FINANCIAL GUIDELINES
Last Revised November 2017

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Officers of the Graduate Student Association, herein called the GSA, hope that through understanding and cooperation the GSA 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, GSA Committee Leaders, and the graduate student body as a whole, about the rules affecting the disbursement of the student activity fee monies.

The GSA collects a mandatory activity fee from all graduate students for use. This fee is $25 per semester for all students.

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 GSA.

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

RGSO’s must follow the requirements in the GSA 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 GSA funding for the following two semesters (not including summer) unless the appropriate GSA subcommittee approves reinstatement beforehand.
III. FISCAL YEAR

No commitments can be made outside the fiscal year. The GSA 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 GSA 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 Association, who is solely responsible for keeping the financial records of the GSA. 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 GSA Assembly may vote to temporarily suspend further actions by said individual. At that time it is the responsibility of the GSA President to appoint an interim Treasurer who must be ratified by a simple majority of the GSA 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 GSA’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 GSA funds by any recognized student group or committee costing more than $ 50 must be stored at the GSA office. Any property purchased by GSA officers with GSA funds shall also be stored in the GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA account.

III.4 Audit Requirements

Any organization or committee found to have improper, inadequate, or inaccurate record will have its GSA privileges automatically frozen. Upon rectifying the conditions, which brought about the suspension and then gaining the approval of the GSA 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 GSA 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, GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA Treasurer, President and Office Manager. To avoid personal liability, all RGSOs prior to ordering goods, making plans for events, etc. in which GSA funds are to be used should obtain written approval from the GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA financial system should be directed to the GSA 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 GSA Treasurer.
V. OTHER FORMS

Tax Exemption

Student groups funded by the GSA are exempt from NYS tax for NYS purchases. A copy of the certificate of TAX Exemption is available from the GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA Treasurer and such person or groups. Under no circumstances is the GSA Treasurer to be contacted at home or anywhere other than the GSA 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 GSA recognized group must state "Your GSA Fee at Work".

2. No GSA 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 GSA committee, which earns income, must have all monies deposited into the GSA 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 GSA 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 GSA 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.