Fiscal Governance Policies of the Graduate Student Senate at Lehigh University

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1) General Administration Structure

All financial allocations of the Graduate Student Senate shall be determined by the Budget Committee, which will be governed by the rules stated in this document. The Budget Committee will submit a budget for approval by the Executive Board. Once all budgets are approved, the Treasurer and Travel Grants Officer will control the budget, and any changes will be subject to review by the Budget Committee and the Executive Board. The final budget will be presented to the Graduate Student Senate General Assembly. The Executive Board will be the deciding body on all appeals, grievances, etc. The Graduate Student Senate Advisor, normally the Graduate Life Office Leadership, will have final oversight of the financial governance of the Graduate Student Senate. The Graduate Life Office will be responsible for administering all Graduate Student Senate accounts. The Graduate Student Senate will operate under the fiscal year, which will be the 12 month period starting July 1.

2) Ratification of the Fiscal Governance

Ratification of this document will require a vote of simple majority of the active Unit Representatives present at a General Assembly meeting.

3) Amendment

Amendments to this document will be presented to the General Assembly and may be approved by a simple majority vote at that meeting. Any amendment will be dated and recorded. A copy of the former Fiscal Governance Policies will be filed for future reference and all changes will be incorporated into the document posted on the Graduate Student Senate website.

4) Budget Committee

4A) Formation of Budget Committee

At the first General Assembly meeting presided by the newly elected Executive Board, the Graduate Student Senate Treasurer will call for the formation of the Budget Committee. The voting members of the Budget Committee will be the Treasurer and one delegate from each of the five (5) colleges. The term of service for Budget Committee members will be for the entire fiscal year. Other than the Treasurer, no Executive Board member will be a voting member of the Budget Committee, unless under the circumstances described in 4C.5. The selection process for Budget Committee members will be determined at the discretion of the Executive Board.
4B) Budget Committee Duties

4B.1) Determine the Graduate Student Senate budget.

4B.2) Determine the overall budget for all graduate clubs and the individual budget for each club according to Section 8.

4B.3) Resolve any financial matter that is not within the power of the Executive Board.

4C) Budget Committee Rules

4C.1) Chair: The Budget Committee will elect one of its voting members to chair the committee. The Chair shall schedule meetings and preside over them.

4C.2) Meetings: The Budget Committee will hold meetings as needed, based on the availability of all voting members on the committee. The Budget Committee will announce meetings in advance and allow interested parties to attend where appropriate.

4C.3) Voting: All Budget Committee decisions require a simple majority vote. If a decision cannot be reached, the Budget Committee shall refer the matter to the Executive Board for review.

4C.4) Appeals: Any financial decision made by the Executive Board may be appealed to the Budget Committee. Any budget committee member may appeal a Budget Committee decision to the Executive Board. In the case of referrals and appeals, all decisions of the Executive Board are final, unless the Graduate Student Senate Advisor recommends bringing the matter to the General Assembly for consideration. All appeals must be submitted using the Appeals Form (access here: https://forms.gle/qSwbAqrC7G2Kzros5).

4C.5) The GSS Executive Board may perform the Budget Committee’s duties if no one volunteers for the Budget Committee.

4C.6) If needed, the Budget Committee will review and update its funding guidelines annually, either at the end of the spring semester or the beginning of the fall semester.

4C.7) The Budget Committee will take into consideration the amount of money available to fund graduate clubs and the number of graduate clubs to be funded.
4C.8) When requests for additional funding are made or if a budget allocation is appealed, the Budget Committee will prioritize open events (see section 7C for open event guidelines) that are on-campus.

4D) Drafting and Approval of Overall Budget

The Budget Committee is responsible for drafting the new budget. The Budget Committee may consult with the outgoing Treasurer. The budget for the next fiscal year will be drafted during the summer after general elections based upon the projected revenue for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget will be divided into several line-items, and each line-item shall have a fixed amount associated with it, including projected expenses between July 1st and June 30th of the following calendar year.

4E) Misjudgment of Income

If the amount of income for the fiscal year is found to be lower than budgeted, the Budget Committee and Treasurer will create a new draft of the budget as soon as possible. The total operating budget for the fiscal year should not be exceeded.

5) GSS Executive Board Budget

5A) Use of GSS Executive Board Budget

At least 50% of events that are hosted by the Graduate Student Senate Executive Board must be open events. If any events are closed to only the GSS Executive Board (work meetings, bonding events, etc.), the total events may not use more than 10% of the GSS budget. The Graduate Student Senate Executive Board may create new line items mid-year following the limitations previously described.

5B) Appealing the use of the GSS Executive Board Budget

Any member of the Executive Board, General Assembly, or Budget Committee is free to appeal budget decisions made by the Executive Board to the Graduate Student Senate Advisor.
5C) What to do with unused GSS Executive Board Funds

If there are unused funds at the end of the fiscal year, these funds must be rolled over into the next fiscal year’s budget at the discretion of the Budget Committee or the Executive Board. Rolled-over funds may be considered as income and do not have to be used for the line-items that they were listed under from the previous fiscal year.

5D) Liquidation of Property

Only the Executive Board can decide to sell property of the Graduate Student Senate. However, the E-Board must get approval from the Budget Committee for any item valued at $500 or less, and the E-Board must get approval from the Graduate Student Senate for any item exceeding $500 in value.

6) Travel Grants

6A) Purpose of Travel Grants

The purpose of the Travel Grant Program will be to assist Graduate Students in attending professional conferences. The Program is intended to cover expenses which Graduate Students would otherwise be forced to pay out-of-pocket. It is intended to supplement existing funds, not to supersede them.

6B) Application Process

6B.1) All Travel Grant applications must be submitted using the online form. (access here: https://forms.gle/yLWbAaez2dv3Npcu5)

6B.2) To qualify for a travel grant, the applicant must meet all the requirements listed below:

6B.2a) The applicant must be from an active Graduate Unit. The student's unit must be active on both the date of application for the travel grant and during the dates of the conference. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure their unit maintains active status. All approved travel grant applications shall be contingent upon verification of active unit status during the dates of the conference. Please email ingss@lehigh.edu for any questions regarding the Graduate Unit.
6B.2b) The applicant must be an enrolled graduate student at Lehigh during the semester in which the travel occurs. An exception will be allowed if the applicant is not enrolled during the summer but was enrolled the previous Fall and Spring semester.

6B.3) After the conference, the student must complete their reimbursement within 30 days of the last date of the conference. Instructions for the reimbursement process will be provided by the Travel Grants Officer. The student must also provide copies of their receipts verifying all expenses reported. The Travel Grants Officer will decide what types of receipts are acceptable. The Executive Board may be consulted concerning what receipts are acceptable.

6C) Use of Travel Grant Funds

6C.1) The following are valid expenses:
- Conference registration fees
- Membership fees for Journals, Organizations etc.
  * There must be proof provided by the student that the membership fee was purchased for the purpose of receiving a discounter conference registration fee. In addition, the membership fee must be purchased within 60 days of registering for the conference.
- Hotel accommodations
- Parking
- Public transportation (includes ubers/lyfts/taxis/scooters/bikes)
- Food and non-alcoholic drinks
  * An itemized receipt is required for all meal purchases showing each individual item bought. Ask the establishment for an itemized receipt if they do not provide it initially. If you need clarification about what an itemized receipt is, please email ingss@lehigh.edu.
- Gasoline expenses to and from the conference ($0.20/mile)
- Any other expenses the Executive Board deems valid

6C.2) The following are ineligible for reimbursement using Travel Grants funds:
- Non-gasoline car/mileage expenses
  * E.g., wear and tear on the vehicle, and insurance
  * The IRS sets standards for mileage reimbursements, which for 2022 is $0.585/mile for businesses and $0.14/mile for charity. GSS will only reimburse for fuel.
- Alcoholic beverages

*All Travel Grants reimbursements are subjected to Lehigh policy.
6C.3) Applicants who are presenting work at their conference will receive a maximum of $150 for any one conference. To qualify as a presenter at a conference, the student must be addressing an audience with a paper, poster, or demonstration. The presenter must also be at least a co-author if not the primary author.

6C.4) Applicants who are only attending and not presenting will receive a maximum of $75 for any one conference.

6C.5) Students must submit a separate application for every conference they are requesting Travel Grant funds.

6C.6) A student will never receive more than $225 in Travel Grants within a fiscal year. The last day of the attended conference will determine which block the application falls under. The Fall block runs from July 1 - December 31 and Spring block is January 1 - June 30.

6C.7) If fraud, misrepresentation, non-responsiveness, or any other form of misconduct is found in any student, department, or college, the Graduate Student Senate reserves the right to revoke Travel Grant privileges from the responsible party for any duration the Graduate Student Senate sees fit. Decisions concerning misconduct will be made by the Executive Board. The student may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Expectations.

6D) Unused Travel Grant Funds

Any budgeted amount not spent in one block will be rolled over into the next until the end of the fiscal year. If a roll-over does occur the budgeted amount for the new block becomes the original amount plus the rolled-over amount.

7) Club Funding

7A) Definition of a Graduate Club

7A.1) A “graduate club” is defined by the following:
    7A.1a) A graduate club must have an Executive Board consisting of, at minimum, a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Treasurer and Secretary positions may be combined into a Treasurer/Secretary. All roles must be filled by Lehigh students. See “Model Constitution” Article IV section three for lists of the minimum duties of each officer.
7A.1b) The President and Treasurer must be graduate students.

7A.1c) The majority of a club’s active membership must consist of graduate students.

7A.1c) At least half of the club’s leadership must be graduate students to be a recognized GSS club.

7A.2) A club is considered active if it is funded (See Section 7B).

7A.3) Fixed assets shall be defined as non-perishable and re-usable items purchased for an event. Fixed assets shall be inventoried with the Graduate Life Office for future use by any club. (i.e. Uniforms, equipment, board games, furniture etc.)

7B) Club funds and maintaining active status

7B.1) All approved graduate clubs may request a budget from GSS for that fiscal year. Use of these funds and events hosted determines that club’s active status.

7B.2) If any club requests a budget for a fiscal year but does not use any of that budget and/or if they do not host any events (see Section 7C) by the end of that fiscal year, that club will become inactive. The following applies to inactive clubs:

7B.1a) The funding provided by GSS may be reallocated and might not roll over into the club’s account for the next fiscal year.

7B.1b) An inactive club can be reactivated by requesting a new budget from GSS, in which case they will begin with the minimum budget amount as allocated to any new club in that fiscal year.

7B.1c) All graduate clubs that request a budget are required to use the University account administered by the Graduate Life Office.

7B.1d) If necessary, the GSS Executive Board has the final decision on the active status of a club.

7B.3) To receive the base funding for the year, each club must submit a budget with at least one line item that is an open event (see section 7C for definition of open event).

7B.4) A club is allowed to have the following funds in the university account:

7B.4a) “GSS Funds”: funding that was provided by the Graduate Student Senate (GSS).
7B.4b) “Club Funds”: funding raised by the respective club (i.e. collected from fundraisers, ticket sales, donations, etc.)

7B.5) Any unused funds by a club will typically (*see 7B.5b below) be rolled over to the next fiscal year.

7B.5a) Any funds that were provided by the GSS and are being rolled into the following fiscal year, these funds are subject to the possibility of subtraction from the budget allocation for the following fiscal year.

*7B.5b) In the event of unforeseen circumstances, the GSS Budget Committee reserves the right to reallocate unused GSS funds at any point in time. A club will receive notice prior to reallocation of any GSS funds in their respective account. Affected clubs can petition reallocation of the respective amount in the next fiscal year, for up to one year, from the date of money removal by GSS.

7B.6) Every active club will submit a budget each spring requesting funding for the next fiscal year. Budget requests must be submitted by May 31st using the Budget Request form (access here: https://forms.gle/phfzyghHFvdQ7eWo6).

7B.7) New clubs should submit a budget within two weeks of their recognition by GSS. New club budget allocations will be decided at the discretion of the acting budget committee.

7B.8) Club funding should be allocated no later than the first day of the Fall Semester. Every club will receive a base amount of funding as determined by the acting Budget Committee.

7B.9) New clubs that are approved in the Fall semester will receive the funding they request (if less than the base amount) or at least the base amount of funding. New clubs that are approved in the Spring semester will receive the budget they request (if less than the pro-rated base amount) or at least half the base amount of funding.

7B.10) The Graduate Life Office and the GSS Executive Board will enforce the correct spending of GSS funds provided to clubs. A club can use its own money, obtained via fundraisers or donations, for all activities, except those that violate university policies or Section 7E of this Bylaw.

7C) Club events
7C.1) Club events will be classified as follows (see the section on “Funding Guidelines” on event advertising):

7C.1a) A small event is defined as any event that will require under $500.00 in funding.

7C.1b) A large event is defined as any event that will require over $500.00 in funding.

7C.2) Open events are open to all members of either the graduate student or broader Lehigh community. Open events must be advertised in at least three different places (e.g., University Announcements, the respective Club’s social media, general assembly announcements).

7C.3) Closed events are only open to members of the club and are not required to be advertised.

7C.4) In the case of deficit funding, requests for additional funding for events can be made at any time using the Additional Funding Request Form (access here: https://forms.gle/2NdSEbZccaPyTvF). Requests are subject to approval by the acting Budget Committee.

7C.5) Any event may be co-sponsored with GSS, GLO, or any other club. For co-sponsorship with GLO or another club, please contact them through their respective email. For GSS co-sponsorship requests, please use the Additional Funding Request Form (access here: https://forms.gle/2NdSEbZccaPyTvF).

7C.6) Reference the Club Policies Document for requirements on timeline and advertising for events.

7D) Funding Dedicated to Open Events

Consistent with our goal that graduate clubs organize events that benefit the entire Lehigh community, all clubs must use at least 25% of their initial GSS-allocated budget on open events (see 7C.2 for Open Event requirements). Clubs not meeting this requirement or engaging with the community in a meaningful way, as determined by the acting Budget Committee, are not guaranteed funding for the following year (see Section 8).

7E) Items ineligible for funding approval

7E.1) Funding for the following items will not be approved using GSS funds:
  - Illegal activity
  - Any activity that violates the University Code of Conduct
  - Purchase or promotion of alcohol
-Any activity relating to gambling
-Lodging, meal or entertainment expenses incurred by the organization’s members while traveling or on organizational business. Only a reasonable amount as determined by the GSS and budget committee can be spent on club Executive Board meetings, events, etc.
-Donations to political or religious organizations
-Speakers tied to a political campaign.
-Clothing expenses or other personal equipment for general membership distribution (includes T-shirts, gloves, bats, clubs, masks, etc.).
-Any activity that is primarily for non-students, e.g. spouses of graduate students or invited non-student guests.
-If a club participates in any event at the Sectional, Regional, and/or National level, each level must be submitted as a new event.
-Mock interviews (See the Career & Professional Development Center)
-Physical awards (trophies, plaques etc.) or cash prizes.
-Reimbursement for miles of travel repetition.
-Any subscriptions/rentals of repetition (e.g. registration fees).
-Other items the GSS already provides funding opportunities for (e.g. travel grants)
-Medical supplies beyond a basic first aid kit. Basic medication can be obtained from the Lehigh University Health Center.
-Any revenue generating activity (see Section 7G)
-Donations to charitable organizations

7E.2) A club can submit a proposal using the Funding Exception Form (access here: https://forms.gle/fG7ULc9CAbzCDHi79) requesting an exception to use funding for the ineligible items listed above, except for activities that violate Lehigh University’s code of conduct and/or illegal activity. Any requests must be approved by the GSS Executive Board.

7F) Reimbursement Procedures and Honoraria

7F.1) Any request for reimbursement is subject to approval by the GSS Executive Board and/or the Graduate Life Office. Any questionable requests should be brought to the GSS Treasurer before the purchase is made. All reimbursement requests will be submitted through the WellsFargo OneCard system, unless an honorarium is requested (see Section *7F.2 below).

7F.1a) A WellsFargo OneCard account Request Form must be submitted via DocuSign using a Lehigh-affiliated address.

7F.1b) The Index must match the account number corresponding to the club.

7F.1c) Any request for reimbursement must include a receipt and a description of the expense.

7F.1d) The request must be reviewed after approval in order for the funds to be disbursed.
7G) Fundraising

Club fundraising, defined as any revenue generating activity, is permissible only for use in approved club activities. All fundraising activities must abide by university policies and are subject to approval by the acting Budget Committee. GSS funds, however, may not be used towards the fundraiser. Clubs may request a loan of up to $100 in total for fundraising activities via the Additional Funding Request Form (access here: https://forms.gle/2NdSEbZecaPyTruFA). All loans must be paid back to GSS within 30 days after the fundraising event. Clubs may petition the acting Budget Committee for a higher amount. The acting Budget Committee will determine individually which activity is for fundraising purposes, and which is not.

Funds earned through such means must be kept in the club’s university account and will be eligible for rollover. Any purchase made with club funds must be approved by the acting Budget Committee.

7H) Misconduct

If fraud, misrepresentation, non-responsiveness, or any other form of misconduct is found from any club or its members, the Graduate Student Senate reserves the right to freeze the account balance of the responsible party for any duration as the Graduate Student Senate sees fit. The responsible club will thereafter have to begin as a new club as defined in Section 7B. Decisions concerning misconduct will be made by the Executive Board. The responsible party may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Expectations.

8) Process for Requesting Club Funding

In order for a returning club to be eligible to receive GSS funding for the next fiscal year they must submit the following documentation by May 31st of the previous fiscal year. New clubs should contact ingss@lehigh.edu for a timeline of submitting documentation: 1) Annual Report, 2) Current Club Constitution, 3) Current Member List.
8A) Annual Report

In order to keep accurate graduate club records and fairly determine distribution of club funds, the Graduate Student Senate Budget Committee shall require the annual reports from the previous year along with the next year’s budget request from every graduate club. These reports shall be submitted by May 31st of each fiscal year and shall provide the following information about each club event:

1. Type of Events (Open/Closed/Small/Large)
2. Number of attendees, including the number of non-club members, at each event
3. Amount spent at each event
4. Amount of funding from other sources
5. Current Club E-board
6. Last Club election date

This information can be disclosed to the members of the General Assembly upon request to the Treasurer. Funding for clubs will only be considered if both reports for the previous year have been received.

9) Club Executive Board Communication

In order to ensure continued communication across academic years between club members and between clubs and the Executive Board:

1. All clubs must have a ‘lehigh.edu’ email address. One of the club’s officers must be assigned the responsibility of the email account, which must be noted in the club’s constitution. The account information must be handed down during transition of leadership between executive boards.

2. The GSS Vice President will oversee club communication. Clubs may be required to complete check-in forms by the date designated by the Vice President. Failure to complete the check-in forms will be taken into consideration during the Budget Committee’s determination of the club’s future operating budget.