

## **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AT GSSWSR**

### **Graduate Student Association (GSA) and GSA Executive Committee (GSAEC)**

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) of GSSWSR consists of the entire MSS student body. It is how students participate in many aspects of the school's governance and is the best opportunity to participate in the school community beyond the classroom's boundaries.

### **GSA Leadership Council**

The GSA Leadership Council is a three-seat committee elected by the MSS student body. The GSA Leadership Council works with GSSWSR administration to represent student voice in decision-making at all levels. The GSA Leadership Council works closely with Student & Career Services to consult on programming and other elements of implicit curriculum for students.

### **The GSA Executive Committee (GSAEC)**

The purpose of the GSAEC is to coordinate graduate student initiatives, share relevant information from committees with the student body, promote the visibility of the GSSWSR both within and outside the College, and provide an open forum for discussion of issues related to graduate student life at the GSSWSR.

GSAEC meetings are held quarterly, or more frequently, as needed. The GSAEC is comprised of all representatives to faculty committees and one representative from every existing student organization or affinity group in a given academic year. Any student can attend a GSAEC meeting with permission from the Convener (the Student Services Coordinator). The Convener schedules GSAEC meetings, communicates scheduling with students, and takes and disseminates meeting notes.

All GSAEC members in attendance receive a copy of the meeting notes. The GSA works best when most students participate. To enable the maximum number of students to hold leadership positions, students may only hold one such position at a time, unless special permission is granted from the Student Services Coordinator.

### **Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW)**

ABSW is the Bryn Mawr student chapter of the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW). The NABSW was formed in 1968 during the Civil Rights Movement, initially as an advocacy group to address social issues and concerns of the Black community. Specifically, it advocates for social change, works toward eliminating racism in the social welfare system and advocates for the inclusion of people of African descent at the decision and policy-making levels. It functions as a change agent in social work education, practice, and research.

The Bryn Mawr student chapter was founded in 1983 and maintains an ongoing connection with its parent chapter, the Alliance of Black Social Workers, Inc., the Philadelphia Chapter. Amongst other things, it seeks to disseminate and exchange information regarding minority concerns in the field of Social Work in and around Bryn Mawr College and its surrounding communities. Activities of the Bryn Mawr Chapter of ABSW are dependent each year on student, faculty, and/or staff participation. If there is sufficient participation, the following processes will be observed:

Officers are elected annually, in April, to serve for the following academic year. Meetings are generally held monthly to discuss various fundraising and service opportunities supported by ABSW. Participation in the annual NABSW conference is encouraged and partially supported by ABSW funds and fellowships from GSSWSR. Each September, as per the policies of the NABSW, students who identify as being of Black/ African descent are invited to become members.

### **Forming Student Organizations and Affinity Groups**

While the GSA provides many opportunities for active involvement, a group of students may wish to create a student organization or an affinity group to address a specific interest that is beyond the focus of the GSA. An affinity group is a sub-group of the Graduate Student Association. They do not receive independent funding from the school but can apply for a small amount of funds each year for relevant activities.

Applications for forming a new affinity group are made available and reviewed in the fall and spring semesters only by the Student Services Coordinator. Students are encouraged to explore the activities of the GSA and/ or ABSW and any group already in existence at GSSWSR before applying to start a new affinity group. If a student finds that these organizations are not able to focus on their area of interest, and they can identify at least 5 like-minded peers, they can choose to apply to create an affinity group. However, the affinity group must be different than any already existing at GSSWSR.

Applications for forming an affinity group are accepted in the beginning of the fall (September 1- October 30) and spring (January) semesters only. Any new group requires at least five members.

New affinity groups should submit the Application Form (included below) during the specified times. The members listed as contact persons for the group will be notified via email whether their group has been approved, or if anything needs to be clarified.

If funding is desired, the new affinity group must submit a written request to the Student Services Coordinator for review. All requests for funding are subject to approval by the GSA Leadership Council and Student Services Coordinator and the availability of funds.

## **Procedures Specifying Students' Rights to Participate in Academic and Student Affairs Policymaking:**

Generally, students participating on committees must have completed one year in the program. The Committee on Policy includes one returning MSS student and one returning PhD student; the Committee on the master's Curriculum includes two returning MSS students; Faculty Search committees include one returning MSS student and one returning PhD student.

Opportunities to serve on standing governance committees are communicated at the beginning of each school year by the Student Service Coordinator (SSC). The SSC works with the Graduate Student Association (GSA) to facilitate recruitment of students for committees. These committees include the Curriculum Committee, Policy Committee, Field Advisory Committee, Student Representative to the Board of Advisors, Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, Student Representative to Graduate Council, and Student Representative to the College Budget Committee. The final student selection is done by the Student Services Coordinator with the Dean. Student members of each committee report back to the Graduate Student Association and on some occasions, survey the student body or facilitate focus groups on various curricular or policy issues. This information is available in the GSSWSR Handbook and Catalog and is accessible to students through the "Student Services" Moodle site. Information about opportunities to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs is also distributed electronically via our "Student Services Digest".

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) of GSSWSR consists of the entire MSS student body. It is how students participate in many aspects of the school's governance and is the best opportunity to participate in the school community beyond the classroom's boundaries. All students are provided information, starting at orientation, about existing student groups and organizations, and are also told about the process for starting new student groups and organizations. Students are also encouraged to become involved in college-wide organizations if these student groups are of interest to them. Connection with the GSA is the primary way that students participate in many aspects of the School's Governance and is an important opportunity to participate in the School and College community beyond the boundaries of the classroom. The Student Services Coordinator serves as a staff liaison to the GSA. The Student Services Coordinator regularly consults with the Dean of the GSSWSR and when helpful, invites the Dean and/or standing faculty governance committees to meet with GSA leaders and membership.

A recent example of this is that students expressed concerns about some aspects of the curriculum. GSA leaders contacted the Student Services Coordinator who, in turn, contacted the Dean and the Curriculum Committee Chair. Two town halls were organized to ensure multiple opportunities for students to attend, either in-person or via Zoom, to express concerns and share ideas and suggestions. As another example, post-Covid the College requested that the graduate school commencement ceremonies be separate from the College-wide ceremony. Wanting to ensure that we had adequate student input into this decision, the Dean worked with the Student Services Team to construct and distribute a student survey to get student feedback and this feedback was utilized to guide institutional decision making.

The GSSWSR holds monthly “Community Conversations” as time set aside for group meetings with students, faculty, and staff. Each semester, these community forums include opportunities to discuss issues that impact the community such as the timing of classes, curricular issues, ethical dilemmas, and topical areas of interest. In addition, Faculty Academic Advisors, the Student Services Coordinator, the Dean, and the Assistant Dean for Administration, maintain an “open door” policy to meet with students around any individual or group issues or concerns. The Dean holds open office hours that students can sign up for utilizing the Calendly application. Many of the standing committees at the GSSWSR hold open conversations/meetings as opportunities for students to raise issues/concerns and to share ideas for growth and improvement. For example, the Curriculum Committee will hold open “town halls, sharing the work of the committee, but also asking for student input and feedback.

### **Provides Opportunities for Student Organization:**

Every student enrolled in the MSS program is a member of the Graduate Student Association (GSA). The GSA, in combination with other student groups and organizations at the GSSWSR, are key vehicles for student advocacy and for fostering and supporting communication amongst student peers, and between MSS students and the faculty and staff of the GSSWSR. In addition to supporting student organizations and student advocacy, leadership positions in GSA and other organizations offer professional development for students in terms of understanding organizational development and context, and, on an individual level, supporting leadership development.

GSA officer positions include the roles of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Officers work closely with the Student Services Coordinator in planning a budget proposal to submit to the Dean and determining activities for students throughout the academic year. While the level of GSA activity varies over the years it includes active participation in Orientation activities, facilitating student participation in school events, and communicating shared students concerns and ideas to the Dean. GSA officers often also serve on one of the faculty or College committees and meet periodically with the Dean of the GSSWSR as well.

GSA Officers also create a budget proposal every year and plan activities, social events, and social justice activities for the student body. Other activities which GSA members help organize include clothing drives and other outreach projects, Graduate Student Appreciation Week, and inviting speakers to come to GSA.

The election of GSA officers is held annually in April for the following academic year. Any current students who are in good academic standing are eligible to run for office. If a student is on leave, they are not permitted to hold a GSA officer role. To enable the maximum number of students to hold leadership positions, students may only hold one position at a time unless special permission is granted from the Student Services Coordinator (SSC). The Student Services Coordinator calls for self-nominations from the MSS student body as well as community nominations (nominations by faculty, staff, or other students of students they think should be considered for the GSA) for the following academic year mid-Spring semester.

In AY 2020-21, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to adapt the governance structure to best meet the needs of the students. The GSA Executive Committee (GSAEC) was piloted and remains active. The purpose of the GSAEC is to coordinate graduate student initiatives, share relevant information from committees with the student body, promote the visibility of the GSSWSR both within and outside the College, and provide an open forum for discussion of issues related to graduate student life at the GSSWSR. GSAEC meetings are held twice per semester or more frequently, as needed. The GSAEC is comprised of all representatives to faculty committees and one representative from every existing student organization or affinity group in a given academic year. Any student can attend a GSAEC meeting with permission from the Convener (the Student Services Coordinator). The Convener schedules GSAEC meetings, communicates scheduling with students, and takes and disseminates meeting notes. All GSAEC members in attendance receive a copy of the meeting notes. The GSA works best when most students participate. To enable the maximum number of students to hold leadership positions, students may only hold one such position at a time, unless special permission is granted from the Student Services Coordinator.

### **How do students form other organizations at the GSSWSR?**

While the GSA provides many opportunities for active involvement, students may still create a new student organization or an affinity group to address a specific interest that is beyond the focus of the GSA. An affinity group is a sub-group of the Graduate Student Association. They do not receive independent funding from the school, nor do they have a formally structured governing body like the larger student organizations: GSA and ABSW. Applications for forming a new affinity group are made available and reviewed in the fall and spring semesters only by the Student Services Coordinator. Students are encouraged to explore the activities of the GSA and/or ABSW and any group already in existence at GSSWSR before applying to start a new affinity group. If a student finds that these organizations are not able to focus on their area of interest, and they can identify at least 5 like-minded peers, they can choose to apply to create an affinity group. However, the affinity group must be different than any already existing at GSSWSR. Applications for forming an affinity group are accepted in the beginning of the fall (September 1- October 30) and spring (January) semesters only. Any new group requires at least five members. New affinity groups should submit the Application Form (included below) during the specified times. The members listed as contact persons for the group will be notified via email if their group has been approved or if anything needs to be clarified. If funding is desired, the new affinity group must submit a written request to the Student Services Coordinator for review. All requests for funding are subject to approval by the GSA and Student Services Coordinator and the availability of funds. Below is a description of current student organizations:

**Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW)** ABSW is the Bryn Mawr student chapter of the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW). The NABSW was formed in 1968 during the Civil Rights Movement, initially as an advocacy group to address social issues and concerns of the Black community. Specifically, it advocates for social change, works toward eliminating racism in the social welfare system and advocates for the inclusion of people of African descent at the decision and policy-making levels. It functions as a change agent in social work education, practice, and research. The Bryn Mawr student chapter was founded in 1983 and maintains an ongoing connection with its parent chapter, the Alliance of Black Social Workers,

Inc., the Philadelphia Chapter. Amongst other things, it seeks to disseminate and exchange information regarding minority concerns in the field of Social Work in and around Bryn Mawr College and its surrounding communities. Officers are elected annually, in April, to serve for the following academic year. Meetings are generally held monthly to discuss various fundraising and service opportunities supported by ABSW. Participation in the annual NABSW conference is encouraged and partially supported by ABSW funds and fellowships from GSSWSR. Each September, as per the policies of the NABSW, students who identify as being of Black/African descent are invited to become members.

### **Social Work Votes**

Social Work Votes is a student-led group working to support marginalized communities by promoting civic activism, broadening the interrelationship of macro and micro social work concentrations.

### **Macro Connect**

Macro Connects' vision is to be a consummate model for extraordinary social work praxis. Macro Connects' mission is to bridge the micro-macro gap by planning, promoting, and expanding macro practice so that all students gain competencies and confidence to be better social workers within our GSSWSR community and beyond.

The goals of Macro Connect are to emphasize the continuum of micro and macro learning and practice, engage all students and alumni in integration of skills into practice and "direct macro" activities and events, offer multiple pathways that allow for a variety of ways to engage with Macro Connects, and to contribute to the MSS macro curriculum.

### **LGBTQ Affinity Group**

This group was started as a place for LGBT+ social workers to gather and discuss the unique challenges and experiences they face as LGBT+ social workers.

### **Ida B Wellness Group**

The Ida B Wellness Group is a student-led support group for self-identified Black students at GSSWSR. Meetings take place via Zoom and are an informal time for designated for students to "take care of one another as we continue to grow in our roles as social workers."

Please see the GSSWSR Student Affinity Group Application Form below.

**GSSWSR Student Affinity Group Application Form**

Students interested in petitioning to form a student affinity group at GSSWSR must submit this form to John Edwards, Student Services Coordinator.

**Name of student submitting form**

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First Last

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Email \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID# (required)

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**Name of Affinity Group**

**Statement of Purpose:** Please describe in detail the group’s decision-making process (majority consensus, etc.)

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**Primary Contact**

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First Last

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Secondary Contact**

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First Last

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Options:**

*Select One:*

- The program has only one (1) option.

**Program Options:**

*Select One:*

- The program has only one (1) option.
- Our response/compliance plan is the same for all program options.
- Our response/compliance plan differs between program options in the following ways: