



CONSTITUTION
GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION
RICE UNIVERSITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONSTITUTION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION.....	4
Article One: Name.....	4
Article Two: Definition.....	4
Article Three: Membership.....	4
Article Four: Insignia, Mascot, and Motto	4
Section 1: Insignia.....	4
Section 2: Mascot.....	4
Section 3: Colors	4
Section 4: Motto.....	5
Article Five: Graduate Student Council.....	5
Section 1: Role and Responsibilities of the Graduate Student Council	5
Section 2: Members	5
Section 3: Selection.....	5
Section 4: Voting.....	5
Section 5: Executive Board and Voting	5
Article Six: Executive Officers and Directors	6
Section 1: Executive Committee	6
Section 2: Cabinet	6
Section 3: President	6
Section 4: Vice President of Student Advocacy.....	6
Section 5: Vice President of Community Engagement	7
Section 6: Vice President of Finance	7
Section 7: Vice President of Administration	7
Section 8: Vice President of Student Development	8
Section 9: Parliamentarian	8
Section 10: Community Service Director	8
Section 11: Graduate Student Space Director.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Section 12: Professional Development Director.....	8
Section 13: Programming Director.....	8
Section 14: Media Director	9

Section 15: Website Director	9
Section 16: Grants Director	9
Section 17: International Student Outreach Director	9
Section 18: Sustainability Director	9
Article Seven: Faculty Advisor	10
Section 1: Election of Faculty Advisor	10
Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty Advisor	10
Article Eight: Meetings	10
Section 1: Council Meetings.....	10
Section 2: Council Open Forum	10
Section 3: Executive Committee Meetings.....	10
Section 4: Cabinet Meetings	10
Article Nine: By-Laws	10
Section 1: Definition of By-Laws	10
Section 2: By-Laws Proposals.....	11
Section 3: By-Laws Approval.....	11
Section 4: Effective Date for By-Laws	11
Article Ten: Amendments	11
Section 1: Constitutional Amendment Proposals	11
Section 2: Amendment Review.....	11
Section 3: Amendment Approval	11
Section 5: Effective Date of Constitutional Amendments.....	11
Article Eleven: Initiatives, Referenda, and Recalls	12
Section 1: Referenda Definiteion.....	12
Section 2: Initiative and Referenda Proposal.....	12
Section 3: Conduct of Referenda	12
Section 4: Referenda Approval.....	12
Article Twelve: Ratification.....	12
Article Thirteen: Nondiscrimination Policy	12
Article Fourteen: Anti-Hazing Policy	13

CONSTITUTION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE ONE: NAME

The name of the organization shall be the Graduate Student Association of Rice University, herein abbreviated as GSA or referred to as the association.

ARTICLE TWO: DEFINITION

The GSA shall be the incorporation of the general graduate student body at Rice University.

ARTICLE THREE: MEMBERSHIP

All full-time, regularly enrolled graduate students of Rice University and only said students shall be members of the association. Members shall pay semester dues collected by the university at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters.

ARTICLE FOUR: INSIGNIA, MASCOT, AND MOTTO

Section 1: Insignia

The device or coat of arms representing the GSA shall be a green field charged with eight conjoined white lozenges, with a white chief bearing a red book, with seven gold seals and gold edging, between two black grackles. A banner depicting this device shall be used at formal events of the association and the university.

Section 2: Mascot

The mascot of the association shall be the black grackle.

Section 3: Colors

The official colors of the association shall be green and white.

Section 4: Motto

The motto of the association shall be *bonis avibus*, literally "(under) good birds," referring to the association's mascot. The phrase signified favorable omens to ancient Romans and is a reflection of the association's perseverance and optimism in all seasons.

ARTICLE FIVE: GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

Section 1: Role and Responsibilities of the Graduate Student Council

All legislative power of the association shall be vested in the Graduate Student Council. The Council shall determine association policies, shall elect executive officers of the association, shall approve social and cultural events, shall authorize the association's annual budget, shall hear graduate students' concerns and complaints, shall establish rules and ordinances for the greater good of graduate students at the university, shall issue resolutions and reports encouraging the advancement of graduate studies and the betterment of graduate student life, and shall, directly or through the president or appointees, represent the association and its members to the university administration, trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, undergraduates, or other bodies.

Section 2: Members

The Council shall consist of the executive officers, as defined in Article Six, and one elected representative from each academic program.

Section 3: Selection

Representatives to Council shall be elected to one-year terms by the regularly enrolled, full-time graduate students in their respective departments.

Section 4: Voting

Representatives shall each have one vote on all questions.

Section 5: Executive Board and Voting

The President shall vote only to break a tie vote of Council and the Parliamentarian may only vote to break a tie vote for elections. No other executive officer may vote in Council, even in proxy, or serve as a department representative.

ARTICLE SIX: EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Section 1: Executive Committee

All executive power of the GSA shall be vested in the President and the Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the President, Vice President of Community Engagement, Vice President of Student Advocacy, Vice President of Administration, Vice President of Finance, and Vice President of Student Development. In addition to these elected executive officers, the association's faculty sponsor, staff advisor and the Parliamentarian shall serve as non-voting members of the Executive Committee. The elected executive officers and the Parliamentarian shall be members of the association.

Section 2: Cabinet

The President shall be advised by a Cabinet, which shall be composed of the other executive officers. The Cabinet shall consist of all executive officers, directors, and the Parliamentarian.

Section 3: President

The President of the GSA shall determine agenda for Council, Executive Committee, and Cabinet meetings; shall implement and oversee the execution of all programs, ordinances, and directives established by the Graduate Student Council; shall preside at all regular and called meetings of the Graduate Student Council, the Executive Committee, and the Cabinet; shall serve *ex officio* on all committees of the Council and the Cabinet; and shall represent the GSA on and off campus. Furthermore, the President shall call meetings of the Council at the request of at least three representatives and may also call meetings at his or her own discretion; shall, with the advice and consent of the Council, shall oversee the policies and procedures of the GSA loan fund program; shall serve as one of the graduate student representatives on the university's Graduate Council; shall submit annually to Council, with the Vice President of Finance, for consideration and approval, a budget proposal for the association; and shall, with the co-signature of the Vice President of Finance or other executive officer, disburse funds from the accounts of the GSA as approved by the Council. The President appoints all Directors with the approval of the Council.

Section 4: Vice President of Student Advocacy

The Vice-President of Student Advocacy shall oversee the policies and procedures in the association's efforts to improve student life; coordinate and foster relations with the various organizations and offices of the university community, including the Rice Women's Resource Center; appoint standing and *ad hoc* committees for the association, designate chairs for the association's standing and *ad hoc* committees, appoint representatives to joint committees, and name other representatives to University administration, trustees, faculty, undergraduate, and other groups; shall present nominations to the President and Council for graduate representatives to the ombudsmen selection committees for University Court and Honor Council; and shall preside in the absence of the President. Furthermore, should the President

resign the office, withdraw from the university, or cease to be a member of the association in good standing, the Vice President of Student Advocacy shall assume the duties and responsibilities of the office of President. The Vice President of Student Advocacy, along with the Vice President of Finance, also has oversight over all student clubs funded by an independent student tax. The Vice President of Student Advocacy will also oversee and assist the Community Service Director, and the International Student Outreach Director.

Section 5: Vice President of Community Engagement

The Vice President of Community Engagement shall oversee the planning and implementation of all Council-sponsored programs, services, and social events; shall, with the President, plan, implement, and direct public relations policies and events for the GSA and its Council; shall oversee and assist the Programming Director(s); shall serve as the association's non-voting representative to the V and W Board, or shall make nominations for a representative to that board, to the President and Council; shall direct the association's congress with Valhalla; shall coordinate and foster programs of communication and cooperation with the Office of International Students and Scholars, various University cultural organizations, other universities, and governmental entities locally, regionally, and nationally; and shall report external events and information to the Council. The Vice President of Community Engagement shall also organize and lead monthly roundtable meetings with student leaders of on-campus cultural organizations. The Vice President of Community Engagement shall appoint the coordinators for Orientation Week and Beer Bike and oversee the planning and implementation of Orientation.

Section 6: Vice President of Finance

The Vice President of Finance shall keep all funds of the association in an account approved by the Council and in accordance with university policy; shall disburse funds of the association, upon the authorization of the Council; shall make a current and accurate general report of the association's funds to the Council in its regular meetings; shall submit a complete and detailed report to the Council within the month before annual elections or whenever such a report may be requested by Council; shall provide a written account of the annual report to the Vice President of Administration; and shall submit annually, with the Cabinet, a proposed association budget to the Council for its consideration and approval. This position is also responsible for maintaining an up-to-date budget on the GSA Shared Drive accessible to the Cabinet. The Vice President of Finance, along with the Vice President of Student Advocacy, also has oversight over all student clubs funded by an independent student tax. This officer shall oversee and assist the Grants Director.

Section 7: Vice President of Administration

The Vice President of Administration shall keep an accurate and current role of Council representatives; shall keep and publish complete minutes of all meetings of the Council, the Executive Committee, and the Cabinet; shall deposit all minutes and other records in the

association's archives at the end of term; shall preserve and maintain the association's archives; shall attend to the correspondence of the association and its Council; shall receive, approve, and submit to Council's consideration the petitions of dependent organizations; shall keep a record of all active dependent organizations and their officers. The Vice President of Administration shall oversee and assist the Media Director and Website Director.

Section 8: Vice President of Student Development

The Vice President of Student Development shall assist departmental and school Graduate Student Associations and hold meetings with their leaders (at least once in the summer); serve as a liaison between departmental and school Graduate Student Associations and the Council; shall coordinate and foster programs of communication and cooperation with alumni; shall serve as the Executive Board liaison to the Council Representatives; and shall oversee and assist the Professional Development Director.

Section 9: Parliamentarian

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Parliamentarian shall oversee revisions and additions to the constitution and by-laws of the association; shall maintain an up-to-date edition of the constitution and by-laws of the association; shall advise the President and Council on procedural matters; shall oversee the association's elections and referenda; and shall submit end-of-term resolutions on behalf of the Council. Furthermore, the Parliamentarian presides over the Awards Committee selection process and is responsible for coordinating any and all GSA award ceremonies.

Section 10: Community Service Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Community Service Director shall organize, oversee, and execute on- and off-campus community service events to provide graduate students a means for giving back to campus-wide, local, and/or international sources. Community service events and information shall be reported to the Council.

Section 11: Professional Development Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Professional Development Director shall coordinate with the Center for Career Development and other relevant professional offices on campus; shall make existing professional programming more accessible and help develop new programming; shall establish and maintain relations with graduate student alumni through outreach; and shall assist the Student Association with mentoring opportunities and programming for graduate students.

Section 12: Programming Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Programming Director(s) shall assist the Vice President of Community Engagement in planning and implementation of GSA sponsored programs, services, and social events. This officer(s) shall also oversee Beer Bike.

Section 13: Media Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Media Director shall oversee the advertising and marketing efforts of GSA events; shall document all events on the GSA website and social media accounts.

Section 14: Website Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Website Director shall maintain and update the GSA website and GSA calendar as needed.

Section 15: Grants Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Grants Director shall assist the Vice President of Finance as needed with upkeep of the yearly budget; and shall oversee the Grants committee, Grants meetings, and Grants allocation.

Section 16: International Student Outreach Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the International Student Outreach Director shall serve as the primary liaison to the Office of International Students and Scholars and shall be the principal Cabinet member in charge of planning Graduate International Cultural Night and Graduate International Student Orientation.

Section 17: Sustainability Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Sustainability Director shall organize, oversee, and execute on- and off-campus projects promoting sustainable practices in graduate student life, including in graduate housing and at GSA events; shall serve as a liaison for university-wide sustainability initiatives; and shall organize environmentally-focused volunteer opportunities.

Section 18: Wellbeing Director

Appointed by the President and approved by the Council, the Wellbeing Director shall organize, oversee, and execute projects promoting the mental and physical wellbeing of graduate students; shall assist the Vice President of Student Advocacy in advocating university practices and policies supportive of graduate student wellbeing; and shall serve as a primary liaison to the Counseling Center and Wellbeing Center.

ARTICLE SEVEN: FACULTY ADVISOR

Section 1: Election of Faculty Advisor

The Faculty Advisor of the GSA shall be elected annually by the Council along with all executive elections and shall be a tenured member of the Rice faculty who has demonstrated a concern for graduate studies and graduate student life at the university.

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty Advisor

The Faculty Advisor shall serve as a non-voting member of the Graduate Student Council, the Executive Committee, and the Cabinet; and shall advise these bodies in their deliberations

ARTICLE EIGHT: MEETINGS

Section 1: Council Meetings

The Council shall meet publicly at least once a month throughout the calendar year and shall meet, either publicly or privately, at other times as deemed necessary by the President or by a call from at least three representatives.

Section 2: Council Open Forum

Members of the association shall be accorded time at regular meetings of the Council to speak on issues affecting graduate student life at Rice University.

Section 3: Executive Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee shall meet at least twice a month to discuss the activities and projects of the association and its Council, and shall meet at other times at the discretion of the President.

Section 4: Cabinet Meetings

The Cabinet shall meet at the discretion of the President

ARTICLE NINE: BY-LAWS

Section 1: Definition of By-Laws

By-laws shall be established to facilitate the fair and efficient execution of all policies, ordinances, acts, and directives of the GSA and its Council, Executive Committee, and Cabinet; and to regulate the proceedings, elections, and programs of the association and its Council, Executive Committee, and Cabinet.

Section 2: By-Laws Proposals

By-laws and amendments to by-laws may be proposed by any member of the association in a written recommendation to the President or the Parliamentarian.

Section 3: By-Laws Approval

The approval of two-thirds majority of Council members present and voting during consideration of the question shall be necessary before ratification of a by-law or an amendment to a by-law.

Section 4: Effective Date for By-Laws

New by-laws or by-law amendments shall become effective fourteen days, excluding holidays, after the publication of the Council's approval, unless contested by association members demanding a referendum. Contested by-laws and amendments that are approved in referendum shall become effective immediately after referendum results are published.

ARTICLE TEN: AMENDMENTS

Section 1: Constitutional Amendment Proposals

Any member of the association may propose an amendment to this Constitution by writing to the President or the Parliamentarian.

Section 2: Amendment Review

Upon receipt of a proposed amendment, the Parliamentarian shall review it for clarity of language and shall present to Council the proposed amendment as received, and if edited, as changed. The Parliamentarian shall also present those sections of the Constitution affected by the proposal.

Section 3: Amendment Approval

Proposed amendments to the Constitution shall be voted upon in Council.

The approval of two-thirds of the voting body shall be required for the ratification of an amendment.

Section 5: Effective Date of Constitutional Amendments

An amendment shall become effective fourteen days, excluding holidays, after its publication, unless contested by association members demanding a referendum.

ARTICLE ELEVEN: INITIATIVES, REFERENDA, AND RECALLS

Section 1: Referenda Definition

Council may defer to the association's general membership by calling for a referendum.

Section 2: Initiative and Referenda Proposal

Any member of the association, writing to the Vice President of Administration with a statement signed by 20 of the current members of the association, may present, in the form of a seconded motion, an initiative regarding any matter, which shall then be considered by Council; or may propose a question for consideration in referendum, which shall then be put to the whole membership of the association.

Section 3: Conduct of Referenda

A referendum shall be conducted by the Parliamentarian within thirty days, excluding holidays, after Council's receipt of a petition signed by 50% of the Cabinet. To be lawful and binding, a referendum must elicit votes from at least 80% of the department representatives.

Section 4: Referenda Approval

Proposals made through initiative and voted on in referendum, other than amendments to the Constitution, shall be approved by a simple majority of those voting in the referendum. Amendments to the Constitution that are proposed through initiative or deferred by Council to the general membership shall require the approval of two-thirds of the members voting in a referendum.

ARTICLE TWELVE: RATIFICATION

The approval of a simple majority of departmental votes shall be necessary to present this Constitution to the association membership in a constitutional referendum. The approval of three-fifths of the full-time, regularly enrolled graduate students voting in the constitutional referendum shall be necessary for the ratification of this Constitution.

ARTICLE THIRTEEN: NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

This organization shall not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, disability, or veteran status.

ARTICLE FOURTEEN: ANTI-HAZING POLICY

This organization shall not engage in any form of hazing, as defined by the Code of Student Conduct and any other applicable Rice University rules and regulations.