

Arolyn Conwill

Statement of Purpose:
MIT GSC President

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Brief Bio

I am a PhD candidate in the Physics Department at MIT, and my research so far has focused on how cooperative behavior in microbes enables survival in harsh environments, particularly in the context of antibiotic resistance. I am grateful to be part of the vibrant and growing biophysics community at MIT.

Outside of the lab, I'm most often spotted at Area Four (just a quick dash from my lab across the Tech Square courtyard), the Zesiger center gym (my favorite place to de-stress and catch up on news podcasts), and the GSC Office (no surprise here).

My GSC Contributions:

Chair, Legislative Action Subcommittee (Summer 2013 - Spring 2015)
Member, Legislative Action Subcommittee (2012 - present)
Physics Department Representative (2015 - present)
External Affairs Task Force (Fall 2015)
Engagement and Recruitment Task Force (Spring 2016)

My Priorities

Above all, I see the main duty of the GSC President as representing and empowering the graduate student body through the GSC.

My priorities as GSC President would include:

Increasing representation: The GSC is a representative government and can best serve its constituents when the composition of the Council reflects the composition of the graduate student body. However, currently Council has some gaps in representation. For instance, only about a quarter of

participants at the March GCM were international students, but international students comprise almost half of the graduate student body. I think we can do better. The impact of recruiting new members from underrepresented groups is twofold: (1) the team of GSC participants will grow, and (2) Council will more completely represent the graduate student body. Based on my work on the GSC's Engagement and Recruitment Task Force this spring, I have a number of ideas¹ on how to accomplish this; I hope to implement these changes as GSC President.

Developing relationships with new Institute leadership: This upcoming year there will be significant turnover in MIT leadership affecting graduate students, including the new VP for Student Life, Suzy Nelson, who will be starting in July. In addition, there is an ongoing search for the new Dean for Graduate Education, who will take the place of Christine Ortiz, and for the new Dean for Student Life, who will take the place of Chris Colombo. The GSC benefits immensely from collaborative relationships with Institute leadership, and it is extremely important to me that we continue this practice through seeking out and developing these relationships. As GSC President, my goals would be to (1) demonstrate our commitment to maintaining an open dialogue with the Institute, (2) establish the GSC as a resource that can help advise Institute leadership, and (3) help shape the Institute's priorities such that they reflect the interests of the GSC.

Supporting the External Affairs Board: This will be the inaugural year of the External Affairs Board (EAB)², and as President, I would be an ex-officio member of the Board. I see my role as: (1) supporting the EAB as it matures, (2) working with other members of ExComm to optimize how the EAB interfaces with existing committees, and (3) collaborating with the EAB to ensure that the GSC has a strong and unified voice to external parties.

My Strengths and Values

Advocacy: I have advocated on behalf of the GSC for the past four years, primarily through the Legislative Action Subcommittee (LASC), which focuses on legislative and regulatory developments that affect graduate students at the federal and state levels. As a Chair of LASC, I coordinated advocacy activities including lobbying in Washington DC, writing op-eds, and developing collaborations with external organizations, across the wide range of topics covered in the GSC's Legislative Platform. To me, one of the most

¹ Stay tuned for the Task Force recommendations at the May GCM! In the meantime, please reach out (aconwill at mit.edu) if you'd like to hear more details on what I have in mind, or

² Full disclosure: I was one of the co-authors on the Resolution that created the External Affairs Board.

interesting aspects of advocacy work is conveying an authentic and compelling narrative that navigates the sometimes disparate interests of other stakeholders. My experience in advocacy will inform me on how to build relationships with Institute leaders, how to approach challenging issues, and how to build consensus.

Teambuilding: Together my LASC Co-Chair and I grew the LASC from only a few members to over 15 regular members, and we created partnerships with both on campus and external organizations. Our growing LASC team took on an expanded scope of projects. Moreover, many of our contributors were new to the GSC. This is analogous to the strategy I have outlined for increasing both representation and manpower on the GSC.

Another important aspect of teambuilding is community-building. As a member of Physics REFS (see <http://refs.mit.edu/>) for the past four years, I have worked to improve adviser-advisee relationships, access to mental healthcare, and my department's support network. Cultivating a strong and supportive community at MIT is something I would continue as GSC President.

Openness: In general, being open and honest is important to me. Through my experience in Physics REFS, I have developed skills on how to approach conflict in a constructive way and how to have challenging conversations that are also productive. In terms of leadership style, this means that I will place a high value on maintaining open communication, even in the face of conflict or uncertainty.

Vote Arolyn for GSC President

I look forward to working with all of you over the course of the next year, and I would be honored to serve you and your constituents as GSC President.

Respectfully,

Arolyn Conwill