

OFFICE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

The School of Arts & Sciences and
The Hajim School of Engineering & Applied Sciences

ANNUAL REPORT



2026





University of Rochester

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MISSION STATEMENT

OFFICE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS FOR SAS & HAJIM

GEPA STAFF



This mission comes to life through meaningful social and professional programming and by equipping faculty and staff with the resources they need to guide and inspire the next generation of scholars.

The Office of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs (GEPA) office strives to support and enrich the intellectual experience of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars by building and maintaining an engaged research and learning community, through social and professional supports. GEPA empowers graduate students and postdoctoral scholars across the School of Arts & Sciences (SAS) and the Hajim School of Engineering & Applied Sciences (Hajim) to thrive at the intersection of intellectual curiosity and transformative research.

Our office is dedicated to enhancing the graduate and postdoctoral experience by collaborating with academic programs and campus partners to cultivate a vibrant research and learning community. We are guided by our Meliora values to foster an environment where everyone is not only welcomed but empowered to excel.

WE SUPPORT



~1500

Graduate Students



~90

Postdocs



20

Master's Programs



27

PhD Programs

OUR TEAM



1. **Nick Vamivakas:** Dean of SAS & Hajim Graduate Education
2. **Kris Lantzky Eaton:** Assistant Dean of SAS & Hajim Graduate Education
3. **Katie Ferruzza:** Director of Student Services
4. **Leanne Temp:** Director of Academic Affairs
5. **Dave Cota-Buckhout:** Director of Alumni Engagement and Career Services
6. **Donna Derks:** Records Manager
7. **Silka Jacobson-Evans:** Graduate Student Recruiter
8. **Nick Chodak:** Financial Specialist

OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The GEPA office supports a diverse population of students and postdocs in all SAS and Hajim Programs. Some info on our students include:

- International: 62% Hajim | 48% SAS
- URM: 2% Hajim | 2% SAS
- Students on NSF GRFP: 17 Students
- Dean's Dissertation Fellows: 4 students
- Dean's Post-Field Research Fellows: 2 students
- Slattery Fellowship Recipients: 7 students
- Wang Family Research Fellowship: 4 students
- Chen Fellowship: 1 student
- Eillinger Fellowship: 2 students
- Hopeman Fellowship: 2 students
- Hajim Dean's Fellowship: 2 students
- George Eastman Museum Fellowship: 1 student

See below for data on approximate numbers of students in GEPA supported programs in SAS and Hajim.

Master's	SAS	Hajim
TOTAL	58	213

PhD	SAS	Hajim
TOTAL	698	448

Non-Matriculated	SAS	Hajim
TOTAL	150	28

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Academic Affairs staff in the GEPA office works with departments and students on a number of academic support and policy services. This includes:

- Academic Probation
- Academic Policy Development & Updates
- Degree Conferral (Master's)
- PhD Defense Reviews
- Change of Status/Time Away
- Registration and Internships for credit
- Academic Honesty Training Registration Holds
- New Program Development & associated NYS Paperwork



Under the leadership of Leanne Temp and with the support of Donna Derks, the GEPA Office provides comprehensive academic support and individualized guidance to help graduate students successfully navigate their academic journey. Through personalized outreach and one-on-one consultations, Leanne works closely with students considering a leave of absence, transitioning on or off academic probation, or facing other academic challenges. Donna oversees a broad range of academic affairs functions, including student registration, degree conferrals, and other key academic processes that ensure students and staff receive timely and accurate support.

See below for data on GEPA provided support for AY 25-26 by the numbers.

Master's Degree Conferrals	SAS	Hajim
TOTAL	143	195
PhD Degree Conferrals	SAS	Hajim
TOTAL	108	51

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

See below for more data on GEPA provided support for AY 25-26 by the numbers.

Change of Status/Time Away	SAS	Hajim
Went on LOA	6	18
Returned from LOA	4	6
Withdrawn	9	34
Dismissed	14	11
Discontinuation (LOA more than 1 year)	9	7

Academic Probation	SAS	Hajim
On probation Fall 2025	5	12
Came off probation Fall 2025	2	13
On probation Spring 2026	4	3
Came off probation Spring 2026	3	9

STUDENT SUPPORT

The GEPA Office supports students directly in a variety of ways including through the CARE network and the Basic Needs Hub. Students are connected with resources and on-campus support to address multiple types of needs including complex mental health, academic, social and/or financial challenges. **From July 2025- June 2026 GEPA and the CARE team has provided outreach and support for 87 CARE referrals, by far the highest number of any of the graduate schools. We continue to see increased need for these services.**



GEPA SUPPORT

GEPA offers 1:1 support to students and/or postdocs who are struggling academically, socially, or professionally and in need of consultation. We also provide support for faculty and staff in all graduate depts that are experiencing challenges with graduate students and postdocs. We collaborate closely with other student support resources such as the Ombuds, Title IX, Academic Honesty, UHS, UCC and the Katie Ferruzza, Director of Student Services, serves on the Graduate Wellness Collective Committee. etc. We also maintain self-directed resources on the [GEPA student support website](#) as well as the [GEPA support contacts page](#).

CARE & BASIC NEEDS HUB

Katie Ferruzza provides direct and collaborative support to SAS and Hajim graduate students that are referred through the University's CARE Network and the Basic Needs Hub system. We have seen the need and intensity of many of these referrals increase over the years and we anticipate that trend continuing. As noted below, we responded to 87 direct referrals from CARE this AY.



**87 CARE
REFERRALS
SUPPORTED**



**1500
GRADUATE
STUDENTS IN
SAS & HAJIM**

GRADUATE AMBASSADORS

The GEPA Graduate Ambassadors provide valuable peer-to-peer engagement opportunities that enhance and diversify the graduate student experience. Ambassadors support the graduate admissions process by offering prospective students firsthand perspectives on graduate life, academic programs, and campus culture, while also enriching the experience of current students through mentorship, community-building initiatives, and peer support. Through a variety of outreach channels, including webinars, campus tours, information sessions, social media engagement, and community-building events, the ambassadors enhance and showcase the graduate student experience for both prospective and current students in virtual and in-person settings. The program is designed to strengthen the school's brand, promote individual academic programs, provide prospective and incoming students with an authentic and personalized introduction to graduate life, and foster a sense of connection, belonging, and engagement among current students through meaningful peer-to-peer interactions and support.



TO NOTE: Katie Ferruzza and Aisling Sive presented at the national NAGAP conference this year about the success of our graduate ambassador program!



12

Ambassadors



43+

Events and
Programs



1000+

Prospective Students
Reached



GRADUATE AMBASSADOR INITIATIVES

- * **Orientation programming:** serving on panels, tabling, leading campus tours, hosting first year squad meetups etc. with over 600 student check-ins at these orientation events.
- * **Social programming:** Hosting monthly ambassador meetup events for students for Fall 2025 & Spring 2026- including craft and relaxation events, coffee hours, snack tasting event, World Cup Watch Party and a Lilac Festival meetup.
- * **End of semester celebrations:** Advertised and hosted celebratory events for students to gather. The end of semester event hosted in December 2025 drew 154 students and event in April 2026 had 132 attendees.
- * **Ambassador Blog & Social Media Outreach:** Ambassadors contributed content to our blog for social media videos providing insight and information to prospective and current students about life as a graduate student and living in the Rochester community. We have over 1300 followers on the GEPA Instagram.
- * **First Year Squad Initiative:** This year, GEPA launched a “First Year Squad” program utilizing the graduate ambassadors. Each ambassador was assigned a small cohort of incoming students and hosted meetups and programs for them throughout the year in order to enhance and provide peer to peer connections for new students. Ambassadors hosted regular office hours and continuously reached out to their squads serving as a resource for information and support.
- * **Graduate Recruitment & Prospective Student Outreach:** Ambassadors have hosted and participated in many of our virtual and in-person prospective student programs including Get Ready Grad Webinars series, program specific information sessions and Q&As, campus tours, and the newly implemented Graduate School Open House. Over the course of the 25-26 AY our ambassadors reached over +1300 prospective students.
- * **Engaging in prospective student outreach:** Ambassadors made phone calls to over 200 admitted students; Participated in general “Grad Chats Q&A” sessions which have reached 71 students; Responded to requests for meetings and campus tours for prospective students individually and in groups

EVENTS & COMMUNITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

THE WHY: A SNAPSHOT OF GROWTH

- GEPA has launched an **annual student engagement survey** consistently hearing from students that social programming & peer connections is most important to their experience and retention
- GEPA has nearly quintupled its programming over three years, **growing from 11 events in AY 2022-23 to 52 in AY 2025-26 — a 373% increase**
- Total attendance has grown 69% over the same period
- The office now serves graduate students and postdocs through a sustained portfolio of close to 50 annual events, workshops, and programs overseen by the Director of Student Services, Katie Ferruzza.



SOCIAL PROGRAMMING

- Orientation programming (Resource Fair, Grad Social, Activities Fair)
- Monthly Ambassador programs
- End of Semester Events
- Monthly Coffee Hours

ACADEMIC, RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

- Graduate Research Day
- Peer Networking Event
- Meliora Weekend Graduate Student & Alumni Social
- Career Development Programs & Workshops

EVENTS FOR POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS

- The Steadman Awards
- National Postdoc Appreciation Week Events
- Partnership & support of Postdoctoral Association (PDA) Events

GRADUATE RESEARCH DAY 2026



2026 WINNERS

- **Anushka Jain, Biology**, Structural proteomics of the human ubiquitinome
- **Nicole Park, Developmental Psychology**, Deciding Together or Alone?: Children's Expectations of Leaders' Decision-Making Behaviors
- **Tariq Adnan, Computer Science**, Multimodal Remote Digital Phenotyping for Detecting and Tracking Early Parkinsonian Change in LRRK2 Carriers
- **Swastik Paul, Chemical Engineering**, Deciphering the Role of Cations in CO oxidation reaction pathway
- **Megan Kibler, Brain & Cognitive Sciences**, Communicative Intent Changes Structural Characteristics of Jazz Solos
- **Noah Reger, Biology**, From cell to self: dAnp23 functions with Jabba to promote early embryonic development
- **Eliya Tazreena Tashbib, Chemical Engineering**, PRDM16 is required for normal nasal septal cartilage and bone development in mice

The GEPA office hosted our **4th annual Graduate Research Day** event on April 2, 2026. This year we featured a diverse range of scholarly work across disciplines. The event began with **11 outstanding talks** representing fields from the humanities and social sciences to the natural sciences and engineering. In the afternoon, a **poster session showcased the work of 57 graduate students**, who presented their research to attendees and faculty judges. We also hosted mid-day professional development workshops in collaboration with WSAP and the Office of Alumni Relations. The day concluded with the announcement of awards for both oral presentations and posters, as selected by judges from the University of Rochester. **Over 200 attendees from across the University** joined us to celebrate the incredible research of SAS & Hajim graduate students.

STUDENT GROUPS

The GEPA Office provides direct advising support for student groups recognized by our office. This includes providing leadership training for group leaders, an annual retreat, policy development, and more. Over the past couple of years, we have worked to enhance the visibility of our student groups by featuring them in our newsletters, social media, on the CCC and through our annual Graduate Activities Fair.



STUDENT GROUP SUPPORT

Katie Ferruzza has actively supported close to 20 graduate student groups and the Postdoctoral Association. The number of active SAS & Hajim grad groups has nearly doubled within the past few years. In the Fall of 2025 GEPA hosted the “Graduate Activities Fair” (130 attendees) to connect students with groups. We have worked collaboratively with Wilson Commons Student Activities and other unit graduate schools to roll out a new digital graduate student campus engagement platform experience on the CCC. This platform reflects the needs of graduate students and allows for increased engagement with all graduate students.

OUR GROUPS & LEADERS

Graduate Student Groups are an integral part of the graduate student experience. They host events throughout the year and serve as connectors among students across departments and disciplines. There are a diverse variety of groups represented from cultural to social to academically focused. GEPA supports all of these groups and collaborates with SMD to host retreats and trainings for our student group leaders each year. We also have them go through an annual recognition process.



130
ACTIVITIES
FAIR
ATTENDEES



20 GRADUATE
STUDENT
GROUPS
SUPPORTED

GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION



GRADUATE ORIENTATION & ONBOARDING

The GEPA office held successful graduate orientation and onboarding events for Fall 2025 & Spring 2026 admits. We offered:

- **Live & recorded pre-arrival webinars:** on a variety of support resources including Housing, Mental & Physical Health Supports, Academic Resources
- **Online orientation in Blackboard:** including a mandatory Academic Honesty training
- **In-person orientation events:** to help students build connections amongst each other and the greater Rochester community including: **Graduate River Campus Tours, TA training, Graduate Resource Fair and the Dean's Welcome & Graduate Student Social** with close to 600 student check-ins between these orientation events
- **First Year Squad Program:** GEPA launched this new program connected each of our graduate ambassadors with a small cohort of incoming students
- **Enhanced GEPA's incoming student communications:** GEPA automatically generates emails to introduce accepted students to Rochester and provided the "GEPA Ready" orientation newsletter.

Additionally, GEPA surveys both Fall and Spring students on their orientation experience. Consistently taking feedback into account to enhance their onboarding experience every year. We work closely with the academic departments so they are looped into the GEPA offerings to supplement and support their departmental onboarding experience.



CAREER SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTERN PHD

GEPA continues to sponsor the Intern PhD program providing PhDs in Humanities & Social Sciences with competitive, paid summer internship opportunities at URochester and Rochester community employer sites – placed 7 PhD students at diverse host sites, including policy think tanks, research institutes, and university offices. This program is fully developed and supported financially by the GEPA office.



GRADUATE STUDENT CAREER SUPPORT

Dave Cota-Buckhout partnered with the Greene Center to expand professional development and experiential opportunities for graduate students within the School of Arts & Sciences and Hajim School of Engineering:

- A total of **18 career development & networking workshops** and events were offered & facilitated by Dave Cota-Buckhout through the GEPA office during the 2025-26 academic calendar year, with 179 graduate students attending 17 workshops and events, and 56 graduate students attending the annual Peer Networking Event & Semester Kick-off in Spring 2026. In addition, Dave partnered with the Greene Center on getting graduate students to connect with employers and alumni through their Career Expos in Fall '25 and Spring '26 and their Professional Success Night annual event that connects students and alumni together on campus, as well as attending Rochester Connects Events hosted by Alumni Relations across 13 major U.S. cities.
- With the current state of the job market, graduate students sought out career services through individual advising appointments, including **139 graduate students meeting with Dave Cota-Buckhout and a total combined 222 graduate students between GEPA and the Greene Center.**
- Supplemental Professional Development Funding through the GEPA office was awarded to 9 graduate students across disciplines to assist in attending professional conferences as they present their research across the U.S.

SUPPORT FOR POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS

Steadman Awards, which is an annual event featuring 3 minute research talks by postdocs across disciplines and presents monetary awards to selected winners sponsored by the Steadman Family, patrons of the University. The event has grown dramatically over the past few years with more than 30 postdocs applying to present their research and close to 100 attendees.



Award for Innovative Research Hannah Poole
(Physics and Astronomy)

Award for Interdisciplinary Research Hayley
Whuk (Neuroscience)

The Steadman Award Gary Hannon (Surgery)

Also pictured Stephen Steadman and Nick
Vamivakas.

GEPA SUPPORT

Under the leadership of Assistant Dean, Kris Lantzky-Eaton, GEPA provides direct support to postdocs including:

- Updating and maintaining Postdoc related policies in SAS & Hajim
- Supporting postdocs looking to take a leave of absence or parental leave
- Connections to resources for postdocs having conflicts or issues within their labs, departments or within the URochester community
- Career development and job search support for postdocs
- Support of the Postdoctoral Association (PDA) group, advising them, managing budget, and assisting with their events including those hosted during National Postdoc Appreciation Week taking place each September.

GEPA COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDED BY GEPA

- **GEPA Connection Newsletter**
 - Distributed bi-weekly to all graduate students, postdocs, Directors of Graduate Studies, Department Coordinators, campus partners
- **GEPA Career Connection Newsletter**
 - Distributed monthly to current students with a focus on career development resources and support
- **Instagram, Facebook, & YouTube Social Media Channels** to distribute content for prospective and current students (as well as the URochester community)

GEPA ASKS & LISTENS

- **GEPA Surveys**
 - GEPA develops and executes an **annual student engagement and orientation survey** distributed to all graduate students in SAS & Hajim
 - We regularly ask and listen to the needs of the departments in surveys and meetings
- **Lunch with the Dean**
 - Dean Vamivakas and the GEPA staff host regular meetings to listen and gather feedback from our students



GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

The GEPA office supervises 3 part-time graduate assistants currently who support our staff with a variety of initiatives. In particular, they support the development of our newsletter, managing of social media accounts, event support, admissions inbox, ambassador program and more. Much of the work discussed in this Annual Report would not be possible without their added support. We also hosted one Intern PhD student the summer of 2026.

EVER BETTER GRADUATE MENTOR PROGRAM



This year the GEPA office launched the “Ever Better Graduate Mentor” program. The program honors those who provide exceptional support to our graduate community. We aim to celebrate mentors who have distinguished themselves by significantly advancing students’ academic, professional, and holistic development. This year we had 23 mentors nominated and recognized including faculty, staff, and graduate students across SAS & Hajim. Mentors were sent a recognition email, certificate, and were formally thanked at our annual Graduate Research Day event.



23 MENTORS RECOGNIZED AY 25-26

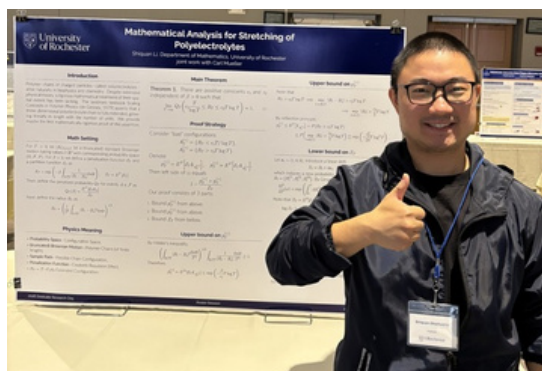
INCLUDING FACULTY, STAFF & GRADUATE STUDENT MENTORS

GRAD ACCELERATOR PROGRAM



This year the GEPA office launched a pilot for another new initiative called the “Grad Accelerator Program” geared toward connecting our graduate students to people, opportunities and experiences to enhance their professional development. We launched it on a pilot basis in the Spring 2026 semester with about 30 graduate student participants across SAS and Hajim. Pilot participants were required to meet 1:1 with David Cota-Buckhout for a career consultation; join the Meliora Collective and complete an activity in each of the 5 skill domains we identified. We gathered their feedback and plan to launch the program to the entire SAS and Hajim graduate student population this Fall 2026.

Pictured below: One of our pilot participants Sophus Li, presenting his poster at Graduate Research Day



**30 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN PILOT
PROGRAM LAUNCH COMING FALL 2026!**

FINANCIAL SERVICES

FINANCIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY GEPA

Under the leadership of Kris Lantzky-Eaton, with support from Nick Chodak, the GEPA Office provides comprehensive financial and administrative oversight to ensure graduate students receive timely and appropriate financial support while advancing departmental strategic goals. Through the following efforts, the office plays a critical role in maintaining sound fiscal stewardship while fostering a positive and supportive experience for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Services include:

- Overhaul of Graduate Student Stipend Budget Process
- Monitored graduate student accepts to come in on budget and meeting goals
- Manage 1500+ graduate student stipend approvals
- Manage TA appointment approvals process
- Process Master's Student Tuition Discounts
- Coordinated new tuition charge process (for next AY)
- Support student & postdoc group finances and budget distribution
- Monitor and allocate funds from the Graduate Student Activity Fee
- Staff maintain CLASP certification
- Run annual NSF GRFP Info Session for Students



PARTNERSHIPS

The GEPA office and staff develop and maintain crucial partnerships across the University to support the work we do including:

- **Graduate Department Coordinators (DGO) & Directors of Graduate Studies (DGS):** Host regular meetings, trainings, and provide direct support to DGOs & DGSs from admissions to student support to financial services
- **Academic Honesty:** GEPA partners to provide information and mandatory training for ALL incoming graduate students in SAS and Hajim, placing registration holds on student accounts for those who do not complete it.
- **NSF GRFP:** GEPA facilitates an info session and distributes information annually to students
- **Ethics Training:** GEPA staff trained
- **River Campus Libraries:** GEPA partners closely to provide monthly coffee hours, collaboration on Graduate Research Day & more
- **Alumni Relations & Constituent Engagement:** Partner closely on events, Ambassador training, & Meliora Weekend

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

For the 25-26 application cycle our recruitment efforts have continued to combine both virtual and in-person events. We sent representatives to 37 events throughout the Fall and Spring semesters reaching thousands of students and collecting leads for continued engagement. We utilized virtual programming, open hours, office hours, social media and enlisted the support of our graduate ambassadors to reach 1000s of prospective students.

GEPA ACTIVITIES - BY THE NUMBERS

Conference Recruiting	Attended 37	Collected 900+ leads & conducted personal outreach
Webinars & Info Sessions	Hosted 25 webinars	1200+ registrants and 500+ attendees
Virtual Office Hours	Hosted 150+	Individual meetings with prospective students
Campus Tours	36+	Individualized graduate tours
Email Responses	100-200+ Per Day	During Application Season
Transcripts	300+ processed	Per academic year by the GEPA office
Graduate School Open House	100+ attendees	*New* collaborative initiative this AY
Master's Student Open House	37 attendees	*New* - Half of attendees are enrolling

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT - 2025 CYCLE

22

RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

For the 2025 application cycle our recruitment efforts have continued to combine both virtual and in-person events. In collaboration with the Kearns Center, we sent representatives including Silka Jacobson-Evans to 31 events throughout the Fall and Spring semesters reaching thousands of students and collecting over 700 leads for continued engagement. The focus of many of these in-person events was on recruiting domestic underrepresented minority populations. While many of the events were longstanding conferences we had attended previously, we also expanded our reach by participating in new conferences such as the AISES annual conference, supporting indigenous students in STEM, and the California Forum on Diversity in graduate education.

BY THE NUMBERS

Interest in the PhD programs in SAS and Hajim has remained strong. The data below reflects the number of submitted applications for which the application fee was either paid or officially waived. This year, the departments and GEPA committed to reducing the number of application fee waivers granted. As a result, the overall number of applications considered decreased compared to previous years.

Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Science

Total Submitted Applications

2023	2024	2025	2026
2939	3034	3795	2204

Total Submitted Applications by Degree

Degree	2023	2024	2025	2026
PhD	1219	1898	2622	1146
Master's	1720	1136	1173	1058

BY THE NUMBERS

Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Science

Total Submitted Applications by Gender

Gender	2023	2024	2025	2026
Female	850	898	1063	649
Male	2078	2136	2732	1555

Total URM Submitted Applications

2023	2024	2025	2026
33	59	75	116

Total Submitted Applications by Citizenship

Citizenship Status	2023	2024	2025	2026
Domestic	280	330	401	554
International	2622	2679	3353	1610
Permanent Resident	27	25	41	34

BY THE NUMBERS

School of Arts and Sciences

** Numbers as of 3/13/2024

Total Submitted Applications

2023	2024	2025	2026
2857	3003	3655	2733

Total Submitted Applications by Degree

Degree	2023	2024	2025	2026
PhD	2677	2837	3465	2334
Master's	180	158	189	397

Total Submitted Applications by Gender

Gender	2023	2024	2025	2026
Female	1354	1328	1609	1307
Male	1503	1664	2041	1407

Total URM Submitted Applications

2023	2024	2025	2026
33	59	75	116

BY THE NUMBERS

School of Arts and Sciences

Total Submitted Applications by Citizenship

Citizenship Status	2023	2024	2025	2026
Domestic	894	763	968	1093
International	1939	2200	2652	1582
Permanent Resident	24	27	31	38

FUTURE PLANS

The GEPA Office provides leadership and support to graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and staff, helping advance excellence in research, scholarship, and community engagement. Over the past 4 years the services for postdoctoral scholars, graduate student, faculty and staff have significantly increased. The GEPA Office is currently at a crossroads in the amount of support that can be provided. In the beginning of the 25-26 academic year GEPA had 7 full-time staff members to serve 41 PhD and Master's programs. The GEPA staff are dedicated to supporting these programs to see students and postdoctoral scholars to be successful in the developing careers. In the next year GEPA looks to increase their work in proactive student support, providing support for positive mentoring relationships between faculty, graduate students and postdoctoral scholars and to continue to build a better process for stipend budget development and providing support for programs in the area of enrollment management and retention.

INCREASED SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SERVICES

GEPA continues to see student needs for services on campus increase. We have determined that supporting proactive engagement with students on academic probation and those that might be struggling in their first year will increase retention. Proactive engagement includes building resources for wellness related activities, increased academic support, activities to support the development of an inclusive environment for families and support for students. We have seen the number and intensity of CARE referrals rise over the years as well as the complex needs for career support in a competitive market. Students also continue to ask for more opportunities to connect to their peers and the campus community to decrease social isolation. The needs of supporting our graduate and postdoc groups continues to rise. With the launch of exciting and important initiatives such as the Grad Accelerator program, we anticipate a strain on the time of our small staff to maintain and grow these programs.

INCREASED NEED FOR SUPPORT IN ADMISSIONS/RECRUITMENT

The GEPA Office serves as a central resource for academic departments by working with University partners to monitor and communicate changes that may affect graduate enrollment and student success. This includes providing guidance on evolving international recruitment trends, immigration and visa policies, enrollment regulations, and institutional processes. GEPA works closely with departments, faculty, and administrative partners to ensure they remain informed of both external developments and internal University initiatives that impact graduate admissions, recruitment, enrollment, and student support. Through proactive communication, training, and consultation, GEPA will increase support for departments to navigate changes effectively and make informed decisions that support recruitment and retention goals.

FUTURE PLANS

POSTDOC AND STUDENT MENTORING

One area GEPA has identified as critical to graduate student and postdoctoral success is the development of strong, effective mentoring relationships between faculty and their students and postdocs. Challenges can arise when students or postdoctoral scholars do not feel comfortable discussing concerns, seeking guidance, or communicating openly about academic, research, or professional difficulties. To address this, GEPA has developed the Advisor Framework to promote clear expectations, open communication, and productive mentoring relationships. Building on this foundation, GEPA will expand programs and resources that support both mentors and student/postdocs. GEPA plans to develop workshops, events, and professional development opportunities designed to strengthen mentorship practices and enhance the graduate and postdoctoral experience. GEPA will also provide resources and training for faculty on effective mentoring, managing research groups, supporting trainees experiencing challenges, and connecting individuals with available University resources. By fostering a culture of strong mentorship and professional development, GEPA seeks to strengthen the research environment and support the success and well-being of graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and faculty alike.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Over the past year, GEPA has played an important role in supporting graduate enrollment planning through budget development, forecasting, and ongoing monitoring of PhD student funding. This work has included developing stipend budgets and partnering with academic departments to determine appropriate admission targets based on historical admissions and yield data. In collaboration with the Hajim School, GEPA successfully managed a process that allowed departments to manage admission offers while remaining aligned with enrollment goals and available resources. GEPA will continue working closely with departmental and school leadership, GEPA will help establish policies, procedures, and data-informed practices that support sustainable enrollment management, effective resource allocation, and long-term planning for graduate education.