Reimaging the Graduate Ally Coalition (GAC): Developing a Year Round Program to Support Graduate and Professional Students

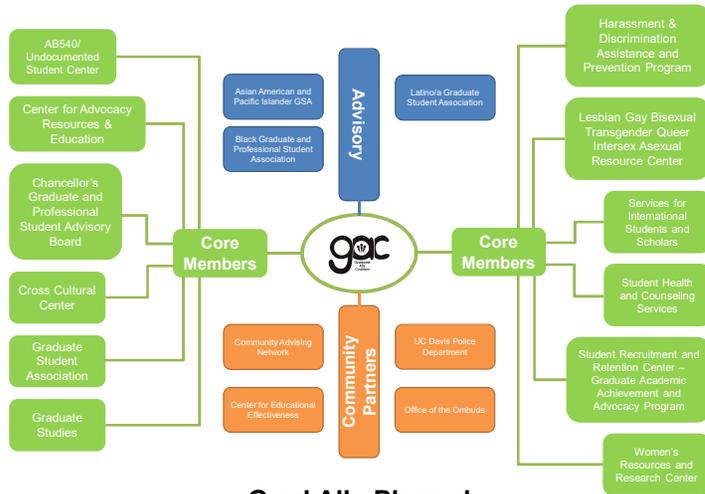**Erica Vonasek-Eco** [a,b]

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About the Graduate Ally Coalition

GAC is a broad coalition of graduate student leaders, student groups, and staff who engage in graduate student issues. Though our advocacy and support since our formation, many new resources for graduate students, including the Student Community Center GSRs, have been created.

Grad Ally Placard

For more information, visit gsa.ucdavis.edu/gac
To get involved, contact gradassistant@ucdavis.edu

Acknowledgements

Developing A Year Round Program

Program Objectives

- Develop Common Skill Sets for Allies
- Engage with Diversity Issues
- Be Knowledgeable about Campus Resources

Learning Outcomes

- Be knowledgeable diversity topics as they relate to graduate/professional students
- Develop skill sets to support the individual in ally work
- Be aware of language and vocabulary and how they are used to include or exclude individuals

Training and Development

Graduate Student Orientation – "Know Your Campus Resources"

Introduction to Allyship Workshop
- 1 day workshop
- Basic skills and concepts

Developing Allyship Seminar
- Quarter long seminar
- Designed to develop personal philosophy of allyship and greater understanding of graduate student issues

Highlights from Training

- Exploring how language sets expectations (e.g. introductions that include year)
- Analyzing how the traditional 8 ascribed social identities can impact grad school experiences
- Defining graduate student roles and how conflict can arise
- Examining power, privilege, and positionality in graduate student life

Graduate Student Roles and Conflict

- Classification into STEM, SS, HArCS
- Student, Teacher, Researcher, Mentor
- In state, out of state, international
- Source of funding (GSR, TA, etc)
- Major professor vs. grad group vs. lab
- Outreach and/or Community Oriented
- Family Status
- Rate of progress
- Institutional Support
- Knowledge of grad student life
- Good mentorship
- Financial means
- Social and Family support
- Difficult situations/colleagues
- Getting connected to resources
- Self care
- Ascribed social identities

Socials and Networking

Graduate Student Orientation – Building Community Dinner

Social Mixers

Social Mixers

Grad Student Grill

Happy Hour

Talking Circles

Fall | Winter | Spring | Summer

Professors for the Future, 2015-2016

PFTF Fellow: Erica Vonasek-Eco
Program: Biological Systems Engineering
Major Professor: Nitin Nitin

Project Title: "Reimaging the Graduate Ally Coalition: Developing a Year Round Program to Support Graduate and Professional Students."

Project Summary:

The Graduate Ally Coalition (GAC) is a graduate and professional student run ally network that was formed in 2009-2010 as a Professors for the Future Project. Since its formation, GAC aimed to increase graduate student peer support and retention by training graduate students as allies in social justice issues, skills, and campus resources as apply to graduate student life at UC Davis. To achieve better peer support, GAC's short term goal was to have an openly identified Grad Ally in every graduate group and school that could act as peer support for members of their group and built ally training around that goal. For the past few years, GAC has offered only a fall quarter ally training, which limits GAC's recognition and engagement with the graduate student community.

The goal of this PFTF project was to develop a year round program for members of the Graduate Ally Coalition. The year round program consisted of a 1 day Introduction to Graduate Allyship workshop, monthly socials, a winter quarter seminar on developing graduate student allyship, and a year end celebration. The Introduction to Graduate Allyship workshop introduced participants to the core skills of allyship: concepts (language, social identities, power, privilege), community agreements, community development, and bystander intervention. The winter quarter seminar built on the training from the workshop, diving into concepts and skills and examining them in the context of graduate student roles and ascribed social identities. The year end celebration, in partnership with other graduate student oriented programs, celebrated the year's work and achievements.

Approximately 165 graduate students participated, combined across all GAC programming. Feedback from participants was generally positive, with a majority reporting learning of a new idea or skill. Over the coming summer, GAC will review the programming and feedback from the year in order to improve and better serve our community.

University of California, Davis