

The Constitutional By-Laws of the
Graduate Student Association



The Graduate School at Western Carolina University
Revised January 2021

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ARTICLE I: NAME

SECTION I. NAME

The name of this organization is hereby entitled the Graduate Student Association of the Western Carolina University, hereafter referred to as the “Graduate Student Association” or “GSA”.

SECTION II. AFFILIATION

This organization is not affiliated with any local, state, national, or international organization.

SECTION III. DEFINITIONS

1. The term **Graduate Student Association (or GSA)** refers to all full-time and part-time students enrolled in the Graduate School at Western Carolina University.
2. The term **Executive Board** refers to the elected/appointed leadership or officers of the organization (i.e President, etc.).
3. The term **Graduate Student Senate** refers to the appointed sub-organization of program representatives and Executive Board members.
4. The term “**ex officio**” refers to a non-voting member of official organization matters.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The Graduate Student Association shall serve and represent all graduate students at Western Carolina University. The purpose of this organization shall be to:

1. encourage, recognize, and assist all graduate students academically and socially,
2. promote the interests and welfare of graduate students within the university,
3. provide a forum for discussion of issues raised by graduate students, and
4. promote and support the continuous advancement of the goals of the Graduate School.

ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

SECTION I. ELIGIBILITY

Membership shall be granted to all graduate students, full or part-time, enrolled at Western Carolina University.

SECTION II. NON-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE

This organization does not discriminate against any student, faculty, or staff member based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, handicap, or sexual orientation.

SECTION III. DUES & FUNDING

No independent organization dues are levied to the students because the organization is funded through the Graduate School and the Division of Student Affairs.

ARTICLE IV: GOVERNANCE

SECTION I. ADVISOR

The advisor of this organization shall be the current Dean of the Graduate School (or his/her designee), providing guidance and direction in matters most important to the University in general and the Graduate School in particular.

SECTION II. OFFICERS OF THE ORGANIZATION

1. The primary officers of the organization shall be the Executive Board. The Executive Board must be composed of the President, (1) Vice President, and the Biltmore Park Liaison.
2. The Vice-President positions are the Vice-President of Travel & Finance, the Vice-President of Public Relations, the Vice-President of Student Advocacy & Affairs, and the Vice-President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Other officers that may be elected as needed include the Chief of Staff.
3. The responsibilities of vacant positions will be assumed by the President.
4. The current Dean of the Graduate School and/or the Advisor shall be an *ex officio* member of the Executive Board.
5. New offices may be created, as necessary, by recommendation of the President or the Executive Board with the final approval of the Advisor.
6. No more than half of the executive board can be members of the same graduate program without the approval of the Advisor and recommendation of the current President.

SECTION III. GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE

1. The Graduate Student Senate is the appointed sub-organization of program representatives and Executive Board members.
2. Representatives from each of the graduate programs/departments can apply or be chosen by the program director/department head of a given college to serve for one full academic

year. Representatives shall offer suggestions, advice and serve as the liaisons between a given program/department and the Graduate Student Association.

ARTICLE V: EXECUTIVE BOARD LEADERSHIP

SECTION I. ELIGIBILITY

The requirements for nomination as an officer of this organization are as follows:

1. the individual must have been in good standing in the Graduate Student Association in the semester before nominations, and
2. the individual must currently be in good academic standing (GPA 3.0 or higher) and
3. the individual must be available to proactively fulfill the duties of the office for the full term of office (one full academic year).

SECTION II. EMPLOYMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

All members who receive a stipend for their service to the Graduate Student Association are employees of the university. Students must follow all university guidelines to retain employment and payment for their services. After becoming elected, students must:

1. Be installed into the organization and provided the Oath of Office
2. Complete the Human Resource's employment contract with the Advisor

The President will oversee daily activities for each officer, but the Advisor is the employment supervisor for all leadership including the President.

SECTION III. RESIGNATION, IMPEACHMENT & REMOVAL OF OFFICE

1. An officer may resign by written or email notification to the President or the Executive Board. The resigning officer would ideally notify the Executive Board at least one week before the next event or meeting.
2. Officers may be removed at the request of the Graduate Dean, Advisor, President, or the Executive Board only.
3. Grounds for removal of an officer includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. dereliction of duties;
 - b. more than one (1) unexcused absence per semester;
 - c. conduct that violates the policies of Western Carolina University;

- d. a failure to maintain the GPA requirements of an officer or representative of GSA.
4. Officers under review for removal can dispute the circumstances for removal. In this case, a special impeachment hearing will be scheduled. A two-thirds vote of the Executive Board at an impeachment hearing will be required for the removal of an officer.
5. Resignation, Impeachment, or Removal will result in the termination of the student's employment contract for failure to complete their term of service and the officer shall forfeit a prorated amount of their allotted stipend.
6. If it becomes apparent that an office has been vacated permanently or in the event that an officer is impeached and removed from office, the Executive Board will have the authority to call for special elections.
 - a. The Executive Board shall have the authority to abstain from holding special elections if, in its judgment, a short period remains until the annual elections. In this instance, the President will select a temporary replacement for the position, from within the Graduate Student Association membership, until the annual elections are held.

SECTION IV. DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. President

- Preside as the chief executive officer and chair the Executive Board
- Represent as the official representative of the Graduate Student Association and the graduate student body.
- Communicate regularly with the Graduate School staff (i.e. Roxane, Joy, Brian)
- Participate in Graduate Student Orientation in the Fall (mid-August)
- Attend Chancellor's Leadership Retreat in Fall
- Attend Graduate Council meetings regularly (once per month) during the academic year
- Represent and serve on special university committees (as requested) or appoint appropriate delegates
- Lead goal-setting discussions with the officers over the summer
- Oversee all organization operations including appointing committee members and committee progress
- Complete paperwork for the RSO (Recognized Student Organization) re-recognition process and ensure the continuity of GSA
- Attend GSA Executive Board meetings (once per month)
- Preside as the parliamentarian and keep order at all official meetings

- Schedule and organize professional development workshops (i.e. grant funding, thesis formatting, social events)

2. Vice President of Travel & Finance

- Manage travel@wcu.edu email account
- Schedule and organize GSA Executive Board meetings
- Serve as the point of contact for travel grant awards and chairperson the application review committee with the Graduate School staff and the Executive Board
- Maintaining a complete, accurate, and up-to-date record of all expenditures, deposits, and receipts related to travel grant expenses
- Maintaining a complete, accurate, and up-to-date record of all expenditures, deposits, and receipts related to the organization's operating expense
- Serve as the organization's fundraising chairperson and oversee any fundraising committees established, if applicable
- Attend GSA Executive Board meetings (once per month)
- Attend Graduate Council meetings (in place of President) throughout the academic year
- Plans and implements one event per semester

3. Vice President of Public Relations

- Manage gsa@wcu.edu email account
- Maintain GSA social media presence
- Represent GSA at special events in the absence of the President
- Oversee membership involvement strategies
- Attend Graduate Council meetings (in place of President) throughout the academic year
- Attend GSA Executive Board meetings (once per month)
- Communicate regularly with Marketing and Recruitment staff in Graduate School
- Make posts to promote Graduate School events (open houses, student spotlights)
- Plans and implements two events per semester

4. Vice President of Student Advocacy & Affairs

- Serve as the liaison with the Student Government Association
- Represent GSA with the Department of Student Community Ethics (DSCE) and become a trained university conduct hearing officer to potentially serve on the hearing board
- Represent GSA at special events in the absence of the President
- Schedule and organize Graduate Student Senate meetings every month (if applicable)
- Serve as the chair of the Graduate Student Senate (if applicable)
- Support and maintain a communication network for graduate student alumni
- Attend GSA Executive Board meetings (once per month)

- Attend Graduate Council meetings (in place of President) throughout the academic year
- Plan and implement events or programs related to graduate student advocacy (i.e. listening sessions, social events)

5. Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- Strategic oversight of education and support programs tailored toward diversity, equity, and inclusion, and developing a positive culture within the graduate school
- Serve as the liaison with the Chief Diversity Officer or its equivalent to develop recruitment strategies and increase minoritized student enrollment as defined by the EEO law
- Addresses concerns related to equality, inclusion, and student safety through all campus programs
- Collaborate with the VP-PR to create posts (via Instagram, Facebook, etc.) to promote diversity & inclusion
- Chair and implement an *ad hoc* (temporary) graduate student diversity committee to help achieve goals/initiatives (up to the discretion and approval of the President and elected officer) that will be dissolved at the end of term or the discretion of VP-DEI
- Attend GSA Executive Board meetings (once per month)
- Attend Graduate Council meetings (in place of President) throughout the academic year
- Plans and implements at least one event per semester

6. Biltmore Park Liaison

- Attend GSA Executive Board meetings (once per month)
- Find strategies to increase GSA presence in Biltmore Park
- Bring concerns from Biltmore Park students to the attention of the executive board
- Assist the President and executive board on other tasks as needed
- Plans and implements one event per semester

7. Chief of Staff

- Serve as the office assistant of the leadership team and report directly to the President
- Record all minutes for all executive board meetings
- Maintaining all official documentation of the Graduate Student Association, including the constitution and any amendments
- Complete all event registration request and assist with location/venue requests
- Maintaining a complete, accurate, and up-to-date record of all expenditures, deposits, and receipts related to the organization's operating expense with the VP-T&F
- Attend GSA Executive Board meetings (once per month)

SECTION V. LINES OF SUCCESSION

1. In the event of a temporary absence or disability of the President, a Vice-President designated by the President shall perform their duties. If the President's designee is not chosen within a week for a lengthened temporary absence (e.g. emergency, sickness, etc), an "Interim President" can be chosen by the vote of the Executive Board.
2. If the President is removed or leaves office for any reason, the position shall be filled by the longest-serving Vice-President or shall be chosen by a vote of the Executive Board.

ARTICLE VI: ELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

SECTION I. PROCESS

Nominations for office shall be made at the beginning of the Spring semester. Open calls for applications will be publicized no later than the second week of February unless amended by vote of the Executive Board for that academic year.

SECTION II. CANDIDATE SELECTION

The outgoing (non-returning) Executive Board of the Graduate Student Association will review all applications received for all candidates and their respective applied positions. Interviews may be implemented to ensure the character and ability of the potential candidates. This process shall include the incoming President-Elect if the position is filled by March. Afterward, the authority is vested to the Executive Board to call an elections meeting. A two-thirds vote of the Executive Board shall be necessary to choose a nominee for each position.

If any office remains vacant after the elections, the newly elected Executive Board will be responsible for filling that position.

SECTION III. INSTALLATION & OATH OF OFFICE

1. Officers shall be inducted before the last Graduate Student Association meeting/event immediately following the receipt of election results. The President-Elect can be installed to serve as early as March.
2. New officers shall be installed using the following **Oath of Office**:
 - a. "I (name) do solemnly affirm that I will serve the graduate student body faithfully, execute the duties and responsibilities entrusted to me by virtue of my office and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and enforce the constitution of this organization at Western Carolina University."

ARTICLE VII: GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE

SECTION I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Graduate Student Senate is to provide a platform that ensures all concerns raised by the graduate student are acknowledged and addressed to the best of GSA's abilities.

SECTION II. STRUCTURE OF SENATE

The Vice-President of Student Advocacy & Affairs will chair the Senate and provide strategic oversight and instruction for its members each semester. In the absence of the VP-SAA, the President (or his designee) will chair the Senate. Final appointment and removal of all program representatives will be selected by the Chair and the Advisor.

SECTION III. DUTIES OF PROGRAM/DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVES

Program/Departmental Representatives shall be responsible for and considered active by:

- Attending Graduate Student Association meetings, with no more than one (1) unexcused absence per semester.
- Representing the concerns and needs of students in their respective departments.
- Assisting on committees, both permanent and *ad hoc*.
- Providing graduate students in their department meeting minutes upon request.
- Promoting and advertising Graduate Student Association events and meetings to students within their respective departments.
- Serving as a voting member of the Executive Board.
- All other duties are generally required of this office.

SECTION IV. MEETINGS

The frequency of meetings is to the discretion of the Chair but must occur at least once per semester. A quorum of one-third of program/departmental representatives must be present to conduct official business and to vote.

ARTICLE VIII: COMMITTEES

Ad hoc committees, e.g., "February Social Committee," may be appointed at the discretion of the President unless the committee is within the jurisdiction of the officer's responsibilities. Generally, a committee requires at least three members.

ARTICLE IX: OFFICIAL BUSINESS & VOTING

SECTION I. MEETINGS & EVENTS

There will be at least one meeting (or event) hosted per month during the academic year.

- A. All general body meetings will proceed in the manner of the agenda outlined in Robert's Rules of Order. The Executive Board maintains the right to suspend the use of Robert's Rules of Order by a two-thirds vote only.
- B. The President maintains the right to keep order in meetings, including the ability to redirect discussion in the event that it strays from the issue at hand.

SECTION II. COMMITTEE & SPECIAL MEETINGS

1. Committee chairs shall possess the authority to schedule additional meetings as necessary to accomplish the goals of the committee.
2. Meetings may be held over the summer at the discretion of the Executive Board.

SECTION III. VOTING

The Executive Board may vote to hold meetings, special elections, or proceedings as appropriate. In the event, decisions amongst the Executive Board cannot be decided with a vote then issues can be brought to the Graduate Student Senate or the President to break a tie.

ARTICLE X: FINANCE

SECTION I. UNIVERSITY POLICY

In accordance with University and State policy, the fiscal year will begin July 1 and end the following June 30, the Fall semester shall be defined as July 1 - December 31, and the spring semester shall be defined as January 1 - June 30.

SECTION II. FINAL EXPENDITURE APPROVAL

All check requests, checks, and other binding financial agreements must be approved by the President, VP of Travel & Finance, and the current Dean of the Graduate School.

ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS

This constitution and any by-laws can be ratified/amended with the approval of a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board at a duly called meeting and final approval of the Advisor.