

ACCESS AND EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

TOWN HALL SUMMARY

Purpose

The town hall series serves an important purpose for GSA in cultivating an open dialogue about issues facing the graduate student community. Regular consultation with graduate students enables GSA to advocate for the community's needs and provide opportunities for engagement that reflect student's interests.

What we heard

For coursework students

Online classes have been a mixed experience depending on faculty, course and subject. Engagement with classes and confidence in assignments could be enhanced through initiatives such as Zoom office hours hosted by tutors.

For research students

Some student-supervisor relationships have become stressed to unreasonable levels during working from home arrangements. Mental health first aid training for supervisors and the forthcoming supervisor agreement could help alleviate some of these issues.

Communication around extensions and leave has been staggered resulting in high levels of stress and uncertainty. Better collaboration and communication with the University would reduce the potential for undue stress in future.

Return to campus 2021

Many students have commenced their studies remotely in 2020 and have spent minimal time on campus. As a result, opportunities for social interactions and to make friends have been incredibly limited. Ensuring these students have a wide range of orientation and social opportunities upon return to campus is critical to welcome them to the University community.

GSA's next steps

GSA is currently planning its 2021 offerings including representation and advocacy campaigns, and student engagement and events. Upon reflection of the town hall session, GSA will:

- Continue to facilitate open dialogue between key stakeholders in open forums such as this one
- Continue advocacy efforts for graduate researchers with a focus on wellbeing and communication
- Ensure a range of orientation activities are offered in 2021 across a range of areas:
 - Transition to Work
 - Academic Excellence
 - Engaged and Healthy Communities
- Work to strengthen advocacy and engagement relationships with grad groups