Dean’s Student Advisory Council
College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
University of Maryland

DSAC Annual Report
2020-2021

May 5, 2021
Chair: Erica Lemen
Advisors: Cierra O’Keefe, Associate Dean Katherine Russell
Executive Summary

The Dean’s Student Advisory Council (DSAC) is a representative and advisory body of fifteen students which implements proposals to improve the student experience within the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS), as well as advises the Dean and Associate Dean regarding students’ concerns and ideas. The DSAC committee members represent students from each major and program within BSOS. Dean Russell has found the DSAC to be an invaluable resource for gauging student feedback to BSOS policies and to proactively seek out student concerns and fresh ideas.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the DSAC’s activities in the past academic year. The council’s leadership is structured with one Chair that leads the Council and three Vice Chairs that each lead a committee as follows: Committee of Programming, Committee of Student Services, and a Committee of Academics. The DSAC leaders for the 2020-2021 academic year were:

*Fall 2020 - Spring 2021*

**Chair:** Erica Lemen  
**Vice Chair of Academics:** Naomi Lichtenstein  
**Vice Chair of Programming:** Florence Ning  
**Vice Chair of Student Services:** Shreya Vuttaluru

*A comprehensive list of the council’s members, including their majors and respective constituencies may be found at the conclusion of this report.*
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Programming Committee

The committee plans, organizes, and manages all of DSAC's events. The committee plans at least one major event each semester, and collaborates with the Dean's Office Staff to make reservations for campus buildings or virtual webinars.

Minors Exposure Project

The Minors Exposure Project is a marketing campaign aimed at advertising BSOS Minors and Certificate Programs to the BSOS and Campus community. This campaign involves interviewing professors, students, and alumni for information to include in an infographic that will be disseminated across campus platforms. Each infographic features one minor program. For Spring 2021, DSAC focused on the Minor in International Development and Conflict Management (MIDCM). For MIDCM, the pamphlet would include a student testimonial, a list of past internships and jobs that MIDCM students have been a part of, frequently asked questions, etc. While the content would change as well as apply this pamphlet to different minors in BSOS, the structure would remain relatively the same. This is intentional, as we feel it will make each pamphlet easier to navigate and digest for prospective students.

terpTALK Initiative

The terpTALK initiative was conducted during the spring semester of 2021 from March 2nd until May 18th. Members of BSOS and the DSAC committee had experienced/shared challenges of accessing information, feeling included, and making connections while enduring multiple semesters of responsible socially distanced virtual university. We were all now collectively considered off-campus students due to the pandemic. As a committee, we decided that the objective should be to provide all students with information that would ease the transition to online and help with new challenges due to the abrupt transition to the online setting. We chose to offer fun interactive tips and pointers to combat these potential issues through social media. The terpTALK initiative was focused on creating graphics to be posted to the BSOS social media
platforms. Any students scrolling on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter would have access to the virtual tips and student profiles we created for this initiative.

**terpTALK Podcast**

For the terpTALK Podcast, the Programming and Academics Committees decided to collaborate. The podcast is intended to be a 20+ minute podcast on DSAC’s experiences as virtual students during the 2020-2021 academic year. We understand that students have felt a wide range of emotions throughout the year, whether it relates to their academics, careers, or personal lives. As a result, we wanted a culminating project that documents our shared experiences as virtual students, so that we can listen and reflect whenever we want. Our target audience is both students and faculty at UMD, as we believe that both parties can learn from our council’s reflections of the past year. The podcast will be released on Tuesday, May 18th.

**The Virtual Student-to Student Series**

The Virtual Student-to-Student Series was a six-week series that featured a panel of panelists, the Undergraduate Director, and moderator for 10 of the BSOS majors. The first step was to ensure that there was a schedule for the weekly series and all BSOS majors, which was created after meeting with Cierra. The next step was to create a schedule for when DSAC members should have their panelists and materials ready, as well as roles for the other programming team members. We met with Michelle Slone to learn how to use Zoom Webinar for this event to make it more professional. We also advertised across BSOS social media and various email listservs. The result was a great six-weeks of panels that were recorded for future use, and can be found at ter.ps/BSOSPanels. The main lessons learned from this event were to plan ahead, stick to the schedule as much as possible, and be ready for a few obstacles because nothing is perfect!
Student Services Committee

The Student Services Committee improves student life through technology, alumni relations, facilities, and other non-academic issues. The committee aims to reach students, provide them with networking opportunities, and improve student life outside the classroom.

BSOS Alumni of Color Panels

In order to address the need to provide a positive role model for students of color, the Student Services committee wanted to create a panel by and for students of color in hopes that this proposal will provide a sense of relief and encourage students to continue pursuing their goals. Our proposal attempts to provide a place for students to hear first-hand anecdotes by professionals who share similar challenges, and how they have overcome obstacles to reach their current positions. Similar to many events hosted by Student Services, this event will foster a sense of community for students in BSOS and provide an extra career-readiness resource during these chaotic times.

As a whole, the committee created a contact spreadsheet of alumni who are affiliated with DSAC per Dean Russell’s recommendations. Additionally, we met with Jenny Kilberg to get her suggestions on the panel, as she hosted a similar event a few weeks prior to our meeting. She suggested that the event should be a series of panels, each roughly an hour and a half with 4-5 panelists maximum. Shortly after this meeting, Cierra and Dean Russell suggested the series be organized by industries rather than majors due to the reality that majors and careers do not always overlap. The finalized industries are the following: Government and Politics and Economics, Health and Wellness, Sustainability, Communications and Journalism, and Women of Color (formerly Entrepreneurship). During a DSAC committee meeting, student services discussed ideas with Michelle Slone to receive feedback on the industries and to get advice on reaching out to alumni. Her thoughts on the categories of industries were positive and she provided suggestions on alumni for the aforementioned industries.
During the spring semester we held the five panels for Alumni of Color every other Wednesday from 5:30-6:30 pm. Our panels featured three to four alumni in the fields mentioned above, except for entrepreneurship, as we had trouble finding alumni within that area. Instead, for our last panel, we opted to change the theme to Women of Color in Social Sciences. We used resources such as DSAC Alumni, BSOS Alumni Page, LinkedIn, and personal connections to find alumni for the panels. Each panel featured a series of pre-written questions moderated by a Student Services committee member, with 15 minutes allotted at the end for any student questions. We averaged about 10 attendees per panel, which was quite low, but expected due to Zoom fatigue and other challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The response from both attendees and panelists was extremely positive: the panelists were very open with their experiences, stating that they appreciated the chance to help students, and some attendees even reached out to panelists via email after the panels. Given this positive feedback, we are hoping to continue hosting these panels in the future in order to further the conversation around what it means to be a person of color in the social sciences.

**BSOS Mentor Database**

The Mentor Database is meant to serve as an accessible outreach point for underclassmen and upperclassmen. The Student Services committee envisioned a platform where BSOS students would be able to easily connect with each other and ask questions they might have about majors, minors, career paths, etc., in a non-intimidating format with candid advising.

To first get a sense of how the current BSOS mentor and advising runs, Shreya emailed BSOS Advising and Elli met with Ken to talk about the BSOS Peer Mentor program. BSOS Advising gave valuable insight/questions for us to consider such as reaching out to different departments about their mentor program if such infrastructure exists, how to delegate the database to next year’s committee, and how recruitment and advertising work effectively. As Ken was open to collaborating with us and transferring interested mentors to our database, the committee does not anticipate that the initial population of the database will be a problem. While the committee was
still contemplating the value of incorporating alumni into the database, Jenny Kilberg suggested that we look over TerrapinsConnect, and this ultimately led to the decision to exclude alumni and to focus on undergraduate mentors. Shreya and Elli’s meeting with OACS went well and OACS was open to creating the new database. There were no significant barriers to the database, which would be self-populating upon a form submission and would delete mentor contact information from the database after a pre-set period of time. One more thing to bring up will be implementing Single Sign-On for student privacy, but we do not anticipate issues with adding this feature to the Database. The new question that came up during this meeting was whether or not the database should live on the Feller Center website or the BSOS website--Shreya met with Crystal Sehlke to solve this problem. Although Ms. Sehlke gave valuable feedback, we decided that there are limitations to the Feller Center website and that we will not be able to accommodate their conditions. Hence, the final decision was made for the database to live on the BSOS website. The committee has started the Google Form which will be distributed to interested undergraduate students through the BSOS listserv. On Tuesday, December 1, Shreya and Marie met with Cierra, Dean Russell, and Michelle Slone to discuss any potential intersection between TerrapinsConnect and the database, and express why they believe the database should be a separate entity.

After a lot of discussion, in collaboration with Dean Russell, Cierra, and Michelle Slone, we decided it would be best to work with the team on TerrapinsConnect to implement Single Sign-On and utilize the platform for the mentor database. We feel that incorporating Single Sign-On (SSO) to TerrapinsConnect will significantly increase accessibility and usage among students, and thus make the mentor program more effective when it is established. Currently, students must make a separate account to access TerrapinsConnect, which involves a lengthy questionnaire as well as approval by BSOS Administrators; we felt this was a substantial barrier to access, and would especially deter first-year students from accessing the resources of TerrapinsConnect, which is the very group we hope to target with the mentor program. Though we received an update that the Alumni Council was in talks to promote SSO for TerrapinsConnect, we did not have substantial updates to this initiative during the spring
semester. The committee spent a lot of time working on the Alumni of Color panels, and thus we were not completely looped into the conversation surrounding Terrapins Connect and Single Sign On. We are hoping to touch-base with those involved with Terrapins Connect in the coming weeks, after the Alumni of Color series finishes.
Academics Committee

The Academics Committee implements policies to improve student-faculty relations and academic procedures. The committee collaborates with the Directors of Undergraduate Studies to discuss campus-wide issues.

Academic Integrity and Resources

The BSOS DSAC has worked towards putting together a short presentation explaining academic integrity and whether any rules have changed since students have moved online. We distributed a survey to UMD students in order to gain insight on what students have struggled most. We included the most common problems students run into and how students can avoid these things. In order to gain background information, we conducted an interview with one of the advisors for the student honor council which is a part of the University Student Judiciary. The interview resulted in some great information including how the Smith School of Business includes icons for each of their classes that indicate what sources are acceptable to use on assignments. Due to the continuation of virtual learning, DSAC created graphics of these tips so they are readily available for social media promotion for the event, as well as for others to have during the spring 2021. From stress management to organization tips, BSOS DSAC used our experiences with the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters to educate other students on what has worked for us and how they can navigate this semester better.

We are currently working with programming to create a podcast featuring our experiences from this past year and highlighting important topics in our conversations to be dispersed among the college and beyond as well. This was as a result of the academics survey which got almost 80 responses. The survey revealed that there is a desire for some type of student perspective on this past year’s experiences.

Undergraduate Research Improvements

The BSOS DSAC identified a lack of cohesiveness in research opportunities; many students have to know how to look for chances to work at centers or with professors. After doing our own
research throughout the semester, we noticed various departments that had not even used the site Maryland Center for Undergraduate Research (MCUR). We also realized that it was increasingly difficult for certain majors to find research on or off campus. To try and help mitigate this problem, we reached out to undergraduate directors on campus to encourage them and their professors to begin using this site more so. We also met with Erin Sorenson from MCUR to discuss updates on the site for when we begin advertising this to professors and students. She informed us that these updates could probably not happen until winter break or early second semester. We have spoken to our departments about increasing equitable access to job opportunities. We continued to look into ways to increase access to on campus opportunities for undergraduate students because research is such a valuable experience to have on one’s resume. Throughout the semester we dispersed graphics about MCUR and how to access it. We also made sure that professors were notified of upcoming changes and confirmed that updates on MCUR will be worked on this summer.

**Textbook Affordability Research and Action**

The BSOS DSAC realized this year that one of the students' most significant problems was the increasing costs for Textbooks and other class materials in their classes. We identified some of the most popular courses that require expensive textbooks, estimated the average cost of the textbook/materials costs for a typical student, and identified some of the existing alternatives professors use to replace textbooks and provide high-quality content. We identified some of the college's largest courses that currently require books (Econ 200, GVPT 170, PSYC 100) and plan to target specific proposals to these classes in particular. We also discussed and partnered with other student organizations interested in the matter, particularly MaryPIRG, to propose alternatives to costly textbooks and generated awareness on this issue for professors, faculty, and staff. After meeting with the head of the Economics department, Dr. Erin Moody, we created a petition to spread awareness regarding the textbook affordability and feasibility issue. The petition received over 100 signatures and we have continued to collaborate with MaryPIRG to tailor the language in the textbook campaign towards professors. We have also started to create a rounded estimate for textbook prices on Testudo.
Campus Partnerships

DSAC collaborates with a variety of different organizations on campus to advance our mission and support theirs. We often work with the Alumni Chapter Board, the SGA, the BSOS Ambassadors, and the University Career Center– to name a few.

Terrapins Connect
The students services committee fostered a conversation with the Terrapins Connect platform on implementing Single Sign On (SSO) access to the platform in order to facilitate student usage and the potential implementation of a mentor database.

Undergraduate Student Government Association (SGA)
DSAC participated in the UMD SGA’s Reclaim the Red campaign to educate students about sexual misconduct prevention and resources at the beginning of the year which had been deemed by experts as the “Red Zone.” The Council participated via social media, heard from a member of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Committee, and attended relevant events.

BSOS Open House Events
A few DSAC members participated in campus-wide Open House events for prospective BSOS students. Council members spoke on student panels with other BSOS student leaders, including BSOS Ambassadors, to share their experiences in the college.

First & Second Look Fair
DSAC members created a virtual BSOS table at the First Look Fair to market student leadership opportunities in the college and provide information on the academic majors and programs housed in the college. The First Look Fair is the first involvement event on campus, allowing students to learn about campus organizations and services during the first weeks of the semester. In the spring semester, DSAC members helped staff the virtual BSOS table at the Second Look Fair to recruit prospective DSAC members and BSOS Ambassadors.
The Robert H. Smith School of Business’ Dean’s Student Advisory Council

The BSOS DSAC met with the Business School’s DSAC in the fall of 2020 to talk about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion issues. Meetings between DSACs may be useful in the future.

MaryPIRG Student Activist Organization on Campus

The BSOS DSAC met and worked with MaryPIRG on campus to help coordinate efforts on textbook transparency and affordability. Tatiana Johnson was the lead in this area and took the petition into MaryPIRG’s work and integrated DSAC efforts when meeting with varied stakeholders.
Future Recommendations

A list of recommendations from the outgoing council as well as initiatives and proposals that may not have been completed during the 2020-2021 academic year. This list only serves as recommendations for the incoming council to consider and is not required to finish.

**BSOS DSAC Anti-Racism**

Over the summer, DSAC met several times to provide a space to discuss the civil unrest and how the council could better serve their constituents in furthering anti-racist efforts in the college. Council members reached out to their departments to encourage and support efforts to include anti-racism in the curriculum. The college has begun to incorporate changes to further its anti-racism mission, and it is encouraged that DSAC continues to pursue and participate in furthering this mission.

**Alumni of Color Panels**

DSAC held Alumni of Color Panels this past spring semester, which were very successful. Continuing this panel series on a semester or year basis would be extremely beneficial for students of color within the college and allow them to connect with alumni who have been in their shoes. Better outreach efforts to students of all BSOS majors and to more specific career paths are encouraged in order to cater to all student interests.

**DSAC Visibility**

Efforts to improve DSAC visibility continued during the 2020-2021 school year with weekly Instagram takeovers. Each member used the main BSOS instagram to share their day. Additionally, a new google form was created to allow students to have easy contact with the council. The form was published during the Spring semester and now serves as an open forum for students to share their concerns with their representative. The form will remain public in the Chair’s google drive and should be reviewed for feedback regularly.
International Week 2021

Typically, spearheaded by Student Series, but can involve a subcommittee specifically for International Week planning. It will take place in the same week as International Education Week in November as most of the campus will be participating as well. Partners from previous years should be contacted, and DSAC should plan to host an event in partnership with BSOS.

100 Days Until Graduation

The annual 100 days to graduation event was held on Monday, February 17, 2020. This event took place in Ledo’s Pizza on Route One. This event was attended by current seniors and alumni to celebrate the upcoming spring commencement. This event did not happen in 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, but it would be a great event to reinstate when we are back in-person.

Coffee and Donuts

During the 2019-2020 academic year, the programming committee hosted four coffee and donuts events. During the events, students were given free coffee and donuts provided by DSAC. During the first event, DSAC members informed students about DSAC and DSAC’s mission. The second coffee and donuts event in October was used to promote the Student-Faculty Dinner. The third coffee and donuts was held in November. This event promoted Vice Chair of Academics, Elena Levan’s SGA initiative and closing event for #reclaimthered. The fourth coffee and donuts was held in Lefrak Hall to target a different demographic of BSOS students. This event marketed programming’s upcoming Criminology and Criminal Justice Student to Student Series, as well as the spring proposals of all of the DSAC representatives. There were no Coffee and Donuts during the 2020-2021 academic year, so restarting this event when students are back in-person would be a great way to foster connections.

Student Faculty Dinner

The 13th annual Student Faculty Dinner for the fall of 2019 was held in Riggs Alumni Center on Tuesday, November 5, 2019. It had a turnout of about 125 with the last RSVP count the day before the event being 193. The meal was catered by Good Tidings and consisted of the standard buffet menu that Good Tidings offers, different from the dinner plan the last few years. The
purpose of this event was to facilitate productive conversation between students and faculty within each department of the college. The BSOS DSAC invited faculty, some with personally handwritten invitations, staff, and students in the college then worked together to successfully plan and execute the event, much of the planning being completed by the Programming Committee. The BSOS DSAC made important planning decisions, organized spreadsheets, and helped to set the room on the day of the dinner. Events like these are crucial because students and faculty often don’t have any other opportunities to meet more personally. There was no Student-Faculty Dinner in the 2020-2021 academic year, due to the coronavirus pandemic.
Council Members

Carla Atalla
- Committee: Programming
- Major: Government and Politics
- DSAC Constituency: At-Large Representative

Cynthia Eapen
- Committee: Academics
- Major: Criminology and Criminal Justice
- DSAC Constituency: Criminology and Criminal Justice Representative

Victoria Hix
- Committee: Academics
- Major: Psychology
- DSAC Constituency: Psychology Representative

Sol Lee
- Committee: Student Services
- Major: Anthropology
- DSAC Constituency: Anthropology Representative

Erica Lemen
- Council Chair
- Major: Economics
- DSAC Constituency: Living and Learning Program Representative

Naomi Lichtenstein
- Vice Chair of Academics
- Major: Environmental Science & Policy
- DSAC Constituency: Student Government Association (SGA) Representative

Elli Nikolopoulos
- Committee: Student Services
- Major: Government & Politics
- DSAC Constituency: At-Large Representative

**Florence Ning**
- Vice Chair of Programming
- Major: Government and Politics
- DSAC Constituency: Government and Politics Representative

**Imani Nokuri**
- Committee: Programming
- Major: Government and Politics
- DSAC Constituency: At-Large Representative

**Marie Panday**
- Committee: Student Services
- Major: Environmental Science & Policy
- DSAC Constituency: Environmental Sciences & Policy Representative

**Ellie Pokress**
- Committee: Academics
- Major: Sociology, Criminology and Criminal Justice
- DSAC Constituency: Sociology Representative

**Esteban Sanchez**
- Committee: Academics
- Major: Economics
- DSAC Constituency: Economics Representative

**Hilary Sandborn**
- Committee: Programming
- Major: Geographic Information Science and Computer Cartography (GIS), Anthropology
- DSAC Constituency: Geographical Sciences Representative

**Robyn Toler**
- Committee: Programming
- Major: Hearing and Speech Sciences
- DSAC Constituency: Hearing and Speech Sciences Representative
Shreya Vuttaluru

- Vice Chair of Student Services
- Major: Government and Politics
- DSAC Constituency: At-Large Representative