

UMCES Graduate Student Council Meeting  
January 12, 2021  
1-2pm

In attendance: Anna Windle, Kia Ramarui, Amy Griffin, Taylor Armstrong, Tan Zou, Alex Gibbs, Daniella Hanacek, Christine Knauss, Amber Fandel, Stuart Clarke, Claire Nemes

- 1) USM Student Council (USMSC), Admin Council, UMCES/MEES PC Updates:
  - a) USMSC
    - i) Had Nov, Dec, and Jan meetings since we last met. Highlights include voting to support the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act.
      - (1) USMSC President Annie spoke on behalf of all of us and our constituents at a press conference and USMSC will be able to support the bill throughout the term. If approved, the SMVEA bill would create formal processes for "large residential communities" like universities, military bases and senior communities to request on-site polling places. It would also require public higher education institutions to step up voter registration efforts on their campuses and give college students excused absences to vote if they wouldn't have time otherwise.
        - (a) Beneficial for students: provides more accessibility and protection for voting
      - (2) Asked who the Government Relations point person was at UMCES
        - (a) Kia asked a clarifying question about whether this person is the liaison between students and the University governance or like Maryland state government
        - (b) Annie said it would be the person who should be in the loop about things like signing off on bill proposals, new laws related to students, etc.
        - (c) I told her that we currently do not have a designated person, so for the time being the GSC chair and co-chair should be kept in the loop
        - (d) **Maybe if we feel it is necessary we can have a designated person to act as the point of contact for these types of topics;** if anyone would like to volunteer, please get in touch with Anna and Kia
      - (3) Shared governance survey to be sent out soon
        - (a) We need a game plan for how to get it submitted collectively as UMCES.
        - (b) Check what Christina did for the last one (sent Google forms to reps of each lab who filled them out together, then used the responses to summarize)

(c) GSC Chair and Co-chair will coordinate; send out Google forms to the representatives from each lab to fill out together, email back for Anna and Kia to review, then summarize and submit as a single response for UMCES

**(d) Should be done before Spring break** (keep an eye out and complete surveys in a timely fashion)

(4) Much higher levels of covid-19 testing in the Spring semester and vaccination

**(a) Looking for student volunteers to help with logistics** at each campus

(b) Ongoing commitment (sign up to volunteer for several days)

(c) Not yet sure what this will consist of, but more information soon?

(5) Breakout session (graduate students)

(a) Finances

(i) Question that remains to be answered: What does “student employment opportunities” mean? What is the difference between that and graduate assistantship roles (GA/TA/RA)?

(ii) What are the student funding opportunities at UMCES? What is the breakdown of students who have graduate assistantships, fellowships, or other funding sources? Are student employment opportunities missing at UMCES? Is this something our students may need? **YES**  **note: Amy has compiled list of financial resources available at each lab, which may differ substantially**

ii) USMSC has six committees: 1) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, 2) Communications and Marketing Committee, 3) Government Relations Committee, 4) Student Affairs Committee, 5) Student Fees Committee, 6) Mental Health Committee. If you would like to join one of these committees and work with other students at different institutions on these topics, please let Kia and Anna know and we will put you in contact with the director of that committee.

(1) Brief discussion of USM Student Council structure; others can participate as non-voting members if interested (again, contact Anna and Kia)

iii) Lynn Rehn asked Anna for names of two students to attend the next Chancellor Meetup with USM Chancellor Jay Perman

(1) This month, the conversation will focus on Reflections on Fall 2020 and cover academic and student (personal and as connected to being in school) life in the face of COVID, social justice

challenges, and anything else that may be wrapped up in looking back on the first semester of the school year.

- (2) Anna will check date/time and send email to solicit volunteers from GSC first, then will open to all grad students – first-come, first-served

b) Admin Council Updates

- i) Meeting in November but Anna could only go to the beginning of it. Meeting this morning. Updates include a cyberinfrastructure committee (discussing collaboration and data storage across campuses), Covid testing logistics, DEIC updates, unit updates

- (1) Cyberinfrastructure committee - making sure we have the tech to allow for data storage and collaboration across the campuses, and are looking to see which campuses/faculty members cross-communicate the most and seeing if they might want to provide some input

c) MEES Graduate Student Organizations (GSO) - Anna is in contact with MEES office and is organizing an initial MEES GSO meeting with interested students.

- i) We have 6 interested UMCES students, 2 UMBC/UMB, 1 UMES, and 1 UMCP student thus far
- ii) At the initial meeting, they will elect a chair and co-chair to lead future meetings and work with the MEES office on any student related items.
- iii) MEES GSO reps will also serve on the MEES Program Committee (PC) and Programs, Courses, and Curricula (PCC).

d) UMCES Programs, Courses, and Curricula (PCC)

- i) Kia is serving as the student representative on this committee
- ii) Last meeting was on Tuesday January 5
- iii) Review UMCES PCC charge, roles, and goals for 2021
- iv) Discussed/approved courses for Fall 2021
  - (1) Some courses proposed to become permanent, including MEES 608B -- Responsible Conduct of Research; MEES 698B -- Environmental Statistics; MEES 698R -- Stable Isotopes in Environmental Research; and MEES 608D -- Scientific Writing and Communication
  - (2) Decided on the two Issue Study Groups for this fall: MEES 718E -- Plastic Pollution: From Land to Ocean; and MEES 718? -- Invasive Species Management (exact course number TBD)
    - (a) Invasive Species Management was a newly proposed course that the committee approved during the meeting
      - (i) End product is still somewhat open-ended for this class; goal to provide something useful to MD DNR
- v) Talked about assessing student learning and course evaluation (via end of semester surveys and other methods)
  - (1) Positive feedback about using EdX and Labster -- good virtual learning tools with built-in student learning assessments

- (a) Some students have already had courses through EdX; Labster is alternative to in-person lab/equipment access in covid era and has worked well
    - (b) Alex Q: Would students need to pay for access to this technology options? (Amy cannot guarantee but highly doubts it)
  - (2) Course evaluations: Need for coordination / streamlining to provide feedback to faculty
  - (3) Want to bring more focus to pedagogy
    - (a) Claire Q: Professor pedagogy or student teaching opportunities? Kia: More professor-level: What can they do to ensure students understand and engage with the material; provide flexibility for students to pursue topics that are most relevant and useful within the structure of the course
    - (b) Classic Readings in Ecology ISG – discussion of re-tooling this course for the future
  - vi) Denise Yost (Director, Graduate Certificate Programs and Extended Learning) is leaving UMCES; she got a new job – currently looking to find her replacement and filling her previous role
- e) COVID Communications Meeting
  - i) We are still under Return to Campus Phase II- 50% occupancy
  - ii) All labs will be required to provide on-site testing (at-home test kits)
  - iii) Working on organizing on-site testing for the Spring semester. USM is providing 3200 test kits. Trying to figure out logistics- who will administer? What times? More information to come.

## 2) Progress of GSC tasks

- a) Anna and Kia- GSC Bylaws, Policy, website, etc. – Good progress, mostly just needs approval from Larry Sanford, Lynn Rehn, et al.
- b) Daniella and Tan - International Student Resources – Tan: will share updates to international student handbook with GSC, would like feedback from other labs (especially on lab-specific events / initiatives / resources.) Maybe add section for local covid-19 resources, too? Original links and dates need updating in handbook. Anna: There is a point person at UMD international student affairs, provide their contact info. Amy will put these resources on website and link from student handbook.
- c) Taylor and Alex- Ombuds
  - i) Amy: Has met with UMD-level ombudsperson who will provide temporary assistance to UMCES student while we are in the process of establishing UMCES-level ombuds positions
  - ii) Lots of support for this initiative at all levels of admin
- d) Amber and Amy - Student resources on website. Currently lots of good resources, but can be hard to find quickly. Idea: Two different landing pages, one

for prospective students and one for current students. Tom Miller asked about this too (UMCES accreditation working group - enhancing student experience means improving website)

- e) Claire - Code of Conduct
  - i) Feedback from DEIC, currently updating with specifics to delineate student-advisor expectations. Also want to make sure that staff are not overlooked in this document. Christine: Folks at HPL have been working on their own CoC but would like to coordinate. Claire will email to join forces!
  - ii) Claire would also welcome feedback from entire GSC and will email current draft
- 3) Professional Development workshop updates:
  - a) Christine Knauss idea: Budgeting workshop led by Nina Lamba of REEF; was very useful
  - b) Ideas for future workshops
    - i) Guidance for applying for funding
      - (1) Amber connected with profs at CBL, who proposed a panel discussion with several faculty
      - (2) Faculty also suggested workshop on professional conduct and communication (ex. with advisors, funders, public)
    - ii) If anyone has ideas, go for it!
      - (1) Contact professors who would be interested, schedule a zoom meeting, and go
- 4) Stuart Clarke: Funding of educational initiatives and goals
  - a) Gaps in existing funding
  - b) Probably a substantial existing donor base; currently developing framing and guidelines to solicit donations
  - c) Funds for supporting student travel to conferences
    - i) Seeking smaller-ticket donations like this can be a useful strategy to introduce potential donors to students
    - ii) Invitation to think about what sorts of funding opportunities would be helpful:
      - (1) Anna: Publishing fees!
      - (2) Claire & Amber: Professional society memberships (enable access to society resources and ability to apply for grants, etc.)
      - (3) Kia: Computing resources
    - iii) Stuart encourages students to keep thinking about financial limitations that may arise and how UMCES can support those
    - iv) Other ways to engage with donors that won't take too much time but allow potential funders to learn about and engage with students

Action Items:

- 1) GSC feedback on International Student Handbook
- 2) GSC feedback on Code of Conduct

3) Volunteers for meetings / committees as listed above

Next GSC meeting: TBA (likely in March – bimonthly)

Meeting adjourned 2:00