

CONSTITUTION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

Last Revised February 2013

PREAMBLE

The students of the Graduate School of the College of Charleston so establish this Constitution for the preservation and improvement of a democratic Graduate Student Association at the College of Charleston. It shall be the purpose of this Constitution and the resolutions legally adopted there under to serve as the guiding documents for the Graduate Student Body at the College of Charleston. This Constitution shall define the structure of the Graduate Student Association, which consists of the Executive and Council branches.

ARTICLE I – Name & Purpose

Section 1: Name

- This organization shall be known as the Graduate Student Association (GSA) of the College of Charleston and shall be the preeminent governance organization for the students enrolled in the Graduate School of the College of Charleston.

Section 2: Definitions

- The term Graduate Student Association (GSA) refers to all full-time and part-time students enrolled in the Graduate School of the College of Charleston.
- The term Executive Board refers to the elected President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- The term Graduate Student Council (GSC) refers to appointed organization delegates and elected Executive Board members.
- The term college refers to all graduate programs sanctioned under the auspices of the College of Charleston, including any off-campus and joint graduate programs.

Section 3: Purpose

- The purposes of the Graduate Student Association shall be:
 - (1) To provide a common association among graduate students in all divisions and departments of the Graduate School of the College of Charleston.
 - (2) To work with the college administration and other commissions in order to improve the quality of the graduate programs, graduate research opportunities, and graduate student services.
 - (3) To promote the improvement of graduate student life - including academic, professional, social, cultural, and recreational programs.
 - (4) To represent the interests of graduate students in all college activities and to facilitate the exchange of information between the college governance structure and the graduate students.

- (5) To provide a forum for discussion of issues internal and external of concern to graduate students.
- (6) To facilitate the exchange of ideas, information, and appropriate resources among other student groups.
- (7) To co-sponsor programs with other student organizations within and outside of the College of Charleston.
- (8) To maintain a budget for graduate student purposes.

ARTICLE II – Membership

Section 1: GSA Membership

- Membership in the GSA shall include all full-time and part-time students enrolled in the Graduate School of the College of Charleston.

Section 2: GSC Representation

- Each organization shall have 2 delegates who will serve as members of the GSC.
- Only appointed delegates shall have voting privileges.

Section 3: Discrimination Clause

The GSA and the College of Charleston are committed to providing leadership in the attainment of equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other legally protected classification. This effort is in compliance with all federal and state laws, including Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 as amended. Inquiries should be directed to the Office of Human Relations and Minority Affairs, College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina 29424-0001.

Section 4: Hazing

This organization complies with all State and Federal laws and College of Charleston policies on hazing. This organization recognizes hazing to be any action taken or situation created to inflict physical or mental discomfort, embarrassment, harassment or ridicule upon an individual or group. Further, the members of this organization understand that any individual or group found responsible for hazing will be subject to disciplinary action, which may result in probation, suspension or revocation of GSA recognition.

ARTICLE III – Governance

Section 1: Governance

- The governance of the GSA will consist of a Graduate Student Council (GSC) led by an elected Executive Board. The Dean of the Graduate School of the College of Charleston shall advise the GSC.

- Members of the Executive Board and GSC must be in good academic standing as deemed by the college. If any member of the Executive Board or GSC drops below good academic standing, he or she will be replaced according to procedures found in the GSA Bylaws.

Section 2: Graduate Student Council

- The GSC shall consist of the two voting delegates (or their proxies) from each graduate student organization.
- Organization delegates shall be responsible for:
 - (1) Attending all GSC meetings or sending a proxy in their place.
 - (2) Representing the concerns and needs of their constituency.
 - (3) Actively serving on at least one committee.
 - (4) Attending at least one GSA event per semester.
 - (5) Providing their constituents with meeting minutes upon request.
 - (6) Promoting and advertising GSA events and meetings to their constituents.
 - (7) Serving as a voting member of the GSC.
- The GSC shall only recognize GSC organization delegates if they are sanctioned by the graduate students of the organization they represent.

Section 3: Executive Board

- An Executive Board consisting of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary shall coordinate the overall activities of the GSC. No more than two Executive Board members shall be allowed per graduate program.
- The Executive Board will ensure that graduate students are consistently represented in all pertinent committees of the College of Charleston including but not limited to the Graduate Council, SGA, and faculty senate.
- Terms on the Executive Board shall run one year from May 1st to May 1st.
- The Executive Board members shall receive compensation up to, but not to exceed 5.0% of the total budget. The total amount of 5.0% shall be divided equally among the four Executive Officers. The Graduate Student Council can withhold up to 50% of this amount upon a two-thirds vote.
- Each outgoing Executive Board member shall be responsible for the continuity of his or her office.
- The Executive Board shall be the reviewing committee for funding awards.

Section 4: The President

The President shall:

- (1) Be the chief executive officer of the GSA.
- (2) Chair the Executive Board.
- (3) Be the official representative of the graduate student body.
- (4) Plan and conduct GSC elections unless running for reelection.

- (5) Be responsible for the continuity of the GSA.
- (6) Be a non-voting member of the GSC except in the case of a tie.
- (7) Have the right to veto motions passed by the GSA, however this can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of the GSC.

Section 5: The Vice President

The Vice President shall:

- (1) Assist the President in the execution of GSA policies and operations.
- (2) Plan and conduct a constitutional review annually or as needed.
- (3) Act in lieu of the President if the President is unable to perform the duties of the office and shall succeed the office if a vacancy occurs.
- (4) Act as Parliamentarian and enforce Parliamentary Procedure.
- (5) Organize and support the committee chairs, assuring that committees are fulfilling their roles.
- (6) Preside over meetings of the GSC.
- (7) Be a voting member of the GSC.

Section 6: The Treasurer

The Treasurer shall:

- (1) Be in charge of all monetary affairs of the GSA including record keeping and timely depositing/distribution of funds.
- (2) Ensure the GSA checkbook is continually and accurately balanced.
- (3) Develop, present, and maintain an operating budget with the assistance of the Appropriations Committee.
- (4) Report on finances of the GSA at the monthly council meetings.
- (5) Be involved with any fund raising projects deemed desirable or necessary by the GSC.
- (6) Chair the appropriations committee.
- (7) Review any budget reallocation and contingency fund requests with the assistance of the Executive board.
- (8) Be a voting member of the GSC

Section 7: The Secretary

The Secretary shall:

- (1) Maintain all official records of the GSA, including membership, agendas, and minutes.
- (2) Notify GSC delegates of scheduled meetings.
- (3) Take roll and manage the attendance policy.
- (4) Handle all GSA correspondence.
- (5) Process new organization requests.
- (6) Maintain an up to date e-mail contact list of the executive officers for GSC organizations.
- (7) Be a voting member of the GSC.

ARTICLE IV – Committees

Section 1: Committee Formation

- Committees shall be made up of at least three GSC delegates or graduate students at the college who wish to participate.
- All committees will be chaired by a member of the GSC who will report to the Vice President with the exception of the appropriations committee, which will report to and be chaired by the Treasurer.
- Committee chairs will be selected by the members of the Executive Board to be ratified by majority vote of the GSC. Candidates must have attended 4 or more Graduate Student Council meetings; 2 or more for students who enroll in a graduate program in January.
- Committee members shall become so by volunteering for a particular committee with discretion of the committee chair acting as the deciding factor of membership for that committee.
- All committee members are expected to participate in and contribute to all activities of their committee.
- Permanent committees may only be established or removed by amendment to the Constitution of the GSA. Permanent committees shall be added only when there is an expectation that the business of the committee will become an integral part of the GSA for an extended period of time.

Section 2: Graduate Representation and Student Welfare Committee

- The Graduate Representation and Student Welfare Committee shall work with the college to maintain high standards within academia, help provide academic resources to graduate students of the college, and work towards assessing problems, establishing and maintaining solutions for all graduate student issues of main concern (as determined by the GSC) outside of academia. This may include but is not limited to: health insurance coverage, parking fees for Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants, housing, etc.
- This committee shall also be responsible for planning and coordinating any academic activities that may involve multiple graduate programs within the college, such as but not limited to, a Graduate Student Research Seminar, in addition to maintaining the Graduate Student Association web resources as needed, including but not limited to the GSA website.
- Unlimited membership.

Section 3: Appropriations Committee

- The Appropriations Committee shall be chaired by the GSA Treasurer and shall oversee the allocation of funds from the college to each graduate organization. They shall also oversee the allocation of money for GSA programs and social activities for enrolled graduate students in the college.

- The committee shall be responsible for the preparation of a balanced budget each year for the following academic year. The proposed budget shall be approved by a simple majority of the committee at a separate meeting in April. An adjusted budget accounting for funds allocated to the GSA will be approved by a simple majority of the committee at the beginning of the new academic year if necessary.
- Membership shall be restricted to the Treasurer (or a proxy) from each organization.

Section 4: Social Activities Committee

- The Social Activities Committee shall be responsible for any non-academic activities that may involve multiple graduate student organizations.
- This committee shall also be responsible for planning and coordinating at least one graduate student social activity per month as well as at least one event per year in partnership with another Charleston area college or university.
- Unlimited membership.

Section 5: Community Outreach Committee

- The Community Outreach Committee shall be responsible for all service oriented activities relevant to the GSA and the college.
- This committee shall coordinate graduate student efforts to perform outreach activities within the College of Charleston and surrounding communities. These outreach activities may include but are not limited to beach clean-ups, mentoring activities, blood drives, etc.
- Unlimited membership.

Section 6: Ad hoc Committees

- Ad hoc committees shall be established to address specific issues or concerns that affect the graduate community which are not already within the jurisdiction of any permanent committee.
- Ad hoc committees shall be recommended by the Executive Board and ratified by a simple majority vote of the GSC.
- The Executive Board shall charge ad hoc committees with a specific mission, time requirements and directions for the committee's product.
- Unlimited membership.

ARTICLE V – Meetings

Section 1: Meetings of the Executive Board

- The Executive Board shall meet at least twice monthly, once as an Executive Board and once with the entire GSC, and shall participate in any emergency meetings of the GSC.

Section 2: Meetings of the GSC

- The GSC shall meet at least once monthly.
- GSC meetings are open to the public.
- Special meetings may be called by the President as needed and also may be scheduled by the GSC at a regular meeting.
- Meetings shall follow parliamentary procedure as defined by Robert's Rules of Order in all cases where such rules are applicable and are not inconsistent with the special rules of order in this constitution.
- At least one half of the members of the council are required for quorum. A majority of the voting members must approve a motion for it to be passed.

Section 3: Committee Meetings

- Committees shall meet at the discretion of the committee chairs and/or request of the GSC or Executive Board.

Section 4: Attendance and Proxies

- Organization delegates must attend required meetings or arrange for an alternate to represent their standing.
- If a delegate is unable to attend a meeting of the GSC, he or she shall appoint a graduate student of that department as proxy, and inform the Secretary of this in writing prior to the start of the meeting. Following the acceptance of the proxy by the Executive Board, the proxy shall assume all duties and privileges of the delegate for the duration of the meeting.
- The Executive Board has the power to dismiss delegates for failure to comply with the attendance policy.

ARTICLE VI – Finances

Section 1: Funding for students

- Any currently enrolled student in the Graduate School of the College of Charleston who is a member of an active GSA organization or who has attended at least two monthly meetings of the GSC is eligible to receive grant funding to be used toward attending conferences or meetings, presenting research, or conducting research.
- The application process will be announced to and open to all eligible students at least one month prior to each application deadline.
- To apply for funding through the GSA grant program, a student must complete an official application and has either personally attended at least two (2) GSC meetings or is a member of a participating organization within the GSC.
- Applications will be collected, reviewed, and awarded by the Executive Board and Faculty Advisor at least two (2) times per year.

- Funding recipients shall attend the GSC meeting following their travel or project completion to comment on their experience supported by GSA funds. Alternatively, funding recipients may write a guest entry on the GSA Blog about their experience.

Section 2: Funding for organizations

- Approval of organizations must be made by the Executive Board and Faculty Advisor and then ratified by a simple majority of the GSC.
- In order for an organization to be eligible for financial assistance from the GSA, they must complete the annual registration process detailed in the Graduate Compass, participate in the GSA as an approved graduate student organization for one semester, and submit a budget request to the Appropriations Committee in the spring term. Failure to register annually shall result in ineligibility to request new monies outside of the allocated budget previously approved by the Appropriations Committee. Any organization that requests funding from the GSA that is specific to a single program of the graduate school must have active delegates serving in the GSC and must be represented at every meeting of the year. All organizations receiving funding are eligible to request new monies from contingency with justification.
- An established organization lacking representation shall be subject to restricted annual budget propositions to the Appropriations Committee for the following year or until such a time that organization representation improves. These organizations shall remain eligible to request new monies with justification.
- All organization treasurers (or an appointed proxy familiar with their proposed budget) are expected to be in attendance at the annual budget meeting in the spring semester. Any organization without representation at the meeting forfeits the right to justify their proposed budget and shall be subject to funding reductions as recommended by the Appropriations Committee and approved by the Executive Board and Faculty Advisor.

ARTICLE VII – Policies

Section 1: College Policies

- This organization shall abide by all applicable policies contained in the College of Charleston student handbook and The Graduate Compass.
- The GSA is not authorized to determine the policies or business of other student organizations.

ARTICLE VII – Constitutional Amendments

Section 1: Procedures

- Additions, amendments, or deletions to the constitution and the bylaws shall be made in the following manner:
 - (1) A first reading to introduce a proposed change shall be made at a meeting of the GSC after it has been reviewed and suggested by one of the Executive Officers. A motion and a seconded motion are required for the proposal of any

amendment. If the motion is passed by the vote of the majority of the Council members present, the Secretary shall then submit a text of the proposed amendment to all the members of the Council prior to the next meeting.

- (2) A second reading shall precede the vote on the proposed change at the next regular meeting of the GSC. Changes to the Constitution shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the GSC delegates at the regular GSC meeting.

Section 2: Formal Review

- A formal review of the constitution and bylaws shall be done periodically at the discretion of the current Executive Board.
- Any proposed amendments shall follow the procedures established in Section 1.

Section 3: Temporary Suspension

- Temporary suspension of any existing article of the constitution and the bylaws shall be enacted in the following manner:
 - (1) A motion and seconded motion shall be made to propose a temporary suspension of an existing article of the constitution or the bylaws. The article in consideration of temporary suspension shall be read by the Secretary, and the mover (individual that makes the motion) shall then provide justification for their motion and the length of time which the suspension should remain in effect. A motion must have a unanimous affirmative vote by the Executive Board to proceed, otherwise the matter is dismissed.
 - (2) Open discussion by present Council members shall precede the vote on the proposed article for temporary suspension by a two-thirds majority vote.

ARTICLE IX – Adoption

This Constitution shall be effective immediately upon passage.