

GSA-GPC Proposed Unification FAQs

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1. Where can I read the content of the actual proposal?

The proposal is available for review [here](#).

The proposal spells out the details of how GSA's functions will be taken on by GPC.

GSA is the Graduate Student Association, and is the Divisional Student Council formerly associated with the graduate school. In 1982, GSA and the three other divisional councils (for the Med school, Vet Med school, and Law school) launched a successful campaign to create GPC, with the intention of amplifying the voice of graduate and professional students within the university and improving the services provided to those students.

GPC is the Graduate Professional Council, and is the official student body government for all graduate and professional students at Mizzou. It is recognized as a co-equal student government alongside the undergraduate student government here on campus. GPC was carved out of the undergraduate student government in 1982 at the request of GSA and the three other Divisional Student Councils.

2. Who brought forth this proposal?

This proposal was jointly drafted by the executive boards of both the Graduate Student Association and the Graduate Professional Council, after deliberation and a majority vote of each board individually approved of moving forward with the proposal.

3. Who will vote on this proposal?

Official departmental representatives of each organization will vote in their respective organization's representative body. Because the vote will require a constitutional amendment for each organization, a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority will be required for passage. As such, please contact your departmental representative in order to discuss the proposal.

4. When will voting occur?

Each organization will vote at its regularly scheduled November meeting. For GPC, this will occur on Tuesday, November 7, and for GSA, this will occur on Tuesday, November 28.

5. Why is it important that this vote happens in November?

Part of the proposed unification involves recommending the transfer of GSA's annual budget to GPC. GSA must recommend this transfer to the Student Fee Review Committee, which finalizes its budget recommendations in the month of November. For this change to be fully in effect for the next academic year, SFRC needs to be notified of the change before their recommendation is final.

6. When will this change take effect?

July 1, 2018

7. Isn't GSA's work valuable and important to graduate students?

Absolutely. The professional development programming, advisory functions, travel funding and other services provided are essential supports to graduate students. And it is for those reason we have worked hard to ensure that *ALL* of these functions and services will continue following the proposed merge. This is addressed in greater detail below, and in the full proposal language, linked above.

8. What is the Office of Graduate Studies' stance on this proposal?

The Office of Graduate Studies has been kept abreast of the proposal at all stages. They have made clear that they will respect the decision of the representative bodies of each organization.

9. Don't GPC and GSA have distinctly different agendas?

The missions are importantly similar. Both GSA and GPC exist to serve the very large and very heterogeneous population of graduate students. Because of their uniquely large overlap in constituencies, GSA and GPC have found it difficult for decades to clearly delineate their missions. The most recent effort at delineation established GSA as an organization dedicated to the apolitical and important mission of providing professional development services to graduate students. When this decision was made, GPC cooperated by ceasing their own professional development programming.

The goal with unification is to amplify the ability of these apolitical services to be provided to graduate students. This is done by empowering a dedicated professional

development team with an improved information and resource pipeline, and by streamlining communication channels between OGS, GPC, and GSA that haven't reliably improved in decades of attempts at improvement. Unification offers the best shot at providing the organizational architecture needed to provide robust, apolitical professional development services, while optimizing the bandwidth of graduate leadership and OGS, improving competition for graduate leadership positions, and maintaining all existing services. Please review answers, below, as well as the full proposal linked above for more complete information!

10. What are the problems that this proposal hopes to resolve?

Confusion

There is confusion regarding the mission and identity of both organization at all levels: from graduate students themselves to faculty and staff, to administrators, the press, and undergraduate students. Invites to meetings, seats on committees, email inquiries for assistance, etc. are frequently sent to the wrong organization.

While this may sound like a minor inconvenience, GSA does not enjoy the same kinds of access to information pipelines and resources that GPC does in its role as the official student government of graduate and professional students. As a result, the confusions referenced above can and have had significant negative impacts on the ability of graduate leaders to protect the interests of graduate students and to provide them with apolitical resources that improve their career readiness and quality of life.

Future-Proofing for Positive Working Relationship Among Graduate Leaders

Interpersonal conflicts between these organizations for many years have previously, and reliably, resulted in needless distractions from the important work at hand, as well as a reduced ability to best serve the needs and interests of graduate students in a timely and robust manner. Consolidation of these organization into a single entity with a common goal, mission and vision will eliminate this problem going forward.

Providing a stable solution to the decades-long instability within graduate leadership is particularly important when higher education is under political and fiscal pressures that are unprecedented. As pressures increase, it becomes increasingly important that graduate student services be placed within as stable an organizational structure as possible.

Demand on Graduate Students for Service Time

One of GSA's primary attempts to separate missional overlap with GPC has been to rebrand itself as an organization whose core function is professional development (due to which GPC agreed to stop offering professional development programming). As such,

the current structure of GSA that requires departments to send representatives to serve on its General Council is an unwarranted and excessive demand upon the time and energy of graduate students for whom these resources are in high demand.

Unification would reduce the duplicative assembly structure, while still providing service opportunities within GPC designed to absorb those passionate graduate students who are still wishing to serve in graduate leadership. The latter can be accomplished in three different ways: (1) through service as an at-large representative in GPC's General Assembly, (2) through service as an officially designated department representative for one the departments not currently sending delegates, or (3) in one of the four titled positions being created as part of this proposal. Each opportunity will give interested graduate students access to serving on a wide variety of committees and task forces that serve a range of apolitical service functions as well as distinct policy-oriented functions throughout the university.

11. What actions have been taken previously to attempt to solve these problems?

Two years ago, GSA undertook a serious look at its mission and attempted to rebrand by narrowing and clarifying its focus to professional development. In response, GPC reduced its Professional Development programming to allow GSA a greater chance at thriving in this newly clarified role. While this has been marginally beneficial, it has been largely unsuccessful at solving the issues of confusion, and had no impact upon the concerns related to interpersonal conflict among graduate leaders or the unnecessary burden of service time addressed above. There is also every reason to think that the new, clarified focus of GSA can be maintained, and strengthened, via unification.

The current board of GSA did also strongly considered a name change as a possible solution to the confusion problem, which was prompted by a suggestion put forth by the Office of Graduate Studies. It was ultimately determined by the GSA board that this would cause a different kind of confusion in the short term and still not solve the other problems listed above.

12. Would consolidation of GSA into GPC cause a loss of benefits provided by GSA?

No. All of the current services, functions, funding and programming opportunities currently enjoyed by GSA's constituents will continue under the current proposal.

What benefits are provided by GSA?

- A non-voting seat on Graduate Faculty Senate.
- Recognitional awards (e.g., Outstanding and Superior Graduate Student Awards)
- Assorted programming (e.g., CV Docs, Field Day, Writers' Room)

- A potential opportunity for two rather than just one graduate student representative to certain committees and task forces.
- Travel award funding, including funds for professional development activities beyond academic conference presentation
- An advisory role in professional development programming planning to the Office of Graduate Studies

What will happen with GSA's Professional Development Programming?

All current GSA professional programming will continue following unification. These offerings will also be expanded and improved upon those offerings under a newly created Director of Professional Development who will serve as an executive board officer of the Graduate Professional Council. This new position will also have a dedicated committee populated with General Assembly Representatives, and will be assisted by a dedicated Assistant Director of Professional Development. They will be given a budget minimum equal to GSA's current programming budget (\$4,000), with concrete plans to increase that budget going forward.

What will happen with GSA's travel funding?

The \$5,000 that GSA currently provides for travel funding will be transitioned to a dedicated "Professional Development Travel Funding" pool that will be treated as distinct from GPC's existing \$50,000 pool for "Conference Presentation Travel." Students will be permitted to apply for either or both pools of funds within the same application. The individual maximum for GPC's conference presentation travel grant amount will also be increased by \$100. These steps will echo the existing dual opportunity to receive funds from both GSA and GPC in types of travel funded as well as the total funds received.

Who will represent graduate students on the Graduate Faculty Senate?

The proposal will create a new position of Assistant Director of Academic Affairs, who would report directly to the Vice President of GPC. This AD would fill the ex-officio role currently filled by the GSA President on GFS.

Who will liaise with OGS to advise about professional development programming?

While this is already one of many functions the Presidents of both organizations serve, this would become a primary function of the newly created Director of Professional Development, who would be a voting officer on the executive board of GPC.

Does this undermine the opportunity for two seats rather than one on certain committees and task forces?

Nope! In fact, GPC has already been working successfully with administrators and faculty leaders this year to comprehensively review all of the Chancellor's Standing

Committees to determine where more graduate representation is appropriate. This means GPC can, upon unification, maintain multiple seats on relevant committees and task forces, and improve the information and experience of the individuals assigned to those seats.

Will the recognitional awards provided by GSA disappear?

No. The Vice President of GPC is already responsible for coordinating such awards, and will add the three awards currently offered by GSA to that process with relative ease. Also, the VP of GPC has long co-funded and co-organized the event at which these recognitional awards are presented.

13. What prevents the graduate student voice from losing strength when it is consolidated among professional students in GPC?

The primary mission of GSA is to serve Mizzou's 6,000+ graduate students. The primary mission of GPC is to serve Mizzou's 6,000+ graduate students and 1,000+ professional students. This means that GPC already tailors a great deal of its operations to the needs of graduate students, including through a long history of providing professional development programming. More specifically, GSA's primary mission is to provide professional development services to graduate students. This is a function GPC has a history of serving. It is also a function that GPC is, as an organization, better resourced and better situated to provide. Unification would enhance the graduate student voice, particularly with respect to providing the apolitical services that the graduate population needs.

Additionally, the voice of graduate students has, for decades, been adversely affected by the difficulties GPC, OGS, and GSA have had in maintaining effective cross-organizational communication. We think that these challenges have gone on long enough. Looking forward at the changes that current affairs portend for higher education, graduate students cannot afford to continue undermining their own collective voice.

14. Are there failsafe considerations to ensure to mitigate unintended consequences?

Yes. There are two circumstances under which this proposal would not move forward should both bodies consent to proceed:

MSA-GPC Articles of Cooperation

As per the current GPC-MSA Articles of Cooperation, GPC is required to transfer 50% of its student activity fee revenue to MSA (the undergraduate student government).

Unification would not proceed if any portion of the student activity fee for GSA, upon transfer to GPC, would be subject to this requirement.

Failure to Adequately Accommodate Proposal Provisions

Should both bodies approve this merger, the executive boards of both organizations will draft changes to their governing documents as necessary and present them in tandem to the representative bodies of each organization at their regularly scheduled meetings of January 30, 2018 and February 6, 2018, respectively. Any voting member may trigger a vote at a regularly-scheduled meeting of that body during the current academic year to remand the full language back to the drafting group on the basis that the proposed amendments to the governing documents fail to adequately accommodate the provisions outlined in the proposal.

15. How will you ensure the smoothest possible transition?

Both of the current Presidents of GPC and GSA will serve in unpaid advisory roles as Immediate Past Presidents (IPP) for a year following the completion of their terms. This will include speaking privileges and a standing slot in the GPC General Assembly agenda. The IPP of GSA shall be granted an ex officio, non-voting seat on the GPC Executive Board, including a standing invite to all Executive Board meetings.

The GSA President will provide written documents detailing our current programming, and will make recommendations for professional development programming priorities, with suggestions for improvement and expansion.

16. How can I contact GSA and/or GPC to share my thoughts on this proposal?

Email

Alex Howe, GPC President - GPC@missouri.edu
Sarah Senff, GSA President - GSA@missouri.edu

Social media

GSA Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/Mizzou.GSA/>
GPC Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/MizzouGPC/>

Face to Face

Both organizations have office space in the Center for Student Involvement in the MU Student Center and welcome meeting with graduate students there.

Two town halls have been scheduled to hear input from graduate students regarding the proposed GSA-GPC merger and to answer your questions.

1) 5-6 PM, Tuesday, November 7, outside Leadership Auditorium

2) 6-8 PM, Wednesday, November 15, Arvarh E. Strickland Room, S203 Memorial Union

Representation

As always, your departmental representatives are there to serve your interests in both organizations, so please discuss your thoughts with them.