

## NAGPS Conference Summary

Julie Roy and I (Gautham Pandiyan) traveled to the annual conference of the National Association of Graduate & Professional Schools ([www.nagps.org](http://www.nagps.org)) as delegates and representatives from the Duke GPSC. We found the conference to be extremely informative and useful in many aspects, some of which are summarized below.

Firstly, we found out about the structures of various other graduate & professional student associations (GSAs), and student governments and different programs that they implement. A variety of structures exist, some more or less similar to our structure. Several of these groups paid *all* of their executive officers a stipend to compensate them for the time spent on their duties. Some of these stipends are as much as \$7,200 a year! Seeing how common this is, I would urge the GPSC to consider this as well. Some other GSAs have executive positions that deal exclusively with national outreach to NAGPS and regional schools, and some also have positions that deal with legislative outreach and lobbying.

Secondly, we found that most other GSAs do programming that is similar to ours, but on a much less frequent basis. We do a lot more programming of a variety of sorts during the year than most other groups. A lot of them have just a monthly social that involves free food. So in that manner our graduate & professional student population has a lot more resources, programs and funds available to them. In terms of funding, GPSC in fact has a larger budget than the entire budget of NAGPS! Also our affiliated student groups are far better funded and supported than at most other schools. So in this regard it appears that the state of graduate & professional students at Duke is very good. A unique program I would like to mention is Washington University @ St. Louis' Child Leave policy. It allows for both maternal and paternal leave both in birth and adoption, and gives the parent 34 working days leave and an optional 8 week extension pending departmental approval, and day-care referrals! This is definitely a model for what we can hope to work towards here.

One programming initiative that seems common to many other GSAs that GPSC does not do is the distribution of travel grants to conferences and meetings for students to present their research, as well as organizing university-wide symposia for the presentation of this research. A lot of organizations in fact offer *non-competitive* grants of up to \$400 or so to their students for this purpose! However at Duke this is administered by the Graduate Student Affairs office. This is another unique feature at Duke – the presence of an office of Graduate Student Affairs – full-time staff members that work on student affairs issues for graduate students! Many other schools' student councils were charged with running orientations, giving out travel grants and so on, things that are done at Duke by the GSA office and presumably the equivalent offices at different professional schools.

Thirdly, another interesting characteristic of NAGPS was that there seemed to be very low-to-poor representation from the professional schools! Several different schools had different graduate councils and professional school councils that were separate from each other and very few representatives from professional school councils were present. Another one of NAGPS' goals this year is to increase the participation of professional school students similar to our efforts in GPSC to do the same. It would seem the situation in GPSC is reflective of national trends.

Finally, during this conference I was nominated and elected to the board of directors of this organization (NAGPS) in the capacity of International Student Concerns Committee Chair. I will therefore be serving on the board of this organization. I urge you to visit the NAGPS website to explore their mission, large parts of which involve supporting member schools and to lobby legislators to pass legislation favorable to higher education and students. This organization shows tremendous potential to create change at the national level and I was convinced of the tremendous enthusiasm and energy that is starting to build up, which I am sure will result in great things from NAGPS in the year to come.