

UNM GPSA 2004-2005 Strategic Plan

The following two paragraphs are the preamble to the University of New Mexico Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) Constitution. It was written at the inception of the GPSA in 1969, shortly before the riot at UNM in April 1970 over President Nixon's decision to send troops into Cambodia. In our case, that student energy was not directed just against the Vietnam War, but attempted to assert the rights and privileges of graduate students, whose voice had not been heard by the UNM administration. After a campus-wide survey delineated the differences between graduate and undergraduate students, the Board of Regents recognized the students' rights to form a representative government to be their mouthpiece, equal in power to the undergraduate government.

We, the graduate and professional students of the University of New Mexico, coming from a variety of disciplines, yet united in our concern for the quality of our academic environment, believing that we can achieve more in our unity than we can alone, hereby establish this Constitution to preserve and protect the rights of the students at this University, to advance the interests of the graduate and professional student community, and to facilitate the professional development of its members.

In operating under this Constitution, the Graduate and Professional Student Association shall hold the following rights to be indispensable: the right to a complete and liberal education, the right to access the resources necessary to promote that education, the right to freely express ideas and thoughts that are a product of that education, and the right to participate in the processes and institutions that will ensure this education remains worthy and acceptable.

In the intervening years the University and our community changed. The professional students joined the GSA, creating the GPSA. The creation of graduate programs and slow growth in enrollment stretched our organization. The passing of years from the student movements of the early 1970s has made us lose contact with the founding energy that benefited our students. Our yearly turnover in leadership has kept the GPSA from building momentum to affect positive change for our students.

This spring we decided to create a strategic plan in an attempt to provide the GPSA with continuity of purpose, stabilize the GPSA's activities and campaigns and chart our course for the next few years. This process is nearly complete, and our current plan is listed below. This begins with a synopsis of our mission.

The GPSA strives to identify, promote, support, and protect interests and concerns that are important to the welfare and academic development of graduate/professional students at UNM.

The main points in black were proposed as strategic goals. They should be the driving goals of the GPSA and should not change over the next few years. The sub-points with open circles are specific objectives that will change slowly; points with filled boxes are action steps that should change as we accomplish the objective or circumstance obviates their need. The order they appear indicates some importance, but is not intended to place priorities oriented to either graduate and professional students over the other.

- **Serve as the principal support organization for graduate/professional students**

- **Promote, facilitate and preserve departmental Student Associations (GSAs)**
 - Host a yearly workshop and create a manual to promote the creation of new GSAs.
 - Host a yearly workshop and create a manual in support of existing GSAs.
 - Maintain GSA information, contacts and calendar of events on the GPSA website.
 - Continue to have department representatives talk about their respective GSA's at Council meetings
- **Facilitate and develop graduate efforts to acquire grant funding**
 - Locate and publicize grant writing resources (courses, workshops) for developing grant writing skills
 - Advocate for OGS to create and send out calendar of funding opportunities, deadlines and have link on website
 - Organize grant review workshops
 - Advocate for OGS and the Office of Research to improve and increase information, publicity and resources for grants and grant writing
 - Provide website link to MIDAS and other grant resources
- **Strengthen and foster community among graduate/professional students**

- Establish a new committee to schedule and coordinate programs/workshops and social events
- Orient new graduate and professional students and applicants to UNM and connect them to the GPSA.
 - Work with OGS to sponsor and improve Fall orientation for graduate students
 - Identify and attend department level orientations, concentrating upon the professional schools
 - Work with OGS to create and distribute a student orientation packet
 - Create and distribute a GPSA Guide to UNM.
 - Use the all-student list to welcome and provide official announcements to all students

•Increase advocacy of graduate/professional issues at state and national levels

- Become an organization that graduate or professional students in other institutions in New Mexico can model
 - Promote the inception of graduate organizations at all institutions in New Mexico
 - Create a federation of graduate student organizations in New Mexico
 - Provide assistance and leadership to New Mexico graduate organizations
- Actively participate in the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS)
 - Pay for institutional membership in NAGPS and subsidize the attendance of representative(s) at annual national and regional meetings

- Provide information of NAGPS activities and benefits to our community via the list serv and website
- Strengthen lobby efforts on behalf of graduate/professional students to the New Mexico legislature
 - Encourage continuity within GPSA's lobby team.
 - Promote organized statewide graduate/professional lobby efforts.
 - Lobby for GRD funding to continue (currently \$90,000/year)
- **Provide for the future viability of GPSA.**
 - Evaluate and update positions and descriptions of GPSA employees
 - Create a job description for our works-study positions
 - Create a job description for the President and Council Chair, considering new positions
 - Evaluate and consider revision of Standing Committee Chairs
 - Examine and reorganize (if necessary) current committees.
 - Create a committee to handle social programming
 - Consider creation of computer resource allocation, graduate symposium and alternative mediation committees
 - Provide for continuity of leadership
 - Create a training manual for each committee chair and committee
 - Create a training manual for each employee
 - Provide transitional training for new officers and committee chairs
 - Yearly train new Council representatives
 - Create an ad-hoc committee to review the GPSA Constitution and By-Laws.

- Focus on GPSA standing committees, officers and budgetary decisions and flexibility

- Update the history of GPSA and have it available on the website

•Proactively identify and address individual and systemic student challenges and seek solutions.

- Open and maintain official channels of communication with UNM's administration.

- Designate a liaison person to bring graduate/professional concerns to the attention of members of the Office of Graduate Studies
- Advocate for a university level graduate/professional ombudsperson, funded with an assistantship, to work under the Provost. Some functions would be to conduct surveys and identify, receive and disseminate student communications and concerns.
- Hold public forums to assess and identify student concerns in child care, family and graduate housing, health care, etc.

- Establish, publicize and ensure continuity for the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process

- **Advocate for clarification of graduate student employment system (GA/TA/RA) and protect rights of students**

- Consider and review impact of graduate TA's on undergraduate education with provost

- Ask OGS to provide a semesterly or yearly report outlining departmental distributions, salaries and titles of graduate and professional assistants and instructors.
- Advocate for a campus-wide forum to discuss assistantships across campus
- Push for standardization of assistant work load and procedures
 - Convert PTI's/adjunct-hired graduate students (about 100 in the College of Arts and Sciences) to TA's so that they receive health insurance benefit and tuition waiver
- Encourage university and department level teaching assistant training.
- Create assistant employment listings similar to those available for student employment.