

How to Run an Effective and Popular Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week

by the
National Association of Graduate-Professional Students

March 2011

A Brief History of Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week:

In 1993, three students, Tony Rosati (Georgetown University), Gina Pearson (American University) & Anne Holt (Florida State University), all activists within NAGPS, wanted to find a way to physically manifest support and appreciation of the contributions, impact and value of graduate students. Their effort led to a cooperative initiative called National Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week. Tony & Anne also realized that bringing in the endorsement of each state's government (via a Proclamation from the Governor) would assist in building greater media attention to GPSA Week.

This new program was extraordinarily well received by the NAGPS membership. For the last 16 years, GPSA Week has grown and been enthusiastically accepted. In 1995, just two Governors made state proclamations of GPSA Week, recently that number has exceeded 25! We hope you'll help participate on your campus.

Suggested Activities

The following is a list of possible ideas. It is not meant to be exhaustive. Please feel free to come up with other new & exciting events or festivities. Try ones that include interaction between graduate and professional students & another group - such as the local community or the undergraduates on your campus.

1. Send a letter to your state Governor requesting that they issue a proclamation for National Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week (see the sample proclamation and template at <http://www.nagps.org/news/graduate-student-appreciation-week>)
2. Send a Press Release to your campus paper with statistics concerning the local grad community: number of grad students, percentage of classes taught by TA's, a list of activities for Grad Week. Send copies of your press releases, notices and event plans to the NAGPS
3. Post on classroom doors: A Graduate TA Teaches in this room! April 4-8 Grad Appreciation Week
4. Wear T-shirts and distribute flyers asking "HAVE U HUGGED YOUR TA THIS WEEK April 4-8"
5. Hold a volunteer day for all grad students -- clean up campus, or convince area nurseries to donate shrubs or trees. Ask your university landscaping dept. for planning help.
6. Set up a display that focuses on famous research, commercial & academic contributions of graduate students (e.g., The Yahoo! Internet site was started by two Stanford graduate students).
7. Plan a research forum or symposium. Several GSO's already do this & they are popular with administration, faculty, students and local press.
8. Hold a Job Fair. Contact your state Chamber of Commerce -- get a list of the 100 to 500 largest employers & invite them to your school. Your Campus Career Center may want to help. Include resume workshops & interview skills seminars.
9. Ask someone from your Campus Counseling center to hold a Stress Seminar. www.GradResources.org will have helpful articles available.
10. Hold a legislative issues day -- arrange for all interested graduate students to visit state capitol and call on staff of education committees. Tell them about the unique problems of grad students.

11. Ask VP for Student Affairs and/or Dean of graduate studies to hold open house in their offices with cookies and drink.
12. Get your University President to hold an open Forum in the Union where students can ask questions.
13. Host a Faculty Appreciation Reception for TA's and RA's with a well-known speaker on campus to talk about any topic on higher education & graduate students (reception with Deans as guests of honor).
14. Conduct workshops on Teaching Skills, Degree Completion or Grant-writing skills.
15. Conduct a "Graduate & Professional Student Open House" on your school's campus green – have tables set up where grad students can answer questions from anyone passing by on a variety of topics: Being a T.A., Realities of Dissertation Writing, Stress and Its Effects on an Individual, etc.
16. Hold a TEACH-IN (as opposed to a teach-out). Graduate instructors teach outside in a central place on a certain day.
17. Have a special awards dinner for graduate & professional student leaders on campus.
18. Coordinate a Volunteer Service day, where students can sign up to give their time to any of a long list of local charities and services, including habitat for Humanity, the Red Cross and the United Way.
19. Have a Teacher-of-the-Year awards banquet, which recognizes Graduate Teaching Assistants as well as faculty. (like the TA Appreciation Reception)
20. Facilitate networking sessions for graduate-professional students. This is an excellent opportunity to help students develop cross-disciplinary relationships and expand their personal and professional network.

DON'T FORGET PRESS COVERAGE!

1. Issue a PRESS NOTICE about two weeks before your events occur. If near the state capital distribute flyers at the press center. Fax it to state university presses. A sample Press release is available from Grad Resources at: <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/15503952/Grad%20Week%20Press%20Release%202011.doc>
The primary emphasis of this release is to promote awareness of grad stress issues and resources.
2. Call local papers, radio & TV for coverage. Ask your local public radio station to broadcast from your university one day.
3. Send copies of your press releases, notices and event plans to the NAGPS National Office. If your Governor issues a proclamation, E-mail the text to NAGPS for inclusion on the GPSA Week Web Site. In addition, send any photos taken during your events to the NAGPS National Office for our NATIONAL public relations sweep!
4. After your events have finished -- issue a PRESS RELEASE telling what happened. I.e. T.A. Appreciation Reception; Faculty Center, 3-4 p.m. Faculty invite their T.A.s/R.A.s to demonstrate appreciation for their work; a brief talk by Dr. Teresa Sullivan, Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies, presentation of Texas-Ex teaching awards; declaration of GPSA week by your state's governor.