

# **A CONSTITUTION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM**

## **ARTICLE I - Purpose**

The graduate students of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, recognizing the need for an organization to promote and protect their interest, to provide a forum to express graduate student concerns on academic and non-academic issues, and to enhance the quality of education and research at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, do ordain this constitution.

## **ARTICLE II - Membership**

Students enrolled in the Graduate School of the University of Alabama at Birmingham shall be members of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and shall be considered equal and shall not be discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability. The GSA senate consists of all voting members and the President.

## **ARTICLE III – Executive Council**

The qualifications and duties of the officers of the GSA shall be as follows:

- A. **Qualifications:** A student must be a voting member of the GSA Senate for a period of at least six months and be in good standing prior to the election in order to run for or hold office in the GSA. A student who has been a voting member of the GSA Senate for less than six months, but more than three months may be granted the right to run for or hold office by a majority vote of the Senate. This is only an option if there are no qualified senators volunteering for an empty executive position.
- B. **Duties:** Each of the officers of the GSA shall be ex-officio, nonvoting members of all standing and special committees, except where voting is allowed in the Bylaws.
  - 1. President**
    - a. Shall represent the GSA to the administration and the public.
    - b. Shall be the chief administrative and Executive officer of the GSA.
    - c. Shall serve as ex-officio, non-voting member of the GSA Senate; in the case of a tie the president shall be a voting member.
    - d. Shall provide agenda for the monthly GSA meeting.
    - e. Shall hold a regularly scheduled meeting for the Executive Council at least once a month.
    - f. Shall call into session the GSA senate at least once a month.
  - 2. Vice-President**
    - a. Shall see to it that all committees attend to their duties as defined by the Bylaws (attached).
    - b. Shall serve as acting President in the event that the President is unable to perform his or her duties.
    - c. Shall serve as the chair of the Orientation Committee.
  - 3. Secretary**

- a. Shall serve as the corresponding and recording secretary; responsible for keeping accurate and permanent record of the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Council and the Senate.
- b. Shall be responsible for keeping and making available to the Executive Council and the Senate a permanent record of the Constitution and amendments to the Constitution passed by the Senate and signed by the Dean of the Graduate School or any other constitutionally-appointed office.
- c. Shall be responsible for forwarding all legislation passed by the Senate, as well as the monthly minutes, to the Dean of the Graduate School.
- d. Shall be responsible for maintaining a list of Senate members and an accurate attendance record of all monthly Senate meetings.
- e. Shall be responsible for notifying the Senate of the next session.
- f. Shall serve on the Constitution Committee.

#### **4. Treasurer**

- a. Shall be responsible for accurate financial records of the GSA.
- b. Shall be in charge of all financial transactions of the GSA.
- c. Shall be in charge of the GSA checking account and all related tax information.
- d. Shall prepare and submit an itemized, monthly budget report to the Senate, including a starting balance, a complete itemized list of income and expenses, and a closing balance in the budget for that time period.
- e. Shall review expenditures and revenues at the end of each quarter and make recommendations, based of the funding guidelines established by the Senate, concerning proposed expenditures.
- f. Shall submit a yearly financial report at the last regularly scheduled meeting of each Spring Semester.
- g. If the University requests an audit, it is the responsibility of the treasurer to arrange for it.
- h. Shall serve as the chair of the Budget Committee and be responsible for calling the Budget Committee into session at least once every three months.

#### **5. Travel Grants Officer**

- a. Shall be responsible for maintaining updated versions of the travel grant policies and rules.
- b. Shall be responsible for supplying travel grant applications to students (this may be done through the graduate school office).
- c. Shall determine and make available the semester travel grant application deadlines.
- d. Shall be responsible for fairly administrating and allocating the appropriate moneys from the GSA funds.
- e. Shall be responsible for the prompt completion of the appropriate paperwork deemed necessary for travel grant administration by the graduate school.
- f. Shall serve on the Budget Committee in order to provide information concerning awards disbursed by the Travel Grants Office.

### **ARTICLE IV - Representatives**

The qualifications and duties of the senators of the GSA shall be as follows:

- A. Qualifications: There shall be a GSA Senate composed of graduate student senators who represent each program in the Graduate School. Only degree seeking students who are enrolled in programs officially recognized by the Graduate School shall be eligible to serve as

a voting member of the GSA Senate. Below is listed the number of students in a program and the number of allowable senators.

1 - 10: 2

11-20: 3

21-30: 4

31-40: 5

41 and up: 6

The number of senators from each program shall be determined by the number of graduate students registered in the fall semester of each academic year. Each program will be responsible for filling vacancies in the Senate. The Senate may choose to appoint at-large representatives from the graduate student population. The number of at-large representatives may not exceed one-half of senators appointed by each graduate program at any one time.

**B. Duties:** The senators shall serve for one-year term (with automatic renewal unless department deems otherwise) and be a voting member of the GSA Senate.

**1. Senators**

- a. Shall be responsible for attending Senate meetings; if he/she is unable to attend, the secretary must be notified at least 24 hrs prior to the meeting (with the exception of an emergency approved by the President and Secretary).
- b. Shall be a voting member of the GSA and must be present to vote (no absentee voting or proxy).
- c. Shall not accumulate more than 5 absences in one academic year. This will result in removal from position of senator.
  - i) Shall be responsible for informing the secretary of absence no later than noon of the day of the regularly scheduled meetings.
- d. Shall be responsible for forwarding all legislation passed by the Senate, the monthly minutes, and GSA sponsored activities to their department.
- e. Shall be required to submit a recommendation letter from their department head or Graduate Program director to the Executive Board to obtain full voting privileges.
- f. Shall be required to serve on at least one GSA standing committee for one semester of each academic year, or one University Committee for a full academic year.

**2. At-large Representatives**

- a. Shall have all the rights and duties of a GSA Senator (See article IV B1), excluding the right to vote.
- b. Shall obtain the right to vote upon affirmation of two-thirds of the Senate at a regular monthly meeting of the Senate.

**ARTICLE V - Elections**

- A. Elections shall be held each April at the regularly scheduled monthly senate meeting with voting open to all graduate students. The officers shall be elected at large by a vote of the GSA, and their terms of office shall begin on June 1st. If any office is uncontested, upon an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the GSA Senate, the candidate(s) shall assume their office(s) on June 1st. This action may be taken only at regularly scheduled monthly meetings of the Senate.
- B. Any officer or standing committee chairperson resigning from office shall announce his or her intended resignation at least two Senate meeting prior to the effective date of his or her resignation.

- C. In the event that any of the elected offices, except President, should be vacated for any reason, the Senate shall nominate and elect individuals to fill these positions.
- D. (Please see "Election Committee" in the Bylaws) The Secretary will enter the complete count into the permanent record of the GSA.

#### **ARTICLE VI - Gross Dereliction of Duties**

- A. Any officer may be removed from office by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the GSA Senate for gross dereliction of duties.
- B. Any GSA Senate representatives may be expelled by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the GSA senate for gross dereliction of duties (expelled meaning the loss of all rights as a GSA Senator).

#### **ARTICLE VII**

The GSA Senate and Executive Council serving at the time of implementation of this constitution shall abide by the duties herein.

#### **ARTICLE VIII - Amendments**

Amendments to the Constitution must be proposed at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting and cannot be voted on until the next regularly scheduled meeting. An amendment shall then be passed if approved by two-thirds of the GSA Senate.

#### **ARTICLE IX**

This constitution shall become effective on January 5, 1977, with the most recent version made as of October 2011, pending approval of one more than one-half of the GSA members voting in referendum. The ratification of this constitution will serve to void any pre-existing GSA instruments of right or privilege.

### **THE BYLAWS OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM**

- A. These Bylaws may not contradict the constitution
- B. All procedures not covered by these Bylaws will follow "*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (10<sup>th</sup> ed.)*" latest edition
- C. Call of meeting

A regularly scheduled meeting must be called monthly. GSA officers shall determine the day, time, and place of the meeting and will inform the Senate at least one week prior to the regularly scheduled, monthly meeting. Special meetings may be called for specific business. These meetings may be called either two ways:

1. The President of the GSA may call a special meeting by notifying the Senate members at least three days prior to the special meeting date.

2. The Senate members may call a special meeting by submitting to the President a petition, signed by the GSA members. Of these signers, there may be no more than two representatives from any one department. Following receipt of this petition, the President must call the special meeting within seven days. The president must notify the GSA Senate members three days prior to the established date of the special meeting. Representatives calling a special meeting may request time and place of the special meeting.
- D. The chair may make procedural rulings. The ruling may be appealed to the Senate and affirmed or reversed by one more than one half of those present and voting. The chair of the Constitution committee (or his/her appointee) may interject if any proceedings violate the policies and procedures set forth in this constitution and its bylaws.
  - E. Points of discussion to be included in the agenda must be presented in a brief written form to the presiding officer prior to the start of the meeting. The Executive Committee shall set a priority for new business. Any Senate member following action on priority business may present other new business.
  - F. Before the meeting can conduct business, it requires quorum. A quorum shall be one-third of the GSA Senate. In the absence of quorum, any business transacted is null and void.
  - G. Tax Exemption (This Bylaw is required to qualify for Federal Income Tax exemption under IRC (c) (3) and should not be changed except to conform with changes in the Internal Revenue Law)
    1. No part of the net earnings of the GSA shall inure to private shareholders or individual members
    2. In the event of the dissolution of this GSA, the assets of the GSA shall be transferred to the Graduate School at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, for providing financial aid to UAB graduate Students.
  - H. All matters pertaining to the operation of the GSA, which are not directly stated in the Constitution will be left to the discretion of the Executive Council.
  - I. All matters pertaining to the operation of the GSA, which are not directly stated in the Constitution will be left to the discretion of the Executive Council.

#### **AMENDING BYLAWS AND INTRODUCING RESOLUTIONS**

- A. Amendments to the Bylaws must be proposed at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting and cannot be voted on until the next regularly scheduled monthly meeting. A Bylaw shall then be passed if approved by two-thirds of the GSA Senate members present.
- B. Resolutions may be introduced by any Senate member. Approval of a majority of voting GSA Senate members present shall be required for passage of a resolution, where "majority" is defined by *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (10th ed.)* p. 3871.5-13 as:

"The basic requirement for approval of an action or choice by a deliberate assembly, except where a rule provides otherwise, is a majority vote. Majority vote means more than half of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote,

excluding blanks or abstentions, at a regular or properly called meeting at which a quorum is present."

1. For resolutions allotting funds over \$2000, the vote of each individual Senator shall be recorded by roll-call vote.
- C. All expenditures by the GSA must be approved by the resolution except GSA office expenditures. The President, Vice- President, Secretary, Treasurer, Travel Grants Officer, and any other individuals designated by the Senate shall be eligible for salary, the amount of which shall be determined by the Senate with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.
- D. All monies raised by GSA must be approved by the Senate. Stipulations for use of funds must be approved by the Senate.
- E. All policies and guidelines related to expenditures must be approved by the Senate.
- F. All proposals originating from a person(s) or committee(s) within the GSA Senate shall be made available in writing to the Executive Board before the monthly scheduled Executive Council meeting. This proposal shall then be made available to all GSA Senators with the agenda for the upcoming GSA Senate meeting.
- G. All proposals originating from an outside organization(s) shall conform to the deadlines and guidelines as posted on the GSA web site.
1. The Presenter(s) of said proposal shall not vote on this resolution due to direct conflict of interest, and shall be dismissed from meeting upon conclusion of the question/answer period following the presentation.
  2. The Presenter(s) shall learn the outcome of the GSA Senate vote within 24 hours of the conclusion of the GSA Senate meeting.
- H. All Senators' votes for resolutions, amendments to the bylaws, and amendments to the Constitution shall be recorded and made publicly available by being entered into the official minutes of the GSA.

### **COMMITTEES AND THEIR DUTIES**

- A. There will be an Executive Committee composed of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Travel Grants Officer and Committee Chairs. The President shall be the chairperson of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will meet prior to every Senate meeting to review matters to be brought before the Senate and to decide on the order of business.
- B. The GSA will establish the following standing committees as needed:
1. **Student Activities Committee:** This committee shall be responsible for identifying and planning all social and community service activities of the GSA.

2. **Constitution Committee:** This committee shall be responsible for meeting and proposing amendments to the Constitution, when needed. This committee may recommend changes in the Constitution to the GSA Senate. Furthermore, the chair (or his/her appointee) shall attend all GSA senate meetings and Executive committee meeting to ensure that the constitution and its bylaws are not being violated.
  3. **Budget Committee:** This committee shall be responsible for meeting in order to make recommendations concerning the GSA's budget. This committee shall be responsible for organizing fundraisers for the GSA. The chairperson of this committee shall be the Treasurer.
  4. **Election Committee:** (Refer to Article V of the Constitution) An election committee will be appointed by the GSA Executive Council in January of each year. No one running for an office shall also be a member of the election committee. This committee will be responsible for organizing and holding elections for the GSA officers. Information about each candidate as prepared by the candidate will be sent to the graduate school for distribution. Ballots will be available at the regularly scheduled April GSA Senate meeting. The election committee will tally votes, and an announcement of the winners will be made at the conclusion of the Senate meeting.
  5. **Orientation Committee:** This committee shall be responsible for hosting the New Graduate Student Orientation at the beginning of each Fall Semester. The chairperson of this committee shall be the Vice – President.
  6. **Graduate Relations Committee:** This committee shall be responsible for the recruitment and orientation of new senators and for assuring that the GSA is adequately represented at university wide events where graduate students will likely be in attendance.
- C. Other committees may be established by the recommendation from the GSA representatives specifying the purpose and maximum number of members. Voting members of the GSA Senate must approve the establishment of the committee. Nominations for positions on special committees will be made by the GSA Senate representatives and/or GSA officers.
- D. The members of each standing and special committee, except the Executive Committee, the Budget Committee and Recruitment Committee, shall select a chairperson. An individual may not be chairperson of more than one standing committee. The chairperson of each standing and special committee is responsible for the following or the committee will be disassembled:
1. Calling the meeting and notifying each member of the time and place of the meeting.
  2. Presiding at committee meetings.
  3. Notifying the Executive Council of the time and place of each meeting.
  4. Giving a committee report to the GSA Senate; or when requested, to the GSA President. The President may request a report to be submitted to the Executive Committee in writing prior to each Senate meeting.
  5. Establishing requirements for active members and submitting them to the vice – president and secretary.
  6. Informing the vice president of any senators who fail to actively participate on the committee.
  7. Attending Executive Council meetings.