended to send a delegation to the Advocacy Summit and Legislative Action Days to be held in Washington, DC, in March 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the event was canceled. That did not stop Columbia legislative efforts though: Barbara Cruvinel Santiago (Physics), Darold Cuba (Oral History), Laura Long (Neuroscience), and had remote meetings with nine congressional offices, including those of both NY Senators.

GRANTS

Student Initiative Grants

	Applications	Awards
Number	26	26
Amount	\$19,994.00	\$19,994.00

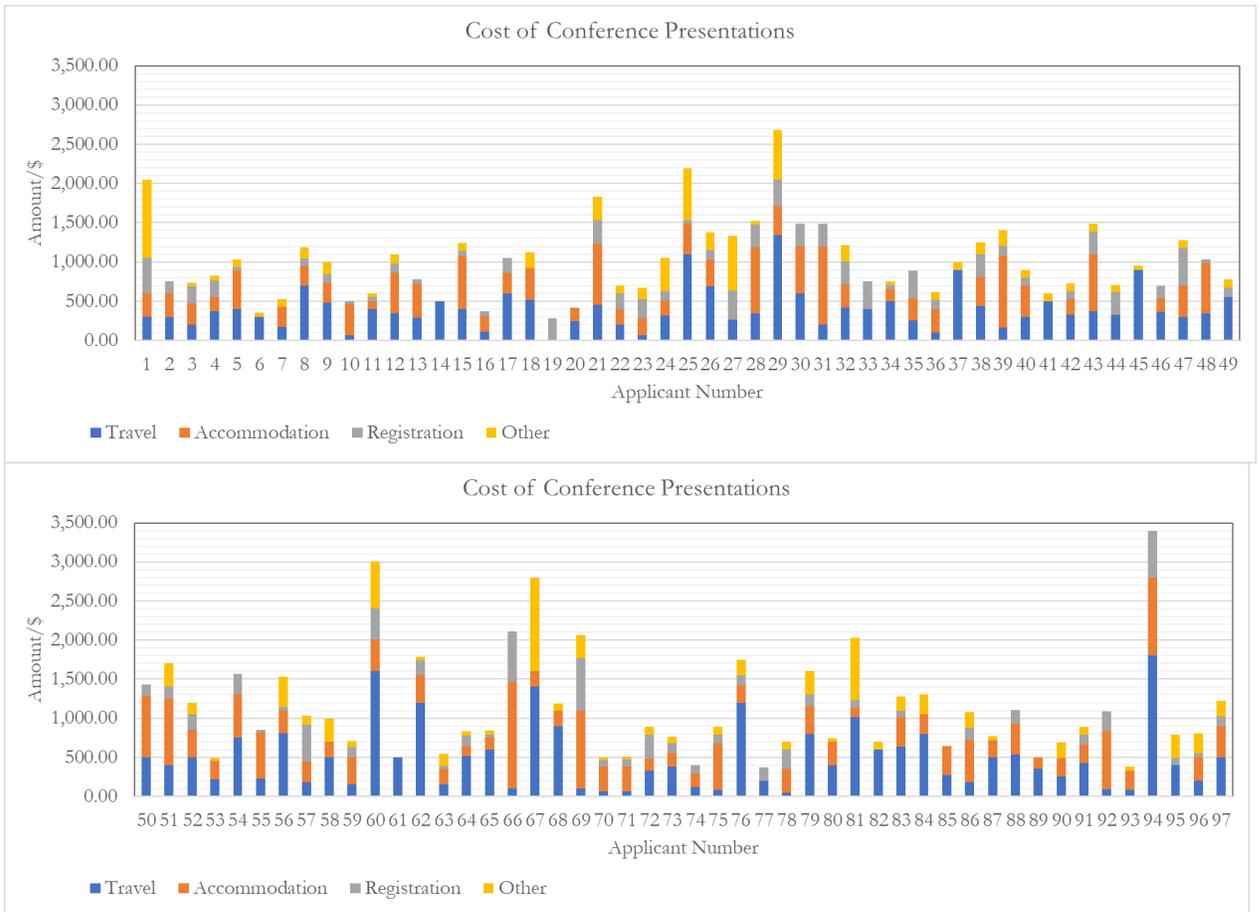
Travel Grants

Last year, due to significantly increased number of travel grant applications, the allocated budget got increased accordingly and the amount was appropriate for the applications received this academic year. All eligible applicants were awarded travel grants of 100% of what they requested. Reasons for disqualification were previously received ASGC travel awards, applicant not being GSAS student, confirmation letters not received, or students opting out due to travel restrictions.

	Applications	Awards		Applications	Awards
Summer			Winter		
Number	21	18		34	32
Amount	\$9,895.25	\$8,719.25		\$15,789.00	\$14,789.00
Fall			Spring		
Number	36	35		19	11
Amount	\$17,755.30	\$17,255.30		\$8,930.00	\$5,380.00
Total					
Number	110	96		Original budget	% Spent:
Amount	\$ 52,369.55	\$ 46,143.5		\$ 52,000.00	88.74%

Conference spending statistics for the entire year, broken down by expenditure type:

- Travel costs:
\$446.63 +/- \$344.58
- Accommodation costs:
\$332.10 +/- \$267.35
- Registration costs:
\$152.07 +/- \$149.347
- Other costs:
\$148.81 +/- \$213.49



BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase NAGPS funds, suggested amount: \$2,500
- Do not recommend increasing Student Initiative grants, since many events from this academic year have been carried over to the next
- Relocate funds from Community and former Alumni & Career Development to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, suggested amount: \$10,000
- Due to high probability of recurring COVID-19 related restrictions and closures, it might be wise to allocate funds for Emergency Funding, suggested amount \$20,000

REPRESENTATION OVERVIEW

By the end of the year, there were 27 (out of 29) PhD representatives and 25 (out of 40) MA representatives. Although the remaining 2 PhD programs were not represented, the department sent proxies to the monthly plenaries and were still eligible. The 2020-2021 Department Representatives roster is being updated as the 2019-2020 representatives submit the 2020-2021 Department Representative form. Finally, programs with less than 10 total students are not required to have a representative. All active external representative positions were filled: IGB, ISSO, GWC, Libraries, and Health (the Disabilities committee was not active during the 2019-2020 year).

MEETING ATTENDANCE

	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
PhD	21	20	24	21	26	21	20	20
MA	12	19	15	16	17	14	12	11
Total	33	39	39	37	42	35	32	31

Department Representatives were reminded on the day of the plenary meeting via email, which included the agenda, the minutes of the last month's plenary, and a brief highlight overview. The aggregated PhD attendance rate was consistently and significantly higher than the MA counterpart.

NEWSLETTER, WEBSITE, EMAIL

Beginning on January 21, regular newsletters were sent every Tuesday. The final weekly newsletter was sent on May 12. Intermittent newsletters will be sent out throughout the summer as necessary. The ASGC website was maintained with updated newsletter archives, plenary attendance, minutes, and the agenda. Separate emails were sent out directly to the GSAS students via the mailing lists containing information regarding the NAGPS Legislative Action Days, Quality of Life Survey, and the University Senate elections for the Humanities and Social Sciences positions. At the end of the semester, an email, which included the registration link, inviting students to submit their questions to ISSO for the information session was sent out.

COVID-19

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the community. The March and April plenaries were held virtually, via Zoom. The links were communicated via email to the Department Representatives and were also included in the weekly newsletters. The various volunteering and donation opportunities, created by the VP of Administration, were sent out directly to the GSAS students via the mailing lists and were also included in the newsletters. Following soon after, the GSAS Community COVID-19 Emergency Fund was founded and sent out shortly after the GSAS announcement.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Audrey Amsellem

QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY

The chair put together and led the Quality of Life Survey committee. The committee edited the previous survey and drafted new questions, as well as developed a system to ensure the privacy and anonymity of respondents.

The chair promoted the survey through hosting departmental events (one in Sociology, one in Economics and one in Music), and reached out to departmental representatives to encourage promotion of the survey and to notify them of the participation rates of their department.

A committee member organized the raffle for respondents and departmental representatives, and the chair notified raffle winners and set up their gift cards. Committee members, including the chair, were assigned portions of the survey, and the chair compiled and edited the report. The chair presented the report to GSAS administration, at the ASGC plenary, and circulated the report through the newsletter and various committees.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Quality of Life Chair processed, communicated and responded to dozens of grievances surrounding the Covid-19 crisis, including childcare services, housing issues, exams, library access, and summer funding.

The chair is a current committee member for the ASGC/GSAS Emergency Fund, coordinating the fund and reviewing eligibility criteria and applications for the fund. The chair co-organized with the President of ASGC an ISSO Information Session for the graduate student body, drafting an agenda and leading the meeting.

CONTINUED ADVOCACY

ISSO

The chair organized and held with ASGC's President meetings with David Austell and Samantha Lu at ISSO to discuss increasing access to resources and information, most notably through establishing phone lines for students, leading to the potential establishment of a phone tree.

The chair organized two OPT workshops with ISSO on February 11 and 19th in Nous, securing the venue, IT and handling registration for the event. Both events were well attended, reaching over 100 students in total.

Columbia Residential

The chair advocated to ensure the reimbursement of the housing payment plan fee, advocated on behalf of students who need medical leave and obtained for appropriate information on this issue to be displayed on the website, and along with the President, advocated for a Columbia Residential Advisory Council, which Columbia Residential has agreed to implement in the Fall of 2020.

Amenities

Over the summer 2019, the Quality of Life Chair Coordinated free gym access with SPS and Dodge Fitness Center for instructors and TA's, ensuring the proper distribution of the list of eligible students and processing grievances for students who had difficulty accessing the gym

ALUMNI & CAREER

President's Note:

When the Alumni and Career Development Chair resigned in December 2019, the Executive Board made the decision to redistribute the position's duties among board members (including President, VP, Administration, Media Chair, and Masters Affairs Chair).

ASGC members maintained relationships with the GSAS Alumni committees, and the Columbia Alumni Association. ASGC Executive Board Members were involved in GSAS's search for a new Career Development Center, and met with the new staff of GSAS Compass in an advisory capacity.

SUMMARY

For the 2019-2020 academic year, ASGC started strong with Orientation Week events including a Broadway show, a Yankees game, and a social event at a Barcade that included Engineering Graduate Student Council constituents.

During the Fall and Spring semesters before COVID-19, we organized 9 performance, 2 sports, and 3 social events. In addition, we formalized a policy for ensuring accessibility accommodations at ASGC events. We were glad to be able to continue the tradition of providing tickets to classic hits as well as new and upcoming shows to our constituents. Our sole music event at Carnegie Hall was also quite popular and we hope to continue in the future with music events at more venues and of varying genres. The sports events were a mixed bag, but that follows past precedent. We do plan to bring back the previously popular basketball games if the NBA should resume before the end of next spring semester.

For social events we were eager to provide varied opportunities for our constituents to casually meet and have fun with one another. We were particularly inspired by the quality and scale of events which were regularly arranged for the now-defunct GSAC constituency. With this in mind we hosted an on campus Wine and Cheese, a Happy Hour at Arts & Crafts, and a Ski Trip to Hunter Mountain. All of these events were very popular and fully attended. Next year we plan to reinstate all of these events and hopefully scale them up even more.

In the pages following, we attach a summary of our events and expenditures. Overall, we ended the year with surpluses of \$15,096.66 in cultural events and \$7,338.77 in social events. These large surpluses are mostly due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic and we have detailed our response to that situation below.

COVID-19 AND ASGC EVENTS

In response to the circumstances brought on by COVID-19, we pivoted to providing remote distant social and cultural programming. The two offerings were virtual Dungeons and Dragons campaigns from the game store Hex & Co and a distance book club with books shipped from Book Culture. These two events were selected as pilots for virtual social and cultural events respectively. As both of these pilots were initiated in a particularly high stress time for all of our constituents, we saw a considerably lower turnout than we would normally expect. Nonetheless, these events were successes and will serve as our model for distance events in the upcoming summer and academic year.

Reviewing our finances in light of COVID, many of our planned events were of course cancelled and refunded including some which had not yet incurred any costs. We had planned a series of 3 more ASGC bar nights at Arts & Crafts as well as a Wine and Cheese. We estimate that these events would have run an additional \$6,500 into the social events budget. We were also considering adding more sporting and arts events which would have added an additional \$2,000 to the culture budget based on our past similar events. In addition the five cancelled cultural events would have netted an additional \$4,299.40 in costs. These spending estimates coupled with lower than expected interest in virtual quarantine events help explain the shortfall in events spending.

2019-2020 EVENTS FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Events (not including Orientation)

Carryover	Debit Estimate	Credit Estimate	Category
Book Culture	\$ 790.00		Cultural
Yankees 110% Credit		\$ 1,936.00	Cultural
Summer Books	\$ 2,000.00		Cultural
Summer Games	\$ 3,000.00		Social

Breakdown	Culture	Social
Fall	\$ 5,274.00	\$ 2,470.54
Spring	\$ 3,839.34	\$ 8,190.69
Total Spent	\$ 9,113.34	\$ 10,661.23
Pending Charges (Approx)	\$ 2,790.00	\$ 3,000.00
<i>Budget</i>	<i>\$ 25,000.00</i>	<i>\$ 18,000.00</i>
<i>Surplus (Budget less pending + spent)</i>	<i>\$ 13,096.66</i>	<i>\$ 4,338.77</i>

Note: This does not include Orientation events which are a separate item on the ASGC budget

Orientation Events Breakdown

Event Name	Investment	Net Cost
Mean Girls	\$ 1,252.00	\$ 677.00
NYE vs. OAK	\$ 1,522.50	\$ 802.50
NYE ADA	\$ 117.60	\$ 87.60
Barcade - Total	\$ 4,009.50	\$ 2,899.50
TOTALS	\$ 6,901.60	\$ 4,466.60

Fall 2019 Breakdown

Event Name	Upfront Cost	Payout/Refund	Net Cost
September			
NYCFC vs Atlanta United FC	\$ 1,070.00	\$ 375.00	\$ 695.00
Betrayal	\$ 1,394.50	\$ 600.00	\$ 794.50
Betrayal - ADA seats	\$ 218.00		\$ 218.00
October			
Cleveland Orchestra @ Carnegie Hall	\$ 120.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 70.00
Turandot	\$ 914.50	\$ 385.00	\$ 529.50
Book of Mormon	\$ 1,532.50	\$ 700.00	\$ 832.50
November			
Tootsie	\$ 1,490.00	\$ 690.00	\$ 800.00
La Boheme	\$ 989.50	\$ 455.00	\$ 534.50
The Sound Inside	\$ 1,340.00	\$ 540.00	\$ 800.00
Wine & Cheese with ASGC	\$ 2,470.54	\$ -	\$ 2,470.54
FALL 2019 Total			\$ 7,744.54

Spring 2020 Breakdown

Event Name	Upfront Cost	Payout/Refund	Net Cost
February			
West Side Story	\$ 1,484.50	\$ 618.16	\$ 866.34
Così fan tutte	\$ 989.50	\$ 390.00	\$ 599.50

Ski Trip	\$ 4,875.60	\$ 2,200.71	\$ 2,674.89
Happy Hour A&C	\$ 1,130.80	\$ -	\$ 1,130.80
March			
Habs vs. Islanders	\$ 810.00	\$ 240.00	\$ 570.00
Six (Broadway) - CANCELLED	\$ 1,300.90	\$ 1,286.90	\$ 14.00
Book of Moromon - CANCELLED	\$ 1,784.50	\$ 1,784.50	\$ -
Hex & Co. (1)	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 60.00	\$ 2,940.00
Book Club	(Pending)	\$ 55.00	\$ (55.00)
April			
Company - CANCELLED	\$ 1,484.50	\$ 1,470.00	\$ 14.50
NYV v DET - CANCELLED	\$ 1,760.00	CREDIT	\$ 1,760.00
Six - CANCELLED	\$ 2,329.00	\$ 2,314.00	\$ 15.00
Hex & Co. (2)	\$ 1,500.00	\$ -	\$ 1,500.00
SPRING 2020 Total			\$ 12,030.03

MEDIA

David Rios

MEDIA UPDATES

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a response form was added in order to better understand the newfound challenges by students and able to better serve them. In addition to the response form, information on support resources and volunteer opportunities were provided.

The ASGC website was regularly updated to create an archive of newsletters, plenary attendance and minutes, and new forms for elections and award nominations.

In order to unify ASGC's social media presence, a new Instagram account was created to replace the previous GSAC Instagram account on Monday, March 30th.

EVENTS

We planned 5 events to address a number of the needs Masters students expressed last year and to increase student engagement across departments. Unfortunately these events were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social

Students noted there aren't many community events for Masters students and departments can feel isolated. We planned a Paint & Sip event at Paint n Pour, a GSAS Masters Mixer and a Midnight Breakfast Break during finals for Masters.

Networking

Students highlighted difficulties in contacting/networking with alumni. To increase networking we planned an Alumni Mixer Happy Hour.

Career Development

Students expressed that they had difficulty finding internships and jobs. We planned a free headshot event where we would promote resources to find internships.