



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Constitution and By-Laws of the Graduate Student Senate

Ratification Date:

3 October 2007

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Graduate Student Senate (hereafter called the Senate) seeks to create a forum for Graduate Student advocacy while acting as a conduit between students, faculty, and administration at the University of Delaware (hereafter called the University). The Senate supports campus-wide activities facilitating Graduate Student professionalism and collegiality. The Senate also seeks to influence the course of the University:

- (a) Through representation on University Committees,
- (b) By expressing views of the student body to the administration,
- (c) By issuing statements of our position to the media and administration.

ARTICLE I

MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Senate Membership

The Senate membership shall consist of the Senate Officers and one voting student Senator from each of the Academic Plans of the Graduate and Professional Schools of the University. The most current official list of Academic Plans as compiled by the Office of Graduate and Professional Education shall be considered binding for the purpose of determining eligibility for Senate membership. Senate Members shall have other duties, responsibilities, obligations and privileges as shall be set forth in the By-Laws.

1.2 Senator Elections

Election procedures for Senators in each Academic Plans shall be determined by the Student Members thereof by a democratic process. The Academic Plans are encouraged to elect Senators who are willing and able to serve for multiple Senate Sessions. Election materials prepared by the Executive Committee may be made available to each Academic Plans by the Senate.

- (a) Each Academic Plan must notify the Recording Secretary in writing within fifteen (15) days of designating their respective Senator.
- (b) In the event of an electoral dispute, the matter must be sent to the President in writing who will forward to the Organization Committee for review. The Organization Committee will report its findings to the Senate and recommendations, if any, for further action.

1.3 Voting

Each Academic Plan shall be entitled to one vote, in person or by proxy.

- (a) Votes will be passed depending on a simple majority when a quorum is met, unless otherwise indicated in this Constitution and By-Laws. A quorum shall be defined as a simple majority (50 percent plus one) of active membership.
- (b) Attendance will be recorded at each meeting as prescribed by the Membership Officer.
- (c) All Senate votes will be public, unless otherwise requested and approved as follows. If a Senator would like to request a secret vote, then he or she must send the request to the Recording Secretary at least five (5) days before the scheduled meeting. The request must include the reason for a secret vote, and that reason may be made public to the entire Senate. The Recording Secretary will then forward the request to the President for approval. If the motion is approved by the President, then voting materials will be made available at the next meeting.
- (d) The Senate will adhere to a “One Program, One Vote” rule. Votes must be cast by the Senator or his or her officially-designated proxy.
- (e) Representation by proxy at Senate meetings shall be counted as attendance for purposes of maintaining active Senate membership. Any Senator who is unable to attend a meeting may designate in writing a graduate student Proxy from the same Academic Plan as a substitute who may attend and vote in his or her place.
- (f) In the case of a tie, the President will vote to break the tie.

1.4 Action Without Meeting

Any action which may be taken by the Senators at a Senate Meeting may be taken without a meeting if consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken or to be taken, is signed by a majority of the Senate Members. The Recording Secretary shall file such consents with the minutes of the meeting of the Members.

1.5 Vacancies

A vacancy among the Senate Members shall exist when an Academic Plan is not represented by a Senator. In the event of a vacancy, the Academic Plan will be contacted to provide a Senator. If the Academic Plan does not respond within fifteen (15) days to the request, the Membership Officer may select a volunteer from the Academic Plan to become Senator.

1.6 Requirements for Active Standing

Each Senator must meet the Active Standing requirements. These requirements will be presented to the Senate by the Executive Committee at the final meeting of the Session for debate and approval. Changes for the following Session must be approved by simple majority of a quorum. If the changes are not approved, the current requirements remain in place for the next Session.

- (a) The Membership Officer shall inform Senators who do not meet their Active Standing requirements.
- (b) If a Senator does not fulfill the requirements to remain in Active Standing, then he or she must be replaced by his or her academic plan.
- (c) If an officer does not fulfill the requirements to remain in Active Standing, then he or she is subject to removal as outlined in [Article IV, Section 4.7](#).

ARTICLE II

THE SENATE

2.1 Senate Session and Meetings

A Senate Session shall commence at the beginning of the first meeting of the Senate of the fall semester and shall end at the conclusion of the last meeting of the Senate of the spring semester. The Senate may agree to change the time and date of meetings by a simple majority of the quorum. Robert's Rules of Order shall be used at the discretion of the Executive Committee to run meetings of the Senate.

- (a) The Senate shall hold at least four (4) meetings a semester at such time and place as it may direct. Notice of the place, day, and hour of each meeting shall be given to each Senate Member not less than five (5) days before the meeting.
- (b) Senate meetings are open to the public; however Senators may request a closed Meeting or discussion by motion to the Senate. Closed meeting attendance is limited to Officers and Senators in Active Standing only.
- (c) Motions for closed status will be decided by a simple voting majority of the Senate to begin at any point during or in advance of any Meeting.

2.2 Special Meetings of the Senate

Special meetings of the Senate may be called by the President, and shall be called by the President upon written request of one-fifth of the Senate membership stating the purpose of such meeting. If the President shall not, within ten (10) days of the request, call such a meeting to be held within fifteen (15) days thereafter, such Senate Members may call the same. Notice of a special meeting shall state the place, day, and hour of the meeting and the purpose for which it is called, and no other business shall be transacted at the meeting.

- (a) A written petition signed by one hundred (100) matriculated Graduate students can call a special meeting through the Office of Graduate and Professional Education.
- (b) The conditions for special meetings are the same as regular meetings.

2.3 Recognition of Service to the Senate

The Senate has the power to nominate and recognize Senators and non-Senators for exemplary service during the course of the Senate session. Nominations by Senators should be sent to the Executive Committee for review and final approval. These individuals will be recognized by the end of the Senate session. Senators may not nominate themselves for recognition.

ARTICLE III

COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

3.1 Establishment of Committees

The Senate may by resolution designate two (2) or more Senate Members to constitute committees. Additional students from each Academic Plan shall be welcome and encouraged to attend meetings, serve on committees and contribute to the work of the Senate. Two types of committees shall exist in the Senate: Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees.

- (a) Standing Committees shall be ongoing committees designated to perform specific functions identified by the Senate. Subcommittees of Standing Committees may exist as members see fit. The establishment and dissolution of Standing Committees shall require approval at a Senate meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of Senators in Active Standing.
- (b) Ad Hoc Committees shall be provisional committees to address topics of the graduate student body that do not fall under the purview of the existing Standing Committees. Upon creation of an Ad Hoc Committee, the charge, deliverables, and time frame of the committee must be declared. The Senate may create an Ad Hoc Committee by a simple majority of present quorum. The Senate may dissolve an Ad Hoc Committee before the end of the time frame stated during its creation by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of Senators in Active Standing.

3.2 Committee Requirements

To remain in Active Standing on a committee, Committee members must fulfill their responsibilities on the committee to the best of their ability.

- (a) The Committee Chairperson will be chosen at the first committee meeting of the Senate session by members of the committee. The Chairperson must be a Senator in Active

Standing or an Officer. If more than one person seeks appointment as Committee Chairperson, then an election will be held among the members of the committee present at the first committee meeting. The election should be held by secret ballot and a simple majority. Committee members may also choose to elect two Co-Chairpersons. One of these Co-Chairpersons must be either a Senator in Active Standing or an Officer and the other may be a Senator in Active Standing, an Officer or a non-Senator.

- (b) Committee Chairpersons must organize meetings of committee members in a timely fashion. The Committee Chairperson must organize a meeting with the members no later than two weeks after the formation of the committee, or the last Senate meeting of the Session, whichever comes first. Committees should meet at least once a month during each regular academic semester.
- (c) Committee Chairpersons must keep and maintain attendance sheets and meeting minutes at the committee meetings. The Chairperson must return typed attendance sheets to the Membership Officer within two weeks of the meeting date, and return typed meeting minutes to the Secretary within two weeks of the meeting date.
- (d) Work carried out by the committee via email or other electronic communication may be counted in lieu of a monthly meeting no more than twice per academic semester, provided that a majority of committee members agrees to this method and that all active committee members are invited to participate in the electronic communication. The Chairperson must still complete the required committee meeting records, denoting the nature and method of the work carried out.
- (e) Communications, Events, Organization, Social and designated Ad Hoc Committee Chairpersons must report regularly to the Vice-President of Internal Affairs on the progress of the committee and to seek attendance at or feedback on any event or deliverable the committee is working on. Diversity, Sustainability, Student Life and designated Ad Hoc Committee Chairpersons must report regularly to the Vice-President of Student Affairs on the progress of the committee and to seek attendance at or feedback on any event or deliverable the committee is working on. All Chairpersons shall be responsible for ensuring that Committee reports are given to the Senate at monthly meetings.
- (f) Committee members must report to the Membership Officer an end of Session evaluation of the Committee Chairperson as specified by the Membership Officer within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of the Senate Session.
- (g) Committee Chairperson must report to the Membership Officer an end of Session evaluation of all Committee Members as specified by the Membership Officer within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of the Senate Session.

3.3 Standing Committees

The standing committees of the Senate are:

- (a) Communications
- (b) Diversity
- (c) Events
- (d) Organization
- (e) Social
- (f) Student Life
- (g) Sustainability

ARTICLE IV

OFFICERS

4.1 Number and Title

The Officers of the Senate shall be the President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, the Membership Officer, and the Recording Secretary.

4.2 Executive Committee

The President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, the Membership Officer, and the Recording Secretary shall form the Executive Committee, with the President serving as Chairperson.

4.3 Election

Terms and Vacancies: The President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, the Membership Officer, and the Recording Secretary shall be elected by the Senate at the next to the last meeting of the Session by secret ballot to serve effective from the last Meeting, and any summer Meetings, to the next to the last Meeting of the following year. A vacancy among these Officers shall be filled by the Senate Members by a special election to be held at the next Meeting after the Senate meeting at which such vacancy was announced.

- (a) A newly elected Officer may serve as the proxy Senator for his or her respective Academic Plan at their discretion until the Senator position has been filled by another individual from the Academic Plan. Every effort shall be made to fill the Senator position with an individual other than the Officer.

- (b) If, after a replacement Senator is designated, an Executive Committee member relinquishes his or her office, either voluntarily or involuntarily, the vacating Executive Committee member does not reclaim voting rights for that Academic Plan, but may continue to serve in the Senate as a nonvoting member.

4.4 Officers Duties

The duties of the Officers shall be as follows:

- (a) **President:** The President shall be the principal Officer of the Senate and shall preside at all meetings of the Senate. The President shall be ex-officio a member of all committees of the Senate and shall perform such other duties as are prescribed elsewhere in these By-Laws and as are usual of this office. All Officers of the Senate shall be responsible to the President. The President shall be the main liaison to the Office of Graduate and Professional Education and the Assistant Provost of Graduate Studies.
- (b) **Vice-President of Internal Affairs:** The Vice-President of Internal Affairs shall be responsible for overseeing the committees that pertain to the internal organization of the Senate including the Communications, Events, Organization and Social Committees and suitable Ad Hoc Committees. The Vice-President of Internal Affairs shall be an ex-officio member of these committees of the Senate. The Vice-President of Internal Affairs shall be the main liaison between these committees and the Executive Committee. In this manner, he/she will function as an intermediary and a facilitator for Senate committee work and will ensure that fruitful collaborations across committees occur. The Vice-President of Internal Affairs shall help the President to implement any and all policies, initiatives, and events that he/she undertakes in his/her time as President. The Vice-President of Internal Affairs will be responsible for running Senate meetings if the President is not in attendance.
- (c) **Vice-President of Student Affairs:** The Vice-President of Student Affairs shall be responsible for overseeing the student advocacy focused committees of the Senate including the Diversity, Student Life and Sustainability Committees and suitable Ad Hoc Committees. The Vice-President of Student Affairs shall be an ex-officio member of these committees of the Senate. The Vice-President of Student Affairs shall be the main liaison between these committees and the Executive Committee. In this manner, he/she will function as an intermediary and a facilitator for Senate committee work and will ensure that fruitful collaborations across committees occur. The Vice-President of Student Affairs shall help the President to implement any and all policies, initiatives, and events that he/she undertakes in his/her time as President. The Vice-President of Student Affairs will be responsible for running Senate meetings if the President and the Vice-President of Internal Affairs are not in attendance.
- (d) **Membership Officer:** The Membership Officer shall be responsible for the maintenance and dissemination of the membership roster of the Senate in accordance with the

By-Laws. He/She shall also be responsible for tallying votes, collecting proxy forms, and maintaining accurate records of member service. He/She shall be the main recruitment officer and is tasked with contacting the Academic Plans when a seat has become vacant. The Membership Officer will be responsible for running Senate meetings if the President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, and the Vice-President of Student Affairs are not in attendance.

- (e) **Recording Secretary:** The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for the day to day operation of the Senate secretariat, shall see that notices of all meetings of the Members are issued, shall be responsible for the correspondence and official communications authorized by the Senate and shall record and file all minutes of meetings with the filing of a copy of all official Senate communications and shall perform such other duties as are usual to this office. The Recording Secretary will be responsible for running Senate meetings if the President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, and the Membership Officer are not in attendance.

4.5 Reporting Requirements

It shall be the responsibility of each Officer to report to the Senate at least twice each semester on the progress of his/her work.

4.6 Officer Absence or Disability

In the absence or the disability of the President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs shall assume the duties of that office. The President shall perform or cause to be performed the duties of the office of the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, the Membership Officer, or the Recording Secretary in the event of their absence or disability. In the event of the absence or disability of the President and the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs shall assume or cause to be assumed the duties of those offices. In the event of the absence or disability of the President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, and the Vice-President of Student Affairs, the Membership Officer shall assume or cause to be assumed the duties of those offices.

4.7 Removal

The President, the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, the Membership Officer, or the Recording Secretary may be removed from office at a Meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of Active Senators.

ARTICLE V

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

5.1 Procedure

This document may be amended by the following procedures. Any Senator in Active Standing or Officer wishing to amend the Constitution or By-Laws must add the request to the agenda of a meeting where it will be presented. The President will forward the proposed amendment to the Organization Committee for review. The Organization committee will present its finding to the Senate within two (2) meetings. The proposed amendment may be ratified by the affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of Senators in Active Standing at such time. Any notice of a meeting of the Senate at which By-Laws are to be adopted, amended, or repealed shall include notice of such proposed action.

APPENDIX A

AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1: Change wording in [Article V, Section 5.1](#) from “2/3 majority” to “2/3 majority of Senators in Active Standing”

Passed on: March 20, 2008.

Amendment 2: Change in [Article IV, Section 4.4](#) Officer Duties, VP: The Vice President shall be a member of the Communications Committee.

Passed on: March 20, 2008.

Amendment 3: Insert “officer” in [Article I, Section 1.6](#) and add subsection “C. If an officer does not fulfill the requirements to remain in Active Standing, then he or she is subject to removal as outlined in [Article IV, Section 4.7.](#)”

Passed on: March 20, 2008.

Amendment 4: Add [Article II, Section 3](#) “Recognition of Service to the Senate” The Senate has the power to nominate and recognize non-Senators for exemplary service during the course of the Senate session. Nominations by Senators should be sent to the Executive Committee for review and final approval. These individuals will be recognized by the end of the Senate session.

Passed on: March 20, 2008.

Amendment 5: Change all mentions of “Department, Program or School” to “Academic Plan” throughout the Constitution. Our intent is to be consistent with the terminology used in UDSIS and by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Passed on: May 8, 2008.

Amendment 6: Change all mentions of “Office of Graduate Studies” to “Office of Graduate and Professional Education”.

This is mentioned in:

- Article I “Membership”, Section 1.1 “Senate Membership”
- Article II “The Senate”, Section 2.2 “Special Meetings of the Senate”
- Article IV “Officers”, Section 4.4 “Officers Duties”

Passed on: November 2008.

Amendment 7: Change in Article II, Section 2.1: Robert’s Rules of Order shall be used at the discretion of the Executive Committee to run meetings of the Senate.

Passed on: November 11, 2010.

Amendment 8: Addition of “Senators” in Recognition of Service to the Senate, Article II, Section 2.3.

Passed on: November 11, 2010.

Amendment 9: Addition of specifying who may be the Committee Chairperson or Co-Chairpersons in Article III, Section 3.2: A Committee Chairperson must be a Senator in Active Standing or an Officer. If a Committee has two Co-Chairpersons, one must be either a Senator in Active Standing or an Officer and the other may be a Senator in Active Standing, an Officer or a non-Senator.

Passed on: November 11, 2010.

Amendment 10: Addition of the existence of vacant Academic Plan Senator positions created by newly elected Officers in Article IV, Section 4.3: An Officer may serve as his or her Academic Plan’s proxy Senator until the position has been filled by another individual. Every effort shall be made to fill the Senator position with an individual other than the Officer.

Passed on: November 11, 2010.

Amendment 11: Change in Article V, Section 5.1: Senators in Active Standing or Officers may propose amendments to the GSS Constitution and By-Laws. The proposed amendment will be presented during the Senate meeting in which it is announced.

Passed on: November 11, 2010.

Amendment 12: Addition of specifying that Senators may not nominate themselves for service recognition in Article II, Section 2.3.

Passed on: March 10, 2011.

Amendment 13: Inclusion of definitions for standing committees and ad hoc committees and the processes to create and dissolve them in [Article III, Section 3.1](#).

Passed on: April 14, 2011.

Amendment 14: Establishment of Diversity and Sustainability as standing committees in [Article III, Section 3.3](#).

Passed on: April 14, 2011.

Amendment 15: Establishment of Student Life as a standing committee in [Article III, Section 3.3](#).

Passed on: April 14, 2011.

Amendment 16: Change in the number of Officers and the structure of the Senate:

(I) Establishment of the Vice-President of Internal Affairs and the Vice-President of Student Affairs in [Article IV, Section 4.4](#) and [Section 4.6](#).

(II) Change in [Article III, Section 3.2](#) requiring Committee Chairpersons to report directly to the Vice President of Internal Affairs or the Vice-President of Student Affairs.

(III) Change all mentions of “the Vice President” to “ the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Affairs.” This is mentioned in: [Article IV, Section 4.1](#), [Section 4.2](#), [Section 4.3](#), [Section 4.4](#) and [Section 4.7](#).

Passed on: April 14, 2011.