Platform

Meredith, Sean, and Bryant care deeply about all matters that affect graduate students, both presently and in the future. While we are aware that there are issues outside of those we articulate below, our platform accentuates a tri-faceted approach to addressing these concerns during our tenure as the 2015-2016 Graduate Student Union Executive Board.

Improving communication and transparency: from graduate students, to the GSU, to the Graduate School

We recognize that the most important function of the GSU, though also one of the most difficult, is facilitating transparent communication between the Graduate School and graduate students. We want to implement improvements in transparency and communication from the ground up, first by overhauling the GSU website. We envision the redesigned site as a comprehensive hub for graduate student information, in the form of new content and a compilation of links to existing information from across campus. To promote transparency, our website should feature a detailed description of the GSU structure, and incorporate user-friendly navigational tools, making it easy for students to find desired information and the appropriate GSU and/or University contacts for their concerns. In addition, the site should host comprehensive information about both the Graduate Life and Graduate Professionalization arms of the GSU. For Graduate Life, we will keep an updated events calendar (e.g., a Google calendar that could be shared with all graduate students) and thorough repositories of healthcare and housing information. On the academic side, we should provide a source for funding information (for example, CPG pointers, links to campus resources, and a curated list of internal and external funding opportunities), teaching resources (e.g., Kaneb Center and local adjunct postings), and links to Professional Development resources.

We will also take a two-pronged approach in reaching out to the graduate student body more effectively: through improved email communication with all graduate students and more effective use of GSU department representatives. We will encourage increased involvement of department representatives with GSU committees and increased communication between department representatives and their constituents (a monthly GSU meeting report, curated specifically for each department). Finally, we will work to increase direct contact between the GSU and Graduate School by meeting regularly with its administration.

Improving the quality of life for graduate students of all backgrounds

One major goal of our Quality of Life division is to gain representation from graduate students of diverse backgrounds and have their voices and concerns be heard by the graduate student body. We want all graduate students to feel welcome and respected by the GSU and its constituents; therefore, we would like to encourage the development of events celebrating the diversity within the graduate school. This could be accomplished by working with student organizations representing the various groups that make up the graduate student body.

Another way in which we aim to increase the quality of life for graduate students is by encouraging and facilitating neighborhood watch programs. Some programs have already been instituted by graduate students in their own communities and can be an asset to the off-campus
graduate community. They will also increase the visibility of available, safe housing options for graduate students, both on and off campus. This will allow graduate students, and their families to acquire safe and affordable housing for their time spent at ND.

Graduate student spouses play a very important role in the lives of many graduate students, and therefore, we’d like to include a graduate student spouse orientation that coincides with orientation week. This will allow for the spouses of graduate students to see what resources are available to them via campus and the greater community.

**Educating our graduate student body on important financial issues**

The financial situation can be tough for many graduate students. In addition to focusing on a specialized research field, this is a time when we graduate students are starting families, buying a vehicle, signing up for a health care plan, starting up a retirement savings, or even just trying to balance a budget.

Some current graduate students were recently informed of a change to their funding status and that they might only be funded through their fifth year. This has become quite disconcerting for many, and we want to ensure every student has an understanding of their funding status; that is, we plan to work with the graduate school and the departments to clear up this funding status confusion.

Interpreting the University health care plan and what it covers, particularly with changes made due to the PPACA, can be puzzling as well. Our goal is to make information regarding this plan’s benefits, details, spousal and dependent costs, dental costs, and women’s health care easily accessible and well disseminated. Also, better educating interested students on retirement savings, personal budgeting, and general financial management are topics we will encourage and provide via collaborating with the graduate school and appropriate University offices.