Article I: Preamble

The Graduate Student Senate of the University of New Hampshire (UNH), hereafter referred to as the GSS, shall serve as an advocate for all graduate students and is developed on the principle of shared governance where all graduate students at the University of New Hampshire have the right and responsibility to participate in this governance.

This Constitution serves to set the structure of the GSS and to articulate the inherent rights and responsibilities of the GSS. The document ensures, to the best of its abilities, that the GSS represents all graduate students equally; regardless of school, college, degree level, and living arrangement.

Article II: Purpose

The purpose of the GSS is to foster the improvement of graduate student life at UNH by providing a framework for graduate student participation in University activities and governance.

The GSS acknowledges the following constitutional priorities in order to serve its purpose:

1. Provide a representative structure for the graduate student body
2. Serve as an advocate for graduate student concerns and a resource for graduate students
3. Establish and maintain an effective means of communication between graduate students, undergraduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators
4. Participate in the decision-making process for establishing University policies and/or setting priorities which affect graduate student life
5. Initiate and administer programs and services for the graduate student body
and the University, as appropriate

6. Monitor the development of all graduate student mandatory fees and the services which they support

7. Provide the graduate student body regular, open meetings for participation in graduate student governance

Article III. Authority and Responsibility

The authority and responsibilities described below are delegated to the GSS by the President of the University, while administration oversight of the GSS rests with the Graduate School. In order to serve its stated purpose and the interests of the graduate student body, the GSS must be able to speak for its constituents and to exercise the rights and responsibilities granted to it by the University President and the administration, without risk to its integrity, its charter, or its continued operation.

The GSS acknowledges the following rights and responsibilities granted by the University President and administration in recognition of the GSS as a governing body:

1. The GSS shall be granted reasonable access to all information or documents needed to take action on matters within its authority.

2. The GSS shall have the opportunity to appoint representatives to serve on faculty and administrative committees, such as the Graduate Council and its associated committees, when graduate student representation is sought.

3. The GSS shall be the official voice for graduate student input into all decisions or policies made by the University, Graduate School, Faculty Senate or Graduate Council that affect graduate students.

4. The GSS shall ordinarily be notified by the University, Graduate School, or Faculty Senate of any proposal to change university policy at least two weeks before the decision is made final.

5. The GSS shall review all changes to academic policy affecting graduate students prior to final action by the University, Graduate School, Faculty Senate or Graduate Council.

6. The GSS shall be the official voice for graduate student input to the mandatory fee assessment process and shall state their position on all mandatory fees assessed to graduate students.
7. The GSS shall be notified of all policy changes related to graduate and family housing on the UNH campus.

8. The GSS shall operate under the GSS Bylaws as well as the GSS Constitution.

9. The GSS shall strive to be inclusive, diverse, and equitable.

Article IV: Structure

The GSS refers to an overarching organizational structure consisting of a general membership and two distinct branches: the Executive Committee to carry out daily operations of the GSS and the Senators to sustain oversight in various committees.

Section I. General Membership

All full-time and part-time UNH graduate students are non-voting, general members of the GSS.

Section II. Senators

Student body representation from each of the following categories shall be based on graduate student enrollment: Colleges, Graduate Programs housed outside of Colleges, and graduate housing units. All Senators shall be voting members of the GSS.

Section III. Executive Committee

The GSS Executive Committee shall, at minimum, consist of the following Executive Officer positions: President, Vice-president, Communications Officer, Community Coordinator, External Relations Officer, and Financial Affairs Officer. The President, at their discretion, may appoint a previous GSS President to serve as a member of the Executive Committee, and may also appoint senators to sit on the Executive Committee. The President shall be a non-voting member of the GSS except in the event of a tie, in which case the President may cast the deciding vote. All other Executive Officers shall be voting members of the GSS.

Article V: Amendments

Constitutional amendments must be approved by at least two-thirds (2/3) of the voting membership of the GSS. The GSS Vice President shall then submit the approved changes and a brief cover letter to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean of the
Graduate School will consider the changes and either approve, disapprove, or abstain from judgment. If the Dean does not approve of the proposed changes, the Dean will communicate his/her/zir decision and rationale to the GSS and the changes as originally proposed will not go into effect. If the Dean approves of the changes or abstains from judgment, the Dean will submit the proposed changes and the Vice President’s cover letter to the University President, along with a favorable or neutral recommendation. The University President will communicate in writing his/her/zir decision to approve or reject the proposed changes to the GSS Constitution to either the Dean of the Graduate School or to the GSS. If approved, the constitutional changes will be formally adopted. Alternatively, the University President may also choose to allow the changes to become adopted without formal approval; if four weeks have passed from the time the University President has received the proposed changes without action being taken, the changes will be formally adopted.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Article I. Composition
   Section I. Structure
   Section II. General Membership
   Section III. Senators
   Section IV. Executive Committee
   Section V. Rights and Responsibilities

Article II. Elections, Removal from Office, and Vacancies
   Section I. Eligibility
   Section II. Elections
   Section III. Term of Service
   Section IV. Inactive Senatorship
   Section V. Removal from Office
   Section VI. Vacancies

Article III. Committees
   Section I. Appointments and General Responsibilities
   Section II. Standing Committees
   Section III. Ad-hoc Committees

Article IV. Transaction of Business

Article V. Amendment and Repeal

Article VI. Nondiscrimination Policy
Article I: Composition

Section I. Structure

The over-arching organizational structure of the GSS is defined by the GSS Constitution as consisting of a general membership and two distinct branches: the Executive Committee to carryout daily operations of the GSS and the Senators to sustain oversight in various Standing Committees.

Section II. Membership

All full-time and part-time UNH graduate students are non-voting, general members of the GSS. All those who are not general members of the GSS but are interested in attending meetings are classified as guests. Guests may attend all public meetings of the GSS, may not vote, but may contribute to meetings according to adopted policy.

Section III. Senators

Student body representation from each of the following categories shall be based on graduate student enrollment and shall be elected by the appropriate constituency as described in Article II below:

1. Colleges: Senators from each college shall be elected by the graduate students of their respective college.

   Number of Senators from each college:
   - Engineering and Physical Science (CEPS) – 3
   - Health and Human Services (CHHS) – 3
   - Liberal Arts (COLA) – 4
   - Life Science and Agriculture (COLSA) – 1
   - Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics (PAUL) – 1

2. Graduate Housing Units: One (1) Senator representing graduate housing units shall be elected by the graduate students living in on-campus housing.

3. Manchester Campus: One (1) Senator shall be elected by the graduate degree students at UNHM.

4. Graduate School Programs: One (1) Senator shall be elected from programs that are housed under the Graduate School.

5. UNH School of Law: One (1) Senator shall be elected by the graduate students of the School of Law, Concord campus.
6. **International Graduate Students:** One (1) Senator representing international graduate students across UNH, including Durham, Manchester, and Concord campuses, shall be elected by graduate students with international status.

**Section IV. Executive Committee**

The GSS Executive Committee shall consist of the following Executive Officer positions:

1. **President:** The President shall be responsible for preparing agendas for GSS meetings; shall preside over all meetings of the GSS; shall appoint all committee members and committee chairpersons not specified by the GSS Bylaws; shall oversee completion of committee objectives; shall have final responsibility for GSS written and oral communications (corresponding with the Communications Officer); shall serve on the Graduate Council. The GSS President is a non-voting member of the GSS, unless there is a tie vote, in which case the President shall cast the deciding vote. The President retains all other rights and responsibilities of GSS Senators outlined above in Article I, Section V-1.

2. **Vice President:** The Vice-President shall act for the President at the discretion or in the absence of the President; shall assume the office of President in the event that office becomes vacant; shall serve as the chair of the Governance Committee.

3. **Financial Affairs Officer:** The Financial Affairs Officer shall balance, manage and distribute the GSS budget; shall serve as Chairperson of Financial Affairs Committee; shall serve as representative to Central Budget Committee.

4. **Communications Officer:** The Communications Officer shall keep meeting minutes; shall draft official documents; shall update the GSS Constitution and Bylaws; shall report meeting minutes to various outlets for dispensing across campus; shall maintain the website of the GSS; shall act as official archivist; and shall, in the spring semester of each year, solicit donations from all GSS representatives for the GSS archival collection at Dimond Library and shall bring said donations to the Milne Special Collections and University Archives.

5. **Community Coordinator:** The Community Coordinator shall serve as Chairperson of the Programming Committee; shall plan and coordinate social and professional development events.

6. **External Relations Officer:** The External Relations Officer shall attend USNH
Board of Trustees meetings; shall serve as a member of the USNH University System Student Board; shall, as needed, coordinate outreach efforts to organizations external to UNH, such as the state legislature of New Hampshire; shall coordinate with on-campus bodies that deal directly with these external bodies on outreach efforts, such as the Undergraduate Student Senate, the Alumni Association, University Communications and Marketing, and the Office of Government Relations.

In addition, the Executive Committee may also, at the discretion of the President, consist of GSS senators and a Past President. The Past President may process vote but may not cast a formal vote.

Section V: Rights and Responsibilities

1. Senators: All Senators are voting members of the GSS. All Senators are expected to serve on at least one (1) GSS committee. The President may appoint Senators to additional committees as needed. Senators are expected to attend all meetings and all meetings of committees on which they serve, and at least one GSS Programming event per semester; special accommodations may be made by the President for senators representing UNH-Law and UNH-Manchester constituencies. Each Senator or their proxy shall serve as liaison for college/department issues and as representatives to college/department committees. All new Senators shall attend New Representative Orientation prior to the first regularly scheduled GSS meeting of the academic year.

2. Executive Officers: Executive Committee members retain all of the rights and responsibilities of GSS Senators outlined above in Article I, Section V-1. New members of the GSS Executive Committee shall be required to attend GSS New Representative Orientation as described in Article II, Section II-3. The GSS Executive Committee shall hold meetings at the President’s discretion. A member of the Executive Committee who misses more than one-half (1/2) of the GSS meetings without giving prior notice shall be subject to removal from the Executive Committee as described in Article II, Section IV below. During academic breaks, the Executive Committee shall be responsible for all official GSS actions.

Article II. Elections, Inactive Senatorship, Removal from Office, and Vacancies

Section I. Eligibility

Any member of the general membership in good academic standing is eligible to serve as a GSS Senator or Executive Officer. Academic standing shall be verified
with the Graduate School prior to the Senator or Officer taking office. A candidate may run for one (1) senator position and one (1) Executive Officer position; however no member of the GSS may simultaneously occupy more than one (1) GSS elected position.

Section II. Elections

1. Nominations: The nomination process shall begin two (2) weeks prior to the opening of the election. A call for nominations shall be issued to the general membership. The Governance Committee shall collect all nominations for Executive Officer and Senator positions and prepare the online ballot.

2. Elections: Executive Officers shall be elected by the general membership. Senators shall be elected by their respective constituencies. Elections shall begin by the first GSS General meeting of March and shall be conducted via an online survey that shall be distributed to the general membership at least one (1) week prior to the close of the election. A minimum of two (2) votes is required for election.

3. New Representative Orientation: Executive Officers and Senators elected to their first term of service shall be required to attend New Representative Orientation. The New Representative Orientation shall be administered by the GSS Governance Committee between the close of elections and the first meeting of the following year. This orientation program shall instruct new Officers and Senators on their fiduciary obligations to the UNH graduate student body and the responsibilities specific to their office.

Section III: Term of Service

Senators and Officers shall be elected prior to June 1 of each year and shall serve for a term of one (1) year, beginning on June 1 and ending on May 31 of the following year. There shall be no limit to the number of terms that an individual Senator or Officer may serve as long as they continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

Section IV: Inactive Senatorship

If a senator misses one regular meeting as defined in Article IV, without notice of the eminent absence given to the GSS President and Vice President in writing, the Governance Committee may approve with a majority vote to put the senator on Inactive Senatorship. A tie may be broken by the GSS president. Additionally, for senators who will be missing an extended period of time without a designated proxy,
Inactive Senatorship may be invoked as seen fit by the Governance Committee. Inactive Senatorship revokes a senator’s right to vote until the senator’s voting rights are re-activated. A senator on Inactive Senatorship must submit a request during a regular GSS meeting to be re-activated, followed by an immediate vote by the Governance Committee. A senator’s voting rights will be re-activated with a majority vote of approval from the Governance Committee. In the event of a tie, the GSS president will provide the tie-breaking vote.

Section V: Removal from Office

Should any Senator, Officer, or committee representative of the GSS fail to fulfill their responsibilities, their removal from office may be initiated by any of the following mechanisms:

1. Any GSS representative may resign their office with a written communication to either the Communications Officer or the President.

2. The GSS may request removal of any GSS representative with a petition of signatures of one-half (1/2) the total GSS voting membership submitted to the GSS President or Vice President.

3. The GSS may request removal of any GSS representative with a petition of signatures of one-hundred (100) graduate students submitted to the GSS President or Vice President.

4. The GSS Executive Committee may request removal of any GSS representative with a petition of signatures of two-thirds (2/3) of the Executive Committee submitted to the GSS President or Vice President.

Prior to removal from office, a written resolution shall be introduced at the following regularly scheduled GSS meeting and removal shall require approval by two-thirds (2/3) of the GSS voting membership.

Section VI: Vacancies

1. Any Executive Officer or senator vacancy shall be filled by the GSS President by appointment and announced at the next general meeting of the GSS. Such presidential appointments are subject to confirmation by a vote of two thirds (2/3) at the next GSS meeting. Should both President and Vice President become vacant, the Executive Committee shall appoint a President for the remainder of the term by majority vote of the Executive Committee.

2. Following the conclusion of elections, the president-elect for the following year may begin to make appointments for expected vacancies that will occur beginning
June 1, as well as appointments for GSS committee members and liaison committee representatives that will take effect beginning on or after June 1.

Article III: Committees

Any GSS voting member shall be welcome to serve on any Standing Committee or any administrative and university committees on which graduate students may serve, except those committees the President and the Executive Committee are required to serve on by the nature of their offices. GSS general members shall be welcome to serve on GSS, administrative, or university committees at the discretion of the President.

Section I. Appointments and General Responsibilities

The GSS President shall appoint all voting committee members and chairpersons not specified by the GSS Bylaws. Chairpersons shall report to the Executive Committee. Chairpersons shall form sub-committees as necessary to facilitate the work of the committee. Committees shall review and propose amendments to the Bylaws pertaining to their committee as necessary. Committees shall meet at the chairperson’s discretion. Committees may choose an operating process that promotes inclusion and efficiency. Committee meetings shall be open to the public with the exception of non-public sessions. Communication of scheduled committee meetings shall be made through the UNH campus calendar.

Section II. Standing Committees

1. Governance Committee: The Vice President shall serve as the chairperson of this committee. The Committee shall consist of the Vice President, Communications Officer, and at minimum two additional senators. This committee shall oversee the annual election process; shall operate/oversee Inactive Senatorship operations as detailed in Article II Section IV; shall oversee any removals from office according to Article II, Section V; shall review and propose amendments to the GSS Constitution and Bylaws as necessary; and shall develop and conduct the annual New Representative Orientation as described in Article II, Section II-3. The Committee is also charged with reviewing previously adopted GSS policies as well as approving new GSS policies. The policies of the GSS are suggestions for best practice only and do not carry the authority of either the GSS Constitution or Bylaws. Any GSS elected representative may bring changes to existing policies or offer new policies to the Governance Committee. Changes to current policies or existing policies must be approved by at least two-thirds (2/3s) of the GSS
Governance Committee and two-thirds (2/3s) of the Executive Committee, and must be communicated to the GSS. GSS Policies will be included behind the GSS Constitution and Bylaws. Finally, in the event of a dispute concerning constitutional or bylaw matters, the Governance Committee shall resolve the dispute. The Committee must agree by at least two-thirds (2/3s) on all such rulings.

2. Financial Affairs Committee: The Financial Affairs Officer shall serve as the chairperson of this committee. The Committee shall consist of the Financial Affairs Officer and at least two other senators. This committee shall advise the Financial Affairs Officer on all matters of Senate finances. This committee shall also oversee all facets of the annual UNH fee oversight process including communication of mandatory fee changes, solicitation of feedback, conducting an annual meeting of the full GSS to vote on the mandatory fees, and drafting of positions statements.

3. Programming Committee: The Community Coordinator shall serve as the chairperson of this committee. The Committee shall consist of the Community Coordinator and at least two other senators. This committee shall plan, coordinate, and develop professional development and social programs for the benefit of the GSS general membership.

Section III. Ad-hoc Committees

1. Ad-hoc Committees: The GSS Executive Committee may create ad-hoc committees to address the immediate needs of the student body. The GSS Executive Committee shall develop a charge for the committee at the time of formation. By the end of the fall semester of each academic year, the Executive Committee will have reviewed the utility of all ad-hoc committees and decided if they should continue as an ad-hoc committee or if the committee should cease to exist.

2. Liaison Committees: The President shall appoint members of the GSS to serve as liaisons to UNH administrative and university committees as necessary to ensure that the graduate student voice is heard on any issues that may affect graduate student life. GSS members serving as liaisons are responsible for attending all scheduled meetings of the committee or identifying an alternate in the case of their absence, and for reporting the actions of the committee to the GSS.

Article IV: Transaction of Business

1. Regular Meetings: The GSS shall hold regularly scheduled meetings no less than
once per month during the fall and spring semesters except during academic breaks and exam periods. Meetings of the GSS shall be open to the public with the exception of non-public session.

2. **Special meetings:** Special meetings may be requested by either of the following methods:

   2.1. The GSS President may call special meetings.

   2.2. The GSS may call special meetings by submitting to the President a petition composed of signatures from one-third (1/3) of the voting membership. Forty-eight (48) hours of notice must be given for any special meeting. The purpose of the meeting shall be communicated to all voting members of the GSS upon calling the meeting.

3. **Quorum:** Sixty (60) percent (rounded to nearest whole number) of the filled voting positions of the GSS constitutes a quorum necessary for conducting regular business. Senators with inactive status (as defined in Article II, section 4) will not count towards quorum.

4. **Procedures:** The business of the GSS shall be conducted in accordance with the GSS’s approved Modified Feminist Process.

5. **Non-public session:** The purpose of entering non-public session shall be communicated at the time the session is called. When in non-public session, the GSS shall abide by all state laws with reference to public bodies in non-public session.

6. **Decorum:** All members of the GSS shall endeavor to maintain a congenial atmosphere during meetings. In addition, GSS members shall maintain a civil tone in all official communications with constituents and outside parties.

**Article V: Amendment and Repeal**

1. **Amendment procedure:** Any voting member of the GSS may propose amendments to the GSS Constitution or Bylaws. Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the GSS Governance Committee for approval before recommendation to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall provide written notice of the proposed amendments to each GSS voting member at least one (1) week in advance of the meeting where the amendment will be discussed.

2. **Ratification:** Amendments to the GSS Bylaws must be approved by at least two-thirds (2/3) of the voting membership of the GSS. The GSS Vice President shall
then submit the approved changes with a brief cover letter to the Dean of the Graduate School, who has ultimate authority over all changes to the GSS Bylaws. The proposed changes will be ratified when the GSS has received either the signature of the Dean of the Graduate School or a written communication of approval from said Dean. Alternatively, the Dean of the Graduate School may also choose to allow the changes to become adopted without formal approval; if four weeks have elapsed since the date that the Dean of the Graduate School received the proposed changes with no action being taken, the changes will be ratified.

3. Inconsistencies: The GSS Constitution renders null and void any conflicting or contradictory Bylaws, resolutions, or policies. Any previously adopted Bylaws, resolutions, or policies that are conflicting or contradictory with amendments to the GSS Constitution or Bylaws will be referred to the Governance Committee for consideration.

Article VI: Nondiscrimination Policy

The GSS and its members shall abide by the University of New Hampshire’s nondiscrimination policy. This policy shall apply to eligibility for general membership, eligibility for Senator and Officer positions, and the right to participate in GSS functions.