

# GSA ELECTIONS

## 2016-2017

April 28, 2016

### CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

#### Electoral Affairs Committee

Stephanie Myrick, Co-Chair

Daniel Wolozny, Co-Chair

David Allen

Greg Purdy

#### Staff Support

Joe Edens

Monika Gibson

Kasey Richardson

# PRESIDENT

## Chelsea Corkins

Dear Graduate Student Assembly at Virginia Tech,

It would be my honor to be elected as the GSA President for the 2016-2017 academic year. As President, I will strive to uphold the missions of the GSA – particularly those relating to advocacy, representation, and communication, as I hold each of these characteristics as monumental attributes to the graduate student life and success while at Virginia Tech.

For the past two years, I have served as a department delegate, Travel Fund Program Co-Chair, and the Director of Programs. Each of these positions required unique skills, but each has significantly increased my ability to understand, represent, and advocate for graduate student life. In each position, I was required or volunteered to sit on a variety of committees around the university. These interactions have created valuable networking opportunities for myself, as well as for the future of the GSA, and existed on graduate-to-graduate, -to-undergraduate, -to-staff, and -to-faculty levels. I intend to continue these interactions in order to improve the visibility of GSA and graduate students at VT.

While I will always value my involvement in organizations around VT and beyond, I intend to focus my time on one entity for the 2016-2017 year – the GSA Presidency. You are all aware of the time management graduate students must practice in order to balance all components of their lives – research, teaching, personal lives – the list goes on. I intend to keep involved with activities, events, and organizations around the campus, but will be doing so with solely the GSA's mission and wellbeing in mind.

The GSA has significantly increased its presence at VT during the last two years, and I have every intention to continue with this trend. In order to do this, I see the GSA expanding in three directions – internal, campus, and national. Internally, I hope to increase delegate involvement. This could involve an increase in committees including social, programming, health, and research, as well as an increase in conversations regarding graduate student needs and worries. Many delegates have expressed an interest in having their voices heard and I intend to offer them this outlet for the 2016-2017 year.

Throughout campus, I hope to improve graduate student interactions with other entities – primarily undergraduates interested in graduate school and with first year graduate students. The Graduate-Undergraduate Mentorship Program (GUMP) previously existed within the GSA with the intent of hosting opportunities for interaction between graduate students and undergraduates interested in graduate school. I would like to revitalize this program and expand on first year graduate student mentorship programs around campus.

Lastly, I want to increase VT's national presence by once again applying to be an official member of the National Association for Graduate-Professional Students. This entity provides networking opportunities for graduate student leader from around the nation to discuss graduate student successes, needs, and downfalls.

I am passionate about graduate life, and look forward to igniting such emotions with other graduate students throughout Virginia Tech as the 2016-2017 GSA President.

Best regards,

Chelsea Corkins

# VICE PRESIDENT

## Brett Netto

Dear Graduate Student Assembly Delegates,

My name is Brett Netto and I am running for the position of Vice President of the Graduate Student Assembly. Currently, I am completing my first year and coursework towards a PhD in Planning, Governance, and Globalization within the School of Public and International Affairs. I received my Masters in Public and International Affairs from Virginia Tech in May 2018 and my Bachelor of Arts in International Studies with a concentration in Diplomacy and International Organizations from the University of New Orleans. All of my academic experiences have been since I ended a 12-year career in law enforcement.

At Virginia Tech, I have been involved in the Graduate Honor System as a panelist and a facilitator. As a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Department of Political Science, I have taught courses regarding state and local government, the U.S. policy process, interest groups, world politics, international relations, diplomacy, and foreign policy. I am currently Project Coordinator for a research team composed of all undergraduates for the U.S. Department of State's Diplomacy Lab and will continue this role with another research team in the fall semester. One of the most enjoyable roles I am involved with at Virginia Tech is that of being a mentor to undergraduates in the Graduate-Undergraduate Mentorship Program (GUMP). Some of you may already know me because of my position as a Building Coordinator at the Graduate Life Center. In this role, I may have assisted you in booking a meeting room, giving you directions, answering your questions, or offering a friendly hello and smile while I have worked at the Welcome Center Desk. I have also volunteered my time to the Graduate School by assisting with international student check-in and the Graduate Teaching Assistant Workshop. Also, I am an adviser and mentor to the young men of Kappa Alpha Order fraternity.

While I have not been involved in the Graduate Student Assembly since I arrived at Virginia Tech in 2014, I have experience in student government from my time as an undergraduate at the University of New Orleans. As an undergraduate, I was a senator for the College of Liberal Arts in the Student Senate. Within the Student Senate, I held the position of Parliamentarian, which was responsible for issuing judgments on questions regarding interpretation of the constitution, bylaws, and any rules and procedures in Senate sessions. By holding the position of Parliamentarian, I was *ex officio* chair of the Governance Committee. During my time in the role of chair of the Governance Committee, I was involved in the writing of a new constitution that was accepted through a vote by the student population that has since been subsequently implemented.

If elected to this position, I would like to be actively involved in establishing a better working relationship between the GSA and the Student Government Association thus allowing graduate students to be comprehensively seen as being a part of the Hokie Nation and not limited to student life at the GLC.

Brett R. Netto

# DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

Alex Hylar

To the Graduate Student Assembly of VT,

I am writing to formally propose my intent to run for Director of Programs for the Graduate Student Assembly at Virginia Tech. I feel I can strongly contribute to the GSA's initiatives for a more inclusive, inviting and thriving VT through programs we collectively create, improve, host and enjoy.

Having been involved with GSA programming as the 2015 Symposium Co-Chair and a Beer & Wine Social volunteer, I know how much the graduate community enjoys coming together. From sharing our research ideas to bonding over our favorite beer, we are a group excited to bond over our Hokie experiences. This amazing sense of community and a shared vision for a successful VT is what truly makes Blacksburg feel like home to anyone and everyone, and I feel confident that as Director of Programs, I will further these goals.

In addition to my previous GSA experience, I am uniquely positioned to foster, understand and recognize the need for a truly diverse and inclusive VT graduate student body as I work with an interdisciplinary and international team everyday in my research. I am a trainee of an interdisciplinary program (IGEP) and am currently researching abroad in Denmark as a Fulbright Fellow. These experiences give me a breadth of knowledge in bringing people together as well as valuing and retaining individual ideas. Therefore, I am confident I can juggle the demands of this role with my work and personal life, and I look forward to the challenges we will inevitably face.

Outside classrooms, my communication and personal skills will also be invaluable for this role. I am an outgoing person that handles delegation well, key components to coordinating programs with hundreds of participants. Additionally, my attitude as a congenial team player and problem solving skills will make me a supportive and effective contributor for my fellow GSA officers and chairs. While those before me have worked tirelessly to create amazing programming, I have a few ideas in mind to improve GSA programs. For example, I want to work on further clarifications with regards to TFP, GRDP, and Cap and Gown eligibility, expansion and evaluation. I also have visions for reinvigorating Research Symposium by continuing to partner with other campus organizations to create a prestigious venue for sharing research ideas. Lastly, I have ideas for new programs such as: a reimbursement program for professional development and a co-organized event with the Director of Events for a merit-based, "TEDx-like" program with graduate student speakers and for graduate student attendees.

Overall, I feel that my qualities of dedication, flexibility and reliability make me a strong candidate for the GTA's Director of Programs for the 2016-2017 year. Go Hokies!

Sincerely,

Alex Hylar  
MultiSTEPS Trainee, Fulbright Fellow  
PhD Candidate, School of Biomedical Engineering and Sciences

# DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

## Marie Stettler Kleine

Hello GSA Delegation!

I'm Marie Stettler Kleine, a second year MS/PhD student in Science, Technology, and Society (STS). If you're unfamiliar with STS, we study scientists and engineers through historical, sociological, anthropological, and philosophical methods. I have a mechanical engineering and international studies background with a double major Bachelor's of Science degree from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. My research interests lie at the intersection of design thinking, religious studies, and international development. I study moral and religious commitments of engineers involved in humanitarian development projects.

I've also had the pleasure of serving as a GSA delegate for my department these past two years, and I am currently serving as one of the Travel Fund Program's Co-Chairs. Through both my academic and extracurricular involvement, I feel that I have an insider's look at what the Director of Programs job would entail. Having such an interdisciplinary background, I see myself as both an interpreter and active participant in defining disciplinary expectations and infrastructural boundaries.

Serving in this position involves commitments to two very important principles, *consistency* and *inclusion*. As a Chair of the Travel Fund, I am actively involved in the processing and reviewing of many applications that span the university's research efforts and disciplines. This has been a wonderful learning experience. I have been able to see the amazing research efforts happening on Virginia Tech's campus and how they are being presented all across the globe. With such diversity, comes the variability of what rigor, quality, and excellence means within each discipline. The Programs Director will have to be able to understand disciplinary expectations in order to both include all students in the participation of existing GSA programs and listen for the opportunity to start others. This involves both consistently in abiding by policies that have already been established in order to be both transparent and fair in the review process, but also keeping ears and eyes open to other opportunities for the GSA to serve the graduate student body. This eye to new opportunities allows for both amending current policy to best suit all graduate students, but also looking for other programs that the GSA can support in order to have our program portfolio be as inclusive as possible.

As someone running for a GSA Exec Board position, I want to be open and accessible to answer any of your questions. If you would like more information on Travel Fund, my ideas for propelling GSA programs forward in the 2016-2017 academic year, or just general questions about me being the right fit for the job, please feel free to reach out to me at [stettlmm@vt.edu](mailto:stettlmm@vt.edu).

# DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND TREASURER

Omchand Mahdu

My name is Omchand Mahdu and I am a Ph.D. student in the Planning, Governance, and Globalization (PGG) program in the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA).

I am interested in the Director of Finance and Treasurer position because I would like to continue to serve graduate students at Virginia Tech in a capacity that is very familiar to me. I served as Treasurer of the graduate student association in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics from fall 2014 to spring 2015 and I am currently the Co-Chair for the Travel Fund Program, a position I took up last fall.

Professionally, I bring extensive knowledge and experience managing large donor funded programs in the United States and abroad. I was responsible for overall financial management that included accounting, budgeting, and reporting on various development initiatives. In terms of relevant educational background, I hold a BS in Accounting and an MBA in Finance. I also hold several professional certifications and I am a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) licensed in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Considering my prior experience and educational background, I am able to make quick, well-informed decisions as financial management issues and problems arise. Thus, I will be able to provide sound advice and guidance to the Executive Board on a variety of issues and/or topics. I will ensure that all stakeholders are properly briefed and assure financial activities are on track and audit requirements are met. I also plan to work closely with the Program Chairs and the Executive Board to expand and/or increase our funding and to continually improve and strengthen the overall financial management of the GSA.

In summary, I am confident that my competence and efficient work ethic will further contribute to the advancement of the Graduate Student Assembly and graduate students at Virginia Tech as a whole. Thus, I look forward to your support on April 28, 2016. A vote for Omchand Mahdu is a vote for fiscal responsibility and prudent financial management.

You know what you have to do, vote for Mahdu!

# DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND SECRETARY

Samantha Fried

My name is Samantha Fried, and I'm a 2nd-year PhD student in the Department of Science & Technology in Society, and in the Remote Sensing IGEP (Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Program). Should you choose me as your Secretary and Director of Communications for the 2016-2017 academic year, I vow to do my best to represent your interests, facilitate networks of communication between you and the university, and expand your quality of life here by keeping you informed about VT goings-on (to reference the GSA mission statement).

I have quite a bit of experience recording and communicating organizational activities. After college, I was a communications assistant at Wide Angle Youth Media, a nonprofit in Baltimore city that helps kids learn to make their own films and documentaries, create and curate photography exhibits, and write scripts and stories. As WAYM was (and still is) a very small nonprofit, we relied heavily on donations from community members. And connecting with community members via Facebook and Twitter, I think, was a medium through which we garnered a lot of interest and support. Additionally, in my masters program at Georgetown University, I was our graduate student journal's assistant webmaster in my first year, and webmaster in my second year. Maintaining the website and keeping it updated with new material not only built connections within our program, but outside of our program as well, for our regular readers. So, I know firsthand that communication networks are powerful ways of building community. And these networks must be not only created, but maintained with enthusiasm and commitment. I hope you will give me the chance to maintain (and possibly create more avenues in) the GSA network with enthusiasm and commitment in the coming year.

Should you choose me to be your Secretary and Communications Director, I hope to maintain the weekly announcement flyers, as I think they're a good, consolidated way sending out information important to graduate students. However, I am interested in knowing the frequency with which you send GSA announcements to your constituents, and the kinds of events your respective departments need to hear about most. I aim to send a survey to you at some point during the summer, and to use this feedback to shape the direction of our GSA flyers, social media posts, and other communications in the coming months. And, of course, I am committed to taking tediously detailed minutes for you all.

# DIRECTOR OF EVENTS

Kisha Gresham

Dear Graduate Student Assembly Delegates,

As a recent Virginia Tech alumna turned graduate student, I've had the privilege of experiencing this university from a variety of perspectives. The one underlying thread that ties Virginia Tech together is the sense of community, which I believe is fostered through events hosted by various organizations. Volunteering to help with these events has become a passion during my graduate career, and for this reason, I am happy to express my interest in serving the Graduate Student Assembly as the Director of Events.

While working as the Events and Special Programs Chair, I was given the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience that will prove to be vital in successfully navigating the new Director of Events position. I assisted in the planning and executing of several GSA events, including the Beer and Wine Socials and the "... with the Dean" series. Through the planning of these events, I worked with various caterers in Blacksburg and feel confident in my ability to make important decisions quickly to ensure these events are executed effortlessly. Importantly, working closely with the Executive Board gave me a better understanding of how GSA functions both as a single entity and within the scope of the university. I believe understanding the role and mission of the GSA gives me a better idea of what type of events graduate students are hoping to see in the future.

Looking forward, I am hoping to bring a strong set of skills to the Director of Events position in order to continue to strengthen the GSA by offering events that support the graduate community. My potential plans include partnerships with other organizations to co-host events as well as GSA-sponsored events to foster a stronger sense of community within the graduate school.

Unfortunately, I will not be available during the election process on April 28th to answer any questions, but feel free to contact the Election Committee with any concerns/questions and I can address them during my speech.

Sincerely,

Kisha Gresham  
kiwi@vt.edu