

PSGSA Newsletter

Fall 2025

Dear Political Science Graduate Students,

We hope that you have had a good semester. The PSGSA is here to be a resource for graduate students and promote a positive environment for everyone in the department. As always, we encourage you to be on the lookout for emails about specific events. Feel free to browse this document to get more information about what PSGSA does and our plans for the remainder of the academic year. This newsletter also includes information about specific committees within the PSGSA that any graduate student in our department can join. If you are interested in becoming involved with PSGSA via any of these committees, please reach out to the person(s) listed as the chair. Also, do not hesitate to reach out to anyone on the board if you have any questions or need any assistance.

Sincerely,

2025-2026 PSGSA Board

2025-2026 Board Members

President - Alesha Lewis

Leads the PSGSA Board and oversees PSGSA activities

Vice President - Akayla Henson

Substitutes for the President, supports board leadership

Treasurer - Katie Worrall

Manages finances and activity budgets

Social Chairs - Myla Burton and Misha Datskovsky

Organize social events to build camaraderie among graduate students

Culture Chair - Qiaoyi Nie

Works to improve the climate of the department

Grievance Chair - Alondra Pagan-Marquez

Handles faculty-related grievances

First Year Representative - Kaan Ackay

Serve as a liaison between the first-year cohort and the board, represents first-years' interests

Mission Statement

The mission of the PSGSA is to enhance the academic, professional, and social experience of the Illinois Political Science graduate students by

- Providing training events, academic resources, and mentorship to graduate students;
- Organizing social and sports activities;
- Facilitating channels for feedback and representing graduate students in discussions with the department;
- Disseminating information about the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) and university resources; and
- Working with the department leadership to promote a respectful and uplifting work environment for all graduate students

Vision Statement

The PSGSA recognizes and celebrates the diversity that exists in students' background, including but not limited to differences in: race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, class, age, neurodiversity, national origin, marital status, military status, parental status, and disability status. We strive to ensure the inclusivity of all graduate students across this range of backgrounds.

The PSGSA acknowledges the institutionalization of ideas and processes that have resulted in the historic and ongoing underrepresentation and disrespect for diverse voices in the discipline. We work to amplify the voices and representation of historically and currently marginalized groups.

The PSGSA works to support the involvement and empowerment of all graduate students, recognizing their inherent worth and dignity, by (1) striving to promote and sustain a sense of

belonging in the graduate student community and (2) valuing and respecting the talent, beliefs, and backgrounds of its members.

Committees

Culture Committee

Chair: Qiaoyi Nie

Strives to improve the overall climate of the department; works in conjunction with faculty members, including the ombudspersons

Math Camp & Methods Committee

Chair: Rahnuma Siddika

Organizes the annual department Math Camp for incoming PhD students; works on improving the use and understanding of empirical methods by Political Science graduate students

Visits Committee

Chair(s): Akayla Henson and Paul Un

Works with the DGS and other faculty to organize admitted students' visits to the department

GEO Committee

Chair: Katie Worrall

Acts as the department's liaison to Union activities; members attend regular GEO meetings and communicate updates with the graduate student body

Survey Committee

Chair: Ekin Alpay

Responsible for designing and administering all surveys for the PSGSA; works with faculty and graduate students to gather feedback and improve the graduate student experience

Board Projects

Peer Mentoring

Qiaoyi Nie

Matches first-year graduate students with advanced student mentors; oversees the peer mentoring program

Brown Bag Series

Akayla Henson & Myla Burton

Organize faculty-student brown bag lunches

Bulletin Boards

Myla Burton

Update graduate student bulletins and publications in DKH

Repositories

Qiaoyi Nie & Katie Worrall

Maintains and updates online repositories

Alumni Mentoring

Misha Datskovsky

Coordinates meetings between graduate students and alumni during MPSA

Seminar Series

Alesha Lewis & Akayla Henson

Plans and hosts professionalization seminars

Volunteering

Misha Datskovsky & Alondra Pagan-Marquez

Plan service opportunities in the Champaign-Urbana community

Website

Katie Worall & Alondra Pagan-Marquez

Maintains and updates the PSGSA website

Town Hall & Newsletter

Alesha Lewis

Host town hall and create/distribute Fall Newsletter

Resources

The PSGSA website is currently undergoing extensive updates and will be revamped this academic year. However, there are a few resources that may be valuable to students, including:

- A series of methods 'cheat sheets' to help introduce students to new methods
- Classes taken by our grad students outside of the political science department
- Fellowships and grants awarded to our grad students
- Job market materials provided by past UIUC graduates

You can access these resources here: <https://publish.illinois.edu/poliscigsa/resources/>

Social Activities

- Social events will be held at least once a month
- At the end of every Spring, we organize a department picnic that is welcome to both faculty and graduate students
- To suggest other events you have in mind, please complete the following survey from our Social Chairs:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScY0ew31ne71XFPQ9tvK-vL4DR3go6M30QeHE7NvDB1O3tSYA/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=114683910629382230293>

Announcements

- We recently received approval for university funding for graduate students to attend conferences during the Spring semester. If you DID NOT previously complete the survey on conference attendance, please fill it out at your earliest convenience so that we can request additional funds for any more students going to conferences.
<https://forms.gle/8pyQ7EUux6hyEH3J9>
- The Seminar Series next semester may include methods-related workshops in which graduate students can teach their peers certain skills they have learned. If you have a method that you would like to teach as part of a seminar, fill out the following survey, and I will reach out to you separately to discuss the details:
https://illinois.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0rllpBKul0yzs4C

A Final Note

Our primary goal is to contribute to enhancing the experience of graduate students in this department. You can help by attending the events, volunteering for committees, and showing support for the organization. If you have suggestions for how we can better support graduate students, please let us know. Good luck on finals and happy holidays!