

GSA President's Message

by Pankaj Gupta



I hope that the fall semester has been going great for everyone. The Graduate Student Assembly has been working on several issues that I mentioned in my last address. Primarily among these are the 'Annual Progress Review of Graduate Students' and the 'Bill of Rights and Responsibilities of Graduate Students at Virginia Tech.'

Some of you may have heard the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies (CGS&P) resolution on the annual progress review of graduate students that was drafted in Spring '03 and was a revision of the existing 'Presidential Policy Memorandum #1' that stipulated timely review of the progress of the graduate students. The CGS&P resolution recommended the departments to file annual progress review reports of graduate students to the graduate school, a clause that was not present in the original 1977 policy. Unfortunately, when the CGS&P tabled the resolution at the University Council (the final governing body at Virginia Tech), it was voted down. In our September meeting, the GSA delegate body meeting passed a resolution (thanks to Megan Elwood-Madden for drafting it) recommending the University Council to reconsider its decision. Following this development, the CGS&P has decided to send their resolution again with GSA's endorsement. The next University Council meeting will be on Nov 17th, where this resolution will hopefully be introduced

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GSA Offers Excellent Opportunity to Present Graduate Research

by Carolina Aguilar



Research is pretty much a synonym of a graduate student. A big amount of time, effort, hope and enthusiasm is put into this by many of us daily. As students, we have wished at least one time to have a bed in our lab, studio or any place where our research is conducted. That's why the GSA wants to recognize your long hours of reading, thinking, typing, pipeting, writing or drawing. We want to see your creation, your findings, the product of all those long hours of work and meetings with your advisors. So start getting ready because the ANNUAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM is coming the week of March 21-26th. New ideas and sections this year will allow a good fit in whatever your work is about. Our newest section is called Visual Research. Do you have a picture of something incredible that happened to your cell line or bacteria colonies? Do you have an architectonic model that you are so proud of but, you can't fit it in a poster? Do you think you could be the next Coco Channel or maybe Picasso and you want to prove it? Bring it on at our Visual Research section at the GSA sponsored Annual Research Symposium this March. Look to the upcoming January issue of the Apex and the GSA website for more information about exact dates and abstracts/work description submissions. In addition, advanced undergraduate work and research will also be accepted. In the meantime, keep up the research!

Board of Visitors Update

by Myrna Callison

Greetings from your Board of Visitors representative. The BOV met on November 2nd and 3rd. Due to space restrictions, only selected highlights that may pertain to graduate students are listed. The complete list of meeting highlights can be found on the GSA's website at: <http://gsa.uusa.vt.edu/>.



Academic Affairs Committee:

- Six departments received Exemplary status. Those departments include ECE, MSE, Physics, Foreign Languages and Literature, Pamplin College of

Business Graduate and International Programs, and Grad Science and Tech Studies.

Finance and Audit Committee:

- Review of University plan to address class size. The findings of this review are that "average hours taken per student is down only slightly and can be considered insignificant, indicating that the student progress towards a degree has not slowed". Meaning: budget cuts made sections and classes disappear but is not impeding graduation of students.
- Approval of an adjustment to graduate assistantship stipends by 2.25% which becomes effective on November 25, 2003.
- Approval was given for the Financial Performance Report. The findings are as follows. 1st quarter tuition

Employment During Fall and Winter Breaks

from International Student and Scholar Support Office website

On-campus employment is limited to 20 hours/week during the academic term, but may be full-time during official university breaks. Students may work on-campus full-time during the fall (Friday, November 21 to Friday, November 28) and/or winter (Friday, December 19 to Friday, January 16) break(s). As a reminder, students on assistantship may not accept employment in addition to their assistantship. Visit them on the web: <http://www.issso.grads.vt.edu/>

You know you're a Virginia Tech Grad Student when...

T- Shirts with the top 10 responses as voted by GSA members are for sale at the GSA Office at 309 Squires Student Center (9-12 M-F) or at the delegate meeting. \$8 per shirt (short or long sleeves) and
SPECIAL OFFER: 2 for \$10!



President's Message

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again. We will inform you of the developments in this regard. On another note, the CGS&P conducted its two readings of the 'Bill of Rights and Responsibilities of Graduate Students at Virginia Tech' this past month. This document, with some modifications, has now been sent to the 'Commission on Research (COR)' and 'Commission on Student Affairs (CSA)' for their input. With the feedback from COR and CSA, CGS&P will incorporate these suggestions (if any) and then table the document at the University Council. Hopefully, this will take place by the end of this semester or early next semester. I would like to thank the GSA representatives to CGS&P, viz. Megan Elwood-Madden, Yvette Quintela, Tina Peterson and Terrell Strayhorn for their support and active participation during the discussion sessions at the CGS&P meetings.

In addition to these, we are currently working in close coordination with the Graduate School in getting adequate health insurance coverage. Thanks to the efforts of Dean DePauw, the health insurance subsidy for GTAs, GRAs and GAs has been increased from last year. Our goal is to get complete health insurance for graduate students on appointment. Hopefully, that day will come soon enough.

Finally, I urge you to bring forward any issues pertaining to graduate students that should be addressed. We invite you to join us in our monthly delegate body meetings to discuss issues concerning graduate student life and of course, for free pizza and drinks. I look forward to seeing you in the delegate body meetings.

GSA Travel Fund Program Report Cycle I (July 1st – December 31st, 2003-2004)

by Jan van Aardt



The GSA's Travel Fund Program (TFP) was once again highly competitive, resulting in a total of 93 applications from Virginia Tech's seven colleges. A total of \$15,000 was available for awards, with another \$15,000 available for the next funding cycle (Cycle II, 2003-2004). As far as evaluation criteria were concerned, the nature of the

conference, as well as funding need, were considered as very important. Given the current budget crisis, many departments/colleges do not have adequate money available for travel, hence this approach. Students that did not receive any support from their departments were favored by this methodology, as were experienced students, and students attending higher-tiered conferences.

Table 1. TFP funding results

College	# Accepted Applications	Funding	Range
Engineering	38	\$7,403	\$146-\$235
Agriculture and Life Sciences	4	\$779	\$176-\$219
Science	17	\$3,312	\$165-\$239
Architecture and Urban Studies	2	\$390	\$187-\$203
Art and Sciences	8	\$1,558	\$144-\$222
Veterinary Medicine	4	\$779	\$163-\$212
Business (Pamplin)	4	\$779	\$134-\$238

It was decided that, because of budgetary issues, an attempt would be made to fund all students even if the award was less than \$200. It was argued that some funding was better than nothing, as opposed to only a few students receiving the full award of \$300. Each college's number of applicants was used as a percentage of the total number of accepted applications (77) to determine the percentage of the \$15,000 assigned to that college. Students from each college were funded by an amount pro-rated by their standing in terms of that college's average score. An attempt was made to keep all awards as high as possible (> \$150), but in some cases this was not possible due to the number of applicants and the amount of funds available per college. TFP results are listed in Table 1 (please see the full TFP report and **details of the next funding cycle** at <http://gsa.uva.vt.edu/travelfund/travelfund-index.html>).

The GSA's Travel Fund Program contributed to many different students presenting their research worldwide. Our sincere thanks go to the Graduate School of Va. Tech for the \$30,000 that it makes available to the GSA for this program annually. The GSA is also indebted to Paula Williams, without whom the TFP would not be possible. Please direct any questions to Jan van Aardt (email: jaardt@vt.edu; telephone (540) 231-6958).

Current Funding Opportunities

from Virginia Tech Research Division

Virginia Tech's Research Division offers an excellent internet resource to find funding. Every week, the office puts out the "Opportunity Update" their weekly electronic newsletter that contains research funding opportunities, graduate and post-doc fellowships, and other research related notices.

Many of the awards listed below are offered on a national scope and require extensive preparation. In addition, space limitation only allow for a very small listing of opportunities. Please visit the Opportunity Update page at: <http://www.research.vt.edu/funding/ou/prev/update.html#grads> and each awards website for more information.

Graduate Fellowships:

Josephine de Karman Fellowships

The purpose of this fellowship program is to recognize and assist students with high academic standards. Special consideration will be given to applicants in the humanities.

Deadline: 31 January 2004

Website: <http://www.dekarman.org/>

Predocctoral Fellowships— University of Rochester, Frederick Douglass Institute

The Predocctoral Fellowship is awarded annually to a graduate student of any university who studies aspects of the African and African-American experience. This fellowship does not come with any teaching obligation, but will require the fellow to work with the institute's director in organizing colloquium, lectures, and other events. The principal aim of this award is to expedite the completion of the fellow's dissertation.

Deadline: January 31, 2004

Website: <http://www.rochester.edu/College/AAS/fellowships.php>

Post Doctoral Fellowships:

Postdoctoral Program in Environmental Chemistry Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.

The program invites experts in environmental science to submit proposals for the training of Ph.D. chemists and chemical engineers in research activities related to chemistry and the environment. Each awardee may then appoint a postdoctoral scientist to spend up to two years in a program intended to stimulate the visiting scientist to carry out further research in support of environmental understanding and values. In general, five institutions are selected annually.

Deadline: February 26, 2004

Website: <http://www.dreyfus.org/ep.shtml>

Senior Research Fellowships— United States - Israel BARD Fund

The Binational Agricultural and Research Development (BARD) fund supports cooperative agricultural research projects that are of mutual interest to the U.S. and Israel. Appropriate projects cover any or all phases of research and development, including integrated research and development problems and basic or applied research.

Deadline: January 15, 2004

Website: <http://www.bard-isus.com/>

BOV Update

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and fee revenues were higher, but revenue in all other income was lower. Total sponsored and overhead revenue and expenses were less than projected but sponsored and research expenditures are ahead of 2002-2003 activity levels. Revenues were greater than projected in RDP and the Athletic Department.

- Approval was given to the Pratt Fund Program.

Student Affairs Committee:

- Dialogue began on the selection process for both the Graduate and Undergraduate Representatives to the BOV.
- Student Governance and its hierarchy will also be discussed in the forthcoming meetings.
- Representatives from the State Council on Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) were on hand to discuss possible tuition increases throughout the state. Due to the recent budget cuts, there is a base adequacy shortfall of nearly \$400 million dollars. Because of this, the Commonwealth must address these budget inadequacies under the General Assembly's funding guidelines by either: (a) providing additional state funding (b) allowing institutions to make up the shortfall through tuition increases or (c) allowing quality and access to continue to decline.

Narrow Tailoring Ad Hoc Committee:

- The Informational Session on Narrow Tailoring of Race Conscious Programs was held on November 10th in the Owens Dining Hall. This session was attended by several members of the Board of Visitors – Mr. John Rocovich, Rector, Mr. Ben Davenport, Vice-Rector and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Narrow Tailoring, and Mr. Rod Layman, Chairman of the Student Affairs Committee. President Steger reiterated the University's commitment to promote a diverse campus environment. Dr. McNamee then brought the audience up-to-date on the current status of the narrow tailoring process within the university. This was followed by a Q & A session.
- Numerous topics were discussed and some members of the audience questioned the programs that were being discontinued or modified due to the narrow tailoring process. Some stated concerns for diversity throughout the campus if these programs are discontinued. Other issues discussed during this session ranged from fee waivers for minority students to recruitment and incentives for minority students to apply to the university. The presentation offered by Dr. McNamee is available on the following website: www.provost.vt.edu. Also following on this website will be answers to questions that were not addressed at the session due to a time constraint.

If you have any concerns or issues that you would like to discuss, please contact me at mcallison@vt.edu.

Calendar of Events

November

- 21st — **Geosciences Distinguished Lecturer—
Dr. Gary Ernst, Stanford University**
"Subduction, Continental Collision, Ultra
High Pressure Metamorphism, and
Tectonic Regurgitation"
3:30 pm
4069 Derring Hall
- **Exam Rescheduling Deadline**
for final exams that conflict or
constitute a third exam in 24 hours
- 22nd — **Fall Break Begins**
30th — **Fall Break Ends**

December

- 4th — **GSA Delegate Meeting — Free Food!**
5:30— 7:00 pm
Squires Brush Mountain Rm. A
- 5th — **Philosophy, Political Science, STS Colloquium**
"Political Pluralism and Limits on State Power"
3:30 pm
113 McBryde Hall
- 9th — **Web DropAdd Opens for Spring 2004**

- 10th — **Last Day of Classes**
11th — **Reading Day**
12th-18th — **Exams**
19th — **Fall Commencement/ Winter Break Begins**

January

- 19th — **Winter Break Ends/ Spring Semester Begins**
29th — **GSA Delegate Meeting—Free Food!**
5:30 pm — 7:00 pm
Squires Brush Mountain Rm. A

February

- 26th — **GSA Delegate Meeting—Free Food!**
5:30 pm — 7:00 pm
Squires Brush Mountain Rm. A

March

- 22nd—26th — **Graduate Education Week**
25th — **GSA Delegate Meeting—Free Food!**
5:30 pm — 7 pm
Squires Brush Mountain Rm. A

Upcoming Attractions

by Andy Sorrell



As grad students we all know what the end of the semester brings— papers, presentations, and a hectic schedule. However, I thought I would take a minute to let you know what to be expecting in the next addition of the Apex.

First off, GRDP Chair, Brian Whitaker, wanted to let everyone know that submissions are currently undergoing review and that the selections and awards will be available early next semester. Secondly, I would like to encourage those of you who know a hard-working grad student to nominate them for the Graduate School's "Graduate Student of the Week" program. As we all know, being recognized for our hard work and research is important! You can find out more about the program by visiting: http://www.grads.vt.edu/featured_grad/index.html. In addition, the week of March 22-26 is Graduate Education Week which will have speakers, the GSA sponsored Annual Research Symposium, an awards ceremony, cookout and plenty more. The GSA is also planning to host a graduate career workshop during the week.

Be sure to look in the January edition of the Apex for more information about this fun week!
Finally, as editor I am constantly looking for interesting articles for the Apex. Whether it is a concern you may have about graduate students in general or something more specific, please feel free to contact me. Have a safe and enjoyable winter break!

Did You Know...

Virginia Tech has (as of spring 2003):

- 6,554 Graduate students;
- 20% International graduate students;
- 3,994 instate graduate students;
- Less than 40% of students paying their own tuition; and
- 110 Graduate degree programs.

Source: Va. Tech Graduate School website

GSA 2003—2004 Executive Board

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