

Constitution and By-Laws of the University of Delaware

Graduate Student Senate

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Mission Statement

The Graduate Student Senate (hereafter called the Senate) seeks to create a forum for Graduate Student advocacy while acting as a conduit between students, faculty, and administration at the University of Delaware (hereafter called the University). The Senate supports campus-wide activities facilitating Graduate Student professionalism and collegiality. The Senate also seeks to influence the course of the University:

- 1) Through representation on University Committees,
- 2) By expressing views of the student body to the administration,
- 3) By issuing statements of our position to the media and administration.

Article I. Membership

Section 1. Senate Membership

The Senate membership shall consist of the Senate Officers and one voting student Senator from each of the Departments, Programs, or Professional School classes of the Graduate and Professional Schools of the University. The most current official list of Departments, Programs, and Schools compiled by the Office of Graduate Studies shall be considered binding for the purpose of determining eligibility for Senate membership. Senate Members shall have other duties, responsibilities, obligations and privileges as shall be set forth in the By-Laws.

Section 2. Senator Elections

Election procedures for Senators in each Department, Program, or School shall be determined by the Student Members thereof by a democratic process. The Departments, Programs, or Schools are encouraged to elect Senators who are willing and able to serve for multiple Senate Sessions. Election materials prepared by the Executive Committee may be made available to each Department, Program or School by the Senate.

- (a) Each Department, Program, or School must notify the Recording Secretary in writing within fifteen (15) days of designating their respective Senator.
- (b) In the event of an electoral dispute, the matter must be sent to the President in writing who will forward to the Organization Committee for review. The Organization Committee will report its findings to the Senate and recommendations, if any, for further action.

Section 3. Voting

Each Department, Program, or School shall be entitled to one vote, in person or by proxy.

- (a) Votes will be passed depending on a simple majority when a quorum is met, unless otherwise indicated in this Constitution and By-Laws. A quorum shall be defined as a simple majority (50 percent plus one) of active membership.
- (b) Attendance will be recorded at each meeting as prescribed by the Membership Officer.

- (c) All Senate votes will be public, unless otherwise requested and approved as follows. If a Senator would like to request a secret vote, then he or she must send the request to the Recording Secretary at least five (5) days before the scheduled meeting. The request must include the reason for a secret vote, and that reason may be made public to the entire Senate. The Recording Secretary will then forward the request to the President for approval. If the motion is approved by the President, then voting materials will be made available at the next meeting.
- (d) The Senate will adhere to a “One Program, One Vote” rule. Votes must be cast by the Senator or his or her officially-designated proxy.
- (e) Representation by proxy at Senate meetings shall be counted as attendance for purposes of maintaining active Senate membership. Any Senator who is unable to attend a meeting may designate in writing a graduate student Proxy from the same Department, Program, or School as a substitute who may attend and vote in his or her place.
- (f) In the case of a tie, the President will vote to break the tie.

Section 4. Action Without Meeting

Any action which may be taken by the Senators at a Senate Meeting may be taken without a meeting if consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken or to be taken, is signed by a majority of the Senate Members. The Recording Secretary shall file such consents with the minutes of the meeting of the Members.

Section 5. Vacancies

A vacancy among the Senate Members shall exist when a Department, Program, or School is not represented by a Senator. In the event of a vacancy, the Department, Program, or School will be contacted to provide a Senator. If the Department, Program, or School does not respond within fifteen (15) days to the request, the Membership Officer may select a volunteer from the Department, Program, or School to become Senator.

Section 6. Requirements for Active Standing

Each Senator must meet the Active Standing requirements. These requirements will be presented to the Senate by the Executive Committee at the final meeting of the Session for debate and approval. Changes for the following Session must be approved by simple majority of a quorum. If the changes are not approved, the current requirements remain in place for the next Session.

- (a) The Membership Officer shall inform Senators who do not meet their Active Standing requirements.
- (b) If a Senator does not fulfill the requirements to remain in Active Standing, then he or she must be replaced by his or her department.

Article II. The Senate

Section 1. Senate Session and Meetings

A Senate Session shall commence at the beginning of the first meeting of the Senate of the fall semester and shall end at the conclusion of the last meeting of the Senate of the spring semester. The Senate may agree to change the time and date of meetings by a simple majority of the quorum. Robert's Rules of Order will be followed at all meetings of the Senate.

- (a) The Senate shall hold at least four (4) meetings a semester at such time and place as it may direct. Notice of the place, day, and hour of each meeting shall be given to each Senate Member not less than five (5) days before the meeting.
- (b) Senate meetings are open to the public; however Senators may request a closed Meeting or discussion by motion to the Senate. Closed meeting attendance is limited to Officers and Senators in Active Standing only.
- (c) Motions for closed status will be decided by a simple voting majority of the Senate to begin at any point during or in advance of any Meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings of the Senate

Special meetings of the Senate may be called by the President, and shall be called by the President upon written request of one-fifth of the Senate membership stating the purpose of such meeting. If the President shall not, within ten (10) days of the request,

call such a meeting to be held within fifteen (15) days thereafter, such Senate Members may call the same. Notice of a special meeting shall state the place, day, and hour of the meeting and the purpose for which it is called, and no other business shall be transacted at the meeting.

(a) A written petition signed by one hundred (100) matriculated Graduate students can call a special meeting through the Office of Graduate Studies.

(b) The conditions for special meetings are the same as regular meetings.

Article III. Committees of the Senate

Section 1. Establishment of Committees

The Senate may by resolution designate two (2) or more Senate Members to constitute committees, which committees shall have and may exercise all such authority of the Senate as is provided in such resolutions. The Senate may create an Ad Hoc committee by a simple majority of present quorum. The Senate may dissolve an Ad Hoc Committee by a simple majority of present quorum. Additional students from each Department, Program, or School shall be welcome and encouraged to attend meetings, serve on committees and contribute to the work of the Senate.

Section 2. Committee Requirements

To remain in Active Standing on a committee, Committee members must fulfill their responsibilities on the committee to the best of their ability.

- (a) The Committee Chairperson will be chosen at the first committee meeting of the Senate session by members of the committee. The Chairperson must be a Senator in Active Standing. If more than one person seeks appointment as Committee Chairperson, then an election will be held among the members of the committee present at the first committee meeting. The election should be held by secret ballot and a simple majority. Committee members may also choose to elect two Co-Chairpersons.
- (b) Committee Chairpersons must organize meetings of committee members in a timely fashion. The Committee Chairperson must organize a meeting with the members no later than two weeks after the formation of the committee, or the last Senate meeting of the Session, whichever comes first. Committees should meet at least once a month during each regular academic semester.
- (c) Committee Chairpersons must keep and maintain attendance sheets and meeting minutes at the committee meetings. The Chairperson must return typed attendance sheets to the Membership Officer within two weeks of the meeting date, and return typed meeting minutes to the Secretary within two weeks of the meeting date.
- (d) Work carried out by the committee via email or other electronic communication may be counted in lieu of a monthly meeting no more than twice per academic semester, provided that a majority of committee members agrees to this method and that all active committee members are invited to participate in the electronic communication. The Chairperson must still

complete the required committee meeting records, denoting the nature and method of the work carried out.

- (e) Committee Chairpersons must report regularly to the President and the entire Senate on the progress of the committee, and should contact the President and the entire Senate, when necessary, to seek attendance at or feedback on any event or document the committee is working on.
- (f) Committee members must report to the Membership Officer an end of Session evaluation of the Committee Chairperson as specified by the Membership Officer within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of the Senate Session.
- (g) Committee Chairperson must report to the Membership Officer an end of Session evaluation of all Committee Members as specified by the Membership Officer within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of the Senate Session.

Section 3. Standing Committees

The standing committees of the Senate are:

- (a) Communications
- (b) Events
- (c) Organization
- (d) Social

Article IV. Officers

Section 1. Number and Title

The Officers of the Senate shall be the President, the Vice-President, the Membership Officer, and the Recording Secretary.

Section 2. Executive Committee

The President, Vice-President, the Membership Officer, and the Recording Secretary shall form the Executive Committee, with the President serving as Chairperson.

Section 3. Election

Terms and Vacancies: The President, the Vice-President, the Membership Officer, and the Recording Secretary shall be elected by the Senate at the next to the last meeting of the Session by secret ballot to serve effective from the last Meeting, and any summer Meetings, to the next to the last Meeting of the following year. A vacancy among these Officers shall be filled by the Senate Members by a special election to be held at the next Meeting after the Senate meeting at which such vacancy was announced.

- (a) A newly elected Officer may serve as their respective Department's Senator at their discretion. In the event that an Officer decides to forfeit voting rights, the Membership officer shall request the election of a new Senator via the normal means.
- (b) If, after a replacement Senator is designated, an Executive Committee member relinquishes his or her office, either voluntarily or involuntarily, the vacating

Executive Committee member does not reclaim voting rights for that Department, Program, or School, but may continue to serve in the Senate as a nonvoting member.

Section 4. Officers Duties

The duties of the Officers shall be as follows:

- (a) **President:** The President shall be the principal Officer of the Senate and shall preside at all meetings of the Senate. The President shall be *ex-officio* a member of all committees of the Senate and shall perform such other duties as are prescribed elsewhere in these By-Laws and as are usual of this office. All Officers of the Senate shall be responsible to the President. The President shall be the main liaison to the Office of Graduate Studies and the Assistant Provost of Graduate Studies.

- (b) **Vice-President:** The Vice-President shall be responsible for the coordination and dissemination of information about the Graduate Student Senate, both within and without the University of Delaware community. He/she shall be concerned with providing information to the various offices at the University of Delaware (e.g., Graduate Student Groups, UDaily, etc.) as well as to a network of outside organizations (e.g., other universities, political groups in this State, etc.). In this manner, he/she will function as a public relations representative of the Senate, disseminating information about policies, activities, proposals, etc., and promoting a favorable image of the Senate and the Graduate community. The Vice-President shall help the President to

implement any and all policies, initiatives, and events that he/she undertakes in his/her time as President. The Vice-President will be responsible for running Senate meetings if the President is not in attendance.

(c) Membership Officer: The Membership Officer shall be responsible for the maintenance and dissemination of the membership roster of the Senate in accordance with the By-Laws. He/She shall also be responsible for tallying votes, collecting proxy forms, and maintaining accurate records of member service. He/She shall be the main recruitment officer and is tasked with contacting Departments, Programs, or Schools when a seat has become vacant. The Membership Officer will be responsible for running Senate meetings if the President and Vice-President are not in attendance.

(d) Recording Secretary: The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for the day to day operation of the Senate secretariat, shall see that notices of all meetings of the Members are issued, shall be responsible for the correspondence and official communications authorized by the Senate and shall record and file all minutes of meetings with the filing of a copy of all official Senate communications and shall perform such other duties as are usual to this office. The Recording Secretary will be responsible for running Senate meetings if the President, Vice-President, and Membership Officer are not in attendance.

Section 5. Reporting Requirements

It shall be the responsibility of each Officer to report to the Senate at least twice

each semester on the progress of his/her work.

Section 6. Officer Absence or Disability

In the absence or the disability of the President, the Vice-President shall assume the duties of that office. The President shall perform or cause to be performed the duties of the office of the Vice-President, the Membership Officer, or the Recording Secretary in the event of their absence or disability. In the event of the absence or disability of the President and the Vice-President, the Membership Officer shall assume or cause to be assumed the duties of the Offices of the President and Vice-President.

Section 7. Removal

The President, the Vice-President, the Membership Officer, or the Recording Secretary may be removed from office at a Meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of Active Senators.

Article V. Amendment to the Constitution and By-Laws

Section 1. Procedure

This document may be amended by the following procedures. Any Senator wishing to amend the Constitution or By-Laws must add the request to the agenda of a meeting. The President will forward the proposed amendment to the Organization Committee for review. The Organization committee will present its finding to the Senate within two (2) meetings. The proposed amendment may be ratified by the affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority at such time. Any notice of a meeting of the Senate at

which By-Laws are to be adopted, amended, or repealed shall include notice of such proposed action.