

SUNY Buffalo State
Graduate Student Association
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Constitution

Mission Statement: The mission of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) of the State University of New York Buffalo State is to represent and advocate for the interests of the institution's current and future graduate students. The GSA will support the graduate student community by providing leadership, career development, support for scholarly activities and networking opportunities.

Article I. Identification

The name of this organization shall be the Graduate Student Association, (hereinafter referred to as "GSA").

Article II. Purpose

Section 1: The GSA shall be the representative body of the graduate students of Buffalo State.

Section 2: The GSA shall not discriminate or promote any form of discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, color, religion or creed, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, economic status, veteran status, physical ability, or national origin in any program, activity, or service.

Section 3: The GSA shall represent and advocate for the interests of the institution's current and future graduate students.

Section 4: The GSA shall provide and inform students of academic and professional development opportunities for members of the graduate student body.

Article III. Membership

Section 1: All full- and part-time matriculated graduate students at Buffalo State who pay the GSA fee are members of the GSA.

Article IV: Graduate Student Fee

Section 1: The GSA Budget shall maintain two lines: a) Academic Line; and b) Student Welfare Line.

Section 2: At least fifty-one percent (51%) of the GSA fee shall be allocated to the Academic Line. The remaining funds may be distributed among the Student Welfare Line or other lines/initiatives as

deemed necessary, at the discretion of the current administration. Funds from each line shall remain distinct and may not be transferred or used interchangeably.

Section 3: The GSA may use funds from the Academic Line for graduate students' research and scholarship, participation in professional organizations and conferences, and the creation and presentation of professional posters and documents related to research and scholarship. The GSA may also use funds from the Academic Line to establish and maintain a scholarship award for SUNY Buffalo State graduate students. Expenses eligible for reimbursement include membership fees, conference/registration fees, travel and transportation expenses, lodging expenses, and poster creation costs. Items not eligible for reimbursement are meals and personal car mileage. All qualified applications will be subject to approval by the GSA Treasurer, with further review by the Senate if necessary.

- a. The GSA establishes a funding reimbursement limit per student per academic year, which is determined annually at the discretion of the Treasurer, upon approval of the Senate, and in accordance with the annual GSA budget. The specific reimbursement amount will be published by September 1st of each academic year, when the reimbursement form opens. Requests will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to available funds.
- b. Only members of the GSA may submit applications to receive funding. Any reimbursement of approved funding requests must be processed within one (1) semester after the student has paid the GSA fee.
- c. All funding requests must include a letter of support from the student's academic department verifying the relevance between request and program and must be submitted a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to the dates of the student's travel/expenses. All funding requests submitted within thirty days (30) will be approved at the discretion of the Treasurer and may be subject to financial penalty.
- d. Applications for funding will be accepted for submission beginning September 1st of the academic year. The deadline for all funding request submissions is May 1st of the same academic year. All applications submitted after May 1st will not be considered for funding.
- e. Students who are members of the GSA are allowed to request funds for domestic and international travel as it pertains to independent research or one's master's project. In order to be considered for funding, the following requirements must be met by the student and submitted to the GSA Treasurer:
 1. Sign-off from the student's department chair and academic advisor that includes a checklist of items that have been completed for the student's research (e.g. IRB verification, literature review, etc.)
 2. An abstract that states the purpose of the student's research.
 3. Submission of the student's IRB for the requested research. If the student has not received IRB approval at the time of the request, a letter of support from the student's advisor is required to verify that all IRB requirements will be met; and
 4. Submission of budget for research that includes, but is not limited to, additional funding provided by the student's academic department and dean, cost of research materials (excluding software), and travel and lodging expenses.
- f. Any funding requests and/or expenses that are tied to the student receiving academic credit (e.g. internship, independent study, study abroad), with the exception of the master's project, will not be eligible for funding.

Section 4: The GSA may use funds from the Academic Line for marketing and business-related purposes, including but not limited to business cards for E-Board members, posters, merchandise, and other materials to promote events and initiatives of the GSA.

Section 5: The GSA may use funds from the Student Welfare line for refreshments at GSA meetings and for graduate student professional gatherings.

Section 6: The GSA may use funds from the Student Welfare Line to support initiatives that enhance the well-being and success of graduate students. This includes, but is not limited to, wellness programs, mental health resources, social events, and community-building activities. Expenses eligible for reimbursement may include event supplies, venue fees, guest speaker honorariums, and promotional materials. Items not eligible for reimbursement are meals and personal car mileage. All qualified applications will be subject to approval by the GSA Treasurer, with further review by the Senate if necessary.

Section 7: The GSA fee shall be reviewed by the Graduate Student Association Senate at the start of every even academic year.

Section 9: After the review, the senators of the GSA may propose a change to the fee. The proposed fee will then be presented to and approved or denied by the general population of the graduate student body, in a referendum.

Section 10: The GSA may use funds from the fee to establish and maintain a scholarship award for SUNY Buffalo State graduate students.

Section 11: The GSA may use funds from the Student Welfare Line to support initiatives that enhance the well-being and success of graduate students. This includes, but is not limited to, wellness programs, mental health resources, social events, and community-building activities. The GSA can award funding to graduate student organizations and/or individual graduate students for programming that benefits the graduate student body, with approval from the GSA Senate. These funds may cover, but are not limited to, expenses related to marketing, business purposes, speakers, advertising, and food/refreshments. The approval of these funds will be determined by the committee, based on the discretion of the VP for Administration and VP for Finance.

Article V. The GSA Senate

Section 1: The governing body of the GSA shall be known as the Graduate Student Association Senate (hereinafter referred to as “the Senate”).

Section 2: The Senate membership shall be comprised of the GSA School representatives (hereinafter titled Senators) and one additional Senator, hereinafter termed the Senator-at-Large, who shall be elected by students from all schools.

- a. The Senator-at-Large will be elected from Graduate Studies, comprised of students enrolled in the Multidisciplinary Studies program.

- b. The Senator-at-Large will be elected during the election of the Senators.
- c. The Senator-at-Large shall represent the needs and concerns of the graduate student body as a whole.

Section 3: The following shall have at least three representatives, in the GSA Senate:

- a. School of Arts and Sciences
- b. School of Education
- c. School of Professions

Section 4: In the case three representatives are not nominated, the GSA will be considered active with only one representative from each school. In the event that no representative comes forward, the other members of the GSA will represent the needs and concerns of the respective school to the best of their ability until representation is established. All efforts will be made to fill the vacant position as soon as possible. The vacant Senate seats will be confirmed by the Senate after appointment by the President.

Section 5: Senators shall represent the voice of the graduate students from all departments within their own school. The Senators will make known to the Senate the needs and concerns of the graduate students whom they represent.

Section 6: Nominees, Senators, and the Senator-at-Large must have the following qualifications:

- a. Must be members of the GSA, as specified in Article III.
- b. Members of the Executive Board must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 to remain in office. Members of the Senate must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50 to remain in office. Failure to meet these requirements may result in removal from their respective positions, subject to review by the Graduate Student Association.
- c. Must be present for Senate meetings.
- d. Must be available to serve for the duration of the appointed term.

Article VI. Executive Officers and Senators

Section 1: The officers of the GSA shall be members of the Senate and shall consist of the following:

- a. President
- b. Executive Vice President
- c. Treasurer
- d. Director for Administrative Programming
- e. Secretary

Section 2: On their election these officers shall become Senators-at-Large, exercising full voting privileges, and shall remain in this capacity until the next general election of Senators following their replacement as officers of the Senate, unless they resign or are impeached.

Section 3: The duties of the President shall be to:

- a. Preside over GSA meetings.
- b. The President is an ex-officio non-voting member of all GSA appointed and created committees.
- c. Oversee the Executive Board and Senate of the GSA.

- d. Act as a liaison on behalf of the GSA with Buffalo State's administration, staff, and undergraduate students; as well as represent them to other constituencies.
- e. Plan meeting agendas with the input of other executives.
- f. Serve as the official representative and voice of the GSA.
- g. Keep meetings operating according to the Constitution.
- h. Oversee nomination and election procedures for the executive board.
- i. Submit a report on activities and accomplishments for the year.
- j. Primary administrator of the official GSA website (<http://gsa.buffalostate.edu>).

Section 4: The duties of the Executive Vice President shall be to:

- a. Assume the responsibilities of the President in the event of Presidential absence.
- b. Serve as internal advisor to the President.
- c. Assist the president with meeting agendas when asked.
- d. Oversee nomination and election procedures for Senators and Senator-at-Large.
- e. Plan and execute the Graduate Student Research Fair, to be held each academic year at the end of the spring semester.
- f. In the event that the Secretary position is vacant, all responsibilities outlined in Section 7 of Article VI shall be temporarily reassigned to the Executive Vice President. This reassignment shall remain in effect until the Secretary position is filled or until the Executive Board establishes an alternative arrangement through a majority vote.

Section 5: The duties of the Treasurer shall be to:

- a. Execute final fiscal decisions of executive board.
- b. Maintain financial records past and present.
- c. Report on financial status of the GSA at each meeting, and additionally to the Executive Board upon request of the President.
- d. Recommend a budget for the GSA.
- e. Provide input in preparation of meeting agendas when asked.
- f. Assist President and Vice President with election and nomination procedures.
- g. Make determinations regarding funding requests and forward recommendations in accordance with internal control guidelines.
- h. Chair the finance committee.

Section 6: The duties of the Director for Administrative Programming shall be to:

- a. Maintain an up-to-date calendar of events and present it when asked by the President or the GSA.
- b. Provide input in preparation of agendas.
- c. Chair the programming committee.

Section 7: The duties of the Secretary shall be to:

- a. Maintain written records of general GSA meetings and executive meetings (minutes).
- b. Manage GSA documentation.
- c. Help any graduate student or person addressing the GSA with ensuring all documentation being presented or given to the GSA is correct and distributed.
- d. Keep detailed records of any resolutions brought to the floor of the GSA, regardless of its passing or failing status acted upon in the Senate.

- e. Keep detailed records of the GSA's Executive Board
- f. Maintain an organized record of all approved GSA Committee members.
- g. Provide copies of all minutes to any member of the GSA when asked.

Section 8: The duties of the Senators shall be to:

- a. Attend meetings of the GSA.
- b. Represent constituents to the best of their ability.

Article VII: Elections

Section 1: Elections for executive board positions will take place electronically every spring semester.

Section 2: Elections for members of the Senate will take place electronically every fall. The Executive Board will be responsible for providing and advertising the Senate meeting dates for the academic year, prior to the elections, at the beginning of the fall semester. Elections for vacant positions will occur during the spring semester, if necessary.

- a. In the event a Senate seat is open, it may be filled by a graduate student of the respective school by appointment of the President, and a simple majority vote of the Senate.
- b. In the event the vacancy occurs after the November meeting and prior to the February meeting, the seat will be filled by standard electronic elections.

Section 3: In alignment with the organization's standard election process, elections for any vacant positions shall take place during the regular spring election period. If a position becomes vacant after the spring elections, the Executive Board may hold a special election or appoint an interim officer to serve until the next spring election.

Section 4: The Graduate Student Association will hold elections for the elected positions that can be held by graduate students on campus-wide committees and governmental bodies. This includes the following seats reserved specifically for graduate students:

- One (1) seat on the Grant Allocation Committee
- Two (2) seats on the Buffalo State Senate

Also included are seats that can be held by either a graduate or undergraduate student (according to the by-laws of the committees themselves) to be decided by the candidate receiving the highest 'vote percentage'. Vote percentage shall be defined as the number of votes received by a given candidate, divided by the size of the candidate's representative population (graduate or undergraduate population in total):

- Three (3) seats on the Faculty Student Association
- One (1) seat on the University Council

Nominations will be accepted through an online form, with results being sent to the current Graduate Student Association e-mail address. Voting shall occur online.

Results will be sent to the following, no later than the 1st week of May:

- The President of the University and the Vice President of Student Affairs shall receive all results.

- The AVP of Student Success will receive the results for the Grant Allocation Committee.
- Both the Chair of the Buffalo State Senate and of the By-Laws and Elections Committee of the Buffalo State Senate will receive the results for the Buffalo State Senate.
- The Chair of the Faculty Student Association will receive the results for the Faculty Student Association.
- The Chief of Staff will receive the results for the University Council.

Article VIII: Impeachment

Section 1: Impeachment of executive officers and/or senators may be initiated by a 2/3 vote of active Senate members present (quorum vote) at a meeting.

Section 2: When impeachment has been initiated, and while final action is pending, the officer or officers mentioned in these proceedings shall lose the right to exercise any of the duties and powers associated with the mentioned offices.

Section 3: When an Officer has been impeached, regardless of whether the motion for removal has succeeded or been tabled, the Senate has the option to elect by majority vote Interim Officers who will hold all duties and powers normally associated with the office. These Interim Officers may only be appointed from amongst the willing members of the graduate student body in attendance that have attended and signed in at two Senate Meetings within the past twelve months. They will hold their office only until permanent officers can be elected according to the rules for replacement, or until their office has been returned to an Impeached Officer who has been cleared of the charges against him, or until they themselves have resigned, or until the Senate by a simple majority vote chooses to recall them.

Article IX: Standing Committees: Each standing committee will be chaired by an Executive Officer and can be co-chaired by a Senator if that Chairperson so chooses. If two or more senators want to co-chair the same committee, an election will be held by written ballot of all senators and officers. Any member of the GSA can serve on a standing committee.

Section 1: Student Welfare Committee: This committee is charged with examining graduate student life and recommending policy related to:

- Graduate students' intellectual/academic, psychological, physical, social, and cultural wellbeing
- Academic matters
- Services available to graduate students
- Faculty-student-administration relations

Section 2: Budget Allocation and Policy Committee: This committee is charged with periodically reviewing the GSA Constitution for accuracy and alignment with practices of the Senate and reviewing the use of funds spent by the GSA.

- a. This committee will review constituent questions and/or concerns regarding funding requests and/or funding decisions made by the Treasurer. This committee will also assist the Treasurer in making any funding decisions when s/he requests their assistance.

Article X: Meetings of the Senate

Section 1: Meetings

- a. Regular meetings of the Senate shall be held at least three times a semester. Additional meetings may be called by the President or the GSA Executive Board as required.
- b. Emergency meetings may be called by the acting GSA President as needed.
- c. All meeting will be held according to Robert's Rules of Order
- d. Executive Board meetings shall be scheduled at the discretion of the current Executive Board

Section 2: Meetings of the Senate shall be open to any member of the college unless an Executive Session is called.

- a. Executive Session will include all Senators and Executive Board members. Advisors and anyone else who may be asked to advise or assist during an executive session must be approved by a simple majority by the Senate directly prior to entering executive session.

Section 3: Voting will take place with a quorum of the elected Senate members present unless otherwise stipulated in the constitution or bylaws.

Section 4: One half of the total senate membership plus one shall constitute a quorum.

Section 5: A majority vote passes any action unless otherwise stipulated in the constitution or bylaws.

Section 6: Any bylaws deemed necessary for the operation of the GSA shall become effective by a two-thirds vote of the Senate.

Article XI. Administrative Liaison and Faculty Advisor

Section 1: The director of Graduate Studies will serve as the administrative liaison.

- a. The administrative liaison serves as a bridge between the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and the campus faculty, staff, and administration on matters relevant to the graduate student population.
- b. The administrative liaison's primary responsibilities are to provide insight and support the organization. While the administrative liaison may share ideas and offer suggestions to enhance the organization's efforts, they shall not assume a directive role or interfere with the leadership's decision-making process.
- c. The administrative liaison may attend meetings and engage in organizational activities throughout the year, supporting the GSA as needed.
- d. GSA Officers are expected to maintain regular communication with the administrative liaison, keeping them informed of projects, initiatives, and events.

Section 2: Upon election of the Senators, the duties and formal selection process of the faculty advisor will be determined.

- a. The advisor serves as a liaison between the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and the campus faculty, staff, and administration on matters relevant to the graduate student population.
- b. The advisor's primary responsibilities are to provide insight and support the organization. While the advisor may share ideas and offer suggestions to enhance the organization's efforts, they shall not assume a directive role or interfere with the leadership's decision-making process.
- c. The advisor may attend meetings and engage in organizational activities throughout the year, supporting the GSA as needed.
- d. GSA Officers are expected to maintain regular communication with the advisor, keeping them informed of projects, initiatives, and events.

Article XII. Amendments

Section 1: Amendments to this constitution or the GSA bylaws may be proposed as a motion by any member of the Senate during a regular or emergency Senate meeting.

Section 2: A majority vote of two-thirds of the Senate present is required for the motion to pass and become an official amendment proposal.

Section 3: All proposed amendments to the constitution or the bylaws must be made public to the graduate student population.

Section 4: All proposed amendments will be discussed and voted on during the next scheduled Senate meeting. This meeting shall be advertised to the graduate student population, giving them the opportunity to inform their Senator of any concern, and will be open to the general population of graduate students. Any current graduate student or Buffalo State graduate student alumni may address the floor at this special meeting in regard to support of or opposition to the amendment.

Section 5: A two thirds vote by a quorum of Senators is required for the amendment to pass and become part of the Constitution or bylaws.