

# PDAs and GSAs- Opportunities for Symbiosis

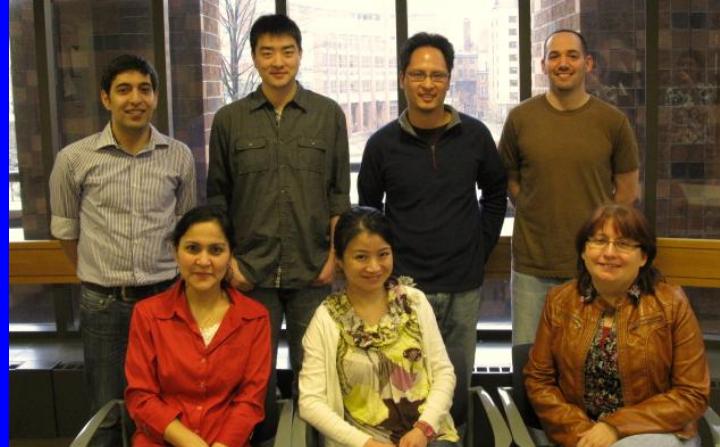
Christopher So, PhD  
Thomas Jefferson University

# Postdoctoral Association (PDAs) and Graduate Student Association (GSAs)



## Graduate Student Association

- President (Chris- U of T, 2004)
- President Emeritus
- VP for Social Events
- VP for Community and Cultural Affairs
- VP for Career Development, PhD Students
- VP for Career Development, MS Students
- VP for Internal Affairs;
- VP for Academic Affairs, PhD Students
- VP for Academic Affairs, MS Students
- Secretary
- Treasurer (Chris- U of T, 2003)
- Education Committee Rep (Chris- U of T, 2005-2006)



## Postdoctoral Association

- President (Chris- 2009-2011)
- Senior Vice-President
- VP for Social Affairs
- VP for Career Development (Chris- 2008)
- VP for Communications
- VP for Nominations and Elections
- Treasurer (Chris- 2007)
- Secretary

# Graduate Student Associations (GSAs)

- Elected graduate student representatives
- Co-ordinate student research symposias
- Development of “soft” skills of student members ie meeting organization, leadership initiatives, administrative experiences



Pictures from GSA-run 'Visions in Pharmacology' 2006, University of Toronto. Pictured: Christopher So, President, Pharmacology Graduate Student Association, 2004.

# Graduate Student Associations (GSAs)

- Organize social events ie social hours, events around student orientations
- Provide input in departmental/university policies on education committees, graduate councils
- Create independent career development opportunities



Pictures from GSA-run Fall student orientations, 2009, Thomas Jefferson University

# Postdoctoral Associations (PDAs)

- Similar orbits as GSA except more career focused:
  - Elected postdoc representatives
  - Organize fellowship writing courses
  - Provide practice teaching/speaking opportunities
  - Postdoc research symposia
  - Create career advancement opportunities ie network development
  - Involvement in University policy initiatives- graduate council, Dean search committee, travel award advisory committees



Pictures from postdoc-run “Postdoctoral Research Symposium” 2010, Thomas Jefferson University

# Postdoctoral Associations (PDAs)

- Organize family-oriented social events
- Involvement in postdoc advocacy groups (International Postdoc Committee, National Postdoctoral Association)
- Development of a postdoc community ie international postdoc potluck lunches, monthly postdoc open meetings



Pictures from PDA-organized outings, 2010

# Opportunities for Symbiosis?

# Shared Social Events

## Co-ordinating social events

- Annual social event for both postdocs and grad students
- Games, raffles and contests co-organized, by VPs of social affairs, and co-financed by both GSA and PDA
- Attended by both students and postdocs
- Easier to coordinate because same faculty advisor for both groups

## Charitable Initiatives

- Expanding the pool of volunteers for fundraisers and volunteer initiatives (tree planting, teaching at inner city schools).



Winter Bash, 2009



Tree Planting, 2009

# Shared Initiatives with College Alumni Board

- At Jefferson, postdocs are recognized as alumni and have a seat at the Alumni Executive Board Meetings.
- **Joint initiatives:**
  - Creation of a alumni network to include postdocs and student alumni
  - Annual alumni day
  - Development of Jefferson College of Graduate Studies (JCGS) Student Lounge
    - Shared initiative between postdoctoral office (PDO), PDA, GSA, JCGS and Alumni board



Postdocs using “the Lounge”

# Shared Skills Development Opportunities

- Personal assessment workshop
  - Myers Briggs (MBTI) workshop, co-organized by PDA, postdoctoral office and career center, to include students and postdocs
- Career workshops (organized by postdoctoral office)
  - Bi-annual resume writing workshop
  - Job interview and conflict management workshops
- Technical Skills Seminars
  - Collaboration between PDA and biotech companies and faculty
  - Attendees include students and staff of Jefferson

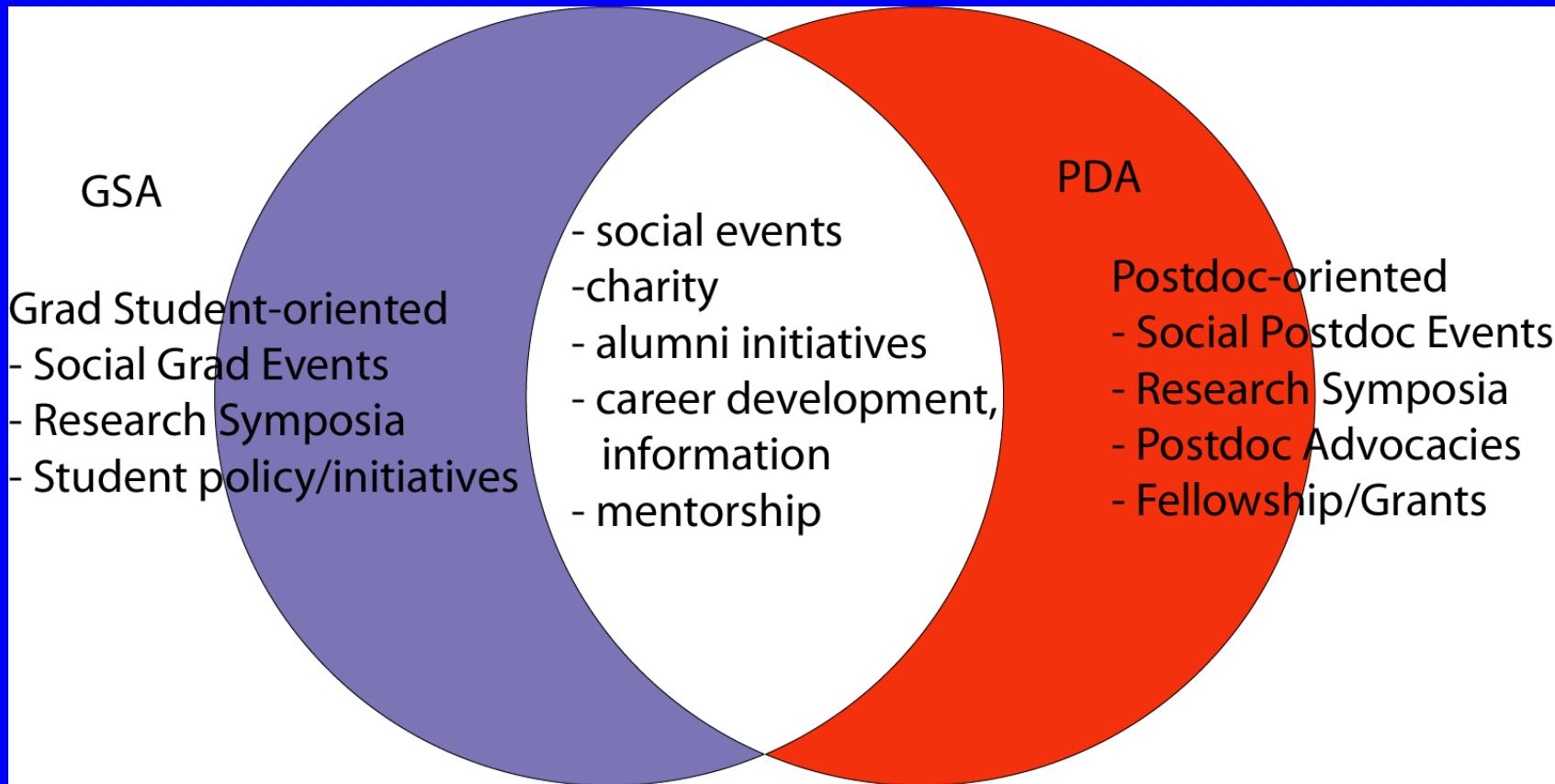
# Shared Career Seminars

- **Input towards invited career speakers**
  - Co-organized and selected, based on survey of both students and postdocs, by career development representatives from both GSA and PDA. Seminars attended by both students and postdocs
  - Take advantage of regional pool of career speakers
- **‘Career Night’**
  - After work career seminar with opportunities to speak to speaker(s) in an informal setting (ie social hour)
  - Co-financed by GSA and PDA, attended by both students and postdocs

# Mentorship Opportunities

- Postdoc-student mentorship programs
  - Course or classes to teach pertinent lab/research issues to students
  - Topics: seeking postdoctoral fellowship, strategies to search for postdoc advisors, etc
  - Mentorship and teaching experience for postdocs

# Summary



# Summary- Importance of Postdoctoral Associations and Postdoctoral Offices

- Advocacy for postdocs
  - Postdoc benefits
- Provide framework for fellowship training
  - Committees, aims and accomplishments
- Added training opportunities to fellows
  - Teaching, practice presentation
- Continuing career education
  - Fellowship writing seminars, technical skills
- Postdoc community
  - International postdoc committee, social events including family

# Thank You!

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