

Xiaomin Huang – GSA FRC International Nominee

Life as an international student can be difficult if one does not adapt well to the new environment. First, one might face communication problems if English is not one's first language, and even when it is, knowing the colloquial expressions can also be a challenge. Second, interaction within another cultural environment can cause confusion and conflict with one's previous points of view and ideals. In some Latin American countries, people greet each other with a hug or a kiss on the cheeks, but this is not always socially accepted in other countries. Finally, being far away from one's family and closest friends leads to homesickness. I started my Master's program this term, and as an international student, I experienced all these issues. I am from Mexico and the first contrast I noticed was the weather. Getting the right shoes and coat were my first concern, but even with these garments, walking around town became a difficult task for me. I had to get used to taking the bus instead of walking. I am very outgoing and I enjoy meeting new people. My new friends have been very supportive and have helped me fit in gradually by giving me advice on simple things such as where to shop for groceries, what to do when it snows, where to go hand in the paperwork, etc. I want to support other students in the same way they have helped me. I would like to be an International Student Representative in GSA because I want to help with the international students' adjustment by promoting more inclusive social activities and speaking up for the concerns that we might have.

Sara Oikawa - GSA VP Internal Nominee

I believe I would be an excellent candidate for the Vice President Internal position on the McMaster Graduate Student Association. Currently, I serve as the Science Faculty Representative on the GSA and therefore have excellent knowledge regarding the GSA activities, views, and involvement. I also have formed a good rapport with the director of operations and McMaster GSA staff. Previously, I have served on several committees that I believe will benefit my work as the VP internal, namely, as the Co-chair of the McMaster Institute for research on aging (MIRA) trainee network, the student representative on the Faculty of Science Graduate curriculum and policy committee and the Kinesiology undergraduate curriculum and policy committee, as well as vice president of the Kinesiology undergraduate society. Further, I have had the opportunity to participate on the committee developing the GSA strategic plan for 2018-2023 and thus would have the opportunity to implement the first year of this plan in 2018-2019 as VP internal. Having done my undergraduate and graduate degrees at McMaster, I have had significant exposure to multiple facets and levels of student policy and activity at the university. I have been significantly involved in the McMaster community for the last 10 years and feel my expertise would greatly benefit the GSA. I am currently in the 3rd year of my Ph.D. in the department of Kinesiology with my research focusing on protein intake and the maintenance of muscle mass during aging. Outside of academics, I love to be active and explore Hamilton and am a cycling instructor at the McMaster Pulse.

Ish Jain – GSA VP Internal Nominee

I am a 1st year Ph.D. student at the Department of Biology. McMaster University has offered me an excellent platform and prepared me to serve the students and make a difference. I have completed my bachelors and Masters from India. I worked as a

member of student empowering community, as a part of my job I represented students at the university level and helped them to bring their problems to the higher authorities and assured that necessary amendment must be taken by the University. At the student community, we also assured that every student should know their rights and involved in the decision-making process. Currently, I am working as an event coordinator at the Biology Graduate Students Society (BGSS) and understanding the responsibility of the organization. I am a stern believer in quality and hard work and this carried out my responsibilities with full sincerity. I believe my background with student communities and my desire to represent graduate students at university will help me to make a valuable contribution to GSA. I hope that Graduate students body will give me a change to make University a better place. Thank you.

Shawn Hercules – GSA VP External Nominee

Hello grad students! I am running for the VP-External position. Over the past year in this position, I had the awesome opportunity to work closely with our President and a dedicated council to enhance grad student life on and off campus. I am hoping to have another awesome year with you in this position where I am looking forward to improving the GSA's overall communication with you via email, social media and web. We've carried out our surveys over the past academic year and are restructuring the way we reach out to you. I hope to continue planning exciting and community building events with a dynamic social events and trips committee. I also endeavor to fully utilize the social issues and actions committee to not only bring more awareness to issues affecting us daily as grad students but to also discuss effective solutions. My time as VP-External over the past academic year has been very rewarding and I look forward to again working closely with a dedicated team of motivated students to make our grad life run as smoothly as it possibly can.

Tim van Boxel – GSA President Nominee

Well hey there Grad Students! It's me and I'm back for more, the masochist in me hasn't quite had enough. The past year serving as GSA President has been great! I have been a part of some really positive change in the organization and I see much more on the horizon. These changes were admittedly largely administrative in nature and are felt in a much more student-focused budget for this upcoming year. This allows us to really focus on how best to serve the membership. As with all things of this nature, change happens SLOWLY. This simply means there is a lot more to be done. We have several big projects in the works that I expect to come to fruition this year. We are working on setting up a suite of services for our clubs and faculty associations, such as websites, elections, bank accounts, etc. These are problems all these associations face and presently are solved individually. These are also problems that the GSA could be solving. A very important priority this year will be better serving our international student population. Much of the international student experience has fallen through the cracks and a lot has is left to be desired. We are actively working with many levels of administration to provide valuable services and options for our international student cohort. It's very important to us that they We are planning for a much more community focused GSA this year. We are exploring several ideas on this front and are very welcoming ideas on how we can better deliver. I also want to point out how excellent

our Council has functioned this past year. We were stocked full with intelligent and engaging members which made it such a pleasure to be a part. I am extremely proud to be a part of the turnaround that The Phoenix has seen this past year and I am oh so eager to start seeing those gains trickle back to graduate students. In case you are unaware, we offer a graduate student discount on all food purchases, just show your GSA sticker! Currently the discount is at 10%, but we will be periodically bumping it up until we hit 25%! Let's be honest, it's our bar, time to start acting like it, right?! Thanks for letting me get through all that. Now, if you have actually read this far along, I urge you to please sign up and get involved! We need engaged students to help further us along. We have many committees that would align with your interests, we have open FRC and Board of Directors positions. Change and impact happens in many ways! Have a great 2018!
Tim van Boxtel