Graduate & Professional Student Association
Executive Board – Declaration of Candidacy
May 2018 – May 2019

Name: Virginia (Nia) Smercina  Department/School: Sociology

Select one: ☐ President □ Vice President ☐ Treasurer ☐ Secretary

Please list any relevant experience/qualifications for the position:
(GPSA experience, student government, extra-curricular activities, or other interests)
- GPSA Graduate Commons Staff Member: Fall 2016-present
- Graduate Assistant for Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, Academic Assessment: Fall 2016-present
  Duties include organization and preparation for Academic Assessment Committee Meetings,
  recording meeting minutes, and circulating the meeting’s take-aways to appropriate parties.
- Lambda Alpha Officer, Secretary (Anthropology Honor Society): Fall 2017-Spring 2018
  Various tasks include meeting preparation, recording minutes, attendance, and take-aways,
  then dispersing the minutes to other Lambda Alpha Officers. Assisted with planning semester
  events related to anthropology (such as trips to local petroglyphs and County Coroner’s Office).
- PHA Delegate, Kappa Delta Sorority (Undergraduate)
  Duties included attending monthly Panhellenic Association meetings involving all PHA-based Greek
  organizations to liaison events and news back to the Sigma Kappa Chapter of Kappa Delta. This allowed
  the chapter to continue to meet PHA guidelines and standards. Additionally, recorded chapter minutes.

Please explain why you are interested in serving in this position:
Serving as GPSA Secretary will allow me to continue to serve UNLV’s campus as well as its
graduate and professional student body. I take pride in campus involvement and assisting
others where I can. GPSA presents an opportunity to display my organization skills while
being an integral part of the stimulating graduate community here at UNLV. I look forward to
using my skills to support the atmosphere this organization has created, one that contributes
to the development of student-based research and scholarship.

Please attach letter of support from your faculty member/advisor to the application.
Dear Colleagues

I am writing on behalf of Virginia Smercina who has decided to pursue the position of Secretary for the GPSA Executive Board. I first met Mrs. Smercina over 11 months ago when she reached out to me for both guidance and to participate on her Master’s thesis committee under UNLV’s Department of Anthropology. Throughout the past 11 months, Virginia has worked diligently to gain insight and a higher understanding in both content and research methods experienced during her tenure at UNLV. Since our first meeting, I have been impressed with her thirst for knowledge as well as her genuine interest in her classes and prospective research topic. I have full confidence that Virginia will follow through in being a strong participant in GPSA.

Mrs. Smercina attended both of my courses SOC 724 and SOC 701. It was in these classes that I first began to understand Virginia’s conviction and discipline when it came to her studies. She continually participated in lively debates, expanded upon modern theory and broke the social constructs of what I would define as the average student. Her continued effort not only allowed her to gain a better understanding of the content in each class, it energized her peers into taking new interest in these topics and ultimately earned her top marks within these courses. Virginia’s blatant determination to pursue a higher level of education would alone sway me to endorse her in her pursuit of the position of Secretary for GPSA. Her intelligence and genuine interest in this position leads me to believe she will be an extremely valued asset to your group and to UNLV’s Graduate College.

In addition to Virginia’s educational undertakings, she remains a very active member on UNLV’s campus as a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Academic Assessment, an Officer in Lambda Alpha (Secretary), and would like to increase her participation by running for Secretary of GPSA this Spring. Virginia continues to use this high level of service as a catalyst for continued success in pursuit of her Master’s degree. I am confident this trend will continue as she works toward obtaining her PhD in Sociology and while servicing your group as acting secretary.

It is also important to note that Mrs. Smercina enjoyed a successful career in the private sector before deciding to return to her true love in the world of academia. Virginia was a Program Manager in a prevalent software company and moved on to become a Project Manager for the country’s largest corrugated display manufacturer. Leaving a successful career in order to chase her love of field research further reassures me that not only does she have the skill for this position, she is passionate about doing this job well.
In summary, please consider this letter a token of my full endorsement for Virginia Smercina for the secretarial position in the GPSA Executive Board. It is my full belief that she not only will continue to be an exemplary student, but that she has the ability to create an impactful and positive influence within your group.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David R. Dickens, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology
CURRICULUM VITAE: VIRGINIA R SMERCINA

Education
2018-present University of Nevada, Las Vegas
   Ph.D. Sociology, in progress
   GPA 3.86
   Las Vegas, NV

2016-present University of Nevada, Las Vegas
   M.A. Anthropology, in progress
   GPA 3.86
   Las Vegas, NV

2009-2012 The Ohio State University
   B.A. Anthropology, Graduated June 2012
   Columbus, OH

Jun-Sept 2011 Università del Salento
   Study Abroad for Italian Language
   Lecce, Puglia, Italia

Professional Experience/Research Appointments

Oral & Poster Presentation | ERQ Conference, June 2018
   7th Ethnography and Qualitative Research Conference, Bergamo, Italy

Graduate Research Assistant | August 2016 – present
   Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Academic Assessment
   • Departmental Course Evaluation reports
   • Assisted is designing, planning, and creation of approximately 788 Course Evaluation reports when reporting software could not be used
   • Collaborated independently with Computer Science Department to create a script which improved project timeline by 4 weeks
   • Manage ongoing projects for the Office of Academic Assessment including:
     • Updating records of annual assessment reports submitted by faculty
     • Managing Academic Assessment website
       • Website was selected as NILOA’s featured website for July 2017
     Distribution and maintenance of Graduating Senior Exit Survey each semester
• Assisted in writing report that was submitted to NWCCU (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities), UNLV's regional accreditation agency, during 2017 accreditation visit.

**Volunteer Research Assistant | May 2015 – October 2016**

• Gathered data on 323 current NBA basketball players with Twitter accounts to use for analysis of dyadic social network data using a multilevel modeling approach
• Harvested data before and throughout the 2015-2016 NBA season
• NodeXL, a network analysis and visualization software with social media network data importers, was used to harvest data.

**Guest Speaker**

Mount St. Joseph University, January 29, 2015, Intercultural Communications

**Research Interests**

In modern social theory the topic of identity is heavily debated. In the past, more solid identities provided stabilization for the social world, but are now abating, allowing new much more fragmented identities to take their place. Processes of change causing this crisis of identity, known as globalization, are upsetting pre-established central structures and undermining the once stable institutions that secured modern society. Individuals of late-modernity are now forced into a social world without an anchor. The once familiar cultural landscapes of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality are transforming, and with it our identity practice must constantly be renegotiated to offset the doubt and uncertainty that characterizes this postmodern era. Some individuals grasp these changes as opportunities, and embrace the uncertainty as a renewed sense of freedom. Among these is the growing population of digital nomads. A community of individuals who embrace a digital coexistence, and are geographically independent of traditional home or office.

**Technical Skills**

• Comfortable in Windows (XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10), Mac, iOS (Apple), and Android platforms
• Proficient in Microsoft Office: Word | Excel | PowerPoint | Visio
• Adobe CC: Photoshop | Illustrator | InDesign | Acrobat Pro | DreamWeaver
• Rhinoceros 3D Modeling
• SPSS
• ArcMap | ArcGIS

**Highlights**

• Exceptional verbal and nonverbal communication
• Skilled in conflict resolution
• Excellent organization and time management
• Strong international cultural awareness and sensitivity
• Project management and process improvement skills
• Ability to manage complex spreadsheets
• Trouble-shooting skills from comprehensive technical background

Smercina | 2
Awards & Honors

Fall 2008  Dean's List
Spring 2009  Dean's List
Fall 2009  Dean's List
Winter 2010  Dean's List
Winter 2011  Dean's List
Fall 2011  Dean's List
Winter 2012  Dean's List
Spring 2012  Dean's List
Fall 2017  4.0 GPA

Work Experience

Aug 2016 – present  Graduate Research Assistant, Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Academic Assessment, UNLV, Las Vegas, NV
Manage ongoing projects for the Office of Academic Assessment including:
• Updating records of annual assessment reports submitted by faculty
• Managing Academic Assessment website
  • Website was selected as NIOA's featured website for July 2017
• Distribution and maintenance of Graduating Senior Exit Survey each semester
• Assisted in writing report that was submitted to NWCCU (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities), UNLV's regional accreditation agency, during 2017 accreditation visit

Member of team selected to design, plan, and create departmental Course Evaluation reports for Fall 2017 evaluations
• Assisted in designing, planning, and creation of approximately 788 Course Evaluation reports when reporting software could not be used
• Collaborated independently with Computer Science Department to create a script which improved project timeline by 4 weeks
• Manage ongoing projects for the Office of Academic Assessment including

Aug 2016 – present  GPSA Graduate Commons
Operate the Graduate Commons in UNLV's Lied Library. A space dedicated to the conducive environment of student-based research and scholarship.

Nov 2015 – Jul 2016  Sales Representative, Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), Henderson, NV
Encouraged fellow outdoor enthusiasts and ensured optimal performance and comfort by recommending the best gear and locales for their interests.
• Educated customers of outdoor activities and proper gear in multiple scenarios
• Assisted customers on the sales floor and through REI sponsored workshops
Dec 2013 – Sept 2015  Project Manager, WestRock, Cincinnati, OH
Developed and maintained ongoing relationships with customers and sales staff for the largest corrugated company in North America.
Managed customer pricing requests, purchase orders, new projects, and project maintenance.
• Assembled project data from various sources for successful formal presentation and implementation
• Resolved customer complaints and issues efficiently, often in less than 30 minutes
• Liaison between customers, plant personnel, and sales team
• Initiated technological advancements within office, cutting down paper usage by 37%
• Supported office staff with hardware, software, and other technological needs and advancements
• Developed New Item Process Flowchart for improved communication and accountability; decreased new project processing time by 2 days

Jul 2012 - Dec 2013  Program Manager, geoAMPS, LLC, Powell, OH
Met operational objectives of Product Support and Development departments. Planned, organized, scheduled, and managed release cycles for software products and the Product Development team.
• Provided quality customer service to all clients
• Promoted from entry level to management in less than 1 year
• Managed seven individual client accounts (average 5 per specialist); 3 by client request
• Team lead of four employees, which implemented QA, and organization strategic plans for software release cycles
• Strong documentation skills and ticket maintenance (Kayako and TFS)

Mar 2010 - Jul 2012  NOC Support Agent, OARnet NOC, Columbus, OH
Provided advanced networking support services to Ohio's academic campuses; K-12, medical, government, and research.
• Gained advanced IT and networking experience
• Responsible for the daily monitoring of advanced network systems

Aug 2008 - Jun 2009  Technical Specialist, ODU Computer Helpdesk, Columbus, OH
Computer repair, customer service and computer assistance over phone, in person, and via email. Department of Information Services.
• Trouble-shooting computing issues for faculty, staff, and students in multiple settings
• Helped install and train university faculty on new interactive technology
• Trained IT personnel on basic computer trouble-shooting methods for software and hardware
• Conducted several Microsoft Office training seminars
Community & Campus Outreach and Volunteer Work

Aug 2017 – May 2018  Anthropology Honors Lambda Alpha Officer, Secretary
Nov 2015  Trail Restoration Project with Friends of Red Rock Canyon
Jun 2003 – Jun 2013  United Way of Warren County, Ohio volunteer
Jan 2012  Center for Child and Family Advocacy volunteer
Aug 2007 – 2012  Girl Scouts of America mentor
Aug 2007 – 2012  Prevent Child Abuse America volunteer
Sept 2011  UIIFI, Undergraduate Interfraternity Institute, Leadership Retreat
May 2010 - 2012  Relay for Life organizer and volunteer
Apr 2010 - 2012  Pay It Forward – Rock the Block, Community Cleanup
Sept 2010  Boys & Girls Club volunteer at University of Illinois

References

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