

CONSTITUTION

BLACK GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (BGSA)

ARTICLE I – NAME

The official name of this organization shall be Black Graduate Student Association (hereafter referred to as “BGSA”).

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of BGSA shall be to foster a sense of community among the Black graduate student body by representing and acting upon its academic, cultural, intellectual, social, and political concerns and interests.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Description

The membership of BGSA will consist of all graduate students at Northwestern University who personally identify with and support the expressed purpose(s) of the organization. All members are expected to register with BGSA, attend meetings, and participate in events.

Section 2: Three Classes of Membership

- 1) Active member – person who is pursuing an advanced degree from Northwestern University and has fulfilled the registration requirements with the organization
- 2) Alumni member – person who previously attended Northwestern University and completed their advanced degree who wishes to continue correspondence with the organization and fulfilled the registration requirements
- 3) Honorary member – person who has contributed to BGSA objectives, and conferred by majority vote of the Executive Board.

Section 3: Registration Requirements

Registration requirements entail that an interested member submit the following information to the organization annually:

- A) Name & Department
- B) Degree Sought
- C) Expected Graduation Date
- D) Email Address
- E) Undergraduate Institution

Upon submission of this information, an individual will be an active/alumni member for the duration of one academic year.

Section 4: Benefits of Membership

The benefits of becoming an active member with the BGSA are as follows:

- A) Election to Office - Any active member may be nominated and/or elected to an Executive Council position.
- B) Voting – Only active members may vote and voice opinion on issues that concern BGSA.
- C) Listserv Addition – Active members will receive emails regarding current BGSA information, meeting times, etc.
- D) Student Networking – Active members gain opportunities to meet and network with other members of the organization and the community as a whole.
- E) Department Recruitment- Active members may be contacted by prospective graduate students interested in their respective academic departments/programs. They may elect to make their information available on the organization’s website.
- F) Alumni – Active members have access to the BGSA database of Northwestern University alumni.
- G) Community- Active members maintain contact with the undergraduate community and The Graduate School at Northwestern University to voice concerns about issues through the organization.

Section 5: Anti-Discrimination Clause

Membership and participation in BGSA are free from discrimination based on race, religion, ethnic group, nationality, sex, disability or gender.

ARTICLE IV – GENERAL MEETINGS

General meetings shall take place on a monthly basis.

ARTICLE V – EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Section 1: General Provisions

The Executive Council (hereafter referred to as the “Council”) shall consist of seven (7) members elected by the membership. The positions are as follows: President, President-Elect, Treasurer, Administrative Coordinator, Programs Coordinator, Membership and Marketing Coordinator, Website Coordinator and Community Outreach Coordinator. General Meetings and Executive Council Meetings will be presided over by the President. Each officer shall have the power of one vote in regards to Executive Council decisions. Each member shall have the power of one vote. The Executive Council will meet on a monthly basis, with each council member presenting an account of their activities at these meetings.

Section 2: Terms of Office

The terms of office of any Executive Council member shall be from the second Tuesday in May through the following May. Council members may run for re-election once, after their term of office expire. The newly elected officers will assume responsibility for the organization at the last meeting of the academic year in June and will be responsible for planning events for the upcoming year.

Section 3: Vacancies

There must be at least seven people on the Executive Council at all times. If a position is vacated, the remaining executive council members must appoint a new officer by a majority vote. In the event of a deadlock, a new

candidate must be proposed by one of the Executive Council members. The process of appointing a new officer shall take place within thirty (30) days from the date of vacancy.

Section 4: Quorum

At least five (5) members must be present in order to proceed with a general body meeting. In the event that a quorum is not reached, the President shall reschedule the meeting for a later date. Committee meetings and other special meetings shall not be held to this standard.

Section 5: Voting

A simple majority vote of active members on any issue put forth in a meeting of the Executive Council or the general membership wins the vote.

ARTICLE VI – EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POSITION DUTIES

Section 1: President

The President of BGSA is responsible for overseeing the general operations of the organization and calling all general and executive board meetings. This includes determining the operating budget, co-sponsorship of various events with other organizations, and theme / focus of the general body meetings. The president should be an active member and have served on the conference planning committee within the last two years. He or she facilitates the general body meetings and invites speakers for the Fireside Chat, a space for BGSA members and other students to discuss events/issues that impact our community. The President will be responsible for co-signing financial releases for BGSA activities and events. The President serves as the chairperson of the Annual BGSA Research Conference. The President also serves on the Graduate Leadership Council (GLC), which acts as an advocate for graduate student issues and an advisory board for The Graduate School. The GLC meets every month and prepares a written report and oral presentation for the Board of Trustees once a year (typically in December). After his/her term, the President should act as a consultant for the incoming President, pending availability, and at the request of the current officer.

Section 2: Vice President

The major role of the Vice President is to assist the President with organizing meetings, making decisions, planning the annual research conference, and serving on the Graduate Leadership Council as a representative of the BGSA. The Vice President is responsible for representing the BGSA to the community at large, particularly when the President is in unable to do so.

Moreover, the Vice President will serve as a liaison to other Northwestern minority graduate student organizations (including, but not limited to, the Student National Medical Association, Black Management Association, Black Law Students Association). The Vice President will also create and maintain a directory and active relationships with other campus leaders to enhance inter-organization collaboration and strengthen the visibility and viability of minority graduate groups.

Section 3: Finance Coordinator

The position of Finance Coordinator primarily involves maintaining the BGSA budget. The duties of the Finance Coordinator shall be to keep track of all funding issued to and used by the association. The Finance Coordinator must maintain an accurate and detailed ledger, complete with receipts of all expenditures. The President and President-elect will create a budget in the summer and thereafter the budget will be in the control of the Finance Coordinator. The Finance Coordinator must attend annual training meetings to learn the processes involved in acquiring and using association funds from the Student Organization Funding Office (SOFO). The Finance Coordinator shall prepare and present a monthly budget report to the Executive Council.

In maintaining the budget, the Finance Coordinator will be responsible for reimbursements and payments, which will require him/her to meet with our advisor and make a trip to the SOFO office, located at Norris Student Center. On a

monthly basis the Finance Coordinator will make one to two trips to see one of our advisors to obtain signatures on any receipts. Trips to SOFO to drop off vouchers, pick up checks and tax-exempt forms are required as necessary.

Section 4: Administrative Coordinator

The Administrative Coordinator is responsible for reserving rooms and ordering food for all general body and executive committee meetings. Room reservations for general body and executive committee meetings are made online at the African American Student Affairs and/or Norris University Center website.

The Administrative Coordinator shall take minutes at General Body and Executive Committee meetings and disseminate the minutes to members in a timely fashion (within three weeks of the meeting). The Administrative Coordinator works primarily in conjunction with the President, Treasurer, and Graduate Programs Coordinators to complete the above tasks. This officer shall also assist the Membership and Marketing Coordinator with administrative responsibilities related to mailings.

Section 5: Programs Coordinator

The Programs Coordinator shall plan BGSA events and programs to enrich the social, academic, and community outreach interests of graduate students. This involves working with undergraduates, graduate students and faculty to obtain ideas, plan and implement effective and well-designed programming. Responsibilities include planning the fall quarter welcome back barbecue, the fall quarter study break, and the winter and spring quarter cultural outings. The Graduate Programs Coordinator shall also assist the Membership and Marketing Coordinator in evaluating the efficacy of BGSA events after each event. In accordance to the interests of the current graduate student body, the Programs Coordinator will help the Community Programs Coordinator design community outreach programs and mentorship programs with the Northwestern undergraduates.

Section 6: Membership and Marketing Coordinator

The Membership and Marketing Coordinator shall be responsible for advertising, promoting and marketing the vision and programs of the BGSA. This officer shall seek to cultivate the current membership and design strategies to increase the active membership. The officer shall work with TGS to obtain a list of current Black graduate students and coordinate the beginning of the year and mid-year membership mailings.

Importantly, the Coordinator shall make note of the attendees at each event and correspond with the attendees to obtain feedback regarding the overall efficacy of the program. In this respect, the Coordinator will communicate frequently with the General Body to keep track of the needs, interests and ideas of the membership in order to enhance overall engagement. Lastly, the Coordinators shall create and implement opinion surveys (twice yearly in September and January) to gauge students' interests regarding programming and other needs. The Membership and Marketing Coordinator will be aided by the Administrative Coordinator on tasks related to the administrative needs (mailing and survey coordinator) and aided by the Graduate Programs Chair on tasks related to the design and evaluation of graduate programs.

Section 7: Website Coordinator

The responsibilities of the Website Coordinator are to keep the BGSA home page up-to-date and to construct and maintain the conference website. Managing the BSGA home page primarily involves updating the announcements page on a weekly basis as you receive new announcements from the Executive committee. This can be done simply using Microsoft Word and an FTP client. Maintenance of the conference website is slightly more involved as it requires knowledge about the forms and scripts necessary to save registrant information into our database. Fortunately, the code to do this has already been written, so the new coordinator would only need to understand how it works and activate the registration site at the appropriate time. Other than these main responsibilities, the coordinator is responsible for updating pictures, posting meeting minutes, adding new pages, and editing the current site in any way that the Executive Board sees fit.

Section 8: Community Outreach Coordinator

The Community Outreach Coordinator shall plan BGSA events and programs that fosters a community between graduate and undergraduate students along with community outreach within Evanston and Chicago. This involves with meeting and planning with graduate and undergraduate students to obtain ideas, plan and facilitate programs. The officer will serve as a liaison to undergraduate organizations and help in joint event planning with the said organizations. In addition, this officer shall assist the larger undergraduate community with retention and recruitment. Responsibilities for community outreach include researching community outreach opportunities, maintaining correspondence and serving as liaison for BGSA with community/ charitable organizations.

Section 9: Conference Chair and Undergraduate Outreach Coordinator

The Conference Chair and Undergraduate Outreach Coordinator shall plan the annual research conference and BGSA events and programs that fosters a community between graduate and undergraduate students. This involves meeting and planning with graduate and undergraduate students to obtain ideas, plan, and facilitate programs. The officer will serve as a liaison to undergraduate organizations and help in joint event planning with graduate and undergraduate organizations. The annual research conference will involve both graduate and undergraduate students. Responsibilities for conference planning include organizing and overseeing the conference committee, planning conference activities, and serving as the liaison for conference contacts and attendees.

ARTICLE VII – ELECTION PROCEDURES

Section 1: General Provisions

A general election for BGSA Executive Council members shall take place at the last general meeting of the year to be held in May of the academic year. All election procedures will be governed and supervised by the outgoing Executive Council members.

Section 2: Nominations

Nominations for office will be taken in April of the academic year. Only active members of the BGSA may make nominations for all offices of the BGSA. An active member may nominate himself/herself for an office. Nominations will be taken from the floor at the April monthly meeting. All nominations procedures will be governed and supervised by the current Executive Council.

Section 3: Voting

Voting for new Council Members will take place by secret ballot at the election meeting held in May of the academic year. The outgoing Executive Council members not running for a new office will tally the votes.

ARTICLE VIII – AMENDMENTS

Any member may propose an amendment to the Constitution by submitting it in writing to the Council at a general meeting during the ‘Any Other Business’ section of the agenda. After being reviewed and discussed by the Executive Council, the person who proposed the amendment will present it to the membership at the next general meeting. The Administrative Coordinator shall be responsible for notifying the membership that an amendment has been proposed and will be discussed at an upcoming general meeting. All amendments must be passed by a majority of the current BGSA membership.

ARTICLE IX – BUDGETARY CONCERNS

The preliminary budget, prepared by the Treasurer, shall be passed by a majority vote by the Fall Quarter. The Treasurer and the President must sign all checks before funds may be disbursed.

NOTES:

This Constitution has been prepared by the members of the constitution committee: Rona Green-Taylor, Krista Johnson, Bill Grant, Myrthil Freeman, Elizabeth Duval, Denise Watson, and Duane Scott in Fall Quarter, 1995.

This Constitution has been amended by the 2003-2004 Executive Council and passed by the BGSA general membership October 2003.

This Constitution has been amended by the 2009-2010 Executive Council and passed by the BGSA general membership May 2010.

This Constitution has been amended by the 2013-2014 Executive Council and passed by the BGSA general membership September 2013.