

University at Albany
Graduate Student Association
1400 Washington Ave
Campus Center 307 & 308
Albany, NY



RGSO

Recognized Graduate Student Organization

Guidelines

Approved October 2015

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Forward:

The following guidelines describe how graduate students may form Recognized Graduate Student Organizations, gain funds for professional development, advocacy, and social events and do service to the University community. These guidelines shall be considered inferior to the GSA constitution and bylaws.

Disclaimer:

If in the event there is a discrepancy between this document and GSA governing documents the GSA governing documents shall prevail.

Introduction

Recognized Graduate Student Organizations (RGSOs) are student groups whose membership consists of fee paying graduate students. These groups are members of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and are eligible for benefits and funding. The nature of these RGSOs vary in terms of their interests, activities, and participation. The GSA serves all member-groups in good standing and who comply with our statement of non-discrimination.

It is the aspiration of the GSA to encourage a vibrant graduate student community. We sincerely hope this document will help support and enhance the growth of existing RGSO groups and aid in the formation of new groups. In so doing, the GSA hopes to build a better and more robust university community for all graduate students.

Part 1: New RGSOs

This section is to help new RGSOs navigate the process of becoming an official recognized GSA group. If you have questions about applying to be an RGSO, how to fill out the paperwork, or anything else RGSO related, you can visit the RGSO FAQ page on the GSA website (www.albany.edu/gsa) or contact the GSA Vice President at GSAVP@albany.edu.

The RGSO Recognition application for the Fall is due by 5pm the Monday after the first GSA Assembly Meeting of the Fall semester (September) and the Spring application is due by 5pm the Monday after the first GSA Assembly Meeting of the Spring Semester (February). **You need to complete the application on myinvolvement.**

- The dates of the GSA Assembly Meetings can be found on the GSA website: www.albany.edu/gsa.

Money is allocated to RGSOs on a rolling basis. You apply for recognition twice a year (once in the fall and once in the spring). If you apply at the beginning of the year, you will receive a grant of \$500; if you apply as a new group in the Spring semester you will receive a \$250 grant.

If your RGSO does not have any events they want to hold, you can still be a recognized group eligible for all RGSO benefits and responsible for completing all RGSO requirements.

You will also need to register your group with the Office of Student Involvement in order to process purchase requests for their events. Contact Elizabeth Conrad, in the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership, for more information.

Note: You will need a written constitution for your RGSO in order to register.

If you missed the deadline for the current funding period, contact the GSA Vice President (gsavp@albany.edu) to become a Developing Graduate Student Organization (DGSO). DGSOs are informal groups, which intend to learn RGSO processes and can request seed money from the Vice President's discretionary budget to have an event or two while becoming established. DGSOs can then apply to become an official recognized group at the beginning of the next funding period. Since Developing Graduate Student Organization's do not have the same recognition as RGSOs they do not have the same resources and will require the assistance of the GSA Vice President. Therefore, DGSO activities should be smaller events which allow the groups to learn RGSO processes, but should be not be so involved that they overwhelm the Vice President with programming responsibilities.

Information regarding the GSA, including Assembly Meeting information, is disseminated through the GSA Listserv every Monday. We suggest that your RGSOs E-board subscribe to this list by e-mailing GSA@albany.edu with Listserv in the subject line.

Part 2: RGSO Recognition and Funding

RGSO funding like all GSA funds come from the Student Activity Fee contributed by graduate students each semester. In order to distribute these funds systematically, our governing documents outline the policies and procedures guiding this process. A copy of these regulations are available on the GSA website.

1. Recognition:

- a. **Recognition Schedule:** There are two recognition periods for each academic year. If you apply in the Fall (September) your group is recognized for the full year and need not apply again in the Spring (February). However, if your group wants to start in the Spring you can.
 - i. **Fall (September):** The deadline to apply for fall recognition is the Monday after the first GSA Assembly Meeting of the semester.
 - ii. **Spring (February):** If you did not apply for recognition in the fall, the deadline to apply for spring recognition is the Monday after the first GSA Assembly Meeting of the semester. If you did apply in the fall, you only need to submit an application if you have had any officer changes.
- b. **Applications:** RGSOs who wish to obtain or maintain their GSA recognition must submit an electronic application. **This application can be found on myinvolvement –**
<https://myinvolvement.org/form/start/66784>.

2. Funding:

- a. At the start of each year (September), each RGSO who applies for Recognition by the GSA, will receive a block grant budget of \$500 to be used for any event within the GSA, UAS, and University guidelines.
- b. If an RGSO wants to hold any event(s) that will cost more than the block grant budget, they must submit an event sheet, also found on MyInvolvement (<https://myinvolvement.org/form/start/66787>), at least 1 month prior to the date of the event. This sheet should include a detailed budget and explanation of the event.
- c. **Review Process:** The charge of the RGSO committee, comprised of the Vice President and Assembly members, is to ensure that yearly RGSO programming serves a wide range of interests. RGSO programming's can include professional development, cultural programs, and social events.
 - i. **Content Justification:** The RGSO committee will organize its definition of content based upon, but not limited to, the following domains. These domains are not mutually exclusive, as some events may promote professional development, cultural, and social objectives:
 1. **Professional Development:** How does the content of your event serve students in your fields or related disciplines?
 2. **Cultural:** In what ways does your event promote diversity and inclusion for the SUNY Albany community?
 3. **Social:** How does your event meet valid social objectives (e.g., team building, networking, etc.)?
 - ii. **Expense Justification:** The RGSO committee will consider expenses linked to respective events including, but not limited to food, speaker

honorarium/travel expenses, room reservations, promotional material (e.g., programs, nametags etc.), decorations, and necessary equipment. In order to help the RGSO committee consider the reasonability of the cost, please provide as much information regarding the expense as possible.

iii. **NOTE:** Decisions regarding RGSO funding are based entirely upon the discretion of the RGSO committee.

d. **Funding Appeals:** In the event that you do not agree with the funding decisions of the RGSO Committee, you may challenge the decision. The RGSO Committee will set an Appeals Meeting within two weeks from the date on the funding letters to allow groups to make their case to the Committee for why the money allocated was not sufficient. The Vice President may bring any appeal to the GSA Executive Board for discussion. Final decisions regarding awards are at the discretion of the Vice President.

e. **Money for Personal Items:** As per the Student Activity Fee policies as set forward by the University's Board of Trustees, GSA money cannot be spent on personal items. This does not include marketing items, which are acceptable. Marketing items are items that cost less than \$20 each and market either the university, the GSA, or the RGSO. Only items that include one or more of the logos listed will qualify as a marketing item. If you have questions about what qualifies, you can contact the GSA Vice President.

Part 3: RGSO Requirements

In order for the GSA to fulfill its mission of professional development, advocacy, and service, committee membership is a critical necessity. As a result, it is required that RGSOs who seek funding provide service in the form of committee/board/council/task force memberships.

1) Committee Requirement

RGSOs are required to fulfill at least four points for the academic year. Any member within a RGSO group can fulfill this requirement.

On page 14 is a list of a few recurring committees that fulfill this requirement, however RGSO groups are not limited to just these committees since new opportunities often arise. All of these Committees are yearlong appointments. (*Note: If a member of your RGSO who sits on a committee is no longer able to fulfill the requirement, your RGSO will not get credit for service*).

2) EI (Equity & Inclusion) Requirement

The GSA affirms its commitment to the principles of equity and inclusion and acknowledges the pervasiveness of inequality in society and in higher education. Therefore, it is expected that RGSOs uphold EI values through one of the following options:

- A) Holding one EI event during an academic year approved by the EI Chair and Committee.
- B) Proposing an alternative EI project approved and tracked by the EI committee

See Appendix C for more information.

3) GSA Assembly Meeting Attendance

For continuity reasons, the RGSO Assembly Representatives and Alternates should be the ones attending these meetings. If a time arises where one of these two cannot attend a meeting, you can send another RGSO member in their place, but this is not preferred. In order to remain an RGSO in good- standing, you may not miss more than one Assembly meeting per semester. If a RGSO misses more than one meeting in a semester, the RGSO will not receive funding for the following funding period during the academic year (fall or spring). Missing the May GSA Assembly meeting will result in the RGSO not be able to apply for funding for the next academic year. (*Note: an RGSO who cannot receive funding can still be a recognized group*).

New RGSOs are not held accountable for not attending the first Assembly meeting of the semester in which they seek initial funding because the applications are not due until after this meeting. Thus, absence from that meeting will not count as an absence for that semester. It is suggested, however, that all New RGSOs attend. Continuing RGSOs are responsible for attending the first Assembly meeting and if they miss the meeting it will count as an absence for the semester.

Information regarding Assembly meetings, including officer reports and the location (which alternates between the three SUNY Albany Campuses), are available at: <http://www.albany.edu/gsa/assembly.shtml>.

4) RGSO Training

The GSA Vice President will conduct the RGSO training which is attended by either the GSA President and/or Treasurer to ensure that all financial questions can be fielded. The training reviews many GSA requirements such as room reservations, flyer postings, and procedures including the online purchase request process. Due to the nature of the material covered, all RGSO President and/or Treasurers must attend this training at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters. It is the duty of the attendees to relay all information to all of their RGSO officers. If neither are able to attend, they must work with the Vice President to set up a different time to meet. RGSOs must be trained no later than 2 weeks after the first Assembly meeting of the semester. *(Note: Your RGSO will not receive funding until you fulfill this requirement).*

5) MyInvolvement Registration

RGSOs are required to register with the Office of Student Involvement in order to process purchase requests for their events. Contact the Elizabeth Conrad, in the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership for more information. Note: You will need a written constitution for your RGSO in order to register.

6) RGSO Requirements

All RGSOs must give the incoming GSA Vice President a point of contact for the summer. This person is the person the Vice President can contact to ensure all groups are aware of important information, such as training dates and application deadlines. This person is responsible for ensuring all group members who need the information are aware of any information communicated by the Vice President.

All RGSO money must be deposited in the GSA account with the University Auxiliary Services (UAS). This means if you fundraise, you have to write a check, made out to the University Auxiliary Services, and give to either the GSA President or GSA Treasurer. This money will be deposited into your RGSOs "Petty Cash" line which you can use for any expense, even those that do not meet GSA requirements because it is your money to do with what you want for your RGSO. The process to access the money is the same as submitting any other reimbursement but instead of choosing your GSA RGSO line in MyInvolvement, you select the "Petty Cash" line. You then must still submit the required paperwork as normal so that UAS can process the reimbursement, but again, there are no strings attached such as deadlines for submission or rules about what you can spend that money on. If you have questions regarding this process contact the GSA President or Treasurer.

Part 4: RGSO Benefits

1) RGSO Funding from GSA

Funding provides financial resources for RGSO groups to conduct the business and activities planned for their group. The EI Chair may award additional funding to RGSO events, which are in line with the EI Chair's approved yearly agenda.

Other funding ideas:

Other sources of funding or potential co-sponsorships include: (1) your department, (2) fundraising, (3) Administration, (4) Graduate Education, (5) International Student & Scholar Services, (6) ITLAL, or (7) University Auxiliary Services (UAS) grant.

2) Copies and Printing

RGSOs can make free copies at the GSA Office for an RGSO-related purpose such as printing fliers for events, brochures, agendas for meetings, and other administrative items. To use this service, please see an office manager at the GSA Uptown Office who will be able assist you. *(Note: If you need to make more than 150 copies or prints at a single time you will need to coordinate with the GSA office since this is a shared resource for all graduate students.)*

3) Using University Facilities

RGSO groups can sign out rooms for meetings and for special events. Some rooms are free of charge and others incur a fee. Please contact the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership for more information.

4) Access to the GSA Calendar

This online calendar is managed by the GSA Vice President. If you want to advertise your event on this calendar, e-mail GSAVP@albany.edu with "RGSO Calendar" in the subject line. Calendar announcements can be made a day or up to an entire year in advance of the event.

Part 5: Purchase Requests & Event Requirements

To be reimbursed for the cost of an event, the RGSO must do the following:

1. Advertise the event on at least the **two** GSA listservs prior to your event. You must submit your listserv announcement to GSAPR@albany.edu by *Sunday night at midnight* for it to be on the Monday listserv. *Note to sign up for the listserv you must email GSA@albany.edu because we distribute the listserv through this general email that all staff can access. Our public relations email, GSAPR@albany.edu, was created among other reasons to ensure that RGSO emails never get lost in the general GSA inbox. For the most efficient flow of information, please sign yourselves up for our listserv through the general email and send your events to our designated PR email.
2. The RGSO President or Treasurer must submit an electronic reimbursement request within **three weeks** of your event/activity. (they are the only officers who are given authorized signatory status in myinvolvement).
3. Submit all required hard copy documents (e.g., payee certification with original signature, contracts with original signatures, original receipts etc.) to the Vice President within **four weeks** of your event/activity.

Online reimbursement requests must include the following:

1. Filled out purchase request
2. Upload blank document in the document field (or whatever you want to upload, like a flyer, for institutional memory)

You must submit the following documents to the GSA Vice President in **hardcopy**:

1. Payee Certification (found in Appendix B of this document or on the GSA Forms/Docs page: <http://www.albany.edu/gsa/docs.shtml>)
2. Original Receipts
3. Contracts**

Note: The GSA cannot move your purchase request through the process without this paperwork.

Contracts: All contracts require the GSA President's signature. The President must sign the contract **BEFORE the event is held because only the GSA President and Treasurer have the authority to indebt the GSA to an individual or vendor. RGSOs must submit the contract for signing no later than two weeks before the event is scheduled. All contracts will be signed within one week after submission, and placed in the respective RGSO's mailbox in the GSA uptown office. Once signed by all parties the contracts must be submitted to the GSA Vice President for financial processing.

Failure to meet the above requirements (during a semester) will lead to a penalty in a tiered system.

- If you miss a listserv posting, fail to have the contract signed on time, or miss the paperwork deadline:

Strike 1: We will assume it is human error and the GSA will e-mail the RGSO president and treasurer to alert them.

Strike 2: The RGSO President and Treasurer will be required to meet with the GSA Vice President to review the RGSO guidelines.

Strike 3: Your RGSO can be put on probation. Probation means that your RGSO will only be funded for one event up to \$500 the following semester. Further errors will result in the cancelation of the rest of your events for the current semester and suspension for one full semester after.

Failure to submit all information and paperwork may result in a delay or denial of the reimbursement. All checks will be mailed.

The reimbursement process takes 2-3 weeks to complete.

THE GSA WILL ONLY REIMBURSE BILLS THAT FOLLOW GSA AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES.

RGSOs are responsible for their own bills!

Part 6: Violations & Penalties

While many of the RGSO policies outlined in this manual are subject to assembly input and approval, some required by the Board of Trustees regulation of the Student Activity Fee. These policies can be found on the University's website:

Student Activity Fees - Mandatory

http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=358

Student Activity Fee Programs - Mandatory, Fiscal and Accounting Procedures for

http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=525

The above policies are distilled in the GSA's Financial Guidelines. Please refer to them if you have questions and feel free to contact the Vice President or Treasurer with questions.

The "three strike" system defined in the previous section is a new policy that was created to allow for small oversights and minor violations of RGSO policies. Under previous guidelines, minor violations of this type resulted in denial of reimbursement for events, and the new guidelines were created to recognize the financial situation of graduate students who often front their own money to put on events, and are reimbursed later. We felt that minor violations should not adversely affect students as much as those policies did.

Violations of Board of Trustee policies by RGSOs cannot be handled this way as neither GSA officers nor University personnel will process reimbursements or vendor contracts that are in violation of these policies. RGSOs that plan and put on events are subject to these policies and by holding events, affirm that their events are not in violation of University policy.

RGSOs will be held responsible for violations and will be responsible for all bills not in compliance with these regulations.

In the instance of a first violation, RGSOs will not be reimbursed for a non-compliant event.

Second offenses within two years from the date of the first offense will lose GSA recognition.

You can prevent violating Board of Trustee policy by familiarizing yourself with these policies and by asking questions. We are here to help!

Appendix A: Committees **GSA Committee Point Outline**

In order to enhance membership of the Graduate Student Assembly, and to promote a proactive governing voice among graduate students, it is necessary to capitalize on system wide committee opportunities. In exchange for funding, the each RGSO will be required to earn four points a year in GSA service. Service opportunities for 2014, and points are listed below. The point value for a Committee may be changed at the discretion of the GSA President, in consultation with the E-board, if it is found that the time commitment demanded of a committee is deemed to be more than the original point allocation.

NOTE: Any committee in italics and grayed out is a Presidential designee. You may submit your request for that committee membership, along with your C.V. to the current GSA President.

GENERAL COMMITTEES		
	MINIMUM REQUIRED MEMBERSHIP	POINTS (PER SEMESTER)
Elections Committee	2	2
Grants Committee	5	1
Judicial Board	5	2
EI Committee	3	1
Programming Committee	3	2
RGSO Committee	6	2
Wages and Benefits	4	2

ACADEMIC COMMITTEES		
	MINIMUM REQUIRED MEMBERSHIP	POINTS (PER SEMESTER)
Council on Academic Assessment	1	2
Council on Libraries, Information Systems, and Computing	1	2
Council on Research	1	2
Undergraduate Academic Council	1	3
University Life Council	1	2
<i>Governance Council</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Graduate Academic Council</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>University Planning and Policy Council</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>

STRATEGIC COMMITTEES

	MINIMUM REQUIRED MEMBERSHIP	POINTS (PER SEMESTER)
Advisory Committee on Campus Security	1	1
Advisory Planning, Architecture, and Aesthetics Committee	1	2
Campus Planning Committee (special project)	1	1

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Committee on University & Community Relations	1	1
President's Advisory Council on Prevention of Sexual Assault	1	1
Sustainability Council	1	2
University Auxiliary Services Board	1	3
University Libraries Student Advisory Committee	1	1
University Police Department Advisory Committee	1	1
Community Engagement	1	2
SUNY Student Assembly	1	2
UUP Contingent Concerns Committee	1	1

EXTERNAL COMMITTEES

	MINIMUM REQUIRED MEMBERSHIP	POINTS (PER SEMESTER)
NAGPS	0	3
SUNY SA	0	3

Appendix B: Payee Certification

Graduate Student Association

Campus Center 307/308 University at Albany, SUNY Albany, NY 12222

Payee Certification – Required only for personal reimbursement

Please provide all requested information for the check recipient:

Print name, as it is to appear on the check: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount of Reimbursement: _____

Event Reimbursement is for: _____

Online Purchase Request #: _____

I hereby certify that this reimbursement is just, true, and correct.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Equity and Inclusion Addendum

Please read the Equity and Inclusion guidelines below. If you have any questions about whether or not your event fits these guidelines, or questions and/or comments about the guidelines in general, please email the Equity and Inclusion Chair at gsamcaa@albany.edu.

Guidelines

- An Equity and Inclusion approved event/project should engage participants in conversations and activities that address, at least one of the following themes:
 - a. Structural power inequalities,
 - b. social justice,
 - c. intercultural dialogue/cultural awareness
 - d. institutionalized oppression,
 - e. intersectionality,
 - f. combatting marginalization
 - g. critical conversations/dialogue about race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, spiritual practices, physical and mental ability, wellness, socio-economic status, veteran status, and national origin

All RGSO's receiving Equity and Inclusion approval for an event, if they choose to use flyers to promote their event, must show on their event flyer that the event was Equity and Inclusion approved.

All Equity and Inclusion events that are not approved may be resubmitted to the Equity and Inclusion chair and the committee for re-evaluation, and a possible, second vote - pending prior communication with the Equity and Inclusion chair. There will be a process of consultation when an event does not meet Equity and Inclusion guidelines where the Equity and Inclusion chair will notify the RGSO and help to plan/revamp an event to fit these guidelines.

If any RGSO needs help developing an alternative event/project proposal, we encourage them to reach out to the **Equity and Inclusion** chair before submitting the form below.

(See the Equity and Inclusion event form below)

Equity and Inclusion Event Form

Please fill out the form below for events seeking Equity and Inclusion approval

Name of RGSO:

Date:

Semester:

Event Objectives/Rationale:-

Event Design:

Which topic(s) from the Equity and Inclusion guidelines will your event be addressing?

-How will your event, speaker(s), and/or attendees address the topic? (Will there be a panel discussion, workshops, demonstrations, documentary screening followed by discussion on topic, etc.?) Please provide as much information and as many details as possible.

What are the specific conclusions/experiences related to Equity and Inclusion guidelines you expect participants to gain?

Has this event been done by your RGSO before? YES NO

Other groups you are coordinating this event with:

Will you be requesting Equity and Inclusion funding? YES NO

