FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Officers of the Graduate Student Organization, herein called the GSO, hope that through understanding and cooperation the GSO may provide campus services and activities that will enhance the quality of student life. The publishing of these guidelines is part of this effort to keep Graduate students informed, and is designed to encourage student involvement.

The following guidelines and procedures are to inform the officers of recognized organizations, GSO Committee Leaders, and the graduate student body as a whole, about the rules affecting the disbursement of the student activity fee monies.

The GSO collects a mandatory activity fee from all graduate students for use. This fee is $20 per semester for all students taking more than eight credits or $10 for those enrolled for eight credits or less.

II. ACTIVITY FEE MONIES

New York State Law requires that mandatory activity fee monies must always be used in a manner, which complies with the guidelines developed by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York. In general, the SUNY Trustees have indicated that activity fee monies may only be used to finance events, organizations, committees, etc. that promote educational, cultural, recreational and social activities which enhance the quality of the university experience which we share.

Activity fee monies may also be used to support student publications and other media as well as for the payment of stipends to the officers of the GSO.

Activity fee monies may not be used to discriminate against anyone based on age, race, ethnicity, color, religion or creed, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, economic status, veteran status, physical ability or national origin.

In an attempt to assure that all members of the GSO have equal access to activities which are financed in whole or in part by activity fee monies collected by the GSO, it is necessary for all activities and organizations supported by the GSO to be open to all fee paying members of the GSO. GSO members may not be charged an admission fee or other price for participation in any activity into which GSO monies are allocated, unless the proper authorization to do so has been approved by the appropriate GSO subcommittee.

RGSO’s must follow the requirements in the GSO By-Laws before they may be approved to receive funding.

Any student organization, group, committee or individual, found to be in violation of any of these policies, after a proper investigation has been conducted, shall be banned from any further GSO funding for the following two semesters (not including summer) unless the appropriate GSO subcommittee approves reinstatement beforehand.
III. FISCAL YEAR

No commitments can be made outside the fiscal year. The GSO fiscal year ends on June 30th. It is the treasurer's final responsibility to itemize all groups’ unpaid bills as of May 15th. This is to insure that the vendors’ bill will be paid over the summer. The GSO treasurer reserves the right to authorize any legitimate expense in the absence of a group’s officer or leader.

III. TREASURER'S DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

III.1 Treasurer Eligibility

Treasurer is the title given to the Chief Financial Officer of the Graduate Student Organization, who is solely responsible for keeping the financial records of the GSO. The eligibility requirements are:

1) Must be a registered graduate student
2) Must have been elected by the graduate student body
3) Must read and understand these financial guidelines and procedures

If the Treasurer is unable, at any time, to fulfill his/her duties, they may take a leave of absence or the GSO Assembly may vote to temporarily suspend further actions by said individual. At that time it is the responsibility of the GSO President to appoint an interim Treasurer who must be ratified by a simple majority of the GSO Assembly.

Absolutely NO financial activities will be allowed until the above requirements are realized.

III.2 Duties

The two main duties of the Treasurer are maintenance of the financial records and budget control. It is the Treasurer's responsibility to see that no committee or student group overspends its allocated budget.

THE TREASURER WILL BE HELD LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WRONGFUL ACTS. All money budgeted to the GSO's chartered committees or recognized student groups are considered student activity fee money. This money may only be used for educational, cultural, recreational, or social purposes. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES are activity fee monies to be used to purchase PERSONAL PROPERTY or to hold exclusive organizational events. Any property purchased with GSO funds by any recognized student group or committee costing more than $50 must be stored at the GSO office. Any property purchased by GSO officers with GSO funds shall also be stored in the GSO office, space permitting, regardless of cost.

III.3 Maintaining Financial Records

The Treasurer is required to maintain a computerized record, which provides an instantaneous view of the organization's current and past financial status.

General Record

The GSO financial record must follow a uniform format. An entry should be made in the proper section for every transaction. The balance will always reflect the current amount remaining in the GSO account.

III.4 Audit Requirements

Any organization or committee found to have improper, inadequate, or inaccurate record will have its GSO privileges automatically frozen. Upon rectifying the conditions, which brought about the suspension and then gaining the approval of the GSO Assembly privileges will be reinstated.

III.5 Evaluating Expenditures
The Treasurer must decide if all expenditures are in accordance with the guidelines approved by the GSO Assembly. The Treasurer must verify the legitimacy of all claims, especially for reimbursement of monies to individual members of the organization. According to the activity fee policy, GSO funds shall be used only for support of the following programs and for the benefit of the campus community:

1) Programs of cultural and educational enrichment 
2) Recreational and social activities 
3) Professional development 
4) Athletic programs, both intramural and inter-collegiate 
5) Student publications and website 
6) Assistance to recognized student organizations, provided that the purpose and activities of the Organizations are of educational, cultural, recreational or social nature 
7) Insurance and Legal expenses related to conduct appropriate to programs 
8) Administration of these programs 
9) Transportation (and other student services) in support of programs 
10) Student services to supplement or add to those provided by the University

According to the above guidelines, the following is a list of expenditures, which will not be reimbursed:

1) Personal property- yearbooks, T-shirts, etc. (The definition of personal property is an item which is intended for the use of an individual and is not accessible to other students.)
2) Food and drink at regularly scheduled meetings for any recognized student group
3) Phone calls not documented as business calls
4) Donations to charities or other such groups without approval by the GSO Assembly

The Treasurer must make sure that all groups observe the above guidelines. Failure to spend money in accordance with the guidelines will result in the suspension of the group’s recognition, pending investigation by the Executive Committee and its recommendation to the GSO Assembly for appropriate action.

III.6 Misuse or Abuse of Funds

Misuse or abuse of monies will be severely dealt with. Any suspected abuse or misuse will result in an immediate investigation of the problems and may result in the revocation of the group’s recognition and money. Persons involved in the misuse or abuse may also be subject to criminal prosecution.

IV. CONTRACTS AND PERSONAL LIABILITY

No student has the right to indebt or commit either the GSO or the University itself in any way, written or verbal, to a financial obligation. All agency disbursement forms must be cleared and signed by the GSO Treasurer, President and Office Manager. To avoid personal liability, all RGSOs prior to ordering goods, making plans for events, etc. in which GSO funds are to be used should obtain written approval from the GSO Vice-President. Never assume there is money available for expenditures. Any organization, group or committee leader can become personally responsible for all expenditures made without GSO approval.

RGSO officers or committee leaders will be held legally responsible for careless or wrongful acts. They are expected to understand and abide by these guidelines. Any questions regarding the GSO financial system should be directed to the GSO Treasurer.

Any agreement between two or more groups which involves commitments of funding must be made in writing, signed by the responsible budgetary officers of all groups involved and attested to by the GSO Treasurer.
V. OTHER FORMS

Tax Exemption

Student groups funded by the GSO are exempt from NYS tax for NYS purchases. A copy of the certificate of TAX Exemption is available from the GSO office. This form must be presented to the vendor as proof of our tax-exempt status. Groups need not pay sales tax. Any group or individual who does not present a tax-exempt form when making a purchase will not be reimbursed for the cost of the tax. Only officers or leaders of a recognized group may obtain Tax Exempt Certificates.

VI. UNACCEPTABLE EXPENSE OR DISBURSEMENT REPORTS

Any reports that are improperly completed will be returned to the appropriate group as soon as possible. The reason for the return of the report shall be clearly stated on a separate attached sheet and designed by the GSO Treasurer. Corrected reports will not receive any preferential treatment. They should be resubmitted as soon as possible and will be re-processed from the beginning.

VII. AVAILABILITY OF THE GSO TREASURER

The Treasurer will be available during his/her office hours set by the Treasurer to help organizational leaders or students with financial questions and problems. These hours may be at the convenience of the Treasurer and must be posted outside the GSO office. Please call and set up an appointment in advance. Do not assume the Treasurer is available at your discretion. If said hours are inconvenient for other graduate students or groups, an alternative meeting time should be worked out between the GSO Treasurer and such person or groups. Under no circumstances is the GSO Treasurer to be contacted at home or anywhere other than the GSO office, unless they advise you to do so. Please remember that the Treasurer is a student, and therefore is not available other than the hours that are posted.

VIII. GENERAL NOTES

1. Any publicity of an event funded by a GSO recognized group must state "Your GSO Fee at Work".

2. No GSO committee may have a bank account. If such account is opened, all rights and privileges of the committee involved will be suspended pending a proper investigation.

3. Any GSO committee, which earns income, must have all monies deposited into the GSO account, and the treasurer should credit it to that committee’s budget line. To do so, the committee leader must give the money to the GSO Treasurer, where it will be counted and a receipt is issued. The receipt given to the committee leader is to be kept with the financial records and the amount recorded in the financial record.

4. The officers of an organization or committee are responsible for adequately publicizing an event sponsored by their group. Failure to do so may cause the event to be judged exclusive and therefore a misuse of activity money; an investigation may be initiated. In the case of GSO committees, several times during the year a concerted effort should be made to recruit new members. Free advertising in campus media should be utilized to inform the student body. It should be remembered that only refreshments served at recruitment meetings and special events are eligible for reimbursement.

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