Graduate Student Association

Constitution

September 2015
ARTICLE I: PREAMBLE

The University at Albany Graduate Student Organization (GSO) was voted into existence in the Spring of 1990 to address the needs of the University at Albany graduate students. In 2013, its name was changed to the University at Albany Graduate Student Association (GSA). The documents governing its operation shall be divided into the Constitution which shall contain the core principles of the GSA and the By-Laws which shall contain the particulars by which the principles codified in the Constitution shall be applied.

ARTICLE II: NAME

The name of this organization shall be the University at Albany GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION, hereinafter referred to as the GSA.

ARTICLE III: PURPOSE

Section 1: General Goals: The purpose of the GSA is to identify and protect the rights of graduate students, to advocate their interests and to provide services that enhance the social, academic, professional and cultural environment of the University at Albany.

Section 2: Equity and Inclusion: The GSA affirms its commitment to the principles of equity and inclusion and acknowledges the pervasiveness of inequality in society and in higher education. The GSA considers itself a proactive and progressive organization and is committed to the elimination 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.

ARTICLE IV: ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS

No part of the net earnings of the GSA shall be to the benefit of or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers or other private persons, except where the GSA shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article III, Sections 1 and 2 hereof. No substantial part of the activities of the
GSA shall be the participation or intervention in any political campaign on behalf of any political party or candidate seeking or holding public office (including the publishing or distribution of statements). The Graduate Student Association will conduct its activities in accordance with the policies of the University at Albany and the State University of New York as well as in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws.

**ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP**

All currently enrolled graduate students of the University at Albany, who have been billed for the GSA activity fee, are members of the GSA. All members of the GSA shall have the right to representation and participation in GSA activities. No member of the GSA shall be denied these rights or otherwise GSA discriminated against for any reason whatsoever.

**ARTICLE VI: THE GSA ASSEMBLY**

**Section 1: Responsibilities:** The GSA Assembly shall act as the legislative body of the GSA. It shall be responsible for approving the budget, developing, approving and adopting policy for the GSA, approving GSA related position appointments, and relaying information between the GSA Assembly and its constituents.

**Section 2: Representative Membership:** Each Recognized Graduate Student Organization (RGSO) shall have one voting representative (and alternate) in the Assembly. A RGSO with forty (40) or more GSA members shall have one additional voting representative. A RGSO may select any of its members to serve as its voting representative(s) to the GSA Assembly, provided that individual is also a member of the GSA.

Every university department or intra-departmental program with GSA members is entitled to one representative in the Assembly. Departments or intra-departmental programs with forty (40) or more GSA members within said program shall be allotted one additional Assembly Representative. Each department or intra-departmental program is also entitled to declare one alternate for each Assembly Representative. Representatives and alternates must be chosen from graduate students enrolled in the department who are members of the GSA.

University departmental and intra-departmental representatives will not be included in the quorum for voting.

**Section 3: Assembly Speaker:** The GSA Assembly shall elect from its voting membership an Assembly Speaker to serve for that academic year (Fall and Spring). The election of the Assembly Speaker shall take place at the first Assembly meeting of the Fall semester. The Assembly Speaker shall act as the chairperson for Assembly meetings and shall have the power to call a special session of the GSA
Assembly. Additionally, the Assembly Speaker shall be responsible for attending all GSA Assembly meetings and Executive Board meetings. The Assembly Speaker shall not cast a vote at GSA Assembly meetings. The Assembly Speaker shall no longer represent their RGSO at Assembly Meetings; the Assembly Speaker’s RGSO shall appoint a new voting representative to the GSA Assembly. Should the office of Assembly Speaker become vacated or the Assembly Speaker be rendered incapable of his or her duties, a new Assembly Speaker shall be elected at the next Assembly Meeting.

Section 4: Meetings: The GSA Assembly shall conduct regular meetings at least once each month during the Fall and Spring semesters. Meetings shall be publicly announced no less than one week in advance. All meetings shall be open to all members of the GSA. Only RGSO, university department, and intradepartmental program representatives may vote at GSA Assembly meetings. There shall be no votes by proxy. A quorum for conducting official business shall consist of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the recognized RGSO GSA Assembly representatives. The Assembly Speaker shall chair meetings of the GSA Assembly. Should the Assembly Speaker be unable to assume his or her duties, the Vice President shall act as chairperson of the GSA Assembly at that meeting.

Section 5: Parliamentary Procedure: GSA Assembly meetings shall operate along the principles of Roberts Rules of Order.

Section 6: Legislative Committees: The GSA Assembly has the power to create legislative committees for the purpose of gathering and/or processing information for presentation to the GSA Assembly. The Assembly Speaker will hold an ex-officio seat on each legislative committee. Individuals with conflicts of interest are expected to recuse themselves from committee activities in which they have a stake. If allotted funds, the committee chairperson shall have signature power on relevant disbursement forms.

Section 7: Audits: The GSA Assembly has the power to, at any time, call for an audit of the GSA records, financial or otherwise.

Section 8: Impeachment:
The GSA Assembly shall have the power to impeach and remove from office any GSA officeholder, upon conviction of financial impropriety, gross negligence or gross misconduct, while performing duties related to their office.

(a) Impeachment proceedings are initiated upon presentation to the GSA Assembly of a written petition indicating both the accusations and the accused officer. The petition must include the signatures of the accuser, a Judicial Board member, and at least five other GSA members.

(b) A committee known as the Investigation Committee will be formed to investigate the circumstances surrounding the accusations. The members of the committee shall include at least one member of the Judicial Board who shall chair it. The Investigation Committee shall have the power to request documentation and testimony related to the charges from any RGSO, the GSA, its officers, and/or its members. Additionally, the Investigation Committee shall have the right to determine the date and time of the impeachment hearing, not less than two weeks from the date at which the petition was first presented. This hearing shall be announced publically not less than one week in advance.

(c) The impeachment hearing shall be presided over by the Judicial Board. A quorum of the GSA Assembly must be present to proceed with the hearing which will be open to all members of the GSA. At this
hearing, the Investigation Committee shall present their findings. Further discussion, questioning, and other fact-finding shall be permitted. No person shall be convicted without being granted a fair opportunity to explain and defend his or her position and present contravening evidence. Conviction of the accused shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of GSA Assembly Representatives present. Upon conviction, the accused shall be stripped of their office. The GSA Assembly may order further action to remedy any harm done by financial impropriety, gross negligence or gross misconduct.

ARTICLE VII: EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 1: Positions: The Executive Board shall consist of six executive officers: the President, the Vice President, the Treasurer, the Multi-Cultural Affirmative Action Officer, the Programming Committee Chair and the Grants Committee Chair. No member of the Executive Board shall be permitted to hold a second office within the GSA, or to act as an officer or Assembly Representative of a RGSO.

(a) President: The President shall act as Chief Executive Officer of the GSA and as its chief spokesperson and representative. The President shall have the power to appoint GSA members as the Grants Chair, Programming Chair, and to remaining seats on the University Senate consistent with the University Senate’s charter. These appointments are subject to approval by the GSA Assembly, but appointees may serve actively until a confirmation vote passes or fails. The President has signature power on all vouchers.

(b) Vice President: The Vice President shall form and chair the RGSO Committee. The RGSO Committee shall be responsible for the reviewing and dispersal of funds related to RGSOs, determining whether RGSOs have met the requirements for continued GSA recognition, and determining whether new RGSO applicants have met the requirements to be recognized. Additionally, the Vice President shall be responsible for calling and chairing the first GSA Assembly Meeting of the academic year, and facilitating the election of an Assembly Speaker at that meeting.

(c) Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be the Chief Financial Officer of the GSA. The Treasurer shall report on the financial status of the GSA to the Assembly at each meeting and officers upon request. The Treasurer has signature power on all vouchers.

(d) Equity and Inclusion Officer: The Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) shall form and chair the Equity and Inclusion Committee. The EIO Chair will advise the Executive Board on ways to proactively ensure that strategic plans, officer agendas, and internal processes address issues of power inequality, as well as diversity and inclusion. The EIO Chair shall serve as an adviser to the GSA President, Lead and GSA Senators on issues of advocacy. The EIO Chair shall serve as a liaison with any campus entity which engages with the issues of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion.

(e) Grants Chairperson: The Grants Chairperson shall form and chair the Grants Committee. The Grants Committee will be responsible for the reviewing and dispersal of funds related to research and travel grants. No grant application by a non-member of the GSA will be honored.
Programming Chairperson: The Programming Chairperson shall form and chair the Programming Committee. The Programming Committee will be responsible for the reviewing and dispersal of funds related to educational, cultural, and social events being conducted by the GSA as well as insuring that those events are sufficiently advertised to the GSA membership.

Section 2: Executive Board Meetings: The Executive Board shall meet regularly. At each meeting, each officer shall report on their activities since the previous meeting and present for discussion and advisement their proposed agenda for the immediate future. Each officer shall have voting rights at these meetings. The Assembly Speaker shall also be required to attend Executive Board meetings as a nonvoting member to represent the assembly in a non-biased manner.

Section 3: Formal Power: Beyond the powers of their individual offices, the Executive Board may act on other powers bestowed in them by the GSA Assembly. Additionally, the Executive Board may endorse vouchers and payments with a minimum of two legitimate signatures. Legitimate signatures include the signatures of the President, and the Treasurer. All signing parties are responsible for confirming that the expenditure is within the budget approved by the GSA Assembly and the policies governing the GSA.

Section 4: Assembly Meetings: Each officer shall be required to attend and issue a report at each Assembly Meeting. Furthermore, each officer shall have a non-voting seat on the GSA Assembly, but is permitted to make motions and speak on matters.

Section 5: Term of Office: Elected officers shall serve one year beginning June 1. Appointed officers shall serve from their appointment until June 1.

Section 6: Executive Committees: The Executive Board has the power to create executive committees for the purpose of exercising powers granted to the Executive Board by the GSA Constitution, Bylaws, and Assembly. These Committees include but are not limited to the RGSO Committee, the MCAA Committee, the Grants Committee, and the Programming Committee. The President will hold an ex-officio seat on each executive committee. Individuals with conflicts of interest are expected to recuse themselves from committee activities in which they have a stake. If allotted funds, the committee chairperson shall have signature power on relevant disbursement forms.

Section 7: Contingency Plan:

a) The President shall have the authority to appoint an acting replacement to any vacant elected or appointed officer position, with the exception of the Assembly Speaker and Judicial Board members. These appointments must be confirmed by the GSA Assembly.

b) In the event the President is unable to assume his or her duties, the Vice President shall assume the Presidency. Beyond the Vice President, the secession of authority is to the Assembly Speaker, the Treasurer, and finally the MCAA Chairperson. The first responsibility of the new President shall be to appoint an acting replacement to any other vacated offices of the Executive Board.

ARTICLE VIII: JUDICIAL BOARD
Section 1: Membership: The GSA Assembly shall elect from the GSA membership five Judicial Board members. No two Judicial Board members may share membership in the same RGSO. The election of the Judicial Board shall take place at the first Assembly meeting of the Fall semester. No Judicial Board member shall serve simultaneously on the Judicial Board and as a RGSO or Department Representative in the GSA Assembly. Should a Judicial Board seat ever become vacated or a Judicial Board member be rendered incapable of his or her duties, a new Judicial Board member shall be elected at the next Assembly Meeting.

Section 2: Term of Office: The Judicial Board shall serve from the date of their election until the adjournment of the first Assembly meeting of the following academic year.

Section 3: Judicial Review: Any member of the GSA, having found contradiction or fault in the rules of the GSA, may petition for Judicial Review. The Judicial Board may convene to interpret the Constitution and Bylaws with authority to pass an immediate ruling on the conflict and recommend to the GSA Assembly amendments of the Constitution and Bylaws to prevent further conflict.

Section 4: Mediation: The Judicial Board shall act as a mediator in any dispute that is brought before them by a GSA member or GSA officer. Any factor which limits the impartiality of a Judicial Board member shall be cause for that member to recuse themselves from the Board. If a compromise cannot be reached, the Judicial Board has the authority to force an action by the GSA or any member to resolve the impasse. Only a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly may override a ruling of the Judicial Board in such instances.

Section 5: Impeachment: The Judicial Board shall preside over impeachment proceedings.

ARTICLE IX: ELECTIONS

Section 1: General Elections: A membership-wide election of the GSA shall be held annually, during the spring semester of the academic year. This shall be called a General Election. The primary purpose of the General Election shall be to elect certain executive officers and representative officers for the following term of office. Additionally, any referendums requiring approval by the GSA membership may be placed on the ballot, including Assembly-approved Constitutional amendments.

Section 2: Special Elections: A membership-wide election of the GSA may be called by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the GSA Assembly. This shall be called a Special Election and will serve to allow the immediate filling of vacant elected offices during the current term and for any referendums requiring approval by the GSA membership may be placed on the ballot, including Assembly-approved Constitutional amendments.

Section 3: Election Committee: The Assembly shall form an Election Committee not less than one month prior to any membership-wide election of the GSA. The Election Committee shall be responsible for coordinating with appropriate organizations within the University at Albany to facilitate the election as well as arranging for campaigning, debates, and other necessities of the election. The Election Committee
will also be responsible for validating election results. The Election Committee shall choose a chair from among its members. Any GSA member running for office must recuse themselves from the Election Committee.

**Section 4: Elected Officers:** The General Election shall serve to elect four members of the GSA Executive Board: the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and MCAA Chairperson. All four elected officers serve one year terms beginning on June 1.

Additionally, the GSA shall elect from its membership a Lead Senator and a University Council Representative. The elections of the Lead Senator and University Council Representative shall take place concurrently with the election of the Executive Board. The terms of office for the Lead Senator and the University Council Representative shall be concurrent with those of the Executive Board.

The Lead Senator shall hold a seat on the University Senate in accordance with the University Senate’s charter and shall be responsible for attending all sessions of the Senate, serving as the chief point of contact for other GSA Senators, and reporting to the GSA Assembly on the deliberations and actions of the University Senate.

The University Council Representative shall hold a seat on the University Council in accordance with the University Council’s bylaws and shall be responsible for attending all meetings of the University Council and reporting to the GSA Assembly on the deliberations and actions of the University Council.

**Section 5: Nominations:** Any member of the GSA has a right to run for elected office. Nominations, including self-nominations, must be submitted to the Election Committee.

**Section 6: Term Limits:** No individual may serve more than two terms in the same elected office or more than three total terms in any elected office.

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**ARTICLE X: AMENDMENT PROCESSES**

**Section 1: Constitution:** The Constitution and any changes shall first be approved by three-quarters (3/4) of the GSA Assembly, then, in a membership-wide election, ratified by two-thirds (2/3) of those GSA members voting.

**Section 2: By-Laws:** The By-Laws and any amendment to them shall be adopted by two-thirds (2/3) of the GSA Assembly.