KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE
ANNUAL REPORT | 2014–2015

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The 2014–2015 academic year was a remarkable one for the Graduate Student Senate, full of outstanding achievements and incredible growth. From the number of graduate students attending GradFest, to the number of applications for each of the travel and research awards, we have seen exponential increases this past year.

We also celebrated the 30th Annual Graduate Research Symposium with nearly 300 presentations of research from graduate students in over 30 academic units! This was our largest Graduate Research Symposium yet and we are very much looking forward to future symposia!

As a university, we began a new era of leadership, with President Beverly Warren completing her first academic year and Dean Mary Ann Stephens retiring from a successful career in higher education. Dean Stephens has played an integral role in graduate education at Kent State University. From being a mentor and leader to creating opportunities to support underrepresented students, she has truly made a positive impact for many at the university.

From the beginning, President Warren initiated conversations around graduate education at Kent State University through student focus groups. She has also demonstrated her support through reaching out to include the Graduate Student Senate as part of her Listening Tour as well as addressing graduate students as the keynote speaker during the 30th Annual Graduate Research Symposium.

The Graduate Student Senate has also undergone changes this past academic year, with respect to new Senators and Executive Board members, as well as revised award guidelines and processes. We are constantly looking to improve our organization to better meet the needs of a diverse graduate student body. While evaluating award processes this past year, we incorporated student-based focus groups and surveys to allow for a more holistic review of challenges within the current system.

This is our second year publishing an Annual Report, which focuses on highlighting the many ways that Graduate Student Senate strives to represent and support graduate students at Kent State University. I hope you will take the time to read the many exciting stories regarding our progress this past academic year.

To the exciting future ahead,

Alexandria M. Lesak  
Master’s Student, Public Health  
Executive Chair  
2014–2015
As a graduate student organization, the Graduate Student Senate provides professional development, financial support, community involvement & networking opportunities to advance all graduate students at Kent State University in their academic journey.
In the last year Graduate Student Senate, the representative body for graduate students at Kent State University, has had several students express concerns regarding the costs that are incurred to use the Kent State University Student Recreation and Wellness Center while enrolled in Thesis II or Dissertation II credit hours. Graduate students would like free access to the SRWC regardless of student status (Note: Some departments pay membership fees with assistantships for graduate students on Thesis II and Dissertation II credit hours, but this is not universally true). GSS has spoke to the SRWC director and is working to increase communication between graduate students and the SRWC staff.

ACCESS TO THE STUDENT RECREATION & WELLNESS CENTER

In the last year Graduate Student Senate, the representative body for graduate students at Kent State, has had several students express concerns regarding the costs that are incurred to use the Kent State University Student Recreation and Wellness Center while enrolled in Thesis II or Dissertation II credit hours. Graduate students would like free access to the SRWC regardless of student status (Note: Some departments pay membership fees with assistantships for graduate students on Thesis II and Dissertation II credit hours, but this is not universally true). GSS has spoke to the SRWC director and is working to increase communication between graduate students and the SRWC staff.

2014–2015 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Fall 2014 Women’s Center Drive
The Women’s Center is a Kent State University program that facilitates professional and education development for women across all Kent State University campuses. GSS collected non-perishable food, children’s toys, and diapers to help benefit female students in need. Graduate students from across the university donated 8 large boxes of goods.

Spring 2015 Miller Community House
The Miller Community House is a local shelter in Kent, Ohio, dedicated to helping individuals struggling with housing and personal needs. GSS collected non-perishable food, toiletries, and personal items (e.g., blankets, towels). Recently, the Miller Community House took in several Kent State University graduate students who were left homeless after a fire in their apartment building.

The professional responsibilities of an academic can be summarized into three main categories: research, teaching, and service. As Graduate Student Senate (GSS) is the governing body for all graduate students at Kent State University, it represents a service component of graduate training for those individuals who are senators or executive board members. In addition, GSS is charged with providing representation at the university level on a number of committees across Kent State. These positions are wonderful opportunities for professional development in the service aspect of academia. Additionally, the opportunity to participate in committee work at the university level is a privilege. GSS is honored to have committees request graduate student representation. This is a testament to the quality of feedback and perspective graduate students provide while serving on committees.

ACTIVE COMMITTEES WITH GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATION

- Accessibility Committee
- Advisory Committee for Academic Assessment
- Educational Policies Council – Graduate Council
- Faculty Senate
- Faculty Senate Budget Advisory Committee
- Intercollegiate Athletics Committee
- University Council on Technology
- Student Media Policy Committee
- University Diversity Action Council
- University Teaching Council
- Public Safety Advisory Committee
- Transportation Advisory Committee
- University Libraries Advisory Committee
- Committee on Administrative Officers

This year, GSS appointed representatives to fourteen active committees throughout the university. The Executive Vice Chair is responsible for the coordination of representation. Once appointments are made, the representatives then attend all committee meetings and report back to the Executive Vice Chair and Senate. This allows for information discussed within each committee to be disseminated to the graduate student body through each Senator. This process provides the most direct and concise method for the distribution of pertinent information to all graduate students at Kent State University.

Through the University, GSS is a 501c3 organization. GSS chose to focus on local organizations within the University and Kent community. As a body of graduate students, GSS is tasked with promoting philanthropic events, as an opportunity for graduate students to give back to the community.

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The 2014-2015 academic year has represented a period of increased demand in support for travel awards. The GSS Domestic Travel Award (DTA) is an award that supports research and professional development of Kent State University graduate students. It is the largest expense in the Graduate Student Senate budget. It is required that students who receive this award are traveling to conferences within the United States, Canada or Mexico and presenting research. Full- and part-time students whose departments are in good standing with GSS are eligible to receive one DTA per academic year. The award reimburses 50% of eligible expenses up to $350.00. This award is offered at the beginning of the fall, spring and summer semesters.

Due to the increased demand for this award, several improvements were made to better manage the demand, but also maintain the spirit of the award. A DTA Committee was established to reevaluate all aspects of the award. During the fall semester, applications were awarded based upon the requirement that they provide proof of presentation. Concurrent with this change, the DTA Committee proposed an improvement of randomizing the selection of applicants should the demand exceed available funds. This was implemented for the spring and summer 2015 semesters. The aim of the DTA Committee has been to streamline the processing of the award while speeding up reimbursement, and creating a fair selection method when the demand for the award exceeds available funds. Options to provide more substantial improvements for the following academic year are currently being discussed.

### DEPARTMENT BREAKDOWN OF AWARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Total Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>$16,512.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology Sciences</td>
<td>$36,202.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry &amp; Biochemistry</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography, 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences, 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Arts &amp; Culture Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MCLS, 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics, 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological Sciences, 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Therapy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.C. 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater &amp; Dance, 5</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

### DOMESTIC TRAVEL AWARD METRICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Total Applicants</th>
<th>Funded Applicants</th>
<th>Total Awarded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>$16,512.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>122*</td>
<td>$36,202.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>171**</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>$112,715.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Using a modified selection process of proof of presentation
**Number derived from total available funds
The International Travel Award (ITA) is a competitive award that provides financial assistance for international networking, research, and professional development by Kent State graduate students. The ITA promotes development of Kent State University's graduate students, supports diversity through exposure to foreign cultures, and extends Kent State University's recognition on an international level. The ITA funds up to $1,500 of student-incurred travel expenses outside the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The International Travel Award is offered fall, spring, and summer of each academic year. Full- and part-time graduate students whose departments are in good standing with GSS are eligible for the ITA.

The ITA guidelines were updated in Summer 2014 to provide clearer instructions regarding technical aspects of the application requirements, including redaction of personal information & length limitations.

**AWARDEES**

- **Art**
  - Noraliz Ruiz, Rachel Smith
- **Biological Sciences**
  - Jennifer Remus, EmmaLeigh Given
- **Biomedical Sciences**
  - Philip Iffland
- **Geography**
  - Michael Allen
- **History**
  - Denise Jenison
- **Lifespan Development and Educational Sciences**
  - Emily Mupinga
- **Modern & Classical Language Studies**
  - Elizabeth Nelsen
- **Psychological Sciences**
  - Shannon Claxton, Brian Don
- **Sociology**
  - Megan Shaeffer

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- **Applied Engineering, Sustainability, & Technology**
  - Lauren Woolum
- **Biological Sciences**
  - James Redfearn
- **Business Administration**
  - Hillary Mellema
- **Chemistry & Biochemistry**
  - Randall Breckon
- **Foundations, Leadership, & Administration**
  - Natalie Fox
- **Geography**
  - Mark Rhodes, Gordon Cromley & William Kiskowski
- **Health Sciences**
  - Keith Burns, Sara Harper
- **Lifespan-Development & Educational Sciences**
  - Yvette Medoza, Jesse Wray & Robin Eastman
- **Nursing**
  - Tamra Courey
- **Political Science**
  - Yeo Jung Yoon
- **Psychological Sciences**
  - Scout McCully (Chair), Shannon Claxton

**Amount Awarded 2014–2015**

$17,500

**Number of Students Awarded 2014–2015**

12

**Countries Visited**

10

All graduate students are invited to serve on the review committee for the International Travel Award each semester. This commitment includes reviewing each blinded application based on an established rubric. Upon assessing all applications, the review committee convenes to discuss the applications and ultimately determine which applications receive the International Travel Award.

We would like to thank each graduate student who served on the International Travel Award committee this past academic year. We are so appreciative of your time and dedication to this process.
The Research Award (RA) is a competitive award that supports research related expenses for Kent State University graduate students. The RA promotes research development and discovery across a variety of academic disciplines. The RA funds up to $2,000 of student-incurred research related expenses and is offered in the fall and spring semesters. Full- and part-time graduate students whose departments are in good standing with GSS are eligible to receive one RA per academic year.

Graduate students from several departments (e.g., geography, health sciences, EHHS) indicated that the current deadline for the Research Award hindered their ability to meet eligibility standards, specifically IRB requirements, for the award. The Advocacy Chair met with IRB, and moving to a mid-semester deadline was advised. The Advocacy Chair also surveyed the Senators to determine if the current deadline presented similar challenges in other departments across campus. Almost 80% of the Senators indicated they would prefer a mid-semester deadline due to the IRB requirements.

Moving forward, the Advocacy Chair is looking to adjust the Research Award deadline to mid-semester with the Senator’s approval.

### Awardees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Awardees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Michelle Bebber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>James Redfearn, Angela Freeman, Binaya Adhikari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical Sciences</td>
<td>Aidan Ruth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid Crystal Institute</td>
<td>Sahil Sandesh Gandhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry &amp; Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chamila Gunathilake, Sonya Adas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching, Learning, &amp; Curriculum</td>
<td>Jennifer Toney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Joshua Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise Physiology</td>
<td>Brandon Pollock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Cadey Korson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Kristen Traynor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Meghan Novisky, Megan Shaeffer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Committee Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Morgan Chaney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Zach Wollert, Andrea Maxell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art History</td>
<td>Debmalya Bhattacharyya, Randall Breckon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry &amp; Biochemistry</td>
<td>Mark Rhodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Sara Harper, Heather Flynn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>Maja Bajac-Carter, Shawn Starcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library &amp; Information Science</td>
<td>Lopamudra Chakravarty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Communication</td>
<td>Nathan Cardenas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Elana Fox</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Research Award Metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Total Applicants</th>
<th>Funded Applicants</th>
<th>Total Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$5,960.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$7,999.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$13,959.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All graduate students are invited to serve on the review committee for the Research Award each semester. This commitment includes reviewing each blinded application based on an established rubric. Upon assessing all applications, the review committee convenes to discuss the applications and ultimately determine which applications receive the Research Award.

We would like to thank each graduate student who served on the Research Award committee this past academic year. We are so appreciative of your time and dedication to this process.
The Graduate Research Symposium is a springtime event hosted by the Graduate Student Senate which features oral and poster presentations by graduate students from a wide variety of disciplines. Faculty and graduate students serve as judges for groups of presentations sharing similar themes or representing common areas of study. The symposium is concluded with an Awards Luncheon which features a keynote address and presentation of awards to the winning graduate students. Each awarded graduate student receives an award certificate and a monetary prize of $100.

The symposium offers benefits for students with any range of presentation experience and skills. For those with minimal presentation experience, the symposium provides an opportunity to speak about research and receive interdisciplinary peer and faculty feedback. The multidisciplinary nature of the event is one of its key features; GSS is dedicated to fostering the multidisciplinary nature of the event, welcoming all forms of scholarship, from empirical research to works of art.

Graduate Student Senate’s 30th Annual Graduate Research Symposium took place on Friday, April 3, 2015 in the Kent Student Center. The symposium was the largest to date, with 289 student presentations and 90 faculty, staff, and administrator judges. The symposium was also the most diverse symposium to date; nearly every GSS academic unit was represented. The theme, ‘Three Decades of Discovery’, celebrated the 30th anniversary of the symposium—recognizing our past achievements and looking to the future ahead. Kent State University President Dr. Beverly Warren delivered the Keynote Address during the Awards Luncheon. The 31st Annual Graduate Research Symposium will be held on Friday, April 22, 2016.

Increase in Presenters Since 2010
723%
Masters Students Presenters 2015
130
Doctoral Students Presenters 2015
159

ORAL PRESENTATION AWARDEES

Art
Sophia Adodo

Biological Sciences
Angela Freeman, Ryan Schoeneman
Monica Burgett, David Cunningham

Business Administration
Paul Mills

Chemistry & Biochemistry
Sonya Adas, Gayan Mirihana Arachchilage

Computer Sciences
Christian Newman

English
Amanda Stovicek

Foundations, Leadership, & Administration
Shakhnoza Yakubova

Geography
Thomas Ballinger, Kathryn Hannum & Srian Rice

Health Sciences
Amal Albeshri

Journalism & Mass Communication
William Kelvin

Physics
Brian Hunt

Political Science
Amanda Clark

Psychological Sciences
Shannon Claxton, Jenna Wall

Sociology
Brooke Long, Meghan Novisky & Nancy Weissman

Teaching, Learning, & Curriculum
Karen Tollafeld

POSTER PRESENTATION AWARDEES

Anthropology
Andrew Kramer, Alexa Stephenson

Applied Engineering, Sustainability & Technology
Nuttapong Phantkankum

Architecture
Daniel Armagno, Cathleen Matuzak, Alexa Copeland, Tyler Middendorf, Christopher Moyer, Christine Scaglione & Caleb Heller

Biological Sciences
Lydia Heemstra, Shruti Jain, James Redfearn & Jonathon Van Gray

Biomedical Sciences
Gaelle Muller-Greven

Chemistry & Biochemistry
Jibin Abraham Punnoose

Health Sciences
Hayden Gerhart

Lifespan Development & Educational Sciences
Yolanda Mahoney, Emily Mupinga

Music
Noraliz Ruiz Caraballo

Public Health
Diana Kingsbury

Teaching, Learning, & Curriculum
Elizabeth Lattime, Jennifer Toney

Visual Communication Design
Joshua Kruszynski

Graduate Research Symposium
GSS hosts monthly social events called GradFest which enable students to have fun and network with other graduate students from across campus. Each GradFest is held in a downtown establishment where GSS provides pizza and a raffle of prizes of Kent State University gear such as mugs, shirts and a large stuffed black squirrel.

The seven GradFests held during the 2014-2015 year were hosted at 157 Lounge, Dominick's, The Local Public House and Zephyr Pub.