

**The Constitution and Bylaws of  
the Graduate Student Senate  
Washington University in St. Louis**

Ratified: May 2023

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

This council shall be known as the Graduate Student Senate at Washington University in St. Louis and hereinafter be referred to as the Senate or GSS.

**ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Senate shall be to:

- A. Represent and advocate for the interests of graduate students at Washington University in St. Louis to/with:
  - a. the Dean of any school that grants a Ph.D. degree,
  - b. the Faculty,
  - c. the Chancellor,
  - d. the Provost,
  - e. the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and International Affairs
  - f. the Graduate Professional Council (GPC) of the University,
  - g. any others within the University whose actions or positions may affect the interests of graduate students, and
  - h. any others outside of the University making decisions or taking positions that affect graduate students in their role as graduate students.
- B. Provide a channel of communication between graduate students and other members of the Washington University in St. Louis community.
- C. Encourage and facilitate:
  - a. interdisciplinary academic activities,
  - b. graduate student governing associations within each department/program, and
  - c. interdepartmental social activities.

**ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP**

The Senate shall be composed of one representative from each Ph.D. degree-granting department or program and five officers (Executive Committee). Representatives may send someone in their place to a Senate meeting or function if they are unable to attend. A Representative's designated alternate may speak, vote, initiate acts, and have all other rights and responsibilities of an elected representative for the agreed-upon duration.

**ARTICLE IV: REPRESENTATIVES**

Section 1: Selection of Representatives

- A. Department/program representatives for the upcoming academic year shall be selected at the end of the spring semester by the graduate student associations/graduate students of their respective departments/programs.
- B. Departments/programs may choose to re-select the same representative. The Senate does not have term limits.
- C. The departments/programs whose representative(s) are elected to the Executive Committee shall select additional representatives to the Senate to serve during the officer's term of office.

Section 2: Term of Office

- A. Department/Program representatives shall begin their term of service at the first Senate sponsored event or at the first regular meeting of the Senate in the Fall semester, as determined by the Executive Committee.
- B. Each representative shall serve on the Senate until one day before the first regular meeting of the following academic year.
- C. If a representative cannot serve their full term, the representative must, in consultation with the graduate students of the represented department/program, find a replacement for the remainder of the term.

Section 3: Powers and Duties

- A. Representation  
Representatives shall represent the interests of the graduate students in their department/program to the Senate.
- B. Communication
  - a. Representatives shall communicate interests, concerns, and department/program activities to the Senate.
  - b. Representatives shall communicate interests, concerns, services, and activities of the Senate to students in their department/program.
  - c. Senate minutes will be posted to the GSS website.
- C. Initiation and Voting
  - a. Representatives may choose to initiate Senate acts and vote on Senate initiatives
- D. Committees
  - a. Representatives shall be willing to chair and are expected to serve on committees.

**ARTICLE V: ELECTED OFFICERS**

Section 1: Election of Officers

- A. The Senate shall elect, in the following order, Co-Presidents and Vice Presidents of Communication, Programming, and Finance.
- B. Secret ballot or online voting are acceptable voting means.
- C. A simple majority is needed to win a position. A simple majority is defined as greater than half of the total number of voting members in attendance.

- D. A minimum of fifteen voting members must be present for an election to take place.
- E. Nominations are taken by Google Form or other online form prior to the election meeting.
- F. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a run-off election will be held between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes in the previous election until an officer has been elected.
- G. Candidates that run but are not elected to an office may run for another office.

#### Section 2: Term of Office

The term of office begins immediately after the final meeting of the academic year and lasts through the final meeting of the following academic year.

#### Section 3: Powers and Duties of Co-Presidents

- A. The Co-Presidents shall convene meetings of the Senate and set the agenda.
- B. The Co-Presidents shall act as chairpersons and presiding officers of Senate meetings.
- C. The Co-Presidents shall act as the official representatives of the Senate.
- D. The Co-Presidents shall oversee the Senate budget.
- E. The Co-Presidents shall regularly report the recent interests, concerns, and activities of the Senate to the appropriate Washington University in St. Louis community members.
- F. The Co-Presidents shall be non-voting members of the Senate and shall vote only in the case of a tie.

#### Section 4: Power and Duties of Vice Presidents

- A. The Vice Presidents shall exercise the duties and powers of the Co-Presidents whenever the Co-Presidents are absent.
- B. A Vice President shall serve the remainder of the Co-President's term if both Co-President resigns, are recalled, or are no longer able to serve. In the case that more than one of the Vice Presidents are interested in assuming this role, a simple majority vote will determine the Co-President's replacement.
- C. If not currently exercising the powers of the Co-Presidents, the Vice Presidents shall be voting members of the Senate.

#### Section 5: Powers and Duties of Vice President of Communication

- A. The Vice President of Communication shall take minutes at Senate meetings.
- B. The Vice President of Communication shall maintain current membership and contact information lists.
- C. The Vice President of Communication shall distribute announcements, notes, and minutes to members of the Senate.
- D. The Vice President of Communication shall oversee maintenance of the GSS website.
- E. The Vice President of Communication shall oversee monthly GSS news emails.

#### Section 6: Powers and Duties of Vice President of Programming

- A. The Vice President of Programming shall maintain lists of committee membership.

- B. The Vice President of Programming shall coordinate with the Co-Presidents and committee chairs to schedule events.
- C. The Vice President of Programming shall serve as the liaison between the GSS and Event Services.
- D. The Vice President of Programming shall inform the Vice President of Communication of all events.

Section 7: Powers and Duties of Vice President of Finance

- A. The Vice President of Finance together with the Co-Presidents shall manage the Senate budget.
- B. The Vice President of Finance shall keep records of expenditures and communicate with the appropriate office about GSS finances.
- C. The Vice President of Finance shall ensure food is provided at GSS meetings.

Section 8: Replacement

- A. If both of the Co-Presidents of the Senate resign, are recalled, or are no longer able to serve, the office shall be immediately filled by one of the Vice Presidents as established in Article V, Section 4, B.
- B. If the offices of the Vice President of Communication, Programming, or Finance become vacant, a special election by simple majority vote shall be held at the next regular meeting (or special meeting, if desired) to replace that officer.
- C. These special elections shall follow the officer election procedures established in Article V, Section 1, B-D.

Section 9: Recall

- A. An officer may be removed from office for reasons of nonfeasance, malfeasance, or misfeasance through Senate initiative brought by any voting member of the Senate.
- B. A minimum of fifteen voting members must be present to recall an officer.
- C. A two-thirds vote is required to remove an officer.

**ARTICLE VI: APPOINTED OFFICERS**

Section 1: Committee Chairs

- A. Committee chairs shall be decided by the Co-Presidents.
- B. Responsibilities include holding regular meetings, advancing the will of the Senate, and executing any other duties established for committee chairs.

Section 2: Other Appointed Officers

Other officers may be appointed by and serve at the discretion of the Co-Presidents.

**ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS**

Section 1: Regular Meetings

- A. The Senate shall meet at least three times a semester to conduct its business.
- B. These meetings shall be scheduled in advance by the Co-Presidents.

Section 2: Special Meetings

- A. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the Co-Presidents with reasonable notice.
- B. All functions of regular meetings may occur.

Section 3: Annual Meeting

- A. The Annual Meeting shall be held each year in April for the purpose of officer elections.
- B. All functions of regular meetings may occur.

Section 4: Access

- A. Regular meetings and the Annual Meeting shall be open to all graduate students represented by the Senate and to guests previously approved by the Co-Presidents.
- B. Upon recognition by the Co-Presidents, any person present at a meeting may address the Senate concerning matters of interest to representatives of the Senate.

**ARTICLE VIII: BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS**

Section 1:

- A. A minimum of fifteen voting members must be present to vote on bills and resolutions.
- B. Bills and resolutions (excluding constitutional amendments) require approval by majority vote.

Section 2: Procedures

- A. Any voting member may initiate a bill or resolution for consideration by the Senate.

**ARTICLE IX: COMMITTEES**

- A. The Co-Presidents shall create all necessary committees to conduct Senate business.
- B. The Co-Presidents shall designate representatives to serve on each committee.
- C. The Co-Presidents may disband committees.
- D. Committee meeting attendance shall be open to any graduate student who is represented by the Senate.

**ARTICLE X: RELATIONSHIP TO THE GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL COUNCIL**

The Co-Presidents shall serve on the Graduate Professional Council and be the communications liaisons between the Council and the Senate.

Section 1: Role of Senate Members

- A. Senate representatives may serve as student representatives on the Graduate Professional Council.

Section 2: Role of the Senate Co-Presidents

- A. The Senate may choose the Senate Co-President to be its student representative to the Graduate Professional Council. In this case, the Senate President will be a voting member of the Graduate Professional Council.
- B. If the Senate chooses another student representative for the Graduate Professional Council, the Senate Co-President will not be a voting member of the Graduate Professional Council. In this case, the Senate's Co-President will be invited to attend all Graduate Professional Council meetings in the role as Senate Co-President and will be included on the Graduate Professional Council's mailing list.
- C. The Senate Co-President will meet with the President of the Graduate Professional Council before the fall semester begins to establish open communication.
- D. The Senate Co-President shall forward Senate initiatives affecting Graduate Professional Council affairs to the President of the Graduate Professional Council for possible inclusion on their agenda or address the matter during open discussion at the Graduate Professional Council monthly meeting.

**ARTICLE XII: PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES**

All procedural matters not specified herein shall be resolved in accordance with the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

**ARTICLE XIII: RATIFICATION**

Section 1: This Constitution and Bylaws shall take effect upon ratification by a two-thirds vote. A minimum of fifteen voting members must be present.

Section 2: Upon ratification, this Constitution and Bylaws shall supersede and replace all previous Constitutions and Bylaws of the Senate, including the original constitution that brought this body into being June 18, 1993 and the versions amended and approved April 22, 1994, April 1997, and November 2010.

**ARTICLE XIV: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

Section 1: Initiation

- A. Any voting member of the Senate may initiate an amendment to the Constitution.
- B. Each amendment must be proposed to the Senate and circulated to the members in written form before the vote occurs.

Section 2: Ratification

- A. The Constitution shall be amended when at least fifteen voting members are present.
- B. A two-thirds vote is required to adopt the amendment.
- C. An amendment shall take effect immediately upon adoption.