

# Constitution

## Graduate Student Association

***Preamble:** We, the graduate and professional students at the University of Georgia, do hereby declare the formation of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) for the promotion of comparative, therefore, of all Graduate and Professional Students registered with the University, GSA seeks to serve as a platform for a collegiate exchange of ideas, and facilitate avenues for support towards building a generative and inclusive community of scholars for cultural, professional, social and from those characteristics of Undergraduate Students and those of the Undergraduate Student association(s). The Graduate Student Association, as developed through this Constitution, will deal with such issues which are of primary concern to the Graduate School, its Students, Faculty, and Administration.*

### **Article I. Purpose**

This constitution of the Graduate Student Association (GSA henceforth) of the University of Georgia sets forth the rules that will serve as the guiding principles of the organization. GSA is an advocacy organization composed of all fee-paying graduate and professional students at the University of Georgia, regardless of full or part time status. Representatives from all graduate departments and programs, as well as University-recognized graduate student organizations, serve as a formal representative voting body at the GSA Council meetings. GSA representatives and Officer Team members exist to provide a voice for the University of Georgia's graduate and professional student body.

### **Article II. Membership and Responsibilities**

#### **Section 1. Graduate Student Association Membership**

The Graduate Student Association is composed of all fee-paying graduate and professional students at the University of Georgia who are registered as post-baccalaureate degree-seeking students, whether they attend UGA full time or part time.

#### **Section 2. Representation and voting**

Each department with a graduate degree program, and each University-recognized graduate organization, can send one representative to serve on the GSA Council. GSA Council Representatives should be elected or appointed by departmental- or program-level graduate organizations; should no such organization

exist, the Program Coordinator for a graduate program will be asked to appoint a GSA Council Representative. Ultimately, responsibility for identifying a Council representative lies with the Department. No minimum number of graduate and professional departments represented is required for Council to operate and vote; therefore, it is crucial that departments send a representative to Council.

GSA Council meetings are open, and all graduate students are welcome to attend. For elections of Officers or amendments to the GSA constitution all graduate and professional students are considered voting members. All other issues put to a vote (namely, resolutions) will be only voted on by members of the GSA Council. A graduate-student body-wide vote can also be called if a quorum of GSA Council members, vote that a resolution or other legislative matter should be voted on by the entire graduate and professional student body. In the case of a graduate and professional student body-wide vote, voting will be held on the Involvement Network so that all graduate and professional students can participate.

All voting results and methods will be publicized via the GSA website, the Involvement Network, and/or the GSA listserv to ensure fairness and the integrity of the voting process.

### **Section 3. Responsibilities of GSA Council Representatives**

GSA Council Representatives are expected to serve as conduits of information between the GSA and students in their respective departments and student organizations. GSA Council Representatives are expected to regularly attend meetings and be prepared to discuss agenda items. Representatives who miss two or more meetings without sending a proxy from their department or organization will no longer be considered representatives, and the GSA President will be at liberty to recruit a new representative from that department or organization. Representatives may also serve on GSA ad-hoc committees and represent graduate students on select university committees and working groups. The GSA representatives will also be asked to approve the annual budgets proposed by the President.

## **Article III. Officers**

### **Section 1. Selection of Officers**

The Officer Team of GSA shall consist of a President, Vice President, Graduate University Representative, Director of Internal Operations, Secretary, and two Representatives-at-Large. Officers will be elected by the full membership of the GSA in an open election to be held during the spring of each academic year, with the new officers taking office upon the beginning of the Summer Term.

Officers will serve from the start of the Summer Semester (or, whenever they are elected, in the case of a delayed election) to the end of the following Spring Semester. Candidates for President, Vice President, and Graduate University Representative will be asked to demonstrate one year of relevant university involvement or leadership experience as part of their election platform; this experience can be constituted

by, but is not limited to, serving as a representative to the GSA Council or having previously served on the Officer Team. Candidates for Director of Internal Operations and Secretary will be asked to demonstrate relevant organizational, logistical, and/or event planning experience as part of their election platform. The two Representatives-at-Large will be chosen from the GSA Council after the start of the academic year.

If, during the academic year, the President should be unable to continue in their post, the Vice President will assume the duties of the President, and the President's committee memberships will be distributed among the remaining Officers. If any other Officer post is vacated during the academic year, the President is empowered to appoint a replacement from among the GSA Council Representatives, with approval by a GSA Council vote.

Elections will be held yearly in March. All prospective officers must declare their candidacy a minimum of two academic weeks before the election. The members of the Officer Team are not required to run together on a ticket. Each Officer Team member must be elected by a 50% plus 1 majority of votes cast. If no candidate receives that percentage, a run-off will be held as soon as possible between the two candidates with the highest number of votes. The mode of voting will be through the UGA Involvement Network website. All prospective Officers must pay the student activity fee to serve.

## **Section 2. Duties of the President**

The President of the GSA is the primary spokesperson for the GSA when working with the University administration and the community at large.

The President's duties and appointments include the following:

- running regularly scheduled GSA Council meetings, using Robert's Rules of Order if necessary;
- overseeing the organization of GSA events and initiatives as directed by the GSA Council;
- overseeing the organization of Fall Orientation events;
- maintaining and updating the GSA listserv;
- overseeing the development of the annual GSA budget, with the approval of the GSA Council, and presenting the GSA budget at the annual All-Campus Allocations meeting;
- serving on the following University committees:
  - University Council
  - Executive Committee of the University Council
  - Graduate Council
  - Leaders Committee,
  - Educational Affairs Committee
  - All-Campus Allocations Committee
- submitting reports at the GSA Council meetings on committee developments pertaining to graduate student life at the University;
- disseminating information of relevance to the local and state graduate body;

- liaising between the GSA and Student Government Association;
- working with the subsequent year's elected Officers to craft and submit a budget in the student fee allocations process and to otherwise make the leadership transition as smooth as possible;
- sending out announcements, polls, and voting procedures through the GSA listserv;
- requesting that the Graduate School send out election notifications and calls for Graduate Council Representatives; and,
- Other duties as assigned.

The President receives a Graduate Assistantship, including a tuition waiver, through the University. If the President has an assistantship separate from their capacity as President, then the assistantship may be transferred to another member of the Officer Team starting with the Vice President, at the discretion of the entity providing the assistantship. The assistantship is neutral in regard to the degree program of the recipient, meaning that it does not depend upon master, doctoral, certificate, or professional degree program. However, the GSA President must be enrolled in a program that falls under the jurisdiction of the UGA Graduate School. The assistantship is governed by all rules of the University regarding standard teaching and research assistantships, including credit hour enrollment. The GSA president will be eligible to receive this assistantship during their term in office as long as they fulfill all of the duties and responsibilities as described in this section. Failure to complete these duties can result in loss of this assistantship, as can a successful impeachment, as described in Article III, Section 7. In the case of an impeachment, the individual who replaces the previous president may be eligible to have the assistantship transferred to them.

### **Section 3. Duties of the Vice President and Graduate University Representative**

The Vice President and Graduate Student Representative are responsible for working with the President to carry out the many duties associated with coordinating GSA events and meetings. Primary duties include service on university committees and working groups, working with the President to recruit volunteers for same, and oversight of GSA expenditures. The Vice President will also assume the duties of the President at GSA Council meetings should the President be unable to attend.

The Vice President and Graduate University Representative together will occupy GSA's second and third seats on the University Council. The Vice President and Graduate University Representative will also divide between them memberships on the following University committees:

- Curriculum Committee
- Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics
- University Libraries Committee
- Committee on Facilities
- Strategic Planning Committee
- Committee on Student Life

The Vice President and Graduate University Representative will attend all regularly scheduled GSA Council meetings to present reports on committee developments pertaining to graduate student life at the University. They will also complete other duties as assigned.

#### **Section 4. Duties of the Director of Internal Operations**

The Director of Internal Operations is responsible for maintaining the financials and logistical planning for all GSA functions. The duties of the Director of Internal Operations include:

- securing purchasing approvals and maintaining financial documentation through the Engagement, Leadership, and Service office;
- retaining all directives given to GSA from various University offices, including but not limited to those sent by the Allocations Committee at the end of each academic year;
- logistical planning and support (e.g., space reservations, transportation arrangements, catering arrangements, technical support) for all GSA functions including, but not limited to orientation, workshops, conferences, special guest speakers, and collaborative events;
- developing and maintaining a master calendar for GSA processes and procedures, including those specific to the Officer positions;
- serve on the All-Campus Allocations Committee, which meets each Spring semester; and,
- Other duties as assigned.

#### **Section 5. Duties of the Secretary**

The Secretary is responsible for the institutional memory of the GSA by maintaining clear, complete, and coherent records. The duties of the Secretary include:

- maintaining records of all meetings and committee updates;
- taking the minutes of all GSA Council meetings and ensuring their accessibility online and in hardcopy in the GSA office;
- maintaining and updating the GSA website and social media accounts;
- maintaining both a public calendar of GSA events and an Officer calendar that cross-lists all committee meetings; and,
- Other duties as assigned.

#### **Section 6. Duties of the Representatives-at-Large (2)**

The (2) Representatives-at-Large are expected to attend GSA Council meetings and are the designated alternate at any meeting for which the other Officers cannot be in attendance. They also serve as two out of the three voting members to the Graduate School's Graduate Council, with the president holding the third role. They also complete other duties as assigned.

## **Section 7. Impeachment of Officers**

In the case of malfeasance, misfeasance or nonfeasance of the duties of office, the GSA council may impeach and remove from office any Officer Team member. A vote to recommend removal can be initiated by any five signatory GSA Council Representatives, who are required to provide at least 14 days' written notice to all GSA Council Representatives and to the officer under potential recommendation will be discussed and voted on at the following GSA Council meeting. An impeachment and recommendation for removal from office will require the vote of 2/3 of all GSA Council Representatives in good standing, to be voted either in person at the GSA meeting or via e-mail. Financial implications as a result of impeachment will be decided upon by the university entity providing the funding.

## **Article IV. Meetings**

### **Section 1. Schedule**

The GSA Council will meet a minimum of four (4) times each Fall and Spring semester. Special sessions, defined as either additional meetings during the Fall and Spring or meetings during the summer, may take place if either called by the President or proposed by any Standing Committee or Special Committee chair and seconded by another Special Committee Chair. Special meetings should be called at least 7 days in advance of when they will take place. Meetings will be at a designated, publicized place and occur during a designated, publicized day and time each month.

### **Section 2. Model for Meetings**

GSA Council meetings will be conducted as a cross between a democratic forum and town hall format. GSA Council members will discuss various events and issues in the "town hall" style format. Resolutions and other pieces of legislation will be voted upon by the methods described in Article II, Section 2.

The Vice President of the GSA votes in the case of a tie.

### **Section 3. Open Meetings**

All meetings of the GSA Council are open to all graduate and professional students. While most meetings are open to the University community at large, the GSA reserves the right to hold an executive session open only to graduate and professional students and/or one only open to GSA Council representatives and the executive board. Executive sessions can be called in advance of a meeting by the President or proposed in advance of a meeting by any Standing Committee or Special Committee Chair and called into effect if seconded by any Committee Chair. Any GSA Council member can also use Robert's Rules to

motion for an Executive Session at any point during a Council meeting, which will go into effect if seconded by another member.

#### **Section 4. Quorum and Majority Rules for Voting**

As GSA membership is open to all graduate and professional students, the membership potentially includes the entire population of the graduate and professional student body. For the purpose of voting on GSA-wide initiatives, elections, and changes in governance, quorum is set at 1% of the entire graduate and professional student body. School-wide measures must receive at least 50% + 1 of the total votes in order to pass.

The GSA Council is to be made of elected representatives from any and all departments with graduate programs, plus representatives from officially recognized graduate student groups on campus. GSA cannot, however, require any department, program, or graduate student group to supply a representative. Therefore, quorum for GSA Council meetings for each academic year shall be set at 50% of those representatives whose names have been officially submitted to the GSA Director of Internal Operations. As in the case of school-wide measures, Council votes must receive at least 50% + 1 of the total votes in order to pass.

#### **Section 5. Meeting Agendas**

The “meeting agenda” refers to the action items that will be voted on and/or discussed by GSA council members at meetings of the Council. Committee chairs, on behalf of their committees, (defined in Article V) who submit meeting agenda items to the President at least 10 days in advance of a regular GSA Council meeting will have their agenda items included in the meeting schedule; submitting meeting agenda items in a shorter time frame and/or prior to specially called meetings of the Council can be handled on a case-by-case basis by the President and executive board. Procedures for committees making an internal decision regarding how to decide if they want to put something in an agenda are detailed in Article V, section 4. The Chair of each Committee or their designee is responsible for fully explaining what the agenda item is and whether it is an item the Committee intends to put up for a vote and/or discuss in a town hall format with the rest of the Council. The President is responsible for disseminating a meeting agenda to GSA Council members 7 days in advance of a regular Council meeting and as early as possible prior to a special Council meeting.

#### **Section 6. Resolutions**

A “resolution” refers to a piece of legislation passed by the GSA Council to represent the GSA’s official stance on an issue related to graduate students to the University of Georgia Graduate School, the University of Georgia as a whole, and/or the University System of Georgia. A resolution might, for instance, condemn or support a certain policy or policies of the Graduate School, UGA, and/or the USG,

as well as make policy recommendations to these same bodies. When a Committee puts a Resolution on the GSA Council agenda for a vote, the chair of that Committee or their designee is required to facilitate a town hall style discussion of the merits of the resolution prior to the entire council taking a vote. At the conclusion of discussing a resolution, members may motion to hold a vote on the resolution, to not hold a vote on the resolution, or to table the vote on the resolution to a later GSA Council meeting.

Only GSA Council members vote on resolutions; during the 7 days between when Council members receive the meeting agenda and the day of the Council meeting, Council members are individually responsible for considering whether and how to vote on a resolution to represent their department, something that may entail informally speaking with members of their department and/or taking a more formal survey. Ultimately, the decision of whether and how to vote lies with the individual GSA Council member; if members of any individual graduate department feel their GSA Council representative has not voted in their best interests, they may address that issue internally.

## **Article V. Committees**

### **Section 1: Standing Committees**

In order to address ongoing and recurring matters important to graduate and professional students' interests, the GSA will constitute six standing committees focused on matters including, but not limited to: community relations, health insurance, the annual interdisciplinary conference, and international student affairs. These standing committees include:

- I. Diversity and Inclusion Committee**, whose mission is to foster an inclusive, safe, and supporting environment for the graduate community of UGA and advocacy on behalf of all graduate and professional students regardless of identity on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ability.
- II. Social Committee**, whose mission is to provide meaningful programming for graduate and professional students at UGA in order to facilitate intentional social enrichment and make connections across all graduate departments.
- III. Professional Development and Campus Student Support Committee**, whose mission is to provide professional development opportunities and connect graduate and professional students to academic and career-oriented resources and information.
- IV. Student Health and Wellness Committee**, whose mission is to promote healthy lifestyles choices by providing information, connection to resources, education, social support, and by advocating for the physical and mental health needs of graduate students.
- V. Student Advocacy and Campus Issues Committee**, whose mission is to identify and research graduate and professional student needs and advocate on behalf of graduate and professional students.



## **Section 2: Committee Membership**

All GSA Council Representatives will be assigned to at least one standing committee by the second Council meeting of the fall semester. The President is charged to recruit and appoint interested department representatives to serve as committee chairs for standing committees. If two representatives agree to share responsibilities for a committee, the President may appoint them as co-chairs. Committee chairs are responsible for recruiting committee members to assist their efforts and for reporting their activities at the GSA meetings. While only GSA representatives may serve as committee chairs, any graduate or professional student is eligible for non-voting membership on these committees.

## **Section 3: Special Committees**

The President may, at any time, form special committees to address issues and concerns facing graduate and professional students as they arise. The President is empowered to recruit and nominate department representatives to serve as members and chairs for these special committees. In addition, a new Special Committee may form if a Standing Committee or preexisting Special Committee introduces an agenda item to form an additional Special Committee at a GSA Council meeting that is then voted through by other GSA Council members, per the procedures for meeting agenda items and voting in Article IV.

## **Section 4: Committee Operations**

Committee chairs/co-chairs are responsible for the internal operations of each individual Standing and Special Committee. Chairs/co-chairs or their designees are responsible for calling Committee meetings, running those meetings, sharing what the Committee has been working on at GSA Council meetings, and submitting agenda items to the President for upcoming meetings. If a Committee chair deems it appropriate to remove a Committee member for non-participation or other issues, they should discuss that issue with the President and officer team on a case-by-case basis. If Committee members find a Chair to be no longer representing them sufficiently, they can call an internal vote to impeach and remove their Chair; the details of how the vote takes place are up to the Committee, but a plurality of members should vote for the removal for it to take place, and Committee members should maintain a written record of the vote.

Committee chairs/co-chairs should put any potential agenda items (including, but not limited to, resolutions) that they want to bring to a *vote* at the GSA Council to an internal Committee vote prior to doing so. Putting the agenda item to a vote at GSA Council is something that should be approved by a plurality of members of the individual committee prior to the Committee Chair submitting it to the president. The precise operation and implementation of a vote is at the discretion of each Committee chair. It is the Chair's responsibility to keep a written record of how the vote takes place and the results, if requested by the President, Executive Board, or other GSA Council members.

In contrast, Committees submitting agenda items that do not require a vote at GSA Council do not require an internal Committee vote.

### **Article VI. Statement of Nondiscrimination**

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) does not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of gender, ethnicity, creed, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, age, national origin, or veteran status. It is the policy of this organization to be open and welcoming to all graduate and professional students.

Membership and all privileges, including voting and officer positions, must be extended to all students without regard to race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.

Membership and all privileges, including voting and officer positions, must be extended to all students as stated in the University of Georgia Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color or national origin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Title IX states that: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Elected officers of the GSA and GSA Council Committee Chairs who engage in discrimination or harassing behaviors are immediately subject to impeachment, as described in Article III, Section 7 or Article V, Section 4. Individual GSA Council members who engage in discrimination or harassing behaviors are subject to removal from their Committee assignment(s) and/or council at the discretion of their Committee Chair and/or the Executive Board.

### **Article VII. Robert's Rules**

For procedures not covered in this constitution and addressing controversial topics that cannot be resolved by consensus, Robert's Rules of Order, as defined in Henry Martyn Robert's *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* will be implemented. GSA Council meetings will either be held in

accordance with Robert's Rules of Order or by a method approved by the GSA President. The President may direct when a GSA Council meeting is operating under Robert's Rules; a meeting can also shift to being operated under Robert's Rules if motioned by any individual GSA Council member and seconded by another.

### **Article VIII. Ratification and Amendments**

This Constitution will be ratified by a 3/4 vote of the GSA members who participate in an open vote which has the sole purpose of ratifications to this document and may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the GSA members who participate in an open vote which has the sole purpose of amending this document. Any member of the GSA general body can propose an amendment to the constitution by contacting the GSA President who will then share the proposal with the GSA Council at the next Council meeting. At which time, the President shall appoint a special committee of no less than 3 Council members, including a Committee chair, to debate the merits of the proposal. The Committee should hold an internal vote regarding whether to put the amendment forward to a vote per the procedures described in Article V, Section 4. If the proposal passes the committee, it shall be put forth to the GSA general body to vote on, per Article II, Section 2. Proposed ratifications and amendments will be introduced at a regular GSA meeting, and cannot be approved until the subsequent meeting to allow time for discussion and debate.