We bring Innovativeness to The University of Akron through visibility, presence, advocacy, empowerment, engagement and voice of graduate students in purposeful matters and student's activities on the University campus through research, programs, networks and partnerships.

Yearly Report
2012 – 2013

Presented to the Graduate Faculty
Presented by Chris Opoku-Agyeman

Prepared by:
The Executive Board of the Graduate Student Government
Chris Opoku-Agyeman, President
Alvaro Rodriguez, Vice President
Kow Okyere Eshun, Treasurer
Shamima Jahan, Secretary
PNC Bank donates $500,000 to support student success

On hand for the August 23 ribbon-cutting at The University of Akron were (l-r) Charles Fey, former UA vice president of student engagement and success; Nicole Hagan, PNC university banking; Robin May-Iona, PNC branch manager; Nicole Slaker, PNC customer service representative; Jim Muraco, PNC regional manager; Kevin Thompson, PNC regional president; Kevin Grobelny, PNC relationship manager – public funds; Mary Beth Clemons, president of UA’s undergraduate student government; Ralph Palmisano, vice chair of UA’s board of trustees; Chris Opoku-Agyeman, president of UA’s graduate student government; Jonathan Pavloff, vice chair of UA’s board of trustees; and Luis Proenza, UA president.
Message from the President

Love is patient, love is kind; it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud; it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs; Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth; Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres; Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV Bible)).

On behalf of the Executive Board, I am expressing my profound gratitude to all individuals, faculty and staff members for their immense contributions and support towards the great achievements of the graduate student government. We will like to acknowledge that without the tremendous and massive support of the entire faculty we would not have accomplished our mission of reawakening student engagement among graduate students on campus. As you know, The Graduate Student Government (GSG), in recent times has made tremendous strides in engaging, representing and advocating student issues to the University administrators. GSG has experienced the reawakening of student’s involvements through programming, empowerment, networking and partnerships. Added to this, GSG has also been able to create an environment for student to network and collaborate on issues of leadership, career choices, academics, research, entrepreneurship and many others. A few highlights of significant achievements and success experienced so far include:

- Created a flexible payment plan for international students enrolling in the UA Student Health Insurance plan starting in the Fall, 2013. Going forward, international graduate students, who enroll in the University Insurance Plan, can have their premiums applied to their student account and register for classes without restrictions.
- Hosted the Annual Graduate Students’ Social Engagement with the School’s Administrators and the leadership of the University. Overall about 200 students were in attendance.
- Initiated a “Leadership Symposums Series” with the goal of bridging the gap between academics and professional career for students at large. The first Leadership Symposium was held in the fall -2012 with The University of Akron President –Dr. Luis M. Proenza. The Second was held in the spring-2013 with the University of Akron Vice President of Strategic Engagement - Jim Tressel. About 60 students were in attendance for each session.
- Sponsored a delegation of four students to the 26th Annual National Association of Graduate Professional and Student (NAGPS) national conference at Duke University, Durham, NC
- Allocated travel and project grants to more than 120 individuals and student groups on campus and several blended and new graduate students’ organizations.
- Videotaped every GSG program to be uploaded on website. We also update the website regularly with new and current information. Visit our websites [http://www.uakron.edu/gsg] and familiarize yourselves with all the videos of the events organized during my tenure of office.
- Conducted one of the actively participated elections on campus for the GSG Leadership positions. For the first time, positions on the GSG board were keenly competed for. Candidates took up initiatives of creating their own blogs, video ads and many other means to canvas votes and supports from students.
- Enforced a more friendly collaboration with our undergraduate student’s counterparts.
- Fostered closer relations with the University’s administrators particularly, the president, provost, the vice presidents, the deans and advisors. We have received tremendous support from our advisors –Dr. Newkome, Dr. Tausig and Dean Rocco.
- Established a strong foundation for financial independence through the engagement of the alumni associations and members.

My administration has always run on the theme of making a difference within our community. And we have worked extremely hard with very limited budget to distinguish ourselves as an organization that has served the majority of graduate students on campus. We have left an indelible and exemplary mark for subsequent administration to move student governance to the next level. As a concluding remark, I encourage everyone to continue promoting unity and tolerance of differences in every walk of life. In fact, by staying and working together, we nurture our values and provide opportunities for our successes and achievements. As you travel the journey of success and prosperity, I want you to guard yourselves with these profound quotes: “Honesty is a very expensive gift; do not expect it from cheap people” (Warren Buffett); and “Leave this world better than it was when you got here” (Stephen .R. Covey). Wishing you the best in life.

Chris Opoku- Agyeman
President, GSG
Background

The objectives of the Graduate Student Government (GSG) are to govern graduate student affairs, represent graduate student sentiment, and promote interdepartmental social exchange and interaction between students. The government is composed of an executive board of officers; a senator representing each college, department representatives and three advisors. The structure of the GSG is shown in the diagram below.

In order to meet the objectives of this organization, members are selected and appointed to participate in various administrative committees meetings such as the University Council, Faculty Senate, Graduate Council and Board of Trustees.

Mission

The Graduate Student Government of The University of Akron strives to serve as an effective organization and a voice for the interests of all substantive matters pertaining to the general welfare of The University of Akron graduate students, provides advocacy in the formulation and application of University and community policies, encouraging high standards in quality of graduate programs, devote actively to campus life, and contribute to the attainment of academic and professional goals.

In implementing our mission, the Graduate Student Government uses resources received from The University of Akron to provide financial support to registered student organizations and other student activities through the Extracurricular Activities Funds (EAF). The EAF exists to encourage programs, activities, projects, research, and leadership development that compliment learning in the classroom with learning outside the classroom. EAF enhances student engagement with the campus community and contributes to student success.
Objectives & Activities

Objectives

- Conference Funding
- Engagement
- Political Voice
- Social Events
- Campus Life
- Representation

Activities

Our activities are categorized into six major areas:
(a) Academics (we sponsor conference presenters and attendees, Research, Innovativeness)
(b) Social Engagements and Networking Programs
(c) Advocacy (e.g. Student Health Insurance)
(d) Community Outreach (Akron Food Bank, University Park Alliance, SpringFest)
(e) Partnerships and Collaboration with the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), National Association of Graduate Professionals Students (NAGPS)
(f) Entrepreneurial initiatives (Leadership Symposium series, awarding distinguished leaders, conference presentation portfolios)

Projects & Programs

Highlights of some of our programs and projects include:
(a) Students Travel Grants Initiative
   - Professional Enrichment Program (PEG) Up to $150 and $300
   - Group Travel Up to $2000
   - Special Project Funds
   - Research Grants
(b) Central Committee Meetings (college senators and department representative)
(c) Campus-Wide Meetings: Everybody has a voice
(d) Representation in the Board of Trustees
(e) Representation in The University Council
(f) Representation in the faculty Senate
(g) Representation in various sub-committees

Graduate Student Organizations

Getting involved is an excellent way to develop professional experience and demonstrate leadership to future employers. Here is a list of graduate student organizations on campus:

- Chemical and Biomolecular Graduate Student Association
- Chi Sigma Iota – Alpha Epsilon
- Counseling Psychology Graduate Student Organization
- Diversity Dialogues
- E-Docs
- Graduate Nursing Student Organization
- Graduate Student Business Association
- Industrial / Organizational Psychology Graduate Club (continued)
- International Society of Pharmaceutical Engineers
- Master of Social Work Student Association
- National Sexuality Resource Center – Akron Chapter
- Polymer Engineering Student Organization
- Polymer Science Student Organization
- Public Administration and Urban Studies Student Association
- Society for the Advancement of Marriage and Family Counseling / Therapy
- Society of Akron English Scholars
- Sociologists for Women in Society
- Student Academy of Audiology
- Student Association for Graduates in Education

As a registered member of a graduate organization, you have access to travel and event funding from the Graduate Student Government.

Interested in a group not listed above? Creating a new student organization has never been easier! Please visit our website for more details [http://www.uakron.edu/gsg/index.dot](http://www.uakron.edu/gsg/index.dot)
The Graduate Student Government Social was a program created to serve as a vehicle to welcome Graduate Students to a new academic year and create a professional atmosphere for networking and interacting with officers of The University of Akron. The 2012 event was dubbed “The Annual Graduate Students’ Social Engagement with the School’s Administrators”. The event was held at the University of Akron Infocision Stadium (5th floor) - FirstMerit Foundation Club Level on Friday, September 14, 2012, from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm.

List of special dignitaries of the University’s administration who honored our invitation are: Dr. Proenza (President), Dr. Sherman (Provost), Dr. Newkome (VP for Research & Dean of the Graduate School), Jim Tressel (VP of Strategic Engagement), Lee Gill, J.D (Assoc VP Inclusion & Equity/CDO), Dr. Tausig (Professor & Associate Dean of the Graduate School), and Denine Rocco (Associate VP and Dean of Students). We also hosted the warmest presence of some students from John Carroll University. Several topics were emphasized to encourage, inform and challenge the youthful minds of students to think about their personal development and opportunities available in advancing the world for the next generation. Overall, about 200 attendees were hosted.

The annual social engagement event will continue to be a major activity to unite both new and old graduate students in the University community and will include orientation, meet and greet, luncheon, familiarization with the school’s administrators and networking.
Achievement II: “Leadership Symposium Series”

The Leadership Symposiums Series were initiated by the 2012-2013 administration with the purpose of bridging the gap between academics and professional career for students at large. An invitation is extended to distinguished personalities from the University campus and the community to share their background experiences to help students shape their youthful minds in career choices, networking building, leadership, knowledge of skills and abilities needed to connect with employers and potential partners, family orientations and other extra curriculum activities.

The Fall 2012 Leadership Symposium was held in the Faculty Lounge at the Student Union on November 30th, 2012 hosting The University of Akron President - Dr. Luis M. Proenza. About 60 students were in attendance.

The Spring 2013 Leadership Symposium was held in the Second Floor of the Polymer Science Building on February 22nd, 2013 hosting The University of Akron Vice President of Strategic Engagement - Jim Tressel. About 60 students were in attendance.

The feedbacks obtained from participants indicate that perceptions were changed, ideas were birth, attitudes were reshaped and lives were greatly influenced.

Pictures from the Leadership Symposium Series
The GSG student travel funding support policy is a program instituted by the graduate student government to help students apply for travel funding for presentations and attendance at conferences. The program is in two forms: (a) Group Travel and (b) Individual Professional Enrichment Grants (PEG).

Group travel is restricted to registered and approved graduate groups and organizations on campus. The PEG program is a grant program to assist individual graduate students to travel to professional conferences that contribute to their professional training. All travel by individual graduate students and groups are authorized by a Faculty member or research advisor who is familiar with the conference, Graduate Student Government, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and SOuRCE. Students who apply for PEG to simply attend a conference are allocated up to $150 for travel. Students who apply for a PEG to present at a conference are allocated up to $300 for travel. Groups are eligible to receive up to $2000 travel money per academic year. GSG’s governing body reviews all requests and provides partial or full funding based on critical assessment of all applicants’ information. On return from the conference, a portfolio is prepared to capture the experiences of participants.

Pictures and Testimonial from Conference Attendees

My name is Kiran Khanal, a doctoral candidate from the Department of Chemistry and Physics. From July 21st to 27th, I presented a poster research work on the topic “Blends of liquid crystalline and flexible polymers: A Monte Carlo Simulation Study” at the Gordon Research Seminar and Conference. I am really grateful to Graduate Student Government for partial financial support to present at both the seminars and conference.

Attendees: Mohammed Eltayeb; Chris Opoku-Agyeman; Shamima Jahan and Jamie Parker

UA Students in Research Roundtables at the preconference of the American Sociological Association (August 15th -20th, 2012)
Achievement IV: GSG’s Awards and Recognition Portfolios

Honoring: Dr. Luis M. Proenza
President

Honoring: Dr. William Mike Sherman
Provost

Honoring: Jim Tressel
VP of Strategic Engagement

Honoring: Dr. George R. Newkome
VP for Research & Dean of the Graduate School

Honoring: Dr. Charley Fey (Former, VP for Student Engagement). Now the VP of Student Engagement, New Jersey Institute of Technology

Honoring: Denine M. Rocco
Associate VP and Dean of Students

Honoring: Lee A. Gill, J.D
Assoc VP Inclusion & Equity/CDO

Honoring: Dr. Mark B. Tausig
Professor & Associate Dean of the Graduate School
Students’ Health Insurance

Graduate Student Government succeeded in advocating for a flexible payment plan for the Students’ Health Insurance Scheme. Currently, graduate students especially international, who are under the university plan, can have their premiums applied to their student accounts or pay through the OIP eMarket. This initiative has now given students the opportunity to register for classes while having the flexibility to pay for the health insurance premiums over time.

Elections

The 2013-2014 election took a competitive and exciting twist with aspirants maximizing every opportunity including campaigning at various classrooms, tapping into the multimedia platform and Social Networking Sites (videos, twitter, facebook, emails) to win votes. For the first time in the history of the GSG, candidates vying for various leadership positions created their own websites, videos and other resources to create and promote awareness of their candidacy and canvass electoral votes. Overall, a total of 340 student voting turnout was reported in this year’s election; an improvement from last year of 290 votes. The candidates who emerged as winners in the 2013-14 election are:

- Marissa Blewitt – President and
- Alvaro Rodriguez – Vice President
- Shamima Jahan – Treasurer
- Nino Colla – College of Education
- Juliane Mier – College of Health Professions
- Parag Garg – College of Business Administration
- Abdullah Ami – Buchtel College of Arts and Science (Appointed)

Handing Over-Ceremony

The Inaugural Handing over-ceremony is set to take place on May 1st from 1:30pm- 3:00pm at the Martin Center. Special dignitaries will be hosted to grace the occasion. Vice President and Chief of Staff, Candace Campbell Jackson, will be honored for her continuous support and outstanding contribution to student success.

The LIFE (Legacy, Integrity, Fellowship and Excellence) AWARDS

Graduate Student Government has sponsored this year’s life awards event to recognize and honor the leadership, excellence, distinction, achievements and support of our organizations, activities, students, faculty and staff of The University of Akron. This years’ event was held on April 17, 2013 where three students were awarded with (a) Masters’ Scholar Award (b) Doctoral Scholar Award and (c) Graduate Excellence and Leadership Award. Each recipient received a sum of money with their prizes.

SpringFest and 2013 University of Akron Student Innovation Symposium (UASIS)

The Symposium receives the support from the GSG by recruiting graduate student volunteers to serve as moderators and provide support to the success of this event.
Achievement VI: “Financial Prudence”

- GSG started the year with a budget allocation of $36,812.05 after accounting for the previous year's deficit of $1,494.90. The Figure below summaries our expenditure for the year.

During the academic year, we received a total of 96 PEG applications and 35 Group travel and Project funding requests. Overall, 131 travel requests were made during the 2012-2013 academic year. A total of 81 of the PEG applications were allocated funds. The PEG grant applications were $76,010 in total and GSG was able to allocate $16007.59. A combined amount of $7,713.00 was allocated for Group Travels and Project Funding. This amount was able to support activities of 25 Graduate and blended organizations on campus out of the 32 funding requests ($73,018.02) received. Approximately 13.5% of the Group travel/Project fund requested amount was granted for various events of graduate organizations. Eighteen (18) new student organizations were added to the existing groups on campus.

Due to the increased number of PEG and Group grant applications this year, we implemented below policies to serve a greater number of the graduate student population:

(a) Reduce the maximum amount per application
   i. Up to $150 for attending a conference
   ii. Up to $200 for presenting at a conference

(b) Limit PEG fund allocations to once per academic year

We would like to express our profound gratitude to the various departments and offices that supported the graduate student government with monetary rewards to accomplish its mission and objectives of serving students.

| 1. Office of the President and Chief of Staff | $1,500 |
| 2. Office of Provost | $500 |
| 3. Dean Graduate School and VP of Research | $2,739 |
| 4. VP for Student Engagement and Success | $500 |
| 5. Vice President, Strategic Engagement | $1,000 |
| 6. Associate Dean of Graduate School | $250 |
| **Totals** | **$ 6489** |

The office of the Dean of Students sponsored in-kind, the food services (pizza) for The Fall 2012 Leadership Symposium with Dr. Luis M. Proenza. In conclusion, through our strong fiscal responsibility, we are able to transfer a surplus amount of about $2000 to the next administration.
Celebrating our Speakers and Sponsors

Dr. Luis M. Proenza
President

Candace Campbell Jackson
VP and Chief of Staff

Dr. George R. Newkome
VP for Research & Dean of the Graduate School

Jim Tressel
VP of Strategic Engagement

Lee A. Gill, J.D
Assoc VP Inclusion & Equity/CDO

Denine M. Rocco
Associate Vice President and Dean of Students

Dr. Mark B. Tausig
Professor & Associate Dean of the Graduate School
Welcome UA Graduate Students!

I would like to take a brief moment to welcome all new and returning UA Graduate Students to The University of Akron. As graduate students, you have chosen to further your education in the hopes of better preparing yourself to meet the needs of an ever-changing and demanding world. Please know that your Graduate Student Government (GSG) understands that they are here to advocate on your behalf and provide a voice for the concerns and issues that affect our graduate students.

Over time, as our University has flourished, the role of the GSG has broadened to address the needs of our graduate students more sufficiently. In addition to advocacy, under the leadership of Chris Opoku-Agyeman, the GSG is now branching out to attract more student involvement, provide more opportunity for student engagement in campus life and activities as well as implement changes in policies and procedures for the benefit of fellow graduate students. I am sure that you have noticed that the normal daily routine and life of a graduate student is somewhat different than that of an undergraduate; however, this does not mean that opportunities to engage in student life and network with fellow students are any less abundant.

I encourage all of you to take an active role in working with your graduate student government. They are here to assist you, listen to you, and advocate for you. In return, they need your support to do those things to the best of their ability. I wish you all the very best in this upcoming year.

With best regards, I remain sincerely,

George R. Newkome, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research and Dean, Graduate School
Oelschlager Professor of Science and Technology
Professor of Polymer Science and Chemistry
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Follow us on:

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