

General Student Affairs Committee 2019-2020 Report

Chair: Josh Epstein, Dept. of English (j.epstein@pdx.edu)

Committee Members: Emma Britton, SBA; Melinda Holtzman, MCECS; Heather Petzold, UNST; Christopher Skinner, Admissions; Wyatt Isaacs, ASPSU; Tricia Oleson, ASPSU

In Attendance: Michele Toppe, Vice Provost for Student Affairs; Alex Miller, Office of the Vice Provost for Student Affairs

Committee Charge (from Faculty Constitution)

The Committee shall:

1. Serve in an advisory capacity to administrative officers on matters of student affairs, educational activities, budgets, and student discipline.
2. Have specific responsibility to review and make recommendations regarding policies related to student services, programs, and long-range planning, e.g., student employment, educational activities, counseling, health service and extracurricular programming
3. Nominate the recipients of the Presidential Community Service Awards.
4. Report to the Senate at least once a year.

Report

The work of the General Student Affairs Committee was truncated by the COVID-19 crisis and transition to remote operations. We intend in 2020-2021 to pick up on much of the work left behind during this academic year. At present, we do not have much to report.

- At the beginning of the academic year, we proposed revised language for the committee charge to Richard Beyler, and hope to continue working with him to make sure the charge reflects the work of the committee. We are eager to hear from the Senate about how we might be of further service.
- During the fall quarter, we met with Michele Toppe to discuss the role that GSAC might play in supporting the recent Student Success Initiatives. The committee believes it can continue to support university efforts to improve persistence and student experience.
- During the winter quarter, we worked with Michele Toppe on the Student Resources Website (<https://sites.google.com/pdx.edu/studentliferesources/home>). Vice Provost Toppe solicited the committee's input on improving this website and making it more accessible to students—and to members of the PSU community (including faculty, advisors, staff, and academic professionals) often charged with referring those students to our campus resources, which are numerous but often obscure or hard to locate for the students who need them most.
- In consultation with Vice Provost Toppe, the committee tabled the President's Awards. We had considered doing so even before the COVID crisis, given the consistently low number of applications in recent years, and the perceived lack of interest from students, departments, and administrators. We intended, instead, to look into student academic and non-academic awards that already exist at departmental and college levels, so that we could refashion the President's Awards so that they yield more enthusiasm and

“buy-in” from students and nominating faculty. Having received feedback from faculty and staff expressing interest in restoring the Awards, we intend to revisit this next year.

- We were in the early stages of speaking with Vice Provost Toppe about an expanded Fall Convocation for new students. That work was tabled (perhaps just as well, given the uncertain status of the Fall 2020 term), but we hope to revisit it next year. We believe it could play a vital role in enhancing the student experience, especially if tied in with University Studies and other curricular programs.
- GSAC remains committed to working with the Vice Provost’s office on supporting students during, and in the wake of, the coronavirus pandemic. Anyone who has worked with students (or been one!) during the past quarter understands the wide range of pressures—personal, psychological, medical, financial, and academic—that have accompanied the pandemic. These matters require ongoing action and attention: many of these problems exist even under ordinary circumstances and are exacerbated during crises like COVID, and similar emergencies for which we will want to prepare in the future.