



AY 2024-2025 Election Candidate Information

FOR ELECTORATE REVIEW

Dear UC Riverside Graduate and Professional Students,

In this presentation you will find detailed information about each of our candidates for the UCR Graduate Student Association AY 2024-25 upcoming election on **May 13, 2024**.

Please take a few minutes to review these candidates' answers to our questions about who they are, what they believe in, what inspires them, and how they intend to use their office to serve the graduate and professional student population at UCR and beyond during the next academic year.

Each of these candidates are exceptional and talented individuals who have a passion for leadership and a strong belief in the value and importance of public service.

Many of our candidates have chosen to include their contact information and we encourage you to reach out to them if you have any questions.

Finally, we appreciate your engagement and interest in our elections and wish to offer you our sincere thanks for taking part. The GSA would not be the effective and instrumental organization that it is today without the continued support of the many talented members of the graduate and professional student population at UC Riverside.

In Service and Solidarity,

The UC Riverside Graduate Student Association



Jordan Steinhauser

Candidate for President

College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

Psychology

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Jordan Steinhauser and I am a 3rd year PhD student in the Psychology Department. My research investigates the circuit-level neuronal activity underlying the generation of fear behavior and safety learning. I attended UCR during my undergraduate studies and am proud to continue my higher education at such a diverse and supportive campus. I have always felt encouraged by the countless faculty, staff, and fellow students here at UCR and I am excited that I am now in a position to provide that same support I received, to others.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

If elected, I aim to work continually throughout the year to improve upon the opportunities and resources provided to graduate students. To do this, I plan to organize regular team meetings with the various liaisons to provide the most informative networking, empowering student, and supportive wellness events for graduate students. Additionally, I will strive to expand the presence of GSA and graduate student voices by advocating for graduate students to be present at various committee meetings hosted by campus faculty, staff, and administration. As a proud UCR undergraduate alumni and current PhD graduate student, I look forward to the opportunity to share the impactful work being conducted on campus at UC system-wide level meetings and will value the experience of advocating for UCR at the state and national level. I believe it is paramount for graduate students to not only be present, but to also have a voice at these meetings where decisions about graduate student well-being is being discussed.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

My experience in GSA the past two years has been fulfilling and rewarding and I am eager to continue to serve the graduate students of UCR. In addition to my duties this year as GSA Secretary and Psychology Graduate Representative the year prior, I had the opportunity to serve on the Elections Committee, and I also previously served on the Bylaws Committee. I was able to experience a fragment of the incredible work the GSA President is afforded to engage in throughout the academic year. I am keen to apply for the position of GSA President to fully immerse myself in advocating for students' needs on campus and to not only engage with UCR faculty and staff, but to also start conversations at the UC System level in order to enact positive improvements to student life. Seeing smart, confident women like Ivett, Marina, Katie, Zaira, and Dulce create such impactful and positive change for the graduate students at UCR has inspired me to run for office.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

2022-2023: Psychology Department Graduate Student Representative

2023-Present: GSA Secretary



Katia Hatem

Candidate for Vice President of External Affairs

College of Natural & Agricultural Sciences

Chemistry

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Katia Hatem and I am a PhD student in the chemistry department. My current research is in physical chemistry dealing with atmospheric Criegee Intermediates. I have obtained my bachelors and masters degree in Chemistry from UC Irvine and Cal State Long beach.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

I have successfully led the chemistry GSA team and we have accomplished our goal in making our department a more social place by hosting events that attracted students to come out and socialize. Through various events, I was also able to recruit some graduate students that are currently on the mini-GSA board. I believe from my experience as president, I can be a great addition to the GSA to bring in new ideas and move it forward. One thing I would like to focus on is making sure that student's voices are heard and implemented along with hosting more social events across various departments to provide a safe place for students to relax and socialize.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

I have been president of the Chemistry mini-GSA for about a year and a half. I have seen and heard about some of the work that the GSA does and would like to be a part of the team. I strongly believe that my contributions to the GSA will have a great impact. I would also be a great GSAUCR representative in front of the UC Graduate and Professional Council due to my strong leadership and public speaking skills.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

15 months – President of Chemistry GSA.



Katie Vidueira

Candidate for Vice President of Academic Affairs

College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

Philosophy

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Katie Vidueira. I am currently a PhD candidate in the Philosophy program. I am passionate about helping graduate students and my experience in GSA over the last 4 years has allowed me to do just this. I am originally from Miami, FL, where most of my family still lives. In my free time, I love to read, exercise, and spend time with my cat, Jack!

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

As the VPAA, I promise to help graduate students in any way possible and approach each issue with compassion, understanding, and clarity. Specifically, I will help each group become acquainted with GSA policies and funding options for events. I will also advocate for them as a member of various campus committees. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I will be there when students need guidance regarding sensitive or difficult subjects. This is an important part of the VPAA position and I plan to continue to prioritize this aspect of the role in the 2024-2025 academic school year.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

As the current VPAA, I would like to continue applying my knowledge to help graduate students connect, face difficult problems, and host important events.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

I have held various roles in GSA. In addition to the VPAA position, I was the VPIA for two years. Before that, I was the philosophy department representative and an active member of the social committee.



Matthew Kersting

Candidate for Vice President of Internal Affairs

College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

Psychology

Tell us about yourself:

I am a 3rd year Ph.D. student in the Psychology program, specializing in Developmental Psychology. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in 2020 with a B.S. in Psychology and a minor in Developmental Science. Before my undergraduate studies, I worked in the aerospace and defense sector as a project manager, where I developed an interest in moral, socioemotional, and cognitive development. I am a member of the Kids Interaction and Neurodevelopment (KIND) Lab, directed by Dr. Kalina J. Michalska, where we examine the brain bases that underlie the development of emotion understanding. My research incorporates neuroimaging techniques to study the role of intention and perspective-taking when evaluating and making judgments of moral blameworthiness throughout development and how blameworthiness is judged when social actors use indirect means (e.g., intermediaries) to inflict harm on others. Aside from my lab research, I have been involved in many departmental committees to improve the experience of graduate students in the psychology graduate program.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

Early in my graduate program, I sought to improve the experience for myself and others. In doing so, I have been fortunate enough to have been involved in several departments and organizations. As a representative and president of the Department of Psychology's GSA, I got an inside look at how communication across campus organizations and departments can boost or hinder the experiences of graduate students. My position within GradSuccess and the Graduate Student Mentorship Program further advanced this insight, underscoring the importance of clear communication, transparency, and engaging and targeted outreach to the graduate student community. As the UC Advocacy Officer in the GSA, I heard more about the direct issues other graduate students go through and their own feedback on how these issues may be alleviated with better access to resources. If elected as VP/IA, I hope to grow the network and engagement of on-campus resources for graduate students, growing resources and information for students and making the processes of accessing them more streamlined and transparent to all. From the position of VP/IA, I will work closely with the many organizations on campus, such as the Well Health Promotion and Education (WELL) Department, Basic Needs, Campus Advocacy Resources and Education (CARE) Program, Office of Sustainability, Career Center, GradSuccess, and the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW). By building solid relationships across organizations and creating standards for how and when information should be disseminated and events will be coordinated, we can maximize the benefits of these programs and ensure all graduate students are given straightforward information about these resources and clear access to them.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

As a graduate student, I have dealt with the many issues we all face in our respective programs. Financial burdens, medical concerns, food and housing insecurity, the stresses of producing research and meeting programmatic hurdles, and future employment uncertainty, to name a few. The university has made efforts to aid graduate students with these struggles; however, many helpful resources are difficult to access due to poor communication about their existence and a lack of support or hidden policies that make using them challenging. As Vice President of Internal Affairs (VP/IA), I aim to lessen this burden by pushing these programs to be the best they can be for students.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

Psychology Department Representative; Psychology Department mini-GSA President; UC Advocacy Officer; Chief of Staff



Samuel Opoku Asiedu

Candidate for Finance and Grant Writing Officer

School of Medicine

Biomedical Sciences

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Samuel Opoku Asiedu, and I was born and raised in a small town in Ghana, West Africa. I grew up playing sports and spending time outdoors, which instilled a love of nature and an active lifestyle that has stayed with me throughout my life.

After high school, I attended the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and earned a degree in Biological Sciences. I joined a research institute at the university to further explore research in infectious diseases affecting the poor and vulnerable in the society. After three years of working as a Research Assistant, I decided to further deepen my understanding about microbial pathogenesis by enrolling into master program in microbiology at the same university.

Currently, I am PhD student in the Biomedical Sciences program with my home lab PI being Dr. Meera Nair.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

When elected as the Finance and Grant Writer position, I envision using my position to increase and deepen UCR graduate students' participation in grant applications, with the end goal of graduate students winning research grants and fellowships. I plan to champion this vision by organizing regular workshops with seasoned professionals who have a track record of winning grants, funders, and successful grant recipients. As a Finance and Grant Officer, I aim to lead by example by applying for and securing grants for GSA.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

As a former Graduate Assistant in Dr. Alexander Kwarteng's research group, an Infectious Immunologist, I developed skills in writing research papers, preparing research budgets, drafting research grants, and writing grant reports to funders such as The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). I gained these skills not only for my future as a potential Principal Investigator but also to benefit others.

With a strong belief in collaboration and sharing of knowledge, I am motivated to apply for the Finance and Grant Writer position in GSA. I aim to utilize my skills and experience to benefit the entire community by producing compelling grant proposals that will lead to successful research outcomes.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

GSA election committee member. I have held the position of the General Secretary for the students' counselling body in my former university (KNUST, Ghana).



Neeha Gajula

Candidate for Finance and Grant Writing Officer

Bourns College of Engineering

Computer Science

Tell us about yourself:

Hello everyone, I am Neeha Gajula, a dedicated graduate student pursuing a Master's degree in Computer Science at UC Riverside. With a solid background in Leadership, Organization, and Teamwork, I am committed to making a meaningful impact within our community. If entrusted with the role of Finance Officer and Grant Writer, I pledge to prioritize the needs of our graduate students by ensuring responsible financial management and securing funding for diverse events. Drawing upon my experience, I will advocate for transparent budgetary policies and work diligently to expand our event offerings, fostering a vibrant and inclusive environment. I am excited about the opportunity to contribute my skills and dedication to enhance the Graduate student experience and drive positive change within our organization.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

As a candidate, my platform prioritizes enhancing the Graduate student experience through increased event participation and improved offerings, such as the renowned GradBash event. I am committed to securing funding to expand more events and provide more diverse food options, ensuring inclusivity and enjoyment for all. I am dedicated to addressing the needs and concerns head-on of all the graduate students. My focus will be on fostering a vibrant and engaging community by organizing a variety of events throughout the quarter, thereby enriching our academic journey and fostering a stronger sense of belonging among all students. With a proactive and collaborative approach, I aim to make tangible improvements that positively impact the lives of graduate students across our campus.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

I'm running for the Finance Officer and Grant Writer position as I'm dedicated to fostering financial transparency and accountability within our academic community. I believe in the transformative power of strategic financial management in supporting student organizations' goals and initiatives. I'm inspired to contribute my skills and experiences to ensure responsible fiscal stewardship, empowering our community to thrive

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

Vice President of Computer Science GSA.



Dulce A. Alarcon

Candidate for Vice President of Public Relations

Bourns College of Engineering

Bioengineering

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Dulce Alarcon, and I am a fourth-year PhD candidate in Bioengineering at the University of California, Riverside. I am a Fulbright scholar from Mexico, and my research interests include the development of low-cost medical diagnostic devices. I love learning about other people's cultures and sharing mine with them.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

This past year, I have focused on regaining the sense of community that was lost within the graduate student body due to the pandemic. My efforts have included organizing events for graduate students to socialize, relax, and network, as well as facilitating the diffusion of resources and opportunities through weekly newsletters and social media. Additionally, I have maintained a safe space where graduate students feel heard and can freely share their experiences and concerns. If re-elected, I will continue to prioritize the initiatives mentioned above. Additionally, I aim to strengthen collaboration with other campus organizations, such as the Graduate Student Resource Center, Career Center, Basic Needs, and The Well, to further improve the well-being of UCR's graduate community.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

Since joining UCR, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact that the GSA can have on graduate students. Beginning my PhD amidst the pandemic as an international student newly arrived in the US, I often found support and fellowship through the graduate student events at UCR. Inspired by these experiences, I ran for the Vice President of Public Relations position last year, with the objective of helping graduate students succeed by providing them with opportunities, support, and resources. As the current Vice President of Public Relations, I have had the privilege to engage with and support the graduate student community at UCR, discovering my passion for serving my peers in the process. With this valuable experience under my belt, I believe in my ability to effectively continue contributing to the graduate student experience for another year.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

GSA Vice President of Public Relations (2023-Present), Vice President of the Bioengineering mini-GSA (2023-Present), GSA Legislative Advocacy Officer (2022-2023), GSA representative of the Bioengineering mini-GSA (2022-2023), GSA member of the Social Committee (2022-Present)



Rodrigo Arenas

Candidate for Vice President of Public Relations

College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

Dance

Tell us about yourself:

I am a visual artist, researcher and educator focused on performance art, currently enrolled at the MFA in Experimental Choreography. I was born in Antofagasta (Chile), and proudly have indigenous ancestry. Before arriving to UCR I held an MA in Literature, a BSc in Economics, and a Google Certification in UX Design. During eight years I co-directed an LGBT+ organization in Guatemala and worked in public relations and as a community management. My professional life started as an elementary and high school teacher. Thanks to my work as a creator, I had the opportunity to travel to several places in the world, an experience that has given me a deep sense of the relevance of culture and communications in order to hope for a more generous future.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

I will focus on three areas: introduction to new graduate and professional students, socializing and safe spaces, and improvements on communication. Regarding the first, I think it is very important to welcome, inform and include upcoming graduate students to life at UCR and specially to what GSA can offer to them. In this task, the collaboration with other units (as International Affairs) could benefit us. Among the initiatives I propose, I would like to develop a short guide that will summarize all the opportunities that they could have access to, from grants to the chance of being a GSA office candidate, to held an informative hybrid meeting, and to share with them possible paths to get the most from GSA. Regarding the second, and as a graduate student myself, I think that there is still a lot of space to develop new or to improve low turnout current spaces of encounter, where students can share and connect. I think we need to be more creative and to widen the focus in terms of scheduling, facilitation, and modalities, including instances focused on diversity and marginalized communities. Regarding the how we communicate, it is a fact that GSA holds many duties and activities. This means that the information can be overwhelming and not focused on the particular interests of the busy graduate students. So, I propose to divide the newsletter into three separate categories: general affairs, opportunities and fun. Also, I would like to reconfigure the website's tree to favor a more friendly navigation by adding submenus and using icons in a more efficient way, and to create a calendar with GSA activities that students could add to their individual ones.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

It inspires me to serve graduate and professional students at the UCR in a position where I can use my skills, knowledge and broad experience. I think that we, as GSA, are able to enrich and empower diversity among students, to provide them with significant tools and spaces, bringing them together and encouraging conversations that enrich us. I have been participating in and observing to several GSA initiatives, and I would like to contribute to them with refreshing ideas and relevant improvements.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

I am chair of culture at Stonehaven, under the management of Hasmeet Kalra. Before, I was a member of the Guatemalan Pride organizing committee (2019-22) and participated in the organization of other LGBT+ and migrant instances.



Sarah Schroeder

Candidate for Vice President of Public Relations

College of Natural & Agricultural Sciences

Cell, Molecular, and Developmental Biology

Tell us about yourself:

I will be entering my second year in the Fall of 2024 as a Cell, Molecular, and Developmental Biology (CMDDB) PhD student. I graduated from UCLA in 20' with a B.S. in CMDDB and worked for three years as a Research Associate at UCLA and City of Hope. My research interests include developing novel gene therapy strategies for the treatment of human disease. Outside of work, I enjoy an active lifestyle, you can often find me at the UCR Rec Center, or at home with my two cats.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

The GSA plays a significant role in the lives of graduate students by connecting us to our larger community and the resources they offer. This cannot be achieved without effective and deliberate strategies to engage the community through persuasive communication. My intention as VPPR is to actively engage with the student body through online and offline methods to increase engagement with the GSA resources and events, which often face low attendance. As Vice President of the departmental CMDDB GSA, I have been able to successfully plan and execute events with high attendance. I developed much of this experience as an undergraduate, where I organized conferences and social events for the UCLA STEM Club.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

Throughout my undergraduate and graduate experience, I have found myself actively engaging in student organizations. These endeavors have allowed me to explore my interests outside of the classroom and provided a method to explore my creativity as I seek innovative and effective strategies to encourage participation from other students. Nevertheless, I have found the ability to connect students with their community to be profoundly fulfilling. Students often neglect other aspects of their lives to focus on their work. This has inspired me to continue to engage in student organizations and more specifically, as a Public Relations officer.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

Vice President of CMDDB GSA. As an undergrad, I have held a variety of positions for student organizations.



Varun Narayanan

Candidate for Graduate Student Health Insurance Policy Officer

Bourns College of Engineering

Computer Science

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Varun Narayanan, and I have been shaped by a lifelong passion for technology, analytics, and making a positive impact in the world around me. I was born and raised in India, where I earned my Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Engineering from SRM Institute of Science and Technology. I am currently pursuing MSCS at UC Riverside. I am a skilled communicator and event organizer with a passion for building strong communities. Throughout my academic and professional experiences, I have honed my abilities in stakeholder management, digital marketing, and bringing people together around shared interests and causes. I have a passion for leveraging data and technology to enhance healthcare accessibility, affordability and outcomes. As an Associate Data Analyst at Optum, I developed powerful healthcare analytics tools to support functions like risk assessment, pricing, and care management. This experience gave me deep insights into healthcare economics, insurance policies, and how data-driven solutions can address cost and access barriers for patients. As GSHIP Officer, I will advocate for comprehensive, affordable insurance guided by an understanding of student perspectives and healthcare realities. With my abilities, I'm prepared to be a voice ensuring our health remains the top priority.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

Graduate students, elect me as your GSHIP Officer and I will prioritize advocating for a comprehensive, affordable student health plan that meets our community's needs. My platform focuses on expanding covered services based on student feedback, pushing for transparent communication around costs and billing, being a voice for patient issues that arise, and promoting preventative care education. With my healthcare analytics background, I can evaluate our plan's shortcomings through a data-driven lens and propose sustainable solutions - all while ensuring diverse graduate perspectives are centered in decision-making. Your health is my top priority. I'll work tirelessly to enhance our plan's benefits and remove unnecessary barriers to care. Vote for me as your healthcare advocate.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

I'm driven to serve as GSHIP Officer because I understand the critical importance of quality, affordable healthcare for graduate students dealing with immense academic and personal pressures. My experience building healthcare reports and analyses at Optum showed me the value of advocating for the patient perspective in insurance policies and offerings. As GSHIP Officer, I can leverage my strengths in clear communication, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

Social Media Manager- ECOCAR at UCR, MILAN- Organizer (UG).



Sushmita Joardar

Candidate for Graduate Student Health Insurance Policy Officer

Bourns College of Engineering

Bioengineering

Tell us about yourself:

As an international student from Bangladesh, I came to the USA to pursue my higher education after completing my undergraduate studies in Electrical Electronic and Communication Engineering. I earned my MS in Electrical Engineering from the University of California, Santa Cruz. During my time there, I worked in bioelectronics, realizing its potential to merge my electrical expertise with healthcare innovation. This revelation inspired me to continue my academic journey, leading me to pursue a PhD in Bioengineering at the University of California, Riverside. Currently, my research focuses on nanopore-based electrical sensing to detect β -Amyloid (1-40) & (1-42) proteins, pivotal in Alzheimer's disease detection.

What is your platform and what are your priorities?

My primary focus will be on enhancing the physical and mental well-being of all graduate students. Here's my plan: - to enhance mental health services through GSHIP, ensuring all graduate students have easy access to the support and care they need. - to conduct quarterly online surveys among students to assess health insurance policies, aiming to effectively and cost-effectively serve the graduate student community. - will improve communication between GSA, GSHIP, and the graduate student community to keep students well-informed about their healthcare options, coverage details, and available resources. - will advocate for the specific healthcare needs and concerns of our graduate student population. With a proactive, collaborative, and student-centered approach, I aim to create a supportive environment where every graduate student feels valued and cared for.

Why are you applying for this specific position?

I am applying for this specific position because, as a graduate student, I faced issues due to a lack of understanding about the health insurance plan. This personal experience has inspired me to address and resolve these challenges for others. I have a genuine passion for working for people and making a positive impact on their lives. My experience as the secretary of my dorm during my undergraduate years has deeply inspired me to continue serving my community. This role taught me the importance of effective communication, organization, and advocacy, skills I believe are essential for the Graduate Student Health Insurance Plan (GSHIP) Officer position. I am committed to leveraging my skills and experience to enhance the physical and mental well-being of all graduate students at UCR.

What are your previous roles serving in the GSA (if any)? Have you held previous positions in public service?

Worked as a secretary of my dorm during undergrad.





Thank you for reading!

The GSA AY 2024-25 Election will be held from Monday, May 13 through Sunday, May 19. A link will be provided to our voting portal at that time.

Winners will be announced no later than Monday, May 27.

For any questions, please contact GSA Election Committee Chairperson Marina Murillo at vpia1@gmail.com.

