

Application for Spring 2015 GSA Best Practices Award

Application Deadline: 12:00 a.m. EST, 3 April 2015

(Please scan the completed application and email it to group-ugsa-dolc@ncsu.edu)

Distributed by the Departmental Outreach and Leadership Committee (DOLC), the Best Practices award recognizes the GSA which most clearly embodies UGSA's mission of improving the satisfaction and scholarship of graduate students at North Carolina State University. Since each department is unique, the award is also intended as a tool to spread ideas and to encourage involvement in GSAs of all sizes.

Please use the space provided to answer the following questions regarding your department's GSA.

GSA NAME: Textile Association of Graduate Students (TAGS)

1. What does your GSA do to enhance the experience of graduate students in your department? This could include how money is spent, how events are organized/publicized, types of events, how student interests are represented, etc.

From Fall 2014 until now, TAGS has planned a wide variety of events, all completely free-of-charge for Textiles grad students: monthly pizza lunch, Fall Break day trip to the NC Museum of Sciences, "International Flavors" potluck, Halloween candy giveaway, movie night with popcorn, catered "Multicultural Spring Festival" with live music, a hiking trip to Umstead Park, and an end-of-year cookout lunch in the courtyard of our building. We have also participated in volunteer events: Homecoming canned food drive and Kupcakes-4-Kay. Additionally, we organize and prepare weekly seminar refreshments, such as tea, coffee, crackers, hummus, veggies, etc., and this provides a routine break during which all the grad students are free to come and eat / socialize. This year, we also ran various activities for the departmental orientations: College of Textiles tours, new student ice-cream social, and Q&A sessions.

The College of Textiles hosts eight graduate programs which are mainly based in three departments – Textile Engineering Chemistry and Science (TECS) Textile Apparel Technology Management (TATM) and Academic Program (PhD programs). Because students are so dispersed in terms of their disciplines and classes, our biggest goal is to bridge the gaps between them, with the hope that these connections carry on to be professional links. Additionally, the students are very internationally diverse, and we aim to make everyone feel a sense of belonging and community through our events.

2. Describe your GSA's organizational structure. (meeting procedures/frequency, member responsibilities, etc.)

TAGS officers meet once per week to organize upcoming events, share news from UGSA, and plan for the subsequent seminar refreshments. In total, we have 10 officers. We have 5 positions, each of which is currently held by two to three officers (i.e. Co-Vice President, Co-Treasurer, etc.) apart from the President position, which is held by one student. Having so many officers allows us to connect with many students and host various events.

- The President is responsible for making executive decisions regarding meeting frequency, meeting time, and event details. Input from other officers is always taken into account. The President also attends the monthly UGSA meetings and is the graduate representative at the College of Textiles Dean's Council meetings.
- The Co-Vice Presidents are responsible for attending meetings that the President is unable to attend, supporting other officers in all of their responsibilities, and attending the bi-weekly Tompkins Textiles Student Council meetings (reps from all College of Textiles student groups).
- The Co-Secretaries are responsible for taking minutes at the weekly meetings and posting the minutes to our internal website.
- The Co-Public Relations officers are responsible for communicating with the graduate students through an email list-serve. They promote all of our events by designing posters, posting announcements on our facebook page, and forwarding event details to administrators who control the display monitors around the college.
- The Co-Treasurers fill out the forms required to obtain the UGSA chapter rebate and departmental funds. They ensure that the funds reach our account, and they maintain the account by keeping track of all expenses. Furthermore, as they hold the debit cards for our GSA account, they are responsible for purchasing the weekly snacks.

3. Are faculty and/or administrators involved with your GSA? If so, how does your GSA facilitate interactions between students and faculty?

This semester, we set up a special meeting with the Director of Graduate Programs (DGP) from each department (three total) during which we shared a PPT with feedback about courses from students. We gathered this feedback from conversations with around 30 graduate students, including students from each of the 8 graduate programs. During the discussion that followed, each of the DGPs said they were pleased to hear the voices of the students, and it was mentioned in a very positive light at the Dean's Council Meeting.

Also, we try to bring faculty and students together at our events. Some of our events, such as the International Flavors Potluck and the Spring Multicultural Festival, are co-hosted by faculty. We even had faculty and students perform on-stage together in a Viola/Flute duet at the Multicultural festival. Events like these are intended to provide students with an opportunity to interact with professors in a casual, pressure-free environment.

Non-faculty administrators also support us in important ways. Our Career Services director sends weekly emails out to the students about events going on around the college, including events that TAGS is hosting. He also maintains a meeting/storage room for all the student groups, which is where we have our weekly meetings and store our resources. Other departmental administrators help us by including our events in their lists of announcements as well, which they post on monitors around the college.

4. What steps do you take to ensure a smooth transition from one academic year to the next so that your GSA stays in good standing with the UGSA?

Each year, elections are held in April. This gives the outgoing officers time to meet with the new officers. During these meetings, the importance and benefits of being in good standing with UGSA are emphasized. The new officers then plan to meet independently during the summer, so that they are prepared for the upcoming semester.

This year, we also adopted a new approach that has been successful so far. Early in the fall semester, we contacted the new students and invited them to be "officers in training". Many students came forward, and started to attend our weekly meetings. This has turned out to be extremely helpful because we had some major changes from one semester to the next (our President left in order to take a job, and two officers left due to time restrictions). The new students have all become full-fledged officers now, and we were able to get through those changes smoothly.

Additionally, we set up a Google site (the internal website) to keep the records of all of our meetings and activities as a reference for the future officers (a preview of this site is attached to this application). This provides a detailed resource for the new officers about how we have organized different events and how they can improve them.

5. Does your GSA raise funds in addition to your chapter rebate? If so, how do you raise these additional funds? How are these funds used?

The Dean's Office is very supportive of TAGS. We organize a meeting with the Dean towards the end of the summer, during which the Treasurer presents our budget for the upcoming year. These funds are combined with the UGSA chapter rebate to ensure that all of our events are free for students. Besides the support from the Dean's office, we were able to raise \$750 for one of our events, the Multicultural Spring Festival, from the three departments in our college (each department gave \$250).

We also recognize the importance of having food at our events in order to boost participation, so we are extremely grateful to have secured support from BRIXX Pizza, who donate 10 small pizzas each month for our pizza lunch.

6. How does your GSA recruit and involve new members?

Orientation events are a very important time for us, because it's the only time that all new students are in one place together. There, we introduce ourselves and give a brief PPT showing slides of our goals and events. We keep people involved throughout the semester by communicating to the grad student list serve, and we also use our weekly pre-seminar snacks to get word-of-mouth going.

7. What makes your GSA unique? Why do you think your GSA deserves to be recognized?

TAGS is unique in that it is the only GSA for the entire college (assuming most other colleges have different GSAs for their different departments). It might seem strange, but Textiles is a

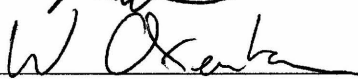
broad subject area that is extremely heterogeneous. Some programs are pure Engineering; others would fit perfectly in with the College of Management. In previous years, our GSA has primarily been run by students from one program, giving the impression that it doesn't represent the whole college. To change this condition, we tried to creating a more inclusive GSA so that all students feel they are part of the same College of Textiles community.

The current diversity among our officers as well as increasing participation from graduate students shows our success toward this important objective. We are hoping to keep this objective going for the next few years and beyond.

Signature of submitting student:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Smith', written over a horizontal line.

Signature of departmental DGP:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. O. Kenner', written over a horizontal line.