Colorado School of Mines

Graduate Student Government

Strategic Plan

Adopted May 6, 2013
I. Vision

The Graduate Student Government is the preeminent custodian of, and advocate for, the graduate student community at the Colorado School of Mines.

II. Mission

The Graduate Student Government will ensure graduate students and their interests are fully represented across the Colorado School of Mines community; the organization will deliver an infrastructure that supports graduate student achievement – academically, socially, and personally.

III. Values

Graduate Student Government recognizes three core values: research, community, and sustainability. We recognize research excellence as a defining asset for both graduate students and the institution as a whole. Graduate students are a diverse and substantive adult community, with unique concerns relating to work-life balance, employment security, and institutional policy. Sustainable growth of our postgraduate experience requires strong communication between graduate students and the broader community, with continuous improvement in all organizational endeavors.

GSG officers and leaders will face complex decisions on the path to supporting an internationally-recognized graduate community. These values are intended to provide a clarifying lens, through which the organization can make consistent and sustainable progress.

Research & Academics
Grants and programs supporting research goals and milestones
Opportunities for personal and professional development
Promote campus policies and practices that encourage well-rounded young scientists

Community
Support of graduate students personal and social lives
Cohesive graduate student engagement in departments, colleges, and across campus
Inclusion in institutional decision making that affects graduate students

Sustainability
Supporting an informed graduate student population
Continual improvement of current practices and programs
Communication and respectful interaction with Faculty, Administration, and Undergraduate Government

Adopted May 6, 2013
IV. History and Partners

The Graduate Student Government (GSG), formerly known as the Graduate Student Association, was founded as an independent governing body in 2010 after two decades of participation in the Undergraduate Student Government (formerly the Associated Students of the Colorado School of Mines). A Joint Operating Agreement (JOA), written in 2010 and revised in 2011, was deployed as a mechanism to enhance interactions and information flow between the bodies. Prior to this separation, the Graduate Student Association was considered a campus club with most – but not all – departments sending an appointed representative.

Since then, GSG has implemented innovative programs and policies that support graduate student achievement academically, socially, and personally. With a more formalized mechanism for communication, the previously-fragmented graduate population is becoming more unified, with a clearer picture of the institutional changes and improvements they wish to support. Through this process, we have observed campus climate concerns – once isolated to individual departments – to be thematic across the campus.

With this understanding, it has become apparent that many of the current Mines policies, practices, and programs, such as the Residential Campus initiative, are directed primarily toward enhancing the undergraduate experience. While the graduate student experience may be considered in some initiatives, it often takes a 'back seat' to the financial incentives derived from supporting undergraduate education. Few institutional resources have been specifically targeted at graduate student achievement and community. To fill the institutional gap, the Graduate Student Government has sought to provide the infrastructure necessary to nurture and produce strong graduate students.

The Graduate Student Government must foster open communication and relationships with key stakeholders who also have an interest in graduate student achievement. The Office of Graduate Studies has long been – and continues to be – the key support office on campus for continual improvement of the graduate environment.

Outside of committee appointments (as listed in the Graduate Student Government Bylaws), there are select administrative offices that have been helpful in facilitating graduate student involvement. Student Activities and Student Life continue to provide graduate students with opportunities to voice concerns. Through these experiences, these offices are becoming increasingly involved with, and aware of, the postgraduate experience at CSM. These interactions are largely coupled with the
Undergraduate Student Government, which provides a useful mechanism to maintain communication between the discrete bodies.

In addition to CSM administrative offices, the Graduate Student Government has a rich history with the Colorado School of Mines Alumni Association (CSMAA). GSG leadership has historically held a non-voting seat on the CSMAA Board of Directors. The CSMAA has traditionally focused a vast majority of its resources on programming for undergraduate alumni. This trend began to shift course in mid-2011, as CSMAA Directors recognized the growing graduate population. The Alumni Association agreed to provide financial assistance for the Graduate Continuance Fellowship, as a first step toward enhancing the graduate experience.

V. Organizational Structure and Accountability

As a graduate student government in ever-changing times, the practice of continuous improvement is fundamentally non-negotiable. That is, current methods and approaches implemented will not automatically be considered the “best way.” GSG seeks continual refinement of programs and practices, to ensure a more efficient and effective organization. Graduate students are encouraged to continuously question, refine, and revisit current practices.

The Executive Team and Council should consider revising and updating this document annually to reflect progress towards reaching goals and objectives. The selection of future goals should also be addressed on an annual or bi-annual basis, driven by the current concerns of graduate students. With the newly established college structure, the responsibilities of Council (currently department and program representatives) should be likewise revisited and revised based on the needs of GSG. The Executive Team and Council should take an active part identifying and pursuing new initiatives, as they are incorporated in this document.

Roles and responsibilities are differentiated below, for both the Executive Team and Council. Roles define the governing duties assigned to executive officers and Council members, as stated in the Graduate Student Government Bylaws. Responsibilities refer to the effort beyond the minimum requirements put forth from the Executive Team and Council to achieve and innovate.

Responsibility of Executive Team

The executive team is responsible for ensuring GSG continuity and standard of governmental operation are being upheld. Executive members are the first line of communication between graduate students, the administration, and the campus community. Therefore, executive members should strive to be professional, courteous, and open-minded. The executive team must be organized in order to effectively and efficiently manage grant programs and business meetings. Executive members must concisely communicate with Council, graduate students at large, and
the Mines community.

Responsibility of Council

Graduate Student Government Council Members represent graduate students across campus. With the elected position comes the responsibility to ensure concerns of the departments are being properly represented and communicated to GSG Council and the Executive Team. As graduate student representatives, Council members should strive to be professional, courteous, and open-minded.

VI. Goals

In April 2013, GSG prioritized goals for the next one, three, and five years. The list of goals should be considered a moving target, where the Executive Team is responsible for annually assessing the progress toward each goal, updating this plan to reflect any mid-course corrections. The discussion presented along with each goal reflects one potential pathway toward realization, but alternative and better approaches should be considered prior to action.

In addition to the one-, three-, and five-year goals, a list of supplementary objectives is provided for consideration, potentially in future initiatives as this plan evolves.

Short-term (1-year) goals

Identified May 2013: Develop departmental graduate student organizations

In order to effectively communicate with and for graduate students, the departments need a cohesive mechanism with which students can interact with GSG. Having departmental graduate student associations accomplishes three key items that promote graduate student representation: forum for communication between graduate students and their representative to GSG, forum for electing department representative to GSG, and organization to promote social interaction within a department.

- Current Status: Some departments have a well-defined graduate student organization within the department while others do not. Requirements applicable to all departments regardless of their current structure are not in place.
- Potential Milestones: Define minimum departmental requirements (month 1-2). Involve partners who may assist with and promote departmental structure (month 2-3). Stage implementation of departmental structure (month 3-12).
- Potential Partners: Department heads, department assistants

Identified May 2013: Streamline communication from GSG (and Mines)
Graduate students are inundated with email communication, as it is an official form of communication for Mines. Often, many events and opportunities offered by GSG and other campus organizations are overlooked merely due to the excessive number of emails received throughout the day. The opt-in, opt-out system (http://inside.mines.edu/Mailing-Lists) adopted by Mines was meant to decrease email traffic. A more efficient means of communicating events and content to the graduate student population is needed.

- **Current Status:** Email is the main form of event communication from GSG to the graduate student population. The campus at large has a community calendar not widely known or used by graduate students (http://inside.mines.edu/calendar).
- **Potential Milestones:** **Incorporate** content previously emailed, into the GSG website. **Promote** the campus calendar and GSG website as main lines of communication; GSG events added directly to inter-departmental mailings by Program Assistants.
- **Potential Partners:** Office of Graduate Studies, Undergraduate student government

**Intermediate (3-year) goals**

**Identified May 2013: Institutionalize the Conference on Earth and Energy Research**

The Conference on Earth and Energy Research (CEER) remains a hallmark event established by graduate students, for graduate students. Building on the former Graduate Research Fair, CEER provides graduate students the opportunity to practice and receive feedback on their presentation skills in a professional environment. An institutional support system ensures continuity in annual planning and collaboration that allows for continual improvement in the quality of the conference for students and partners.

- **Current Status:** The Executive Team and Council volunteers have primarily performed the planning and execution of CEER. Communication with the Office of Graduate Studies, Office for Research and Technology Transfer, and the Alumni Association is reestablished at the outset of annual CEER planning.
- **Potential Milestones:** **Identify** key CEER stakeholders in the Mines community (Year 1). **Establish** a CEER guiding committee of stakeholders (e.g., the Office of Graduate Studies) that will provide macroscopic feedback and aid in networking (Year 1). **Define** year-to-year responsibilities for each committee member, based on each member’s desired level of involvement (Year 1-2). **Designate** a regular meeting schedule (Year 1-2). **Pursue** broader financial sources, including industry, government, and academia (Year 2-3). **Revisit** stakeholders and committee composition, to ensure an optimal balance is provided for sustainable success (Year 2-3).
- **Potential Partners:** Office of Graduate Studies, Office of Research and Technology Transfer, Alumni Association, Green Center Staff, Conference
Identified May 2013: Increase support of graduate students through awards, recognition, and grant programs

Programs that support graduate students in their research endeavors and personal lives are key to the GSG mission. Currently lacking within the support programs are those for graduate student recognition and awards. Recognition awards, such as a Graduate Student Research Award (similar in fashion to Research Council’s Research Faculty Awards) would acknowledge graduate student efforts and contributions to the Mines research community. Additionally, departmental awards of recognition similar to those distributed at E-Days and graduation would enhance the visibility of graduate student efforts on campus.

- **Current Status:** Grant programs supporting travel (Travel Grants) and degree completion (Graduate Continuance Fellowships) are offered. Recognition awards currently in place are the departmental awards for CEER presenters.
- **Potential Milestones:** **Investigate** current Mines awards and recognition of graduate students, as well as programs at other institutions (Year 1). **Define** nomination, qualifications, requirements, and eligibility for award program (Year 2). **Refine** nomination and selection process (Year 3).
- **Potential Partners:** Office of Graduate Studies, Office of Research and Technology Transfer, Department Heads, Faculty Senate

Identified May 2013: Increase the number of networking opportunities for graduate students with other graduate students, faculty, alumni, and industry partners

With a growing graduate student population, it is important to maintain a similar level of opportunities for social and professional networking. In particular, there is a need for networking with other students, faculty, and industry partners.

- **Current Status:** Social networking with other students is offered through campus wide social events. Networking events during CEER provide a forum for networking amongst interested students, faculty, and alumni.
- **Potential Milestones:** **Investigate** partnership potential with the Career Center, Faculty Senate, and CSM Alumni Association for social and professional events (Year 1). **Organize** one or two annual networking events (Year 2). **Establish** networking event series, with specific and achievable outcomes drafted for each event (Year 3).
- **Potential Partners:** Faculty Senate, Career Center

**Long-term (5-year) goals**

Identified May 2013: Develop a teaching associate program

Opportunities for graduate students to learn, practice, and hone teaching skills
are not widely available on campus. While some departments encourage and have teaching requirements for degree programs, most do not. Having a Ph.D. or M.S. in science or engineering from CSM does not necessarily mean that graduates are prepared to teach at the high school or university level. Pedagogical opportunities for graduate students in science and engineering should be abundantly available, as it is those students who will teach future students.

• **Current Status:** Mines offers a handful of classes related to pedagogy. A few degree programs have teaching requirements, while others discourage graduate student teaching. A campus-wide teaching program does not exist.

• **Potential Milestones:** *Identify* how each campus constituency would be affected by, or benefit from, a teaching associate program (Year 1). *Establish* an exploratory committee tasked with developing a teaching program for graduate students (Year 2). *Investigate* teaching programs at other institutions, to refine the initial design of the committee (Year 2-3). *Develop* procedures and processes for program, and engage Deans and Department Heads to gain feedback on, and support for, the initiative (Year 3). *Pilot* teaching program (Year 4). *Refine* procedures and processes (Year 5).

• **Potential Partners:** Office of Graduate Studies, Department Heads, College Deans, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate

*Identified May 2013: Inclusion in policy dialogues affecting students*

University administration ensures policies and processes are in place that support education. Often, the administration is provided with difficult circumstances that require difficult decisions. Complex problems faced by Mines are best solved through collaboration and inclusion of the constituencies affected. Through collaboration, the constituencies are more likely to develop an understanding and mutual ownership of the difficult decisions and solutions that they will ultimately be affected by. Further, inclusion of students ensures generational diversity in approaches to modern education.

• **Current Status:** The climate for collaboration and inclusion of students in meaningful dialogues is sub-optimal.

• **Potential Milestones:** *Seek* open communication with key administrators (Year 1). *Identify* critical administrative departments and offices that lack graduate student feedback in decision-making processes (Year 2-3). *Develop* a plan for inclusion of students (Year 4-5).

• **Potential Partners:** College Deans, Office of the Provost, Office of the President, Planning and Policy Analysis, Human Resources

*Identified May 2013: Establish a graduate student community lounge*

There are few institutional efforts aimed at enhancing the graduate environment or promoting cohesion of graduate students. Mines policies, processes, and programs are generally aimed at enhancing the undergraduate experience.

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Further, the *in loco parentis* mentality that Mines promulgates does not align with the needs and expectations of today’s graduate student, with an average age of 32. In furthering Mines’ aspirations as a world-renowned research institution, attracting and keeping quality graduate students should be of top priority. In order to attract and keep high quality graduate students, it is important that Mines communicate to the potential student pool that graduate students are adults and treated as such at this institution.

- **Current Status:** The social events currently offered provide a short few hours for social interaction and often to not align with the volatile schedules of graduate students. The greatest hindrance to GSG efforts for graduate student cohesion is the lack of an on-campus environment where graduate students can socialize.

- **Potential Milestones:** *Investigate* graduate student spaces at other institutions (Year 1). *Work* with institutional administrators to identify potential graduate student spaces, such as the I-Club or Berthoud Hall vacant parking lot (Year 1-2). *Establish* timeline/action plan (Year 1-3). *Identify* potential funding sources such as GSG, a solicited endowment, or corporate Sponsorship (Year 2-3). *Develop* a financial plan and timeline (Year 2-4). *Implement* progressive adjustment plan for GSG budget (Year 3-4). *Recondition* or construct space identified (Year 5-7).

- **Potential Partners:** Office of Graduate Studies, Student Life, Finance and Administration, Capital Planning and Construction, Facilities Management

*Secondary listing of goals for future consideration:*

- Committee reporting
- Department reporting on graduate student achievements and awards
- Interdisciplinary events and research opportunities
- Overall college representative
- New graduate student survival kit
- Individualized communication of graduation requirements
- Clarity on tax forms and requirements of graduate students
- Give program reps voting rights
- Continued excellence with LyX template
- Better documentation for graduation paperwork and procedures
- Conversion of family assistance grants to voucher program
- Multi-university GSG database for best practices, idea sharing, and social site
- Campus based daycare solution

**VII. Assessment**

*Short term assessment*

The Executive Team and Council require metrics in making progress towards and achieving each of these goals. Both the Executive Team and Council should complete
a bi-monthly assessment during business meetings to gauge progress on each goal as outlined in a given year. The evaluation should be anonymous to ensure honest and critical feedback. An example assessment rubric is included at the end of this document.

Long term assessment

In 2012, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Student Engagement Survey (SES) was piloted at three universities in Colorado in order to establish a basis for providing insight into the engagement and satisfaction of graduate students. The intent of this tool is to begin understanding what areas of the graduate student environment need improvement based on descriptive data of student perceptions. In the event that the pilot program does not continue in the future, it may be beneficial to continue annually surveying graduate students here at CSM with a similar assessment tool in order to evaluate the utility of Graduate Student Government and CSM efforts for continuous improvement of the graduate environment. Questions asked in that survey can be obtained from the Graduate Student President.
## Example Goals Assessment Rubric

**Intended Outcome:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has an action plan been developed?</th>
<th><strong>Lack of a plan:</strong> Intention only, no action plan in place</th>
<th><img src="#" alt="Circle one. Provide Comments in the space below." /> <img src="#" alt="1" /> <img src="#" alt="2" /> <img src="#" alt="3" /> <img src="#" alt="4" /> <img src="#" alt="5" /></th>
<th><strong>Well-defined plan:</strong> Action plan with clear steps and benchmarks in place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there flexibility in the action plan?</td>
<td><strong>Lack of flexibility:</strong> Conditions changed with no updates made to the goal or plan</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Circle one. Provide Comments in the space below." /> <img src="#" alt="1" /> <img src="#" alt="2" /> <img src="#" alt="3" /> <img src="#" alt="4" /> <img src="#" alt="5" /></td>
<td><strong>Flexible response:</strong> Adjustments made to align with current conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has progress been made?</td>
<td><strong>Lack of progress:</strong> No support internally; no support externally</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Circle one. Provide Comments in the space below." /> <img src="#" alt="1" /> <img src="#" alt="2" /> <img src="#" alt="3" /> <img src="#" alt="4" /> <img src="#" alt="5" /></td>
<td><strong>Progress made:</strong> On task for the next step of the plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the executive team put effort towards achievement?</td>
<td><strong>Lack of effort:</strong> Avoidance; other items took priority; lack of follow through</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Circle one. Provide Comments in the space below." /> <img src="#" alt="1" /> <img src="#" alt="2" /> <img src="#" alt="3" /> <img src="#" alt="4" /> <img src="#" alt="5" /></td>
<td><strong>Good effort:</strong> Regular activity, follow up, and reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Council put effort towards achievement?</td>
<td><strong>Lack of effort:</strong> Avoidance; other items took priority; lack of follow through</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Circle one. Provide Comments in the space below." /> <img src="#" alt="1" /> <img src="#" alt="2" /> <img src="#" alt="3" /> <img src="#" alt="4" /> <img src="#" alt="5" /></td>
<td><strong>Good effort:</strong> Regular activity, follow up, and reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Progress</td>
<td><strong>Lacking</strong></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Circle one. Provide Comments in the space below." /> <img src="#" alt="1" /> <img src="#" alt="2" /> <img src="#" alt="3" /> <img src="#" alt="4" /> <img src="#" alt="5" /></td>
<td><strong>Progressing</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>