

Physics Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

Welcome Orientation – Fall 2025



Meet our GSO members!

President: [Indra \(Ina\) Gankhuyag](#)



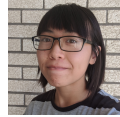
Vice president: [Kaustubh Roy](#)



Treasurer: [Agni Purani](#)



Mock qualifier organisers: [Dilys Ruan](#)

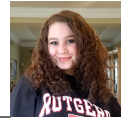


& [David Rogerson](#)

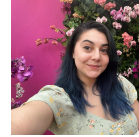


([Lita de la Cruz](#) & [Derek Zapata](#))

GSLC representatives: [Nicole Firestone](#)



& [Lianys Feliciano](#)



Web Administrator: [Anushka Saha](#)



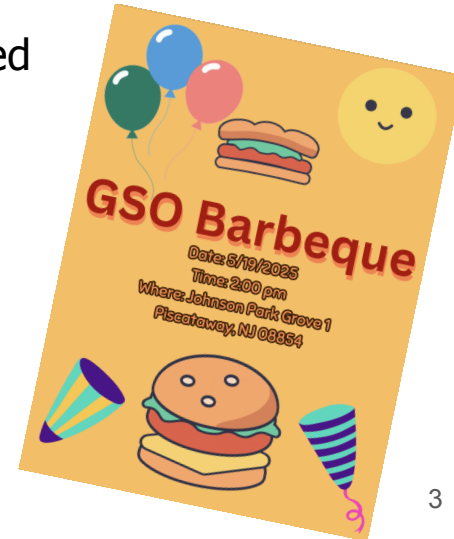
Chair of the Computing Committee: [Ravi Koka](#)



Goals and duties of the Physics & Astronomy



- We are a non-profit organisation run by the Physics and Astronomy graduate students aimed to guide and support the graduate students
- Our organization's main goals:
 - Helping graduate students with departmental and research related problems, Graduate Student Life committee (GSLC)
 - We organise SSPAR talks (with free food)
 - Organizing the mock qualifiers
 - Seasonal grad student barbeques
 - More fun things (surprise...)



✨ SSPAR ✨ (Student Seminars in Physics & Astronomy at Rutgers)

A lot of grad school is spent sitting in an office/lab working on your own niche project by yourself. It can get isolating at times.

SSPAR is aimed to bring students together where you can take a break and learn more about the research, interesting hobbies and fun topics from your peers. The GSO will provide free food from local restaurants (the speaker chooses the food)

Run every 2-3 weeks on Thursday (typically) at 5:30(ish) pm

Previous talks include:

- “An Unnecessarily Deep Dive into the Cars Universe” - Kaustubh Roy (Indian: Delhi Garden)
- “Poker by the Numbers: Statistics Explored Through Texas Hold'em” - Ben Rand and Michael Terilli (Ethiopian: Dashen)
- “Leonessa: An Extremely Metal Poor Dwarf Galaxy”. - Joseph Breneman (Mediterranean: Efes Grill)



*our funding is limited to \$15/person based on who shows up and **signs in (please sign the sheet)**



Mock quals



We have a 3-part qualifying process for the Ph.D. program here:

1. A paper (usually a field review) ~ 15-20 pages
2. A presentation of the content of the paper ~ 20 minutes
3. A question section / "oral exam" ~ 1 - 2 hours

These are stressful, but practice especially the mock qualifier will help! We will assign a group of grad students to run through this entire process with you before your qualifying exam.

Key organizers: Dilys Ruan & David Rogerson

(supported by: Lita de la Cruz & Derek Zapata)

Grad students and life committee (GSLC)

“The GSLC supervises the operation of the graduate program, including advising graduate students, considering complaints, problems, and suggestions, and recommending changes in the program. Student members advise the committee on policy matters.”

Some examples to consult to our grad student GSLC liaisons about:

- Paycheck delays
- Systematic barriers in the program (like placement exams)
- TA's exceeding their 15 hr/week contract limit
- Mediation between grads & faculty if needed

If you want to reach out about anything else not on the list, please don't hesitate!
We're all in this together

Our current GSLC: [Nicole Firestone](#) & [Lianys Feliciano](#)

What else goes on in the department / in the area?

- **MiPA (Minorities in Physics and Astronomy)**: for people who identify in underrepresented groups in P&A, organize to increase equity in the dept
 - Equity and Inclusion Journal club (discuss articles on Physics Education Research, culture in the field, studies on best practices, etc.)
 - Book club (ex. "Invisible Women", "Disordered Cosmos")
- **Robert A. Schommer Observatory**- Public Observing Nights - here in **Serin!**
- Rutgers **Quadball (formerly Quidditch) Recreation Team**
- Rutgers **Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Club**
- **Various recreational activities:**
 - rock climbing and various sports classes can be found in Student recreation center (College Avenue Gym and here in Busch campus Sonny Werblin)

Quick aside: the union!

You are represented by a union!



RUTGERS
AAUP-AFT

American Association of University Professors
American Federation of Teachers • AFL-CIO

In the US, unions are commonplace organizations (separate from your employer) with workers, staff, and lawyers who review contracts and negotiate for better working conditions. (Other unions include those for K-12 teachers, steel workers, police, etc.)

We are in the same union as postdocs as well as non-tenure and tenure track faculty. This partnership gives us immense bargaining power with Rutgers management. Rutgers has one of the highest public TA/GA stipend in the US.

Current contract (2022-2026): we went on strike in the spring of 2023. Graduate TAs and GAs won a **massive, immediate raise** from \$30k → \$35k (2022-2023) with **yearly raises** to \$40,000 this year (2025-2026) and **5 years of guaranteed funding**

This year we are due for a new contract (2026-2030)!

Am I already a member of the union?

[Become a union member!](#)



No! Being a union member is voluntary. Every academic worker at Rutgers (domestic + intl) is covered by the same excellent contract regardless of union membership status.

Dues are necessary to build organizing power (resource funds, strike funds, internships, and compensating the labor of our union staff).

Why is union membership important?

Beyond financial support, your involvement can improve the quality of life for people who work at Rutgers, and for the local community.

- **Some issues that our union focuses on:** race and gender equity, comprehensive healthcare, housing rights, international student rights, parental rights, climate change, University investments.

Year	Minimum Salary	Rate: 0.8%	Per Year	Per Paycheck
2022–23	\$34,678	x .008	\$277.42	\$12.79
2023–24	\$35,335	x .008	\$282.68	\$13.03
2024–25	\$36,395	x .008	\$291.16	\$13.42
2025–26	\$40,000	x .008	\$320.00	\$14.75

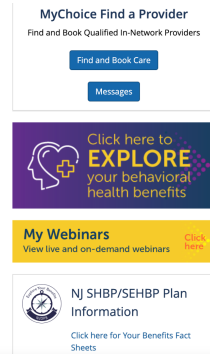
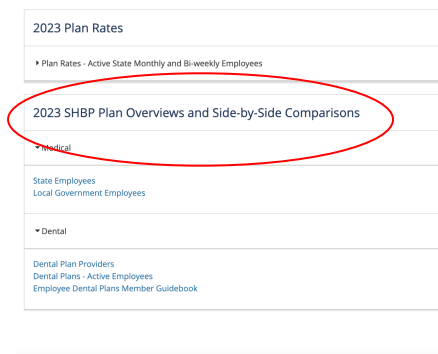
([source](#))

Common P&A Grad Issues

To sign up for insurance, go to benefitsolver.com → if it's your first time, you'll need to create an account ([more info here](#))

On home page, should see a comparison of the different medical and dental plans

You have to have medical insurance (but it doesn't need to be through Rutgers), dental is optional



pt 1 (TA/GA)

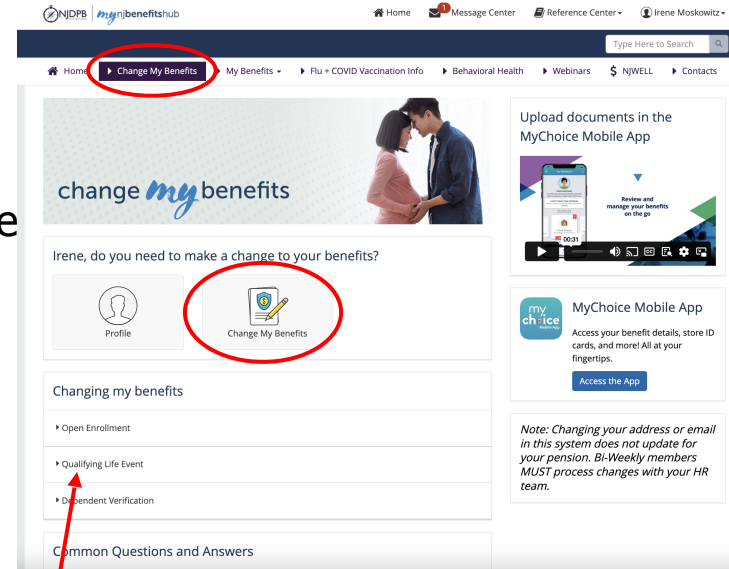
Make sure you are registered for only **one** health insurance be it state or student!

Health Insurance pt 2 (TA/GA)

To actually sign up, go to the “enroll in benefits” tab (mine says “change benefits” because I’m already enrolled, but yours should be something about enrolling)

You should see something that says “enroll in benefits” (again, mine says “change” because I’m already enrolled)→this will walk you through choosing an insurance plan, and a dental plan if you want it

If you’re on your parents’ insurance, you can keep that for now. When you age out, you can still sign up for the state health insurance by using the “qualifying life event” option



If you're a fellow, you'll be on the student health insurance plan. You shouldn't have to do anything to be enrolled in this, but you'll need to decline if you already have insurance

Health Insurance: Problems to watch out for

- Standard Rutgers employees are made to wait for 2 months before being eligible for benefits. **Graduate students are eligible as soon as your contract starts→when you get your insurance card(s), double check that the listed start date is September 1st, NOT November**
- If you have issues, you can file an HR inquiry via [onesource](#) or contact
 - Shirley Hinds (Physics and Astronomy department administrator, shinds@physics.rutgers.edu) probably can't fix it herself, but she probably knows who you should talk to
- For now, fellows are on the student health insurance plan.
- If staying on your parent's health insurance you need to opt out of the student health insurance every semester. If you're on Rutgers insurance it should opt you out automatically.
- Be sure to check you are on **one** health insurance either the state or student

Dental Insurance & Plans

Dental is optional and plans are HMO.

- No deductible.
- Must stay in network and pick a dentist beforehand:
 - Choose a dentist on your provider's website (activates on the 1st of the month)
 - Call insurance provider to choose your dentist

Usually get 2 free cleanings per year and all other services have a set price.

Bring your pay schedule with you for any appointments that are not cleanings.

- Will tell the dentist what to charge you for and for how much.
- Can save hundreds of dollars..

Parking Permits

Most P&A grads park in [Lot 53 A](#). The New Brunswick TA/GA permit allows you to park in most ["Faculty/Staff" lots](#).

You have to get a [temporary pass](#) for August (this year) - October (this year), and then purchase another from October (this year) - August (next year).

Purchase permits and check citations on your [parking account](#). (Beware, they do not always email you about citations!)

1 | PERMITS

+ PURCHASE



Number	Series	Space	Effective	Expires	Vehicles
  NBTAGA230609	New Brunswick TA/GA 2023 		10/13/2022	08/31/2023	 +

International Students

RGlobal check-in

This needs to be completed as soon as possible in order to be fully processed into the system.



You'll need to give them your current address and some official documents:

1. Digital I-20 signed by you
2. Picture of student visa stamp
3. Picture of passport biographical page
4. I-94 confirming entry into the U.S.
5. (As of 2024, according to Shirley) Financial certification form

Getting a Social Security Number (SSN)

Shirley is going to help you apply for your SSN, this is the nearest social security office if you have any issues and if the online portal doesn't work.

Address:	Suite 200 550 Jersey Avenue New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone:	1-800-772-1213
TTY:	1-800-325-0778
Fax:	1-833-950-3315
Hours:	9 AM - 4 PM on weekdays

- During Orientation week there is a university bus going from College ave to the SSN office, You can also form a small group and get an Uber there
- Be sure to bring all documents stated and be prepared including signatures by pen!
You will be sent back if not meeting criteria

RU ID cards

Once you have your netID set up, submit an “acceptable” photo (face-on, white background) through the [Rutgers online photo submission page](#) (“How to submit your photo” > “Upload Photo”)

Physically pick-up your ID at one of the [centers](#). Busch campus has

- Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor Hall, One Stop Student Services Center
- Buell Apartments Housing Office



Legal Support for Rutgers International Students

Jason Hernandez

856-225-2302

jason.c.hernandez@rutgers.edu

*Director of Rutgers Immigrant Community Assistance Project at
Rutgers Law School*

Jeanne LoCicero

917-617-0875

llocicero@aclu-ni.org

Leena Khandwala

Leena.khandwala@rutgers.edu

Managing Attorney of the Immigrants' Rights Clinic at Rutgers Law

Rutgers Student Legal Services

848-932-4529