

Final Report for the GSA Director of Events

INTRODUCTION:

It's been a real pleasure to serve as the Director of Events for the past year. We've held a wide variety of events, from large galas at the Hammer Museum to late-night karaoke in Koreatown. Below is a breakdown of strategy, finances, results, and advice for the future. You may always contact me at wolske@gmail.com or 646.345.5523

STRATEGY:

I began the year with a very clear definition of what I wanted to accomplish in the DoE role: I wanted to continue the tradition of small, easily accessible GRADBARs, but combine them with large "tentpole" events would draw a larger crowd than usual and increase the campus profile of the GSA. I felt that some of GSA's most successful programs (i.e., Melnitz Movies, GRADBAR) didn't have an identity that clearly links back to the GSA and the many other things the association provides. The large-event strategy was an attempt to address that, allowing other aspects of GSA (Community Service, Academic Affairs) communicate directly to the graduate student audience in a captive setting.

I think the strategy worked overall. With events like the Hammer GRADBAR and Speed Dating, we got RSVPs into the thousands and attendees over 300-400. Below is a complete listing of the events that we threw this year:

Melnitz: Making It GRADBAR – approx. 150 attendance

Hammer Art Crawl & GRADBAR – approx. 500 attendance

Alumni Center Blue & Gold Celebration (Co-Sponsor w/James West Alumni Center) – approx. 130 attendance

Holiday Gift Drive & GRADBAR (Co-Sponsor w/GSA Community Service) – approx. 140 attendance

UCLA vs. USC Karaoke-Off (Co-Sponsor w/USC Graduate Events) – approx. 75 UCLA attendance

Valentine's Day Speed Dating – approx. 200 attendance

Pre-St. Paddy's Day GRADBAR – approx. 140 attendance

Wooden Center GRADBAR (Co-Sponsor w/Graduate Students Resource Center) – approx. 430 people

Speed Dating Part II – approx. 250 people

Coming: International Graduate Students Association GRADBAR (Co-Sponsor w/International Graduate Students Association)

FINANCES:

I was able to supplement my \$22,000 annual budget with a series of collaborations with other organizations, which also allowed me to reserve my budget for the larger events while still be able to accommodate smaller ones. Below is my budget allocation:

Fund 4105:	\$ 1,998.86
Fund 4300:	\$ 1,300.00
Fund 4800:	<u>\$17,100.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$20,398.86</u>

During this year, we collaborated with organizations like the UCLA Alumni Center, USC Graduate Events, GSA Community Service, UCLA Graduate Student Resource Center, and the International Graduate Student Association. Each collaboration provided crucial funds, manpower, or support to hold events far beyond GSA Events' means.

I understand that incoming GSA President Nurit Katz wants to expand the association's presence through events. This is something I strongly encourage, and would agree that a budget increase for this department would go far to enhance GSA's image among the grad student population.

RESULTS:

I think this past year was successful on a number of fronts. First, I think we created a much more capable and responsive logistics system to communicate events to our audience. Beyond the already existing Events Webpage, the GSA Webmaster and myself created an RSVP page, shepherding people to sign up for events through this process. This was helpful because (a) it gave us concrete numbers on popularity of events, (b) it helped us better plan our resources, (c) it allowed us to target messages exclusively to those people who planned to attend an event, and (d) it gave us the potential to increase our various mailing lists, from Events to Community Service to Melnitz Movies, to name a few. Second, we created a pretty varied catalogue of events that appealed to a large, general audience. We got off-campus (UCLA-USC Karaoke-Off); we offered traditional GRADBARs (Pre-St. Paddy's Day GRADBAR); we offered large events (Speed Dating); and we offered more intimate niche events (IGSA GRADBAR). Lastly, we produced a strong turnout with consistent repeat attendees. Getting a tiny fraction of the 10,000+ graduate student population to attend an event is a feat in itself, particularly when one is trying to reach across different disciplines. A series of 200-people events, combined with a few 400-people events allows GSA Events to reach a large, eclectic audience while still keeping the quality and quantity of the events high.

There were a few disappointments, as well. The GSA Events Webpage was not updated as much as I would have liked, and I take full responsibility for that. It can definitely be used more effectively in the future. Also, I often took on too much of the planning responsibility myself; I could have depended more on a select group of volunteers and

government officials to help execute the event. And spending per event, at least in the beginning of the year, was higher than it should have been due to my inexperience in the position. In all, though, I feel that the attendees were pretty satisfied and we received overwhelmingly positive feedback throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) The incoming Director of Events should create a planning committee from the various academic councils to help plan, schedule, and execute the year's events. This allows the DoE to better understand competing discipline schedules, get more feedback about which events are most requested, and have crucial help when putting on the event. Various factions in the student government will feel more involved in the process as a result.
- 2) The RSVP page should remain an integral part of the DoE's communication and data-gathering strategy. For virtually zero investment, it gives so much information about how the graduate student community is responding to the slate of events.
- 3) The DoE should work closely with ASUCLA to come up with an insurance policy that allows more than a 2-drink maximum at events thrown in areas under ASUCLA jurisdiction. This policy was imposed on me mid-year and it makes ASUCLA property a much less attractive place to have events. I understand there are insurance risks, but I believe the two parties can either work together or through a third party to get rid of this onerous policy.
- 4) As I said before, I believe the DoE's budget should be increased. GSA Events is one of the best ways to increase the group's presence on campus, establish a "brand identity" and connect with the GSA's constituents. Any increased effort towards that is a good thing.

It's been great serving as the Director of Events. I hope to do everything I can to help the incoming officers in the year ahead. Thanks for the opportunity.

Sincerely,
Justin Wolske
Director of Events, Graduate Students Association
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