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**State University of New York**

**College of Environmental Science and Forestry**

Graduate Student Association Senate

Bylaws & Structure

Amended: April 2023

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**Preamble***: It is the purpose of these bylaws to set forth the responsibilities and procedures guiding the operations of the Senate of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF). Pursuant to the aforementioned purpose of these bylaws, this document establishes the organizational structure of the GSA and procedures necessary for the effective performance of responsibilities of each senate role, and for the orderly transaction of the business of the SUNY-ESF Graduate Student Association. The GSA represents the entire graduate student body for SUNY-ESF and represents their interests at various levels of college administration.*

***Vision****: The Graduate Student Association is the foremost organization at the SUNY-ESF, Syracuse Campus that represents the interests of the graduate student body. We maintain strategic relationships with all administrative and faculty offices at ESF and within the SUNY network to the benefit of an improved graduate student experience. Our operations are built on the values of equity and inclusion.*

***Mission****: We aim to serve the graduate student body at SUNY- ESF by:*

1. *developing and execute sustainable programs for professional development of graduate students,*
2. *increasing graduate student engagement on campus through more jointly executed activities with other ESF organizations and offices,*
3. *continuously seeking ways to improve the organizational sustainability and efficiency of the GSA,*
4. *building, strengthening, and maintaining, as applicable, relationships with the Graduate Office, MOSA (formerly USA), ISA, GSO and the wider graduate student community and ESF faculty and staff,*
5. *working with department representatives to improve interdepartmental relationships by equipping students with the tools to lobby within their own departments for integration commensurate with the quality of environmental problems being addressed through research at ESF, and*
6. *working with the graduate school to improve the attractiveness of ESF for future environmental researchers and students.*
7. *improving graduate student perception of the GSA in terms of governance efficacy and effectiveness.*

# Purpose and Definition

* 1. The SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry Graduate Student Association (GSA) is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.
  2. Upon the dissolution of this organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal, governmental, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose.

# Duties of the Executives

* 1. All Members of the GSA Senate shall:
     1. Attend the Anti-Bias and Safe Zone Training and any additional trainings voted upon by GSA prior to the end of the second month in the Fall semester or following appointment to a vacancy.
     2. Attend scheduled meetings of the GSA Senate. If attendance is not possible, Senate members are obligated to submit their reports to the President or their identified proxy (see GSA Standard Operating Procedure – Meetings) for presentation at the meeting.
     3. Prepare a plan of events and budget for the academic year to be presented to the Chief Financial Officer and President within the first two meetings of the semester.
     4. Maintain an updated budget of event and committee expenses as the academic year progresses.
     5. Keep logistical and preparation records regarding each planned event.
     6. Ensure the GSA is ALWAYS represented at their appointed campus committees. This means that if their attendance is not possible, an appropriate proxy should be identified as regulated by the specific committee.
     7. Prepare an Executive Report prior to the final meeting of the academic year, to be delivered to both the President and the incoming Senator for the upcoming academic year, documenting and assessing responsibilities, resources, challenges, and recommendations.
  2. **The President** shall:
     1. Maintain GSA as a recognized organization at SUNY-ESF that abides by all regulations set forth by the Division of Student Affairs and the Business Office, or the office in charge of oversight of student organizations on campus.
     2. Maintain strategic relationships with other organizations on campus as well as administrative and faculty offices.
     3. Assist with the planning and execution of graduate student orientations.
     4. Preside at all meetings of the GSA Senate or appoint someone to do so in their absence.
     5. Prepare and circulate a structured agenda (see GSA Standard Operating Procedure – Meetings) for each meeting of the GSA Senate.
     6. Establish channels for effective communication with the graduate student body.
     7. Initiate a vote among the GSA Senate to settle issues of contention or debate.
     8. Vote only on Motions if there is a tie.
     9. Certify monetary payments in coordination with the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Internal Affairs/Internal Vice President, and/or the Faculty Advisor.
     10. Act as an official check signer for GSA checks in coordination with the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Internal Affairs/Internal Vice President, and/or the Faculty Advisor.
     11. Act as a designated cardholder for one of two GSA Debit Cards.
     12. Serve as liaison between the GSA and MOSA as needed on pressing issues.
     13. Act as GSA’s representative to the Academic Governance Executive Committee.
  3. **The Director of Internal Affairs/Internal Vice President** shall:
     1. Act as the Proxy for the President at GSA Senate Meetings in their absence.
     2. Oversee all internal committees of the GSA.
     3. Appoint with approval of the GSA Senate additional and appropriately constituted committees deemed necessary and not provided for in the Constitution or Bylaws.
     4. Serve as ex-officio member of all committees of the GSA Senate.
     5. Act as secondary coordinator of events along with the President for unrepresented committees.
     6. Certify monetary payments in coordination with the Chief Financial Officer, the President, and/or the Faculty Advisor.
     7. Compile and archive individual Executive Reports as an Annual Report and Assessment.
     8. Prepare meeting minutes of all GSA Senate meetings and upon request, provide a copy to any member of the GSA.
     9. Maintain an accurate account of all the GSA Senate members and their positions.
     10. Lead the review of the constitution and bylaws during the appropriate time.
     11. Help assemble the Annual Report and organize archive folders on the GSA Senate hard drive.
     12. Keep attendance at meetings through the roll call.
     13. Work closely with the Director of Communications to ensure all outgoing messages reflect the true and accurate status of the GSA.
     14. Maintain the organization of Google Drive through the Gmail account and archive all contents onto the GSA hard drive at the end of the academic year.
  4. **The Director of External Relations and Community/Vice President of External Affairs** shall:
     1. Constitute and chair the Committee of External Affairs to ensure GSA participation in all external resources available to ESF Graduate Students, including but not limited to SUNY Student Assembly (SUNY SA), Syracuse University Graduate Student Organization (GSO), Mighty Oak Student Assembly (MOSA), and the ESF Board of Trustees (BOT).
     2. Serve as the Student Trustee representing ESF graduate students for the ESF BOT.
     3. Serve as the Official Delegate to the SUNY SA for ESF Grad Students.
     4. Represent the interests of ESF graduate students as applicable in SUNY SA matters by attending meetings of the SA and reporting back to the GSA Senate.
     5. Appoint with approval of the GSA Senate all delegates or representatives to ESF external and internal bodies or committees, unless otherwise stipulated in the Bylaws.
     6. Before the first Board of Trustees meeting of the academic year, coordinate with the MOSA BOT representative to ensure that rotation between the graduate and undergraduate representatives alternate on a yearly basis. The graduate representative shall hold the vote every academic year where the fall semester is an even year.
     7. Voice graduate student interests and concerns to, and obtain relevant information from, members of the BOT.
     8. Act as liaison between the BOT and the GSA Senate as needed on pressing issues.
     9. Keep a record of the BOT actions relevant to graduate students during their term of office.
  5. **The Chief Financial Officer** shall:
     1. Maintain close relations with the Business Office to ensure GSA’s fiscal processes are in line with ESF, New York State’s and other legal requirements.
     2. Keep an account of all receipts and disbursements.
     3. Lead the participatory budget review and approval process at the beginning of each semester.
     4. Work with the college accountant to ensure the purchase, implementation and maintenance of QuickBooks accounting software.
     5. Direct the payment of money only on written orders properly certified by the Chief Financial Officer, the President, and/or the Faculty Advisor.
     6. Safeguard the monetary capabilities of the GSA Senate and ensure its ability to address all monetary obligations.
     7. Co-ordinate with the President, Director of Internal Affairs/Internal Vice President and Committee Chairs to facilitate the expenditures necessary to conduct the business of the GSA.
     8. Organize end-of-semester Financial Review Meetings in the Fall *and* Spring with GSA committee chairs.
     9. Act as an official check signor for GSA checks, in coordination with the President, Director of Internal Affairs/Internal Vice President, and/or the Faculty Advisor.
     10. Coordinate the changeover of check signors from the outgoing Senate and incoming Senate (to be performed at the end of the Spring semester).
     11. Act as a designated cardholder for one of two GSA Debit Cards and coordinate the destruction of the outgoing Senate’s debit cards.
     12. Prepare the yearly budget and present financial reports to the GSA Senate when requested.
     13. Submit an itemized written report to the GSA Senate of all financial transactions at the end of their term of office.
  6. **The Chief Communications Officer** shall:
     1. Maintain close relations with the Office of Communications and Marketing
     2. Vet and approve all outgoing communications to make sure they reflect the true and accurate position and ethos of the GSA.
     3. Manage and maintain GSA’s online presence.
     4. Execute the annual GSA Survey.
     5. Maintain the GSA’s website, Gmail account, and social media accounts (Instagram, Discord server, any additional social media accounts added by future Senates).
     6. Maintain the GSA’s calendar of events (for example GSA Senate meetings, etc.) on the GSA Google Calendar, the ESF Engage platform, and the ESF Corq platform.
     7. Archive meeting minutes on the GSA website.
     8. Post GSA event descriptions, information, and advertisement flyers on the website and various social media platforms in a timely manner.
     9. Organize and execute GSA Elections according to the guidelines laid out in GSA Standard Operating Procedure - Elections
     10. Maintain and update the Annual GSA Process and People to Know document.
     11. Develop and implement strategies to increase and maintain ENGAGE membership and use.

# Duties of Committee Chairpersons

* + 1. **The Chairperson of Grants & Awards** shall:
       1. Constitute and chair the Grants & Awards Committee to facilitate and execute events, grant opportunities, and awards.
       2. Oversee the application and disbursement process of any research, travel, professional development, etc. grants and awards that they, with approval of the Senate, deem necessary and/or prudent for the academic year.
       3. With the handling of multiple types of grants and awards per semester, the VP of Grants and Awards can reserve the right to ask for additional Senate help when the application period closes each semester.
       4. Prepare the guidelines and solicit applications for the grants offered through GSA.
       5. Updated guidelines are to be sent to the Director of Internal Affairs/Internal Vice President and Director of Communications or the Senate member in charge of updating the SUNY-ESF Graduate Student Association website by the start of the application period.
       6. Update and follow the process outlined in the ‘Grant Review Process’ document which is to be sent to the current VP of Grants and Awards at the beginning of the academic year.
       7. Coordinate with the Chief Financial Officer to disburse and track funds awarded to recipients.
    2. **The Chairperson of Inclusion, Equity and International Activities** shall:
       1. Constitute and chair the Inclusion, Equity & International Committee to facilitate and execute events.
       2. Represent the GSA at meetings of the International Students Association meetings and act as liaison between ISA and GSA.
       3. Plan and execute multicultural events that facilitate gatherings of **all** members of the international graduate student community.
       4. Assist with the planning and execution of international graduate student orientation each academic semester.
       5. Maintain a working relationship with the ESF Offices of International Education and the Syracuse University Office of International Services and keep apprised of college’s diversity and inclusion initiatives.
       6. Maintain a working relationship with the ESF Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (OIDE) as well as the Office of International Education and keep apprised of the college's diversity and inclusion initiatives.
       7. Coordinate with OIDE to organize Anti-Bias and Safe Zone Trainings, as well as any other training they deem necessary for the GSA Senate members, to be voted upon by the Senate.
       8. Act as the GSA’s representative for the Committee of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity.
       9. Work with the Director of Communications to organize and execute the GSA Survey within the first 3 weeks of each Fall semester.
       10. Review and assess GSA events and processes to ensure they meet the criteria for justice, equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion.
    3. **The Chairperson for Professional Development** shall:
       1. Constitute and chair the Professional Development Committee to facilitate and execute events.
       2. Organize panel and workshop events representing the professional interests of the graduate student body.
       3. Work closely with the Chairpersons for Graduate Research & Curriculum in organizing the CNY Conference on Environmental Science and Studies.
       4. Maintain a working relationship with the Graduate School, Career Services, Alumni Office and Office of Student Success and Engagement.
       5. Act as GSA’s representative to the Academic Governance Faculty Experience and Academic Affairs Committees.
       6. Work with Administration (Dean of the Graduate School, Vice President for Research, Provost, Department Chairs, etc.), AGAA, and GSA Curriculum Committee to review graduate courses (through, for example, course evaluations or other assessment means, etc.), identify areas of concern, and propose upgrades to ESF graduate courses.
    4. **The Chairperson of Social Activities & Engagement** shall:
       1. Constitute and chair the Social Committee to facilitate and execute social events.
       2. Be responsible for coordinating and managing all social affairs of the GSA.
       3. Maintain a working relationship with the Office of Student Engagement and Success.
       4. Work closely with other Senate Members to ensure all events meet the standards for social engagement by the GSA.
       5. Work closely with the Mighty Oaks Student Assembly (MOSA) and the Syracuse University -Graduate Student Organization (SU-GSO) representatives to ensure coordination of co-executed social events.
       6. Act as GSA’s representative to the Academic Governance Student Experience Committee.
    5. **The Chairperson for Graduate Research & Curriculum** shall:
       1. Constitute and chair the GSA Research & Curriculum Committee.
       2. Lead the yearly planning of the CNY Conference on Environmental Science and Studies.
       3. Act as GSA’s representative to the Academic Governance Committee on Research (COR).
       4. Work with Administration (Vice President for Research, Provost, Department Chairs, etc.), COR to review enabling conditions for graduate research and learning at ESF (financial support packages, lab spaces and equipment, safety training, internal and external grant awareness and access, incentives for publications and conferences, endowed fellowships, etc.) and propose improvements as they see fit.
       5. Work with Administration (Vice President for Research, Provost, College Foundation, etc.), COR to compile information on ESF graduate student research and learning output and productivity metrics, compare performance metrics with other graduate programs outside of ESF, and assemble information highlighting examples of success/achievement to use in promotional marketing material to attract donor/alumni support.
       6. Prepare summaries of activities of the GSA Research & Curriculum Committee to the ESF Board of Trustees, upon request from the GSA President and GSA Board of Trustees Representative.

# Duties of Department Representatives

* 1. Represent the students of the following departments:
     1. Chemical Engineering
     2. Chemistry
     3. Environmental Biology
     4. Environmental Resources Engineering
     5. Division of Environmental Science
     6. Environmental Studies
     7. Landscape Architecture
     8. Sustainable Resources Management
  2. Facilitate communication between the students and faculty of their respective departments via mechanisms that shall consist of, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:
     1. Attending faculty meetings.
     2. Receiving a copy of the formal faculty meeting minutes.
     3. Scheduling meetings with the department chair or coordinator at least once a semester.
     4. Hosting internal departmental forums.
     5. Holding office hours to receive general comments or concerns.
  3. Serve on the Graduate Dean’s Advisory Committee. When called upon, provide feedback to The Graduate School and Office of Academic Administration on campus issues concerning graduate students.
  4. Maintain a record of specific departmental contacts.

# Duties of the SU GSO Senators

* 1. Represent the interests of ESF graduate students as applicable in GSO matters by attending meetings of the GSO and reporting back to the GSA Senate.
     + 1. This task shall be delegated to the VP External Affairs when there is no current designated SU GSO Representative within the GSA Senate for the academic year.

# Duties of the Faculty Advisor

* 1. The Faculty Advisor is not considered a member of the GSA Senate and therefore does not have voting privilege.
  2. The Faculty Advisor:
     1. Provides information and advice to the GSA Senate as requested and supports GSA Senate initiatives in college venues as appropriate.
     2. Maintains a record of involvement and activities to be passed on to the incoming Faculty Advisor, or to be held by the continuing Faculty Advisor.
     3. Oversee all events where alcohol is served, according to the official campus Alcohol Policy.
     4. Attend meetings of the GSA Senate as necessary.

# Committees

* 1. **Standing Committees**
     1. General Actions
        1. All GSA Senate members must serve on a committee, while graduate students not in the Senate can serve under an appointed but non-voting capacity.
        2. Committees shall hold meetings to satisfy the requirements stipulated in Meetings – S. General Conduct.
        3. Each Chairperson of each committee shall prepare a template of events to present to the GSA Senate for discussion at the beginning of each semester and shall provide a preliminary budget for a formal GSA Senate vote.
           1. In the case of a committee being formed in the middle of a semester, the budget for events should be produced within two weeks of the formation of the committee and be presented to the Treasurer and President.
        4. Committees shall operate with general autonomy but shall present any large procedural changes or concerns to GSA Senate during a general meeting.
        5. Approval shall be sought from the Senate to host any unplanned event, or any event not previously approved by the Senate.
  2. **Special Committees**
     1. Additional committees can be proposed by any GSA Senator and approved by a vote of the GSA Senate.

# Assessment

* 1. Surveys
     1. The Communications Committee, with assistance from the VP of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, shall design and distribute an annual survey to all graduate students at the start of each academic year to solicit feedback from the GSA. The results of the survey are to be used to guide event planning and budget allocation.
        1. The annual GSA Survey should also seek to identify areas in which the GSA Senate can better serve its constituents, including such topics as: campus climate, satisfaction with relationships with major professors and departments, working spaces, funding source availability and distribution, inclusion, diversity, and equity, etc.
     2. The GSA Senate or independent committees may develop additional surveys to solicit feedback from graduate students or departments.
     3. All surveys must follow the official College protocol and pass through the Assessment Office for approval as outlined at <http://www.esf.edu/assessment/policies.htm>.
        1. Unless survey results are to be shared outside of the GSA, the annual GSA Survey falls under exemption 2 under “When is IRB oversight not required?” in the above website. This should be confirmed with the Assessment Office each year before survey distribution.
     4. The GSA Survey shall be distributed through an appropriate survey platform.
  2. **Executive Reports**
     1. Each executive Vice President shall complete an annual committee report to be submitted to the President who shall then pass the reports to the Secretary at the final meeting of the academic year.
     2. This report shall contain a summary of events and committee operations throughout the academic year.
  3. **Annual Reports**
     1. The Annual Report shall consist of all Executive Reports and shall be prepared by the President and Secretary.
     2. It shall serve as a final assessment and record of the GSA Senate operations and events.
     3. It shall include a summary of GSA Senate member attendance at regularly scheduled meetings and participation in GSA Senate events.

# GSA Senate Bylaws Amendment Process

* 1. GSA Senate Bylaws must be reviewed during the Fall semester of each academic year, however additional amendments may be proposed throughout the academic year.
  2. Proposed amendments to the Bylaws must be deemed necessary for GSA Senate operation.
  3. Any new positions created by the GSA Senate must be formalized by the second year of the position through an amendment to the GSA Senate Bylaws.
  4. Amendments shall be proposed according to the established protocol outlined.
  5. The amendment approval process shall follow the protocol as outlined in the Voting Procedures.
  6. The Director of Internal Affairs/Internal Vice President shall document the review and amendment process as necessary in the meeting minutes and shall make the necessary corrections to the GSA Senate Bylaws document.
  7. The VP of Communications shall upload the revised document to the GSA Senate Website.