

# By-Laws of the Graduate Student Council

As Amended Through 10/9/17

The following By-Laws shall govern the operations of the Graduate Student Council (hereafter Council) of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences (hereafter GSAS) at the University of Virginia.

## I. GENERAL POLICIES

### A. Meetings:

1. The Council shall meet at regular intervals no less than three times each Spring and Fall semester. Meetings may be held during the Summer semester at the discretion of the Council.
2. Additional meetings may be called by the President when necessary or by petition from one-third of all voting members.
3. The President shall make reasonable public notice of the date, time, and location of all Council meetings and distribute an agenda to all voting members in advance.

### B. Elections:

1. Elections for President, Vice-President of Administration, Vice-President of Communications, and Vice-President of Finance (hereafter Executive Board) will take place at a regularly scheduled Council meeting during the month of April.
2. The Executive Board shall be elected by separate ballots in the order listed above in §I.B.1, so that unelected candidates can be nominated for another office.
3. Before each vote, the President will request nominations from the voting members of the Council. All candidates must be voting members of the Council.
4. Upon nomination, each candidate will be allowed a reasonable amount of time to present his or her qualifications to the Council and answer questions.
5. In the event that more than one candidate is nominated for an office, the voting procedure shall proceed as follows:
  - i. All candidates nominated for the position shall be asked to leave the room.
  - ii. Individually, candidates shall return to the room to present his or her qualifications and take part in a brief Q&A, after which he or she shall leave the room.
  - iii. Council members shall be given the opportunity to speak in support of or opposition to each candidate without the candidate present.
  - iv. Voting will take place through secret ballot and tally. The winner will be determined by a majority vote.

- v. If necessary, a run-off election will be held (also by secret ballot) between the two candidates with the highest vote counts.
  - vi. In the event of a tie between two candidates, council members will be given another opportunity to discuss the candidates followed by another secret ballot and tally. This will continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes.
  - vii. Once the winner has been determined, candidates are allowed to return to the room, and the winner is announced.
6. Elections for the standing Committee Chairs or Co-Chairs (hereafter Chairs) will be held following the Executive Board elections and in an order voted upon by the Council at the prior Council meeting.
7. Elections for the Chairs of each standing Committee will be held as follows:
  - i. Each Committee may nominate a number of candidates up to the number of available positions.
  - ii. Any candidates nominated are asked to leave the room. Individually they will be asked to return to present his or her qualifications to the Council and take part in a brief Q&A.
  - iii. The individual candidate will then be asked to leave the room again, and the Council will vote yea or nay on that candidate with a majority of yeas required for confirmation to the position.
  - iv. In the event of a tie, the council members will have another opportunity to discuss the candidates followed by another yea or nay vote. This will continue until there is a majority, either yea or nay.
  - v. This will be repeated until a vote has been held on all Committee-nominated candidates. The results will be announced when the candidates return to the room.
  - vi. If after voting has been held on the Committee nominations there are open Chair positions, nominations will be opened up to all voting members of the Council.
  - vii. The elections will then follow as outlined in §I.B.4–5.
8. No voting member who has been nominated as a candidate may cast a ballot.

*C. Email Communications:*

1. The Vice-President of Communications shall oversee three main types of email communication pertaining to the council:
  - i. Messages distributed to departments through contact with:
    - a. Council Departmental Representatives (hereafter Reps).
    - b. Directors of Graduate Studies and Department Administrative Assistants.
  - ii. Internal communication among council members via distribution lists.
  - iii. Monthly Connections emails sent to the entire GSAS Student Body.

2. The VP of Communications shall be responsible for monitoring and maintaining a number of email distribution lists, which exist for communication with and dissemination of information to graduate students. The purposes, populations, and proper uses of these lists are as follows:
  - i. SYMPA Name: GSASC
    - a. This list shall contain all active members of the Council, both Reps and non-voting members.
    - b. This list shall be used for the Council's internal use; to communicate with or solicit information from the Reps and to disseminate information to departmental graduate student email lists (responsibility of Reps).
    - c. Messages distributed via this list shall be limited to those publicizing events and opportunities for GSAS graduate students, as well as news and information from the Council. Personal notices or outside advertisements are prohibited.
    - d. Communications may be sent to this list by any member of the Council but must be approved by the VP of Communications before distribution.
    - e. While care should be taken to prevent unnecessary e-mail traffic, the distribution of messages through this list shall not be limited by a set schedule.
    - f. Under no circumstances shall the Council use this list to conduct official business or hold a vote by e-mail in lieu of a regularly scheduled meeting.
  - ii. SYMPA Name: GSASC-Exec
    - a. This list shall minimally contain the current Executive Board. This list may also contain members who have formerly held any Executive Board position, or who act in an advisory capacity to the Executive Board.
    - b. This list shall be used for internal communication among Executive Board about issues pertaining to the Council.
    - c. Communications may be sent to this list by any member of Executive Board without moderation by the VP of Communications. Outside parties wishing to send emails to this list should do so through an Executive Board member, as emails sent directly to this list by outside parties will be automatically refused.
    - d. There shall be no restrictions on the frequency of message distribution through this list.
  - iii. SYMPA Name: GSASC-Chairs
    - a. This list shall minimally contain the current Chairs. This list may also contain former Chairs, or those acting in an advisory capacity to Chairs.

- b. This list shall be used for internal communication among Chairs, as well as for the communication of items pertinent to both Executive Board and Chairs (used in conjunction with the GSAS-Exec list).
  - c. Communications may be sent to this list by any Chair or Executive Board without moderation by the VP of Communications; however, email from outside parties will be moderated.
  - d. There shall be no restrictions on the frequency of message distribution through this list.
- iv. SYMPA Name: GSAS-Connect
    - a. This list shall contain every current graduate student in GSAS.
    - b. This list is owned and managed by the Office of the VP of Student Affairs; the Council VP of Communications acts as a list moderator.
    - c. Only the VP of Communications may send emails to this list.
    - d. To prevent unnecessary email traffic, this list shall only be used to send monthly Connections emails (see §I.C.3) or corrections thereto. Use of this list for the distribution of any other messages requires the majority approval of the Executive Board.
- 3. Monthly Connections Emails
    - i. Connections emails are designed to provide all graduate students in GSAS with a list of events in the coming month that may be of interest to them.
    - ii. The VP of Communications shall set a monthly deadline for the submission of items to be included both from internal and outside parties.
    - iii. Once all submissions have been collected, they will be combined and circulated via the GSAS-Connect email list.
    - iv. These messages should only be sent out once monthly; however, in the event of a last minute addition, change, or identification of a pertinent mistake, addenda may be distributed as well.

## II. COMMITTEES

### A. *Committee Policies:*

1. All voting members of the Council are required to serve on at least one standing committee or ad-hoc committee. However, exceptions shall be made for Council officers and members of the Student Council, Honor Committee, and Judiciary Committee, as well as representatives appointed by the President to official University committees.
2. The President and Vice-President of Administration shall assemble a list of committee assignments at the beginning of the academic year, taking into account the preferences of each Council member.

3. The President or Vice-President of Administration is empowered to make changes to committee assignments with the consent of the individual(s) involved and the appropriate committee chair.

B. *Standing Committees:*

1. Finance Committee

- i. The Finance Committee shall be responsible for overseeing the Council's finances.
- ii. The Finance Committee shall meet before each regularly scheduled Council meeting to review all submitted funding requests and make recommendations to the Council.
- iii. The Finance Committee shall also be responsible for proposing annual budgets to the Council.
- iv. The Finance Committee shall be led by a single Chair, elected as outlined in §I.B.7, who will deliver regular reports to the President and the Council about the Committee's activities.
- v. The Finance Committee shall consist only of voting members of the Council.

2. Initiatives Committee

- i. The Initiatives Committee shall be responsible for addressing issues affecting underrepresented graduate students, investigating complaints from graduate students and recommending action when necessary.
- ii. The Initiatives Committee shall be responsible for advising the Council and the administration about quality of life issues such as health insurance, childcare, and transportation.
- iii. The Initiatives Committee shall be responsible for addressing issues affecting graduate students conducting research, such as library holdings, lab policies, and research fees.
- iv. The Initiatives Committee shall be responsible for addressing issues that concern graduate student instructors and teaching assistants, such as training, evaluations, and stipends.
- v. The Initiatives Committee shall also sponsor events and undertake initiatives to promote graduate student teaching.
- vi. The Initiatives Committee shall be led by two Co-Chairs, elected as outlined in §I.B.7, who will deliver regular reports to the President and the Council about the Committee's activities.
- vii. At the discretion of the Co-Chairs, graduate students who are not voting members of the Council may serve on the Initiatives Committee in a non-voting capacity.

3. Social Committee

- i. The Social Committee shall be responsible for organizing events and activities to encourage social interaction among graduate students in

different departments.

- ii. The Social Committee may use Council funds to sponsor events, provided that such funding does not violate §III.A.3 of these By-Laws.
  - iii. The Social Committee shall be led by two Co-Chairs, elected as outlined in §I.B.7, who will deliver regular reports to the President and the Council about the Committee's activities.
  - iv. At the discretion of the Co-Chairs, graduate students who are not voting members of the Council may serve on the Social Committee in a non-voting capacity.
4. Research Committee
- i. The Research Committee shall be responsible for overseeing the annual Huskey Graduate Research Exhibition.
  - ii. The Research Committee shall be responsible for organizing events and activities to encourage collaboration and innovation in graduate student-led research.
  - iii. The Research Committee may use Council funds to sponsor events, provided that such funding does not violate §III.A.3 of these By-Laws.
  - iv. The Research Committee shall be led by two Co-Chairs, elected as outlined in §I.B.7, who will deliver regular reports to the President and the Council about the Committee's activities.
  - v. At the discretion of the Co-Chairs, graduate students who are not voting members of the Council may serve on the Research Committee in a non-voting capacity.
5. Professional Development Committee
- i. The Professional Development committee shall be responsible for organizing, implementing, and overseeing the annual GradDays (or GradWeek) celebration.
  - ii. The Professional Development Committee shall be led by two Co-Chairs, elected as outlined in §I.B.7, who will deliver regular reports to the President and the Council about the Committee's activities.
  - iii. At the discretion of the Co-Chairs, graduate students who are not voting members of the Council may serve on the Professional Development Committee in a non-voting capacity.

*C. Ad-Hoc Committees:*

1. At the discretion of the President or a majority vote of the Council, ad-hoc committees may be formed to address issues which do not fall under the jurisdiction of a standing committee.
2. All ad-hoc committees shall be dissolved automatically at the end of each academic year, unless the Council votes to renew them.

### III. BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

#### A. Guidelines:

1. The Council and the Finance Committee will follow the Board of Visitors guidelines for the use of student activity fee funds. In particular, the Council recognizes that: *the purpose of the student activity fee is to provide financial support for student organizations that are related to the educational purpose of the University of Virginia. As a required student fee, the monies collected by the University for funding student activities are public funds which must be administered in a manner consistent with the educational purpose of the University as well as with state and federal law.*
2. The Council and the Budget Committee shall make funding decisions according to the following criteria:
  - i. The number of disciplines in the GSAS that will benefit from the proposed event or activity.
  - ii. The number of GSAS graduate students who will participate in (or benefit from) the proposed event or activity.
  - iii. The financial support provided by other sources, as well as funds currently held by the organization.
  - iv. Whether GSAS graduate students are the primary beneficiaries of the proposed event or activity.
  - v. The Council's past history of funding the event or activity.
  - vi. The verbal and written presentation of the request.
  - vii. A review of the line items of the request.
  - viii. The discretionary funds available in the Council's budget.
3. The Council's funds may not be used for the following items, in accordance with University policy:
  - i. Religious activities.
  - ii. Social entertainment or related expenses.
  - iii. Philanthropic contributions and activities.
  - iv. Political activities.
  - v. Activities which would jeopardize the University's tax exempt status.
  - vi. Loans or temporary deposits for any of the items listed above.

#### B. Procedures:

1. All funding requests must be submitted to the President, Vice-President of Finance, and the Finance Committee Chair no fewer than three days preceding the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Finance Committee.
2. Funding requests must include:
  - i. A full explanation of the activity or event.
  - ii. A detailed description of expenses and a summary of the total costs of

the activity or event.

- iii. A complete list of all other sources of revenue (including currently held and anticipated funds).
  - iv. The amount being requested from the Council, and what these funds will be used for.
3. Any individual or organization requesting funds must deliver a presentation to the Finance Committee. Funding requests for individuals or organizations that are unable to send a knowledgeable representative to the Finance Committee meeting may be declined for review until the next month's meeting, at the discretion of the Finance Committee Chair and VP of Finance.
  4. Debates on funding requests shall be closed to all except voting members of the Council. No Council member with a conflict of interest may take part in a funding debate or vote on a request.
  5. The Finance Committee shall recommend a specific amount of funding for each submitted request by email to the Council at least three business days before the meeting. The requestor shall be notified immediately of the Committee's decision, and the requestor will be given the opportunity to appeal the recommendation to the Council.
  6. Council will vote on the Finance Committee recommendations as submitted as though it were a motion on the floor. The possible recommendations will be to fund at some amount, not to fund, or to discuss the issue more in the council meeting. There may be a brief explanation as to why the recommendation was made but there will not be further discussion from the council. Further time can be given to discussion of the Committee's recommendations only via majority vote on a motion to that affect.
  7. If the individual or organization requesting funds chooses to appeal the Finance Committee's recommendation, the following procedures shall be followed:
    - i. The appeal must be submitted in writing, and may be no longer than one page.
    - ii. The appeal must be received by the President at least twenty-four hours before the Council's next regularly scheduled meeting, at which time the Council is scheduled to vote on the funding request in question.
    - iii. The appeal may only challenge the denial of requested funds, and may not request additional funding not stated in the original request.
    - iv. The appeal shall be distributed to the Council before it votes on the funding request in question.
  8. The Vice-President of Finance shall retain photocopies of all signed disbursement forms that have been submitted to the Finance Committee within the past two years.
  9. The Council shall not agree to pay any individual a stipend or salary, unless the Finance Committee has been consulted about tax and human resources issues.



10. The Council reserves the right to investigate whether its funds have been misused, or used for a purpose other than described in the original funding request. Such incidents may be referred to the University Judiciary Committee, the Honor Committee, or the administration for further action.
11. The Council may also make use of its own funds as follows:
  - i. The Executive Board may use Council funds to prepare for regularly scheduled meetings, provided that the Council has approved such expenditures in its annual budget.
  - ii. Committees may apply for funding by submitting a request to the Finance Committee as described above.

*C. Budget:*

1. The Vice-President of Finance, with the approval of the Finance Committee, shall submit a budget for the upcoming academic year to the Council during the July general body meeting. The Council will have until the August meeting to review the proposed budget; at which point a vote to ratify the budget will be held.
2. This budget shall specify:
  - i. Anticipated revenues for the upcoming academic year.
  - ii. The size of any surplus left over from the current year.
  - iii. Funds allocated to the Executive Board to prepare for regularly scheduled meetings.
  - iv. Funds allocated for Council-sponsored events, such as the Huskey Graduate Research Exhibition.
  - v. Discretionary funds which may be allocated to graduate student organizations over the course of the academic year.
  - vi. The size of a reserve fund for use in financial emergencies.
3. This budget shall remain in force for the entire academic year, but may be altered at any time by a majority vote of both the Finance Committee and the Council.