

Monthly Report (October-November): Chair of the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC)

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As the Chair of the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC), I have undertaken the following responsibilities and tasks during the past month:

1. Town Hall Meeting

The Town Hall Meeting was held on October 22 from 4-6 p.m. at Fine Arts 301. It was conducted in a hybrid format, with both in-person and virtual attendance. Food was provided for in-person participants.

The event was organized as a panel discussion. The panelists included:

- Jessica Burstrem (GSA President)
- Lydia Majure (Lead Organizer, International Union, UAW)
- Greg Babic (Graduate Assistant Leader, University of Maryland College Park)
- Two international graduate students from the University of Maryland College Park

Each panelist shared their experiences and insights about unionization and addressed students' questions, particularly focusing on the implications for international students, tax concerns, and other graduate student issues. The discussion provided clarity on the consequences of joining the union and aimed to address the concerns raised by the audience.

2. Chat N Chew with President Ashby

During a lunch meeting with President Ashby, GAAC discussed several important topics:

- **Protection for GSA Leadership:** There are ongoing concerns about the need for protection of Graduate Student Association (GSA) leaders from potential threats or retaliation by departments or other university members. GAAC requested that President Ashby prioritize this issue, starting with safeguarding GSA leaders and then extending protection to all graduate students. GAAC emphasized the importance of fostering a supportive culture at UMBC and addressing this issue promptly.
- **Lack of Office or Study Space for GSA Members:** GAAC highlighted the need for dedicated office or study space for GSA members to conduct virtual meetings, study, and collaborate effectively. This concern was discussed with President Ashby, emphasizing its importance for supporting graduate student work and engagement.

- **Meet and Confer:** President Ashby expressed interest in the upcoming Meet and Confer meeting, which will include Dr. Van Dulmen (Provost), Dr. Halverson (Associate Dean), and other members of the university administration. The meeting will address key concerns raised by GAAC and GSA.

3. Upcoming Plans (November-December)

- Meet with GSA President Jessica Burstrem and Vice President Aminah Amjad to discuss topics for the Meet and Confer meeting.
- Prepare a preliminary list of graduate students from various departments for bargaining discussions (in collaboration with Jennifer Artist).