ARTICLE I: Organization Name
The name of this organization shall be **Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA)**.

ARTICLE II: Mission and Vision
Section 1. Mission and Vision
The BIOS Graduate Student Association seeks to unite and sustain a diverse community of graduate students across both East and West campuses and all BIOS programs (E&E, MCDB, N, ABC). Our mission is to empower students by fostering collaboration, mutual support, and academic and professional excellence. Through representation among departmental leadership, funding opportunities, and inclusive social networks, we aim to help students thrive and shape impactful initiatives. Together, we strive to build a community where every voice is respected and valued and a strong sense of belonging is cultivated for all.

Section 2. Inclusivity and Accessibility
BGSA is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment that empowers all members to engage fully in the Association's activities. To uphold this commitment:

1. BGSA will ensure that all meetings, events, and communications are accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing advance notice of events and accommodating accessibility needs, such as closed captioning, providing alternative formats for materials, and choosing venues that comply with accessibility standards to the best of our ability.
2. BGSA will actively promote diversity and equity by encouraging participation and leadership from underrepresented groups, incorporating feedback from members to identify and address barriers to inclusion, and hosting events and initiatives that celebrate diversity and enhance cultural awareness.
3. BGSA leadership will conduct end-of-term reviews of practices and policies to ensure alignment with inclusivity and accessibility goals and support continuous professional development.

ARTICLE III: Membership
Section 1. Membership Eligibility
Membership is limited to currently enrolled UIC students and affiliated academic staff or trainees.

Section 2. Membership Non-Discrimination
It is the policy of the University and this Association not to engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, disability, national origin, citizenship status, ancestry, age, order of protection status, genetic information, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, arrest record status, unfavorable discharge from the military, or status as a protected veteran and to comply with all federal and state nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action laws, orders, and regulations.

Section 3. Membership Application Process
Membership shall not be denied to anyone based on major or degree program. To become a member, applicants must submit a membership application via our Google Form, including: Name, Degree Type, and BIOS Advisor Name (if applicable).

Section 4. Membership Dues

BGSA will require $5 paid in dues to maintain active member status. Dues will be required once every year during the first membership meeting of the year. If registering after the first membership meeting, new members will be required to pay dues for the year upon registration. All dues will either be sent to the BGSA Gift Fund (+$0.16 transaction fees) or paid in cash.

Section 5. Membership Expulsion

Member expulsion from BGSA shall be a progressive process in which:

1. A formal notice will be emailed detailing concerns about the member's conduct and behavior (e.g., harassment, violation of BGSA policies).
2. A review shall be conducted by the elected officers taking account of the member's provided feedback.
3. A final decision shall be made by a majority vote of the elected officers. This decision will be communicated formally by email to the member in question.
4. The member shall have the opportunity to appeal the final decision.

Section 6. Code of Conduct

The BGSA is committed to fostering a respectful, inclusive, and professional environment for all members. To uphold this commitment, the following Code of Conduct applies to all members and participants in BGSA events, meetings, and activities:

1. Treat all members, officers, faculty, and guests with respect, courtesy, and professionalism at all times.
2. Actively listen to and value diverse perspectives and experiences.
3. Support a welcoming and inclusive environment by avoiding language or behavior that may be discriminatory, harassing, or offensive.
4. Strictly prohibited behaviors include harassment, bullying, and misuse or misrepresentation of BGSA resources.
5. Comply with university policies and the BGSA Constitution at all times. Violations of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the Association, following the process outlined in Section 5.

Reports of violations should be directed to an officer or the Faculty Liaison, who will issue a formal notice email and initiate a review process.

Section 7. Conflict Resolution Policies

The BGSA recognizes that conflicts may arise among members or between members and leadership. To ensure a respectful and fair resolution process, the following procedures will be implemented:

1. Members are highly encouraged to address conflicts directly with the involved parties through open and respectful communication.
2. If conflict cannot be resolved informally, members should escalate the issue to the BGSA Executive Board in a formally written conflict report including: 1. A clear description of the issue, 2. Parties involved 3. Descriptions of prior attempts for a resolution. If the conflict involves the President or Vice President, the report may be submitted directly to the Faculty Liaison or Secretary if the Faculty Liaison is not currently appointed.
3. Upon receiving the conflict report, the Executive Board will acknowledge the conflict within three business days, schedule a review meeting with involved parties, and work

collaboratively to identify potential solutions. All discussions will be documented to ensure transparency and accountability.

4. A neutral third party, such as the Faculty Advisor, will facilitate resolution if a conflict is unresolved. Once a final resolution has been reached, the final resolution in writing will be communicated to all involved parties within ten days.

Section 8. Membership Expectations

To maintain active membership status in BGSA, members are expected to:

1. Pay membership dues.
2. Actively engage with and participate in BGSA activities, including attending meetings (minimum 1), and events, or contributing to initiatives.
3. Demonstrate respect for fellow members and leadership, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment.
4. Adhere to BGSA's Code of Conduct (section 6), including supporting inclusivity and equity in all interactions and upholding professional standards in public and online spaces as representatives of BGSA.
5. Communicate any accessibility needs or barriers to participation to the Executive Board, who will take appropriate measures to accommodate them.

Section 9. Leadership Expectations for Executive Board Members and Officers Officers of BGSA are expected to exemplify leadership through the following responsibilities:

1. Actively promote a culture of inclusivity by considering diverse perspectives and ensuring accessibility in all organizational activities.
2. Advocate for the needs of members, particularly those from underrepresented groups, during the decision-making process.
3. Communicate decisions, policies, and updates clearly and transparently to the membership.
4. Regularly solicit feedback from members and incorporate it into organizational planning and actions.
5. Represent BGSA with integrity in all interactions by modeling respectful and collaborative behavior in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
6. Seek opportunities to develop skills that enhance their ability to lead effectively and support members' academic, professional, and personal growth.

ARTICLE IV: Executive Board and Officers

Section 1. Offices

The elected BGSA offices shall be the Executive Board and the Officers. The Executive Board shall be composed of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Officers shall be composed of the Media and Communications Office, Faculty Liaison, and the Events Coordinator. For BGSA to operate, the entire Executive Board must be chaired to ensure basic operations.

Section 2. Officer Eligibility

To be eligible for election, the individual must be a member of BGSA and a degree-seeking UIC student in good standing with the University and the Association.

Section 3. Term Limit

The term of office shall be one (1) year, with the term beginning on February 1st and ending on January 31st of the following year. Executive Board members and Officers will be expected to serve for only one (1) term, but may serve a maximum of two (2) terms.

Section 4. The Executive Board

The executive board shall be composed of the following 4 offices: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Typically, the executive board should include a mix of members from both East and West Campus. It is expected that each executive board member be responsible for training their successor.

A. President

a. The Office of President shall preside over all BGSA meetings.

b. The Office of President shall be responsible for interpreting the constitution. c. The Office of President will represent the Association at all events, or delegate representation to another Office.

d. The Office of President shall work in coordination with the Vice President and delegate tasks, within reason, to the Vice President.

e. The Office of President must approve all spending and deposits by the Treasurer.

f. The Office of President, in coordination with the Vice President, must facilitate contact between the Association and the Faculty Advisor.

B. Vice President

a. The Office of Vice President shares responsibilities with the President, delegated by the President.

b. The Office of Vice President assumes the President's duties in the absence of the President.

C. Treasurer

a. The Office of Treasurer shall be responsible for all fiscal matters of the BGSA.

b. The Office of Treasurer shall, in coordination with the Event Chair and the Biological Sciences Department, be responsible for devising the Association's budget for the academic fiscal year.

c. The Office of Treasurer shall be responsible for keeping records for the BGSA Gift Fund.

d. The Office of Treasurer shall communicate the status of BGSA accounts and budget during officer and general membership meetings.

e. The Office of Treasurer shall lead efforts to find and apply for grants for the Association.

D. Secretary

a. The Office of Secretary shall be responsible for recording the minutes of all BGSA meetings.

b. The Office of Secretary shall keep record of membership status and attendance to meetings and events.

c. The Office of Secretary shall be responsible for Association record-keeping, including the constitution and by-laws.

d. The Office of Secretary shall assist with all administrative tasks within the Association, including organization of all meetings in coordination with other Offices.

Section 5. The Officers

A. Media and Communications

a. The Office of Media and Communications shall be responsible for maintaining the BGSA website and ensuring its accessibility in coordination with the Biological Sciences Department.

b. The Office of Media and Communications shall produce advertising materials for BGSA events and recruitment in coordination with the Events Coordinator. c. The Office of Media and Communications shall participate in the Biological Sciences Department recruitment initiatives for graduate students and faculty members.

d. The Office of Media and Communications should form a committee of BGSA members who are interested in web development, advertisement, and recruitment.

B. Faculty Liaison

a. The Office of Faculty Liaison shall attend and take notes at all Biological Sciences faculty meetings. Information from these meetings shall be disseminated to the BGSA membership.

b. The Office of Faculty Liaison shall facilitate graduate student communication with faculty members.

c. The Office of Faculty Liaison shall hear BGSA member grievances in regard to faculty and advise the student on how to proceed.

d. The Office of Faculty Liaison should form a committee of BIOS program representatives. These representatives shall be elected by BGSA members of their respective programs.

C. Events Coordinator

a. The Office of Events Coordinator shall be responsible for organizing and coordinating all BGSA events, including bi-semesterly general membership meetings and seminars.

b. The Office of Events Coordinator shall work with the Office of Treasurer to determine the budget required for the fiscal year's BGSA events.

c. The Office of Events Coordinator must organize events in line with the BGSA mission statement and define how it will help the members' professional development.

d. The Office of Events Coordinator will collaborate with the Media and Communications Chair to advertise events to membership and other graduate students.

e. The office of Events Coordinator should form a committee of BGSA members who are interested in planning, advertising, setting up, and cleaning up events.

Section 6. Committees

All elected Executive Board members and Officers may form committees of BGSA members to assist in the completion of any of their tasks. It is the responsibility of the elected Officers to involve membership in the Association and assist in their professional development.

Section 7. Office Secession

In the event of an executive board member or officer secession, the seceding office's duties will be transferred temporarily to another office, to be determined by a majority vote of the remaining executive board members and officers of the BGSA. An election for the seceded position will be

held within 2 weeks from the date of the secession.

Section 8. Executive Board Member and Officer Removal
The removal of an executive board member or officer will be due to the lack of fulfillment of the stated duties or misconduct regarding the Code of Conduct in Article III Section 6. The removal process will be as follows:

1) The executive board member or officer will receive a formal notice of concerns (email or letter). They will need to respond within two (2) weeks from the date of the notice in order to set up a review meeting.

2) Once the review meeting date and time are set, the executive board member or officer in question will be able to address the concerns and provide feedback at said meeting. 3) Lastly, a formal communication of results will be provided to said executive board member or officer. If they wish to appeal the decision, a final review will be done. If an executive board member or officer is removed from office, that office's duties will be transferred temporarily to another office, to be determined by a majority vote of the remaining offices of the BGSA. For continuity, the Office Removal process should be shared formally with new executive board members or officers at the start of each semester. An election for the removed position will be held within 2 weeks from the date of removal.

Article V: Elections
Annual elections will be held in accordance with university policies and will ensure transparency. This electoral process enables all members to review the list of candidates and exercise their right to vote. Interested members will be invited to participate in the application process to become candidates, promoting inclusivity and fairness. By prioritizing transparency in our elections, we uphold the BGSA principles and enhance our Association's integrity for the benefit of all members.

Section 1. Timing of Elections
Elections will be held once a year during the first (1st) meeting of the Spring semester, prior to February 1st. The date, time, and location of the election meeting will be announced two (2) weeks prior to the election meeting. Nominations will begin at this time.

Section 2. Nomination Requirements
In order to become a candidate, a BGSA member must be self-nominated or nominated by another BGSA member for a specific office. The nominee must be notified of their nomination within 24 hours. In addition to nomination, the nominee must fill out a candidate application, including the applicant's qualifications and a brief statement, generally within 250 words, on their vision for the position. Candidate applications will be reviewed by the Executive Board for approval. Candidates for each position shall be announced at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the election.

Section 3. Election Meeting Structure
The election meeting will be structured as follows:

1. Information session: The rules of the election process will be detailed thoroughly. Members are encouraged to ask for clarification during this time.
2. Call for Nominations: During this time, members may self-nominate or be nominated for any position. Nominees must be verified for eligibility at this time.

3. Candidate Introduction: All candidates shall introduce themselves and share their vision for their role.
4. Casting Ballots: All present members at the meeting will cast anonymous ballots as outlined in the election process.

Section 4. Election Process
Ballots will be made following nominations and candidate presentations. Voting will be open for 24 hours. Candidate presentations will be recorded and sent out to BGSA membership following the meeting.

Present BGSA members shall partake in a ranked-choice vote wherein the voting member ranks candidates for each office in order of preference. The candidate with a majority of first-preference votes shall be elected. If there is no first-preference majority, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes shall be eliminated. Ballots that list the eliminated candidate as their first-preference will be reevaluated, where the second-preference candidate will be reordered as their first-preference. This process shall be continued until one (1) candidate receives a majority of first-preference votes.

Section 5. Counting of Votes
The Elections and Amendments Committee shall be responsible for tallying and verification of all ballots.

Section 6. Notice of Elections
The results of the election will be announced by the previous Vice-President to all members via email within twenty-four (24) hours of votes being cast.

Section 7. Absentee Votes
In the case that online voting is available, absent members may cast their vote remotely during the voting period. If online voting is unavailable, absentees may assign a proxy to cast their vote officially with a signed form.

Article VI: Meetings
Section 1. Membership Meetings
Four full membership meetings shall be organized per academic year. Two of these meetings should be a special event. Each subsequent membership meeting must alternate between both campuses.

Section 2. Officer Meetings
The elected officers shall meet twice a month to discuss and report on the Association's business. Each subsequent officer meeting must alternate between both campuses, with additional options for virtual attendance for members unable to attend in person.

Section 3. Emergency Meetings
Based on emergent topics that arise, the President can call an emergency general membership meeting. The reason and agenda of that meeting will be provided to members no less than 48 hours in advance. Members should contact any office to request an emergency meeting, which must then be approved by the President.

Section 4. Structure of Meetings
The Executive Board and the Officers will determine the agenda prior to each meeting and share it with BGSA membership at least two (2) weeks in advance. The general structure of meetings should be as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Attendance check
3. Executive Board, Officer, and Committee reports
4. Old business (e.g. continuation of previous discussion, progress on projects)
5. New Business (e.g. new ideas, proposals)
6. Announcements
7. Member input
8. Adjournment

Section 5. Officer Reports
Officer report time limits will be decided by the President. Extensions will be permitted if approved by the President. All reports should be submitted to the Secretary via (Submission Form) for the report to be added to the agenda. The deadline for the submission is to be determined by the Secretary.

Section 6. Quorum
The majority of the voting members present at the meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Article VII: Advisor
Section 1. BIOS Department Faculty Member
The advisor of the Biology Graduate Student Association shall be a Biological Sciences Faculty member, usually with an administrative position within the faculty (e.g. Department Head, Director of Graduate Studies).

Section 2. Faculty Mediator
The Advisor shall facilitate the relationship between the BGSA and the Biological Sciences Department. This includes but is not limited to, communications with the department accountant, updating other faculty members about BGSA business, representing the Association to the University as necessary, and representing the Faculty Liaison at Department Faculty meetings.

Section 3. Emergency Elections
In the event that BGSA fails to fill the Executive Board, the Faculty Advisor shall be responsible for calling a snap election. While the election process should align with the established procedure, the Faculty Advisor shall design and execute an alternative plan to conduct the snap election due to the failure of the previous process. If this process also fails to fill the Executive Board, BGSA shall dissolve.

Article VIII: Committees
Section 1. Formation
Any elected official of BGSA may form a committee to assist in their duties and contribute to the professional development of members. The “Elections and Amendments Committee” must be formed by every Secretary term.

Section 2. Track Representative and Faculty Liaison Committee
Led by the Faculty Liaison, this committee facilitates communication between BGSA members and faculty, represents students from each BIOS program track, disseminates information between faculty and students, organizes bi-semesterly meetings for track representatives to gather student feedback, and reports grievances to faculty and advocates for solutions.

Section 3. Events Committee
Led by the Events Coordinator, this committee organizes and manages BGSA events (seminars, workshops, socials), ensures events align with the BGSA mission, including professional development, works with the Treasurer to manage budgets for the events, and collaborates with Media and Communications to promote events.

Section 4. Budget, Grants, and Fundraising Committee
Led by the Treasurer, this committee oversees the annual budget for BGSA activities, researches and applies for internal and external funding opportunities, develops and executes fundraising strategies, tracks all expenditures, and presents financial updates at officer meetings.

Section 5. Media and Communications Committee
Led by the Media and Communications Officer, this committee manages and maintains the BGSA website and social media platforms, creates promotional materials for events and recruitment, assists with departmental recruitment efforts for graduate students, and designs a newsletter to keep members informed about BGSA activities.

Section 6. Elections and Amendments Committee
Led by the Secretary, this committee organizes and oversees the election process, ensures transparency in nominations and voting procedures, manages constitutional amendments, including drafting and presenting proposals, and maintains accurate records of election results and amendments.

Section 7. Committee Member Expectations
Within four (4) weeks of admittance to the committee, new committee members must interact with their committee. Interaction requirements will be determined by the committee leader. If committee member fails to meet these requirements, they will be removed from the committee at the leader’s discretion.

Article IX: Funds
Section 1. COF (Campus Organization Finance) Account
Monies collected on/off campus associated with this Association may be deposited into the Association’s COF account. The Association's COF account will be managed by the Office of Treasurer, who shall oversee all transactions and deposits in this account on behalf of the Association.

Section 2. Gift Fund
The Office of Treasurer shall be responsible for all transactions and deposits into the BGSA Gift Fund, which is a UIC account under the University of Illinois Foundation. The Gift Fund shall be open to any individual (including, but not limited to, alumni, professors, and students) who wants

to financially support the BGSA. The Office of Treasurer shall handle all communications with the University with regard to this account.

Section 3. Approval Process for Spending
The Office of President and the Office of Treasurer shall have the authority to approve and sign documents related to the Association's funds. This includes approvals for financial transactions, disbursements, and other financial matters.

All spending requests must be submitted to the Treasurer in writing and include the following information:

1. A detailed description of the expenditures,
2. The purpose of the expenditure and its alignment with the BGSA mission 10

3. An estimated or exact cost. Spending requested will be reviewed and approved by a unanimous vote of the elected offices during an elected officer meeting or via email. The President must provide final written approval before any expenditure is made.

Section 4. Budget Planning and Reporting
The Treasurer, in collaboration with the Events Coordinator and other officers, shall prepare an annual budget at the beginning of the fiscal year. The proposed budget will be presented and approved by a majority vote of the Executive Board and Officers. The Treasurer will also prepare quarterly financial reports to present at general membership meetings detailing: account balances, recent expenditures, income, and progress on fundraising and grants. At the end of the fiscal year, the Treasurer will prepare an end-of-year financial summary for review by the Executive Board and Officers and present it to the general membership at the final membership meeting.

Section 5. Fundraising and Grants
BGSA may organize fundraising events, such as bake sales, merchandise sales, or donation drives, to support the Association’s mission. All fundraising activities must be pre-approved by the Executive Board and comply with the university policies. Grant applications must be reviewed and approved by the Executive Board before submission.

Section 6. Spending Categories
The BGSA budget will include the following spending categories:

1. Event Expenses: Funds allocated for BGSA events, including speaker fees, venue rentals, catering, and materials.
2. Operational Costs: Expenses necessary for the day-to-date functioning of BGSA, such as printing, office supplies, or website hosting.
3. Professional Development: Support for members’ attendance at conferences, workshops, or training that aligns with BGSA’s mission.
4. Community Engagement: Expenses for initiatives aimed at fostering connections within the department and university community.

Section 7. Financial Audits and Accountability
The Treasurer will conduct a financial audit twice a year (end of Fall semester and end Spring

semester) to ensure accuracy and transparency. Audit results will be presented to the Executive Board, Officers, and general membership. The Faculty Advisor may request an external audit of BGSA's financial records if concerns about fiscal responsibility arise. The Treasurer will maintain financial records, including receipts, invoices, and approvals, for a minimum of three (3) years. Records will be made available for review by any officer or the Faculty Advisor upon request.

Section 8. Emergency Expenditures
In the case where immediate spending is required, the President and Treasurer may approve emergency expenditures up to $200 without a formal vote. Emergency expenditures must be reported to the Executive Board and Officers within 48 hours and included in the next financial statement.

Section 9. Non-Compliance and Mismanagement
In the case of misuse or mismanagement of funds, the Executive Board will address the issue and may result in disciplinary action, including removal from office and/or membership. Instances of financial misconduct will be reported to the Faculty Advisor and, if necessary, to the appropriate university authorities.

Article X: Amendments
Section 1. Amendment Process and Requirements
Amendments will be made to this constitution with a two-thirds majority vote with at least one-quarter of BGSA membership voting. Objections to constitutional changes will require a member petition of at least one-third of the BGSA members and will be up to revote.

Section 2. Notification of Amendments
Any proposed changes to the Constitution must be announced to the members during Membership Meetings and via electronic communication two weeks prior to the meeting by the President.

Section 3. Notification of Changes
The President shall be responsible for updating the changes in the Constitution and notifying The Center for Student Involvement and the general membership.