

CONSTITUTION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Constitution of the Graduate Student Association, as found in the Preamble of the Constitution, is to “define clearly the powers and responsibilities of the students, to secure for ourselves training and experience in self-government, and to provide an organizational framework through which our efforts shape a better university experience.”

POLICY STATEMENT

We, the students of the Graduate Student Association at the University of South Carolina, do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution for the Graduate Student Association of the University of South Carolina.

PREAMBLE

We, the students of the University of South Carolina Graduate School, in order to conduct graduate student affairs in an efficient, orderly, systematic, and professional matter, do define clearly the powers and responsibilities of the students:

- to secure for ourselves training and experience in self-government, and
- to provide an organizational framework through which our efforts shape a better university experience.

We do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution for the Graduate Student Association of the University of South Carolina.

I. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

1. NAME

The name of this body shall be the Graduate Student Association of the University of South Carolina (hereafter referred to as the Graduate Student Association [GSA]).

2. AUTHORITY

In accordance with other university policies and procedures, the Graduate Student Association shall have the authority to provide a comprehensive voice on behalf of all graduate students enrolled at the University of South Carolina.

3. JURISDICTION

By virtue of their registration at the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina, all Master’s, Doctorate, and professional degree students shall be subject to this Constitution.

4. MEMBERSHIP

- a. Whether seeking a degree or not, all duly enrolled graduate students taking at least one (1) academic credit hour (excluding undergraduates exercising “senior privilege”) shall constitute the membership of the Graduate Student Association for the current semester.
- b. Members are represented by the Graduate Student Association Executive Board and Cabinet.
- c. All members are free to attend and participate at any Graduate Student Association meeting.

5. FRANCHISE

All duly enrolled graduate students at the Columbia campus shall be entitled to vote in general and special elections, as well as GSA meetings when appropriate.

II. EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. VESTED POWERS

- a. All primary executive powers of the Graduate Student Association shall be vested in an Executive Board consisting of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Graduate Council Representative.
- b. The President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Graduate Council Representative shall be elected in a manner provided for by this Constitution and any additional rules approved by the graduate student body.
- c. All elected executive officers are required to uphold the Constitution and any official University policies and procedures. They shall also administer all regulations established by the graduate student body, if applicable.

2. QUALIFICATIONS

- a. No student shall be eligible to hold the offices of President or Vice President who has not completed at least two semesters of coursework attributed to the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina at the time the general election is held.
- b. No student shall be eligible to hold the offices of the Treasurer or the Graduate Council Representative who has not completed at least one semester attributed to the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina at the time the general election is held.
- c. No student shall be eligible to hold any elected executive office if s/he does not maintain the cumulative GPA requirement for graduation and remain in good standing with his or her respective school, college, and/or degree program.
- d. No student, while holding executive office, shall hold any other office under the authority of Graduate Student Association.

3. ELECTIONS

- a. Before each election, the Executive Board shall appoint a five (5) member Elections Commission that, upon Cabinet approval, will serve as both the primary body to oversee the elections and to act an independent arbitrator for election-related issues.
 - i. Unless the makeup cannot be maintained, the Elections Commission shall be composed of at least two students pursuing master's degrees and two students pursuing doctorate degrees. The fifth member can represent any University of South Carolina graduate program.
 - ii. No student who is pursuing an Executive Board position in the nearest Executive Board elections shall serve on the Elections Commission.
- b. Each Executive Board position – President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Graduate Council Representative – shall be elected annually by the graduate student body. In contested elections between only two individuals, the person receiving the absolute majority of votes cast shall be elected.
 - i. Absolute majority is defined as fifty percent (50%) plus one vote of all eligible votes cast.
 - ii. All general elections for the Executive Board positions shall be conducted in accordance with GSA rules and will be held no later than April 1 of each year.
- c. In the event that no person receives an absolute majority of the votes cast for any contested office amongst three or more individuals during the general election, GSA shall hold a run-off election between the two persons who received the greatest number of votes cast for the office during the general election. In the run-off election, the person receiving the highest number of votes cast for the office shall be elected.
 - i. The run-off election shall occur within seven (7) days after the general election for the position(s) meeting this criterion.
 - ii. If the run-off election ends in a tie between the two candidates, Cabinet will decide via absolute majority vote who will fill the contested position.
 - I. If a Cabinet member is involved in the run-off scenario that ends in a tie, his/her vote will be abstained from the final tally.
 - II. This step will repeat until Cabinet has officially determined a winner via vote.
 - iii. All run-off elections shall take place no later than April 8 in any calendar year.
- d. After the election cycle, if the President is not elected by April 23, the elected Vice President shall serve as President until a confirming election can be held.
- e. If necessary, after the election cycle - provided any other elected executive office remains vacant on May 1 - the highest-elected Executive Board member from the most recent election shall have the power to call an emergency special session of the GSA. During this session, s/he shall appoint individuals to vacant Executive Board positions with the simple majority approval of Cabinet.
 - i. This emergency special session must be scheduled and communicated to Cabinet no later than May 2.
 - ii. This emergency special session must be conducted prior to the Spring semester Commencement.
 - iii. Business conducted during this emergency special session shall be required to have a quorum of 2/3 of Cabinet to be considered.

4. TERMS OF OFFICE

All elected executive officers shall serve from their inauguration date of May 1 of the calendar year in which they were elected until May 1 the following year, when the newly elected Executive Board members assume their respective positions.

5. OATH OF OFFICE

All elected executive officers, before they enter upon the duties of their respective offices, shall take and adhere to the following oath:

“I, {name}, do solemnly pledge to faithfully execute the office of {position title}, to abide by the Graduate Student Association Constitution, to uphold the Carolinian Creed, and to represent the graduate student body to the best of my ability.”

6. SUCCESSION

- a. In the event that the President is no longer able to assume the duties and powers of his or her office due to injury, removal, resignation, or other cause, the Vice President shall assume the office of the President.
- b. In the event that that the Vice President is no longer able to assume the duties and powers of his or her office due to injury, removal, resignation, elevation to higher office, or other cause, the Treasurer shall assume the office of the Vice President.
- c. Further vacancies of the Treasurer and Graduate Council Representative positions shall be filled via special election.
 - i. Within two weeks of the position becoming vacant, the Election Commission shall open nominations for consideration for each vacant Executive Board role to the graduate student body. The applications must be submitted within two weeks of the application release date.
 - ii. Once the nomination window has closed, a special election shall be held within seven (7) days.

7. BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

- a. Duties of the President
The President shall:
 - i. Appoint all other executive officers as specified in this Constitution.
 - ii. Act as both the official representative of the GSA - before the President of the University, President of the Student Government, Board of Trustees, or any other office of the University - as well as an official University representative at the request of the President of the University of South Carolina.
 - iii. Remove any Cabinet member for his or her appointed position without the membership’s prior consent.
 - iv. Preside over all GSA meetings or delegate this responsibility to another executive officer as needed.
 - v. Call for a special GSA meeting session at any time for any reason.
- b. Duties of the Vice President
The Vice President shall:

- i. Serve as an ex-officio member of any committee established under this Constitution at the request of the President.
 - ii. Serve in lieu of the President in his or her absence or disability and succeed to that office should it become permanently vacated.
- c. Duties of the Treasurer
 - The Treasurer shall:
 - i. Be responsible for the preparation and presentation of the budget of the GSA in consultation with the other Executive Board members.
 - ii. Serve as the chair of the Finance Committee.
 - I. Uphold the purpose and integrity of the GSA Finance Guidelines.
 - II. Select members to serve on the Committee for the academic year, with Cabinet approval, to appropriate funds towards student organization efforts.
 - iii. Inform all department organization treasurers of the rules under which funding will be determined no later than the distribution of funding request forms.
 - iv. Record all receipts, expenditures, and appropriations of GSA funds. These records shall be made public and subject to audit.
 - v. Participate in the planning and coordinating an informational workshop for student organizations.
 - vi. Serve in lieu of the Vice President in his or her absence or disability and succeed to that office should it become permanently vacated.
- d. Duties of the Graduate Council Representative
 - The Graduate Student Representative shall:
 - i. Liaise between GSA and the graduate council through reporting various concerns, comments, and/or feedback from graduate students.
 - ii. Serve as a voting member of the Graduate Council.
 - iii. Identify proper channels to disseminate information addressing said concerns, comments, and/or feedback.
 - iv. Generate report(s) to respective University offices pertaining to graduate interests.
- e. All Executive Board members shall receive a stipend which shall not be increased or diminished during their respective term of office.

III. PRESIDENT'S CABINET

1. VESTED POWERS

- a. The President's Cabinet shall include whatever permanent and ad hoc committees and/or officer positions are considered necessary for the current academic year.
- b. All ad hoc officers shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the other Executive Board members.
 - i. The number of positions of appointed Cabinet members may fluctuate each year depending on the goals and expectations of the elected Executive Board members.
- c. The President, at minimum, shall nominate six (6) Cabinet positions at the beginning of his or her term of office.

- d. All appointed Cabinet officers are required to uphold the Constitution and any official University policies and procedures. They shall also administer all regulations established by the graduate student body, if applicable.

2. QUALIFICATIONS

All members are eligible to serve in the President's Cabinet without restriction to number of semesters completed at and attributed to the University of South Carolina Columbia campus.

3. TERMS OF OFFICE

All appointed Cabinet members shall serve from the time of their confirmation into their respective position until the following Spring semester commencement date.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

All Cabinet positions' responsibilities and duties shall be defined at the discretion of the President.

IV. IMPEACHMENT AND REMOVAL

1. Any member of the graduate student body may call for the impeachment of any Executive Board member by presenting a written petition citing reasons for removal from his or her Executive position at any GSA meeting. The petition shall effectively be considered that targeted officer's Article(s) of Impeachment.
 - a. Impeachable offenses shall primarily pertain to issues of civil and criminal offenses committed by the executive officer or to issues of ethics deemed to be significant violations of GSA's goals and/or overall purpose.
 - i. Any Executive Board or Cabinet officer who does not report either a) issues of personal academic misconduct or b) his or her placement on academic probation to the Executive Board may be barred from any future GSA appointment or election to a future position.
2. Upon receipt of the Article(s) of Impeachment, Cabinet shall appoint an Impeachment Committee consisting of at least five (5) members at the meeting at which the Articles of Impeachment are considered.
 - a. Unless the makeup cannot be maintained, the Impeachment Committee shall be composed of at least two students pursuing master's degrees and two students pursuing doctorate degrees. The fifth member can represent any University of South Carolina graduate program.
 - b. The highest-ranking Executive Board officer not being impeached shall chair the hearing, thus claiming one of the five available seats as allocated by degree pursuit.
 - c. The member filing the Articles of Impeachment and the targeted officer are both prohibited from serving on the Committee.
3. All impeachment trials will be held no later two weeks after the initial presentation of the Articles of Impeachment.
4. A recommendation of conviction to Cabinet shall require at least four-fifths (4/5) concurrence of the Impeachment Committee. The recommendation of conviction shall

be communicated from the Impeachment Committee chair to Cabinet within two (2) days of the recommendation being made.

- a. In the Cabinet correspondence, the Impeachment Committee chair shall determine which of the two nearest upcoming general meetings the recommendation of conviction shall be brought to a vote.
 - b. Failure to make a recommendation of conviction shall constitute an acquittal.
5. Any elected executive officer may be removed from office following a supermajority vote of Cabinet present at the general meeting in which the vote occurs.
- a. Supermajority is defined as at least 2/3 (or 67%) of eligible votes cast.
 - b. The impeached individual and the Impeachment Committee chair will be given the opportunity to provide brief remarks before the conviction vote is held.
 - c. Failure to convict shall constitute an acquittal.
6. Conviction by Cabinet will result in the convicted individual's immediate removal from his or her held office.
7. No officer convicted may receive a future appointment or stand to a future election for any position in GSA.

V. AMENDMENTS

1. At any time, any member of the graduate student body may propose amendments in writing to this Constitution to any member of the Executive Board or Cabinet. The proposal must specify which article, section, and clause under consideration for amending.
 - a. No amendment shall be considered if the intent is to deny any academic department or professional school the right to the representation to which they would otherwise be entitled under this Constitution.
 - b. No amendment shall be considered if the intent is to deny any academic department or professional school equal access to funding or any other benefit enjoyed by all other academic departments or professional schools.
2. Upon receiving the proposal, the executive officer recipient shall forward onto the Executive Board to include reviewing the amendment on the agenda at the next scheduled general meeting.
3. Any proposed amendment may be brought to the attention of the graduate student body following a supermajority approval of Cabinet and Executive Board members present at the general meeting at which the vote occurs.
4. If the supermajority vote is approved, the Executive Board shall notify the membership within two days from which approval was met. The Executive Board shall conduct a special election amongst the membership to consider the amendment within two weeks of the meeting when the vote occurred.
5. Considered amendments in the special election shall be subject to a simple majority of the graduate student body in order to be enacted immediately.

VI. RATIFICATION

1. MEMBERSHIP APPROVAL

This Constitution shall not become effective until it is approved by a simple majority of all eligible graduate students who vote in a special election for the purpose of passage.

2. EFFECT OF APPROVAL

- i. Upon compliance with Article VI.1, this Constitution shall become effective immediately.
- ii. All prior constitutions or other documents governing the running of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) will be null and void.
- iii. Constitutional modifications pertaining to simple spelling and grammar issues (e.g., punctuation, capitalization, spacing, etc.) shall be corrected and not subject to vote by the graduate student body as defined. These modifications shall be communicated to the membership as a courtesy notification in the nearest planned GSA correspondence.

3. APPROVAL

This Constitution required a vote and approval by the graduate student body. The official vote took place in March 2021 and took effect on March 31, 2021.