

University of California, San Diego (UCSD)

Graduate Student Association (GSA)



2014 Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction (GPSES) Survey Preliminary Report

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## 1. Background Information

### 1.1. Introduction

This document reports the preliminary overview of responses to the 2014 Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction (GPSES) Survey administered August to October of 2014. The survey was designed by members of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) [Graduate Student Association \(GSA\)](#) and the [Graduate Division](#) to gain insight into the quality of graduate and professional student life, specifically in the areas of Academic Development, Campus Climate, and Student Services.

The aim of this report is to assess graduate and professional student perceptions and to identify areas which merit deeper examination and further actions by the GSA or other entities. Further, the committee has identified major priorities and concerns which it calls on the GSA to pursue actively and immediately. These areas are highlighted as “Overall Recommendations” in section 1.5. All other solutions included with this report are intended to inspire current and future initiatives, and readers are encouraged to use these to seed new ideas for programming or policies that raise the quality of the graduate student experience at UC San Diego. Also, additional in-depth analyses on the GPSES survey will be performed by the Graduate Division and Office of the Vice Chancellor for Equity Diversity and Inclusion (VC EDI). These analyses should further guide and direct GSA policy as well.

### 1.2. History

The 2014 GPSES survey is the latest in a series of efforts to poll the graduate population about their experience at UCSD.

The first such survey was created by the GSA and administered by UCSD’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) during the 2004-2005 academic year. At that time, with a response rate of 37%, it was the best source of information for graduate student demographics and experiences. Major findings of the survey reported in the [2005 GSA GPSES report](#) were that fewer than 10% of graduate students felt connected to the campus, and many found that the social and cultural experience were significantly lacking.

Subsequently, in 2007, a committee of graduate students, faculty, and staff assessed the survey results to determine appropriate steps to improve UCSD in the areas identified. The result of this effort was the [2007 GPSES report](#). At the behest of the GSA council, a [2007 GSA GPSES Supplementary Report](#) was produced to guide policy on

housing, transportation, new student orientation, communications, and student support services. The GSA council of 2007-2008 continued to work with this GPSES Supplementary Report in order to begin addressing a lack of community by opening Cafe Vita and creating two new GSA positions (cultural events coordinator and social events coordinator).

In 2009, many stakeholders across campus requested additional questions to the survey. The GSA produced a [2009 GPSES report](#) in collaboration with the Graduate Division Grad Life Intern. In part, due to the expanse of data generated, responses from this survey were primarily used for reporting by the Office of Graduate Studies (now known as the Graduate Division) at administrative meetings.

In the spring of 2014, a sub-committee of GSA and Graduate Division members was formed to reassess the survey's structure. Additional campus climate questions were included, and the number of questions was reduced from over 400 to approximately 230. This survey was administered through the Graduate Division in August to October of 2014. GSA formed a GPSES committee tasked with the preliminary evaluation of responses to the 2014 survey, comprised entirely of graduate students: 6 voting GSA council members and 7 non-voting members (see Appendix 6.1 for Committee Charter). The committee would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Erin Espaldon, Assistant Graduate Institutional Research Officer with the Graduate Division, for verifying respondent demographic data.

### **1.3. Data Access**

Inquiries about analyses or data should be addressed to Erin Espaldon at [eespaldon@mail.ucsd.edu](mailto:eespaldon@mail.ucsd.edu), the Graduate Division Analyst. It is the hope of this committee that future access to demographics and analyses will be made available with the unveiling of UCSD's "dashboard" webportal. An example of such a page can be found at: <http://diversity.berkeley.edu/data-dashboard>.

### **1.4. 2014 Respondents Demographic Summary**

This survey was open to outgoing and returning graduate students, with a resulting response rate of ~39%. Of the ~5,300 students total, ~2,050 students started the survey, and ~1,650 finished completely.

Of these respondents, 55% identified as male, 45% as female, and 0.24% self-identified. Responses about sexual orientation ranged from 91% identifying as heterosexual to 9% not. Most of the respondents report as U.S. citizens or domestic

(75%), with the remaining reporting citizenship from 46 other countries. 14% reported identifying, at least in part, as belonging to an Underrepresented Minority (URM) group. Those who reported any diagnosed disabilities responded as 13% of the total. 10% of respondents either have dependents, or were expecting children at the time of the polling.

The most common degrees being sought by the respondents were the Ph.D. (67%) and M.S. (10%). Response rate was highest among students just completing their first or second year (20% and 30%, respectively).

## **1.5. Overall Recommendations from the GPSES Committee**

Because this is a preliminary report, the GPSES committee recognizes that the full analysis of the 2014 GPSES survey is incomplete. The GPSES committee has several recommendations for the GSA and Graduate Division to follow in order to further address the key issues indicated by graduate students. The list below includes the formation of GSA committees to carry out solutions proposed in sections 2 through 4 of the report, as well as areas which need more attention from Graduate Division and other Vice Chancellor offices.

### *1.5.1. Improvement of the GSA Website via a Website Taskforce Committee*

A common trend seen throughout the report is that the graduate student respondents want to see programs or resources made available to them, however, unbeknownst to them, several of these resources are already provided to them at UCSD. Therefore, many problems stem from lack of communication and awareness.

The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA develop a website taskforce committee during the summer of 2015, that will enhance the GSA website (<http://gsa.ucsd.edu>) to become a central hub for graduate students. The GSA website is now largely devoted to what programs and events GSA offers, but should be developed to include information related to general graduate student resources. In the past year, the GSA website has been re-designed to offer a more streamlined layout that makes it easy for graduate students to find information. However, communication can be further improved by continuing to develop the website. Keeping this page up to date will be paramount and should be a joint collaboration between the GSA and the Graduate Division's Grad Life Intern.

### *1.5.2. GSA Assistance for Creating and / or Developing Departmental Student Governments*

Several respondents requested that the GSA host more departmental events and assist in advocacy, such as increasing the Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) stipend. Because the impact of such issues vary from department to department, it should instead be the graduate students in these departments that undertake the responsibility of hosting departmental events and advocating to their department for the changes they want to see. Graduate students in departments that lack strong departmental student governments were particularly vocal about such issues. Therefore, the GPSES committee recommends that the GSA help streamline the process for developing and strengthening departmental student governments.

The GSA Website Taskforce Committee is advised to create a section of the website with a how-to on creating a departmental student government. This section should include information such as how to register as a student organization, as well as examples of successful departmental student government constitutions. The committee recommends that the Website Taskforce Committee provides information on successful departmental student governments so that other departments can use them as a resource.

### *1.5.3. Formation of the Departmental Breakdown Analysis (DBA) Committee*

This preliminary report only provides overall statistics for questions. The committee recognizes that departmental breakdown statistics are crucial for further analysis. There were several questions on the GPSES survey related to how graduate students feel about their department, including questions about course quality and availability, relationship with faculty and staff and inclusiveness in the community. These are examples of questions that need to be analyzed on a departmental level.

The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA form a Departmental Breakdown Analysis (DBA) committee that will provide departmental statistics to the graduate coordinators. A departmental report should then be sent to each department, showing the departmental rating for each question and the average rating across all departments. For example, for a question ranking from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5), the graduate coordinator can be sent a score for their department (2.5), as well as the overall departmental average (3.3). The GPSES committee also recommends that the departmental scores and average of all departmental scores are shared with the corresponding GSA representatives so that the council representatives can advocate for improvements to their department.

#### *1.5.4. Assessment of Underrepresented Minority (URM) / Gender / Sexual Orientation / etc. Status*

Several questions were added in the 2014 GPSES survey regarding exclusionary behaviors and campus climate. Roughly 1 in 5 respondents have experienced exclusionary behavior at some point at UCSD, with the majority of this behavior resulting from the respondents' race or gender. The GPSES committee recommends that the [Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(VC EDI\)](#), in collaboration with the Graduate Division and the GSA, further analyze the questions related to exclusionary behaviors based on the protected categories, including but not limited to race, sex, religion, or sexual orientation. In addition, roughly 1 in 4 respondents have considered quitting graduate school because of personal factors. Analysis should also be performed by VC EDI to see what personal factors have led graduate students to consider quitting their graduate program.

#### *1.5.5. Analysis of International Student Issues*

A large percentage of international students indicated that their visa or immigration status has affected their academic progress. Therefore, additional effort is required to analyze this issue as it relates to available citizenship data. The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA VP of Diversity, Service, Equity and Inclusion Affairs (VP Diversity), in conjunction with the VC EDI, form an International Graduate Student Analysis (IGSA) committee composed of international graduate students and representatives from the GSA Diversity Committee. This committee should work with the [International Center](#) to research what specific problems associated with being a non-citizen have affected academic progress.

Because the GPSES survey is an umbrella survey for all graduate students, very few questions were asked specifically to international students. However, the data is available to breakdown based on international student status by the IGSA committee. This committee should analyze the GPSES data with respect to international student status to see what personal factors have the greatest impact on academic well-being for international students, as well as what programs or services are most or least utilized by international students.

#### *1.5.6. Improved Visibility and Understanding of Documented Disabilities*

The majority of graduate students who have a disability or accessibility issue first contact their department, rather than use resources such as the [Office for Students with](#)

[Disabilities \(OSD\)](#). While it is understandable that students first discuss disability related issues with their graduate coordinators, the GPSES committee also sees value in graduate students being made more aware of resources and services on campus that help with documented disabilities. This includes resources that are provided as mental health services, such as the [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#). The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA improve visibility and understanding of documented disabilities and the resources available for improving health and accessibility. The committee recommends that the website task force include information on these services in a centralized location. In addition, the GPSES committee requests that the Graduate Division obtain numbers for utilization of services provided by these offices and assist in improving the number of graduate students using these resources.

## **1.6. Format of the Report**

The report is divided into three overall sections: academic development (section 2), campus climate (section 3), and student services (section 4). The sections are further broken down into subsections with more specific categories. Each subsection has two parts: a general overview of the survey findings followed by suggested solutions proposed by the GPSES committee.

## **2. Academic Development**

The largest portion of the survey focused on academic development, in which graduate students were asked an array of questions related to their academic progress and career aspirations. Respondents indicated how satisfied they were with their department courses and program structures, shared their opinion on relationships with faculty and staff, and showed which financial resources they had utilized in the past. The survey also probed what personal factors affected graduate students. In addition, graduate students were asked about their teaching assistantship training and experience, as well as what professional development and career services they would like to see.

### **2.1. Academic Experience**

*2.1.1. Department / Program Requirements (Courses, program structure and degree requirements)*

#### **Department / Program Requirements Survey Findings:**

Students were asked about their level of satisfaction with different aspects of their department, including course availability, program structure and requirements, course quality, and course relevance. Overall, 63% of respondents think that graduate courses are above average quality, but only 50% are satisfied with their availability. Additionally, 20% of respondents found their courses to have below-average pertinence to their degree. The departmental breakdown statistics, which will be made available to departments by the Departmental Breakdown Analysis (DBA) committee, show which departments need to improve regarding the quality of their courses and their program structure.

### **Department / Program Requirements Proposed Solutions:**

The GPSES committee recommends that the departments with poor course quality, poor availability, below-average rankings on pertinence to students' degrees, and requirements that are prohibitive to academic success work with their respective GSA representatives to improve in areas where the department scores are low. We request the GSA VP of Academic Affairs (VP Academic) to form a GPSES Departmental Breakdown Analysis committee in the Spring of 2015, which will work on analyzing and publishing the scores for departments in each of these areas. This committee, introduced in section 1.5.3, shall work with the Graduate Division Analyst to further analyze the results, including studying a breakdown of Masters vs. PhD vs. Professional Degrees. The GPSES committee also recommends that the Graduate Division include this data in departmental reviews.

GSA representatives from the corresponding departments will be asked to work with their respective graduate coordinators and faculty members to collect community feedback from students and develop a proposal to address the key issues within the department. In addition, the departmental student governments shall be involved in the process. For departments without a strong student government, GSA shall provide assistance in forming and strengthening departmental student governments, as mentioned in section 1.5.2.

#### *2.1.2. Climate within Department (Relationships with colleagues and mentors within department)*

### **Department Climate Survey Findings:**

Students were asked to rank how strong they feel their relationship is with their department, faculty, and their colleagues. With regards to professional and social climate within their departments, 71% of respondents felt that the relationship between

themselves and fellow graduate students rank from average to excellent. Students feel well respected, but are very perceptive to tensions among faculty in certain departments. A large fraction (31%) of students do not feel that they have any input with regards to the future of their program. A similar proportion (34%) of students say that their personal relationship with their advisor has challenged progress. At the same time, 76% of students feel well supported by coworkers/lab colleagues.

### **Department Climate Proposed Solutions:**

Previous tensions within departments have been alleviated by students forming strong departmental governments. For example, the Physics department's student government was able to advocate for a graduate student to be on the admissions committee to allow student input. The GPSES committee recommends that GSA help streamline the process for starting departmental governments and provide direction on how to handle conflicts within departments.

The Graduate Division should be encouraged by GSA to host workshops aimed at dealing with personal conflicts as well as conflicts associated with the advisor-student relationship. Support can be requested from the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (VC EDI) to provide resources to help cope with and manage work conflicts. With 34% of students expressing that their relationship with their advisor has been detrimental to their academic progress, resources need to be allocated towards improving student-advisor relations. For a more thorough analysis and recommendations on student-advisor relations, see section 2.2.

## **2.2. Advisor / Faculty / Lab Relations**

*Advisor / Faculty Relations (Relationships between students and their advisors, faculty, lab members, and colleagues)*

### **Advisor / Faculty Relations Survey Findings:**

In terms of students' relationships with their advisors, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their advisor is readily available to meet (85%), values the work of their students (81%), and provides constructive feedback (75%). 76% of students report at least above average quality of research advising for their thesis or dissertation and 74% feel comfortable suggesting future research directions and discussing future career interests. However, only 64% of students report at least an above average quality of academic advising, and only 66% at least moderately agree that they feel they can talk openly about personal problems interfering with work.

## Advisor / Faculty Relations Proposed Solutions:

These findings suggest that research advising is adequate from a career standpoint, but other forms of advising are low, including academic advising. While personal or professional mentorship can come from the research advisor, we recommend that students also consider other mentors for this role, such as faculty outside of their research group. Such an individual can serve as an objective point of view or outlet for research lab issues. They can also serve as a point of contact for personal problems that a student would rather discuss with a Principal Investigator (PI) rather than Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). A good example of this is the Biomedical Sciences (BMS) department SPAC ([Student Standing, Promotions, and Advisory Committee](#)), which appoints each student a committee member (SPAC advisor) that serves as an out-of-lab resource for career advice, lab relation problems, and academic progress. Appointed when a student enters the program, this advisor also offers research lab selection advice. Such an advisor can fill in these gaps for students, and could also improve student-advisor relations; the survey reveals that 34% of students feel their progress is impeded by personal relations with their thesis advisor.

The GSA Diversity Committee (DC) has been accumulating data regarding mentorship programs since 2014. The DC has contacted departments asking for information regarding what types of mentorship opportunities are currently offered and compiled what they have received from departments. The GPSES committee will share relevant statistics to the DC, and the DC will write a report in Spring of 2015 with an analysis of their findings and how the GPSES data relates.

### 2.3. Financial Support

*Financial Support (Sources of funding, financial stressors)*

#### Financial Support Survey Findings:

Unsurprisingly, financial situations remain a major impediment to academic progress. For example, 68% of respondents indicated that cost of living has posed a significant challenge to their academic progress. Respondents reported that they utilize multiple funding sources to fund their education (average ~3.5 sources throughout their UCSD graduate career), with sources primarily coming from fellowships or scholarships (54%), teaching assistantship (53%), research assistantships (43%), personal savings (28%), loans (24%) and family earnings or savings (8.5%). The largest fraction of students receive funding through fellowships or teaching/research assistantships. It seems that

these sources are not sufficient however, as around 28% of students supplement their funding with personal savings, while 24% utilize loans. Overall, 33% of students feel they are not receiving enough financial support, and only 58% feel that the criteria for obtaining financial aid from their program are clear and available.

### **Financial Support Proposed Solutions:**

Acquiring funding can be a very difficult process, and the average graduate student requires more than 3 sources to fund their education. The GPSES committee recommends that departments make financial materials and opportunity notices more available to students, be it through regularly updated web pages, seminars, or email reminders of opportunities and deadlines.

The GPSES committee also suggests that the Graduate Division office, with the help of the Grad Life Intern, increase efforts in this area. This may include additional workshops on the “How-Tos” of applying for major financial aid sources and upcoming deadlines, working with GSA for information dissemination (by email or attending a council meeting), and updating/improving the financial blog in collaboration with the Graduate Division. The financial blog (<http://graduatefunding.ucsd.edu>) is an existing resource for funding opportunities, but few students are aware of it. The GPSES committee recommends GSA and the Graduate Division work on raising awareness of this resource so graduate students can learn about funding opportunities in one central space. More opportunities and increased awareness of these opportunities will help students alleviate their financial burden.

## **2.4. Personal Factors Affecting Academic Progress**

*Personal Factors (Personal relationships, cost of living, immigration issues, attitude towards personal background, and financial obligations)*

### **Personal Factors Affecting Academic Progress Survey Findings:**

Graduate students were asked what personal factors have affected their academic progress, including factors such as personal relationships, cost of living, immigration laws, and attitudes toward their demographic background. The most significant factors are largely financially based. 52% of respondents feel that work and financial obligations outside of school impact their academic progress, while 47% feel that family obligations impact their progress. 68% feel that cost of living impacts their progress. Meanwhile, out of the 25% of respondents who identified as international students, 63% of them report that immigration laws and regulations have posed challenges to their progress.

Respondents indicated that personal relationships with their thesis advisor (34%) and academic colleagues (29%) had a lower impact on their progress compared to personal relationships with non-academic colleagues (41%).

### **Personal Factors Affecting Academic Progress Proposed Solutions:**

The GPSES survey shows that personal factors affecting academic progress are largely financial, as both financial obligations and cost of living were indicated as obstacles to academic progress. On-campus graduate housing through the Associated Residential Community Housing (ARCH) remains an economical option that lowers the cost of living, but currently has a 2 year maximum term limit. The GPSES committee recommends that the ARCH Advisory Committee (ARCHAC) analyzes and discusses increasing the term limit to 3 years, going into effect in 2017 when the new graduate housing project is complete, and that the University continue to expand its graduate housing capacity.

Most of these issues are difficult to mitigate, but one that deserves particular attention is difficulty with immigration laws and regulations. The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA VP Diversity, in conjunction with the VC EDI, form a committee composed of international graduate students and representatives from the Diversity Committee, as mentioned in section 1.5.5. This committee shall work with the International Center on researching what specific problems associated with being a non-citizen have affected academic progress.

## **2.5. Teaching Assistant (TA) Experience**

*Teaching Assistantships (Teaching assistantship training and experience)*

### **Teaching Assistant Survey Findings:**

Many graduate students have or will serve as a teaching assistant (TA) at some point in their academic career, with 58% of respondents indicating that they have been a graduate teaching assistant at UCSD. The GPSES survey asked graduate students who have been TAs to comment on their training and preparation. The majority of departments offer TA training, and of the 72% of TAs who indicated that their department provided TA training, 73% of these respondents found the training at least moderately helpful.

While 65% of respondent TAs are aware of the services offered by the [Center for Teaching Development \(CTD\)](#), only 27% of those TAs sought its services. The level of

satisfaction of the TA training received from the CTD was higher than the TA training provided by individual departments, in which 87% of TAs were at least moderately satisfied with the CTD training. This suggests that the CTD can help departments further develop their departmental TA training.

### Teaching Assistant Proposed Solutions:

Given these data and the newly established [UC San Diego Teaching & Learning Commons](#), the quality and relevance of department-specific TA training will hopefully increase. The Teaching & Learning Commons will provide resources to undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and faculty in order to enhance teaching and learning at UC San Diego. The ultimate goals of the Teaching & Learning Commons mesh well with the interests of the GSA and graduate student body: to equip our TAs for their immediate teaching roles and to invest in the professional development of our TAs for their future careers. The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA VP Academic use the GSA Facebook page and website to promote the Teaching & Learning Commons and the CTD throughout the school year, and especially at the beginning of the quarter when TAs begin teaching.

## 2.6. Professional Development

*Professional Development (Career workshops, conferences, and programs to help develop graduate students professionally)*

### Professional Development Survey Findings:

The respondents of the GPSES career and professional development section indicated a desire to have more resources (workshops, information sessions, etc.) dealing primarily with grant writing/funding sources, dissertation writing and career advice/development for jobs in and out of academia. Roughly half (49%) of respondents agree they are generally satisfied with services and advice provided by UCSD dealing with career decision making and training. Graduate students were asked which workshops they would like to see provided to them, and they indicated a preference in seeing workshops dealing with grant writing (56%), dissertation writing (40%), and career decision making with an emphasis on training for jobs in (43%) and out (54%) of academia. Public speaking also ranked high in interest (37%) for a workshop.

Graduate students were asked how they feel about the services offered to them, and 86% of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with the career services training and advising offered by their program or department.

Below is a table of which services respondents preferred based on their department with at least 15% of respondents from the department indicating interest:

	Dissertation Writing	Obtaining Grants/Fellowships	Working with an Advisor on a Committee	Preparation for Academic Jobs	Preparation for Jobs Outside of Academia	Career Decision Making
Anthropology						
Audiology						
Bioengineering						
Biomedical Sciences						
Bioinformatics and Systems Biology						
Biological Sciences						
Chemical Engineering						
Chemistry and Biochemistry						
Clinical Psychology (JDP)						
Clinical Research						
Cognitive Science						
Communication						
Computer Science and Engineering						
Economics						
Electrical and Computer Engineering						
History						
International Relations/Pacific Studies						
Literature						
Material Science and Engineering						
Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering						
Medicine						
Neuroscience						
Pharmacy						
Philosophy						
Physics						
Political Science						
Psychology						
Rady						
Scripps Institute of Oceanography						
Sociology						
Structural Engineering						

Finally, Mathematics would prefer a workshop on selecting an advisor and the Rady MBA program would like assistance with public speaking.

A total of 26 respondents provided fill-in answers regarding what workshop they would like to see. Of those answers, the most common answers were how to successfully publish in academic journals (5 respondents, 19%), network and make connections with employers or colleagues (5 respondents, 19%), and start a business (3 respondents, 12%). Respondents also indicated that workshops would be too specific for their area of research and thus would be unhelpful (4 respondents, 15%).

### **Professional Development Proposed Solutions:**

The GPSES committee suggests the GSA and the Graduate Division establish a mentorship program for the departments that respondents indicated were not doing well with particular areas of professional development. This mentorship program would enable the sharing of best practices by each department. Given the diverse career interests of the graduate students, we recommend that the GSA consider additional polling of the student body to determine the most effective resources provided by departments across the campus. Following this assessment, programs or departments such as Biomedical Sciences, which has a successful career advising program, could act as mentors to other departments for improving career development programs. We recommend for this department mentorship program to be established by the GSA VP of Academic Affairs during the summer of 2015.

Regarding workshop development, a more beneficial and streamlined approach would encompass the creation of a certificate program offered through UC San Diego Extension at a subsidized cost. This proposal is currently being coordinated with the Graduate Division, [Career Services Center \(CSC\)](#), the VP Academic and the Academic Judicial committee. The GPSES committee requests the CSC to provide attendance statistics for currently offered professional development workshops and will make recommendations for improving how CSC advertises services and workshops to graduate students.

### **3. Campus Climate**

Graduate students were asked several questions on how inclusive they felt within the UCSD community and what resource centers they were aware of and had used. In addition, graduate students who had experienced exclusionary behavior were probed further regarding what had triggered the incident and how the situation was handled. Finally, graduate students with children were asked questions on the availability and quality of childcare at UCSD.

### 3.1. Exclusionary Behaviors

*Exclusionary Behaviors (Unwelcome behavior caused by personal background)*

#### Exclusionary Behaviors Survey Findings:

Graduate students were asked several questions about exclusionary behaviors, including whether or not they had experienced discrimination or judgment based on their background. Overall, 21% of respondents reported exclusionary experiences that they have encountered at UCSD. These experiences ranged from being shunned and ignored (47%), to being the victim of intimidation (39%), derogatory comments (32%), or verbal harassment (16%). The sources of exclusionary behavior come primarily from fellow students and faculty, as 48% of respondents indicated the source being a student, and 42% indicated the source being a faculty member or advisor. Of the respondents who had experienced exclusionary behavior, 40% of respondents indicated that the conduct was based on their sex, while 39% reported experiencing exclusionary behavior based on their race. These were the top two protected categories students highlighted as the reason for feeling exclusionary behavior. In addition, 70% of those who had experienced exclusionary behavior felt their position as a student contributed as an additional factor.

In addition, the respondents were asked how they addressed the exclusionary behavior. The survey shows 68% of the respondents did not seek assistance. From those respondents who did not seek assistance, 35% did not have confidence that campus leadership resources could resolve the problem and 24% felt the problem did not seem important enough. Of those who did seek assistance, 46% used another resource unrelated to UCSD's available resources (peers, faculty, staff, or legal services), 35% used [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), 23% used the [Office of the Ombuds](#), and 19% used the [Office for Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination \(OPHD\)](#).

#### Exclusionary Behaviors Proposed Solutions:

A safe-space for conversation needs to be created for graduate students to be comfortable enough to question and discuss experiences dealing with exclusionary behaviors. At the Old Student Center (OSC), the Graduate Lounge has the potential to be utilized as a safe-space where student leaders from the GSA, the Graduate Division, and cultural organizations can create support groups where grad students may get peer-to-peer feedback regarding exclusionary experiences. The Graduate Division Interns and the GSA VP of Student and Campus Affairs (VP Campus) have opened the

Graduate Lounge and begun hosting events there. The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA and the Graduate Division Interns continue to push the graduate lounge as a safe-space alternative to other areas on campus. Staff mentors from resource centers (OPHD, CAPS, Ombuds, etc.) can be invited to host workshops geared towards graduate students coping with feeling unwelcome or isolated among peers and faculty.

Due to the importance of these issues, the GPSES committee and the GSA Diversity Committee have engaged the [Institutional Research office](#) and the [VC EDI office](#) to further investigate the high rates of exclusionary behavior experienced by graduate students. In addition, the GPSES committee recommends the GSA to work with OPHD to ensure that OPHD is aware of the exclusionary behaviors experienced by protected categories. From this further analysis, the Diversity Committee will be responsible for communicating results and recommendations to the GSA and the graduate student body, as well as to the Campus Climate Council.

### **3.2. Resource Centers and Offices**

*Resource Centers and Offices (Awareness and utilization of cultural and community centers on campus)*

#### **Resource Centers Survey Findings:**

Graduate students were asked what resource centers and offices they were aware of on campus and whether or not they had used those services. Awareness of the multitude of resources available to students on campus is an issue, with the most aware office (LGBT Resource Center) only being known to 2 out of 3 students. The offices that scored the highest in terms of student body awareness were, in order of succession: the [LGBT Resource Center](#) (67% aware), the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) (65% aware), and the [Women's Center](#) (57% aware). Those that scored the lowest were the Inter-tribal Resource Center (19% aware), Accommodation Counseling & Consulting Services (31% aware), and the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (34% aware).

Students were also asked if they have used the resource centers or offices. The percent of respondents who have used the resources is under 10% for each center or office. Many of these offices offer services to specific demographics, such as the Women's Center, LGBTRC, and [Black Resource Center \(BRC\)](#), which explains why the use percentage is low.

## Resource Centers Proposed Solutions:

Because graduate students have very different needs than undergraduate students, the resource centers should be creating programs that cater specifically to graduate students. Graduate students are in a different stage of life than undergraduate students, and thus require programming geared towards their academic mentality and level of professional development. The GPSES committee recommends that the Grad Life Intern, Campus Climate Intern, and the GSA Community Outreach Coordinator work with the resource centers and offices to create more graduate student focused activities and events. The GSA should use their Facebook page and website to advertise these new graduate student-centric events. Additionally, the committee recommends communicating results for any further analysis of the resource centers to the office of VC EDI.

### 3.3. Community Experience

*Community Experience (Social experience and inclusion in the department and UCSD community)*

#### Community Experience Survey Findings:

Graduate students were asked whether or not they feel a sense of community within their department, as well as how important social experiences and community development are to their graduate experience. According to the data, respondents indicated that having a sense of community (68%) and attending social activities (59%) are important to their overall graduate experience. Respondents agreed that their respective program successfully provides community (57%) and fosters community (61%). Only 10% of respondents stated that they did not feel a sense of community was important to their graduate experience. Overall, 19% of respondents felt their department or program did not make an effort to foster a sense of community.

Another section of the survey asked students reasons that they had ever considered quitting grad school. Many respondents answered they wanted to quit based on feeling isolated and unwelcomed due to their academic environment and collaborations.

#### Community Experience Proposed Solutions:

Although 61% of respondents indicated they have a sense of community within their department, that percentage is still very low. The GPSES committee recommends that departmental student governments help create social events that foster and enhance

both academic and cultural collaboration. The Departmental Breakdown Analysis (DBA) committee shall review the departmental data on how well the departments fostered a sense of community. With this data, the departments with a strong sense of community can act as a model for the departments that scored low. Moreover, this will help to develop a more campus-wide community. The establishment of strong departmental student governments can strengthen each program's academic community. The departmental governments can communicate with the graduate coordinator to ensure that these activities happen and will give students a greater sense of community, especially for those students that expressed a disconnect from their programs.

### **3.4. Grad Families and Childcare**

*Grad Families (Availability of childcare at and around UCSD)*

#### **Grad Families Survey Findings:**

Graduate students who have children or are expecting were asked several questions related to childcare. According to the survey, 10% of respondents surveyed have children or are expecting. The majority of these respondents have between 1 and 2 children, with the age range of these children being fairly evenly distributed between those expecting, 0-18 months, 18-36 months, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11 years or older.

39% of the grad parent respondents either stay at home or have a spouse who stays at home to provide for their child. Parents also utilize licensed day care, with 18% of respondents using day care services outside of UCSD. A large portion also use home care options, with 7% using licensed home care and 20% using unlicensed home care (friend, family, etc.). Only 5.8% of graduate student parent respondents utilize the [UCSD Early Childhood Education Center \(ECEC\)](#) and 3.3% utilize the [UCSD Mesa Child Care Center](#). 34% of the respondents disagree with the statement that they are satisfied with the childcare options at UCSD. Cost and availability are the most common reasons for this dissatisfaction, although hours and quality also play minor roles.

#### **Grad Families Proposed Solutions:**

The percentage of graduate students utilizing university-sponsored childcare services is relatively low. This is caused by a combination of lack of capacity within the childcare centers, as well as a perceived low priority for enrolling graduate student families when compared to faculty and staff families. If the expansion of the UCSD Early Childhood Education Center occurs, graduate student families should be prioritized to fill the

increased capacity. The GPSES committee recommends that the GSA VP Diversity work with the Vice Chancellor of Resource Management & Planning (VC RMP) to guarantee a certain number of slots for graduate students.

The GPSES committee recognizes that there is no guarantee that space will be ensured for graduate students at ECEC, and thus recommends that the GSA take a multifaceted approach. The GPSES committee reiterates and stresses the need for the construction and maintenance of a database of local childcare options, which was previously requested from the GSA's 2013 Council Resolution #5. The GSA VP Diversity is currently working with the VC RMP to provide information on third party childcare vendors in the area of San Diego, and the GPSES committee encourages the VC RMP to ensure that this information is made available to graduate student parents. Creating a UCSD reimbursement voucher program for obtaining a childcare license would also increase the university's involvement in increasing childcare options for graduate students. Currently, there is a limited availability of licensed home care in the surrounding community. Creating a childcare license reimbursement voucher program for spouses or family members of graduate students would increase the number of home care opportunities in the area. In addition, With poor childcare options at UCSD, it would be a valuable asset to improve childcare services for entering graduate student families and graduate students who are still searching for viable childcare.

## **4. Student Services**

Graduate students were asked about the various student and campus services they used on campus. Many of these questions were focused on health services, including the student health insurance plan, Student Health Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, and the Office for Students with Disabilities. Students were also asked about where they currently live, and where they want to live in the future. Usage statistics for many of the facilities on campus were acquired, including RIMAC, Price Center, the bookstore, and several eateries around campus. Finally, students were asked about the GSA, and what they would like the GSA to focus on.

### **4.1. Health Insurance and Services**

#### **4.1.1. [Student Health Insurance Plan \(SHIP\) / Student Health Services \(SHS\)](#)**

##### **SHIP / SHS Survey Findings:**

77% of graduate respondents have used SHS in their time at UCSD and 78% currently have a graduate student health insurance plan (GSHIP). 91% of respondents report

being at least moderately satisfied with their experience at SHS, and 75% are moderately or strongly satisfied with their GSHIP coverage. The GSHIP referrals process is the most contentious service provided, with 20% of respondents either moderately or strongly dissatisfied with the process.

### **SHIP / SHS Proposed Solutions:**

Much of the confusion regarding the referrals process through GSHIP may be due to the lack of information provided on the SHS website. SHS should create a separate website for SHIP/GSHIP with more detailed instructions on the referral process. In addition, the committee recommends that the GSA insists SHS repair the online appointment system, which has been down for several quarters. While the extended weekday and Saturday hours are appreciated, the committee recommends that SHS also consider extending Sunday appointment hours to better serve the student population.

#### **4.1.2. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

### **CAPS Survey Findings:**

A substantial number (43%) of respondents have considered seeking counseling or mental health services during their time here. Of those, 61% went to CAPS. Overall, students seemed generally satisfied with the timeliness of the response and the care they received. However, 18% of students were unhappy with their experience with CAPS. 66 respondents provided fill-in answers regarding why they were unsatisfied. Of those answers, the most common reasons given were the limited nature of their services (19 respondents, 28.7%), a dislike of the counselor(s) they met with (31 respondents, 47%), and being forced to take an off-campus referral (10 respondents, 9.1%).

### **CAPS Proposed Solutions:**

The committee recommends that the GSA VP for Campus and Student Affairs help find additional funding to alleviate the strain on CAPS. In particular, hiring counselors who serve only graduate students is critical, as the needs and experiences of undergraduate and graduate students are very different. Providing additional services through SHS, particularly an on-campus psychiatrist, will further relieve the financial burden on CAPS and students seeking care. Currently, psychiatric services are provided off-campus through an expensive and burdensome referral process. Finally, extended hours and

more graduate support groups will expand the available services for students and make it easier for those who need help to get it.

#### 4.1.3. [Office of Students with Disabilities \(OSD\)](#)

##### **OSD Survey Findings:**

Although 13% of respondents have been diagnosed with a medical or psychological disability, only 24% of them have self-disclosed to OSD and only 30% have told their department. Of those who have interacted with OSD, 30% were slightly, or not at all, satisfied with their experiences and 20% were slightly, or not at all, satisfied with accommodations on campus.

##### **OSD Proposed Solutions:**

Visibility of disability services continues to be a concern for the graduate student body. GSA should work with OSD to improve outreach to the graduate student population and make their services known to grad students. In addition, students need to be made more comfortable with self-disclosure. The GPSES committee also recommends further investigation into what specific buildings and locations on campus are inaccessible to students with disabilities, so that those concerns can be addressed.

## **4.2. Housing and Transportation**

*Housing and Transportation (Location and priorities of housing)*

##### **Housing and Transportation Survey Findings:**

Only 35% of respondents live in on-campus housing. While more than 90% say they are at least moderately happy with [UCSD Associated Residential Community Housing \(ARCH\)](#), 74% still would rather live off-campus. The respondents had various priorities when it comes to selecting a place to live, and were asked to select which factors were the most important to them. Among the most important are affordability (82%), ease of commute (67%), and proximity to campus (59%), as well as the size of the living space (55%) and safety of the community (57%). 28% of the survey respondents had difficulty finding their current housing. A majority used Craigslist to find housing (54%), while many others found their housing through a friend or other connection (24%). Only 6.9% used the graduate housing email listserv (<https://mailman.ucsd.edu/mailman/listinfo/grad-housing-op-l>).

## **Housing and Transportation Proposed Solutions:**

Increased efforts to promote the use of the graduate housing email listserv would likely benefit those who had trouble finding housing. The city of San Diego is a great place to live, and the appeal of on-campus housing may vary based on an individual student's priorities. Because no questions related to parking on campus or shuttle / MTS bus utilization were asked in the GPSES survey, we recommend that the GSA conduct a transportation survey in the 2015-2016 school year in order to compare to the results of the 2013 GSA Transportation Survey. It would be worthwhile to look into student interest in supporting paid UCSD shuttles from popular off-campus neighborhoods such as North Park and Golden Hill. It is important to provide diverse housing and transportation options which accommodate a wide range of students. This will help create a vibrant, inclusive graduate community at UCSD.

### **4.3. Facilities**

*Facilities (Campus facilities including Price Center, RIMAC, libraries, and the bookstore)*

#### **Facilities Survey Findings:**

The most used centers on campus are , Price Center (88%), libraries (87%), the bookstore (86%) and RIMAC (44%). For food options, the most used restaurants are Porter's Pub (64%), the Loft (55%), Round Table Pizza (43%), and the college dining halls (32%). The facility centers which had at least 10% of respondents indicate dissatisfaction were the college dining halls (19%), Porter's Pub (19%), the Financial Aid office (14%), and Round Table Pizza (14%).

#### **Facilities Survey Solutions:**

The advisory boards that oversee the corresponding facility centers which showed low satisfaction among respondents shall be made aware of the results. For example, the University Center Advisory Board (UCAB) shall be provided the results of the usage and satisfaction portion of the survey for all University Centers facilities.

### **4.4. Student Government**

*Student Government (Graduate Student Association and departmental governments)*

## **Student Government Survey Findings:**

A huge problem has consistently been that students are unaware of what the GSA is and what the GSA is responsible for. Of the total respondents, 48% of students do not know who their GSA representatives are and 53% have not attended a GSA-sponsored event in the last 12 months. There needs to be a continued push for communicating with graduate students as to what the GSA does, and how the GSA can best serve the interest of students.

In general, graduate students want the GSA to focus on campus (54%) and external (38%) advocacy, campus-wide social (51%) and cultural events (35%), and community service opportunities (35%). When asked what additional services the GSA should provide, many students wanted to see more department-focused events that unify departments and programs. Respondents also indicated a desire for advocacy from the GSA for departmental issues, such as salary increases, even though these issues need to be handled by their respective departments.

## **Student Government Proposed Solutions:**

The GSA should continue to focus on social and cultural events, as well as campus and external advocacy. The GSA Community Outreach Coordinator position has been created as a GSA executive position to help unify the campus community centers, as well as plan at least one service event per quarter. The lack of awareness regarding the GSA is being addressed by the GSA Chief of Staff, who oversees the branding of GSA. The UCSD GSA Facebook page has gone from under 100 likes to over 1,200 likes in under 2 years, and a continued push should be made for the recognition of the GSA name. The GPSES committee recommends a GSA website task force be formed in the summer of 2015 to develop the GSA website into a hub for all graduate student-related issues and concerns. The Facebook page, as well as Grad Life emails, should be used to promote the website as a central location for information.

The GSA can do a better job communicating with students in individual departments on how to unite and lobby for their specific concerns and for better support in general. The website task force should work on a section of the website entirely dedicated to outlining how departments can come together to advocate on behalf of the students within their department. Programs and departments with strong student governments, such as Bioengineering and Biomedical Sciences, can serve as models for others.

## 5. Concluding Thoughts

This preliminary report summarizes the main findings of the 2014 GPSES survey and advises the GSA, the Graduate Division, and the relevant administrative offices as to what future steps need to be taken. This report looked at the overall statistics, and did not perform significant analysis with respect to breakdown of departmental data or protected categories (URM, gender, sexual orientation, etc.). As such, the GPSES committee recommends that the GSA form new committees to address the continued analysis of the GPSES survey, as well as to implement the proposed solutions that the GPSES committee has recommended.

## 6. Appendices

### 6.1. GPSES Committee Charter

Special Committee of the Graduate Student Association on the Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction (GPSES) Survey

#### Article 1. CHARGE

The charge of this committee shall be to analyze the results of the 2014 Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction (GPSES) survey and propose specific solutions for addressing the primary issues affecting graduate and professional students.

#### Article 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this committee is to:

1. Analyze the results of the survey based on three sections (academic development, campus climate, and student services)
2. Discuss preliminary findings with the full committee and the two Graduate Division interns
3. Write a comprehensive report with specific action items by Week 6 of Spring quarter

#### Article 3. CHAIR

The VP of Student and Campus Affairs shall chair the committee. The Chair is responsible for appointing GSA representatives, scheduling all meetings and completing the final report. The Chair shall only vote in the case of a tie.

#### Article 4. MEMBERSHIP

1. Mandatory Membership (Voting membership)

- a. 2 GSA representatives for academic development
  - b. 2 GSA representatives for campus climate
  - c. 2 GSA representatives for student services
  - d. 2 Graduate Division interns (Grad Life and Campus Climate Intern)
2. Ex-Officios (Non-voting membership)
- a. GSA President
  - b. VP of Academic Affairs
  - c. VP of Diversity, Service, Equity and Inclusion Affairs

#### Article 5. MEETINGS

This committee shall meet every other week, beginning in Week 2 of Winter quarter, until the final report is submitted to council.

#### Article 6. ACCOUNTABILITY

Each section shall be written by the corresponding representatives for that section, with guidance from the two Graduate Division interns. The final report must be submitted no later than Week 6 of the Spring quarter to the GSA council. The committee shall close no later than Week 10 of Spring 2015.

### **6.2. GPSES Membership and Meeting Record**

The GPSES committee membership and authors of this report were:

Lindsay Freeman, Chair of GPSES Committee, GSA VP of Student and Campus Affairs  
 Jessica Blanton, Vice Chair of GPSES Committee, GSA Diversity Committee Co-Chair  
 Lindsay Dawson, GPSES Academic Development Rep, GSA Council Representative  
 Steven Rees, GPSES Academic Development Rep, GSA Council Representative  
 Leandra Boucheron, GPSES Campus Climate Rep, GSA Council Representative  
 Kyle Adam Blair, GPSES Campus Climate Rep, GSA Council Representative  
 Joseph Ponsetto, GPSES Student Services Rep, GSA Council Representative  
 Maya Sapiurka, GPSES Student Services Rep, GSA Council Representative  
 Jeanelle Horcasitas, Graduate Division Grad Life Intern  
 Beatriz Ramirez, Graduate Division Campus Climate Intern  
 Holly Dembinski, GSA VP of Academic Affairs  
 Donald Johnson, GSA VP of Diversity, Service, Equity, and Inclusion Affairs  
 Jonathan Monk, GSA President

The GPSES committee met 5 times during the 2015 Winter quarter. The meeting dates and times were:

January 6th, 12-1pm  
January 20th, 12-1pm  
February 3rd, 12-1pm  
February 17th, 12-1pm  
March 3rd, 12-2pm