

**AS&E GSA Constitution**  
2022 Version

Last updated by:  
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Approved by Department Reps 3-25-22

**Preamble.**

The University of Rochester Arts, Sciences, and Engineering Graduate Student Association, which shall be informally known as the Graduate Student Association (GSA), represents graduate students in Arts, Sciences, and Engineering programs at the University of Rochester. The GSA advocates on behalf of our students to the University's administration, connects students to each other and University resources, and organizes activities that promote personal, academic, and career success during graduate school.

**Article I: Membership.**

Any graduate student enrolled in the College of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering is automatically considered a GSA member and has access to GSA events. Any GSA member or student organization can apply for the grants and funding opportunities that the GSA Steering Committee supervises, with the exception that part-time graduate students, who do not pay the Graduate Student Activity Fee, may not apply for individual GSA-funded grants. In addition, any GSA member can run for a GSA Steering Committee or Department Representative position.

The mandatory University of Rochester Graduate Student Activity Fee, which is set by the Board of Trustees and billed automatically through the Bursar's office, shall fund the GSA. Steering Committee officers can recommend fee changes to the Board of Trustees through the Dean of Graduate Studies for Arts, Sciences, and Engineering.

**Article II: Voting Bodies.**

The GSA will have two voting bodies — the Steering Committee and the Department Representatives. The Steering Committee and the Department Representatives are accountable to the students who comprise the broader GSA.

Members of the Steering Committee will be elected following the procedures in Article IV. A GSA member cannot serve simultaneously as a Department Representative and Steering Committee Officer.

The Department Representatives shall consist of one representative from each department of the College, as well as graduate programs that are run jointly by multiple departments. Department Representatives are direct liaisons between the Steering Committee and the broader GSA. Each department is free to draft its own election procedures for filling Department Representative positions. Departments may have more than one representative; however, for purposes of voting on official GSA business, only one representative may vote.

### Article III: Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee operates in collaboration with the AS&E Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs (GEPA) office. The committee's purpose is to help students have a better experience during graduate school. To this end, the Steering Committee shall engage in regular communication with the graduate student body, provide an outlet for the concerns and ideas of students, advocate for policies that benefit students, and serve as an intermediary between students and the University administration. Ultimately, the Steering Committee must strive to unify the graduate student body, provide opportunities to build community among graduate students, represent graduate student needs on a variety of committees, and consistently seek opportunities to support, engage, and share the voice of the AS&E graduate student body.

The GSA Steering Committee shall consist of seven elected officers:

- **The President**, who shall set the agenda for and preside over GSA meetings, serve as a liaison to the Office of the President, represent the GSA in University administrative forums such as the Board of Trustees and the Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Advisory Council, maintain a list of student resources and office and administrative contacts, communicate with graduate student governments in the other schools and at other universities, and help to maintain an electronic archive of GSA records;
- **The Vice President and Treasurer**, who shall schedule GSA Steering Committee meetings and Department Representative meetings, keep GSA meeting minutes, prepare and monitor the GSA budget and approve requests for funding, maintain a list of Department Representatives, and serve as a primary point of contact for Department Representatives and University administrators;
- **The Communications Officer**, who shall keep in frequent contact with GEPA and other campus offices, share and promote events of interest to AS&E graduate students, maintain the GSA website and CCC platform, maintain a calendar of events, work directly with all other officers in preparing surveys, promotional materials and other communications, create and manage content for the GEPA newsletter and GSA social media accounts (Slack, Facebook, Instagram), and design posters and graphics for GSA events;
- **The Academic and Career Programming Officer**, who shall organize the travel grant competitions, represent the GSA on the AS&E Faculty Council, and meet regularly with staff from the River Campus Libraries, Writing, Speaking, & Argument Program, and the Greene Center to collaborate on and promote academic and professional development programming and events (including career networking events, the AS&E Research Symposium, and 3 Minute Thesis);
- **The Social Programming Officer**, who shall have primary responsibility for planning and facilitating GSA social events, including coffee hours, Graduate Student Appreciation Week, and orientation programming, as well as other social events that the GSA co-sponsors with other University of Rochester graduate student bodies;

- **The Student Life Officer**, who shall investigate and seek to resolve issues of concern to graduate students, collect and analyze data on student life and wellness by surveying students regularly, evaluate the effectiveness of GSA programming to meet student needs, sit on the Graduate Student Wellness Committee, maintain a list of other graduate students who sit on University committees and seek to maintain and expand the graduate student voice at an institutional level, help arrange issue-related and instructional seminars, and serve as a liaison to University administrative divisions dealing with student life (e.g., Residential Life, International Students Office, Office of Disability Resources, University Health Service, University Counseling Center, the Interfaith Chapel, the Kearns Center, the Burgett Intercultural Center, the Title IX Office);
- **The Diversity and Engagement Officer**, who shall maintain a list of active graduate student clubs and organizations, encourage the formation of new student organizations, provide logistical and planning support for clubs and organizations hosting events, assist the Social Programming Officer in co-sponsoring events with graduate student clubs and organizations, assist the Vice President in approving requests for event funding, assist the Communications Officer in highlighting student groups and upcoming events, and specifically seek to create opportunities for and programming that highlights the diversity of the AS&E graduate student body.

The Steering Committee shall meet at least every two weeks during the fall and spring semesters, and at least once per month during the summer, to coordinate GSA functions. The Steering Committee may pursue policy initiatives, make and approve changes to the GSA Bylaws and budget, and appoint students to University committees (e.g., Board of Academic Honesty, River Campus Library Advisory Council, Title IX Committee). However, the Steering Committee cannot independently revise the GSA Constitution. Rather, the Steering Committee must propose any changes to the Constitution to the Department Representatives, who will then vote on the changes.

#### **Article IV.A: Elections.**

The GSA will hold Steering Committee elections once per academic year, in April, to elect the Steering Committee officers for the following academic year. Terms for all Steering Committee officers shall begin on June 1 and end on May 31, as discussed in the Bylaws. Any GSA member at the time of an election shall be eligible for nomination, with two exceptions: 1. No GSA member can run for the same Steering Committee position more than twice and 2. Candidates for an elected GSA position must be resident graduate students for the academic year in which they will serve. In the event that no other GSA member is interested in filling a Steering Committee position, the first restriction shall be lifted.

The Vice President will be in charge of maintaining a record of eligible nominees. Any eligible GSA member may nominate themselves or another eligible GSA member. Nominations may be sent electronically to the Vice President after the start of the election process is publicly announced. The nomination period will begin at least two weeks before the election. After all nominations have been collected, candidates must prepare a brief written statement to be submitted, at the latest, one day before the election opens. All nominees must indicate that they expect to be able to commit to a full twelve-month term if elected.

The names of all nominated candidates and any accompanying statements shall be shared simultaneously to ensure equal exposure of candidates. These statements shall also be emailed to the GSA membership body when the voting period begins.

Voting shall take place using a secure electronic polling site maintained by the GEPA office. The Dean of Graduate Studies for Arts, Sciences, and Engineering or the Dean's appointed deputies shall certify the results of the election. The voting period shall remain open for a period of three days.

#### **Article IV.B: Vacancies.**

In the event that a Steering Committee officer vacates their position before the end of their term, the vacancy shall first be offered to the runner(s)-up for the position from the previous GSA election. If the runner(s)-up do not wish to serve in the position, then a special election shall be held. In this case, all GSA members shall be notified of the vacancy in a call for nominations open for at least ten days. The individual so elected shall serve until their replacement is duly elected at the next normally scheduled election.

If a Department Representative vacates their position before the end of their term, that representative's department shall elect a new representative. Each department is free to draft its own special election procedures for filling Department Representative positions.

It is the responsibility of the Steering Committee to inform the GSA of any changes in the roster of Steering Committee officers.

#### **Article IV.C: Expulsions.**

Officers may be expelled from a Steering Committee position by either a two-thirds majority vote of the department representatives, or by the Dean of Graduate Studies of Arts, Sciences, & Engineering together with a two-thirds majority vote of the Steering Committee.

Each department is free to draft its own expulsion procedures for removing Department Representatives.

#### **Article V: General Meeting.**

A General Meeting of the Department Representatives with the Steering Committee must occur at least twice per academic year. The Steering Committee or one-sixth of the GSA Department Representatives may call additional meetings. It is the responsibility of the Steering Committee and Department Representatives to make the time, date, and location of general meetings known to the broader GSA.

At each General Meeting, the current GSA Steering committee officers must update the Department Representatives on recent projects and University developments. The Department Representatives may bring issues to the attention of the Steering Committee, challenge decisions made by the Steering Committee, expel individuals from GSA-elected positions, review the allocation of the GSA budget (including any use of reserve funds), ratify amendments to the GSA Constitution (see Article IX), and discuss other proposals as needed.

All decisions at a General Meeting must be declared by a majority of the GSA Department Representatives who are in attendance. One Representative from each department or proxy who is present at the meeting shall cast an equal vote.

A two-thirds vote of the Department Representatives shall be necessary to overrule a Steering Committee decision or expel a GSA member from an elected position. Other decisions may be approved via a simple majority vote of the Department Representatives.

The Steering Committee shall give the Department Representatives an agenda of items to be discussed at the General Meeting at least one week prior to the meeting. In addition, Department Representatives shall each have a brief opportunity at the General Meeting to share feedback about the Steering Committee.

#### **Article VI: Compensation.**

Members of the Steering Committee will be compensated for their time in the amount of \$200 for each six-month period for which they serve, as detailed in the Bylaws. GSA Steering Committee members are not eligible to apply for individual GSA conference travel awards or individual research awards during the year of their service. (See the AS&E GSA Conference Travel Grant Rules for more information).

GSA members are entitled to reimbursement for approved expenses incurred in the organization of GSA events and should submit these requests to GEPA staff. The Vice President shall consult with GEPA staff members as needed to facilitate reimbursements.

#### **Article VII: Definition of Bylaws.**

The GSA Steering Committee shall compose a set of Bylaws that will govern the organization and daily operation of GSA not specifically outlined in the Constitution. The bylaws should contain, but are not limited to, budgetary procedures, funding request guidelines, and policies for recognizing graduate student groups.

#### **Article VIII: Availability of the Constitution.**

The current version of the GSA Constitution, along with the current version of any applicable GSA Bylaws, will be available for public view on the GSA and GEPA websites. Additionally, the Steering Committee shall provide an additional electronic copy of the Constitution and Bylaws to new Department Representatives on or by June 1 of each year.

#### **Article IX: Amendments to the Constitution.**

Constitutional Amendments must be passed by two-thirds of the GSA Steering Committee and must be ratified by a simple majority of the Department Representatives. Votes occur in a Department Representative Meeting or electronically. In the event of an electronic vote of Department Representatives, the GEPA office will provide a secure electronic polling site.

## **AS&E GSA Bylaws**

### **Fiscal Year:**

The Fiscal Year shall be defined from July 1 to June 30. These dates coincide with the University of Rochester fiscal year and accompany changes in the Steering Committee, while allowing for the planning of events falling shortly after officer elections and the Steering Committee turn-over to occur during the previous year and have funds appropriately allocated.

### **Elections:**

The April election for GSA Steering Committee officers shall occur through a secure electronic polling site managed by the GEPA office on behalf of the Dean of Graduate Studies for Arts, Sciences, and Engineering. Voting shall not occur via email. The polling site must have a secure sign-in method, to prevent repeat voting by individuals, but the polling site must anonymize votes once students cast them. The Dean or the Dean's appointed deputies will verify and announce the results of the election.

### **Election Turnover:**

The term for the Steering Committee and Department Representatives shall begin on June 1, and the term for the Steering Committee and Department Representatives shall end on May 30. New Steering Committee officers may attend the final meetings of the previous year's Steering Committee (e.g., meetings that occur between the April election date and May 30). Likewise, old officers may attend the first Steering Committee meeting in the new term (e.g., after June 1) to effect a smooth transition of student leadership.

Every outgoing Steering Committee officer shall meet with their successor during the month of May to discuss the responsibilities of their position and to share relevant information. The outgoing officer must confirm to the GSA's advisor that this meeting took place.

### **Budget:**

The Vice President shall work with GEPA staff to prepare the GSA budget over the summer at the start of their term. This budget draft will be presented to the other Steering Committee officers and an anonymous majority vote of all the officers, taken via Slack or another digital platform, will be needed to approve the budget. After approval, any officer or GEPA staff member can suggest adjustments to the budget as the semester progresses, which are subject to majority consensus of the officers.

### **Steering Committee Compensation:**

The GEPA office will compensate each Steering Committee officer with \$200 for each six-month period served (e.g., June 1–November 30 and December 1–May 30). Officers who do not wish to receive compensation may submit notice to the Vice President in advance of the two pay periods. The GEPA office will determine whether it is most effective to pay officers twice or to pay officers one sum in May, at the conclusion of their terms.

In cases where an officer is not fulfilling the responsibilities of their role, the officer may be prevented from receiving compensation by the Dean of Graduate Studies of Arts, Sciences, & Engineering together with a two-thirds majority vote of the Steering Committee.

### **New Steering Committee Positions:**

The Steering Committee retains the ability to appoint create new officer roles if they are deemed necessary for effective student governance.

### **Other Committees:**

Ad hoc committees shall be created and dissolved as needed to support in the organizing of larger events or other programming. The Steering Committee shall appoint members of each committee from any interested volunteers in the general GSA and at least one of the Steering Committee officers will organize the committee.

### **Service on University Committees:**

Any AS&E graduate student is eligible to serve on any University committees, councils, or advisory boards that seek input or consistent representation from graduate students. These positions are first-come, first-served, with no term limits unless the office or committee facilitator requests so. The Student Life Officer will keep a record of graduate students on University committees, check in with them on a semesterly basis, and seek out students to fill any new or empty committee roles. Students on committees are reasonably expected to update the Steering Committee on the proceedings of committee they attend.

### **Event Funding Requests:**

The GSA Steering Committee can provide funding for social and academic events that appeal to AS&E graduate students. An organization, department, or individual can request funding via an online form on the GSA website. The event planned must be open to the entire AS&E graduate student body. The event must be sufficiently advertised to the entire graduate community, and the GSA logo must be displayed. Funding support is capped at \$500 per group per semester and is ultimately decided by the Vice President.

### **Graduate Group Recognition:**

Graduate groups must file a group recognition form with the AS&E GEPA office at the beginning of each academic year to obtain and maintain official status. To obtain recognition, groups must have at least two AS&E graduate students acting as primary officers and demonstrate regular involvement with the AS&E graduate student community. The GEPA office will determine each group's status.

### **Misconduct:**

Misconduct will be handled in accordance with University of Rochester policies. In the event of misconduct by a Steering Committee officer or Department Representative, the GEPA office may take the steps it deems necessary to discipline the officer or representative in question, including expelling them from their role.