

Constitution  
of the  
Graduate Student Association  
of

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Graduate Student Association of The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC), hereafter referred to as the GSA.

PURPOSE

The GSA will represent the needs and concerns of graduate students as a whole at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga by:

- a) promoting cohesiveness between the various graduate-level programs at UTC and encouraging collegiality among all graduate students;
- c) supporting and promoting an atmosphere of mutual respect and professional development within the University;
- d) making recommendations to the Graduate School Office and the Graduate Council on behalf of all University graduate students;
- e) increasing graduate student representation within University, faculty, and System-wide committees;
- f) supporting the professional development of graduate students;
- g) advancing the public image and prestige of both graduate students and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga as a whole.

and

- h) representing graduate school students to the UTC and UT administration

MEMBERSHIP

Any student currently enrolled in at least one UTC graduate course (3 hours) will be considered a member of the GSA. The GSA does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, color, ethnicity, religion, belief or creed, natural origin, disability, or veteran status.

OFFICERS

The GSA will be served by five annually elected Officers:

President

Vice-President

Secretary

Treasurer

Public Relations Chairperson

#### a. Officer Roles

The **President** will lead the overall focus of the program, call and conduct meetings, initiate and oversee student wide surveys, and work with the Dean of the Graduate School to further identify potential needs of graduate students at UTC. The President will also serve as an *Ex Officio* member to the Graduate Council.

The **Vice-President** will be responsible for planning programs and activities to meet the academic and social needs of graduate students and will serve in the role of President should that individual be unable to serve. Both the President and Vice-President will serve interchangeably as a liaison between the Student Government Association, Campus Organizations, and other groups as needed. The Vice President will also be responsible for overseeing GSA committees and leading committee chair meetings.

The **Secretary** will record the minutes of GSA meetings and is responsible for the storage and filing of minutes of GSA meetings, recording precedents & procedures, relevant communications, the preservation of the GSA's functional history, and the implementation of approved changes to official documents. The Secretary will oversee year-to-year transitions of leadership among GSA executive officers by maintaining files, guidebooks, and databases of detailed GSA records, and transferring them to the next year's leadership team.

The **Treasurer** will serve as a record keeper responsible for all incoming and outgoing transactions, evaluating the effectiveness of fund-raising events, and projecting the GSA's operational budget based on this history. The Treasurer will be responsible for filing SPAC (Student Programming Allocations Committee) budget requests, as well as other University and external funding requests, and serving on the University SPAC committee.

The **Public Relations (PR) Chairperson** will manage communications between the GSA and the University and public via social media, email, hard copy materials, etc., according to University standards and policies. The PR Chairperson will be responsible for managing GSA social media and UTC Learn accounts, designing and sending communications, advertising GSA events, creating marketing materials, and handling inquiries from the public and University, among other communication duties as required.

The President and Vice-President must ensure that the GSA is adequately represented and useful to all relevant UTC committees, functions, and to graduate students as a whole.

In addition, all Officers of the GSA must each individually maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0.

#### b. Advisory Board

1. The GSA Officers will be assisted by an Advisory Board made up of not more than five representatives from each University graduate program (e.g. Representative(s) of Biology) that will advise the GSA on program-related needs and on future and current actions. Representatives will be students in the following University Colleges/Divisions, that may include multiple similar graduate programs, and are subject to be updated by the university at any time. They are:

- i. College of Arts & Sciences
- ii. College of Business
- iii. College of Engineering & Computer Science
- iv. College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies

2. GSA Representatives are responsible for providing a timely response to Officer requests for information, dissemination of graduate surveys created by the GSA, and serving as a representative for their academic program. Representatives are also responsible for accurately portraying the needs and opinions of their division in response to direct Officer requests. Representatives are furthermore responsible for keeping current on all GSA activities and encouraging collaboration among all graduate students. Representatives are encouraged to attend all GSA meetings in order to effectively represent their program

3. Representatives will be appointed through directed inquiries to each division for a representative, and approved by a joint officer majority vote for each member. In the event that more than 5 graduate students wish to apply from the same division, a majority-takes-all vote shall be held between the GSA Officers.

4. Representatives may be removed for similar reasons as GSA Officers (failure to perform adequately, participate, or maintain a professional demeanor), but with a majority vote by the current GSA Officers. New Representatives may be chosen following the initial appointment procedure described immediately above.

5. Representatives are not limited to terms of service and do not need to formally run to be selected again after participating for one year, but must satisfy the requirements of membership to the GSA to continue holding the position. If another graduate student in the same division wishes to serve, the above procedure for a majority-takes-all vote shall be conducted.

6. Representatives are required to serve on at least one GSA committee per year. The committee titles and purposes will be determined prior to the beginning of each academic year by the GSA Officers, with input from current Representatives. Committees may be related to Graduate Student Orientation, Public Relations, Fundraising, etc., although this list is not meant to be inclusive. Each committee will elect its own Chair. These Chairs will be responsible for reporting their activities directly to the Vice President of the GSA and attend regular GSA Chair meetings.

#### c. Officer Elections

i. An electronically based method (e.g. email) will be used to communicate to all currently enrolled graduate students of UTC a detailed notification of the initiation of elections for Officer positions. This communication must take place at least 30 days before the opening of elections, which are to be held annually on the first Friday of February.

ii. Graduate Students wishing to run for an Officer position must submit an electronically based response to the notification in accordance to its requirements to be considered a candidate for the position. Potential candidates are to be notified by a currently serving GSA Officer of successful/unsuccessful completion of their candidacy application in a timely manner. The submission deadline for candidacy is to be included on the initial notification as being 11:59pm on the last Friday of January.

iii. Officers will be elected by current GSA Representatives in good standing, with all voting conducted through an electronically-based polling method. Polls will be open for the duration of one (1) week from the initiation of voting, which will begin on the first Friday of February.

iv. Winning a GSA Officer position is accomplished by receiving a total of at least 51% of all votes for an Officer position. In the event that there is a tie for a GSA Officer position, a single tie-breaking vote will be cast jointly by the current GSA Officers.

v. Election results are to be collected, interpreted, and summarized within one (1) week of the closing of polls. Results are to be distributed to all graduate students of UTC through electronically based methods promptly after election results have been identified.

#### e. Officers' Term of Office

i. Terms of service for all GSA Officer positions are from the date of the announcement of the election results to April 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Officers are not limited to serving only one year in any one position or as an Officer of the GSA, but must maintain graduate student status to maintain eligibility to serve and officially participate with the GSA. Before beginning their terms of service in the fall semester, Officers-elect must participate in selected meetings, briefings, and GSA activities with currently serving GSA Officers, which will begin immediately following the election. This measure will help ensure the successful transition of leadership from year to year.

ii. In the event that an Officer fails to perform adequately, participate, or maintain a professional demeanor as befitting an elected Officer of the GSA, a special vote may be initiated by any member of the GSA's elected Officers for the reappointment of this position by another graduate student. This reappointed member shall have the same term of service as the originally elected Officer. This reappointment vote must be agreed upon by all elected Officers, with the exception of the member in question.

iii. In the event that an elected Officer personally resigns from a position or is ineligible to participate in the GSA, the following represents a succession plan for each elected Officer:

a. President: The Vice-President will have the option to succeed and take the office of President. An election will be held according to annual election standards to replace either the position of Vice-President (if the former Vice-President chooses to take the office of President) or President (if the Vice-President elects to remain as Vice-President). In the event that the President resigns or is unable to participate within 2 months (60 days) before regularly scheduled elections, the GSA will leave

the position vacant until the conclusion of annual elections, with the Vice-President maintaining or assigning a replacement for any ongoing duties that require attention.

b. Vice-President: A special election will be held according to annual election standards to replace the position of Vice-President. Currently serving GSA Officers are allowed to enter into this election, and subsequent elections may be held to replace their current position. In the event that the Vice-President resigns or is unable to participate within 2 months (60 days) before regularly scheduled elections, the GSA will leave the position vacant until the conclusion of annual elections with the President maintaining or assigning a replacement for any ongoing duties that require attention.

c. Secretary: A special election will be held according to annual election standards to replace the position of Secretary. Currently serving GSA Officers are allowed to enter into this election, and subsequent elections may be held to replace their current position. In the event that the Secretary resigns or is unable to participate within 2 months (60 days) before regularly scheduled elections, the President will assign a temporary replacement until the conclusion of annual elections.

d. Treasurer: A special election will be held according to annual election standards to replace the position of Treasurer. Currently serving GSA Officers are allowed to enter into this election, and subsequent elections may be held to replace their current position. In the event that the Treasurer resigns or is unable to participate within 2 months (60 days) before regularly scheduled elections, the President will assign a temporary replacement until the conclusion of annual elections.

e. Public Relations Chair: A special election will be held according to annual election standards to replace the position of Public Relations Chair. Currently serving GSA Officers are allowed to enter into this election, and subsequent elections may be held to replace their current position. In the event that the PR Chair resigns or is unable to participate within 2 months (60 days) before regularly scheduled elections, the President will assign a temporary replacement until the conclusion of annual elections.

### MEETINGS

All official GSA meetings are open to currently enrolled graduate students of UTC, the Dean of the Graduate School, and any previously invited member of the university administration, faculty, or undergraduate population. These meetings will be held on a regular basis at a time and place determined by the President with a minimum of three meetings per semester.

### FACULTY ADVISER

The GSA will be advised by UTC's Dean of The Graduate School or her/his designate. The Dean serves in an advisory capacity to the GSA for relevant aspects of the university system, administration, funding, and procedure of the university.

### DUES FUNDING

The GSA shall not have a monetary dues policy for the participation, serving in office, or use dues as a restrictive mechanism against currently enrolled graduate students.

Procurement of funds is a shared responsibility among all elected Officers, but many important aspects fall under the purview of the Treasurer (effectiveness of previous fund-raising, prediction of funding).

In the event that funds are accumulated by other sources and the organization is dissolved, the remaining account balance will be donated to UTC's Graduate Studies Gift Account to be earmarked for scholarships

### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROCEDURE

This Constitution may be amended by an in-person vote held by Representatives and Officers of the GSA. A 2/3 majority vote of Officers and Representatives must be reached for an amendment to pass. A 2/3 quorum of Officers and Representatives must also be present at the meeting in order for the amendment vote results to be considered valid.

Furthermore, all graduate students should be informed using an electronic communication method(s) (e.g. email) of the proposed amendments to the Constitution by the sponsor of the amendment prior to the meeting where this vote will be taken.

If the majority veto is successful, a constitutional amendment of a similar nature (to be determined by the current Dean of Graduate Students or his/her representative) cannot be proposed again for one calendar year from its initial announcement. If the majority veto is not successful, the constitution may be changed as proposed.

### Autonomy

The GSA shall operate as an independent body, as a sister organization to the undergraduate UTC Student Government Association (SGA). All decisions which determine GSA elections, appointments, expenditures, and Constitutional changes shall be determined solely by GSA Officers, Representatives, and members, and in accordance with University policies and regulations.

### POSTING

Due to the importance of the GSA's Constitution to the organization's design, intention, and continued support, a copy of this constitution is to be made available on the GSA UTC Learn page or GSA webpage, as well as available in print or electronic copy to any interested party at any time. Sufficient time to provide a print or electronic copy must be allowed by the requesting party.