Graduate Student Senate
University of New Hampshire

Constitution
2015 May 22

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 matriculated graduate degree students and is developed on the principle of shared governance where all matriculated graduate degree 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 and administrators
4. Participate in the decision-making process for establishing University policies and/or setting priorities which affect graduate student life

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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.

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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.¹

Article IV: Structure

The GSS refers to an over-arching 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 matriculated full-time and part-time degree-seeking 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 consist of the following Executive Officer positions: President, Vice-president, Clerk, Programs Coordinator, External Affairs Officer, and Treasurer. The President shall be a non-voting member of the GSS, unless there is a tie, in which case the President shall cast the deciding vote. All other Executive Officers shall be voting members of the GSS.

¹ Pending approval by President Huddleston

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Bylaws
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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. General Membership
All matriculated full-time and part-time degree-seeking UNH graduate students are non-voting, general members of the GSS.

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 matriculated 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 matriculated 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 matriculated graduate degree students of the School of Law, Concord campus.

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

1. **President**: The President 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 Clerk); shall serve on the Graduate Council.

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. **Treasurer**: The Treasurer 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. **Clerk**: The Clerk shall keep meeting minutes; shall act as official archivist; shall draft official documents; shall report meeting minutes to various outlets for dispensing across campus.

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

6. **External Affairs Officer**: The External Affairs 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.

**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. All 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. 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:** 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. All other 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, 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: 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. 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.
2. The GSS may request removal of any GSS representative with a petition of signatures of one-hundred (100) matriculated graduate degree students submitted to the GSS President or Vice President.
3. 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 V: Vacancies
1. Senators: Any vacancy shall be filled by a special election to be held by the affected constituency within four (4) weeks of the position being vacated. In the event that the affected constituency fails to fill the vacant position within the four (4) week limit, the GSS President shall fill the position by appointment or special election.
2. Executive Officers: The GSS President may fill vacancies on the Executive Committee from the GSS representatives in the event of a mid-term vacancy.
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 GSS shall hold a special election to fill the vacancies. The respective term of service begins immediately following approval by the GSS and the new Officer shall undergo New Representative Orientation (as described in Article I, Section IV-3) as soon as possible following their confirmation.

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. All committees shall follow Robert’s Rules of Order. 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, Clerk, and at minimum two additional senators. This committee shall oversee the annual election process and any special elections; shall oversee any removals from office according to Article II, Section IV; 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. In the event of a dispute concerning constitutional matters, the Governance Committee shall resolve the dispute. The committee must agree unanimously on all rulings.
2. **Financial Affairs Committee**: The Treasurer shall serve as the chairperson of this committee. This committee shall advise the Treasurer 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 Programs Coordinator shall serve as the chairperson of this committee. 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. One year after the inception of such a committee, the utility of the committee shall be reviewed to decide if the committee 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.

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 shall be subject to approval by at least two-thirds (2/3) of the voting membership of the GSS before being adopted. Approved changes to the GSS constitution shall be signed by the GSS President, and Vice President. These changes shall be communicated to the Dean of the Graduate School by the above signees. The Dean of the Graduate School shall, at their discretion, recommend the proposed amendments to the University President, who has ultimate authority for approval of amendments.

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.