

Constitution and Bylaws of the Graduate Student Association of the University of Arkansas Little Rock

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Preamble

We the graduate students of the University of Arkansas Little Rock seek to inspire students to represent ourselves within the university, to create a campus community amongst ourselves to support our fellows, to support research and creative endeavors, and to create a pathway through which we may enrich our learning beyond the classroom. We set forth these laws to serve as guiding principles of the Graduate Student Association; whereas, the Association shall seek to establish unbiased and equal representation of all graduate students, respect their interests, and ensure an educational process of quality and integrity, we do hereby establish this Constitution of the Graduate Student Association of the University of Arkansas Little Rock.

Article I. Organization

Section 1: Organizational Mission

The Graduate Student Association promotes the advancement of quality and integrity in the graduate education experience. The Association represents graduate students through formal communication channels within the university structure and through informal networks to promote professional development. The Association provides a forum for advocacy, grievance, and interests unique to graduate students. By recognizing the priority among graduate students for career development, the Association promotes the linkage of academic endeavor with the broader community in which we work and live.

Section 2: Organizational Structure

An organizational chart outlining the structure of the Graduate Student Association can be found in Appendix A.

Section 3: Organizational Definitions

Section 3.1: Graduate Student

A graduate student is defined as any student enrolled at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, whether full-time or part-time, degree seeking or otherwise who has in their student classification "graduate" (e.g. graduate special, graduate, graduate transfer, etc.).

Section 3.2: Membership

Membership in the Graduate Student Association is automatically granted to any graduate student as defined in Article I, Section 3.1.

Section 3.3: Executive Team

The Executive Team is composed of elected Constitutional officers and their appointed and confirmed standing committee chairpersons. The members of the Executive Team are confirmed by vote. This vote is by a combination of sitting Senators and Executive Team Members as outlined in Article 1, Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

Section 3.4: Senators

Each college at the University of Arkansas Little Rock (hereafter "UA Little Rock") shall be represented by at least two (2) but no more than three (3) elected Senators. Senators shall represent the interests of graduate students in their respective colleges, not only representing their specific programs. These will be filled first-come, first-served basis, unless there becomes a need for an election. If the need for an election occurs, the Executive Team Members as defined in Article I, Section 3.3 shall elect the senators.

Section 3.5: Graduate Student Association Council

The Graduate Student Association Council is composed of Executive Team members as defined in Article I, Section 3.3 and elected College Senate members as defined in Article I, 4 Section 3.5. Voting rights of Council members are determined in accordance with Article III, Section 5.

Section 3.6: Standing Committees

The standing committees of the Graduate Student Association are determined by the Executive Team as defined in Article I, Section 3.3. The selection of standing committee chairpersons will be determined in accordance with Article III, Section 1.3.

Section 3.7: Term

A term is defined in this document to be one academic school year consisting of a university semester in the fall and a spring semester in the succeeding year. Summer and winter sessions are not to be considered toward a member's term limits.

Article II. Purpose

Section 1: Graduate Student Association

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is the leadership body for Graduate Students, composed of representatives from each college who act as liaisons between their colleges and council as a whole. This is done with the goal of increasing dialogue between colleges and administrative groups on behalf of the graduate student body.

The GSA performs its duties through monthly meetings, discussion on upcoming events, and committee work. Members of the GSA may exercise their full rights as representatives by attending and participating in these monthly meetings.

As part of its representation of the GSA before the Graduate School and the university, the GSA elects student representatives to attend Graduate Faculty Council (GC) and to serve on the GC's two subcommittees, the personnel subcommittee and the curriculum subcommittee. The GSA members that attend the GC will provide feedback to the GSA from meetings about issues relevant to the student body.

Section 2: Purpose of GSA Representatives

Section 2.1: Executive Team

The purpose of the Executive Team is to establish direction and policy for the Graduate Student Association in the form of recommendations to the Senators. Additionally, the Executive Team is responsible for completing routine business activities and other activities so delegated by the GSA. The Executive Team has no authority to bind the Association without significant consultation of graduate students and approval of the Senators, except in cases of urgent or emergency matters. Such actions of urgent or emergency nature shall be subject to ratification by the Council at the earliest scheduled meeting, or if possible with an online poll with at least 50% of the Senators responding.

Section 2.1: Senators

The purpose of GSA Senators is to provide adequate representation of graduate students from each college, to pose opportunities to better serve graduate students, to adjudicate on matters posed by the Executive Team, to vote on matters presented to the representative body of the GSA, and to represent the GSA at university-sponsored events.

Section 3: Responsibilities of Officers and Senators

3.1: Representation

Each council member shall assess the opinions of the graduate students in his or her respective college department on issues being considered by the GSA and its committees and report the actions of the GSA to the graduate students in the same department.

3.2: Requirements of Service

Each council member shall serve on at least one committee, either a GSA- or university-level committee.

3.3: Reporting of Member Visibility

Members may be required by the Executive Team to make a written or oral report on any meeting which they have attended in their capacity as a representative of the GSA.

3.4: Attendance

The Executive Team and Senators are required to attend monthly meetings. Members of the GSA should not commit to serving in a representative capacity if they expect significant scheduling conflicts. Senators and the Executive Team should make a good-faith effort to accommodate university events, holidays, or academic conferences, but this effort in no way absolves a member of their responsibility for active, substantive representation of a member's college at meetings and GSA-sponsored events.

Article III. Personnel

Section 1: Officers of the Executive Team

The Executive Team is composed of elected officers and standing committee chairpersons. The Executive Team is a coordinating body that informs the Council of ongoing matters and will work jointly with it. The Executive Team may act on matters of immediate concern.

Section 1.1: President

The president of the GSA will preside over the Executive Team and the GSA Senators, call meetings to order, establish the agenda for each meeting of the Executive Team

and Senators, and call special elections as the need arises. The president shall appoint all standing committees with majority approval of the Council (quorum required). The president shall not vote except in cases of a tie.

Section 1.2: Vice-President

In the absence of the president, the vice-president will assume the duties of the president. The vice-president will coordinate business activities of the Association as necessary as noted in Article 2, Section 5.5. In the event that the office of president is vacant, the vice-president shall serve in the capacity of president until one can be elected in accordance with Article III, Section 1.1. The Vice-President will call meetings to order if the President is unable to attend the meeting.

Section 1.3 Secretary

The secretary shall record the minutes and attendance of each Executive Team and Senator meetings and ensure that they are presented completely, accurately, timely, and authenticated. Further, the secretary is responsible for maintaining appropriate files of all documents necessary for the operation of the Executive Team and Senators. The Secretary shall report any issues with respect to a member's active or inactive status to the representatives at-large.

Section 1.4: Treasurer

The treasurer shall care and be accountable for such funds as the Council and Executive Team raises and utilizes. The treasurer shall make reports to the Executive Team and the Council regarding budget balances, sources and uses of funds. The treasurer must be bonded. The treasurer will create and propose a budget to the university as needed per university protocol. This budget must be approved by the senate before proposition to the university for approval

Section 1.5: Parliamentarian

The parliamentarian shall maintain proper parliamentary procedures as defined by Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. The parliamentarian shall also oversee the election process of officers, and oversee special elections if vacancies occur

Section 1.6: Public Relations Coordinator

The public relations coordinator shall be responsible for publicizing GSA events and fundraisers, maintaining GSA social media accounts, and completing GSA online

presence maintenance. This includes but is not limited to, social media, printing flyers, and putting events on the GSA website.

Section 2. Senators

Senators shall be responsible for providing perspective on debatable issues, representing the interests of their respective colleges, voting on issues raised by the Executive Team, or by the proposal of constituents with 275 signatures, and participating in GSA events.

Section 3. Dean of the Graduate School

Section 3.1: Role

The Dean of the Graduate school is an official member of the Executive Team and may advise on issues before the GSA if he or she so chooses.

Section 3.2: Quorum

The Dean of the Graduate School may choose not to attend official meetings and is not counted among members to achieve a quorum.

Article IV. Procedural Orders

Section 1: Election of Officers

Section 1.1: Executive Team

A ballot of proposed candidates for office shall be determined by the election committee. The ballot of officers must be submitted by April 1, prior to the end of the office term, to the current Parliamentarian. Open floor nominations for office shall be extended to members present at the May GSA Council meeting if a position has had no formal nominations prior to April 1. Following open floor nominations, elections will be conducted at the August meeting, in writing or verbally (electronic nominations are not valid), and newly elected officers will take office in accordance with Article III, Section 3.

Section 1.2: Senators

Senators may be nominated by their colleges, another member of the GSA, another Senator, or, if such representation exists, department-specific or college-specific representative bodies which may consist of GSA members but act separately from the legislative body of the GSA. Each college is entitled to three Senators.

Section 1.3: Standing Committee Chairpersons

Standing committee chairpersons shall serve at the pleasure of the Executive Team. The chairpersons shall be recommended to and approved by the GSA Senators. A majority vote is required.

Section 2: Removal of Officers

Executive Team and Council members may be removed from office for cause or excessive absences. If an Executive Team or Council member performs in a manner determined to be unprofessional or to bring discredit to the organization, they may be removed from office by two-thirds majority vote of the Council during quorum or with the signatures of 275 enrolled graduate students. If a member misses more than two scheduled meetings during the academic term, they will be removed from office, except as noted. Only in rare cases shall members be permitted to serve after two absences; however, continuation of the member in this situation requires a three-fourths vote of approval from the Council. The Dean of the Graduate School may remove any executive team member at his/her discretion if it has become apparent that the executive team member has become inactive or inefficient in his/her position.

Section 3: Term of Office

3.1: Elected Members

The term of office for all members of the Executive Team and elected senators will be one year beginning the first day of June and terminating the following last day of May. Senators' terms of office may not exceed the length of their enrollment in an approved graduate program. The Parliamentarian will ensure terms of office are not violated.

3.2: Interim Executive Team Membership

In the event that an elected member of the Executive Team resigns, is recalled, or is otherwise on inactive status, an interim member may be nominated and elected to serve in the vacant position, excepting the role of President which would be filled by the Vice President until such time that an election can be held to fill the vacant position. Nominations for a vacated role, in the case of a Senator becoming inactive, will begin immediately, and a vote for a new Senator shall be held at the next monthly meeting, quorum required. Interim terms of office which begin after the last class day of the fall semester shall not be counted as one of the member's two allotted terms of office.

3.3: Term Limits

No member of the GSA may hold a single position on the executive board for more than two (2) academic years total whether consecutive or otherwise.

Section 4: Meetings

Section 4.1: Representatives

The Executive Team and Senators shall meet no less than once per month during the regular academic year. A quorum must be present in order to conduct official business.

Section 4.2: Additional Meetings

In case of emergency, additional meetings can be called upon by the President or the majority of the Executive Team or the majority of Senators.

Section 4.3: Active Status

To be considered a representative with active status, the representative must attend regular meetings and participate in GSA-sponsored events.

Section 4.3: Departmental Representatives

There may come a time when interest in representation exceeds the number of allowed representatives of the GSA or where additional department-specific representation could imbalance the effective equal representation of all UA Little Rock colleges and departments. The GSA acknowledges that some university departments may enact their own student-led organizations for graduate students and welcomes participation from these students. Future members of the GSA should determine the best course of action for incorporating these departmental representatives into the governance of the GSA.

Section 4.5: Inactive Status

A council member may miss up to two monthly meetings per term of office without penalty. If a representative misses more than two meetings of the council or meetings of any committee of which the individual is a member in any given academic year, the Secretary shall notify the Senators, Executive Team, and missing representative that the responsibilities of the representative are not being fulfilled, and the representative could be replaced. The Executive Team will request that a new council member be selected to represent the department. The replacement will be confirmed by majority vote of the

senators. The Secretary shall give written or electronic notifications to the council member of the inactive status. The absentee member shall not be counted in a quorum.

Section 4.6: Restoration of Active Status

If an officially inactive representative has not yet been replaced and resumes regular attendance, an active Senator may move for the inactive member's reinstatement. The reinstatement must be ratified by no less than a majority vote of present, active representatives in the presence of a quorum.

Section 4.7: Guidelines for Attendance

Council members shall be counted present if they attend remotely via telephone, video conference, or other electronic means. It is the responsibility of the absent council member to find remote means to attend monthly meetings either by contacting the Executive Team or by contacting another Senator to give them access to the meeting.

Section 5: Voting Rights

Constitutional officers and elected college senators are voting members. Only these members can vote on official business before the Council. All members of standing committees shall have voting rights in committee. Only Senators may vote on resolutions brought to the floor by the Executive Team or Constituents. All actions of the Executive Team on behalf of the GSA must be approved by the Senators. This includes Executive Team actions when an official meeting is not in session. Unless the legislation helps with an emergency, legislation must be passed by sitting Senators.

Section 6: Minutes

Minutes shall be taken in accordance with Article II, Section 5.3. The minutes shall be distributed to each Executive Team and Council member prior to regularly scheduled meetings. If changes to approved minutes are required, these changes shall be appended to the approved minutes. Approved minutes shall never be altered, except to append additional information.

Section 7: Quorum

A quorum is considered to be 51% of the voting members of the Council or Committee. See Article III, Section 5.

Section 8: Conflict of Interest

Section 8.1: Voting Conflicts

Elected GSA representatives, and standing committee chairpersons shall not introduce or vote on matters in which they have an immediate personal financial interest. The Bylaws Committee may recommend to the GSA that individuals violating this provision be removed from office.

Section 8.2: Travel Grants Conflicts

- a. The President of the GSA, who is a non-voting member of the Selection Committee, shall be responsible for redacting any personally identifiable information from travel grant applications before presenting the applications to the Selection Committee at large for adjudication.
- b. No member of the Selection Committee shall be eligible for travel grant funding through the GSA funds.
- c. Selection Committee members shall be responsible for recusing themselves from the adjudication of travel grant applications whenever they have some foreknowledge of the contents or are able through examination of the contents able to deduce the identity of the applicant.

Section 9: Faculty Advisor

One member of the Graduate Faculty will be asked to serve as faculty advisor to the GSA each year. The Executive Team will choose the faculty advisor at the end of the spring semester each year.

Section 10: Recall

Any representative may be recalled at any time by a three-quarters vote of active GSA representatives or by the representative's university department at a meeting announced for that purpose. A quorum is required.

Article V. Standing Committees

Section 1: Standing Committees

Standing committees shall be appointed by the Executive Team in accordance with Article I, Section 3.7. Each standing committee is chaired in accordance with Appendix A.

Section 1.1: Required Standing Committees

Standing committees shall not be limited in number. However, a minimum of four standing committees shall be maintained which include: the bylaws, the Finance, the Selection, and the Public Relation Committees.

Section 1.2: Appointment to Committees

Individuals shall request appointment to committees, subject to ratification by the GSA representatives. All committee members shall have equal rights on a committee. A committee chairperson may be removed from office by a vote of the Council. Each committee shall prepare and present to the Council and Executive Team a written summary of its activities at least once per term.

Section 2: Responsibilities of Committees

Section 2.1: Bylaws Committee

The committee shall make recommendations to the Council and Executive Team and decide disputes under the Constitution and bylaws. The committee shall ascertain that all colleges have representation in the Council and committees. The Parliamentarian shall be the chair of the Bylaws Committee.

Section 2.2: Finance Committee

The committee shall procure funds for endowment and such other projects as deemed appropriate. The committee is responsible for preparing budgets for the Association. The Treasurer shall be the chair of the Finance Committee. This Committee shall set guidelines for any fundraising event, and coordinate any required paperwork.

Section 2.3: Selection Committee

The committee shall present to the Executive Team recommendation for the position of Graduate Student Representative to the University Council for Graduate Studies and Research. The committee shall make other recommendations as needed and adjudicate the disposition of travel grants. The committee will be in contact with the Dean of the Graduate School about travel funding. The Vice President shall be the chair of the Selection Committee.

Section 2.4: Public Relations Committee

The committee shall prepare newsletters and other publicity for the distribution to the membership of the GSA. The committee shall provide the GSA with a means of communication with the academic and non-academic communities. The Secretary shall be a non-voting member of the Public Relations Committee, and the Public Relations Officer shall chair the committee.

Section 2.5: Ad Hoc Committees

The President may create ad hoc committees as necessary or at the request of the Council, Executive Team, or standing committees.

Article VI. Amendments to the Constitution

Section 1: Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be initiated by one-third vote of the GSA representatives (including Senators and Executive Team) or by petition from 25 enrolled University of Arkansas at Little Rock Graduate Students.

Section 2: Ratification

Amendments to this Constitution may be ratified by two-thirds vote of the Senators of the GSA, quorum required.

Appendix A:

Organizational Chart

Appendix B:

Historical Context for This Document

This document has been drafted and revised from the most-recent extant copies of the Graduate Student Council Constitution from the late 1980s.

We have simplified the organizational structure of the GSA by eliminating the artificial level of "Council" (formerly the GSA-C) from the GSA. Essentially, members of the former GSA-C were a part of the GSA, but not all members of the GSA were a part of the GSA-C. This led to some confusion as the GSA-C was also a part of the Student Government Association, at which graduate students were due but did not receive regular representation. With this document we, therefore, established an organizational structure which represents the interests of graduate students exclusively.

Extant documents indicate the GSA once contained a Council which was made up of three legislative bodies: the "Executive Board" or Officers, the voting "members" elected by the GSA-C itself, and "Departmental Representatives" which were chosen from members of/by students within the departments.

At the time of ratification, there is not adequate representation from the colleges to warrant Departmental Representatives. However, we have left language within this document which would allow with minimal revision for increased involvement at the department-level should such a need arise.

AEA

AEA (also known as AEL), is recognized as the official honor society of the GSA. The leadership of AEA will be separate from that of GSA, but cooperation between the two Graduate Student Organizations is strongly encouraged by GSA Senators and Executive team members.