BOSTON COLLEGE, GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

CONSTITUTION

Amended: 24 February 2016

Preamble

We, the graduate students of Boston College, including the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the Lynch Graduate School of Education, the Carroll Graduate School of Management, the Connell Graduate School of Nursing, the School of Social Work, and the School of Theology and Ministry, in order to establish ourselves as an association of the greater Boston College community, do declare and constitute our association in accordance with the following fundamental principles:

1. We hereby affirm that the rights and privileges of graduate students will not in any way be violated or abridged for reasons of age, race, sex, gender, school, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, national origin, ability, or enrollment status.

2. We affirm that no graduate student should be subject to hazing of any kind.

3. We hereby affirm that the graduate students of Boston College have the right and responsibility to participate actively in all University matters that are relevant to the lives of the graduate student body. The graduate students of Boston College have the right to participate in and have audience with University committees and offices dedicated to graduate education and all aspects of University life relevant thereto. Where appropriate, the GSA will serve as the representative body for graduate students in this regard.

4. All graduate students ought to abide by these principles in their relations with all members of the Boston College community.

By means of this Preamble, we affirm our position and principles as fully participating and concerned members of the Boston College community. We affirm our right and our intention to use the means necessary to ensure the implementation of these principles through the effective representation of the interests of the graduate student body in the decision-making processes of the University. We affirm that it is our sincere desire to work together with all members of the Boston College community in an effort to improve University life for the Boston College community as a whole.

Article I. GSA.

Section 1. Statement of Purpose

1. The GSA will represent the interests of its members in their relations with the other members of the Boston College community and will strive to improve the general quality of the University as a whole.

2. The GSA will establish and facilitate programs which are designed to meet the academic, social, and personal needs of all graduate students, and to ensure that the activities of graduate students are conducted in accordance with the principles established in the Preamble of this Constitution.
3. The GSA will provide general information and services to graduate students concerning all aspects of University life.

Section 2. Membership

1. Any student who pays a graduate student activities fee and is currently enrolled (including part-time and full-time) at Boston College is a member of the GSA.

Article II. GSA Senate.

Section 1. Statement of Purpose

1. The purpose of the Senate is to represent the interests of members of all graduate leadership bodies of Boston College; to create and promote the avenues of communication between graduate students, faculty and administration; to discuss, review, and make suggestions regarding various academic, social and other school issues and policies; to support and improve the quality of the environment for graduate students at Boston College.

Section 2. Membership

1. The Senate includes one representative from each of the following Boston College graduate leadership bodies:
   a) Graduate Arts and Sciences Association (GASA)
   b) School of Social Work Collective (SSW Collective)
   c) Graduate Management Association (GMA)
   d) Graduate Nursing Association (GNA)
   e) Graduate Education Association (GEA)
   f) The Student Forum of the School of Theology and Ministry (STM)
   g) Graduate International Student Association (GISA)
   h) Graduate Students of Color Association (GSCA)
   i) Graduate Pride Alliance (GPA)

2. Appointment Procedures
   a) Each graduate student leadership body appoints or elects two members to serve as a Senator and Alternate Senator. The appointment or election is carried out according to the constitution and by-laws of the relevant student leadership body and is to be finalized and reported to the current GSA Executive Board (see below III.1) no later than the end of April of a given academic year for the next academic year. In any case where it is not possible to inform the Senate of incoming Senators by the specified time, the organization(s) in question must appoint Senators as quickly as possible and provide notification to the Senate thereto.
   b) No Senator can serve more than two (2) consecutive terms, where a ‘term’ specifies the months of the academic year. A term is determined to have been served in any of the following cases: (1) where a Senator has served during the full academic year; (2) where a Senator began to serve a term but has either withdrawn or been dismissed; (3) where a Senator began to serve a term who was appointed after the beginning of the term.
c) The Senator and the Alternate Senator are required to be of varying gender identity, where ‘varying’ stipulates that both the Senator and the Alternate Senator must not have the same exact gender identity. This item is voided in any case where it is impossible for an organization represented on the Senate to supply a Senator and Alternate Senator of varying gender identity.

3. The three members of the GSA Executive Board are ex officio members of the Senate without voting privileges unless there is a tied vote (see below II.5.3).

Section 3. Meetings.

1. The Senate convenes once a month, resulting in eight regularly scheduled meetings each academic year, subject to BC’s academic calendar. Each Senate meeting includes Senators from all graduate student leadership bodies, members of the Executive Board and the Director and/or Assistant Director of the Office of Graduate Student Life (OGSL).

2. Other individuals may be invited to these meetings at the discretion of the Senate and/or Executive Board without prejudice to section II.3.5 below.

3. All meetings will be chaired by the Executive Director of the Executive Board. The Executive Director is responsible for preparing, introducing and directing the agenda for each meeting.

4. A Special meeting is a meeting that convenes outside the regular schedule and can be called for by any member of the Senate and/or Executive Board. In order to call a special meeting, the matter must be urgent. A determination of urgency is made by the Executive Director. If a Special meeting is needed, the Executive Director will indicate the time, place, and purpose of the Special meeting, and will execute the coordination thereof.

5. By virtue of being a member of the GSA (I.2.1), any graduate or professional student at Boston College can attend any meeting of the Senate for any reason. Any such student attending with business to discuss will be granted a hearing by the Senate, and will receive follow-up action in writing from the Executive Director in order to relay the Senate’s opinion, and, if applicable, plan of action, within two weeks from the date of the hearing. Such graduate or professional student is granted voice without vote in any subsequent deliberative matters. Such a graduate or professional student is requested to provide advance notice to the Executive Director if possible.

Section 4. Duties.

1. The purposes of the Senate meetings include but are not limited to:
   a) identifying issues of broad importance and application to the graduate student body;
   b) reporting updates on Senators’ graduate student leadership bodies;
   c) voting on the agenda presented by Senate Committees;
   d) amending the GSA Constitution.

2. Senators act as liaisons between their representative student body and the Senate. Senators will disseminate information from the GSA relevant to their constituents in a timely fashion (i.e., no later than three (3) days after the conclusion of the Senate meeting). A list of items to disseminate will be included under a separate header within the Minutes as prepared by the Director of Programming within the GSA’s Executive Board. Senators will copy the Executive Director on the relevant communication when carrying out this responsibility.
3. Each Senator will attend all meetings. If a Senator is not available to participate in the next meeting, he/she must inform the Executive Director of the Executive Board about his/her foreseen absence no later than a week before the meeting.

4. The absent Senator will relay his or her responsibilities to the Alternate Senator for that specific meeting. If neither the Senator nor the Alternate Senator are able to attend, agenda items are to be sent one week prior to scheduled meeting to the Executive Director, who will then communicate the information to the Senate members. Absent senators are expected to read meeting minutes and provide feedback as necessary.

5. Alternate Senators from graduate student leadership bodies may attend meetings at their discretion, unless the Senator from the same graduate student leadership body will not attend the meeting, in which case Alternate Senator must attend the meeting.

Section 5. Voting.

1. Each graduate student leadership body is allotted one vote, represented and managed by the respective Senator. If a Senator is absent, the vote for that student leadership body and the rights to manage it are transferred to the respective Alternate Senator.

2. Senate voting is defined as the formal process by which Senators express their approval or disapproval on some matter referred to their deliberation. A typical tally of the votes is carried out by the means of showing hands either in favor of the item; not in favor of the item; or an abstention from voting altogether. A tied vote occurs is a situation when an equal number of votes are in favor of and not in favor of a particular item on the voting agenda.

3. When a tied vote occurs the right to decide the outcome of the vote is given to the Executive Board of the GSA, all members of which vote unanimously by consensus.

Article III. GSA Executive Board.

Section 1. Structure and duties

1. The Executive Board consists of the Executive Director, Director of Programming, and Director of Finance.

2. The Executive Director serves as the spokesperson for the graduate and professional student community to the administration of Boston College and serves on a number of university committees. The Executive Director is responsible for advocating on behalf of all Boston College graduate and professional students. The Executive Director is involved in the design and creation of GSA programming as well as assisting in the planning of the graduate and professional student orientation. The Executive Director communicates regularly with the Boston College graduate and professional student community as well as with the constituent schools and groups of the GSA.

   a) The Executive Director has the following responsibilities:

   2.a.1. To convene, coordinate, and chair monthly meetings of the Senate, including the creation and distribution of an agenda for each meeting.

   2.a.2. To serve as a representative on the Provost Advisory Council, the Library Group, the Parking Committee, and all other committees as needed.
2.a.3. To prepare an end-of-year report on behalf of the GSA, soliciting, in particular, end-of-year reports from all advocacy groups.

2.a.4. To attend monthly meetings of GSA staff as well as weekly meetings of the OGSL/GSA.

3. The Director of Programming serves as the internal conduit for communication within the GSA. This individual’s primary responsibility is to coordinate all programming and events conducted by the GSA. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: Grad Night Out and New Graduate and Professional Student Orientation. The Director of Programming will also coordinate programs around spirituality, scholarship and excellence, and service, and is the primary note taker for all Senate meetings.

4. The Director of Finance oversees the allocation and administration of all GSA funds; keeps the financial records of the GSA; and ensures that the official GSA annual budget is adhered to by the Executive Board and the members of the GSA through an internal audit. The Director of Finance serves as the primary contact person for GSA members regarding all financial concerns. The Director of Finance trains all organization treasurers and serves as the primary liaison between the Budget Office, Student Services, and other Boston College administrative offices, in addition to serving on any special Committees.

Section 2. Meetings

1. The Executive Board convenes once a week with the staff of the Office of Graduate Student Life for the purpose of performing executive duties. A meeting of the Executive Board may be called at any time by any member of the Executive Board or by the Advisor, who is the Assistant Director of the Office of Graduate Student Life, or by a staff member of the Office of Graduate Student Life deputized for such a function.

Section 3. Selection

1. The Executive Board members shall be selected through a democratic process of all graduate students as represented by their Senators. The process is executed according to the policies and procedures of the Election Committee of the Senate.

Article IV. Senate Committees.

Section 1. General.

1. A Senate Committee is a group formed by the Senate from the Senators and members of the Executive Board to fulfil a specific goal.

2. There are three standing committees: the Election Committee, the Finance Committee and the Disciplinary Committee. All other ad-hoc committees can be formed during the year at the discretion of the Senate.

3. All Committees will be headed by a committee chair, whose responsibility it is to manage the affairs of the relevant committee in a timely manner.
Section 2. Election Committee.

1. The purpose of the Election Committee is to organize and carry out the elections of the members of Executive Board for the next year according to the election procedures and policies.

2. The Election Committee is formed annually and no later than the last business day of February, and is charged with the task of creating profiles of suitable candidates for each of the executive board positions. This subcommittee will be composed of the following members: the Assistant Director of Graduate Life, three current Senators in good standing, and the holder of the relevant position on the GSA’s E-board (for example, if there is a search for the Director of Programming, the Director of Programming would serve on this committee; if it were a search for the Director of Finance, the Director of Finance would serve, etc.). The committee will issue an invitation to the Graduate Student community for any interested student to apply, and the committee will conduct a fair interview process for all candidates. At the conclusion of the interview period, the subcommittee will prepare a one-page profile of at least two candidates for each of the available positions, including the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. These profiles will be distributed to the Senate for review, along with a recommendation from the election committee for the suitable candidate(s).

3. The Senate will make a recommendation for each position through majority vote no later than the April Senate meeting. The names of elected students are then submitted to the Director of Graduate Student Life for confirmation. If the Director of Graduate Student Life withholds his/her confirmation, then the Director of Graduate Student Life meets with the election subcommittee in order to produce a consensus (i.e., unanimous) elected candidate for all non-confirmed candidates. The decision of this expanded subcommittee will be considered final, and a report will be prepared for the full Senate recounting this expanded subcommittee’s deliberations.

Section 3. Disciplinary Committee.

1. The Disciplinary Committee is formed at the first Senate meeting of the year and consists of the Executive Director and two current Senators in good standing. The purpose of the Disciplinary Committee is to monitor the carrying out of the duties by Senators and members of Executive Board and to propose to the Senate any actions necessary to enforce the proper carrying out of those duties.

2. In the event that both the Senator and the Alternate Senator are absent for two meetings throughout the academic year or has acted in an unethical manner according to the Discipline Committee, these senators will be put on probation. The actions of these senators will be reviewed by the Disciplinary Committee, who will then make a recommendation to the Senate at the following Senate meeting.

   a) A determination of unethical conduct includes all behaviors in contravention of the Boston College Student Code of Conduct; the aspirations of the preamble to the GSA Constitution; or the duties of Senate membership, including, but not limited to, attendance and participation at meetings and in relevant committees.

3. The dismissal of Senators will involve their removal from the Senate and from their corresponding duties, including attending meetings, obtaining and relaying information to their groups, and voting on Senate matters. Dismissed Senators will be unable to hold Senate representation from that point forward, including future academic years.
4. When both the Senator and Alternate Senator from the same student leadership body have been dismissed from the Senate, funds will be temporarily frozen and no financial paperwork will be approved until the student leadership body has elected new Senators. Financial paperwork includes outside vendor forms, student reimbursement forms, and P-card increase forms. Any money spent during this “penalty period” will not be reimbursed to the group, but may be retroactively reimbursed once the group has elected new representation.

Section 4. Finance Committee.

1. The Finance Committee is formed at the last Senate meeting of the year and consists of the Director of Finance of the future Executive Board and two more Senators of the future Senate. The purpose of the Finance Committee is to oversee the evaluation and compiling of the GSA budget at the beginning of each year, propose the yearly GSA budget to the Senate at the first meeting of the year (or as soon as possible upon the commencement of the academic year), monitor the use of the GSA budget throughout the year, and report to the Senate the budget statistics at the end of each semester.

Article V. Office of Graduate Student Life.

Section 1.

1. The supervisor of the GSA Executive Board is the Assistant Director of the Office of Graduate Student Life.
2. The Assistant Director serves as the primary resource to the GSA and assures that the GSA functions in compliance with the rules and regulations of Boston College and in the spirit of the University.
3. The Assistant Director will hold the Executive Board accountable for maintaining fair and equal practices within the GSA.
4. The Assistant Director will assist in the development of GSA meetings, functions, and events.
5. The Assistant Director does not vote on GSA matters, but will hold the GSA to the tenets of the Constitution and to Boston College’s principles, policies, and procedures, except as required in special circumstances as defined below.
6. The Assistant Director will coordinate the annual hiring process for the Executive Board, pursuant to IV.2.
7. The Assistant Director has the responsibility to appoint vacant Executive Board positions with Senate approval, pursuant to IV.2.
8. The Assistant Director will confirm all constitutional amendments, pursuant to VI.2.
Article VI. Constitutional Amendments.

Section 1. Definition

1. A Constitutional amendment modifies the GSA constitution, either through the addition of text, the subtraction of text, a new understanding of language found in the text, or a reordering of language currently found in the text.

Section 2. Procedures

1. Constitutional Amendments may be submitted by members of the GSA, Senators, and the Executive Board. Any proposed amendment must be presented in writing to the Executive Director. By default, an amendment is immediately added to the subsequent meeting agenda unless the Executive Director determines that it must be tabled at the present time. If the proposed amendment is tabled, it must be discussed at the subsequent meeting, and can only be tabled by majority vote of the Senate.

2. Constitutional Amendments proposed according to VI.2.1 are passed by majority vote in the Senate. A quorum is constituted by the presence of seven (7) Senators with voting privileges. Amendments so passed are submitted to the Assistant Director of Graduate Student Life for confirmation. Any confirmation withheld summons all Senators into a Committee of the Whole at the next meeting wherein the Assistant Director is given a hearing by all Senators. A vote is then taken by all eligible Senators at the same meeting after the hearing concludes, any crucial changes to the amendment notwithstanding. If the amendment passes the Senate again, the Assistant Director is given the opportunity to confirm. If confirmation is denied this second time, a consensus decision must be reached by the Senate’s executive committee, composed of the Assistant Director and the chairs of the permanent committees. Without consensus at this stage, the amendment fails. If the amendment passes, a full report of this committee’s deliberations must be presented to the Senate at the next meeting.