

# CONSTITUTION OF THE GRADUATE SENATE

## LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

### **Article I Name**

The name of this organization shall be The Graduate Senate of Liberty University.

### **Article II Purpose**

As a deliberative body comprising members representing the faculty of the various graduate programs of Liberty University, the Graduate Senate in a spirit of prayerful consideration shall conduct the general business of the Faculty as it pertains to graduate educational concerns. The Graduate Senate shall be authorized by the General Faculty to advise and make recommendations to the Provost and Chief Academic Officer of Liberty University (hereafter referred to as "Provost") on the initiation, modification, suspension, and discontinuation of graduate programs. It evaluates, recommends revisions of, and approves graduate curriculum.

### **Article III Units of the Faculty**

The units of the faculty shall be the graduate programs of Liberty University as determined by the Graduate Senate.

### **Article IV Units of Representation**

The deans of each college or school with a graduate program may appoint up to two senators to the Graduate Senate. Ex-officio members shall be the Dean of The Graduate School, Vice-Provost for Graduate Education, the University Registrar, Associate Registrar for Graduate Studies, the Director of Admissions, and University officers at or above the rank of dean.

### **Article V Eligibility for Graduate Senator**

Representatives to the Graduate Senate shall be nominated by their respective dean from among qualified graduate faculty. Each college or school with existing or developing graduate programs chooses its representatives. Ex officio members of the Graduate Senate shall not be eligible to serve as unit representatives to the Graduate Senate.

### **Article VI Term of Office for Graduate Senator**

Representatives to the Graduate Senate shall be elected to a term of office consisting of three academic years. The terms to be served shall be staggered in such a way that approximately one-third of the Senate membership will be elected each year. The terms of office for Senate members shall commence at the beginning of the fall semester following their election and shall expire at the end of the spring semester of their third year of service. Representatives may be re-elected to subsequent terms.

## **Article VII Mode of Election for Graduate Senator**

During March of each year, the Chair of the Graduate Senate will notify all deans that are to nominate representatives from their college or school to be members of the Graduate Senate. The selection shall be made as specified in Article V.

## **Article VIII Officers of the Graduate Senate**

- A. **Officers.** The officers of the Graduate Senate shall be the President, the Chair, and the Secretary.
- B. **President.** The Provost of Liberty University shall be ex officio the President of the Graduate Senate. The President of the Graduate Senate shall have power to call and to preside at meetings of the Graduate Senate and of the Graduate Senate Executive Committee.
- C. **Chair.** The Chair of the Graduate Senate shall preside at meetings of the Graduate Senate. The Chair shall have authority to call special meetings of the Graduate Senate, at the request of and by permission of the Dean of The Graduate School. The role of Chair is indefinite and serves at the discretion of the Dean of The Graduate School. The Chair of the Graduate Senate shall act as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Graduate Senate.
- D. **Secretary.** The Secretary shall assume the responsibilities of the Chair in the absence of the Chair. A Secretary may be appointed by the Dean of The Graduate School, and serves at the discretion of the Dean of The Graduate School. The Secretary shall be a member of the full-time faculty of Liberty University. The Secretary shall prepare and post bills and minutes electronically of the Graduate Senate virtual and in-person meetings to all graduate faculty and to all members ex officio of the Graduate Senate. The minutes will have a list of all senators identified with the unit they are representing. The Secretary ensures that the proceedings of the Graduate Senate are conducted according to the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order with the exception that there shall be no secret ballot unless specified by this Constitution.
- E. **Curriculum Committee Chair.** The Chair of the Graduate Senate Curriculum Committee assigns tasks to, and notifies, the members of the committee for each proposal/bill to be presented to the Graduate Senate. The Chair works with the Secretary to communicate any questions or concerns to the department sponsoring a proposal/bill, and assists in the review of the proposals/bills.
- F. **Election and Term of Office for Chair, Secretary, and Curriculum Committee Chair.** These positions are filled by, and serve at the discretion of, the Dean of The Graduate School.

## **Article IX Ex Officio Members of the Graduate Senate**

- A. **Members.** Ex officio members of the Graduate Senate shall consist of those persons specified in Article IV above.
- B. **Voting.** Among the ex officio members of the Graduate Senate, only those who are serving as their college or school's representative shall be voting ex officio members of the Graduate Senate.

- C. New Positions.** The designation as an ex officio member of the Graduate Senate of any individual holding a newly created administrative position shall be subject to approval by the Dean of The Graduate School. In any event, the voting ex officio membership of the Graduate Senate shall never exceed one-fourth of the total voting membership of the Graduate Senate.

## **Article X Meetings and Procedures**

- A. Meeting Schedule.** Virtual meetings may occur July through June of each academic year. The Provost, the Chair of the Graduate Senate, or one-fourth of sitting Graduate Senate members, may call special meetings. Meetings are conducted via web conference, though originators of proposed legislation are required to attend in-person. In-person meetings for the Graduate Senate body may be scheduled under extenuating circumstances.
- B. Proposed Legislation.** The Graduate Senate must consider any recommendation proposed by any of its members or committees, by any group of three members of the faculty or by the Provost of the University. Such recommendations must be submitted to the Graduate Senate for inclusion on the Graduate Senate agenda during the next proposal cycle of the Graduate Senate. Its originators upon submission shall sign the recommendation.
- C. Attendance.** Attendance at every meeting of the Graduate Senate is required. Electronic means will be used to determine attendance for each Graduate Senate member. Absentees may be excused for due cause by the Graduate Senate Chair. Any member who accumulates three absences during the academic year shall forfeit the right to membership on the Graduate Senate and shall be ineligible to serve on the Graduate Senate for at least one academic year. In such cases, the dean of the college or school shall take action to secure a replacement unit representative. In the Graduate Senate, a quorum shall consist of a majority of the voting membership.
- D. Voting.** A majority vote shall be required for a bill or resolution to pass the Graduate Senate.
- E. Bills.** When the Graduate Senate passes a bill, it shall be signed by the Chair of the Graduate Senate, Dean of The Graduate School, Vice-Provost for Graduate Education, and Provost. The decision of the Provost is final. In the event that the bill needs to be addressed by the Liberty University Board of Trustees, the Board's decision will be included in the minutes.
- F. Resolutions.** When the Graduate Senate passes a resolution, it shall be signed by the Chair and submitted to the Dean of The Graduate School for consideration by the Provost. No response from the Provost is required for a resolution.

## **Article XI Graduate Senate Committees**

- A. Purpose.** The standing committees of the Graduate Senate are formed as needed and can serve as the centers of investigation and consideration through which most of the Graduate Senate's business can be initiated. The establishment of standing committees places the diverse responsibilities of the Graduate Senate into smaller bodies, each with specific areas of concern.

- B. Relationship to the Graduate Senate.** The committees exist as extensions of, and are subordinate to, the entire Graduate Senate assembly. The Graduate Senate must ratify all committee recommendations.
- C. Membership on Committees.** The Graduate Senate Elections Committee may nominate a faculty member to a committee. Standing committee membership shall consist of no more than one member from each College or School except where otherwise specified. Unless otherwise specified, both graduate senators and faculty members approved to teach at the graduate level shall be eligible for election to the standing committees. The Dean of The Graduate School, Vice-Provost for Graduate Education, and Provost shall be ex officio members of all standing and ad hoc committees of the Graduate Senate except the Senate Elections Committee.
- D. Election to Committees.** Elections shall be held at the regular Graduate Senate meeting in April of each year. Except when otherwise specified, the Graduate Senate Elections Committee shall provide a slate of nominees for each Graduate Senate standing committee for inclusion in the agenda for the regular April meeting. The slate of nominees shall include the designation of a senator as Chair of each committee and a secretary for each committee. Committee vacancies occurring after the April meeting shall be filled by a special vote of the Graduate Senate from names submitted by the Graduate Senate Elections Committee.
- E. Organization of Committees.** It is the responsibility of the committee chair to call committee meetings according to a schedule that allows committee members due notice of each meeting. Meetings may take place electronically. Prior to each meeting, the chair must provide committee members with an agenda of the items to be considered. The committee secretary shall keep minutes of the meetings and provide copies of these minutes to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Graduate Senate, the Provost, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Recommendations from standing committees must be submitted to the Graduate Senate in writing prior to the regular monthly meeting of the Executive Committee if they are to be included on the Senate's agenda. All committee recommendations must be submitted to the Graduate Senate for action.
- F. Annual Committee Reports.** At the request of the moderator, Executive Committee, or ex-officio members of the Graduate Senate, each standing committee chair may be asked to prepare an annual written report of the committee's action as it relates to the charge given that committee in this Constitution. The Executive Committee shall establish a schedule for submission of reports by the various committees in conjunction with the committee chairs as appropriate. Committee chairs may be asked to meet with the Executive Committee to discuss the report.
- G. Procedure for Communicating with Committees.** Individuals or groups wishing to present recommendations and matters for consideration by a particular committee will do this in writing to the Chair of the Graduate Senate for assignment to the appropriate standing committee. Committees shall receive requests from and make reports to the Administration only through the Executive Committee of the Graduate Senate.
- H. Standing Committees.** The Graduate Senate shall establish committees when and as it is determined necessary. The membership of each committee, except the Executive Committee, shall consist of at least three members, and no unit shall be represented by more than one member on each committee.

- I. Executive Committee.** The Executive Committee of the Graduate Senate of Liberty University shall consist of the Dean of The Graduate School, the Chair of the Graduate Senate, the Curriculum Committee Chair, and two at-large members elected at the second meeting of the spring semester to take office on July 1. The Executive Committee shall meet virtually prior to each regular meeting of the Graduate Senate and at the call of the Provost or the Chair of the Graduate Senate. The functions of the Graduate Senate Executive Committee shall include the following:
- a. to set the agenda for Graduate Senate meetings including a time for the University Provost (or a representative designated by the Provost) to respond to questions from, and provide information to, the Graduate Senate;
  - b. to serve as a channel through which any group of three faculty may introduce matters for consideration by the Senate;
  - c. to assign to the standing committees such work as is within the charge of each committee;
  - d. to submit to the Graduate Senate for action all recommendations from the Graduate Senate standing committees and Graduate Senate ad hoc committees;
  - e. to solicit annual reports from and evaluate action by the Graduate Senate Standing Committees;
  - f. to act on behalf of the Graduate Senate as needed during the summer (such action will be subject to approval by the Graduate Senate when convened);
  - g. to review legislation, in conjunction with the Graduate Curriculum Committee, prior to presentation to the Graduate Senate; and
  - h. to interpret this Constitution.
- J. Graduate Curriculum Committee.** Each college or school dean with a graduate program may appoint one representative to the Curriculum Committee. This committee coordinates and advises on graduate academic matters and recommends policy to the Graduate Senate. It advises on the initiation, modification, suspension, and discontinuation of graduate programs. It receives proposals for consideration only after approval at the department and college or school levels. Each committee member is assigned a specific task/function to review for each proposal to assist in the expediting of proposals. The committee consists of at least one member from each department having a graduate degree program. The Dean of the Jerry Falwell Library, University Registrar, Associate Registrar for Graduate Studies, and the Director of Admissions shall be ex officio members of this Committee.
- K. Ad Hoc Committees.** The Provost or the Graduate Senate may appoint special committees as occasions warrant.
- L. Dual Graduate Senate and Faculty Senate Committees.** Due to the overall mission of the University, and its relationship to its faculty and where overall faculty and University benefits are best served, the following committees will be represented and governed by both the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Faculty Senate as Dual Standing Faculty Senate Committees. The dual committees include the Faculty Life and Wellness Committee, the Student Life Committee, the Academic Facility-Use Committee, the Information Services Committee, and the Athletic Committee. All committee recommendations will be presented to both the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Senate for ratification.

Elections to Dual Standing Faculty Senate Committees shall be held at a combined Faculty Senate and Graduate Senate meeting in April of each year. Except when otherwise specified, the Faculty Senate

and Graduate Senate Elections Committees shall provide a slate of nominees for each Senate standing committee, for inclusion in the agenda for the regular April meeting. The nominations shall include the designation of a senator to serve as Vice-Chairperson or as Chairperson of each committee. Committee vacancies occurring after the April meeting shall be filled by special vote of the Faculty Senate and Graduate Senate from names submitted by the Faculty Senate and Graduate Senate Elections Committees.

There will be a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for each Dual Committee. The Chair and Vice-Chair positions will be represented by one senator from the Graduate Faculty Senate and one from the Faculty Senate. The position of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will rotate between the two elected senators for each senate body. The Vice-Chairperson must serve one year as an active committee member before serving as the Vice-Chairperson. The Graduate or Faculty Senate Executive Committee may appoint senators to replace a senator who can no longer serve until faculty elections can be called to replace or affirm said member.

- M. Athletic Committee.** The mission of Faculty Senate Athletics Committee (FSAC) is to promote consistency with the academic standards and overall mission of the University in the policies and procedures of the Athletics Department to ensure the holistic development of its student-athletes. The committee is comprised of faculty members and representatives appointed from each academic college/school and approved by the Undergraduate and Graduate Faculty Senate. At least one Faculty Senator and one Graduate Faculty Senator serve as Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee and are responsible for reporting between Senate bodies and the committee. As approved by the elections committee, the chair, vice chair, and secretary are responsible for leading meetings, recording minutes, and setting agendas for the committee. The Athletic Director, the Senior Women's Administrator (SWA), the Senior Vice President for Student Affairs, the campus Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR; voting), and the University Registrar shall be *ex officio* members of this committee. In addition, two members of the Student-Athlete Advisory Council serve as consulting members of the committee.
- a. **Committee on Faculty Life and Wellness.** This Committee shall seek to foster optimum professional achievement by every faculty member. This includes encouragement in the use of effective teaching methods and in scholarly research and writing. The Committee makes recommendations regarding leave policy, fringe benefits, salary, and criteria for determining faculty rank.
  - b. **Information Services Committee.** This Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Dean of the Jerry Falwell Library. The Committee provides a liaison between the faculty and Library. It provides input for ongoing facilities development and helps evaluate the effectiveness of the Library and information services. The Dean of the Jerry Falwell Library and the Chief Information Officer shall be *ex-officio* members of the Committee.
  - c. **Committee on Student Life.** This Committee provides a channel of communication between Faculty and Students, between the Faculty and the Office for Student Affairs, and for faculty input into *The Liberty Way*. It establishes and enforces qualifications for officers in the Student Senate and oversees student elections. It assists the Senior Vice President for Student Affairs in planning and scheduling social and other extracurricular events. The Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and the President of the Student Government Association shall be *ex officio* members of the Committee.
  - d. **Academic Facility-Use Committee.** This Committee provides information and makes recommendations to the Faculty Senate and Graduate Senate on matters related to the

instructional use of University property. This includes such matters as equipment, maintenance, scheduling, custodial service, and construction. The goal of the Committee is to maximize the usefulness of academic space for instruction. For construction projects, the Committee would help to bring the appropriate academic departments into direct consultation with the administration. The Senior Vice President for Auxiliary Services and the Senior Vice President for Construction Planning shall be ex officio members of the Committee.

## **Article XII Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed to the Graduate Senate by any of its standing committees, by the petition of one-fourth of the voting members of the Graduate Senate, or by the Provost of Liberty University.

Amendments that are passed by a two-thirds vote of the Graduate Senate shall be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Graduate Faculty. Amendments shall be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the Graduate Faculty. Amendments to the Graduate Senate Constitution are subject to approval by the Dean of The Graduate School, Vice-Provost for Graduate Education, and Provost.

Minor modifications of existing Constitution articles need to pass the Graduate Senate by a two-thirds vote and approved by the Dean of The Graduate School. Minor revisions or changes to titles, roles, and positions may be updated without Graduate Senate approval.

This Constitution ends with Article XII above.

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