Letter from the GSC Co-Chairs

2020 has been an unusual year for every graduate student, and the 2020-2021 Graduate Student Council (GSC) team is operating under unusual circumstances. These challenging times bring a special sense of obligation for the committees on the GSC to serve our graduate student members. This year, our goal has been to provide resources for graduate students to navigate their lives during the pandemic. This includes hosting events which unite the graduate community within and beyond the field of applied linguistics. In doing so, we hope to build a strong connection among our graduate student members as well as between graduate students and the GSC team. Thus, it is our honor and pleasure to update you on our roles and the operations of the 2020-2021 GSC committees.

Our core mission is to create more service, leadership, and professional development opportunities for our graduate student members. In keeping with this goal, the GSC Steering Committee (SC) revised its governance structure in early 2020. The SC now includes six members: two co-chairs, one secretary, and three members-at-large (social media, newsletter, and event-planning). We also extended our social media, event planning, and diversity sub-committees, as well as our newsletter team, amounting to a total of thirteen members. You can find our complete member profiles and mission statement on our website. For your convenience, we have also provided links to the individual sub-committees in each of the sections that follow.

The AAALGrads Newsletters provide the most relevant news and resources to our members. They are also intended as a platform for community building among the AAAL graduate students. The AAALGrads Newsletter complements the AAALetter, which offers information about the AAAL operation and membership. This year, led by Stefan Vogel, the newsletter team published a summer special issue to address graduate students' concerns and needs during the pandemic. In order to contribute to recent discussions about race and inclusion in higher education and society at large, this current, Fall 2020 issue presents different perspectives and resources on race, social justice, diversity, and allyship. The profiles of our newsletter sub-committee members can be found here: https://www.aaal-gsc.org/newsletter-co-editors.

Our social media sub-committee is in charge of developing short media content and posting it to our social media channels and website. This year, led by Svetlana Koltovskaia, the social media team has been communicating with graduate students through Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and our blogs. Our July and August posts focused on online teaching, and in September and October we distributed detailed information about the GSC. The profiles of our social media sub-committee members can be found here: https://www.aaal-gsc.org/social-media-sub-committee.

The diversity sub-committee is in charge of tasks that address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the GSC operation. Led by Josiah Murphy, the sub-committee revised the GSC diversity climate survey (included in this issue of the newsletter) to gauge diversity among our AAAL graduate student members. A second goal of the revised survey is to assess student members' opinions about the GSC's operations regarding DEI. The GSC is also working on finalizing an award for Distinguished Service and Engaged Research in Relation to Diversity Efforts. The profiles of our diversity sub-committee members can be found here: https://www.aaal-gsc.org/diversity-sub-committee.

The event-planning sub-committee organizes AAAL GSC webinars and conference events. Led by Lupe Rincon-Mendoza, the sub-committee hosted a webinar in September entitled "Navigating and Thriving in Graduate School." Lupe's team is currently preparing for the AAAL 2021 graduate students events. This year, we will host two pre-conference workshops, one on March 17th ("Strategies for Publishing and Interviewing Along the Way to the Job Market") and one on March 18th ("Balancing the Holistic Experience of Being a Graduate Student"). We will also hold social hours on March 19th. The Profiles of our event-planning sub-committee members can be found here: https://www.aaal-gsc.org/event-planning-sub-committee

Although each sub-committee has specific responsibilities within the GSC, all members closely collaborate on many essential tasks. Earlier this year, we were all involved in the publication of the summer special issue of the AAALGrads Newsletter. In addition, all members contributed to the recent GSC intro video. As a vibrant student organization affiliated with AAAL, the AAAL GSC has seen continued and steady growth in its presence and influence in the graduate student community. Even as we remain socially distant, members of the GSC Steering Committee and the sub-committees are dedicated to maintaining and strengthening the connections within the AAAL graduate student community.

We cordially invite you to share your opinions with us, and we look forward to collaborating with AAAL graduate students all over the world.

If you have any suggestions or questions about our current and future initiatives, please contact us at: grad@aaal.org.

Sally Ren & Laxmi Prasad Ohja, GSC-Co-Chairs

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If you want to learn more about GSC events and/or become a part of the Steering Committee, please follow our social media to stay up to date about our events and calls:

- GSC Website: www.aaal-gsc.org
- Facebook: AAAL Graduate Students
- Twitter: @AAALGrads
- YouTube: AAAL GSC
- LinkedIn: AAAL Graduate Student

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