

# **Constitution of the Graduate Student Organization**

## **ARTICLE I – Name**

The name of the organization shall be the Graduate Student Organization of Stony Brook University, hereinafter referred to as the GSO.

## **ARTICLE II – Purpose**

The purpose of the GSO is to identify and protect the rights of graduate students, advance their interests, provide a forum for public debate and promote graduate student participation in University affairs. The GSO is committed to affirmative action/equal employment laws and to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, race ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or veteran status.

## **ARTICLE III – Membership**

Membership in the GSO shall consist of all graduate students who are enrolled at Stony Brook University and paying student activity fees. Any member of the GSO that satisfies the criteria in Elections Bylaws is eligible to be an officer of the GSO, and may serve on any GSO committee. All members of the GSO are eligible to vote in officer elections, referenda, and other organization-wide ballots. All members of the GSO vote equally.

## **ARTICLE IV – Officers**

The offices of the GSO shall be those of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

### **Section A: President**

The President shall:

- a. act as a spokesperson for the GSO in the presentation of its positions and enunciation of its policies;
- b. supervise the execution of Senate-approved legislation;
- c. appoint and remove members of all GSO and University committees, subject to confirmation by a majority and a two-thirds vote of the Senate respectively, over which the GSO holds power of appointment; nominate and recommend the removal of candidates, subject to confirmation by a majority vote and two-thirds vote of the Senate respectively, for University committees over which the GSO holds no power of appointment. Except in the case of emergency appointment, the President shall make a public call for members interested in specific committees, no later than one week prior to the official confirmation by the Senate.
- d. chair meetings of the Executive Council;
- e. in conjunction with the current Executive Council, conduct an open search and recommend a candidate to the Graduate School for the position of Graduate Student Advocate to serve in the following academic year.
- f. hire and remove the GSO Control & Disbursement (C&D) Agent, subject to a two-thirds vote of the Executive Council.

- g. Report at each Senate meeting a summary of her or his activities and such activities of the University Committees which may be of interest to GSO members;
- h. has the power to interpret this Constitution. In the President's absence, this power devolves upon the Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer, in that order.

### **Section B: Vice President**

The Vice President shall:

- a. assist the President in the execution of her or his duties;
- b. fulfill the responsibilities and duties delegated to her or him by the President;
- c. in the absence of the President, perform all duties of immediate concern vested in the President;
- d. shall organize training of the elected officers after annual GSO Elections;
- e. chair the GSO Senate in the absence of the Speaker;
- f. chair the Social Concerns Committee;
- g. keep the updated list of all GSO committee members and GSO representatives to university committees;
- h. report at each Senate meeting a summary of her or his activities which may be of interest to GSO members.

### **Section C: Secretary**

The Secretary shall:

- a. record, publish, and report the minutes of Senate and Executive Council meetings;
- b. assist the President with the dissemination of GSO related matters to the public;
- c. maintain and distribute a membership list of the Senate;
- d. chair the Election Committee;
- e. report at each Senate meeting a summary of her or his activities which may be of interest to the GSO members;
- f. keep and maintain the GSO inventory as recorded in the executive committee minutes;
- g. record the senator attendance at each Senate meeting.

### **Section D: Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall:

- a. chair the Budget Committee;
- b. be responsible for the management of all GSO revenues and expenditures, as detailed in the GSO Internal Control Program;
- c. prepare the organization's budget in conjunction with the Budget Committee and the Executive Council for the following academic year;
- d. provide an oral and written update on the state of the GSO finances at least once every semester;
- e. report at each Senate meeting with a summary of her or his activities which may be of interest to the GSO members.

## **Section E: Election, Removal and Succession of Officers**

- a. Candidates for office must be members of the GSO. The officers of the GSO shall be chosen in a membership-wide election held in the month of April, in accordance with the Elections Bylaws. Candidates are elected by a plurality (the largest number) of all votes cast for the office. Should the membership-wide election result in a tie vote, the Senate shall vote to decide which of the candidates shall become the officer. Newly elected officers shall take office on July 1 and shall serve through June 30 of the following year. No member shall hold more than one office at a time. The offices of the President , Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer shall have two-term limits. No member shall hold an office and be a GSO Senator at the same time. Only individuals who are qualified to serve in the office of President may serve in the office of Vice President.
- b. An officer of the GSO may be removed from office for misconduct or neglect of duty, violation of the GSO Constitution or any actions contrary to the integrity of the graduate student community. The Board of Appeals shall function in an advisory capacity to investigate any allegations brought against an officer. The officer in question shall have the right to know the allegations brought against him or her. The Board of Appeals and the officer shall have the right to present their evidence before the Senate for a final decision. The Senate shall have the power to remove the officer by a two-thirds vote. The findings and recommendations of the Board of Appeals must be made in writing and made public at least ten days prior to the Senate vote.
- c. If the office of the Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer is vacant, the President shall nominate a candidate for that office. The nomination shall be confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate. Should the nominee fail to be confirmed, the President may nominate another candidate. If the office of President is vacant, the Vice President shall assume the office and nominate a new Vice President. Should the offices of President and Vice President be vacant simultaneously, the Senate shall meet to elect a new President. Nominations shall be accepted from the floor and are open to any member eligible for the office in question. The candidate receiving a plurality of the votes cast shall be elected and shall assume the office immediately.

## **ARTICLE V – Senate**

The legislative power of the GSO shall be vested in the Senate.

### **Section A: Duties and Powers of the GSO Senate.**

- a. The Senate shall establish the policies and procedures of the GSO.
- b. Each Senator shall have the right to vote once on all matters which come before the Senate, except when a conflict of interest exists, or when prohibited by law.
- c. Senators may not vote by proxy. Alternate Senators may vote in the absence of the primary Senator(s).
- d. Unless otherwise specified, every Senate vote refers to the vote of the members present (quorum vote).

- e. A quorum shall consist of 25% of the total number of currently certified GSO Senators, or 8 certified Senators, whichever is greater.
- f. In compliance with the GSO Internal Control Program and The Chancellor's Guidelines, the passage of any subsequent amendments to the GSO annual budget shall require a two-thirds vote. All budgetary allocations recommended shall require a two-thirds vote.

### **Section B: Meetings of the GSO Senate**

- a. The Senate shall meet at least once every month, except during intercession periods.
- b. The Senate meeting can not take place unless the majority of the Executive Council is present.
- c. Emergency meetings of the Senate must be convened upon the request to the chair of the GSO Senate of either 2 voting members of the Executive Council or 8 Senators. Emergency meeting agenda is set by the members requesting it.
- d. Senate meetings are open to all GSO members. A specific portion of the senate meeting can be held as a "closed" session (meeting is only open to senators, executives, and individuals approved by a senate majority vote to attend) for reasons as specified in Board of Appeals Bylaws. A "closed" session will be held following a recommendation from the executive board and approval by the senate majority vote. Minutes will not be recorded for the closed session portion of the meeting. Senate meetings are to be publicly announced at least 1 week in advance. Meeting agenda need to be publicly announced at least 2 business days in advance.

### **Section C: Speaker of the Senate**

The Speaker of the Senate:

- a. shall be chosen from among the Senators at the beginning of each academic year by a majority vote of the Senate; in the event of a vacancy, the Senate shall elect a new Speaker;
- b. may be removed by two-thirds vote of the Senate;
- c. upon election, must relinquish Senatorial status;
- d. shall chair the GSO Senate and have the power to interpret rules of order at Senate meetings;
- e. shall be a member of the Executive Council;
- f. shall chair the Rules and Constitution Committee.

### **Section D: Election, Tenure and Removal of Senators**

- a. Each department or school shall elect its own Senator(s) with the following restriction:
  - i. The election must reflect the informed consent of the constituency. All departments shall demonstrate informed consent through an organized departmental election. Should an election not take place, all departments shall demonstrate informed consent through the department-wide advertising of the Senate position(s) and the presentation of a petition signed by at least 30% of

- the department's registered graduate students. The departments of Continuing Education (CED) and the School of Professional Development (GSP) Senator(s) shall demonstrate informed consent through the presentation of a petition signed by at least 5% or fifty (50) registered students in the program, whichever is less.
- ii. All Senators will be required to submit their credentials to the Secretary for certification according to the procedures outlined in the GSO Election Bylaws. Should there exist a question of legitimacy for a Senatorial election, the Executive Council shall oversee the resolution of the disputed election within the department.
  - b. A department may elect 1 alternate Senator, according to the same guidelines established above, who may fulfill the duties of the Senator(s) when she or he is unable to attend a GSO Senate meeting.
  - c. Departments or schools belonging to the GSO with less than 50 students shall be allotted 1 Senator; those having between 50 and 200 students shall be allotted 2 Senators; those having greater than 200 students shall be allotted 3 Senators.
  - d. The term of a Senator shall be from September 1st to August 31st (of the following year).
  - e. A Senator may be removed from office by means of a petition signed by a majority of the Senate.
  - f. Two (2) months before the end of their term, a Senator must post, both within their department as well as the GSO office, a call for nominations for new Senators. If a sitting Senator runs unopposed, they may renew their position for a second term by notifying their department and the GSO Senate of their intent; otherwise, normal election procedures must be followed.

## **ARTICLE VI – Executive Council**

The Executive Council is comprised of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Speaker of the Senate. The C&D Agent shall participate as nonvoting members.

### **Section A: The Executive Council shall:**

- a. have general supervision of the affairs of the GSO between Senate meetings;
- b. coordinate the activities of the GSO, its officers, committees and representatives;
- c. recommend policies, programs and activities to the Senate, and bring resolutions before the Senate;
- d. oversee the operation of the GSO office;
- e. carry out the directives of the Senate.
- f. in those cases where a decision ordinarily requiring Senate ratification is necessary, yet there is good reason to believe that a Senate meeting cannot be convened in good time, have the authority to act on behalf of the Senate by ratifying, by a majority vote of the Executive Council, a President proposed appointment to or candidate(s) for a University committee, GSO standing committee, or office listed in Article IV subject to the following stipulations:

- i. that the decision of the Executive Council shall be fully explained to the Senate at its next meeting, and
  - ii. that the decision of the Executive council shall be submitted to the Senate for a further vote of confirmation.
- g. shall approve the hiring and removal of GSO administrative personnel.

### **Section B: Advisory Groups**

Any voting member of the Executive Council may form an Advisory Group to assist her or him in the administration of an official duty. An Advisory Group is under the sole authority of the Executive Council member forming it, and may be granted only those powers or responsibilities already possessed by the Executive Council member. The Executive Council shall inform the Senate of the formation of any Advisory Groups. Members of Advisory Groups must be GSO members.

## **ARTICLE VII – Committees**

### **Section A: Membership and Procedures**

- a. Membership of all GSO committees is open to all GSO members. Committee members, except Board of Appeals, must be nominated by the President, and confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate. Nominations to Board of Appeals shall follow Board of Appeals Bylaws.
- b. meetings of all GSO committees, except the Board of Appeals, must be open to all GSO members. The times and places of all committee meetings shall be made publicly available through the GSO office.
- c. Committees shall keep the Executive Council apprised of their activities and deliberations, and shall periodically present reports to the Senate.
- d. All committee actions and resolutions are subject to review by the Senate.
- e. Any committee member may be removed upon the recommendation of the President and a two-thirds vote of the Senate.

### **Section B: Standing Committees**

All Standing Committees shall have Bylaws, which must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Senate. At least one member of each Standing Committee must be a GSO Senator. Membership and structural rules are detailed in The GSO Standing Committee Bylaws. The GSO Standing Committees are as follows:

- a. The Budget Committee shall consist of the Treasurer and four other GSO members. The C&D Agent shall be a nonvoting member, with responsibilities as detailed in the Chancellor recommendations to the Senate in accordance with the GSO Internal Control Program.
- b. The Rules and Constitution Committee shall be chaired by the Speaker of the Senate, and shall include at least three other GSO members. This committee shall review and recommend modifications to the GSO Constitution and to the Rules of Order. Should a President's Constitutional ruling be challenged, the Rules and Constitution Committee shall convene prior to the following Senate

meeting and issue the definitive interpretation of the Constitution with regard to the dispute at hand.

- c. The Board of Appeals shall consist of five GSO members in accordance with Board of Appeals Bylaws. The Board of Appeals shall act in an advisory capacity in matters concerning the removal of an officer, and shall adjudicate grievances against the GSO, its officers, Senate, committees or representatives brought by any member of the GSO. Grievance members shall be granted a hearing. The Board of Appeals may convene closed sessions; however, it must inform all concerned parties of the nature and source of the dispute and must provide all interested parties the opportunity to argue their case. Rulings of the Board of Appeals may be overruled by a two-thirds vote of the Senate. The Senate shall be responsible for deciding what actions are to be taken against those individuals found guilty of the charges. Records of all Board of Appeals may not hear a grievance more than once unless new evidence has been presented.
- d. The Elections Committee shall be chaired by the Secretary, and shall include at least three other GSO members. The Elections Committee shall prepare, conduct and report to the Senate all GSO elections in accordance with the Elections Committee Bylaws.
- e. The Housing Committee shall consist of at least three GSO members including a representative from each of the graduate student residential apartment associations. It shall be responsible for investigating problems with on-campus and off-campus graduate student housing.
- f. The GSEU Liaison Committee shall have a minimum of three members. It shall be responsible for serving as a communications bridge between the GSEU and the GSO.
- g. The Social Concerns Committee shall be chaired by the Vice President, and shall include at least three other GSO members. It shall serve as a forum for consideration of social concerns on campus not covered by other standing committees. It may advise and support graduate social groups and promote discussion centered around social issues, particularly but not limited to, those related to graduate life and welfare in the campus community
- h. The Graduate Student Emergency Loan Fund (GSELF) committee shall consist of five members, of which at least three are GSO senators. The purpose of the fund is to provide short-term loans to graduate students as dictated by the committee bylaws. The purpose of the committee is to oversee the use, distribution, collection, and appeal process of this fund.

### **Section C: Special Committees**

The Senate may form Special Committees as necessary to carry out a specified task. A special Committee dissolves upon completion of its duties and responsibilities.

### **Section D: University Committees**

- a. Any GSO member can be appointed by the President, subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Senate, to represent the GSO on a University Committee over which the GSO holds power of appointment.

- b. Any GSO member (or members) can be nominated by the President, subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the senate, as a candidate (or candidates) for a University committee over which the GSO holds no power of appointment.
- c. GSO representatives shall inform the Executive Council of the proceedings and actions of the University Committees on which they serve.
- d. Representatives shall be removed upon the recommendation of the President and a majority vote of the Senate.

## **ARTICLE VIII – Amendments and Referenda**

### **Section A: Amendments to the GSO Constitution**

- a. Amendments to the GSO Constitution may be proposed by any GSO member. Proposed amendments require approval by at least 75% of the Senators in the GSO Senate in order to be approved. Should the Senate fail to approve the proposed amendment, it shall be put to a vote of the membership upon presentation of a petition signed by 200 GSO members.
- b. A proposed amendment approved by petition shall be put to vote during the membership-wide election for GSO officers, unless the Senate convenes a special membership-wide election. Ratification of a proposed amendment requires a two-thirds vote of the membership.
- c. An amendment to the GSO Constitution shall not be proposed and voted on at the same Senate meeting unless it is publicly disclosed 10 days prior to the meeting via hard copy or electronic copy to all Senators (e.g. via the listserve).

### **Section B: Referenda**

#### **B.1 Types of Referenda**

- a. Amendment Referendum – referendum dealing with amendments to the Constitution. This type of referendum is enumerated and shall be carried out in accordance with in Article VII, Section A of this Constitution. Amendment referenda are binding on the Graduate Student Organization.
- b. Mandatory Student Activity Fee Referendum – referendum on whether the Student Activity Fee shall be mandatory or voluntary, in accordance with the SUNY Chancellor’s Guidelines, shall occur every two years. This type of referendum shall pass by a simple majority of votes cast. Mandatory Student Activity Fee Questions are binding on the Graduate Student Organization.
- c. Student Activity Fee Referendum – referendum approving an increase or decrease in the amount of the Student Activity Fee. It shall pass by a simple majority of votes cast at the ballot in a general election. Student Activity Fee referenda are binding on the Graduate Student Organization.
- d. Advisory Questions – question on the use of the Student Activity Fee, specifically whether a club, organization, service, or event should be budgeted a certain amount of funds. This includes creation, continuation, or increase of funding. Advisory referenda shall be considered one of the factors in determining an or-

ganization's funding or GSO position and are not binding on the Graduate Student Organization, in accordance with the SUNY Chancellor's Guidelines.

## **B.2 Procedure**

- a. Referenda may be proposed by any GSO member. Proposed referenda requires a majority vote of the Senate in order to be put to a membership wide vote. Should the Senate fail to approve the proposed referendum, it shall be put to a vote of the membership upon presentation of a petition signed by at least 100 GSO members with no more than 30% of the petitioners from any one department or school.
- b. Should a referendum that is in regards to the same subject or issue be approved by both the Senate and by petition, the following protocol shall apply:
- c. If the referendum was approved first by the Senate and later by petition, the Senate shall vote to determine which referendum shall be presented to the membership. A majority vote is required for the Senate approved option to be presented to the membership in lieu of the petition approved option. Failure of the Senate approved option to receive a majority vote shall result in the presentation of the petition approved option to the membership.
- d. If the referendum was approved first by petition and subsequently by the Senate, the Senate shall vote to determine which referendum shall be presented to the membership. A three-fourths vote is required for the Senate approved option to be presented to the membership in lieu of the petition approved option. Failure of the Senate approved option to receive a three-fourths vote shall result in the presentation of the petition approved option to the membership.

Referenda shall be put to a vote during the membership wide election for GSO officers unless the Senate convenes a special election.

## **Section C: Special Elections**

- a. The Senate may convene a membership-wide election in order to vote on referenda and Constitutional amendments at times other than the annual election for GSO officers.
- b. Special elections may not be convened more than once a semester.

## **ARTICLE IX – Parliamentary Authority**

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rule of Order (Newly Revised) shall govern the GSO in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution or any special rules of order which the GSO may adopt.

As approved by the GSO Senate on March 24, 1993  
Ratified by the Membership of the GSO on May 17, 1993  
Amended April 1994, Revised March 1996  
Amended May 1996, May 1998, May 1999, May 2001, May 2006, May 2007