

# **Constitution**

## **Graduate Student Association**

### **The Catholic University of America**

#### **Preamble**

The Graduate Student Association of The Catholic University of America is dedicated to the academic, cultural, and professional development of all graduate students enrolled at CUA. As the official voice of graduate students, the Graduate Student Association responds to the needs and concerns of the graduate community and strives to improve the quality of education and life at the university, acting fully within the university's mission statement and governing documents.

#### **Article I: General Provisions**

Section 1: This organization shall be the "Graduate Student Association of The Catholic University of America," herein referred to as the "GSA."

Section 2: Membership: Every graduate student shall become a GSA member upon paying the Student Activity Fee. Membership is valid for one year, excepting graduation, withdrawal, or expulsion. Only GSA members are eligible to hold office, serve on committees, or be a senator.

Section 3: Before serving the GSA, whether as senator, officer, or committee member, GSA members must first take the Oath: "I, (name), do hereby promise to serve the Graduate Student Association to the best of my ability and to uphold the GSA Constitution."

Section 4: The Constitution should be understood with reference to accompanying bylaws.

A: Bylaws may be changed with a 2/3 vote of the Senate.

B: All bylaw changes must be presented to the Senate and Executive Committee at least one week prior to voting.

Section 5: The Graduate Student Association deplors and expressly forbids any activities, commonly called "hazing," that are demeaning and harmful to a student.

Section 6: All graduate students at The Catholic University of America are welcome to seek involvement in the Graduate Student Association. In the interest of a fully inclusive graduate community, participation in the Graduate Student Association shall not be restricted on any basis, including race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or personal appearance.

#### **Article II: Senate**

Section 1: The Senate shall represent GSA members individually and collectively in all matters pertaining to the graduate student body. The Senate shall serve as a liaison between its members and the community, faculty, administration, and other student groups. The Senate shall have the power to enact policy in any manner pertaining to the graduate student body and to decide other matters not enumerated in the Constitution by majority vote, unless otherwise specified.

Section 2: The Senate shall hold, at minimum, six meetings per semester. Special meetings may be called by the President or vote of the Senate.

A: Meetings must meet a quorum of at least 50% of active senators for voting to occur.

Section 3: All GSA members may attend regular Senate meetings, and may invite non-members to attend.

A: The Senate may restrict attendance to portions of its regular meeting (for debate only) by a 2/3 vote. Officers, alternates, and senators may attend this meeting, and special invitees may be admitted with a two-thirds vote.

Section 4: Unless otherwise specified, all votes pass with a simple majority of senators.

Section 4: The Senate shall pass a budget, and ensure that sufficient funds are available each semester to fulfill Constitutionally mandated expenditures.

Section 5: Each department or school (herein referred to as "school"), whichever is smaller, shall appoint senators.

A: Any GSA member, unless otherwise specified, is eligible for appointment to the Senate.

B: Each school shall send one senator for every hundred GSA members within it, or fraction thereof.

C: While a school may institute its own method of choosing senators, if it so chooses, all senators must have a written appointment from the dean or chair of their school; a vacancy may be filled at any time.

Section 6: Terms: A senator's term begins upon receipt of written appointment, and continues until the end of the academic year. The secretary shall notify schools which send representatives.

A: A senator may serve unlimited terms.

B: A senator may be removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Senate for flagrant misconduct, non-attendance, or failure to perform duties, or a two-thirds majority vote of the members of his school for any reason.

Section 7: A school is actively represented if the total attendance of its senators is at least one-half of the total possible attendances, determined on a per-semester basis.

Section 8: A school may appoint one alternate for each senator. Alternates follow all Constitutional provisions and enjoy all privileges of a senator, but may only vote or motion in the absence of the senator for whom he is designated alternate.

### **Article III: Officers**

Section 1: The Executive Committee shall be elected, and shall consist of the offices of President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and two Academic senators. Committee members act as full members of the Senate, except where specified. They may not bring a motion nor second one, and may not serve as senators for their schools. The President shall vote only to break a tie.

A: The Executive Council is a body appointed by the Executive Committee, and consists of the Parliamentarian, Social Coordinator, Lectures Coordinator, Conferences Coordinator, and Public Relations Director. Council members may not vote, nor bring or second a motion in the Senate, but otherwise have all rights and privileges of senators. A Council member may not serve as a senator for his school.

Section 2: The Executive Committee shall be elected each spring semester.

Section 3: After having sworn the oath of office and consulting with the newly elected officers, the president shall appoint the Executive Council members. The Executive Committee shall affirm the appointments with a majority vote.

Section 4: The term of an officer ends upon the newly elected officer taking the oath of office, or the beginning of the new academic year, whichever comes first.

A: Removal of an officer may be accomplished by a two-thirds vote of the Senate, provided the officer and Senate receive written notice at least two weeks prior to voting. A removed officer may have recourse to referendum by the GSA members.

B: If the office of President becomes vacant, it is immediately filled by the vice president. Any GSA member may fill a vacant officer position if nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

Section 5: Officers shall be compensated for their work, in accordance with the Bylaws. Failure to perform their duties is grounds for removal.

A: Officers who are removed or resign forfeit all future and outstanding compensation.

#### **Article IV: Committees**

Section 1: Committees may be created by the President with approval of the Senate.

Section 2: Only one representative from any one school may be permitted on a committee, excluding the chairman. Other than officers, no GSA member may serve on more than two committees. All chairs of non-standing committees must be members of the Senate. These rules may be waived on a per-case basis by two-thirds vote of the Senate.

Section 3: The responsibilities and powers of the Executive Committee shall be to represent the GSA between Senate meetings, to vote and act on matters requiring final decisions before a regular Senate meeting, and to report all relevant Executive Committee actions to the Senate

A: The Executive Committee shall meet at least once per semester before the first scheduled Senate meeting of the semester and thereafter on an as-needed basis.

Section 4: Elections are to be run each spring by the Elections Committee. GSA members either elected or seeking election may not serve on the Elections Committee.

A: The Elections Committee must publicize the elections to as many GSA members as possible.

B: Nominations may only be submitted by GSA members.

C: Each GSA member shall have one vote for each Executive Committee position.

#### **Article V: University Committee Delegates**

Section 1: The GSA shall be represented on the following committees and entities of the University: committees of the Board of Trustees, committees of the Academic Senate, the Office of Student Life, and other committees of the University which may affect graduate students.

Section 2: Delegates of the GSA to these committees must be GSA members.

- A: The president sits, ex officio, on the Board of Trustees and on all its committees to which the GSA is entitled representation.
- B. The university-wide academic senators sit, ex officio, on the Academic Senate and all its committees to which the GSA is entitled representation, dividing these responsibilities between themselves.
- C: Delegates to other university entities are nominated by the president and must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate. The president or vice-president may represent the GSA in the place of a designated delegate if the Senate has not been able to consider the appointee.

## **Article VI: Rebates**

Section 1: Upon achieving active representation, either 40% of the per semester student activities fee paid by each graduate student in the actively represented school, or a minimum amount as stated in the bylaws, whichever is greater, shall be transferred to each student's school.

A: Rebates shall be transferred to the designated account of the school as soon as possible.

Section 2: Money, once deposited, may not be removed by the GSA, except for the failure of a school to send any senators to GSA meetings for an entire semester.

A: The GSA shall recall 25% of the funds available in the unrepresented school's GSA account.

B: After three consecutive semesters, the entire balance in the unrepresented school's GSA account will be recalled.

Section 3: Misuse of funds shall result in action by the University Hearing Board and by the Senate.

## **Article VII: Amendments**

Section 1: The GSA may amend this Constitution by a referendum.

A: Referenda may be initiated by a petition of 10% of the GSA members, or two-thirds majority vote of the Senate. The Senate and Executive Committee must be notified of the proposed amendment in writing at least two weeks before the vote is taken.

B: The Elections Committee must put the referendum before the GSA members for a minimum of three days.

C: Referenda shall be binding if it attains a 2/3 majority of votes cast.

Ratified