

UConn

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE

Bylaws

Effective April 19th, 2023

Graduate Student Senate

Student Union, Room 213

Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3008

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BYLAW I: Scope

- 1) The Bylaws of the Graduate Student Senate “GSS” at the University of Connecticut shall not conflict with the Constitution of the GSS, University of Connecticut policies, or any applicable law. In the event that they do conflict, then they will defer to the aforementioned policies.

BYLAW II: Executive Committee

- 1) **Membership.** The Executive Committee of the GSS shall be composed of the President, Vice President, Communications Director, Treasurer, Parliamentarian and Activities Director. The Board of Trustees Graduate Student Representative shall be considered an ex-officio member of the executive committee with no voting power.
- 2) **Responsibilities.** As a coordinating and policy-recommending body for the Senate, the committee shall:
 - A. Recommend a budget to the Senate.
 - B. Prepare an agenda for Senate meetings.
 - C. Appoint individuals to committees and posts outside of the GSS, subject to approval of the Senate when multiple members are nominated, and notification of the Senate only when one member is nominated.
 - D. Facilitate communication among Senators and between Senators and their constituencies.
- 3) **Authority.** According to its role as an executive body for the Senate, the committee may:
 - A. Request reports from other Senate committees and appointees to outside committees or posts on their activities.
 - B. Appropriate expenditures as necessary between Senate meetings, subject to a three-fifths majority vote, consistent with the Finance Policies and Procedures.
 - C. Voice its opinion on motions before the Senate.
 - D. Exercise jurisdictional authority over all disputes that cannot be settled at a lower level, including disputes between committees.
- 4) **Executive Committee Meetings**
 - A. The President shall prepare an agenda for and preside over all meetings.
 - B. The Communications Director shall record and sign minutes of all meetings and shall communicate those minutes to the senate.
 - C. Any vote taken by the Committee shall require a three-fifths majority for passage.
 - D. Meetings shall occur before GSS general meetings and additionally when deemed necessary.
 - E. If circumstances preclude a meeting, the President may solicit an electronic vote from the members on issues that call for immediate action. At least five-sixths of the Executive Committee must participate in the vote, and its results shall be recorded in the minutes of the next Executive Committee meeting.

F. Quorum shall consist of two-thirds of the Executive Committee.

5) Officer Duties

- A.** Each officer shall be required to report to the Senate at each Senate meeting.
- B.** Each officer shall be required to participate as a full Executive Committee member.
- C.** Each officer shall attend the regular meetings of the Executive Committee and the Senate.
- D.** All GSS officers shall not be officers of any other graduate student organization.

6) Transition of Officers

- A.** To ensure an effective transition of Executive Committee duties, each officer and officer-elect shall document that a comprehensive transition plan has been developed and agreed to by both the incumbent and the officer-elect. The plan will terminate when both parties have attested to the accomplishment of the goals set forth in the plan by way of their signatures.
- B.** GSS Executive Committee members shall attend a transition meeting in which the previous and incoming board members meet regarding their roles and responsibilities for the upcoming academic year.

7) Board of Trustees Graduate Student Representative

- A.** To enable effective communication between the GSS and the Board of Trustees, the Graduate Student Trustee shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee *ex officio*.
- B.** The Executive Committee shall invite the Graduate Student Trustee to deliver a report on the past year's proceedings of the Board of Trustees to the GSS during the final meeting of the Senate in the Fall semester.
- C.** The Graduate Student Trustee may also be a Senator for a constituency or an at-large Senator if so elected.

BYLAW III: Apportionment of the Senate

1) Establishing Constituencies

- A. Academic constituencies based on upon fields of study recognized by the Graduate School and/or academic departments of the University having graduate degree programs shall form the basis of the Senate.
- B. Non-academic constituencies of graduate students may be recognized by the Senate upon the recommendation of the Procedures Committee.

2) Apportionment of the Senate based upon Constituencies

- A. At the first meeting of the Spring Semester of alternate academic years, the Procedures Committee shall determine the constituencies to be represented in the Senate and the apportionment of seats among those constituencies, to take effect at the beginning of the Fall Semester of the next academic year.
- B. The apportionment of academic constituencies shall be based upon the enrollment figures found in the most recent Graduate School Enrollment Report.
- C. Apportionment shall meet the following conditions:
 - i. The minimum numbers of graduate students in any constituency is 1
 - ii. All GSS recognized academic constituencies shall be entitled to at least 1 seat.
 - iii. The GSS officers shall not count as a Senator against their constituency's apportionment.
 - iv. Academic constituencies shall be apportioned at least three-fourths of the total number of seats apportioned, including at-large seats but not including the GSS officers.
 - v. Academic and non-academic constituencies shall be apportioned separately.
- D. While the Procedures Committee shall have flexibility in apportioning seats in the Senate amongst the academic constituencies, the following guidelines should be used:
 - i. Thresholds for each level of representation (1, 2, or 3 seats per constituency) should correspond to natural breaks in the distribution of constituency enrollments.
 - ii. Constituencies below roughly the 50th percentile of the distribution of constituency enrollments should receive 1 seat.
 - iii. Constituencies within roughly the 50th-to-75th percentile of the distribution of constituency enrollments should receive 2 seats.

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- iv. Constituencies above roughly the 75th percentile of the distribution of constituency enrollments should receive 3 seats.
- E.** To be represented in the Senate, a non-academic constituency:
- i. Will only have 1 seat.
 - ii. Must have a membership that is not a subset of an academic constituency. Its members may belong to a diverse range of academic constituencies. These groups shall be formed around a non-academic identity (such as in a cultural identity).
 - iii. Must demonstrate to the Procedures Committee a need for representation that is not being met by the existing constituencies.
 - iv. Must send one representative at minimum per academic year to serve on any committee for GSS.
- F.** The Senate shall approve the apportionment of the Senate by majority vote.
- G.** Once the Senate has approved the apportionment, the representation of each constituency shall remain set, regardless of changes in enrollment, until the Senate approve a new apportionment.
- H.** The procedures for electing or appointing constituency Senators and setting their term lengths shall be at the individual discretion of the constituencies. In the event that more senator applications are submitted than there are apportioned senators, then GSS will facilitate an electronic election to determine the senators for the department.
- I.** Changes in Apportionment
- i. Should an unrecognized constituency emerge after apportionment and petition for representation, the Procedures Committee shall review the petition and recommend to the Senate how the apportionment of the Senate should be changed, if at all.
 - ii. Should a recognized constituency petition for changes in its representation, the Procedures Committee shall review the petition and recommend to the Senate how the apportionment of the Senate should be changed, if at all.

3) At-Large Senators

- A.** One-twentieth (rounded up) of the apportioned seats shall be at-large. All graduate students who do not already represent a constituency in the Senate or serve as an officer shall be eligible to be an at-large Senator.
- B.** At-Large Senator terms shall end with the last day of the Spring Semester and begin on the following day.

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- C. Elections shall occur by the following procedures, overseen by the Parliamentarian and the Procedures Committee:
- i. Applications to run for at-large seats shall be solicited from the graduate student community a reasonable time before the elections.
 - ii. At-Large elections shall take place during the Spring Semester. Voting by closed ballot shall be open for multiple days to all members of the graduate student community. All graduate students may cast up to one vote for each open seat. The nominees with the most votes shall obtain the positions.
 - iii. At-large elections may be conducted electronically in conjunction with the Student Activities Joint Elections program.
- D. If there is a vacancy in an at-large or tier II organization senate seat during a term:
- i. Candidates who wish to fill a vacant At-Large Senator seat must collect a petition with 25 verifiable signatures from graduate students supporting his or her candidacy. The Procedures Committee shall review and verify the petition.
 - ii. If the Procedures Committee approves a candidate's petition to fill an At-Large Senator vacancy, a closed ballot vote of current active senators shall be held. If a majority votes in favor of the candidate, that candidate is elected.
 - iii. If a Tier II Organization has a seat vacancy for any reason during the semester, the organization will vote amongst themselves to provide its representative. The GSS Parliamentarian and Communications Director will be notified of the change, and the seat will be considered filled.

4) The multi-departmental Tier II RSOs

The multi-departmental Tier II RSO shall declare how many academic depts. They represent and offer events and services to. That number shall be cut in half, rounded down to the nearest integer in the event that the number of represented academic depts is an odd number. The final number shall constitute the minimum number of departmental senators required for the Tier II RSO.

- A) In order to select which departments the (minimum of) Senators multi-dept TIER II nominates, it is the policy of GSS that multi-dept tier II's senator representation should proportionally match multi-dept TIER II's membership body as much as possible. To this end, it shall be GSS policy that multi-dept TIER II tally up the registered members on multi-dept TIER II's **UContact** page, and create a breakdown of each department by membership count. Members from department that are not officially represented by multi-dept TIER II shall be dropped from the tally. From there, the top 3 depts with the most registered members shall constitute the depts that multi-dept TIER II shall send senators from. This is a quantitative and subjective way to ensure that multi-dept TIER II senators proportionally represent the academic dept membership of multi-dept TIER II. Again, multi-dept TIER II is welcome to send additional senators as desired.

Note: Prospective multi-dept TIER II senators will be required to turn in the tally results when they apply for senatorship and turn in their paperwork

- i. In the event that there is a tie between depts. In the context of multi-dept TIER II members, then multi-dept Tier II's e-board will have the discretion to select which academic dept. will be selected in the situation where the minimum cutoff rests between the tie. (e.g. if EE and BME are both ranked 3rd, then multi-dept TIER II will have the discretion to select either EE or BME to fulfill the requirements). In the event that the tie is within two depts both in the top 3 departments by UConntact membership tally, then those 2 depts will both be required to send a senator each. (e.g., if CEE and CSE are both ranked in the 2nd position, then they both must send a senator each). If the top 4 depts happen to tie with each other
- ii. The "upper half" senators shall be required to meet attendance requirements by academic department lines. E.g. if the top 3 senators are from BME, EE, and CSE, they shall each be required to meet the attendance requirements individually, along department lines, in order for SAGE to remain eligible for funding.

5) Attendance requirements

- A.** Voting may only commence once quorum is met. The Parliamentarian (or executive board appointee) will announce to the Senate whether or not quorum is met once attendance is recorded during the first hour of the Senate meeting. The GSS Constitution, Article VI Section 1 Subsection B states:

The number of active Senators shall be the average of the number of Senators (including alternates) attending the two most recent regular meetings. A quorum shall consist of a majority of active Senators.

Therefore, the number of "active senators" can be projected prior to each GSS meeting. After attendance is recorded for a meeting, and compared to the projection of active senators, quorum is considered the majority (50% + 1) of that number per the GSS constitution.

For example: if 26 senators attend the September meeting, and 30 senators attend the October meeting, the number of "active senators" on record for the upcoming November meeting is 28. Therefore, the "majority" for that number of active senators is 15 (14+1). So long as 15 senators are in attendance at the November meeting, quorum is met and voting may commence.

- B.** Attendance requirements for senators representing constituency organizations receiving a budget are detailed in Financial Policies and Procedures (FPP) (2019) Section 4.1.4. As per these policies, a constituency may not miss more than one (1) meeting per semester. Repercussions for this are detailed in FPP (2019) Section 4.1.4.2.

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- C. As per FPP (2019) Section 4.3: Attendance requirements for senators representing Tier II organizations from regional campuses are exempt from the attendance requirements. Therefore, regional senators (Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury) do not have to attend Senate meetings in order for their organization to be eligible for funding.

BYLAW IV: Recall Procedure

- 1) **Initiation of Recall Procedure.** A senator shall move to initiate recall procedures against officers, committee chairs and at-large senators for specific violations of Article VI, Section 4, Subsection B of the Constitution.
 - A. Senators may motion to add, remove, or change specific charges.
 - B. Debate shall be limited to the sufficient specificity of the charges and validity of those charges as a violation of Article VI, Section 4, Subsection B of the Constitution.
- 2) **Notification of Recall**
 - A. The individual charge must receive written notification of the specific charges outlined in the motion to initiate recall against said individual within one day of the motion and at least seven days prior to the meeting at which the hearing will take place.
 - B. All Senators and officers shall be notified at the same time as the accused.
- 3) **Recall Hearing**
 - A. The Senate shall consider only those charges made in the initiation of the recall procedure.
 - B. The individual charged shall have the right to present a defense before the Senate.

BYLAW V: Short-Term Emergency Loan Fund

- 1) The GSS Short-Term Emergency Loan Fund, hereafter referred to as the Loan Fund, has been designed to meet the immediate financial obligations that may confront graduate students. Loans made through the Loan Fund are for emergency purposes only.
- 2) Standard operating procedures are designed to meet State statutes and University regulations.
- 3) Eligibility
 - A) Any graduate student, who is enrolled at the University of Connecticut and is a member of a recognized academic constituency shall be eligible for a loan from the Loan Fund, provided they have no University financial hold and satisfy all other eligibility requirements.
 - B) Eligibility for a Loan is limited to three per calendar year, as determined by the date of loan application.
 - C) Any student who is currently delinquent in his or her repayment of a past loan shall be ineligible to borrow additional funds, of any amount, until such time as the previous debt has been settled.
 - D) Any student who has had loan eligibility revoked by the Office of Student Services and Advocacy shall have Loan Fund eligibility revoked by the GSS.
- 4) The maximum amount one individual may borrow at any one time is \$2,000. The Administrative Assistant may, in consultation with the Executive Committee, lower this maximum if the loan fund is in danger of default.
- 5) For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the loan maximum amount shall be set up to \$3000. The administrative Assistant may, in consultation with the Executive Committee, lower this maximum if the loan fund is in danger of default. The duration of the COVID-19 pandemic shall be defined as from the period where UCONN has closed the campus, to 30 days after UConn has fully reopened the campus.
- 6) The period of each loan is 90 days. A loan may be extended once, for up to 30 additional days, upon application to the Senate Office and approval by the Administrative Assistant in consultation with the Executive Committee. Applications for extension must be submitted before the initial due date.
- 7) For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the clock on the 90 days countdown shall be frozen. The duration of the COVID-19 pandemic shall be defined as from the period where UConn has closed the campus, to 30 days after UConn has fully reopened the campus.
- 8) If a loan through the Loan Fund is approved, funds will be disbursed via check from the Office of the Bursar in accordance with the Bursar policies and procedures.
- 9) Loans not picked up within 30 days of the date of application will be automatically cancelled.
- 10) All loans made through the Loan Fund shall be interest free. However, late payment penalties may be applied by the Bursar's Office.
- 11) Repayment of a loan made through the Loan Fund is made at the Office of the Bursar.
- 10) Any loan not paid by the due date shall result in a hold being placed on the account of the person involved; therefore, restricting future enrollment, student benefits, and eligibility for academic transcripts from the University.

- 11)** Any loan originally paid on time that is subsequently overdue as a result of financial aid being rescinded shall be given an automatic 30-day extension from the date funds are rescinded. Following this 30-day period, all penalties shall apply as normal.
- 12)** The treatment of past due loans will be handled in accordance with the policies and procedures employed by the Bursar's Office pertaining to other, similar accounts receivable.
- 13)** Standard Operating Procedures for the Loan Fund shall be outlined in the Short-Term Emergency Loan Fund Guidebook, which shall remain in the Senate Office at all times, with copies maintained by the Communications Director, Treasurer and Administrative Assistant.

BYLAW VI: Executive Board Allowance Funds

- 1) The GSS may approve funds in reimbursement of actual, documented expenses incurred by its officers, in recognition of their contributions to the GSS, to pursue professional development (e.g., conference attendance either in-person or virtual), research (e.g., for research funds for social science studies), or educational opportunities (e.g., enrolling in classes off-campus) in line with the purposes of the GSS; as described hereunder and, in all cases, subject to a majority closed ballot vote of the Senate.
- 2) The executive officers of GSS may work for compensation during academic breaks (Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring Break) in order to make GSS operations smoother during academic year. These appointments will be under Class IV (advance level professional training positions) student employment. The total compensation (whether in the form of travel reimbursements or as actual wages paid for work during breaks) for an officer during an academic year (i.e., Fall and Spring semesters and Winter Break) is not to exceed the total allowance budgeted for the office in Bylaw VI:7.
- 3) The Senate shall vote once at the beginning of the Fall semester to approve the annual allotted amount of the allowance fund for each respective officer.
- 4) At any time, the Senate may propose a vote to deny such travel funding to an officer who is not appropriately performing, or has not appropriately performed, his or her duties. A simple majority vote will void the allocation of these funds.
- 5) In the case of travel reimbursements, no such reimbursements shall occur for travel that took place after an e-board member has graduated, regardless of when the travel was completed.
- 6) After earned as stipulated by Bylaw VI:6, reimbursement may be applied retrospectively to travel taken after the start of the respective officer's term.
- 7) Allowance funds available to officers for the execution of duties as defined in the GSS Constitution and Bylaws shall be limited to the following totals for each office, regardless of the number of individuals serving in each office. These amounts will be available for the academic year (Fall and Spring semesters as well as Winter break):
 - A. **President**
 - i. \$5,000/Academic Year
 - B. **Vice President**

i. \$1,500/Academic Year

C. Communications Director

i. 3,000/Academic Year

D. Treasurer

i. \$5,000/Academic Year

E. Activities Director

i. 3,000/Academic Year

F. Parliamentarian

i. 1,500/Academic Year

8) Summer Duties and Allowance Funds

- A) The Executive Committee shall play an active role over the summer, in performing regular tasks such as, coordinating summer events, overseeing GSS finances, and deliberating graduate student issues.
- B) The executive officers of GSS may work for compensation during the summer break (the period between the end of the Spring semester and the beginning of the following Fall semester, as determined by the university), in order to make GSS operations smoother during the following academic year. These appointments will be under Class IV (advance level professional training positions) student employment. This compensation will be in addition to the compensation allotted to the executive officers for the academic year (Article VI:7). The maximum hours each position is allowed to work per week is as below:
1. President – Up to 20 hours/week
 2. Treasurer – Up to 20 hours/week
- C) During the summer months, the Executive Committee may withhold any portion or all of the funds available to any Executive officer(s) by majority vote. At the first Senate meeting of the Fall semester, the Senate shall vote to approve any portion or all of the funds for the Executive Committee.
- D) In the case that officers are unable or unwilling to fill their summer roles, the Executive Committee may appoint individuals to do so in their place (by majority vote). Current Executive Committee members are excluded in filling these positions. The officers who are unable or unwilling to fill their summer roles, would be ineligible for their portion of their funds during that time period. Said funds would be allocated to the individual who had taken over their tasks during this time.
- E) In the event that officers of their appointed substitute becomes unwilling or unable to continue in the role over the summer, the Executive Committee may appoint by a three-fifths majority vote a substitute to serve the role for the remainder of the summer.

9) After serving 10 months as a productive member of the Executive Committee, all Members of

the previous term's Executive Committee will be entitled to parking passes in the Garage. The Committee members will pay the full amount for a Garage parking pass at the beginning of the academic year to be refunded after 10 months have been served, by the GSS.

10) The individuals being considered for allowance funds shall abstain from voting on their own funds.

BYLAW VII: Procedures Committee

- 1) The Procedures Committee shall oversee the membership and verify credentials of both the membership and other graduate student organizations.
- 2) The Procedures Committee shall report any election and membership violations to the Senate for action.
- 3) The Procedures Committee shall deliver a recommendation on disputes concerning the interpretation of the Constitution and its Bylaws.
- 4) The Procedures Committee shall periodically review and recommend changes to the Constitution and Bylaws in light of operational exigencies of the Senate. The contents of this update shall be subject to approval of the Senate.

BYLAW VIII: Activities Committee

- 1) The Activities Committee shall be responsible for scheduling and carrying out events applicable to graduate student enrichment, subject to approval by the Senate.
- 2) The Activities Committee shall be responsible for the planning, scheduling, organizing, and advertising of GSS-sponsored events under the fiscal constraints imposed by the Senate and the Financial Policies and Procedures.

BYLAW IX: Student Life Committee

- 1) The Student Life Committee shall be responsible for addressing any major graduate student life issue that is brought to the attention of the Senate and is delegated to the Student Life Committee by the Executive Committee.
- 2) The Student Life Committee shall be responsible for identifying graduate student life issues. The Committee shall bring them to the focus of the Senate along with as much information as possible and shall be involved in as much of the communication on this problem as necessary.
- 3) The Student Life Committee shall be responsible for creating and organizing projects that will be directed towards or will improve graduate student life, especially those directed towards issues pertinent to graduate students.

BYLAW X: Public Relations Committee

- 1) The Public Relations Committee shall be responsible for promoting the GSS, Senate sponsored events, and any information that is pertinent to the graduate student body.
- 2) The Public Relations Committee shall be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the GSS website (<http://gss.uconn.edu>).

BYLAW XI: External Committee Representatives

- 1) External Committee Representative shall accurately represent to the best of their abilities the interests of the graduate student body with limited personal bias.
- 2) External Committee Representatives shall attend formal committee meetings and notify the Executive Committee if unable to attend committee meetings.
- 3) External Committee Representatives shall provide information concerning the organization, activity, and mandate of their committees.
- 4) External Committee Representatives shall provide oral reports of committee meetings at the next Senate meeting.
- 5) Members of the Executive Committee shall be required to serve on certain external committees:
 - A. The President shall serve as representative to:
 - i. University Senate
 - ii. University Senate Executive Committee
 - B. The Vice President shall serve as representative to:
 - i. University Senate
 - ii. Student Welfare Committee
 - iii. Student Union Partners
 - C. The Treasurer shall serve as representative to:
 - i. Student Fee Advisory Committee
 - ii. University Budget Committee
 - iii. Any External Committee whose principal aim concerns matters of finance or budget
 - D. The Communications Director shall serve as representative to:
 - i. Student Union Board of Governors
 - ii. Student Union Policy Council
 - iii. Any External Committee whose principal aim concerns the Student Union
 - iv. Public Relations Committee
 - E. The Parliamentarian shall serve as representative to:
 - i. Graduate Faculty Council
 - ii. Student Activities Joint Elections Committee

- iii. Student Trustee Election Committee
 - iv. Any External Committee whose principal aim concerns elections or issues of procedure.
- 6) If scheduling concerns prevent a member of the Executive Committee from serving on a designated External Committee, the President may appoint another member of the Executive Committee to serve. If no member of the Executive Committee is available, the President may appoint a Senator. The Executive Committee will notify the Senate of these appointments.

BYLAW XII: Administrative Assistant

1) Eligibility

- A. The Administrative Assistant must be a graduate student at the University of Connecticut.
- B. The Administrative Assistant shall not be either a member of the Executive Committee or a Senator.

2) Application and Hiring

- A. The application process shall be designed and administered by the Executive Committee.
- B. The hiring decision shall be made by majority vote of the Executive Committee.

3) Responsibilities

- A. The Administrative Assistant shall manage the short-term emergency loan fund.
- B. The Administrative Assistant shall hold office hours in the Senate office at regularly scheduled and posted times.
- C. The Administrative Assistant shall complete any appropriate duties as assigned by the Executive Committee.

4) Compensation

- A. The Administrative Assistant shall receive equitable compensation for duties performed in accordance with the University of Connecticut's established guidelines and norms.

BYLAW XIII: Alcoholic Beverage Policy

- 1) Events sponsored by the GSS at which alcohol is to be served must encourage responsible consumption of alcohol in the publicity, promotion, and execution of the event. There is to be no reference or publicity regarding the amount of alcohol that is available.

