

Weitao Zhu | Mathematics | 2-year term



My first and a half years in graduate school have been testimony to the fact that gender is not well represented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). During my senate term, I would like to focus on strengthening both the support systems for women in these academic disciplines and the interdepartmental connections between graduate students in natural sciences.

Universities across the nation have worked to improve the relatively low enrollment rates of female doctoral students in STEM. Even with increasing promotional efforts, women and other minorities in STEM still face many personal and professional adversities in these academic communities today. Many struggle with lack of friends, role models or difficulty in finding their place in academia. Fortunately, several organizations, including Women in Science, Society of Women Engineers, Association of Women in Mathematics, as well as many individual departments are actively addressing these issues. Leveraging the existing support and resources, I'd like to propose a more inclusive measure to provide a support network for women across STEM departments with the Senate platform. Through peer-organized social and career-focused events, I hope to help build a community and safety net that caters to the needs and concerns of women students.

In addition, given the interdependence of science research, more extensive connections across departments would benefit graduate students in natural sciences at large. University-sponsored events for graduate students such as dollar beer/ pizza nights, graduate gala or speaker series could help foster a stronger sense of community.

As an ASGC representative of the math department, I hope to help improve graduate life at Columbia. As Chair of International Students Association, Chair of Association of Women in Math and as a representative on several student-faculty committees, I have also actively worked with administration to advocate for student interests throughout my undergraduate career. I believe, with my passion, experience and leadership skills, I could serve your interests well.