Annual Report of the Graduate Student Council

Academic Year 2015-2016

Prepared by the Executive Board of the Graduate Student Council of Tufts AS&E
Introduction

This document is the yearly report of the Tufts Graduate Student Council of Arts, Sciences, & Engineering (hereafter, simply ‘GSC’) on our activities, initiatives, and efforts in this year and in future years. It is intended for an audience that includes the graduate students of the Tufts Graduate Student Community, as well as the administration of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences and the graduate School of Engineering.

This document shall furthermore be made available on the GSC website for a minimum of five years, and into perpetuity, space permitting.

Any questions, comments, or concerns should be addressed to:

gsc-president@tufts.edu
# Council Members

## 1.1 Executive Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Jeremy Wachter</td>
<td>Physics &amp; Astronomy</td>
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<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>Irina Yakubovskaya</td>
<td>Drama</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Michael Pietras</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Elizabeth Newman</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<td>Academic &amp; Career Development</td>
<td>Cassandra Donatelli</td>
<td>Biology</td>
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<td>Community Outreach</td>
<td>Rachael Bonoan</td>
<td>Biology</td>
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<td>Social</td>
<td>Taylor Sands-Marcinkowski</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Life</td>
<td>Daniel Ciba</td>
<td>Drama</td>
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## 1.2 Department Representatives

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<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Art History</td>
<td>Naomi Lazny</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
<td>Charles van Rees</td>
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<td>Biomedical Engineering</td>
<td>Eleana Manousiouthakis</td>
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<td>Chemistry &amp; Biological Engineering</td>
<td>Chris Ghadban</td>
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<td>Fanny Frausto</td>
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<td>Child Development</td>
<td>Chenine Peloquin</td>
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<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Willie Wilson</td>
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<td>Drama</td>
<td>Steven Drum</td>
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<td>Jean Degeorge</td>
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<td>Andrew Alquesta</td>
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<td>Samuel Lee</td>
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<td>John Scott Parker</td>
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<td>Michelle Connor</td>
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<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Clint Perry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Environmental Planning</td>
<td>Ben Baldwin</td>
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2 Initiatives

Following the primary goal of the GSC of being the source of advocacy for, and voice of, the AS&E graduate students at Tufts, we present here a discussion of major initiatives begun in the 2015-2016 academic year.

All initiatives are a part of our ongoing goals as an organization, and will be central planks to the GSC’s operation for years to come. If you are: curious about our initiatives; interested in becoming involved; or if you have a suggestion for how the GSC could better represent the interests and concerns of our constituents, please do not hesitate to contact us.

2.1 Graduate Student Wellness

As it is primarily a subjective feeling, well-being is difficult to define. Each graduate student must identify what strategies they need for their own personal well-being. However, the importance of cultivating conversations about well-being lies in how such conversations can have a direct impact on academic success, as well as alleviating mental health issues. For the purposes of this section of the document, graduate student well-being is a catch-all term intended to promote discussions about life balance, self-care, relaxation, mental health, imposter syndrome, and feeling valued and included in the Tufts Graduate Community—as well as general happiness and satisfaction with life. Although there are many things that graduate students have little control over, helping students to create their own happiness is something that the GSC can help realize by creating a community where graduate students can engage in these discussions and share these strategies. Although Tufts already has some programs that include discussions about well-being, the GSC is committed to the development of more programs focused directly on well-being so that these discussions become normalized and frequent, rather than isolating and occasional.

To this end, the GSC stands resolved on the following points.

• Ensure that all doctoral-track graduate students at Tufts are supported financially by their departments for at least the average time to degree completion in their department. A graduate student whose financial situation is uncertain or otherwise in jeopardy cannot produce the quality of research which they are otherwise capable of. The Boston and Greater Boston area is the third most expensive housing market in the nation, and costs of living are rising in other sectors as well. If Tufts is to continue to accept the most qualified applicants to their graduate programs, then all graduate students should feel secure in both the amount and duration of their stipends.

• Ensure that all graduate students at Tufts have access to comprehensive health care and healthy living resources for the entirety of their time at Tufts. It is not possible to conduct quality research when one is not free of concerns about how to treat or pay for the medical issues one may face,
nor is it correct or healthy to neglect or be denied access to the facilities and resources necessary for self-care.

- Ensure that all graduate students at Tufts have access to social and relaxation opportunities, as well as the time to form networks outside of their professional obligations. It is unfair and unhealthy to expect a graduate student to consistently work eighty or hundred hour weeks; social interactions, rest and relaxation, and personal pursuits and interests are essential to physical and mental health. The culture of a department should not, implicitly or explicitly, encourage the pursuit of research work to the exclusion of all other activities.

Many of the issues laid out here are due to manners of thinking which are deeply ingrained in the graduate school experience. We are all responsible for their continued existence, and so we are all responsible for their remedy. We do not expect rapid solutions, nor do we expect linear progress at all times. What we do expect is that the Tufts community engage in an earnest and open fashion with the issue of graduate student well-being, that we may build together a stronger and more inclusive institution.

In pursuit of this initiative, the GSC has taken the following steps.

1. The creation of a peer conversation program. This pilot program provides graduate students with a list of other graduate student volunteers who are available for conversation, advice, and/or mentoring.

2. The creation of surveys to address such issues as space allocation for graduate students in academic buildings, to allow us to back our arguments and advocacy with data.

3. The redesign of the Deans’ Coffee Hour, to provide more structured, interactive feedback to the university administration.

4. The creation of the Vent Event, to provide students with de-stressing activities and to hear student concerns directly.

5. The creation of the International Graduate Student (IGS) Chair. IGS often face a very different set of challenges compared to American graduate students, and the definition of well-being varies among cultures.

### 2.2 International graduate student concerns

International graduate students face a number of issues beyond, and in addition to, those faced by their peers. Outstanding issues include visa and immigration concerns; language barriers; cultural and societal differences; and feelings of isolation and pressure heightened by these differences.

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1 This program is not intended to replace counseling services or other forms of professional help.
There are nearly three hundred IGS in the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences and the Graduate School of Engineering, or roughly one-sixth of the total graduate student population of those schools. Despite this large population, there was not previously an organization or contact person in the Graduate Student Community tasked solely with IGS issues and concerns.

These conditions have led to a situation where the GSC is not fully informed on IGS issues, and therefore cannot properly represent IGS in the community and to the administration. Our recent survey data, as well as conversations with individual students, comprise the majority of the information we have about IGS, their issues and concerns, and how to best address those issues and concerns.

The specific issues faced by IGS require specific attention. In pursuit of this initiative, the GSC has created the new Executive Board position of the International Graduate Student Chair. This chair is tasked with advocating for IGS, and we expect them to work closely with the International Center at Tufts, who has recently added a graduate student liaison to their staff.

As an entirely new position, with the inaugural Chair assuming the office in May of 2016, there is great flexibility in how the IGS Chair conducts and executes the responsibilities of their office, and we expect this position to greatly evolve within its first year of existence.

2.3 Expanded Programming and Flexibility

To better serve the graduate student community, the GSC has increased the Student Activity Fee from $25/semester to $30/semester, effective in Fall of 2016. The majority of these new funds are to go to expanding our current events and programmings. The budget has been further redesigned to allow for increased flexibility in how the GSC as a whole, and the Chairs specifically, can spend our funds.

It is our hope that the additional fiscal freedom given to our Chairs will allow for a greater variety and creativity in their programming. While we will keep in place the traditional events which have formed the backbone of GSC programming for many years, we are now more able to experiment with new events and immediately incorporate feedback from the graduate student community, rather than have to cut other programs or wait for the next fiscal year to attempt a new event.

Included in this initiative is expanded funding for our Graduate Student Organizations. We would like to encourage our GSOs to put on more inter-organization and inter-disciplinary events, reaching a larger fraction of the graduate student population and bringing their specific expertise to bear in these events.

Further details about the new allocations of funds, and more information in general about the GSC’s budget, may be found in Appendix A.
2.4 Data-Driven Advocacy

The GSC has traditionally relied exclusively on our own experiences, conversations with graduate students, and general word of mouth to inform and direct our advocacy efforts. While there is merit in these approaches, and while we will continue to solicit comments and concerns from the graduate student community, it still holds that the plural of anecdote is not data. Beyond this concern, it is likely that an advocacy platform built in this fashion has large holes in it of which the GSC is entirely unaware.

To address this concern, the GSC in the 2014-2015 academic year designed and administered a survey with the goal of collecting data and feedback from the largest possible cross-section of the graduate student community. The survey covered demographics, experiences at Tufts, and had several opportunities for free-response feedback. It received six hundred twenty-six responses, or roughly forty percent of the graduate student body at that time.

We have since then designed a tool for analyzing the survey data, and are ready to begin using it in our advocacy efforts. Sample results, and a brief discussion of each, may be found in Appendix B. It is our hope that this data will provide evidence to support our current advocacy issues, and will in addition reveal previously unknown issues which require the GSC’s attention.
3 Major Events

Following is a summary of major events of the GSC in the past academic year. Specific attention is given to attendances, reach, improvements on prior years, and proposed or suggested changes for future events.

Events are ordered chronologically from the beginning of the 2015 academic year. Events with multiple occurrences are placed at the position of their first occurrence.

3.1 Apple Picking

2015 September 26
The traditional September apple picking trip remained one of our more popular events, drawing eighty graduate students and their families to enjoy a sunny, breezy fall day at Honey Pot Hill orchards. Despite the claim of a certain saying, future doctors are not repelled by apples in the slightest.

3.2 Pub Nights

Various
The recurring GSC Pub Nights continue to be popular and well-attended events. On average, 30-60 students from at least half a dozen departments come out to meet friends new and old, experience a local establishment, and enjoy complimentary appetizers.

Major changes this year included fewer pub nights, but at locations with better food, as well as collaboration with the Sackler School of Biomedical Sciences for our December and April events. Given the positive feedback regarding both decisions, we will continue to collaborate with Sackler and provide a higher quality of food at future events.

The dates and locations of this year’s pub nights were as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015 October 15</td>
<td>The Burren (Davis Sq)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 December 17</td>
<td>Meadhall (Kendall Sq)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 February 11</td>
<td>Joshua Tree (Davis Sq)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 April 14</td>
<td>Aeronaut (Union Sq)</td>
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3.3 Deans’ Coffee Hour

2015 October 19
2016 February 08
2016 April 25
The Deans’ Coffee Hours underwent a major overhaul in their design and structure in the 2015 academic year. Most predominantly, the Coffee Hours are henceforth structured as times when the graduate student body can meet with and talk to the administration of AS&E on a selection of topics decided upon by the Graduate Student Community beforehand. In designing a particular Coffee Hour, the procedure is as follows:
• At the General Meeting twice preceding the Coffee Hour, the Student Life Chair suggests possible topics of conversation, drawn from their list of known graduate student issues. The Council makes suggestions and offers feedback.

• The Council members return to their individual departments and/or GSOs to solicit further input and topics of conversation.

• At the General Meeting preceding the Coffee Hour, the Council provides to the Student Life Chair their findings in the intervening month. The Chair leads further discussion on the Coffee Hour agenda.

• The Student Life Chair provides the Deans, and any other administrators in attendance, with the agenda for the Coffee Hour one week in advance, or immediately following the preceding General Meeting.

We have received enthusiastic feedback on the new format, which allows for more constructive discussions on issues that graduate students face. The administration has more time to consider issues in advance of the Coffee Hour, and the Council’s workshopping of the agenda assists in making the topics of conversation more complete and focused. One early success of this model is the creation of a parking policy specifically for graduate students.

The agenda items for the Coffee Hours this academic year were:

**October:** Expanding the informal Space Allocation survey, initially conducted by MEGSO, to all interested departments. Concerns about parking plans and restrictions for graduate students. Auditing classes as a graduate student.

**February:** Graduate student well-being, including imposter syndrome, fostering happiness, mental health, and finances.

**April:** Advisor-advisee relationships, GSRC, communication between administration and faculty.

### 3.4 Tufts IGNITE

**2015 November 04**

Now in its third year, and continuing to increase in attendance and popularity, IGNITE saw thirteen graduate students from Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Sackler, and The Gordon Institute present their research in the lightning-fast, five-minute format. With only fifteen slides, each automatically advancing after twenty seconds, the presenters demonstrated their creativity and communications skills in informing an audience of largely non-experts just what it is they do on a daily basis.

The winners of Tufts IGNITE were:

*First Place* Beste Yuskel Computer Science
*Second Place* Simran Kaushal Biology
*Third Place* Mike Shah Computer Science
The GSC would like to thank the following judges for volunteering their time and expertise to Tufts IGNITE:

- Xiaocheng Jiang  Biomedical Engineering
- Mihir Mankad  Fletcher School
- Eric Tytell  Biology

3.5  Thanksgiving Food Drive

2015 November 21
The Thanksgiving Food Drive, which benefits the Somerville Homeless Coalition, enjoyed this November its most successful year yet. Our volunteers collected twenty-one boxes (U-haul medium size) of food, as well as three boxes of food and supplies to be donated to animal shelters in the Boston area.

3.6  Clothing Swap

2015 December 01
2016 April 06
New this year, the Clothing Swap gave graduate students the opportunity to clear out their closets and exchange clothes which were old (to them) for ones which were new (to them). Each article of clothing donated entitled the donor to take a previously-donated item.

The inaugural December event was attended by two dozen students and drew positive feedback from its attendees. At the end of the event, we donated all unclaimed articles to Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

For the April event, the GSC collaborated with the Leonard Carmichael Society, an undergraduate service organization, to expand our reach. Unclaimed articles from this event were donated to the charities Second Chances and NuDay Syrica.

3.7  Graduate Student Research Symposium

2016 February 26
The GSRS greatly expanded both its attendance and scope in this year. A total of forty-one graduate students from Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Sackler, and Fletcher took part in the Research Symposium, presenting their research to their peers, as well as to faculty and undergraduates, in a day-long event in and around Granoff Hall. This year, the GSC was excited to have Dr. Ben Wolfe of Biology featured as the event’s keynote speaker.

The winners of the GSRS, by category, were:

15-minute talks
First Place  Charles van Rees  Biology
Second Place  Eric Scott  Biology
Third Place  Long Bao  Electrical & Computer Engineering
## 5-minute talks

**First Place**  
Vasanth Sarathy  
Computer Science

**Second Place**  
Esther Miller  
Biology

**Third Place**  
Agustin Botteron  
Civil & Environmental Engineering

## Poster session

**First Place**  
Rachael Bonoan  
Biology

**Second Place**  
Tom Williams  
Computer Science

**Third Place**  
Melissa Cruz  
PREP

The GSC would like to thank the following judges for volunteering their time and expertise to the GSRS:

- Tim Atherton  
  Physics
- Jordan Crouser  
  Computer Science
- Nicole Danos  
  Biology
- Betsy Goldman  
  Drama & Dance
- Nikita A. Karlamov  
  Communication & Psychology
- Kelly McLaughlin  
  Biology
- Mitch McVey  
  Biology
- Barbara Parmenter  
  UEP

### 3.8 The Vent Event

**2016 March 28**

Newly created this year as a part of our initiative on graduate student well-being, the Vent Event was designed to provide students with relaxation, de-stressing activities, and the opportunity to bring issues directly to the Student Life chair in a graduate student-only environment.

Activities included coloring, face-painting, nail-painting, and a selection of board games. The GSC also provided an anonymous suggestion box for those who did not wish to discuss their issues directly. Throughout the day, just over 30 graduate students stopped by Curtis Hall to relax and socialize.

With several issues brought to the Student Life Chair’s attention, and with positive feedback from the attendees, we look forward to hosting this event again in the following year.

### 3.9 National Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week

**2016 April 04–08**

This weeklong series of events is our participation in a nationwide event established by the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students. This year, we hosted the following events.

**Monday:** The penultimate general meeting of the academic year is also the GSC’s elections meeting. We are excited for the coming year’s executive
board, and wish them the best.

**Tuesday:** Graduate students enjoyed cupcakes from Modern Pastry, generously sponsored by GSAS. The three locations around campus (Curtis Hall, Balch Lobby, and 200 Boston Ave.) saw hundreds of students across dozens of departments stop by for a midday snack and socializing.

**Wednesday:** In addition to our second clothing swap (discussed in further detail above), the GSC hosted the inaugural confidence-boosting workshop for international graduate students, run by Vice President Yakubovskaya.

**Friday:** The first GSC-run Careers Outside Academia panel, hosted in Curtis Hall, gave graduate students the opportunity to ask a panel of five Tufts PhDs who currently work outside academia about their experiences, as well as advice for how to make the transition themselves. The GSC would like to thank ..., and for volunteering their time to come and talk to us.

### 3.10 Graduate Student Council 5K

*2016 April 30*

The 19th Annual GSC 5K saw 49 registered runners, and many more attendees besides, come out and enjoy a rarely cooperative Spring day. We raised ≈ $1000 to benefit Project Hope and RESPOND, Inc., two local charities with whom we have been successfully partnered for many years. Other activities included face-painting, a raffle for gift cards to local businesses, and the Kids' 5K.

The GSC would like to thank the following organizations for their sponsorship.

- Tufts Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
- Xtreme Ninja Martial Arts Center
- Redbones BBQ
- The Friendly Toast
4 GSC Awards and Recognition

Herein, the GSC would like to acknowledge those persons and organizations who have earned awards of distinction. Each entry includes a brief summary of the excellent practices and attitudes of the award winner. The “Outstanding Contribution” awards contain quotations from the winners’ nominations.

**Outstanding Faculty Contribution to Graduate Student Studies**

*Marina Umaschi Bers, Child Study & Human Development*

“I have seen the significant impact that [Dr. Bers] has made on numerous students; she provides unique opportunities to all of her students (undergrads, graduate, and Ph.D. students) such as spearheading and leading research studies, attending national conferences related to technology and engineering, and designing robotics curricula for schools and educators.”

“Upon first meeting Professor Bers, I recognized her genuine interest in getting to know her students and helping them to follow their aspirations.”

*Kim Ruane, Mathematics*

“[Dr. Ruane] is always willing to discuss with grad students about what is going on in the department, either one-on-one or during OGSM meetings, and is honest and forthright about what needs to be done on both our end and the department’s end. She understands grad student needs, and is the first to speak up for us.”

“Dr. Ruane has been such an integral part of the making the math grad program so incredible and she deserves recognition for all she does.”

“She is always fighting for us!”

**Outstanding Contribution to Mentoring or Teaching Undergraduate Students**

*Peter Bourdeau, Art History*

“In a class like this, it was so easy to get caught up thinking you weren’t good enough. But Peter was very kind, approachable, and ALWAYS went out of his way to let you know your ideas were valuable and that you were contributing to the class in a meaningful way.”

“Moreover, Peter offered a hand in helping me look for jobs in the field post-graduation, and gave advice about graduate school. He was professional yet candid about his own experiences as a student of art history.”
Yiwei Jiang, Economics

“I had not taken statistics or econometrics, but Yiwei took time out of her busy week several times to explain STATA to myself and my partner. She was a great teacher and managed to teach us how log files worked, and how to clean up all our data so that we were able to analyse it accordingly. Without Yiwei’s help, we would not have been able to write a paper that actually analyzed data, and so her personal dedication to this class and to the students really helped us challenge ourselves and learn a new skill”

Charles van Rees, Biology

“Not only was [Charles] a maverick at identifying birds, but he would go out of his way after an already exceedingly long day to help students with various research snafus. He hiked miles to find bat roosts, waited silently to count bees and stayed up late into the night helping a student identify plants. Whenever someone needed anything, Charles was the first to offer his hand.’

“He, without hesitation, will take time out of his very busy schedule to meet with me and answer questions about my classes, future career opportunities and research.”

Outstanding Service Award to Administrator

Ariana Hajmiragha, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

A graduate student herself, Ariana nonetheless always finds time in her schedule to inform and assist the GSC in our events and initiatives. Through her professionalism, she has made the process of coordinating between the GSC and GSAS smooth and simple. The GSC hopes we will be able to rely on her expertise for many years to come.

Outstanding Service Award to Faculty or Staff

Dean Robert Cook, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

Dean Cook has for many years been a staunch advocate for graduate students on Tufts campus. He played an instrumental role in the conception and implementation of the new Careers Outside Academia panel, and has always been generous in his co-sponsorship of GSC events. The GSC, and the school at large, is lucky to have Dean Cook lead us in his capacity.

Outstanding Service Award to Graduate Student

Irina Yakubovskaya, Drama
In her three years of service on the GSC Executive Board, Irina has demonstrated time and again her complete commitment to the GSC and to the betterment of graduate students at Tufts. She has spearheaded many of the GSC’s recent initiatives, such as the survey in the 2014-15 academic year, and has been for her entire tenure a driving force for our direction and cohesion. Irina has been always involved, always thinking ahead, and never afraid to speak her mind, and the GSC and graduate student community would be poorer off without her.

Outstanding GSO for Graduate Student Betterment
Organization of Graduate Students in Mathematics (OGSM)

In the four years of their existence, the OGSM has made significant and admirable gains in advocating for graduate students within the Mathematics department. Some of their notable successes include the creation of a peer mentorship program, a teaching seminar, and a compilation of useful resources for academic and career successes for graduate students in Mathematics. They additionally provide ample social opportunities for their constituents. The GSC looks forward to the new leadership of OGSM carrying on these traditions of excellence.

Outstanding GSO for Outreach
Computer Science League of Learning (CSLOL)

Although they have only existed for two years, CSLOL has already made a large impact on the graduate student community. Their Programming for Non-Programmers events routinely draw high attendances from a variety of departments, and have generated positive feedback from attendees. These events have been a prime example of graduate students sharing their expertise in a way which benefits our entire community. They have additionally been extremely active online and on social media, widely and enthusiastically advertising their events and creating a positive public representation of GSOs at Tufts. For these activities and others, the GSC finds CSLOL to be a deserving recipient of this award.

A Fiscal Year 2016: Summary

Following is a brief summary of the GSC finances and expenditures for the 2016 fiscal year. As FY16 runs from July of 2015 to June of 2016, this information is current, but not complete. Values in parentheses are income; values not in parentheses are expenditures. An explanation of each category follows the table.
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<td>Travel Awards</td>
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<td>Officer Stipends</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$(5,637.96)</strong></td>
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</table>

**Student Activity Fee**: The Activity Fee, which was $25 per semester for FY16, is paid by all graduate students enrolled in the schools of AS&E. It is the GSC’s sole source of income.

**Committee Expenditures**: The Internal Committees of the GSC are Academic and Career Development, Community Outreach, Social, and Student Life. They are each headed by their respective Chairs. This value is the net cost of programming for these four committees.

**GSO Funding**: This is the total amount of funding claimed as reimbursement by the Graduate Student Organizations which the GSC recognizes and funds. We expect this value to increase before the end of FY16, as not all claims for GSO activities have been submitted.

**Travel Awards**: The GSC sponsors the $200 Travel Award for graduate students traveling to, but not presenting at, conferences. This Award is administered through the GSAS office.

**GSC Lounge/Office**: This is the net cost of operating and maintaining the GSC Lounge spaces in West and Curtis Halls, as well as the cost of employing the Lounge Manager and Lounge Assistants.

**Executive Discretionary**: This is the cost of General Meetings and travel/business costs, and includes an unallocated “slush fund” which allows the Executive Board to fund new opportunities.

**Officer Stipends**: The President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer are all paid a yearly stipend.

The GSC forecasts it will end the year with a budget surplus, as we have for our entire existence as an organization. The intent of this surplus is to allow the new Treasurer flexibility in budgeting, as well as providing them with a cushion to preserve our financial solvency.

Beginning in Fall of 2016, the Graduate Student Activity Fee will be changed to $30/semester. This change is to permit the GSC to expand its programming, increasing funding to GSOs, expand the Travel Award coverage, and keep pace with rising costs, all while continuing to operate within budget. The semesterly fee was last adjusted in FY14, when it was increased to $25/semester from the...
longstanding fee of $24/semester, which was set in FY05. This increase brings us into line with the inflation-adjusted value of the GSC’s operational budget in FY05.

B  Academic Year 2014 Survey Data: Selected Results

One of the achievements of the 2015-2016 GSC Executive Board was the creation of a tool to analyze the survey data taken in the 2014-2015 academic year. To demonstrate the usefulness of the survey data, we present here a series of plots and analyses which we may now use to inform our advocacy, policy decisions, and outreach, as well as suggesting future paths of inquiry.

The total survey response rate was $N = 626$, with $N = 441$ students from GSAS responding and $N = 185$ students from the SoE responding. The estimated graduate student population is $N \approx 1700$ students, with $N \approx 1100$ in GSAS and $N \approx 600$ in the SoE. There was therefore an overall response rate of $\sim 37\%$, a response rate in GSAS of $\sim 40\%$, and a response rate in the SoE of $\sim 31\%$. We claim a statistically significant response rate for the graduate student population at large, for members of GSAS, and for members of the SoE.

Plots and analyses begin on the following page.
Figure 1: (1) AS&E STEM students most consistently receive summer funding. (2) The majority of students are uncertain about the likelihood of summer funding.

This suggests to us that all departments need to make information about summer funding more readily available to their graduate students.

The precise question text is: “Does your department provide students with funding opportunities during the summer?”. “Humanities” refers to the departments of the Classics, Drama, English, Fine Arts History, German, History, Music, and Philosophy. “AS&E STEM” refers to the departments of Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics.
Figure 2: (1) Only \( \sim 13\% \) of all graduate students regularly attend GSC events. (2) Students from GSAS attend GSC events with twice the frequency of their peers in the SoE. Coupled with the higher enrollment in GSAS, which is roughly twice that of the SoE, engineering students are typically outnumbered by A&S students by a factor of four. (3) More encouragingly, \( \sim 72\% \) of graduate students have ever attended a GSC event, and \( \sim 45\% \) attend more often than “rarely”. This suggests to us that the GSC needs to improve its reach to all students to encourage higher frequent event attendance, and that a large fraction of graduate students effectively do not engage with the GSC. The precise question text is: “How frequently do you attend GSC-sponsored events?”.
Figure 3: (1) Just because a student never reads emails from the GSC does not mean they don’t attend GSC events. (2) Just because a student always reads emails from the GSC does not mean they attend any events. This suggests to us that the GSC may wish to explore advertising events through non-email channels. We have experimented with an increased social media presence for the 2015-2016 academic year, such as Facebook events and live-tweeting events, and so a future line of inquiry may be to look at how attendance at GSC events is influenced by all modes of advertising. We additionally wish to explore why students who are informed on GSC events elect to not attend, and work to provide events to accommodate them.

The precise question text is: “How frequently do you attend GSC-sponsored events?”, while the bins are organized by responses to the question “Regarding communication from the GSC, please select the statement that most accurately represents how often you read them.”
Figure 4: (1) Students who took significant time between undergraduate and graduate school feel slightly less supported regarding their future careers. (2) Most students do not consider this question to be applicable to them, or have not considered it before.

This suggests to us that we should encourage students to begin thinking about their post-graduate careers earlier in their time at graduate school, and/or that we should encourage them to broach these topics with their advisors.

The precise question text is: “My program and/or advisor assists me in finding employment in the career path of my choice.”, while the bins are organized by responded to the question “After receiving your undergraduate degree and before starting graduate school, how many years did you work full-time (such as industry, government, academia, non-profits, or NGOs)?”.

Figure 5: This figure is included as supplement to Fig. 4. We suggest that the slight discrepancy in feelings of support between students who took significant time between undergraduate and graduate school and those who did not may be due to the higher desire of the former category to go into industry or private sector. Many students report feelings of expectation that they will go into academia. This conflict of desire and expectation may lead to the lower feeling of support we observed in Fig. 4.

The precise question text is: “What is your primary career choice at this time?”.