

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA STUDENT ASSOCIATION  
GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE  
BY-LAWS

**Preamble and Statement of Purpose**

Graduate Students have a number of unique concerns and interests requiring a voice in the University of Oklahoma separate from the usual instruments that express the will of the faculty and of the undergraduates. For this reason, the Graduate Student Senate (hereinafter referred to as Senate) of the University of Oklahoma Student Association (hereinafter referred to as UOSA) was established in 1987 to represent all Graduate Students and to serve their needs.

**SECTION 1. Defined Terms**

- A. "Absence" is the absence of a Senator from a Committee Meeting or Meeting unless a Proxy has been sent in the absent Senator's stead.
- B. "Active Membership" means all non-expelled Senators who have a current Senator Credential Form on file with the Secretary.
- C. "Appropriate, Curative Action" includes, but is not limited to, removal of an incumbent Senator and replacing him or her with a new Senator.
- D. "Bad Standing" means that a Department so labeled shall be ineligible for conference and research grants beginning the semester following the semester in which the Department fell into Bad Standing and until the Department returns to Good Standing.
  - 1. A Department in Bad Standing shall remain in Bad Standing until the Department has sent its allotted number of Senators for a full semester without an individual Senator accruing more than two Absences at regularly scheduled Meetings or Committee Meetings in the semester.
- E. "Committee Meetings" are general meetings of Senate committees.
- F. "Department" is an academic unit within the Graduate College which has a Graduate Liaison (adviser) recognized by the Graduate College. The College of Law shall be considered as a graduate Department for purposes of representation in the Senate.
  - 1. To ensure proper representation in the Senate of both current and future

- Departments, the Executive Committee shall consult the Graduate College at least once every two years to determine Departmental eligibility in the Senate.
- G. “Good Standing” is not being on academic probation as defined by the student’s Department or the Graduate College/College of Law.
- H. “Graduate Liaison” is a faculty/staff employee of the University of Oklahoma designated by the Graduate College as the link between the College and Graduate Students.
- I. “Graduate Students” are those students currently enrolled in the Graduate College or College of Law. All Graduate Students are eligible to:
1. Select the voting members of the Senate from their Department;
  2. Attend meetings of the Senate as non-voting representatives of their Department; and
  3. Serve as voting members of the Senate when selected by their Departmental colleagues, provided that they are students in Good Standing with the Department.
- J. “Graduate Student Website” means <http://gss.ou.edu/>
- K. “Legislation” includes all acts, motions, and resolutions brought before the Senate for consideration.
1. All Legislation—excluding expulsions of Senators, officer elections, dismissals of officers and committee chairs, amendments to the UOSA Constitution and By-Laws, adoption of Standing Rules of Order and amendments to Standing Rules of Order— require only a majority vote of the Active Membership present to pass. This does not affect voting requirements found elsewhere in these By-Laws for excluded Legislation.
- L. “Quorum” shall be defined as at least 50% plus one of the Active Membership present.
- M. “Meetings” are general meetings of the Senate as a whole.
- N. “Selection Method” includes, but is not limited to, appointment, volunteering, and election. It is the duty and decision of the Graduate Students of the respective Departments to decide the appropriate Selection Method.
- O. “Senator” is a Graduate Student selected by his or her peers to represent their Department in a voting capacity in the Senate.

P. “Senator Credential Form” is a document, containing both Senator Credentials and the Senator Responsibility Statement that must be filled-out completely by all Senators and returned to the Senate office by the end of the spring semester.

Q. “Senator Responsibility Statement” is a document outlining the commitments owed to the Senate by incoming Senators.

## **SECTION 2. Representation**

### **A. Selection**

1. Each Department shall select two Senators to the Senate every year in mid-spring. The Graduate Students of the Department—not the faculty, Graduate Liaison, Department chair, or college dean—shall select the senators. Before the last regularly scheduled Meeting of the academic year, the Executive Council (EC) shall be provided with an official document describing the Selection Method and results, separate from the Senator Credential Form, signed by the Graduate Liaison.
2. The Chair of the Senate does not represent a Department. Thus, the Department from which the Chair was elected must send a new Senator to fill the vacancy.
3. Any Department that is in Good Standing with the Senate may notify the EC on the Senator Credential Form that the Department will be sending only one Senator for the upcoming year. The Department must notify the EC before the second Meeting of the fall semester. Once accomplished, a Department cannot send two Senators for the remainder of the academic year.
4. The new Senators may meet at the last regularly scheduled Meeting of the spring semester. Notwithstanding, it is the responsibility of the outgoing Senators to attend the last regularly scheduled Meeting of the spring semester to fulfill their obligation to their respective Departments.
5. Each Senator’s tenure may only begin upon the signing of the Senator Responsibility Statement, which should be done before the last regularly scheduled Meeting of the academic year.

### **B. Expulsions, Removals, and Resignations**

1. Expulsion by Senate
  - a. Attendance

- i. Attendance is the responsibility of each Senator. In order to assist Senators with keeping track of their attendance, the Secretary shall publish a list with the number of absences each Senate seat has accrued.
  - ii. In the event that a Senator accrues more than three Absences at regularly scheduled Meetings per semester or more than three Absences at regularly scheduled Committee Meetings per semester, the Senator may be expelled from the Senate. The EC shall first inform both the Senator in question and the Senator's Graduate Liaison through email. The affected Department shall be given ten days from the date of notification to take Appropriate, Curative Action. During this time, the EC may prepare Legislation that will expel the Senator in question. If Appropriate, Curative Action is not taken, then the expulsion Legislation, passed by a majority of the EC, shall be brought before the Senate at the next regularly scheduled Meeting.
  - iii. If a Senator is expelled for attendance violations, the affected Department shall be placed in Bad Standing.
  - iv. After notice has been given to the Graduate Liaison of the expelled Senator's Department, the affected Department must select a replacement as soon as possible.
- b. Negligence, Misconduct, etc.
- i. A Senator expelled from the Senate for any reason other than attendance violations shall not force the Senator's Department into Bad Standing.
  - ii. After notice has been given to the Graduate Liaison of the expelled Senator's Department, the affected Department must select a replacement as soon as possible. If a replacement is not sent to the Senate within two weeks of the expulsion, the Department shall be placed into Bad Standing.
  - iii. The EC may introduce expulsion Legislation without first

affording the affected Department the opportunity to take Appropriate, Curative Action. The EC may bring such Legislation before the Senate by a majority vote.

- c. A two-thirds vote of the Active Membership is required to expel a Senator from the Senate.

## 2. Removal by Department

- a. A Senator may also be removed at any time by the Graduate Students from that Senator's Department. In that event, the Department's Graduate Liaison shall submit a letter to the EC stating that the Senator has been removed. The letter must include documentation showing the actions taken by the Graduate Students.
- b. The Graduate Students from the Department must select a new Senator to fill the vacant seat. The Senator may not fill the vacant seat until the completed Senator Credential Form is given to the EC.

## 3. Resignation

- a. If a Senator resigns, the Senator shall notify the Senate and the Department's Graduate Liaison in writing. The Graduate Liaison or appointee shall notify the Graduate Students in the Department of the empty Senate seat. The Graduate Students must select a new Senator or risk expulsion of the "vacancy" for attendance violations.
- b. All new Senators must submit the completed Senate Credential Form, by the start of the next general meeting.

## **SECTION 3. Composition and Duties of Members**

### A. Senators have the responsibility to:

1. Attend regular and emergency Meetings and Committee Meetings;
2. Serve on no more than one standing committee, when appointed by the Chair;
3. Serve on ad hoc and joint committees, when appointed by the Chair;
4. Be informed of all upcoming Legislation;
5. Report the proceedings of the Senate to all constituents; and
6. Be available to meet with constituents.

### B. Senators shall be empowered, so long as all Legislation is in compliance with Senate

Standing Rules of Order, to:

1. Vote on any Legislation introduced in either Meetings or Committee Meetings;
2. Introduce Legislation for Senate consideration; and
3. Introduce amendments to any Legislation under consideration by the Senate or in committee.

#### **SECTION 4. Proxies**

- A. If a Senator is going to be absent from a Meeting, the Senator may send a Proxy to the missed Meeting.
- B. The sending of a Proxy does not count as an absence.
- C. For that missed Meeting, the Proxy shall have all of the powers of the represented Senator as long as the following conditions are met:
  1. A Senator seeking a Proxy must first inform the Executive Committee at least one day before the Meeting of the Senate in which the absence is to take place and must inform the Executive Committee of the reason for requesting the Proxy.
  2. The Proxy must come to the Meeting with the Proxy Request Form completed by and signed by the Senator missing the Meeting.

#### **SECTION 5. Officer Elections**

- A. Election of Officers
  1. The Senate shall elect officers at the next to last regularly scheduled meeting of the spring semester. At this Meeting, the Senate shall elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary to serve during the Summer Semester and following academic year.
  2. To serve as an officer, a Senator must be in Good Standing and must have served one full semester as a Senator.
  3. No elected officer may serve in two or more capacities, nor may any elected officer serve as chair of a standing committee.
  4. The Chair of the Internal Affairs Committee shall oversee the election of officers. In the event that the Chair of the Internal Affairs Committee is a candidate for office, the committee shall select one of its members to oversee the elections.

## B. Election Guidelines

1. Nominations shall be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Internal Affairs Committee or selected replacement by noon on the Friday before elections.
2. Only Senators may make nominations.
3. On Election Day, each candidate shall have five minutes to address the Senate. During this time, others may be allowed to speak on a candidate's behalf and questions may be taken from the floor.
4. Elections shall be conducted with a plurality vote of the Active Membership needed to win.

## **SECTION 6. Elected Officers**

### A. Chair of the Senate

1. The powers and responsibilities of the Chair of the Senate (Chair) are to:
  - a. Preside over all Meetings, voting only in case of a tie
  - b. Serve as Chair of the EC, preside over its meetings, voting only in case of a tie;
  - c. Act as official spokesperson and representative of the Senate to the administration of the University of Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents;
  - d. Act as official delegate to any national convention or meetings involving Graduate Students;
  - e. Oversee the orientation session, which shall take place before or during the first Meeting of the academic year;
  - f. Nominate personnel to assist in Senate activities subject to approval by the Internal Affairs Committee or Senate as a whole;
  - g. Prepare the Senate's annual budget with EC approval, before submission to the Ways and Means Committee;
  - h. Appoint acting-chairs for standing committees to serve during the Summer Semester with Senate approval; and
  - i. Maintain at least fifty hours of service per month.

### B. Vice-Chair of the Senate

1. The powers and responsibilities of the Vice-Chair of the Senate (Vice-Chair)

are to:

- a. Preside over all meetings when the Chair is absent;
- b. Serve as Vice-Chair of the EC;
- c. Act in the capacity of the Chair, when authority is so delegated by the Chair, or upon premature termination of the Chair's term for whatever cause, until the Senate can elect a successor;
- d. Post agendas in accordance with the Oklahoma Open Meetings Act; and
- e. Ensure that all proposed legislation appears on the Senate Web Page no later than two business days prior to regularly scheduled Meetings;
- f. Serve as liaison between the Graduate College and the Senate;
- g. Assist the Chair and Secretary in the performance of their duties; and
- h. Maintain at least thirty hours of service per month.

#### C. Secretary of the Senate

1. The powers and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Senate (Secretary) are to:

- a. Record minutes and other records of the Senate, and make the documents available on demand to any person should it be requested in writing (The Secretary reserves the right to consult General Counsel before releasing certain information.);
- b. Serve as Secretary of the EC;
- c. Maintain the roll of voting members to bring vacancies and absences to the attention of the EC.
- d. Act as archivist of the Senate, distributing copies of all relevant records to the EC and maintaining the archives of the Senate;
- e. Ensure that Senators are provided with copies of proposed legislation through posting on the Senate Web Page;
- f. Receive correspondence and bring it to the attention of the Chair;
- g. Delegate authority to perform any of these functions subject to approval of the EC;
- h. Assist the Chair and Vice-Chair in the performance of their duties;

- i. Act in the capacity of the Chair or Vice-Chair, when authority is so delegated by the Chair or Vice-Chair, or upon premature termination of the Chair or Vice-Chair's term for whatever cause, until the Senate can elect a successor; and
    - j. Maintain at least twenty-five hours of service per month.
- D. If the Officers of the Senate are unable to attend a Meeting, or must temporarily recuse themselves, then the duties of the Chair fall to the Committee Chairs in the following order: Internal Affairs, Ways and Means, External Affairs, Academic Affairs, Problems and Projects, Public Relations, and Human Diversity.

## **SECTION 7. Appointed Officers**

### **A. Appointment**

- 1. The Chair shall have the authority to appoint Senators to any Appointed Position.
- 2. The appointment can be terminated earlier at the discretion of the Chair, but otherwise lasts until the next regularly scheduled officer elections.

### **B. Positions**

#### **1. Parliamentarian**

- a. The Parliamentarian advises the Chair, other officers, and Senators on matters of parliamentary procedure.
- b. The Parliamentarian does not have the authority to make official rulings.
- c. The position of Parliamentarian cannot be filled by the Chair. The position may be filled by either the Vice-Chair or Secretary if the position cannot be filled otherwise.

## **SECTION 8. Executive Council**

- A. The EC shall be composed of the three elected officers and the chairs of the six standing committees or the three elected officers until the committee chairs have been selected.
- B. The EC is an administrative body and is not empowered to dismiss Legislation. Except for dismissal of officer motions by individual Senators, Legislation proposed for consideration by the Senate shall be brought first to the EC, which shall do only

one of the following:

1. Recommend consideration of Legislation by the Senate; or
2. Refer Legislation to the appropriate committee.

C. The functions of the EC are to:

1. Meet at least twice a month during the academic year at a regularly scheduled and published time;
2. Meet during periods when no Meetings are scheduled, at which time the committee chairs shall act as fully empowered committees except for matters of budget allocations, grant allocations, Constitutional amendments, By-Law amendments, and the like;
3. Consider every piece of legislation brought before it, and dispose of it in a timely and authorized manner;
4. Set the agenda for the consideration of Legislation on the Senate floor;
5. Ratify the Chair's nominations for the membership of committees; and
6. Suggest representatives to the UOSA President to serve on University Councils and Committees. This action does not replace the advice and consent role of the Senate once the UOSA President nominates representatives to such Councils and Committees.

## **SECTION 9. Standing Committees**

A. There shall be seven standing committees, listed as follows:

1. Academic Affairs - works on issues that affect the University and Graduate Students in terms of their academic missions and goals, such as exam preparation week, the language test for international graduate assistants, etc. The committee also selects the outstanding graduate assistants for the academic year.
2. External Affairs - confronts problems of wages, health insurance, facility access rights and the relationship of Graduate Students to their Departments and the University at large.
3. Human Diversity - regularly schedules a series of panel discussions, the "Diversity Discussion", that allow students, faculty, staff, and members of the community to come together and discuss issues of human diversity in an

academic setting. The committee co-sponsors other activities with other cultural groups on campus as well as developing new ideas on how to address diversity issues.

4. Internal Affairs – helps manage the Senate's relationship with other UOSA branches, works on the Senate By-Laws, and oversees the Senate's internal policies and procedures.
  5. Problems and Projects – organizes events, such as the Graduate Student Appreciation Week, that provide enjoyment for Graduate Students as well as projects that raise funds for Senate activities.
  6. Public Relations – oversees advertising for events related to the Senate, as well as general advertising for the Senate. Public Relations is tasked to get the word out and educate the student population about Senate activities.
  7. Ways and Means – manages the Conference Travel and Research Grant allocation process and serves an oversight role in the UOSA budgetary process.
- B. The Senate may, from time to time, pass Legislation dictating the committee appointment process.
- C. The membership numbers for the committees shall be determined by the Chair and the EC with special consideration for the more time-intensive committees, mainly the Ways and Means Committee. Thus, Senators may be asked or required by the EC to transfer committees depending on need.
- D. Standing committees shall be empowered to consider and amend all Legislation referred by the EC, and shall dispose of all Legislation in exactly one of the following ways:
1. By recommending immediate consideration of Legislation on the Senate floor;
  2. By amending and/or consolidating Legislation, then by recommending it for immediate consideration on the Senate floor; or
  3. By failing legislation and reporting why it is unworthy of consideration. Any Senator may appeal a committee's decision to the Senate as a whole. This appeal does not affect the status of the legislation, only whether the Senate will hear the appeal. If the appeal passes by majority vote, the Senate will hear the Legislation.

- E. The Chair of the Ways and Means Committee shall be considered the financial officer of the Senate and shall oversee the disbursement of Senate funds. While the Ways and Means Committee manages the Conference Grants allocation process and advises the EC on the Conference Grants allocation process, the EC reserves the right to make changes to the Conference Grants allocation process. The Conference Grants shall be dispensed to approve Graduate Students at the end of each semester, upon approval by the Senate.

#### **SECTION 10. Ad Hoc and Joint Committees**

- A. Ad hoc committees shall be formed to resolve issues which are not under the normal purview of standing committees or are of sufficient intricacy to require special attention.
- B. Ad hoc committees may be formed to consider only one issue and shall be dissolved once the committee's recommendation is made.
- C. Joint committees consisting of members of both the Senate and the Congress shall be formed at the recommendation of the UOSA President or in accordance with the UOSA Constitution.

#### **SECTION 11. Business and Rules of Order**

- A. The Senate shall meet regularly as designated by the EC.
- B. The first meeting of the academic year may be preceded by an orientation session mandatory for all new Senators or the first meeting may include an orientation segment.
- C. The Senate may promulgate Standing Rules of Order.
- D. The agenda for the Senate shall follow the pattern as found in the Standing Rules of Order.
- E. Photocopies of legislation may be provided at the discretion of the Chair.
- F. An overhead version of all legislation must be furnished or the legislation shall be out of order.

#### **SECTION 12. Dismissal of Elected Officers or Committee Chairs**

- A. An elected officer or committee chair may be dismissed by the following procedures:
1. Committee Chair
    - a. A majority vote of the effected committee is sufficient to remove the

committee chair or

- b. The EC may remove a committee chair with a three-fourths majority vote.
- c. The effected committee chair may appeal either the committee's or EC's decision to the Senate. The appeal must pass by a two-thirds majority of the Active Membership or the dismissal decision stands.

## 2. Elected Officer

- a. By a two-thirds vote, the EC may send a resolution to the Senate recommending dismissal. Until the Senate has voted on the matter, the officer shall be temporarily relieved of all duties and authority. The resolution shall be the first order of new business at the next Meeting. A two-thirds majority of the Active Membership vote shall be required to remove the officer.
- b. Any Senator may motion to remove an officer. Once moved and seconded, the motion immediately goes to the Internal Affairs Committee for review. After review, the Internal Affairs Committee may forward the motion to the Senate for disposition or fail the motion in committee. The Chair shall read the recommendation or disposition of the motion as the first order of new business at the next Meeting. If the motion fails, the author may appeal to the Senate. The appeal does not validate a removal, it only determines whether the Senate shall hear the motion or not. The Senate shall hear the motion if a majority of the Senators grant the appeal. If the motion to remove comes before the Senate, the officer shall temporarily step down until the matter is resolved. A two-thirds majority vote shall be required to remove the officer. If the Chair is the subject of the removal motion, the Chair shall temporarily step-aside at the beginning of the Meeting.

## 3. Appointed Officer

- a. All appointed officers may be removed by the Chair without appeal.

- 4. Except for an appointed officer, all resolutions or motions to remove an officer shall follow proper protocol and the Standing Rules of Order.

5. All officers or committee chairs, except for the Chair of the Senate, removed from office shall continue to represent their respective Departments unless expelled by the Senate. The Chair of the Senate, if removed, is expelled from the Senate.

### **SECTION 13. Amendments to the UOSA Constitution and the Senate By-Laws**

- A. Any Senator may propose an amendment to the UOSA Constitution.
  1. The proposed amendment to the UOSA Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the EC at least one meeting in advance of the consideration of the amendment.
  2. Any amendment shall require a two-thirds majority of the Active Membership vote to pass.
  3. The amendment, once passed, shall be forwarded to the Congress for consideration.
- B. By-Laws not in conflict with the UOSA Constitution may be adopted by the Senate membership.
  1. The Senate By-Laws are to be attached to and considered an integral part of the UOSA Constitution.
  2. Any Senator may propose amendments to the By-Laws.
    - a. Proposed amendments to the By-Laws shall be submitted in writing to the EC at least one meeting in advance of the consideration of the amendment.
    - b. Moreover, any proposed amendment to the By-Laws must be written and typed in such a way that clearly indicates the proposed changes to the By-Laws. This includes the use of italic and strikethrough font to indicate additions and eliminations, respectively.
    - c. Passage of a By-Law amendment shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the Active Membership to pass.
  3. Any Graduate Student may initiate a referendum procedure by providing a petition signed by two hundred Graduate Students.

### **SECTION 14. Policy Statement for the Administration of the GSS Foundation Account**

- A. This endowment is to be operated by the University of Oklahoma Foundation and

shall assist the research and creative work of Graduate Students at the University of Oklahoma.

- B. The yearly interest on the principle of the endowment shall be distributed in the following manner:
  - 1. Seventy-five percent shall be used in fulfillment of Section 11, Subsection D; and
  - 2. Twenty-five percent shall be reinvested into the fund principal.
- C. This distribution shall be dependent upon the yield of the fund and the current fiscal responsibilities of the Senate.
- D. Applications made available through the Senate to all interested parties shall be reviewed by a Senate sub-committee appointed for that purpose. Guidelines for the use of these funds shall be established by a Senate sub-committee, subject to the approval of the full Senate, in an effort to provide for the needs of as many Graduate Students as possible. In all cases, the primary consideration shall be the quality of the proposed research or creative work.
- E. This endowment is intended to supplement the operation of the Senate Research and Creative Activity Grant Awards.

**SECTION 15. Challenges to the By-Laws**

- A. If any word, phrase, paragraph, or section of the Senate By-Laws is found to be invalid or illegal by any body of competent jurisdiction, then the remaining words, phrases, paragraphs, and sections not found to be invalid shall remain in force.

**SECTION 16. Standing Rules of Order**

- A. The Senate may adopt Standing Rules of Order to govern procedure by a two-thirds majority vote of the Active Membership.
- B. The Senate may, from time to time, amend the Standing Rules of Order by a two-thirds majority vote of the Active Membership.