



GRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES

Strategic Plan

Revised May 24, 2017

Vision

The Graduate Student Government is the preeminent custodian of, and advocate for, the graduate student community at the Colorado School of Mines.

Mission

The Graduate Student Government will ensure graduate students and their interests are represented across the Colorado School of Mines community. The organization will support graduate student achievement academically, socially, and professionally.

Values

Graduate students are a diverse and substantive adult community, with unique concerns relating to work-life balance, employment security, and institutional policy. Sustainable growth of our post-graduate experience requires strong communication between graduate students and the broader community, with continuous improvement in all organizational endeavors.

GSG officers and leaders will face complex decisions on the path to supporting an internationally-recognized graduate community. These values are intended to provide a clarifying lens, through which the organization can make consistent and sustainable progress.

Graduate Student Government recognizes four core values: research, academics, community, and sustainability.

Research

We recognize research excellence as a defining asset for both graduate students and the institution as a whole, and support campus policies and practices that encourage well-rounded young scientists and engineers.

Academics

We recognize academic excellence as a goal for all graduate students, and we support campus and departmental practices that foster a network of resources for students to accomplish this goal. Academic excellence can include but is not limited to: attaining high marks in coursework, recognition for outstanding achievements, and receipt of scholarships for noteworthy performance.

Community

Inclusion of graduate students within both the graduate and greater Mines communities is crucial to a successful graduate student experience. This requires support of graduate students' personal and social lives, cohesive graduate student engagement in departments, colleges, and across campus, and inclusion in institutional decision making that affects graduate students.

Sustainability

To maintain a healthy Graduate Student Government, it must be sustainable for graduate student participation and have clearly defined, measurable, and achievable goals. We support an informed graduate student population, and strive to continually improve our current practices and programs. As our relationships with other campus institutions are crucial to our success, we must maintain robust communication and interaction with Faculty, Administration, and Undergraduate Student Government.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

As a graduate student government in ever-changing times, the practice of continuous improvement is fundamentally non-negotiable. That is, current methods and approaches implemented will not automatically be considered the "best way." GSG seeks continual refinement of programs and practices, to ensure a more efficient and effective organization. Graduate students are encouraged to continuously question, refine, and revisit current practices.

The Executive Committee and Council should consider revising and updating this document annually to reflect progress towards reaching goals and objectives. The selection of future goals should also be addressed on an annual basis at the beginning of each academic year, driven by the current concerns of graduate students. The Executive Committee and Council should take an active part identifying and pursuing new initiatives as they are incorporated in this document.

Roles and responsibilities are differentiated below, for both the Executive Committee and Council. Roles define the governing duties assigned to Executive Officers and Council members, as stated in the Graduate Student Government Bylaws. Responsibilities refer to the minimum requirements put forth from the Executive Committee and Council to achieve and innovate.

Responsibility of Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring GSG continuity and standard of governmental operation are being upheld. Executive Officers are the first line of communication

between graduate students, the administration, and the campus community. Therefore, Executive Officers should strive to be professional, courteous, and open-minded. The Executive Committee must be organized in order to effectively and efficiently manage grant programs and business meetings. Executive Officers must concisely communicate with Council, graduate students at large, and the Mines community. Executive Officers shall document their activities and responsibilities related to the GSG and provide guidance to incoming officers to facilitate transitions upon completion of their term.

Responsibility of Council

Graduate Student Government Council Members represent graduate students across campus. With the elected position comes the responsibility to ensure concerns of the academic departments are being properly represented and communicated to GSG Council and the Executive Committee. As graduate student Representatives, Council members should strive to be professional, courteous, and open-minded.

Goals

This list of goals is not comprehensive, but a place to start when considering what to take on for the academic year. The GSG Council is responsible for reviewing, amending, and prioritizing this list annually—preferably at the start of the year; the Executive Committee is responsible for assessing the progress toward each goal, updating this plan to reflect any mid-course corrections, and providing updates to the Council.

In crafting a new goal, the core value(s) it supports should be identified. A brief, one paragraph description of the goal should be written along with a short but descriptive title. In addition, the new goal should contain concise discussions of the current status, potential milestones, and likely partners. The discussion presented along with each goal reflects one potential pathway toward realization, but alternative and better approaches should be considered prior to action. This new goal should then be presented to the GSG Council for approval, at which point it shall be included in this Strategic Plan.

In selecting a goal to proceed, the Executive Committee should draft a plan of action which details the necessary resources, partners, and evaluation metrics, along with an assessment of the current state of affairs. This plan should then be used to assign tasks and responsibilities, such as the formation of a committee.

Short-term (1-year) goals

Develop departmental graduate student organizations (Community)

In order to effectively communicate with and for graduate students, the departments need a cohesive mechanism with which students can interact with GSG. Having departmental graduate student associations accomplishes three key items that promote graduate student representation: forum for communication between graduate students and their representative to GSG, forum for electing department representative to GSG, and organization to promote social interaction within a department.

- *Current Status:* Some departments have a well-defined graduate student organization within the department while others do not. Requirements applicable to all departments regardless of their current structure are not in place.
- *Potential Milestones:* Define minimum departmental requirements (month 1- 2). Involve partners who may assist with and promote departmental structure (month 2-3). Stage implementation of departmental structure (month 3-12).
- *Potential Partners:* Department heads, department assistants

Streamline communication from GSG (and Mines)

Graduate students are inundated with email communication, as it is an official form of communication for Mines. The opt-in, opt-out system (<http://inside.mines.edu/Mailing-Lists>) adopted by Mines was meant to decrease email traffic. The Daily Blast was created to offer a summary of all upcoming activities on campus for both graduate and undergraduate students, and is sent out daily. Often, many events and opportunities offered by GSG and other campus organizations are overlooked due to the excessive number of postings within the Daily Blast. Resorting back to direct email lists has been considered and is not a favorable option, as it does not provide a solution to email inundation. GSG will continue to post events through the Daily Blast, however a more efficient means of communicating events and content to the graduate student population is needed.

- *Current Status:* A posting within the Daily Blast is the main form of event communication from GSG to the graduate student population. The campus at large has a community calendar not widely known or used by graduate students (<http://inside.mines.edu/calendar>).
- *Potential Milestones:* Incorporate content previously emailed, into the GSG website; promote the campus calendar and GSG website as main lines of communication; GSG events added directly to inter-departmental mailings by Program Assistants; utilize departmental graduate student organizations for direct communication between the GSG Council and graduate students within their respective departments.
- *Potential Partners:* Office of Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Student Government.

Foster relationships with GSG Academic Workshop facilitators

The GSG typically hosts two Academic Workshops per semester. Historically a financial planning workshop has been held each semester, and recently the GSG Academic Affairs Director and the Graduate Mentoring Experience (GEM) Coordinator have developed a relationship with a member of the Mines community to facilitate two additional workshops on the “Student-Advisor Relationship” and “Professional Communication.” The GSG recognizes a need to foster relationships with our current facilitators to provide Academic Workshops that are valuable for the graduate student community.

- *Current Status:* GSG typically hosts two academic workshops per semester, four per academic year.
- *Potential Milestones:* increase number of Academic Workshops to three per semester and develop program offering consistency (e.g. Fall semester workshops held on the third Thursday of September, October and November, and Spring semester workshops held on the third Wednesday of February, March and April); identify workshop topics to include financial health and planning, professional development, and mentoring.
- *Potential Partners:* North Star Resource Group for financial health and planning; Diane Witters of CSM for professional development and mentoring, and the GEM coordinator.

Integrate GEM Program with the GSG

The Graduate Experience Mentoring (GEM) program is integral for graduate students transitioning to the Mines community and provides leadership growth opportunities for current graduate students. A closer relationship between GEM and the GSG is necessary to provide outreach for the graduate student community, achieve the goals of GEM, facilitate efficient marketing of activities, and streamline budget management.

- *Current Status:* the GEM coordinator operates independent from the GSG Council, with minimal support outside of financial provided by GSG.
- *Potential Milestones:* Incorporate the GEM coordinator as a member of the Executive Council; host Academic Workshops each semester with topics centered around financial health and planning, professional development, and mentoring.
- *Potential Partners:* GSG Executive Council and Academic Affairs Director

Intermediate (3-year) goals

Institutionalize the Graduate Research and Development Symposia Conference (Research, Sustainability)

The Graduate Research and Development Symposia (GRADS) Conference remains a hallmark event established by graduate students, for graduate students. GRADS provides graduate students the opportunity to practice and receive feedback on their presentation skills in a professional environment. An institutional support system ensures continuity in annual planning

and collaboration that allows for continual improvement in the quality of the conference for students and partners.

- *Current Status:* The Executive Team and Council volunteers have primarily performed the planning and execution of GRADS. Communication with the Office of Graduate Studies, Office for Research and Technology Transfer, and the Alumni Association is reestablished at the outset of annual GRADS planning.
- *Potential Milestones:* Create a central transition document that carries the knowledge developed by previous years' organizers (year 1). Establish a GRADS guiding committee of stakeholders that will provide feedback and aid in networking (Year 1). Designate a regular meeting schedule (Year 1). Define year-to-year responsibilities for each committee member, based on each member's desired level of involvement (Year 1-2). Pursue broader financial sources, including industry, government, and academia (Year 1). Revisit stakeholders and committee composition, to ensure an optimal balance is provided for sustainable success (Year 2).
- *Potential Partners:* Office of Graduate Studies, Office of Research and Technology Transfer, Alumni Association, Green Center Staff, Conference Services, Research Council, CSM Foundation.

Increase support of graduate students through awards, recognition, and grant programs (Academic)

Programs that support graduate students in their research endeavors and personal lives are key to the GSG mission. Currently lacking within the support programs are those for graduate student recognition and awards. Recognition awards, such as a Graduate Student Research Award (similar in fashion to Research Council's Research Faculty Awards) would acknowledge graduate student efforts and contributions to the Mines research community. Additionally, departmental awards of recognition similar to those distributed at E-Days and graduation would enhance the visibility of graduate student efforts on campus.

- *Current Status:* Grant programs supporting travel (Travel Grants) and degree completion (Graduate Continuance Fellowships) are offered. Recognition awards currently in place are the departmental awards for GRADS presenters.
- *Potential Milestones:* Investigate current Mines awards and recognition of graduate students, as well as programs at other institutions (Year 1). Define nomination, qualifications, requirements, and eligibility for award program (Year 2). Refine nomination and selection process (Year 3).
- *Potential Partners:* Office of Graduate Studies, Office of Research and Technology Transfer, Department Heads, Faculty Senate

Increase the number of networking opportunities for graduate students with other graduate students, faculty, alumni, and industry partners (Academic, Community)

With a growing graduate student population, it is important to maintain a similar level of opportunities for social and professional networking. In particular, there is a need for networking with other students, faculty, and industry partners.

- *Current Status:* Social networking with other students is offered through campus wide social events. Networking events during GRADS provide a forum for networking amongst interested students, faculty, and alumni.
- *Potential Milestones:* Investigate partnership potential with the Career Center, Faculty Senate, and CSM Alumni Association for social and professional events (Year 1). Organize one or two annual networking events (Year 2). Establish networking event series, with specific and achievable outcomes drafted for each event (Year 3).
- *Potential Partners:* Faculty Senate, Career Center

Long-term (5-year) goals

Develop a teaching associate program (Academic)

Opportunities for graduate students to learn, practice, and refine teaching skills are not widely available on campus. While some departments encourage and have teaching requirements for degree programs, most do not. Having a Ph.D. or M.S. in science or engineering from CSM does not necessarily mean that graduates are prepared to teach at the high school or university level. Pedagogical opportunities for graduate students in science and engineering should be abundantly available, as it is those people with advanced degrees who will teach future students.

- *Current Status:* Mines offers a handful of classes related to pedagogy. A few degree programs have teaching requirements, while others discourage graduate student teaching. A campus-wide teaching program does not exist.
- *Potential Milestones:* **Year 1:** Establish an exploratory committee to identify how each campus constituency would be affected by, or benefit from, a teaching associate program. Kickstart a campus-wide association, such as a Future Professor Organization. **Year 2:** Investigate teaching programs at other institutions. Find a nearby university with which to collaborate and design a program by modifying a pre-existing one. **Year 3:** Develop procedures and processes for program to suit the needs of our university. Engage deans and department heads to gain feedback on, and support for, the initiative. **Year 4:** Begin implementing the program. Continuously reflect on what works well and what needs improvement. **Year 5:** Based upon the reflections from Year 4, refine program design as necessary.

- *Potential Partners:* Office of Graduate Studies, department heads, college deans, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate, TEAM-UP, Trefny Institute, CU Boulder, CU Denver, University of Northern Colorado

Inclusion in policy dialogues affecting students (Community)

University administration ensures policies and processes are in place that support education. Often, the administration is provided with difficult circumstances that require difficult decisions. Complex problems faced by Mines are best solved through collaboration and inclusion of the constituencies affected. Through collaboration, the constituencies are more likely to develop an understanding and mutual ownership of the difficult decisions and solutions which will ultimately affect them. Further, inclusion of students ensures generational diversity in approaches to modern education.

- *Current Status:* The climate for collaboration and inclusion of students in meaningful dialogues is sub-optimal.
- *Potential Milestones:* Seek open communication with key administrators, including regular meetings with the GSG President along with invitations to GSG Council meetings (Year 1). Identify critical administrative departments and offices that lack graduate student feedback in decision-making processes (Year 1). Develop a plan for inclusion of students (Year 3).
- *Potential Partners:* College Deans, Office of the Provost, Office of the President, Planning and Policy Analysis, Human Resources

Establish a graduate student community lounge (Community)

There are few institutional efforts aimed at enhancing the graduate environment or promoting cohesion of graduate students. Mines policies, processes, and programs are generally aimed at enhancing the undergraduate experience. Further, the in loco parentis mentality that Mines promulgates does not align with the needs and expectations of today's graduate student, with an average age of 32. In furthering Mines' aspirations as a world-renowned research institution, attracting and keeping quality graduate students should be of top priority. In order to attract and keep high quality graduate students, it is important that Mines communicate to the potential student pool that graduate students are adults and treated as such at this institution.

- *Current Status:* The social events currently offered provide a short few hours for social interaction and often do not align with the volatile schedules of graduate students. The greatest hindrance to GSG efforts for graduate student cohesion is the lack of an on-campus environment where graduate students can socialize.
- *Potential Milestones:* Investigate graduate student spaces at other institutions (Year 1). Work with institutional administrators to identify potential graduate student spaces, such as the I-Club or Berthoud Hall vacant parking lot (Year 1-2). Establish timeline/action plan (Year 1-3). Identify potential funding sources such as GSG, a solicited endowment, or corporate Sponsorship (Year 2-3). Develop a financial plan and timeline (Year 2-4). Implement progressive adjustment plan for GSG budget (Year 3-4). Recondition or construct space identified (Year 5-7).

- *Potential Partners:* Office of Graduate Studies, Student Life, Finance and Administration, Capital Planning and Construction, Facilities Management

Goals for future consideration

- Committee reporting
- Department reporting on graduate student achievements and awards
- Interdisciplinary events and research opportunities
- New graduate student survival kit
- Individualized communication of graduation requirements
- Clarity on tax forms and requirements of graduate students
- Continued excellence with LyX template
- Better documentation for graduation paperwork and procedures
- Multi-university GSG database for best practices, idea sharing, and social site
- Campus-based daycare solution

Assessment

Short term assessment

The Executive Team and Council require metrics in making progress towards and achieving each of these goals. Both the Executive Team and Council should complete an assessment at the end of every semester to gauge progress on each goal as outlined in a given year. The evaluation should be anonymous to ensure honest and critical feedback.

Long term assessment

In 2012, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Student Engagement Survey (SES) was piloted at three universities in Colorado in order to establish a basis for providing insight into the engagement and satisfaction of graduate students. The intent of this tool is to begin understanding what areas of the graduate student environment need improvement based on descriptive data of student perceptions. In the event that the pilot program does not continue in the future, it may be beneficial to continue annually surveying graduate students here at CSM with a similar assessment tool in order to evaluate the utility of GSG and CSM efforts for continuous improvement of the graduate environment. Questions asked in that survey can be obtained from the GSG President.