

EMERGING SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS ORGANIZATION:

AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUR GSA PEER NETWORK



1. BACKGROUND

The Emerging Scholars and Professionals Organization (ESPO), formerly known as the GSA Student Organization, exists within the larger organization of GSA. ESPO is recognized by GSA as the official forum for the organization of junior GSA members. ESPO members are comprised of undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and individuals transitioning from student to professional status (e.g., from post-doctoral fellow to assistant professor).

ESPO was established in 1960 to provide a formal classification for student members of GSA. As of 2007, there were 1,027 ESPO members, including 62 undergraduate members.

2. STRUCTURE

Each ESPO member affiliates with one of the four GSA sections, Biological Sciences (BS), Health Sciences (HS), Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSS) and Social, Research, Policy and Practice (SRPP). However, as an ESPO member, one has the opportunity to not only vote for GSA-wide leadership (e.g., GSA president; section chair), but also vote for leadership within ESPO.

3. LEADERSHIP

Leadership positions within ESPO offer students and emerging scholars and professionals a unique opportunity to become more actively involved in GSA, provide increased opportunity for networking and collaboration, and enhance their CVs.

Student representative positions are available on the following committees and Sections:

- Society Committees: Finance Committee; Program Committee; Research, Education and Practice Committee; Humanities and the Arts Committee; Public Policy Committee; Publications Committee; and Membership Committee;
- Society Sections: Biological Sciences Section; Clinical Medicine Section; Behavioral and Social Sciences Section; Social Research, Policy, and Practice Section;

- Organizational committees: Nominating Committee and others as needed.
- The chair(s)-elect shall serve as the representative to the Program Committee, the immediate past chair shall serve as the representative to the Finance Committee, and the elected position of secretary will have first recommendations to one of the above-stated committees.
- Society Task Force and ad-hoc committees, as designated by GSA President.

HOW TO APPLY for LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

If you are interested in applying for any of the student/Emerging Professional Section, Committee or Task Force representative positions (see appendix for descriptions) you should feel free to contact the current representative for that position or any of the ESPO Executive Committee members to ask about their experiences.

Typically the process starts in September with materials being due in October. Materials generally include a CV and a brief explanation describing why you are interested and what you hope to get out of the experience.

4. ESPO ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS

GSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

GSA organizes a four-day Annual Scientific Meeting that attracts about 3,500 professionals with more than 400 peer-reviewed scientific sessions and over 100 technical and educational exhibits. Continuing education credits are offered. The 61st Annual Scientific Meeting will be November 21-25, 2008, in National Harbor, MD. Please go to

http://www.agingconference.com/about_the_meeting.cfm for more information and also see the Navigating the Conference brochure.

ESPO ANNUAL COMMUNITY MEETING

Typically held Saturday Morning at the annual GSA Conference, the ESPO Community Meeting provides an opportunity for ESPO members to get together and become informed about what has happened in the past year, explore issues of importance to members, network, and learn about new opportunities and resources. Most importantly it is a venue for ESPO to share their thoughts and have their voices heard in a supportive environment.

CAMPUS AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The GSA ESPO Campus Ambassador Program is a vital networking tool, linking students with an interest in gerontology on campuses all over the country and abroad. Campus Ambassadors are encouraged to become actively involved in promoting opportunities in the field of aging on their campuses. Campus

Ambassadors will have the opportunity to be the face of GSA/ESPO on their campuses or in their organizations and will have the opportunity to:

- Generate awareness of GSA and ESPO
- Promote abstract submission for and participation in the GSA Annual Scientific Meeting
- Promote and organize participation in "Careers in Aging Week" (www.careersinaging.com)
- Organize other events on their campuses throughout the year such as: guest speakers, meetings, panel presentations, networking receptions; and discussion sessions on topics related to gerontological research, policy, practice, careers, and student topics such as internships, etc.

5. AWARDS

Awards for the Emerging Scholars and Professionals Organization (ESPO) members are offered by each of the Society's four sections, in addition to offering one award through its Civic Engagement in an Older America Project. Awards will be presented at GSA's Annual Scientific Meeting. Please be sure to check the appropriate box in GSA's Call for Papers under "Student Awards". For complete descriptions of each award, including dates and deadlines, please visit www.geron.org

The ESPO offers a \$250 cash award for the best **Interdisciplinary Research Paper** on a topic related to aging by a GSA student member.

The ESPO offers five **Poster Awards**. The applicant must be a GSA ESPO MEMBER. Posters from all sections will be considered.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES SECTION

The **George Sacher Student Award** is given to the best student presentation by a GSA member at the Society's Annual Scientific Meeting. The annual \$500 award is designed to encourage research and to foster interest among students in the Biological Sciences section to play an active role in the Society's annual meetings.

HEALTH SCIENCES SECTION

The **Person-in-Training Award** is given to a student of the Health Sciences section for the best student presentation at the Society's Annual Scientific Meeting. Eligibility for the Person-in-Training Award is limited to students enrolled in a doctoral program. The \$500 award is designed to encourage research and to foster interest among students in the Health Sciences section and to encourage participation in the Society's Annual Scientific Meeting.

The **Health Sciences Research Award** is given to a new investigator in the Health Sciences Section. Individuals eligible for the Research Award are new investigators who have received a doctoral degree within the last seven years. The \$1000 award is

designed to encourage postdoctoral research and encourage participation in the Society's Annual Scientific Meeting.

BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES SECTION

The Behavioral and Social Sciences Section presents two awards for student posters/papers: **one at the pre-dissertation level and one at the dissertation level**. The award winner at the dissertation level receives a \$1,000 cash prize and the award winner at the pre-dissertation level receives a \$500 cash prize.

SOCIAL RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Social Research, Policy and Practice Section offers two awards for its Student Research Awards: a \$500 cash prize for **doctoral level work** and a \$250 cash prize for **advanced undergraduate/or masters level work**.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN AN OLDER AMERICA PROJECT

GSA's **Civic Engagement in an Older America initiative** offers two cash awards to recognize outstanding papers on the topic of civic engagement as it relates to older adults. The Initiative will award \$500 to one paper from a student or junior scholar (no more than five years post-doctorate on September 10, 2005).

References:

- 1) <http://www.geron.org/Bylaws/studbylaws.html>
- 2) <http://www.geron.org/commitandtf.htm>

APPENDIX

SECTION/COMMITTEE/TASK FORCE OPPORTUNITIES

All positions begin at the close of the GSA conference in November

- Humanities and Arts Committee
- Publications Committee
- Membership Committee
- Public Policy Committee
- Research, Education and Practice Committee
- Task Force on Interest Groups
- Task Force on Minority Issues
- Student Paper Award Committee
- Behavioral and Social Sciences Section
- Health Sciences Section
- Social Research, Policy and Practice Section
- Biological Sciences Section

Descriptions of GSA Committees

The Humanities and Arts Committee

A representative is needed for one two-year appointment. This committee promotes research and program development in humanities and the arts, to aid by providing a forum for discussion and dissemination of the results of research and development programs. The committee reviews all activities undertaken or to be undertaken by the Society in the fields of humanities and the arts. The committee also has an active listserv in which members exchange information on topics related to humanities and aging. Activities of this committee focus around the annual meeting.

This committee typically meets only at the annual meeting with midyear business conducted by email and telephone conference calls. The student representatives on The Humanities and Arts Committee are encouraged to actively participate in committee meetings. Students may have opportunities to be involved in special committee projects. A recent project involved interviewing past committee chairs.

The Publications Committee

A representative is needed for one two-year, non-renewable appointment. It is the responsibility of the Publications Committee to advise the Council on ways in which the Society's objectives may be implemented through publications, and to make recommendations on publications plans and policies, including the management, acquisition, initiation, or discontinuance of publications.

With the approval of Council, this committee also appoints editors of the journals. The Publications Committee provides an excellent opportunity for the student representatives to learn about the publication process. Students are encouraged to actively participate in conference calls and committee meetings. If a student is serving during an editor search, students can offer suggestions for potential editors, participate in all discussions regarding editor selection, and

interview individuals selected as nominees. Students also may have the opportunity to discuss with the committee topics such as proposals for special journal issues and the financial efficiency of the five GSA journals. This committee meets at the annual meeting and mid-year by email and telephone conference calls.

Membership Committee

A representative is needed for one two-year appointment. It is the duty of this committee to oversee the activities and policies of the Society concerning membership and to assist the Society and its staff with membership promotion and retention. Recent activities of this committee have included: Working with Interest Groups, and developing a member survey which is now online. This Committee also focuses on membership and retention. This committee typically meets only at the annual meeting with mid-year business conducted by email and telephone conference calls.

Public Policy Committee

A representative is needed for one two-year appointment. This committee advises the Council, individuals, agencies, and officials outside the Society on policy matters relevant to the encouragement, development, and promotion of gerontology in accordance with the stated purposes of The Gerontological Society of America. The committee formulates statements on such matters and these statements are made available to GSA and other outside sources.

Research, Education and Practice Committee

One appointment for two-years is needed. It is the duty of the REP Committee “to advise Council on matters pertaining to research, education and practice in gerontology and to explore ways to encourage, develop and promote opportunities for research and education activities”, especially GSA and AGHE collaborations.

Student Paper Award Committee

Two representatives are needed for a one-year appointment. The duties of the Student Paper Award Committee are to organize and oversee the solicitation, organization, review of applications, and distribution of the \$250 Student Paper Award. They are also responsible for the organization, review of applications, and distribution of the Student Honored Poster awards.

Description of GSA Task Forces

Task Force on Interest Groups

A representative is needed for one two-year appointment. The duties of this Task Force are to monitor the development and maintenance of the Society's interest groups.

Task Force on Minority Issues

A representative is needed for one two-year appointment. The duties of this Task Force are to undertake activities to increase the quantity and quality of gerontological research on minority aging questions, increase the number of minority researchers in gerontology, and to increase the number and participation of minority members in GSA. They meet during the Annual Meeting and at least one other time during the year.

Description of GSA Sections

Biological Sciences, Health Sciences, Behavioral and Social Sciences, and Social Research, Policy and Practice.

One representative for a two-year appointment is needed to serve on each Section Executive Committee. The senior student representative participates in the Executive Committee (BSS, HS, SSRP, or BS) mid-year conference call and other meetings throughout the year via conference

calls. He or she is expected to attend the Governance meeting typically scheduled for the day before the annual meeting. Before the annual meeting the senior student representative will work with the junior student representative to explore ideas for the student section symposium at the next annual conference, invite possible speakers, and then solidify the topic and speaker panel by the program committee meeting.