The Constitution and Bylaws
of the
Graduate Student Association
of
Virginia Commonwealth University

Amended: April 6, 2020

1. Name of Organization

The name of the organization will be the Graduate Student Association (GSA) of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

2. Mission of Organization

The purpose of the GSA is to:

2.1. Facilitate the appropriations process to all graduate student organizations; 2.2. Serve as an advocate for the issues and needs of the graduate students; 2.3. Support programs that enhance the academic skills, professional development, and social environment of graduate students;

2.4. Provide a forum for discussions on matters involving graduate students and their welfare at VCU; and

2.5. Represent the interests of graduate students by being active members of campus committees and other pertinent university forums.

3. Membership

3.1. Membership in the GSA is guaranteed to all students enrolled in graduate degree programs at VCU.

3.2. There is no fee to join the GSA. Every graduate student is a member and eligible to participate in and contribute to the GSA and GSA activities.

4. Organization and Governance

4.1. The GSA Governing Board shall consist of an Executive Committee and a Representative Council.

4.2. The GSA Executive Committee shall consist of the offices of President, VP/President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, Appropriations Chair, Research Symposium Chair, Communications Chair, and Events Chair.

4.3. The Representative Council should consist of at least one (1) member from every School/College, up to and including all Departments/Programs, at VCU that has graduate students, as well as one (1) member from each Graduate Student Organization (GSO) that received funding through GSA Appropriations.

4.4. Members of the Representative Council may also act as a representative of their School and/or GSO.

5. **Conduct of Meetings**

5.1. The meetings will follow Robert's Rules of Order, Revised Edition. For more information, please visit www.rulesonline.com.

5.2. There shall be at least eight (8) GSA Executive Committee meetings and eight (8) separate GSA Governing Board/General Body meetings during the Academic Year: September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April.

5.3. Attendance at GSA Governing Board/General Body meetings is required by all GSA Representative Council members (six (6) out of eight (8) meetings) and open to the general graduate student body. All graduate students are encouraged to attend and voice their opinions.

5.4. All Governing Board/General Body meeting dates shall be set by August 1 for the fall semester, and by the December meeting for the spring semester.

5.5. Voting rights for operational decisions are reserved for Executive Committee and Representative Council members.

5.6. The President shall be responsible for calling full meetings of the Governing Board. The Secretary shall be responsible for recording and distributing minutes of Executive Committee and Governing Board meetings.

5.7. The President shall preside over meetings. A quorum will consist of five (5) Executive Committee members. Meetings may be held without a quorum as long as no votes are taken. If questions arise, Robert's Rules of Order, Revised Edition shall be the guide to any procedures to be used.

5.8. The representative of a graduate program or organization may send a student to act as a proxy in that representative's place, as long as the proxy is officially enrolled in the same graduate program. A vote cast by the proxy shall be considered the same as that cast by the official representative.

5.9. Standing and ad hoc committees will meet as needed and shall make reports of any meetings held to the Executive Committee.

6. **Executive Committee Responsibilities**

6.1. President

6.1.1. *Option A*: The VP/President-Elect position was created to ensure that the

President has enough experience to lead the GSA successfully. Therefore, the VP/President-Elect is automatically moved forward into the President position after serving for one year as the VP/President-Elect.

6.1.2. *Option B*: If the VP/President-Elect is removed from office, or declines to continue as President, then the position may be posted for a modified internal election. Namely, the President should have served on the GSA Governing Board previously. The entire graduate student body will vote; it is preferable that the candidates be from the GSA Governing Board.

6.1.3. Finally, if neither *Option A* or *Option B* is possible, then after seeking guidance from the Faculty Advisor and Dean of the Graduate School, a general election may be held to fill the President's role.

6.1.4. The President shall lead or facilitate the meetings of the GSA Executive Committee and Governing Board and act as the official spokesperson for the GSA in communicating the decisions and opinions of the association to its membership, to the Graduate School, and all other relevant parties.

6.1.5. The President, along with the Executive Committee, shall be responsible for appointing representatives to the official standing committees of the GSA Governing Board (Appropriations, Events, Advertising Committees, or others as needed).

6.1.6. The President shall be responsible for ensuring that elections are held in accordance with the bylaws of the GSA.

6.1.7. The President shall be responsible for ensuring that there are regularly scheduled GSA meetings during the academic year. The President must schedule a meeting within ten (10) school days if requested to do so by a member of the Executive Committee, by the Dean of the Graduate School, or by a majority vote of the representatives in the GSA Representative Council.

6.1.8. The President or designated representative shall serve as the graduate student representative on campus committees and on other bodies where graduate students are represented in accordance with the University's Plan of Organization.

6.1.9. The President will represent the GSA and have voting privileges in the VCU Student Government Association (SGA), Graduate and Professional Student Senate.

6.1.10. The President will have one deputy who can assume the role in SGA affairs if he/she is not able to perform the duties (usually the VP/President Elect).

6.1.11. The President shall be a signatory for the GSA account(s).

6.2. Vice President (VP)/President-Elect

6.2.1. The VP/President-Elect can be any graduate student who has been at VCU for at least one semester.

6.2.2. The VP/President-Elect shall be a student committed to assuming the role of President the following academic year. Therefore, a VP/President-Elect must have two (2) years left to degree completion upon assuming office.

6.2.3. The advancement to President following one year as VP/President-Elect is contingent upon the performance during the first year.

6.2.4. The VP/President-Elect shall oversee the GSA in the absence of the President.

6.2.5. The VP/President-Elect shall support and facilitate communication coordinating the activities of the standing committees and the President. 6.2.6. The VP/President-Elect, along with the Executive Committee, shall maintain and update the Constitution and Bylaws regularly with the assistance of one appointed member of the Representative Council.

6.2.7. The VP/President-Elect will assume the responsibility of the office of President if that person is unable to complete the term office.

6.2.8. The VP/President-Elect will represent the GSA and have voting privileges in the SGA Graduate and Professional student senate.

6.2.9. The VP/President-Elect will choose one deputy who can assume the role in SGA affairs if he/she is not able to perform the duties.

6.2.10. The VP/President-Elect will be responsible for organizing tabled events, bringing relevant materials from storage, setting up the table, ensuring enough printouts and event flyers for the expected number of attendees, and delegating other related tasks as needed.

6.2.11. The VP/President-Elect shall sit on the appropriations committee and vote on decisions regarding budgets submitted from Graduate Student Organizations for the following academic term.

6.2.12. The VP/President-Elect shall design, maintain, and implement elections to appoint officers for the following GSA Executive Cycle.

6.2.13. The VP/President-Elect shall work with two Executive Council members to purchase sufficient merchandise for their presidential year, to be given out at GSA events as promotional materials.

6.2.14. The VP/President-Elect shall help maintain GSA presence on social media platforms, including e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, by coordinating with the Communications Chair.

6.3. Treasurer

6.3.1. The Treasurer can be any graduate student.

6.3.2. The Treasurer shall be responsible for developing and submitting a budget to the Executive Committee by mid-February. (This will align with the appropriations committee budget process).

6.3.3. The Treasurer, along with the President, shall be responsible for authorizing and monitoring all expenditures made by the GSA.

6.3.4. The Treasurer shall be responsible for maintaining the budget, monitoring GSA funds, and shall make reports of spending at least every other Executive Committee meeting.

6.3.5. The Treasurer shall ensure the timely payment of all GSA bills, including programming, travel, and operational expenses.

6.3.6. The Treasurer shall deposit income (donations, etc.) into GSA account(s) within two (2) business days of the event.

6.3.7. The Treasurer shall handle correspondence regarding funding requests for the GSA.

6.3.8. The Treasurer shall prepare, present, and distribute reports to the GSA Governing Board at the September, November, and February General Body Meetings.

6.3.8.i. September - Present the beginning budget for the Fall Semester.

6.3.8.ii. November - Present a report consisting of a breakdown of all program, travel, and operational expenses.

6.3.8.iii. February - Present the beginning budget for the Spring Semester, and a proposal for the next academic year's budget request.

6.3.9. The Treasurer shall help facilitate GSA activities.

6.3.10. The Treasurer shall be a signatory for the GSA account(s).

6.4. Appropriations Chair

6.4.1. The Appropriations Chair can be any graduate student. This position may be appointed by the Graduate School rather than elected in situations when an assistantship is provided.

6.4.2. The Appropriations Chair shall ensure that funds are allocated to students, groups, and/or GSOs in accordance with the written policies of the GSA (see separate GSA Appropriations Bylaws).

6.4.3. The Appropriations Chair shall serve as chair for the Appropriations Committee.

6.4.4. The Appropriations Chair will keep a record of each student organization and copies of all proposed and approved budgets. The records include (i) contact details for the student organization Treasurer, President, and (ii) number of active members.

6.4.5. The Appropriations Chair will provide any training necessary for the GSA Executive Committee or GSOs.

6.4.6. The Appropriations Chair will serve as a liaison between the GSA, all Graduate Student Organizations, and The Underground: Student Organization Resources Center within the Student Government Association (SGA).

6.4.7. The Appropriations Chair will request budget reports from GSOs from the previous year prior to the start of the current year's budget process.

6.4.8. The Appropriations Chair shall prepare and distribute, at the end of the academic year, a report to the GSA Governing Board and Faculty Advisor of funds given out to student organizations during the academic year.

6.4.9. The Appropriations Chair will conduct all other duties as specified in the GSA Appropriations Bylaws.

6.4.10. The Appropriations Chair shall help facilitate GSA activities. 6.4.11. The Appropriations Chair shall be a signatory for the GSA account(s).

6.5. Secretary

6.5.1. The Secretary can be any graduate student.

6.5.2. The Secretary shall record minutes during all GSA meetings. 6.5.3. The Secretary shall record attendance at all GSA meetings and will determine which Schools and Graduate Student Organizations are in good standing.

6.5.4. The Secretary shall send minutes of meetings and specific action items to the Executive Council members no more than one (1) week after the meeting has taken place.

6.5.5. The Secretary shall keep track of important deadlines such as budget submission, Symposium, and travel grants.

6.5.6. The Secretary shall maintain an up-to-date group calendar for the Executive Council in RamsConnect and communicate upcoming task dates as needed.

6.5.7. The Secretary shall assist the VP/President-Elect and Treasurer in the ordering of GSA promotional materials.

6.6. Events Chair

6.6.1. The Events Chair can be any graduate student.

6.6.2. The Events Chair is responsible for planning at least two (2) graduate student social events and two (2) professional development events per semester. Responsibilities include securing the space, equipment, food, and other necessities for each event.

6.6.3. The Events Chair will form and lead the Events Committee, delegating tasks to committee members. The Events Committee will consist of interested GSA Executive Committee members, School Representatives, and graduate student volunteers.

6.6.4. The Events Chair is responsible for organizing one philanthropy event each semester, including the delivery of goods to the appropriate location. 6.6.5. The Events Chair will motivate volunteers to participate in GSA events. 6.6.6. The

Events Chair is responsible for adding new businesses to the list of approved eVa vendors.

6.6.7. The Events Chair is responsible for the timely completion of required documents to request funds for hosted events, in conjunction with the Treasurer.

6.6.8. The Events Chair will provide the Executive Committee and the Graduate School with an annual evaluation of GSA events at the end of April.

6.7. Communications Chair

6.7.1. The Communications Chair can be any graduate student.

6.7.2. The Communications Chair works with the Executive Committee to promote events and communication with the graduate and professional student body at VCU. This includes creating and distributing information using printed flyers, e-mail, social media, and on the GSA Web Site.

6.7.3. The Communications Chair will check the GSA e-mail and social media sites AT LEAST once per week and disseminate any correspondence within one (1) business day.

6.7.4. The Communications Chair will maintain an updated Google calendar through the gsa@vcu.edu e-mail address in coordination with the Secretary. RamsConnect and Facebook calendars will be updated to match the Google calendar.

6.7.5. The Communications Chair will form and lead the Advertising Committee, which is responsible for creating and distributing promotional flyers and sharing event details with GSOs and Schools/Programs.

6.8. Symposium Chair

6.8.1. The Symposium Chair can be any graduate student.

6.8.2. The Symposium Chair is responsible for planning, coordinating, and serving as master of ceremonies for the annual Graduate Student Research Symposium. This includes serving as the primary point of contact for all Symposium-related inquiries, reserving an event location, creating the application format, setting application deadlines, reviewing all applications, putting together the program, recruiting and coordinating faculty judges, working with students, planning and managing the Symposium event schedule, completing data entry of judges' scores to determine award winners, and collaborating with the following positions:

6.8.2.i. Administrative Staff from the Graduate School on event space reservation, placing catering and printing orders, scheduling e mails to graduate student listservs, and printing event certificates

and awards;

6.8.2.ii. Common Book Fellow on Common Book related event content;

6.8.2.iii. Scholarship Office and Library Staff on event participation; 6.8.2.iv. Communications Chair for developing an advertising strategy and schedule;

6.8.2.v. Events Chair to recruit student volunteers; and

6.8.2.vi. Treasurer for reimbursement of orders covered by the Graduate School and submission of purchase orders for event materials.

6.8.3. The Symposium Chair must maintain a document repository including, but not limited to, the following documents:

6.8.3.i. Symposium planning checklist

6.8.3.ii. Faculty judge contact list

6.8.3.ii.1. Faculty judges are volunteers. As such, if they request to be removed from the contact list, facilitate that request immediately.

6.8.3.iii. Draft communication documents

6.8.3.iv. Archive of prior years' listserv e-mails, programs, applications, volunteer judges, event-related receipts, and score spreadsheets

6.8.3.v. Feedback from prior years' Symposia

6.8.4. Following the election of next academic year's (incumbent) Executive Committee, the outgoing Symposium Chair must support the incumbent Symposium Chair by scheduling at least one (1), one-hour meeting to provide an overview of duties, review document repository, share lessons learned, and discuss the role on the Executive Committee beyond the Symposium. In order to ensure continuous improvement of the Graduate Research Symposium, the outgoing Symposium Chair must be available to the incumbent Symposium Chair by e-mail for the duration of the following academic year. If the outgoing Symposium Chair is graduating, then a personal e-mail must be shared with the incumbent Symposium Chair; however, the incumbent Symposium Chair must not share the outgoing Symposium Chair's personal e-mail under any circumstances.

7. **School Representative Council**

7.1. Purposes

7.1.1. To communicate between GSA and individual schools within VCU. 7.1.2. To support the GSA Executive Committee by serving on either the Events Committee, Appropriations Committee, or Advertising Committee.

7.1.3. To serve as a gateway for future election to the GSA Executive Committee, if desired.

7.2. Representative Council Requirements

7.2.1. The time commitment for this appointment is about 1-2 hours per week,

with the ability to flex up to accommodate any events. Requirements include monthly meetings with the GSA Governing Board and other associated committee meetings as necessary (such as Events, Appropriations, or Advertising).

7.2.2. To remain in good standing, a School, Department/Program, or Graduate Student Organization must have a representative in attendance to at least six (6) of the eight (8) GSA Governing Board meetings in an academic year.

7.2.3. Attendance at more than 50% of the events/social gatherings organized by the GSA. Failure to attend could result in dismissal from the GSA Governing Board.

7.2.4. Failure to comply may result, after a determination by the Executive Committee, in the representative losing his/her post, and a new representative will be sought.

7.2.5. Graduate Student Organizations that do not have a member in good standing on the Governing Board may also be ineligible for appropriations funding the following fiscal year. This will be at the discretion of the Appropriations Committee.

7.3. Representative Council Responsibilities

7.3.1. Representatives are to advertise meetups, events, and opportunities available through GSA to their schools and departments. Likewise, representatives can share events, opportunities, and funding needs from their department to GSA.

7.3.2. Representatives should be fully aware of the GSA bylaws, roles of Executive Committee members, and communication processes used. They should aim to formulate a weekly e-mail to GSA about opportunities and on-goings in their schools and promote all GSA opportunities to their department by sharing with their cohort, program communications/marketing directors, and more.

8. **Committees**

8.1. Graduate Student Positions on University Committees

8.1.1. Individuals from the GSA Governing Board may sit on the following VCU boards and committees:

8.1.1.i. University Council

8.1.1.ii. University Graduate Council

8.1.1.iii. Student Health Advisory Committee

8.1.1.iv. Students Today Alumni Tomorrow

8.1.1.v. IT Steering Committee

8.1.1.vi. Student Government Association (Graduate and Professional Student Senate)

8.1.1.vii. Other committees as requested by VCU senior leadership

8.1.2. Many boards and committees are temporary (only a one-year appointment), or occur every other year. As such, the list above is not all inclusive, and VCU senior leadership may request that members of the GSA Governing Board sit on additional boards and committees.

8.1.3. Selection procedure for other university boards and committees: 8.1.3.i. The Governing Board may recommend students for positions on University boards and committees, as directed by VCU senior leadership.

8.1.3.ii. The names of nominees approved by the Executive Committee shall be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.

8.2. Reports

8.2.1. The student members of each university board or committee shall provide a report (verbal/written) at each meeting to the Executive Committee and GSA Representative Council members. Information pertinent to GSA operations should be shared in writing after the committee meeting in e mail form to all Governing Board members.

8.2.2. Each semester a written report shall be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School if requested.

8.2.3. Each report shall describe the committee's activities and may recommend changes to the committee's authority, duties, or procedures.

8.2.4. The student members of each committee are responsible for knowing which actions of the committee should be made public.

9. **Term of Office**

9.1. The term of office for each elected position and each committee appointment shall commence during the first week of May and shall end during the first week of May the following year.

9.2. If a particular School, Department/Program, or Graduate Student Organization is not adequately represented, then a new member may join the Representative Council at any time following approval by the Governing Board.

9.3. Elected positions within the Executive Committee are merit-based. If at any point, an elected member does not fulfill their job requirements, the incident will be recorded and submitted to the GSA Faculty Advisor. After three (3) incidents, a special meeting of the Executive Committee will be called to discuss the removal of the member in question.

9.3.1. Notifications will be made to the member in question with each

documented incident. That member will be notified at least one (1) week prior to the special meeting of the Executive Committee, where they will be allowed to defend their actions. See Section 12 below for details on removal from office.

10. **Elections**

10.1. A call for applications to the Executive Committee should be communicated to all graduate students by the first week in February each year.

10.2. All students enrolled in a graduate or professional program for the entire upcoming academic year may be eligible to apply for a GSA Executive Committee Position.

10.3. All applicants for any GSA Executive Committee position shall have the opportunity to address the outgoing GSA Governing Board following application submission.

10.4. Elections shall be held during the last week of February through RamsConnect or a comparable platform.

10.5. Elections shall be open for one (1) week, and results shall be announced no more than two (2) business days after their conclusion.

10.6. All enrolled graduate students are eligible for voting and have the right to cast one (1) vote.

10.7. If an elected student does not accept the position, the next in line shall have the right to hold that position.

10.8. In the case of a winning tie, Robert's Rules will be modified as follows: the two candidates in question (who are tied with the most votes for a position, regardless of the number of other candidates running) will be placed in a runoff election, and the graduate student body will be asked to vote again.

10.9. If an office cannot be filled, a call for applications shall be re-distributed, and the electoral procedure outlined above shall be followed with adjusted dates until the position is filled.

10.10. If an elected officer resigns from office, a call for applications shall be distributed within one (1) week after the resignation date, and the electoral procedure outlined above shall be followed with adjusted dates until the position is filled.

11. **Vacancies**

11.1. Any vacancy in an elective position or on a GSA or university committee will be filled at a regular or special meeting of the Executive Committee.

11.2. In the event that a member must vacate their position, two (2) weeks' notice is requested to allow ample time to fill the vacancy.

11.3. If the President is unable to fulfill their duties, the VP/President-Elect shall assume

the duties of the President. A special election to replace the VP/President Elect will then proceed.

12. **Removal**

12.1. See Section 9.3 for incident details. The Secretary will keep track of any incidents and communicate those accordingly.

12.2. The Executive Committee may remove any executive officer of the GSA with a three-fourths (¾) majority vote.

12.3. The Executive Committee may remove any Representative Council Member by a simple majority vote of the Governing Board.

12.4. No vote on removing members shall take place unless notice of the proposed removal was given to the member in question at least ten (10) days prior to the vote.

13. **Amendments and Changes to the Constitution and Bylaws**

13.1. The Governing Board may enact or amend the constitution and bylaws by a majority vote at a Governing Board meeting.

13.2. Any proposed amendments to the bylaws must have been presented in writing at a previous regular meeting to the VP/President-Elect, who is in charge of facilitating the amendment process.

13.3. Such amendments shall be appended to this Constitution and Bylaws and be available upon request.

13.4. Revisions may be made to the Constitution and Bylaws periodically to keep current with VCU visions and goals and must be approved by the Governing Board prior to publication on the website and RamsConnect pages. An archived copy of each version of this document will be kept on the Google Drive for the GSA e-mail account, and by the Graduate School.