



Congratulations new international graduate students, and welcome to the Rice family!

I am delighted that you have accepted admission at Rice University for your graduate studies. As Vice President for Community Engagement in Rice University's Graduate Student Association (GSA) and a PhD student in the Bioengineering Department, let me personally welcome you to the graduate community.

Nearly 40% of the graduate population at Rice is international, and we are excited to welcome you and your fresh perspectives to Rice. The GSA is the governing body for all students enrolled in graduate-level degree programs and our mission is to enrich the graduate student experience by representing, supporting, and promoting graduate students' interests and values. The GSA is composed of Elected Officers, Departmental Representatives, and all graduate students, including you! We work with administrative offices at the university and the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) to address the needs and concerns of all graduate students.

The GSA hosts a variety of social events throughout the year, including seasonal picnics, monthly coffee breaks, happy hours at Valhalla (the graduate student pub, located on campus), and the Graduate International Cultural Night. Through my position as Vice President for Community Engagement, I represent any group that interacts with the GSA, which includes the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS). Although the GSA works diligently to address the needs of the campus at large, I regularly meet with OISS staff to ensure international students' concerns are being addressed. I also strive to be friendly and approachable to all graduate students, so I invite you to reach out to me via email if you have any questions/concerns, or would like to grab a coffee or a beer!

I hope to see you take an active role in the GSA, which you can do in many ways. Each graduate program has a representative to GSA who serves as a liaison between students in that program and GSA, and each year we hold elections for the GSA executive board, which oversees the GSA. Many students choose to serve Rice and GSA on a university committee, giving them an opportunity to gain experience and take part in activities they are passionate about. Most departments also have a departmental GSA that is tailored to the needs of that specific program. In addition to leadership positions, we also offer a number of volunteering opportunities through high-profile organizations, such as the Houston Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross Society Blood Drives, and other volunteer groups in Houston. Furthermore, there are many student groups representing cultural, professional, and intramural sports that will undoubtedly add value to your academic careers, while offering opportunities to make new friends and expand your social circle.

GSA funding supports the activities of a number of diverse groups on campus to host symposia, conferences, speaker series, social meetings, and many other events. The GSA maintains a close relationship with the Center for Career Development and the Center for Written, Oral, and Verbal Communication to expand professional development programs and workshops for graduate students. We also partner with resource centers on campus, including the Rice Women's Resource Center, the Rice Counseling Center, and the Rice Gender and Sexually Diverse Graduates and Post Docs. The GSA strives to preserve an inclusive and accepting environment for all Rice students, domestic and international.

I encourage you to take advantage of the tremendous resources offered through the GSA. To learn more about these and other opportunities, please visit our website (<http://gsa.rice.edu>) or contact us at gsa@rice.edu. I look forward to meeting you at Graduate Orientation and at GSA events that will follow in the year ahead!

Warm regards,

Ian Kinstlinger (iank@rice.edu)

Graduate Student Association Vice President for Community Engagement