



# UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

2125 Lee Building  
College Park, Maryland 20742-5121  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
301.405.0358 TEL 301.314.9305 FAX  
*Office of the Dean*

## **GRADUATE ASSISTANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Monday, April 18th**

**12 - 1:30pm**

**2124 LEE BUILDING**

### **1. GAAC Constitution**

- a. We have hard copies for your perusal.

### **2. The Graduate School's New Dean**

Many of our constituents, especially those GAs in the social sciences and humanities, are aware that Dean Caramello is vacating his position, that no successor has been named, and that the existence of the Graduate School as a whole is up for debate over the next two years. This uncertainty and lack of transparency is deeply concerning for those GAs who rely on the Graduate School for fellowships, travel funding, awards, the mediation of disputes, and general guidance—especially given the leadership Dean Caramello has displayed in supporting GAs during his tenure.

### QUESTIONS

- a. How *was* or *is* Dean Caramello's successor being selected? Have any GAs been involved in the process, as they generally are for any other search committee on campus?
- b. When will the decision be made public?
- c. Will the successor be an interim Dean or a fully-fledged successor? If the former, what are the driving forces behind the decision to name an interim Dean?
- d. What should GAAC tell constituents, as well as incoming graduate employees, regarding the future of the Graduate School over the medium-term of the next two or three years?
- e. On what terms are the administration at the campus level (e.g., Provost, President, Deans) and system level (e.g., Regents) discussing the medium-term future of the Graduate School?

### **2. MEAs (for Dean Caramello)**

We wanted to follow-up on the discussion that has been had both here and within the Graduate Council. There has been a great deal of discussion between graduate assistants and the Council since we last met in the Fall. In particular the efforts of the PI/RA working

group has been shown to only be a small part of the larger project to include the MEAs as a requirement for all GAs on this campus. Charles Delwiche has worked hard at fine-tuning the working group's approach to this complex issue and we've appreciated having GAs brought into the shared governance process both in that working group and without, and hope and expect that to continue. When Stephanie and Dan met with Dr. Delwiche on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, he proposed *recommending* MEAs in the Graduate Catalog while piloting MEAs as a *requirement* with PIs/RAs and then elsewhere. He also said that MEAs are only recommended, there is no need for a vote in the Graduate Council. Once again, we are encouraged by this development but still have a number of concerns:

### QUESTIONS

- a. How will the Graduate School disseminate information about and encourage adoption of MEAs from the top down? How can GAAC help individual departments disseminate it from the bottom-up?
- b. Dean Caramello's dedication to the issue speaks to his years of hard work on the behalf of GAs. However, his successor has not been named and the future of the Graduate School as a whole is in doubt. To counter this uncertainty, preserve Dean Caramello's legacy, and proceed with the professionalization mission of MEAs, we have repeatedly asked for public announcements of policy changes and publicly announced dates for the various stages of the pilot program. What else will the Graduate School do to ensure this policy doesn't get left by the wayside in the transition and interim leadership?
- c. We are concerned about the professional development of all three groups of employees at Maryland. We have repeatedly expressed concern about the policy being limited to only RAs, and have been told by Dr. Delwiche that attempting to cover all assistants would be both impractical and fail. Yet, if these groups are fundamentally so different, how are we going to take something that worked for RAs and make it work for TAs and AAs? We would like to suggest a possible way to address this concern: piloting MEAs with all three employment groups in the same college. Diana Bowen's unit of EDUC—which includes AAs, TAs, and RAs—is interested in piloting the MEA program with all three employment groups in cooperation with Dr. Delwiche and the Graduate School. How can we make this happen to ensure all three employment groups are equally protected?
- d. Stephanie Cork, our GAAC representative on the PI/RA working group, is unable to attend the final meeting of the Graduate Council this spring. Her TA duties come first. In order to preserve the shared governance process and make sure GAAC's knowledge and the concerns of its constituents are adequately represented in this important meeting, we would like to be able to send a proxy in Stephanie's place. Both Dan Greene and Diana Bowen have volunteered to serve in this capacity. Either would be happy to help.

### **3. Fellowship Issues (for Vice President Collela)**

We would like to follow up on our discussion last time when Vice President Collela had mentioned that payment to Fellows could potentially be addressed through adjusting the payment methods (the timing etc.,). This is only the beginning of a number of

issues that are being presented by GSG and we're wondering how these will be addressed and what governing bodies need to be engaged to facilitate greater transparency on these issues.

#### **4. International Employee Issues**

Most graduate employees come into a department with an offer letter including their offer for funding; this is especially important for international employees whose ability to stay in the country is contingent on funding.

#### QUESTIONS

- a. Do offer letters count as contracts?
- b. What are international graduate employees supposed to do when they are promised funding in these letters but then are not given funding when they arrive on campus?
- c. Do you know about the practices of only offering graduate employees funding contingent on an audition period
- d. How do you believe the graduate school can and should interrupt these practices?

#### **5. Diversity Projects (for Provost Rankin)**

With the speed that the Diversity Dialogues project has been put together, it seems that graduate employee voices have not been heard. During the meeting between the President's Student Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion and the Diversity Dialogues Planning Committee on February 23rd, the Provost had claimed that anyone could join the planning committee. Of special interest here is the need for inclusion of graduate employee voices, as graduates teach, research and learn on this campus. Many of the events that have become part of the dialogues were in fact developed by graduate employees, and then appropriated by this program without their consent. Without any faithful follow-up from the joint meeting at the University House it is clear that graduate employees are not represented fully in this initiative.

#### QUESTION

- a. How can GAAC facilitate the inclusion of these voices, as it is Graduate Assistants who have both great diversity and wide access to research, teaching and other spaces through which to can facilitate change?

#### **6. UMB and UMCP Strategic Partnership**

Many questions have been insufficiently answered around the financial impacts and other issues of job opportunity (or potential losses) that may occur in the next few years. There are clearly parallel departments such as Neuroscience that may be concerned about their continued existence, as well as our graduate organizations (including GAAC and the GSG).

#### QUESTIONS

- a. How will this strategic partnership affect those positions, both volunteer and paid?
- b. How can we make sure that graduate assistants are not at risk during this transition?
- c. How do we best get information that is vital to our constituents from the admin beyond public forums?

## **7. Salary (for Vice President Collela)**

Time and again, our constituents voice concern about the difficulty surviving in the DC area on the minimum salary established by the graduate school. (Thankfully, most departments pay above that salary, and there are loans and fellowships.) We need hardly tell you, but these low salaries—compared with other campuses in more-affordable areas—often cost us bright recruits as well. Our constituents are interested in knowing more about how graduate employee salaries are determined within departments, colleges, and the graduate school. We recognize that the Graduate Catalog addresses some of these issues, but it really does not give us any sense about how stipends are determined, and why there are such huge variations between departments and colleges. Even within departments there are often issues around the consistency of graduate employee stipends for the same positions (when the graduate employees are at the same level: Step I, II, III, Candidacy etc.).

### QUESTIONS

- a. How does the Graduate School set the minimum stipend for Step I employees?
- b. How are stipends determined within a college?
- c. How are stipends determined within a department?
- d. Why does the graduate school not cap admissions, and thus raise the minimum salary for GAs?
- e. Where can we get the full information about average stipends in departments?

We would like to discuss these questions, but recognize it might be easiest to provide us with documentation of the different stipends or other policies; we'd be grateful to receive these electronically. If an example would help, several GAAC members would be happy to volunteer to have their stipend level explained.

## **8. Thriving Workplace Initiative**

This is an extremely exciting opportunity to reinvigorate the campus climate but some of our constituents are concerned that money that could be used to improve their workplace conditions is instead being used to survey them about their working conditions, and they're not being involved in the shared governance process here. We are interested in knowing more about the scope of this project.

### QUESTIONS

- a. How much does the Gallup contract cost the University?

- b. There are many groups on this campus who work in many different ways, and graduate assistants as employed by the university can help this campus thrive through their variegated roles. This would offer stellar work experience, and help redirect money toward much-needed work on campus. How can graduate assistants get involved in designing and implementing this analysis?

**9. Lot 5 Parking**

DOTS wants to remove all graduate employee parking from Regents Drive Garage, while retaining faculty and administration parking. To indeed foster a “thriving” workplace we need to recognize that Graduate Assistants who do not live on this campus must arrive here to teach, research and learn, often by car. Furthermore, how can we assure that expectant graduate-employee parents, employees with disabilities or others in need of accommodation or access can continue to be on this campus if these spaces are consistently eliminated? There needs to be a more sustainable plan or more viable solution for parking on this campus, and graduate employees should not bear the brunt of poor longterm planning.

**10. Anything administration wants GAAC to communicate to constituents?**