

*College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Dean's Student Advisory Council
2013-2014 Report*

Executive Summary

The Dean's Student Advisory Council (DSAC) is a representative and advisory body of 13-15 students that implements proposals to better student experience within the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, as well as advises the Dean on student concerns and ideas. Students from every major and program within BSOS are represented on DSAC. Dean Townshend has found DSAC to be an invaluable resource for both gauging student feedback to BSOS policies and for proactively seeking out student concerns and ideas.

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the activities of DSAC. DSAC leadership is structured with one Chair that leads the Council; three Vice Chairs that each lead a Committee on Programming, a Committee on Student Services, and a Committee on Academics. The leadership for 2013-2014 was as follows:

Fall 2013

Chair: Maddy Bersch
Vice Chair of Programming: Amanda Eisner
Vice Chair of Student Services: Mackenzie Burnett
Vice Chair of Academics: Roxanne Oroxom

Spring 2014

Chair: Mackenzie Burnett
Vice Chair of Programming: Amanda Eisner
Vice Chair of Student Services: Jhansi Katakam
Vice Chair of Academics: Roxanne Oroxom

Typically, a Chair and Vice Chairs serve the entire academic year. However, due to a class conflict in the spring, Maddy Bersch stepped down as Chair and mid-year elections were held in January to elect Mackenzie Burnett as Chair for Spring 2014 and elect Jhansi Katakam as Vice Chair of Student Services.

This report is structured first with DSAC Projects from the 2013-2014 academic year, broken down by committee. Then, it gives an overview of individual project proposals, both implemented and still in the process of implementation. Finally, it includes an Appendix with more detailed feedback from certain events. A separate document shows our budget.

DSAC Projects
(Broken down by committee)

Programming Committee

The Programming Committee was established to organize major annual events, like the Student-Faculty Dinner and the Student-Alumni BBQ, that DSAC implements every year. In the future, the Programming Committee would like to implement exciting, novel, events that are of a very low cost or free of charge for students, faculty, and alumni.

Student-Faculty Dinner: The goal for the Student-Faculty Dinner is to provide a semi-formal night for students and faculty to interact in an environment outside of the classroom, thus building relationships and that allow students to gain more information about resources available through faculty (for example, research lab opportunities).

- *Benefits:* This event aligns with the goals of both DSAC and the college as it improves student-faculty relations and allows for relationship building and networking. This event has been going on for several years now, and each year has been a great success. DSAC dedicates a great amount of the budget to this event every fall, as it is very well received and has become a tradition.

Student-Alumni BBQ: The goals for the Student-Alumni BBQ are to allow an opportunity for students to network and make connections with BSOS alumni, and for alumni to feel connected to the University of Maryland and the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences after graduation.

- *Benefits:* The college has been attempting to create an environment in which alumni feel involved and connected to their alma mater with the goal of increasing involvement and fundraising; this event supports this goal as well as DSAC's mission of fostering student-alumni relationships. The event took place at the Moxley Gardens out of the Riggs Alumni Center and was greatly enjoyed by both students and alumni. This is an event that we would like to continue annually. Food, music, and games were provided for a very low cost and funding was provided by Carapace and a Pepsi Grant as well as by the college.

Student Services Committee:

The Student Services Committee was established to improve student life through technology, alumni relations, facilities, and other non-academic issues. Through alumni led field trips, helping to enhance the BSOS blog, and creating the DSAC Facebook Page, we are able to reach students more directly as well as provide them with networking opportunities. Furthermore, the Student Services Committee works on Maryland Day activities, such as the Passport Activity for BSOS.

Maryland Day Passport Activity: Each BSOS department has their own respective activity that has to do with their department, that being said, the Passport Activity combines all the departmental activities such that each participant must fill out a 'passport'. Each participant will get a stamp when they complete each BSOS department's activity and must complete their full passport, as they will then be entered in a raffle to win a prize.

- *Benefits:* The Passport Activity in essence connects all the departmental activities into one holistic activity. It also facilitates a comprehensive tour of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences for Maryland Day visitors, in a fun and interactive way.

Student-Alumni Field Trip: Student-Alumni Field Trips allows students the opportunity to attend the workplace and facilities of BSOS Alumni. Students will get to meet the Alumni(s), get a tour of the facility, as well as network with Alumni. DSAC wanted a way for students to directly interact with their Alumni and by providing students with the opportunity to visit their respective Alumni workplace; it allows students the direct interaction that they might not get otherwise.

BSOS Blog Student Proposal: DSAC members created a proposal to send to Andrew Roberts for suggestions for improvement for the new BSOS blog. Andrew Roberts implemented the suggestions.

DSAC Facebook Page: DSAC members wanted a way to reach students more directly than through advisor-sent emails. They also wanted a way to invite students to events. Thus, they created <https://www.facebook.com/DSACBSOS>, which has 241 likes. Each week, the page is updated with internship opportunities, events, and alumni features.

Academics Committee:

The Academics committee was established with the goal of providing opportunities for BSOS students to connect with faculty and staff on a more personal level. Through brown bag lunches and faculty led field trips students have the opportunity to network with professors in a small setting. In addition, the Academics Committee works to improve awareness and marketing of undergraduate research opportunities on campus.

Brown Bag Lunches: Students attend a 90-minute lunch in which they are free to ask a professor about their career, research, courses, and education. Through this dialogue, students may glean information about scholarships, internships, undergraduate research positions, and graduate school that they may not have known before attending. After each lunch, the DSAC member in charge of planning the event follows up with students regarding any information discussed by the professor as well as any personal tips. The follow up email will cover relevant online courses that students may pursue through UMD or Coursera, where to find

undergraduate research opportunities (Maryland Summer Scholars, Maryland Center for Undergraduate Research, or the advising office), and recommendations for books as well as technical skills to develop or professors to take courses with.

- *2013-2014:* Over the course of the year, DSAC has organized a brown bag lunch for every department to great success. While the Academics Committee did not distribute evaluation forms prior to spring 2014, those that were distributed during the spring came back with encouraging results.
 - On average, 92% of respondents answered yes when asked “Do you think this event provided you with an opportunity to connect with a BSOS faculty member?”
 - Roughly 98% said yes when asked “Do you think that the event provided you with an opportunity to learn something new?”
 - 93% answered yes when asked, “Would you consider attending another DSAC Brown Bag Lunch?” *See Appendix 1 “Table” for full data.*
- *Benefit:* Due to the large number of students enrolled in certain majors and consequently the large number of students enrolled in classes for those majors, connecting with faculty on a level is not always possible. Furthermore, for young students it can be a very daunting task to attend office hours by themselves. These brown bag lunches allow students to overcome these obstacles and connect with a faculty member without having to feel the pressure of going at it alone. As such, students who are able to capitalize on these opportunities have the advantage of being able to distinguish themselves in a crowd of students. They have demonstrated their interest in a topic and in a specific faculty member, putting them in a good position to ask for further advice and potentially even develop a mentorship relationship with said faculty member.

Faculty Led Field Trips: 25-30 students go on a trip with a BSOS faculty member to a location that is relevant to the professor’s research. Once on site, the professor provides a mini-lecture on the topic of their choice and students engage in a related hands-on activity.

- *2013-2014:* While the Dean’s Student Advisory Council was not able to successfully carry out a faculty led field trip this year, we were in talks to attend an environmental law hearing with a professor from the Environmental Science and Policy program as well as attend a police-training program on responding to human trafficking with a professor from the Criminology and Criminal Justice department.
- *Benefit:* Students get to participate in an activity that will allow them to see firsthand how their education relates to real world events. Furthermore, students are able to network with peers in their major(s) or with whom they share an academic interest.

Recommendations for the Maryland Center for Undergraduate Research:

Members of the Academics Committee analyzed the university's main undergraduate research website and provided recommendations to improve the layout, marketing, and content. *See Appendix 1 "Recommendations" for full proposal.*

- *2013-2014:* The Academics Committee created the list of recommendations in the fall after DSAC discussed challenges facing undergraduates in research with the Maryland Center for Undergraduate Research's Director and the Dean of Undergraduate Research. In the spring, the Academics Committee interviewed students who completed undergraduate research with a professor or graduate assistant outside of a department honors program. Questions on how they found their position, what strengths they highlighted in their application, what they liked about working as a RA, what skills they built, and how they used that position to continue to grow as a student were included. So far, profiles have been completed for the Economics, Geography, and Psychology departments. Interviews with students from the Anthropology and Government and Politics departments are underway. For each undergraduate researcher that is contacted, every effort is made to get a picture of the student actively conducting research (e.g. in the field or lab) and/or with their faculty or graduate supervisor.
- *Benefit:* Despite being one of the largest colleges at the University of Maryland and having significantly high enrollment in certain majors, the number and quality of undergraduate research opportunities has not kept up with this growth. In addition, there are only a few students who are aware of how to find undergraduate research opportunities and how to prepare themselves to become competitive applicants. The Academics Committee's aim is to have these interviews published in their entirety on the MCUR website as well as have summaries posted on the College and MCUR's main pages. By showcasing how students have benefited from undergraduate research their peers will become aware of its availability and work with the administration to support more opportunities. In turn, this will foster innovation within the entire college and connect students with faculty mentors.

Individual Projects

Implemented:

- **DSAC Summit:** Ryan Belcher proposed this partnership between BSOS DSAC and the Library DSAC, as well as SGA. Leaders from DSACs across the campus got together to share ideas, learn about new resources that the Library and SGA has to offer, and network.
- **DSAC Town Hall Meeting:** This program proposal by Vanessa Jarnes aimed to create a town hall meeting for BSOS Students. This town hall will serve as a method for students from across the school of BSOS to have a way they can meet to voice their concerns to their DSAC representatives.
- **Alumni Featured on Facebook Page:** For this year on DSAC, Katie Chen wanted to incorporate the alumni on our Facebook page, so she created a short questionnaire. The alumni's answers are posted under a picture of themselves or the BSOS "B" from their respective department. This has been quite successful and an easy way for students to think of their current studies and future.
- **IRB Workshop for undergraduate & graduate students:** The IRB workshop, proposed and implemented by Amanda Eisner, was meant to help students who are interested in pursuing research successfully apply for IRB approval.
- **Federal/Global Semester Information Session:** The Federal Semester program (and now the Global Semester program) run by Dr. Joan Burton has proven itself to be one of the most effective programs at acquiring relevant internships to BSOS students. By publicizing their programs more and giving their programs more support through BSOS, we can assist BSOS and CCJS students in finding relevant internships to their field. Tommy Minter held an information night furnished by BSOS to get the word out about these programs and to increase their influence in BSOS.
- **Coffee Break:** Dylan Gleadall and Kevin Silverman implemented a coffee break as a change to their originally proposed "Welcome Breakfast" for BSOS students to mingle and learn about DSAC.
- **Living Learning and BSOS Centers Connection Proposal:** Vanessa Jarnes proposed this. The goal of the Living-Learning and BSOS Centers Connection is to incorporate the College's multiple centers into the academic programs of the BSOS Living-Learning programs. As a result of this new connection, BSOS students in the Living-Learning communities of CIVICUS, Global Communities and International Studies Scholars will have a greater knowledge of the various BSOS centers and will become more involved in their future research and internship opportunities as a result.

Proposed:

- **Establishment of International Relations as a BSOS major:** Mackenzie Burnett proposed the creation of an International Relations major within the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. Many students within the

Government and Politics major specifically identify themselves as concentrating on an International Relations academic track—this points to a demand among students for an International Relations major. There are courses offered every semester specifically titled as Seminars in International Relations. If quantitative and qualitative feedback from administration, faculty and students is positive, steps should be taken towards creating a major in International Relations.

- **BSOS Faculty Speaker Series:** Mackenzie Burnett proposed this. The BSOS Speaker Series will be 2-3 events focused on discussing topics in current international affairs, like the Ukrainian riots and revolution, Venezuelan protests, the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, and other such topics. The speakers will be BSOS faculty, and the events will be live streamed from Van Munching Hall with questions fielded on Twitter.
- **Entrepreneurship @ BSOS:** Ashmi Sheth and Mackenzie Burnett are working together to brainstorm ways to bring an entrepreneurial mindset to BSOS. Both students are directly involved in entrepreneurship efforts on campus, and hope to make recommendations to the Dean for improving an entrepreneurship culture within BSOS.
- **Increasing Recruitment to AASD:** Stephanie Yanok is working on collaborating with an already established student group within the African American Studies Department with the sole purpose of increasing recruitment numbers of students within the major. Efforts will also be toward building more of a community within the department through initiatives and activities.
- **Undergraduate Researchers: A Mentorship Program:** “Undergraduate Researchers” is a proposal for a yearlong program in which senior undergraduate students teach sophomores about various aspects of research as well as mentor them in the creation of their own work and application to research opportunities. The goal is to have sophomores exit the program with greater critical thinking, communication, and technical skills as well as a deeper understanding of the opportunities within and outside of the University of Maryland.
- **BSOS Blogs:** The goal of our proposal is to create and streamline departmental blogs for each of the ten purely undergraduate majors of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland and facilitate more student opportunities via each site.
- **Salary Negotiation Workshop:** This mini proposal aims to bring the American Association of University Women’s salary negotiation workshop to female undergraduates in the Economics and Geography programs. The ratio of men to women in these majors is largely indicative of their fields in the real world, and in times of economic downturn, the university and the college have a responsibility to prepare these women to fight the gender pay gap.
- **Welcome Breakfast:** This proposal is for bagels, pastries, coffee, and tea provided free of charge by DSAC to students in Tydings during the first

morning's rush. DSAC members will hang out in the open space on the first floor of Tydings.

- **BSOS Alumni Internship Database:** One of the most requested and wanted programs in the school of BSOS and the CCJS major in particular is more access and availability of internships pertaining to the students major. By having an interactive, up to date database of all former BSOS members (based on participation) contact information and employment information, we can offer exclusive opportunities to Maryland students directly.
- **Student-Mentor Showcase:** Jhansi Katakam designed a template in which a student and their respective mentor (faculty member) would be featured with their story of how they came to be and how each of them as influenced each other to grow both as a mentor and mentee. By showcasing all the wonderful student-mentor duos, Jhansi hopes that students will be encouraged to pursue research experience and find that perfect mentor.

Appendix

Table 1

Department	Percentage of Students Who Answered Yes			Number of Respondents
	Do you think this event provided you with an opportunity to connect with a BSOS faculty member?	Do you think that the event provided you with an opportunity to learn something new?	Would you consider attending another DSAC Brown Bag Lunch?	
Government & Politics	100	100	100	3
Sociology	75	100	100	4
Economics	100	100	80	5
Hearing and Speech Sciences	93	93	93	7
Average	92*	98.25*	93.25*	4.75

**Each answer of "Yes" was counted as 1 point, "Maybe" as 0.5 points, and "No" as 0 points.*

Recommendations for the Maryland Center for Undergraduate Research's Website

<http://www.ugresearch.umd.edu/>

Layout/Functionality:

- To make it easier for students to know which opportunities to apply to, it would be helpful to add a category that conveys the status of the project. "Accepting", "not accepting", and "not currently accepting" are three possible options. Students would know to apply immediately to positions labeled accepting, and to check back later for positions labeled "not currently accepting".
- Students with no prior research experience may be hesitant to work with faculty, and may prefer to pursue opportunities with graduate students first. As such, it might be suitable to change "Faculty Name" to "Supervisor". In this manner, students will have explicit knowledge of who they will be working with and can tailor applications to their preferred type of supervisor.
- One of the first things I noticed when opening to the MCUR page is how I am immediately greeted with blocks of text. I think it would be nice to see that broken up more and cut down the wordiness of that paragraph so students are not shifting through all that to find a single piece of information.
- Projects should be divided by college as well as by major.
- Make the search bar more consistent. If "GVPT" is typed into the search box at the bottom of the main page, it comes up with no results. If "Government" is typed into the search box, it comes up with only two results. These findings stand in contrast to the fact that there are multiple research opportunities listed for GVPT, if one clicks on "For Students: All Research Opportunities".

- If possible, adjust the website's formatting so that the UMD logo in the top left is not cut off.
- The committee also recommends designing a better graphic for MCUR. This could double as a marketing opportunity if a student design competition is established.
- A key issue with the design of the website is aesthetics. Students today are very visual and a general lack of graphics/pictures can easily be a disadvantage to a website. Pictures of students with professors/graduate students, as well as info graphics on the importance of research may be a good solution.
 - Examples
 - <http://www.tesc.edu/2013/11/How-to-Conduct-College-Level-Research-%5BInfographic%5D.cfm>
 - <http://engineering.missouri.edu/2011/06/infographic-how-does-research-work/>

Content:

- To boost the number of opportunities posted, it is essential to make sure newly hired professors know about this website. They will not have preconceived notions about how research works at Maryland/within departments, so we can start developing a more research friendly culture with them. To implement this idea, DSAC representatives could remind undergraduate directors to bring it up or go to talk to new faculty members themselves.
- Each professor should know about this website and be contacted each month about postings and to see if there are any available positions for students.
- CIVICUS is listed as a college-wide research opportunity, but there is no research component of CIVICUS and the classes are not open to people not in CIVICUS.

Marketing:

- To market the website to students and faculty, I recommend asking the Diamondback to cover the website and students who are currently participating in research that they found via the website.
- Professors should be encouraged to tell students in their classes about MCUR and ask them to visit it.
- Ensure that all department websites as well as Careers4Terps link to MCUR.
- To make the website more student-friendly, student testimonials should be posted on the main page. These testimonials should come from students who found their opportunity through MCUR. Knowing that actual research positions have materialized as a result of the website will counteract the perception that the website is used infrequently.
- Showcase MCUR in orientation, advising sessions, UNIV100, living-learning communities like Scholars, Honors, CIVICUS, etc. Get the word out as much as possible that this resource exists, its useable and helpful, and that popular conceptions of what undergraduate research may or may not be are often misleading.