



# GRADUATE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

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Ali Sajid Imami  
*President*  
*Graduate Students Association*  
*Ali.Imami@rockets.utoledo.edu*

May 3, 2022

Respected Members of the Graduate Council

It is my great pleasure and honor to present the Annual Report for the Graduate Student Association for the academic year 2021-2022. It has been a long and eventful year for all of us and it gives me hope for the future to see all of you present in person for the first Graduate Council Meeting in two years. This gives me hope that things will back to they way they used to be soon.

First of all, I would like to thank the Council for their continued support for the Graduate Students Association over the years and particularly during this year. The support of the council members and the GCEC, particularly Drs. Giovannucci and Thompson has been invaluable in the continued functioning and success of the GSA.

I'll start be recounting the outreach activities for the GSA that happened this year. We started off the year with a table at the Student Involvement Fair. The involvement fair was a wonderful experience where we were able to reach more than 100 people at the spot. This mostly included the graduate student body which made this an excellent way to introduce GSA and its role in advocating for the graduate student body. Additionally, we were able to reach a number of graduating undergraduate students, serving as an ambassador for the our university's graduate programming.

Additionally, we recorded a video from the GSA withe myself as the GSA President welcoming the incoming graduate students and introducing them to the Graduate Students Association. This video was well received and widely shared across social media platforms.

Moving on to the Advocacy domain for the GSA, this has been a big year for us. We have had a list of issues brought to us by the student body and though our own research which allowed us to advocate for the graduate student body. The chief among these was the Parking Crisis whereby the demolition of a Parking Structure on main campus resulted in a lack of adequate parking spaces for everyone. The GSA was able to quickly and effectively reach both the stakeholders and the administration and the issue was handled amicably. We are currently a known stake holder in discussions related to parking and will continue to advocate for better parking and parking regulations for the students.

Another concern was around both the price of the student health insurance and the

perception that students were being forced to sign up for the university health plan. For this case, the GSA was able to act as the conduit between the university administration and the students and were able to convey the reason behind certain restrictions including federal guidelines prohibiting certain plans from being accepted for a waiver of health insurance. Thanks to our President, Dr. Gregory Postel, who is actively working on having graduate student health insurance being folded into employee health insurance which will be a win-win-win situation for the graduate student body, the university and the insurance provider.

Another issue for the graduate student body is the issue of equity of stipends across colleges and programs. I would like to thank Dr. Thompson and Dr. Postel for helping us along in this and with ensuring that this is a relevant point in the university's strategic planning and budgeting process.

As I'm sure of all of you can attest, the life of a graduate student is not without a significant amount of stress. On top of that, a global pandemic and an environment of uncertainty internationally can shake the most strong willed of people. This just goes on to underscore the importance of mental health for our vulnerable graduate student body. For that purpose, we were able to do introduce a number of initiatives and hooked into the resources already available at the university. This included, but was not limited to, actively opening a dialogue with Dr. Linda Lewandowski who leads the efforts of improving mental health and self-care. We also promoted the university counseling center and partnered with them in getting them more opportunities to expand their outreach to the graduate student body.

Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness are core American values, outlined in the founding documents of this great nation. One such liberty is the ability to choose what you should be called as. In the face of some adversity, the university put forth their policy document codifying their chosen first name policy. As the graduate student association, we were quite concerned about the opposition the university may face. As a show of support, we passed a resolution, supporting the university's decision to go ahead with this policy.

Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging are important parts of the recipe that allows people to be their best. Taking the lead from the university's focus on DEIB, the Graduate Student Association has established an ad-hoc Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging committee. This committee keeps a close eye on the state of affairs and ensures that our graduate student body is always represented. In fact, Robert Worthington, who chairs said committee, also drafted the resolution mentioned earlier.

Another initiative that has become a major part of the GSA and its partnership with the University institutions is our involvement in the student parent task force. A number of our graduate students are either parents already, or they will be soon. Thus, it is important to foster an environment that allows for graduate students to thrive, both as exceptional students and in their roles as parents. The Student Parent Task Force and the GSA are working on establishing a policy document that will codify various facilities and amenities that student parents are already entitled to but may not be aware of.

In the administrative sphere, we faced the same challenged we have faced over the years. We spent half a year without a full executive board and often, without representation from the individual colleges. However, our team worked hard and ensured that the special elections took place in a timely manner and we did have a full slate of executive board members and representatives. Similarly, the attendance to the general assembly meeting was comparable to the pre-pandemic and in-person meetings. I would urge the respected members of the Graduate Council to ensure that their mentees and students take an active part in the governance and day-to-day operations of the GSA as this provides them with a unique leadership training opportunity.

As of the end of this year, our Executive board had the following members:

|                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| President                       | Ali Sajid Imami          |
| Vice-President                  | Hossein Abedsoltan       |
| Treasurer                       | Diwakar K C              |
| Main Campus Secretary           | Darain Mathur            |
| Health Science Campus Secretary | Farzaneh Naghavi         |
| Communication Specialist        | Aravind Thirunavukkarasu |

Additionally, the roster of our college representatives was as follows:

|                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| David Aaron Lacy         | Arts and Letters                 |
| Tanzia Tasneem Ahmed     | Arts and Letters                 |
| Empty                    | Business and Innovation          |
| Lynn Xie                 | Business and Innovation          |
| Brooks Spiess            | Education                        |
| Pierrette Dagg           | Education                        |
| Asal Soltani             | Engineering                      |
| Empty                    | Engineering                      |
| Mihkaya Best             | Health and Human Services        |
| Tessa Alloy              | Health and Human Services        |
| Patrick Naranjo          | Law                              |
| Robert Worthington       | Law                              |
| Dhilhani Mohammed Faleel | Medicine and Life Sciences       |
| Farzaneh Naghavi         | Medicine and Life Sciences       |
| Gabe Kreider-Letterman   | Natural Science and Mathematicss |
| Radhika Thanvi           | Natural Science and Mathematicss |
| Empty                    | Nursing                          |
| Linda Corbitt            | Nursing                          |
| Daniyah A. Almarghalani  | Pharmacy                         |
| Saloni Malla             | Pharmacy                         |

For the Graduate Research Award this year, we had a highly competitive year with 29 applications received. Even with the hard work of the student affairs committee, this was not an easy task to accomplish. My gratitude goes to the Student Affairs Committee for ensuring that these awards were announced and disbursed in a timely manner.

The winners of the 2021-2022 Graduate Research Award are given in the following table. In total, \$19,847.00 were distributed to 10 worthy graduate students.

| Name                             | College | Amount     |
|----------------------------------|---------|------------|
| Fathima Dhillani Mohammed Faleel | COMLS   | \$2,000.00 |
| Iluja Gautam                     | COMLS   | \$1,970.00 |
| Nicholas Henkel                  | COMLS   | \$1,907.00 |
| Sukanya Chakravarty              | COMLS   | \$2,185.00 |
| Micah Garcia                     | HHS     | \$1,900.00 |
| Vickie Dugat                     | HHS     | \$2,000.00 |
| Maureen Casaus                   | NSM     | \$2,000.00 |
| Navdeep Kaur                     | NSM     | \$2,000.00 |
| Paige Madden                     | NSM     | \$1,985.00 |
| Silas Fischer                    | NSM     | \$1,900.00 |

This year, the Midwest Graduate Research Symposium was held virtually for the second year running. Learning from previous experiences, it was a much smoother experience for everyone this time. The MGRS, which is GSA's Flagship event, attracted over 80 attendees and 30 presenters from 11 different universities. We did have a little trouble ensuring that we had enough judges but with the kind support of this council we were able to ensure that we had the requisite number of judges for every field. The event itself was held on April 16th from 8 AM to 5 PM.

For the Poster presentations:

Third Position was awarded to Sandhya Adhikari from the University of Toledo for their poster presentation on *Environmentally Friendly Novel Sorbent Material for the Preconcentration and Determination of Rare Earth Elements*.

Second Position was awarded to Livina Itheme from the University of Toledo for their poster presentation on *Exploring Soft Templating Strategies in Non-Hydrolytic Sol-Gel Synthesis of Titania*.

First Position was awarded to Michael Vang from the University of Toledo for their poster presentation on *Examining the Relationship between Health Regulatory Focus and Health Consciousness in Undergraduate Students*.

For the Oral presentations:

Third Position was awarded to Haley Knuth from the Miami University for their oral presentation on *Who Controls the Narrative? Newspapers and Cincinnati's Anti-Black Riots of 1829, 1836, and 1841*.

Second Position was awarded to Emily Jason from the University of Toledo for their oral presentation on *Do primary side effects to the COVID-19 vaccine predict booster intentions?*.

First Position was awarded to Evan Clarkson from the University of Toledo for their oral presentation on *Behavior in Situations Simulating the Tragedy of the Commons is*

*Predicted by Moral Judgment.*

In conclusion, I would like to thank the graduate council for their continued support of the GSA and its activities. It has been an immense honor for me to serve as the president of the GSA and to present this report. I would like to thank Dr. Thompson, the acting Dean of College of Graduate Studies for her support and her valuable mentorship as I navigated these treacherous waters. I would also like to convey my gratitude to Dr. Giovannucci, who has been a guiding light and role model of leadership for me. I would also like to convey my thanks to President Postel for not only his support indirectly, but also his direct intervention if and when the situation warranted it. I would be remiss if I did not mention the entire staff at the College of Graduate Studies, including, but not limited to, Teri Hayes, Teri Green and Mary Main for their behind the scenes support to ensure that we continued to function without any hindrance. Finally, I would like to thank my team and my executive board at the GSA for standing by me and giving me a chance to serve the graduate student body.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ali Sajid Imami  
President  
Graduate Students Association