

Constitution of the Graduate Student Association Of Northwestern University

Preamble

This Constitution sets forth the laws and guiding principles of the Graduate Student Association. It provides a formal channel for communication between Graduate Students, Graduate Faculty, and University Administration. The interests and concerns, specific to Graduate Students, will often diverge from those characteristic of Undergraduate Students and those of the Undergraduate Student Government Association. The Graduate Student Association, as developed in this Constitution, will deal with such issues which are of primary concern to the Graduate School: its Students, Faculty, and Administration. The goal of this organization is to foster interactions between graduate students, faculty, and administrators, with an emphasis on maintaining and improving the quality of graduate education and graduate student life at Northwestern University.

Article I

Definitions

The name of this organization shall be the Graduate Student Association of Northwestern University (GSA).

Section 1: Graduate Student: A graduate student is defined as anyone registered as a degree seeking Graduate Student at Northwestern University.

Section 2: Member: Membership in the Graduate Student Association is granted to any Graduate Student. Membership numbers are derived from the bi-monthly listservs.

Section 3: Department: A department is defined as a group of Graduate Faculty and Students in a field of study organized under a Department Chairperson and recognized by the Graduate School as having a graduate program.

Article II

Purposes

Section 1: To facilitate communication, cooperation, and the exchange of ideas among Graduate Students, Faculty, and the Administration of The Graduate School (TGS) and Northwestern University.

Section 2: To strive to enhance the quality of graduate education at Northwestern University.

Section 3: To define and protect the rights and privileges of graduate students within TGS.

Section 4: To provide and disseminate information which enhances the quality of graduate education or student life.

Section 5: To encourage and conduct Graduate Student social activities.

Section 6: To ensure adequate representation of graduate students on University committees and legislative bodies.

Section 7: To ensure adequate representation of graduate students to the Graduate Leadership Council.

Article III

The Governing Bodies

Section 1: Department Representatives: The Department Representatives are composed of one member from each department of The Graduate School. Each Department Representative shall be elected or appointed by the graduate students of each department/school within each college. The Graduate Student Advisor (in the absence of an election) of each department/school has the right to nominate or affirm a Graduate Student Representative from his/her department/school.

Each Department Representative shall be enrolled as a Graduate Student, as defined under Article I, section 1, and be in good standing.

The term of office of a Department Representative will be from May 1 through April 30 of the following academic year. Department Representative may be appointed at any time within this twelve (12) month period to serve out the rest of the term.

If a Department Representative cannot be present at a meeting of the Department Representatives, then the Representative may issue a written proxy to another graduate student of their department, temporarily transferring the ability to vote as a Department Representative.

Section 2: The Executive Board

The Executive Board (also known as "The Officers") will be elected annually in open elections conducted using University-wide emails with online voting. Any graduate student in TGS is eligible to run for positions of the Executive Board, provided they are in good standing with The Graduate School. Elections will be completed by April 30, with new terms starting May 1, and will be for a period of one year. Individuals elected to standing offices will be expected to meet the guidelines established herein.

A quorum for decisions and recommendations by "The Officers" will require a minimum of 2/3 of the total number of officers (currently 6 of 9 officers). Officers who hold more than one officer position will still only count as one officer, and will only have the power of one vote.

All officers other than the President, may serve an unlimited number of terms in their position.

When an Officer is not going to be present or cannot fulfill their duties, they are expected to inform the President as soon as possible such that another officer can assume responsibilities for their duties in their absence.

Executive Board meetings shall take place no less than once per month during the academic year.

Section 3: Officer Responsibilities

3.A: The President of the Graduate Student Association

The President will call for, preside over, and establish the Agenda of each meeting of the Graduate Student Association Executive Branch. The President will also organize and preside over general meetings of the

GSA.

The President can appoint all University Committees and their respective chairpersons with the approval of a quorum of the Executive Board.

The President reserves the right to create ad hoc committees as determined by the Executive Board.

The President shall call for special elections as the need arises for the Executive Board.

The President will keep a file of all documentation necessary for the operation of the Graduate Student Association.

At the beginning of his term, The President will be expected to evaluate the GSA constitution, and recommend any amendments or changes for the coming term.

The President shall have one vote during motions requiring full voting with a 2/3 majority of officers, and no votes except in the case of a tie for a simple majority vote.

The President will be one of the representatives to the Graduate Leadership Council representatives and will appoint a second representative from among the Executive Board.

The President may serve no more than two terms.

3.B: Chairs of Advocacy

The Chairs of Advocacy shall oversee all advocacy projects of the Graduate Student Association.

The Chairs of Advocacy will obtain reports from GSA committee chairs and provide a summary of advocacy issues to the Executive Board at bi-weekly meetings.

The Chairs of Advocacy will have the authority to create ad hoc committees and nominate committee chairs and members from the larger student body as the need arises.

The Chairs of Advocacy will work with the Graduate Leadership Council to execute an annual Graduate Student Survey and use the information collected to shape future advocacy recommendations for the Graduate Student Association.

The Chairs of Advocacy shall cast one vote each in Executive Board voting.

3.C: Vice President: The Vice-President of the Graduate Student Association will be appointed from the existing Executive Board of officers.

The Vice President will be the second representative to the Graduate Leadership Council from the GSA.

The Vice President will serve as the President in the absence of the President.

The Vice President will have no supplemental voting rights.

3.D: Secretary: The Secretary will keep and publish (by forwarding to the webmaster) the minutes of each meeting of the Executive Board. The Secretary will publish the minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Student General Assembly (by forwarding to the webmaster).

The Secretary will keep and maintain the records of the Graduate Student Association, to be stored in the Graduate School under the supervision of the President.

The Secretary will keep a file of all documentation necessary for the operation of the Graduate Student Senate, to be stored in the Graduate School under the supervision of the President.

The Secretary shall cast one vote in Executive Board voting.

3.E: Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for preparing the annual budget request of the Graduate Student Association to The Graduate School at Northwestern University.

The Treasurer will maintain the budget, and make adjustments as necessary to ensure the functioning of the Graduate Student Association.

Expenditures or adjustments considered petty cash for a given event may be approved directly by the Treasurer. Expenditures or adjustments of \$20-\$50 must be approved by the Treasurer and the President. Expenditures or adjustments of \$50-\$500 must be approved by a simple majority of the Officers during an Executive Board meeting. Expenditures or adjustments of \$500 or more must be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the Officers.

The Treasurer is also responsible for holding financial seminars throughout the year as may be beneficial to the graduate student body. The number and nature of these seminars will be determined by the Executive Board.

3.F: Chair of Service

The Chair of Service will be responsible for organizing and running all service activities sponsored by the Graduate Student Association, with at least one per quarter. These activities include any service projects directed at the University or community level.

The Chair of Service shall represent the Graduate Student Association at these events.

The Chair of Service will cast one vote in Executive Board voting.

3.G: Chair of Social Activities: The Chair of Social Activities will be responsible for planning and hosting all social activities sponsored by the Graduate Student Association.

The Chair of Social Activities will be responsible for creating and adhering to a budget for each social activity. These activities include, but are not limited to, a yearly Halloween Social and a Summer Barbeque.

The Chair of Social Activities will be responsible for ensuring that social activities sponsored by the Graduate Student Association appeal to the majority of graduate students and do not discriminate based on gender, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation.

3.H: Chair of Public Relations: The Chair of Public Relations is responsible for publicizing all Graduate Student Association events outside of the website. This includes listerv e-mails once to twice a month, and organizing the advertisement of special events such as the Summer BBQ through flyers and any other means of advertising.

The Chair of Public Relations is also responsible for running the annual elections for the Executive Board.

The Chair of Public Relations is responsible for administration of the Graduate Student Association website and the GSA wikipedia. The Director of Public Relations may appoint a webmaster as desired.

The Graduate Student Association Webmaster (appointed as needed): The GSA webmaster shall be responsible for maintaining the Graduate Student Association website regularly. The maintenance of the website shall include maintaining active weblinks, providing up to date GSA activity information, and posting information as provided by committee chairs. Website updates are expected to occur at least twice per month.

The Chair of Public Relations will cast one vote in Executive Board votes.

3.I: Chair of Operations: The Chair of Operations will be required to maintain a list of resources owned by the Graduate Student Association, and to keep track of which officer is currently in possession of a given resource.

The Chair of Operations is required to bring a copy of the constitution to every Officer's Meeting and General Meeting, and is in charge of ensuring that the protocols set forth in the constitution are being followed -- interrupting the discussion if necessary. In the event that the Chair of Operations will not be able to attend an Officer's Meeting, they must inform the Secretary at least 3 days ahead of time, and the Secretary will act as Chair of Operations in their absence.

The Chair of Operations will be responsible for purchasing for events and scheduling the venues for events, as well as maintaining the GSA locker in Norris Student Center.

The Chair of Operations will cast one vote in Executive Board votes.

Section 4: Executive Committees: The Graduate Student Association Committee composition shall not be restricted to the elected members of the Graduate Student Senate or the Graduate Student General Assembly but may include appointed individuals from the Graduate Student Body as defined under Article I.

The Executive Board also reserves the right to create ad-hoc committees as dictated by graduate student needs and appoint appropriate chairs from the larger student body.

Section 5: Elections: The Executive Board will be elected by the entire Graduate Student Body during the month of April annually, to take office on May 1.

Should any office or position of the Graduate Student General Assembly or the Graduate Student Senate become vacant, a special election will be held to fill the vacancy. Such election shall be called by the President of the Graduate Student Association or the Vice-President acting in that capacity. Such elections will be overseen by the appropriate officials of the departments/schools or colleges/schools as needed.

If elections are not held in a timely manner, the Student Representatives or Senators shall have the appointment of the Graduate Advisor/Director of the respective department/school or college/school. The elected member shall be enrolled as a Graduate Student as defined under Article I, Section 1, and be in good standing.

Section 5: Officer Dismissal Guidelines: Executive Board members of the Graduate Student Association may be dismissed for failure to perform their duties as determined by this document. After the fourth unexcused absence from the bi-weekly Executive Board meetings, a Graduate Student Officer may be removed from their position. Alternately, failure to fulfill the duties outlined in Article 2, Section 3, will also be grounds for dismissal. Officer dismissal must be voted on by a two thirds majority of the Executive Board and the officer must be notified in writing at least one week prior to the vote.

Article V

Amendment Process

Section 1: Proposed Amendments to this Constitution may be initiated by a one-third vote of the Graduate Student General Assembly, a petition signed by fifty (50) Graduate Students, or any member of the Executive Board.

Section 2: Amendments to this Constitution must be presented in written form to all members of the Executive Board at least one meeting prior to voting. All changes must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board or a simple majority of graduate students in attendance at a quarterly general meeting.

Section 3: Amendments to this Constitution must be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the Graduate Student Association Executive Board and ratified by the Graduate Student Association Department Representatives.

Article VI

This constitution supersedes all previous and subsequent documents unless amended or discarded following the established procedures.