

University of South Alabama Student Organization Constitution

Constitution of the Graduate Student Association

Date Last Revised: April 19, 2023

Article I. NAME

The name of this organization is Graduate Student Association, also known as GSA.

Article II. PURPOSE

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is a student-run organization committed to advocating for the well-being of graduate students and enhancing the graduate student experience at South. GSA is dedicated to representing all graduate students by providing a forum for graduate students to voice their concerns, and advocating for graduate students' unique interests to University administration.

GSA holds one voting position on the Graduate Council for the purpose of effectively representing the wishes of the graduate student body in front of the key stakeholders who make decisions impacting the lives of graduate students, and doing so while decisions are being made. GSA strives to inform grad students of the Council's activities and decisions.

Article III. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Membership in University of South Alabama student organizations is open to all regularly enrolled students. Accordingly, no person may be excluded from membership or leadership in a registered student organization due to race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender (unless exempt under Title IX), sexual orientation, disability or veteran status; provided, however, that registered student organizations may limit their membership to students who, upon individual inquiry, affirm that they support the organization's religious, political or other legally protected views, consistent with the First Amendment.

Article IV. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. USA Enrollment Requirement

Membership is limited to graduate students currently enrolled at the University of South Alabama. The purpose of this organization is to advocate for the unique needs of graduate students.

Section 2. Membership Qualifications and Requirements

To join, a student must ask to be placed on the roster. There are no additional qualifications or requirements for membership.

Section 3. Quorum and Voting Requirements

For the purpose of official business, a quorum is defined as a majority of the total membership. If enough votes are not cast to reach a quorum within a week of the poll being sent out, the officers will make a decision based on the votes cast. On any business requiring a vote, the winner must receive a majority of the ballots cast.

Article V. OFFICERS

Section 1. Positions

Subsection 1. Executive Board

An Executive Board, composed of all elected and appointed officers will be the entity responsible for the day-to-day operations and policy setting of GSA. The elected officers of GSA will consist of President, Vice-President, Communications Officer, International Communications Officer, and Treasurer. The appointed officers of the Executive Board will consist of Secretary, Social Chair, Director of Media, and Director of Development.

- **President.** The president is the chief executive officer, responsible for the general operations of the organization. This includes but is not limited to being lead planner of the organization's activities (with input from all other officers), officiating meetings, managing the organization's Canvas site, networking/interacting with other offices/organizations, orchestrating events, and attending events whenever possible. The president may delegate the above duties as they see fit. The president will be the representative who acts on behalf of GSA at Graduate Council meetings and participates in Graduate Council votes unless mitigating circumstances arise. The president shall handle all communication with the Graduate Council, and takes responsibility for informing GSA's members of Graduate Council decisions, including posting the minutes on GSA's Canvas site. The president may delegate these duties in the event they are unable to attend a Graduate Council meeting for any reason.
- **Vice-President (VP).** The vice-president is second-in-command, assisting, advising, and filling in for the president as required. As such, the vice-president is closely involved in the president's activities and shares the same duties (at the president's discretion). The

vice-president should facilitate grievances from members, students, and staff. The vice-president is responsible for conceptualizing and running the Council of Representatives.

- **Communications Officer (CO).** The communications officer is responsible for GSA's correspondences with its members and other offices and organizations (when not covered by the president or vice-president as part of their administrative duties) including sending announcements, administering polls, and responding to emails received by the GSA jagmail account other than those relating to the Graduate Council, which are handled by the president.
- **International Communications Officer (ICO).** The international communications officer is responsible for representing challenges unique to international students and overseeing outreach to that community. This officer should themselves be an international student to ensure that they fully understand the community's needs and that members of the community are comfortable reaching out to them. The international communications officer shares many duties with the communications officer, including administering polls and responding to emails received by the GSA jagmail account.
- **Treasurer.** The treasurer is the organization's chief financial officer, responsible for all financial matters within the organization. This includes counting and keeping record of any money received (aided by at least one other officer) and ensuring the money is placed in the appropriate account (accompanied by at least one other officer). When the organization is in a position to provide funding to individual graduate students or to other graduate organizations to promote their success (for things such as travel to conferences, equipment for research, etc...), the treasurer will handle those interactions.
- **Secretary.** The secretary is responsible for coordinating all executive board written agendas and recording meeting minutes. The secretary is also responsible for coordinating and distributing newsletters to keep members informed about GSA activities. The secretary should update and maintain the GSA membership roster.
- **Social Chair.** The social chair should keep member morale high and work with other executive board members to coordinate social events. The social chair is responsible for arranging carpools for off-campus social events if necessary.
- **Director of Media.** The director of media is responsible for documenting all GSA activities in the form of photographs and videos. The director of media is also responsible for creating graphics for events and outreach as well as producing GSA flyers, posters, and promotional materials.

- **Director of Development.** The director of development facilitates programming for personal and professional development of general members. The director of development should provide guidance to general members seeking personal and professional development advice.

Subsection 2. Council of Representatives

The Council of Representatives is made up of delegates from each graduate degree offering department at USA, and will meet as a whole with the members of the Executive Board at least twice a semester. Representatives are considered officers in the organization, but have secondary authority to the members of the Executive Board. Each department will have one representative regardless of the number of programs or degrees offered by that department. Delegates will be nominated and elected by members of the individual department they serve through polls administered by GSA's executive board. The functions of these representatives are to:

- Interact with their department (students and faculty/staff) on behalf of GSA, including administering polls, reporting on GSA's meetings and activities, and assisting with outreach.
- Make GSA's Executive Board aware of the needs, wants, and concerns of their department.
- Help plan, facilitate, and promote GSA's activities, including meetings, socials, workshops, and activist events, so that the organization may better direct its efforts. This includes volunteering as workers at GSA events when necessary.
- Advise the Executive Board when necessary on important decisions, including on Graduate Council votes if possible.

Subsection 3. Guidelines for Officers

Changes to the structure described above, including the creation of a new office or the extinguishment of an existing office, may be made either by a majority vote of the sitting officers (including both the Executive Board and the Council of Representatives) or by a majority of ballots cast in a vote sent out to the general membership. All officers must be graduate students at the University of South Alabama. No one may simultaneously hold an officer role in GSA and a part or full time faculty position at USA. Any officer who accepts a part or full time faculty position automatically vacates their office. Full and part time staff at USA are eligible to serve as long as they are also a graduate student at USA, as are graduate student workers. No officer positions at any level are presently paid.

Section 2. Elections

Elections will be held at the end of the Spring semester unless mitigating circumstances arise. Members may nominate themselves or others. For each position, the winner must receive a majority of the ballots cast. If there are two or more candidates for the same position and none receives a majority, a run-off election will be conducted. There are no prerequisites to be elected for any position, except for the President. The incoming President must have served at least one semester on GSA's executive board. In the case that there are no nominees that meet this requirement, GSA members may vote to elect the new GSA president among remaining nominees.

Section 3. Appointed positions

Candidates will be asked to complete and turn in an application that includes a detailed resume by a specified time. Candidates will be given an interview where at least one elected executive board member will be in attendance. Selection of the appointed positions will be done by consensus of the five presiding elected officers. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, then decisions will be decided by a secret ballot in which each of the five elected officers has one vote. The president will conduct the ballot. If there is a tie, the president will have the tie-breaking vote.

The elected executive board will announce the results of the selection process at their discretion prior to the end of the current year. In the event that the general membership does not wish to acknowledge an appointment, a petition containing signatures of 50% of the general membership must be turned in within 7 days to challenge the appointment. The vice-president will then verify the legitimacy of the signatures after which the official removal process will proceed.

Section 4. Vacancies and Removals

If the president resigns or is removed between elections, the VP will become the interim president, and either the CO or ICO (whoever has served with the organization longest, or is most willing to serve) will become the interim VP. The same procedure will be enacted if the VP resigns or is removed between elections. The remaining officers are responsible for finding an interim CO or ICO if the above occurs, or if either resigns or is removed. The same applies to the position of treasurer. If a department's representative resigns or is removed, the students of that department shall nominate and vote on a replacement. The majority of officers must agree for any interim officer to be confirmed.

An officer may be removed by a majority vote among the remaining officers (including both the Executive Board and the Council of Representatives), or by a majority of ballots cast in a vote

sent out to the general membership. Any officer or member may call for a vote to remove an officer at any time.

Section . Term

All offices are subject to a term of one year.

Article VI. ADVISOR AND CO-ADVISOR

Section 1. Advisor Employment Requirement

The official advisor and co-advisor (if more than one advisor is in place) to the organization must either be faculty members or full-time staff members at the University of South Alabama.

Section 2. Qualifications and Responsibilities

Ideally, GSA's advisor and co-advisor will be energetic advocates for graduate students who champion GSA's mission to ameliorate and enhance the graduate student experience at South. The advisors will serve as a resource to the organization and, when available, attend official events and meetings.

Section 3. Selection and Replacement

The organization's officers are responsible for finding a faculty member or full-time staff member who is willing to serve as advisor. Once a potential advisor/co-advisor has been identified, the officers (including both the Executive Board and the Council of Representatives) will vote on the nominee. The nominee must receive a majority of the ballots cast to be confirmed as advisor. With the support of the officers and membership, an advisor or co-advisor may serve indefinitely. If an advisor or co-advisor resigns or a majority of officers vote to replace the current advisor or co-advisor, the selection process will begin anew. Any member may call for a vote amongst the general membership to confirm or oust an advisor or co-advisor.

Article VII. MEETINGS

Section 1. General Meetings and Notification

The organization will have three general body meetings during the academic year. All meetings will be announced at least one week in advance.

Section 2. Special Meetings

Any officer can call a special meeting.

Article VIII. FINANCES

Section 1. Financial Transparency Statement

All accounts, financial records, and transactions of the organization are subject to audit or review at the University's discretion.

Section 2. Bank Account

The organization will maintain an off-campus bank account at USA Federal Credit Union.

Section 3. Dues

To allow the organization to hold events, the officers may instate dues of \$5 per member each Fall and Spring semester. Dues will be optional in the sense that membership in the organization and the associated privileges will not be lost for failure to pay, but payment will entitle the payer to extra incentives that will be set by the officers. Once dues are collected by the treasurer, the organization will hold funds in the off-campus bank account at USA Federal Credit Union.

Section 3. Dissolution

Should the organization be dissolved, all remaining funds will be donated to the non-profit Penelope House, an organization that provides shelter to victims of domestic abuse.

Article IX. AMENDMENTS AND BYLAWS

Amendments and bylaws can be proposed in writing by any member at any regular meeting. A majority vote of all members is required for adoption.