

Graduate Student Senate Constitution

Ratified April 5th, 2017

Amended October 4th, 2017 (Appendix A modified)

Amended September 9th, 2018 (V.B and V.C modified)

Amended September 16th, 2020 (II.4, IV.B.3, IV.B.3, IV.B.4.e, IV.C.1, IV.C.1.e, IV.F.5, V.B.1, V.C.8, and VI.C.12 modified; IV.C.1.d, IV.D, IV.E, IV.F.4, and V.D.2 created)

I) Name

The name of this association is the Graduate Student Senate.

II) Definitions

- 1) Semesters are defined as the fall and spring semesters unless otherwise noted.
- 2) GSS refers to the Graduate Student Senate.
- 3) Any reference to the University denotes Lehigh University.
- 4) College(s) refer to the five (5) Colleges of Lehigh University: (1) College of Arts and Sciences, (2) College of Business, (3) College of Engineering, (4) College of Education, and the College of Health.
- 5) A simple majority vote is defined as receiving more than half of the votes (excluding abstentions) on any measure.

III) Objectives

The objectives of the GSS shall be the following:

- 1) To serve as the representing body of the graduate student community in all matters pertinent to graduate programs and graduate student life at Lehigh University;
- 2) To provide graduate students with a forum to discuss issues pertinent to graduate programs and graduate student life at Lehigh University;
- 3) To encourage communication, networking, and social interaction among graduate students;
- 4) To promote academic achievement and professionalism within the graduate student community;
- 5) To provide a communicative body to act as a liaison between university faculty, staff and organizations and the graduate student body at large.

IV) Meetings and Membership

A) General Assembly

The GSS General Assembly shall meet at least five (5) times during each semester.

B) Graduate Units

- 1) Graduate Units shall be assigned to each College (see Appendix A).

- 2) Graduate Units shall be re-evaluated once every three (3) years; however, if a new department or program is established, a new Graduate Unit may be created.
- 3) Graduate Units are defined in Appendix A. Changes to this list require a General Assembly majority vote.
- 4) Active Graduate Units shall be recognized by the GSS on the basis of attendance at General Assembly meetings. It is the responsibility of the primary, alternate, or designated proxy (see Section V.F.2) Senator to sign in at each General Assembly meeting.
 - a) Any Graduate Unit that has missed no more than one (1) of the General Assembly meetings in the academic semester shall be considered an Active Graduate Unit for the following semester.
 - b) Any Graduate Unit that misses two (2) or more of the General Assembly meetings in the academic semester shall be considered an Inactive Graduate Unit for the following semester.
 - c) Members of Inactive Graduate Units have no privileges of membership, and cannot vote or receive travel grants.
 - d) Inactive Graduate Units do not count towards quorum.
 - e) An Inactive Graduate Unit may be reactivated following a semester of it missing no more than one (1) of the General Assembly meetings. Once the requirements for reactivation are satisfied, the Senator must petition the Executive Board for reactivation.
 - f) Attendance shall be counted starting with the first General Assembly meeting of the semester, and shall end with the last General Assembly meeting of the semester.
- 5) Exceptions to the Graduate Unit attendance policy may be granted, upon petition, by the Executive Board.

C) Membership

- 1) The GSS consists of General Members, Senators, Club Representatives, Internal Committee Members, External Committee Representatives, and the Executive Board.
 - a) General Members: Every current Lehigh University graduate student is a General Member of the GSS.
 - b) Senators: A Senator, selected by their Graduate Unit, is required to attend and participate in meetings, as well as communicate information between their constituents and the General Assembly.
 - c) Club Representatives: A Club Representative, selected by a GSS-approved club, represents that club at all General Assembly meetings and serves as a liaison between the GSS and their respective club.
 - d) Internal Committee Members: Each of the GSS internal committees discussed in Section IV.D below are open to all General members unless otherwise specified.

- e) External Committee Representative: Each university standing committee with a graduate student representative is open to all General Members unless otherwise specified. The Committee Representative is encouraged to attend all committee meetings and required to share committee reports with the General Assembly through the Executive Board.
- f) Executive Board (see Section V): The Executive Board is a group of elected officers that coordinates and oversees all decisions made at General Assembly meetings.

D) GSS Internal Committees

- 1) The following committees exist within the GSS. Each committee is expected to contain at least two (2) members and will operate according to its own governing document, as approved by the Executive Board. The committees are required to communicate their activities to the General Assembly through the Executive Board.
 - a) The Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (DI&E) Committee exists to provide intercultural visibility, advocacy, and community for graduate students at local and systemic levels at Lehigh.
 - b) The External Affairs Committee assists the External Affairs Officer in the duties described in section V)C)8) below.
 - c) The GSS Budget Committee determines the GSS operating budget for a given academic semester.
 - d) The GSS Lehigh University Graduate Student (LUGS) 5k Committee organizes the annual LUGS 5k.
 - e) The Mental Health/Graduate Wellness Committee works to promote a culture of well-being throughout the graduate student community.

E) External Committees

- 1) The GSS shall appoint at least one (1) graduate student to each University committee that allows it. This student or these students will serve as representative(s) of the GSS.

F) Senators

- 1) Each Graduate Unit should have two (2) Senators in the GSS, one (1) primary and one (1) alternate Senator.
- 2) Senators are selected by their respective Graduate Unit.
- 3) Only one (1) Senator from each Graduate Unit may vote during General Assembly meetings.
- 4) One (1) Senator from each Graduate Unit is required to send an update email to their Unit after each General Assembly Meeting, cc'ing the GSS Secretary.

- 5) If the primary Senator is unable to attend a General Assembly meeting, the alternate Senator may act in their stead. All rights and responsibilities of the primary Senator shall be granted to the alternate Senator.
- 6) Executive Board members can serve as Senator to their respective Graduate Units.
- 7) If a Senator resigns for any reason and/or is no longer a graduate student at Lehigh University, it is the responsibility of that Graduate Unit to assign a new Senator and inform the GSS Executive Board.

G) Quorum

Quorum shall be defined as having 50% of the Active Graduate Units represented at a meeting along with three Executive Board members. No business may be conducted without a quorum.

V) Executive Board

A) Function

- 1) To support and enforce the Constitution and Bylaws;
- 2) To propose a Constitution or Bylaws amendment when the need arises;
- 3) To approve all communications of the Graduate Student Senate;
- 4) To prepare the agenda for the Graduate Student Senate meetings;
- 5) To prepare events for Graduate Students;
- 6) To archive GSS documents (e.g., meeting minutes, agendas, etc.)

B) Membership

- 1) The voting membership shall consist of the eight (8) officers. Each officer shall have one (1) vote at Executive Board Meetings. An officer shall have one (1) vote at General Assembly meetings if and only if they are also a Graduate Unit Senator.
- 2) The GSS Advisor (normally the Associate Dean for Graduate Life), the Graduate Life Coordinator, and the Graduate Life Office Graduate Assistant shall be non-voting members of the Executive Board.
- 3) Any Executive Board voting member may call for a formal vote on any Executive Board issue.
- 4) Any Lehigh University graduate student in good standing shall be eligible to hold a GSS Executive Board position.
- 5) A graduate student may concurrently hold an Executive Board position in both a GSS-funded club and the GSS Executive Board.

C) Elected Officers

- 1) **President:** The President shall represent the graduate student community in all matters pertinent to graduate student life at Lehigh University. In this capacity, the President shall serve as a liaison between the GSS and the University administration. The President shall uphold the Constitution and Bylaws and has authority over the

- implementation of GSS policy, as guided by the GSS and with the approval of the Executive Board. The President presides over meetings of the General Assembly and the Executive Board. The President and the Vice-President shall prepare the GSS Annual Report.
- 2) **Vice-President:** In the event the President resigns or is unable to perform a particular duty, the Vice-President shall be prepared to act as President of the GSS. The Vice-President shall also perform various duties as directed by the Executive Board and President. In coordination with the Executive Board, the Vice-President shall coordinate graduate students to serve as Graduate Members on Lehigh University committees. The Vice-President shall also serve as a liaison to all ad-hoc GSS committees and working groups.
 - 3) **Treasurer:** The Treasurer shall be responsible for drafting and maintaining the budget and any other financial records of the GSS. The Treasurer shall also serve as the primary liaison to the graduate clubs.
 - 4) **Secretary:** The Secretary shall be responsible for GSS General Assembly and Executive Board meeting minutes and shall monitor Senator and Club Representative attendance. The Secretary shall coordinate GSS Senator and Club Representative communication and encourage participation from all Graduate Units. The Secretary shall notify all Graduate Units and Clubs of their attendance standing at the end of each semester.
 - 5) **Communications Officer:** The Communications Officer shall be responsible for the GSS website, GSS email list, GSS social media, alumni correspondence column, sending meeting and event announcements, and updating the GSS brochure as needed.
 - 6) **Travel Grant Officer:** The Travel Grant Officer shall be in charge of the travel grants and shall work closely with the Treasurer and Budget Committee.
 - 7) **Historian:** The Historian shall keep records of events organized by the GSS. The Historian shall also record the efforts and accomplishments of the GSS and ensure archiving.
 - 8) **External Affairs Officer:** The External Affairs Officer shall be responsible for coordinating relationships with organizations outside of Lehigh University (e.g., the National Association for Graduate and Professional Students), political advocacy at all levels of government in conjunction with Lehigh University's Government Relations Office; informing Lehigh's graduate students of policy affecting them, and issuing statements on positions of the GSS on issues of significance. The External Affairs Office shall also form a committee to assist in these duties.

D) Resignations and Vacancies

- 1) Resignations shall be accepted by the President, or in the case of the President's resignation, by the Secretary.
- 2) Resignations should be submitted in writing with as much notice as possible.

- 3) If for any reason an Executive Board officer is no longer a registered graduate student in good standing, the position will become vacant.
- 4) When an Executive Board office becomes vacant, the GSS should follow the procedures in the GSS Guidelines for Elections and Vacancies.

E) Elections

- 1) Elections should take place in the spring semester following the GSS Guidelines for Elections and Vacancies.

VI) Impeachment

A) Criteria for Impeachment of GSS and Club Officers

An elected officer of the GSS or a GSS-recognized club may be impeached for nonperformance of duty or for willful misconduct of office.

- 1) GSS officer: A petition of charges must be presented at a GSS General Assembly or Executive Board meeting. The petition must be signed by at least five (5) GSS Unit Representatives and two (2) members of the current GSS Executive Board.
- 2) Club officer: An impeachment petition signed by at least five (5) current club members must be presented to the GSS Executive Board at an Executive Board meeting.

B) Governance of Impeachment Procedures for GSS Officers

- 1) If a signed impeachment petition has been brought against an officer, he or she shall be suspended from duty immediately. The duties of the suspended officer shall be fulfilled by another Executive Board officer until the matter has been resolved. The suspended officer shall not enter the Graduate Student Senate into any obligation or contract and shall not receive reimbursement for expenses incurred after the presentation of impeachment charges to the General Assembly.
- 2) The Executive Board shall designate an officer to preside over the impeachment proceedings.
- 3) The presiding officer shall convene a special meeting for the sole purpose of hearing the charges against the officer. The time, date, and place of the meeting shall be ratified by the GSS, and the GSS should attempt to ensure that the suspended officer can be present at the meeting. The meeting shall occur no sooner than six (6) days after the charges are read, nor any later than thirty-two (32) days thereafter.
- 4) The presiding officer shall designate the regular meeting at which the vote shall be taken on the charges. This regular meeting shall be held at least six (6) days after the special meeting, but no more than thirty two (32) days thereafter.
- 5) If an accused officer is not present when the charges against him or her are read, the presiding officer shall immediately inform the accused officer in person of the charges. This must occur at least three (3) days prior to the hearing meeting date. If the officer cannot be reached, a certified signature-required letter shall suffice. If such

- a letter is not deliverable to the address the University holds for the accused officer, the officer shall be automatically removed from office. If such a letter is delivered, then the start date for the above timetable shall be the date the letter is received.
- 6) At the special session for impeachment hearing, a quorum shall be determined as provided in the Constitution, unless either the defendant is absent or all the accusing petitioners are absent. In such a case, the presence of the presiding officer alone shall be enough to constitute a quorum.
 - 7) At the hearing, the accusing petitioners shall be allowed to make an opening statement and the defendant shall be allowed a rebuttal, neither of which shall be longer than ten (10) minutes. The charges shall then be discussed and debated as moderated by the presiding officer in order to determine whether any offense has been committed and if an offense has been committed, whether removal from office is warranted. Closing arguments up to five (5) minutes in length shall also be accepted, with the defendant going last.
 - 8) If at this time the General Assembly believes more discussion is warranted, the presiding officer shall call another special session for that purpose, but this shall be done only once before a vote must be taken.
 - 9) The General Assembly shall then vote on whether to convict or acquit the defendant. A vote to convict shall require a three-fourths majority. If convicted, the defendant shall be removed from office immediately and the process for replacement begun. Upon acquittal, the status of the acquitted officer shall be as if no charges had been brought.
 - 10) No officer shall be tried twice for the same offense. If more than one officer is to be impeached, separate petitions of charges must be read, and separate special sessions held.

C) Governance of Impeachment Procedures for Club Officers

- 1) At the Executive Board meeting, the GSS Executive Board will vote to determine the credibility of the accusation.
- 2) If the credibility is not sustained then the GSS Executive Board will turn down the petition of impeachment and no action will be taken. Furthermore, another petition of impeachment with the same exact accusations no longer applies to the accused unless new evidence is presented to the Executive Board.
- 3) If the credibility is sustained, then the accused shall be suspended from duty immediately. The suspended officer's duties shall be fulfilled by another Executive Board officer, and the suspended officer shall not attend any club/GSS meetings until the matter has been resolved.
- 4) The GSS Executive Board will form a Committee For Impeachment (CFI), consisting of one GSS Executive Board member and two general assembly Unit Representatives; neither of which can be part of the club bringing forth the

- impeachment petition. This committee must be formed within one week after the credibility of the accusation has been sustained.
- 5) The CFI shall convene a special meeting for the sole purpose of hearing the charges against the officer. The time, date, and place of the meeting shall be ratified by the CFI, and the CFI should attempt to ensure that the defendant can be present at the meeting. The meeting shall occur no sooner than six (6) days after the charges are read, nor any later than thirty two (32) days thereafter.
 - 6) The CFI shall also designate the club meeting at which the vote shall be taken on the charges. This regular meeting shall be held at least six (6) days after the special meeting, but no more than thirty two (32) days thereafter.
 - 7) If an accused officer is not present when the charges are read against him or her are read, the CFI shall immediately inform the accused officer in person of the charges, but must do so at least three (3) days prior to the hearing meeting date. If, as may be the case, the officer cannot be reached, a letter to the department/program mailbox of the accused shall suffice. If such a letter is delivered, then the start date for the above timetable shall be three days post-delivery date.
 - 8) At the club meeting for impeachment hearing, a quorum of at least three-fourths of the current club members is required, unless either the defendant or all the accusing petitioners are absent. In such a case, the presence of the CFI alone shall be enough to constitute a quorum.
 - 9) At the hearing, the accusing petitioners shall be allowed to make an opening statement, and the defendant shall be allowed a rebuttal, neither of which shall be longer than ten (10) minutes. The charges shall then be discussed and debated as moderated by the CFI in order to determine whether any offense has been committed and if an offense has been committed, whether removal from office is warranted. Closing arguments up to five (5) minutes in length shall also be accepted, with the defendant going last.
 - 10) If at this time the club believes more discussion is warranted, the CFI shall call another special session for that purpose, but this shall be done only once before a vote must be taken.
 - 11) The club members shall then vote on whether to impeach the defendant. A vote to impeach the defendant shall require voting from at least three-fourths of the current club members. The defendant shall be removed from the room while the voting takes place.
 - 12) If impeached, the defendant shall be removed from office immediately and the process for replacement begun. If the burden of impeachment has not been met, the accused officer shall continue their role as if no charges had been brought against him/her.

13) No officer shall be tried twice for the same offense. If more than one officer is to be impeached, separate petitions of charges must be read, and separate special sessions held.

VII) Ratification

Ratification of this Constitution requires a vote of three-fourths of all present graduate students at the meeting. This new Constitution shall be made available for review at least four (4) weeks prior to the ratification vote.

VIII) Amendment

A) Formal Amendment

Amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws requires a vote of three-fourths of the Unit Senators present at a General Assembly meeting. Any amendment shall be dated and recorded. A copy of the former Constitution and Bylaws shall be archived for future reference and all changes shall be incorporated into the document on the GSS website.

B) Updates

This Constitution shall be reviewed and updated as needed at least once every five (5) years. All proposed changes shall be enacted through the formal amendment process.

IX) Dissolution

Initiation of a dissolution vote must be moved and seconded at GSS General Assembly meeting. A three-fourths vote of all present Unit Senators is required to initiate a formal dissolution vote. Within two (2) weeks after the initiating dissolution vote, an open meeting for all Graduate Students will be held. A simple majority vote of all those in attendance is required for formal dissolution of the current constitution.

Appendix A

College	Unit
Arts and Sciences	American Studies, History
	Biology (Integrative and Molecular Biology)
	Chemistry, Biochemistry
	Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Environmental Policy Design
	English
	Mathematics, Statistics, Applied Mathematics
	Physics
	Psychology
	Sociology, Political Science, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.
Business and Economics	Accounting and Informational Analysis
	Analytical Finance
	Economics, MS Economics
	MBA (1-MBA, MBA-engineering, MBA-educational leadership) , MS management
Education	Comparative and International Education, Globalization and Educational Change
	Counseling Psychology, Counseling and Human Services, International Counseling
	Educational Leadership
	School Psychology
	Special Education
	Teaching and Learning; Teaching, Learning, and Technology; Instructional Technology; Elementary Education; Secondary Education
Engineering	Biological and Chemical Engineering (Biological Chemical Engineering, Chemical Energy Engineering, Chemical Engineering.)
	Bioengineering
	Civil and Environmental Engineering, Structural Engineering
	Computer Science and Engineering
	Electrical and Computer Engineering, Wireless and Network Engineering
	Health Care Systems, Energy Systems Engineering
	Industrial and Systems Engineering, Manufacturing Systems Engineering
	Material Science and Engineering, Polymer Science and Engineering
	Mechanical Engineering, Photonics
	Technical Entrepreneurship, Business Administration and Engineering, Management Science and Engineering