

GSO 2016 Survey – Responses to Frequently Asked Questions

We received great feedback from everyone this year that included many constructive comments, most of which were incredibly positive. Thank you all so much! Here, we have collected questions and comments that required responses that could be useful to all students. We hope you find these helpful!

RE: Time of annual GSO meetings and events

- 1. “Could we hold meetings and coffee hours at 8-9 am or 4-5pm? I would like to come to these events, but it is not convenient that they are always held in the middle of the day. I don’t mean to be rude in saying this: I would never skip a day of experiments to come to a GSO meeting or coffee hour. Maybe other graduate students don’t use experimental techniques that are time sensitive (whoever they are, I am jealous). Please don’t ask students to skip experiments or slow down scientific progress just to be part of the GSO community (which is what I think you are doing currently).”**

In planning the days and times of our events, we are cognizant of several factors that include department schedules, University schedules, commuting needs of our peers, and family needs of our peers (i.e. child pick-up and drop-off). For several years, the GSO meeting had been held from 5:30-6:30PM on Wednesday evenings and attendance would average between 5-9 people. Four years ago we moved it to lunchtime and now we average 35 attendance, sometimes peaking to the 50s. While we understand and share the constraints of scientific progress and experiment management, we cannot cripple our growth by moving our meetings to times of the day that historically showed poor attendance and naturally preclude those individuals with families or responsibilities apart from OHSU from regularly participating.

- 2. Can we move the day and time of the GSO meeting?**

The GSO meeting is currently held on the 1st Wednesday of each month, 12-1pm in BRB381. We understand there are some groups of students who cannot attend due to journal clubs or other classes scheduled at the same time as our meeting. We have been exploring alternative times, but as of now we haven’t found an alternative that does not similarly prevent other groups of students from attending. There may not be an ideal solution to this scheduling dilemma, but please keep in mind that we post all of our meeting minutes to our website afterwards to help keep everyone up to speed, even if they can’t be at the meetings in person.

- 3. Can we have more interactive events?**

We can, and if you have any ideas for a specific event and/or wish to plan one, please contact us at somgso@ohsu.edu!

- 4. Could we perhaps do an annual volleyball tournament, or softball/soccer tournament?**

Absolutely! Since the GSO officers alone have limited time and availability, we would love it if interested individuals played an active role in planning the events(s) they'd like to see! If anyone would like to plan this or any other event, please contact us and we will help you get the ball rolling!

RE: GSO communication, infrastructure, and travel awards

- 1. Can more contentious issues that come up during the meeting, for example funding requests, be presented in a more unbiased fashion? Often they are presented at the same time as the opinions of the GSO officers.**

Absolutely, we have been striving to increase transparency. In that spirit, we have established a new funding request form on our website that includes directions RE: the process of requesting sponsorship and funding. You can find it at: <http://ohsugso.weebly.com/funding-request.html> Please note, however, that one of the reasons the officers voice our opinions as strongly as we do is because we are charged with carrying out the mission set-forth in the budget that is approved at the end of each academic year.

- 2. The GSO has been doing a good job of creating a student community. It seems like it hasn't been doing much towards advocating for student needs, although perhaps this just isn't very public. I want the GSO to listen to the experiences of the students that have had problems with PIs that overstep their authority and find a way to address their needs and to offer support.**

Regarding advocating for student needs, we currently do it behind the scenes primarily, though we are working to make that process more transparent and interactive as well. One way in which we, GSO officers, already advocate for students is by attending and voting on the Graduate Council each month, where decisions like stipend increases, health insurance, and course development occur. Another way is by meeting individually with Deans and faculty. Finally, we usually have administrative representatives at our meetings and provide time at meetings for students in attendance to give feedback to these representatives.

Again, we are striving to make our student advocacy more transparent and a greater overall focus than it may have been in years past. Toward this end, we held a GSO Open Forum at the end of Spring 2016 in an effort to get a better sense for what kinds of issues the student body as a whole is currently experiencing on campus. We asked similar questions about student concerns on our survey. Responses from these two avenues will help us guide how we develop our student advocacy goals over the coming year (we need to know *what* the majority of students want, need, and care about). We plan to make this a continuous dialogue between GSO officers and all other students. If you have particular concerns that you would like the GSO to help you address related to your department, program, PI, etc. you are always welcome to talk to one of the officers at any time!

- 3. Could the GSO provide more resources about dealing with the hard stuff in grad school, like mentoring relationships, unclear department/committee expectations, and confusing tax forms?**

We try to accumulate and disseminate information on seminars and resources for the hard stuff, including imposter syndrome, JBT Health and Wellness Center, Diversity Listening Sections, and the OHSU Ombudsman. These events and seminars are included on our calendar. We also invite representatives from these resources, for example the Ombudsman, and include contact information for these individuals in our meeting minutes. If there is a topic you think should be addressed in a seminar or panel discussion and you would like to plan it, please let us know and we are more than happy to help.

Regarding department/committee expectations, we advocate primarily on the school level. However, please make us aware of specific department/committee issues.

Regarding the tax forms, we advocate to be paid with a W2 instead of a 1099. We are continuing this advocacy this year.

- 4. One item to take up could be the CORE instrument time. It's kind of ridiculous that the OHSU CORE incentivizes our students and staff to work outside of normal business hours. This policy makes no sense; why would OHSU encourage poor work hygiene? This is not a healthy policy for either the students or staff. Furthermore, with the current policy, instruments hardly have any time booked during business hours which are most conducive to learning. Students and staff are marginalized to obscure hours because of this ridiculous policy. The CORE staff are most likely to be able to assist students and staff assistance during normal business hours. Why would it make sense to rig our system and generate these problems? Please make a push to abolish this backward incentive system.**

Thanks for raising this point! While this may not be necessarily an issue we, the GSO, can singularly drive change in, it is certainly something we can discuss with the SOM administrators.

- 5. I would like to see GSO direct more funds towards travel grants and other student financial support, rather than to coffee breaks, pub nights, and BBQs. Also, the GSO email are worded in such a way that sounds unprofessional.**

We have increased the number of travel awards we are giving out this upcoming academic year. However, part of our mission is to provide academic *and* social forums in which to build student community. Our Pub Nights, BBQs, and Coffee Breaks provide such forums and all of these events are well attended, indicating an overall interest.

Regarding the tone of our communications, we strive to appear as accessible, cheerful, friendly, joyful, and unsterile as possible. While we consciously never want to be offensive, exclusionary, or unprofessional, we also wish to set ourselves apart from the average OHSU administrative communication. Being a graduate student at OHSU is hard enough, and we like to provide some humor and lightheartedness. However, if ever a student finds specific content of our communication offensive, we encourage them to contact us right away.

- 6. Why so many emails?**

One of our goals for last year was to build unity and increase communication. Survey results indicate that email, as opposed to numerous other channels, is how nearly all students find our about GSO-related events. While we try to keep our emails from being excessive, we also want to make sure that information (about GSO-specific *and* other OHSU topics) is getting to everyone, and we have received ample feedback from students in the past that 1-2 reminder emails leading up to big events is appreciated.

RE: Campus Inclusion

- 1. Could there be more support and meetings/activities for students working at the West Campus?**

YES! We have money allocated to the West Campus and are still looking for a West Campus Liaison! If you would like to be it or find out more about what this role would entail, please contact us!

- 2. It would be great to include the students in the South Waterfront more. Never attended any GSO meetings because it is too far away (~30 min each way).**

We similarly have money allocated to the South Waterfront students and are still looking for a Campus Liaison. Please contact us if you are interested!

RE: Coffee Breaks and Pub Nights

- 1. Can we have more money for pub nights? Can we have more than one per semester? Why do you bother purchasing food?**

We can and did increase the budget for pub nights. The officers cannot plan more than one per term due to budget constraints and our own schedules. We purchase food at the events because we cannot, in good faith, buy you drinks without showing we offered you hot food as well. It is a safety thing. But we are going to reformat the food and pitcher system this next year.

- 2. Can we have more snacks at coffee breaks?**

Absolutely! That is why we increased the coffee break budget.

RE: BBQs

- 1. Is there a better alternative space than the Student Center gymnasium for the Spring BBQ?**

We looked for a better alternative, but the construction around RJH and the Old Library seriously limited our options. Hopefully next year the weather will cooperate with us, but if not, we hope that other indoor locations will be available!

RE: Research Week

- 5. My criticism for this year mainly has to do with Research Week. I don't know if you guys plan this at all, but Research Week this year felt unattended, unadvertised, and just pretty much overlooked. Especially when you compare it to the last year where Research Week was, I think, the best ever. What happened from one year to the next?**

Research Week is the current iteration of what was known as the Student Research Forum. The SRF was planned solely by GSO. Four years ago the provost's office decided to coopt the SRF and rebranded it Research Week. While the GSO still funds events on Student Day and has a Student Chair on the committee, we retain the option to leave Research Week at any point.

The 2016-2017 Student Chair will be Amy Williams. If you wish to be part of her committee, please contact us at somgso@ohsu.edu.

RE: Various other points

- 6. Could we get bus passes discounted to employee levels?**

They already have been! 2016-2017 annual TriMet passes for **ALL** OHSU badge holders (including students) will be \$70, and these will be available for purchase starting August 2016.

More information about the new price structures are here:

<https://o2.ohsu.edu/blogs/staffnews/2016/05/05/parking-and-transit-rates-announced-for-fy17/>