

**BYLAWS OF THE  
GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF  
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA**

**Article I – Name**

The name of our organization shall be the Graduate Student Association (GSA) of Saint Mary's College of California (SMC), henceforth referred to as GSA of SMC or GSA.

**Article II – Purpose**

GSA's purpose is to foster a sense of community among graduate students, provide leadership opportunities, act as a conduit of information to graduate students, encourage the active engagement of graduate students on SMC matters that affect them, represent the needs of graduate students to the administration, and host in-person and virtual social gatherings for graduate students. GSA understands and is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities by abiding by SMC's policies for student organizations.

**Article III – Authority**

The authority of this constitution and bylaws is the basis for the conduct of all business of the GSA. The GSA's Constitution and Bylaws shall form the authoritative base for all graduate student government policies. The final authority of the GSA shall perpetually be vested in the members of the graduate student body and enumerated by this Constitution. The GSA shall be the primary representative of the graduate student body at SMC.

**Article IV – General Membership**

**Section 1. Membership.** The eligible membership of GSA shall consist of all currently enrolled full-time and part-time SMC graduate students.

**Section 2. Non-Discrimination Statement.** GSA shall not discriminate based on race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, personal appearance, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, or based on rights secured by the First, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution.

**Section 3. Proposed GSA Activity Fee.** Fully enrolled and part-time graduate students at SMC will be assessed a Graduate Student Activity Fee for their participation. The GSA fee will support GSA funding requests, social and network events for graduate students, requests for conference and travel by GSA officers, operational costs, and officer stipends. The GSA Activity Fee may be changed as a constitutional amendment and as approved by the St. Mary's College of California Board of Trustees.

**Section 4. Fundraising.** GSA may hold fundraising opportunities each semester to supplement the organization's budget.

**Article V – Officers**

**Section 1. Executive Branch Composition.** The Executive Branch of the GSA will be composed of the following elected officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Director of Communications.

**Section 2. President.** The GSA President shall be an elected member and be held accountable to the GSA members for proper conduct and efficient administration of all GSA responsibilities. To serve as GSA President, prior leadership experience in student organizations is desirable. The GSA President is authorized to:

1. Chair and be a non-voting ex-officio of the GSA Senate. The President may only vote in case of a tie.
2. Appoint Executive Officer positions with a two-thirds affirmation vote from the GSA Senate when positions are not filled during the election process or become vacant.
3. In coordination with the Executive Board, establish annual goals and objectives for the GSA and share them with the GSA Senate.
4. In coordination with the Secretary, develop and disperse meeting agendas.
5. Sign or veto all measures the GSA Senate adopts within 5 business days after being adopted.
6. Call for special meetings of the GSA Senate if deemed necessary.
7. Execute all graduate student government affairs and/or delegate responsibility to GSA Executive Officers.
8. Ensure the Elections Committee is formed and prepared for running GSA elections.
9. Serve as the primary representative of the Graduate Student Body.
10. Have such powers as necessary for the fulfillment of the duties of the office and are consistent with other provisions of this Constitution.

**Section 3. Vice President.** The GSA Vice President shall be an elected member of the GSA. To serve as GSA Vice President, the student must have prior leadership experience in student organizations. The GSA Vice President has the authority and responsibility to:

1. Act in place of the GSA President during a leave of absence, incapacity, or resignation.
2. Be a voting ex-officio member of the GSA Senate.
3. Assume such executive functions as may be delegated by the GSA President.
4. Assist the GSA President in establishing annual goals and objectives for the FSA.
5. Appoint members of the GSA and Senators to various internal standing and ad hoc committees.
6. Assign GSA Senators to be liaisons to various on-campus constituencies.
7. Coordinate the selection of GSA Senators when positions are not filled during the election process or become vacant. Specific duties include narrowing down the applicants to qualified candidates to bring in front of the GSA Senate at a GSA meeting for review and selection voting.
8. Maintain records of all University committees with student representation and establish committee appointees.

**Section 4. Treasurer.** The GSA Treasurer shall be an elected member of the GSA and has the authority and responsibility to:

1. Be a voting ex-officio member of the GSA Senate.
2. Receive, process, and maintain all budget requests and funding for GSA.
3. Draft, maintain, and distribute bi-weekly updates for the GSA financial accounts.
4. Have final authority on all recommendations to the Senate on annual budget allocations.
5. Present the annual and semiannual GSA budget to the GSA Senate.
6. Serve as a liaison to St. Mary's College budget office.
7. Chair the GSA Finance Committee.

**Section 5. Secretary.** The GSA Secretary shall be an elected member of the GSA. The Secretary has the authority and responsibility to:

1. Be a voting ex-officio member of the GSA Senate.
2. Maintain all attendance records at all official meetings, office hours, and mandatory events.
3. In collaboration with the President, develop and disperse meeting agendas.
4. Serve as the official record keeper of GSA Senate and GSA Executive Board Meetings.
5. Disperse emails and other forms of communication with GSA members.
6. Maintain records (i.e., forms, documents, minutes, agendas, etc.).
7. Approve all postings, surveys, or fliers displaying the GSA logo.
8. Supervise the committees/groups putting on GSA events and tabling.
9. Serve as the liaison to the St. Mary's College Communications office.

**Section 6. Director of Communications.** The GSA Director of Communication shall be an elected member of the GSA. The Director of Communication has the authority and responsibility to:

1. Be a voting ex-officio member of the GSA Senate.
2. Create marketing materials and promotional items for GSA related issues or events (including social media and SMC communications) to encourage student engagement.
3. Create, update, and maintain the GSA website and GSA social media content.
4. Design, draft, distribute, and manage subscriptions to the GSA e-newsletter.
5. Write, distribute, and manage GSA press releases.

## **Article V – Senate**

**Section 1. Composition.** There are 25 graduate programs run by SMC's four colleges. The GSA Senate will be composed of two graduate student representatives from each of the four SMC graduate schools, as follows.

- School of Education (KSOE)
  - 2 Senator Representatives
- School of Business (SEBA)
  - 2 Senator Representatives
- School of Liberal Arts (SOLA)
  - 2 Senators Representatives
- School of Science
  - 1 Senator Representative
- The entire GSA Executive Branch including the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Director of Communication

**Section 2. Senator Responsibilities.** The GSA Senators will have the following responsibilities:

1. Voting member of the GSA Senate; and
2. Must act with vested legislative authority (including proposing and passing resolutions) with GSA; and
3. Collectively, with fellow Senators, have the authority to determine the general policies of the GSA; and
4. Collectively, with fellow Senators, have the authority to override a GSA Presidential veto by two-thirds vote of the GSA Senate; and
5. Approve the GSA annual budget by two-thirds vote; and
6. Serve as a representative to appointed committees, programs, and/or departments; and
7. Be responsible for researching advocacy issues relating to their constituency and sharing information with the GSA Senate for legislative action; and
8. Collect input data from surveys about pertinent student issues on campus; and
9. Ratify by two-thirds vote executive officers appointed by the President with positions are not filled or become vacant; and
10. Elect Senators when positions are not filled or vacant, as presented by the Vice President.

#### **Article VI – GSA Advisor**

The GSA will have at least one advisor from SMC’s administration. The GSA Advisor has the authority and responsibility to:

1. Be appointed by the Office of Student Life and act as a non-voting unofficial member; and
2. Act as an observer and ensure that SMC’s policies are being adhered to; and
3. Attend GSA Senate meetings, GSA Executive Board Meetings, and GSA-run programs and events; and
4. Support the graduate student body; and
5. Oversee the budget and the expenditures of GSA and provide signature as needed on expenditure forms; and
6. Provide student leadership training for GSA officers and senators; and
7. Maintain records on Constitutional or bylaw amendments; and
8. Act as the liaison between the GSA and SMC.

#### **Article VII – Voting**

**Section 1. Senate Voting Eligibility.** All Executive Board members and Senators, except for the President, present at meetings, are eligible to vote.

**Section 2. President’s Role in Voting.** The role of the President is to facilitate meetings and voting opportunities. As a facilitator, it is essential for the President to remain objective, and thus is not allowed to vote. The President may vote in the case of a tie.

**Section 3. Quorum.** A quorum of 50% +1 of the Senate is required for a vote.

#### **Article VIII – Elections**

**Section 1. GSA Officer and Senator Eligibility.** Eligibility for all candidates and incumbents for any elected or appointed office shall meet the SMG regulations, as determined by the Office of Student Life. This includes:

1. Meet and maintain a grade point average of at least a 3.0 or passing grade for pass/no pass programs; and
2. Be a full-time or part-time enrolled graduate student with at least one quarter/semester, meeting the terms of enrollment at SMC; and
3. Be and maintain good student conduct standing with SMC; and
4. Elected officers may be elected to a maximum of two (2) one-year terms for the same office; and
5. Candidates not meeting the criteria are ineligible to run for the position from which they were disqualified.

**NOTE See SMC Constitution Article IV Elections**

**Section 2 – Election Procedures.** The GSA elections and referendum shall be conducted utilizing an approved online format accessible to all full-time and part-time graduate students enrolled at SMC. Elections will take place within the following format:

1. Elections will take place over three (3) consecutive weekdays (Monday – Wednesday) in the 9<sup>th</sup> week of the Spring semester (not including Spring Break); and
2. Elections are held electronically; and
3. Election voting will start at 8 a.m. on the first day and continue until 11 p.m. on the third day; and
4. Each currently enrolled graduate student, full and part-time, shall be eligible to vote for the following offices:
  - a. President
  - b. Vice President
  - c. Secretary
  - d. Treasurer
  - e. Director of Communications
  - f. Senators from their respective college (KSOE, SEBA, SOS, SOLA)
5. All election votes will be counted and confirmed by three (3) independent SMC staff members appointed by the SMC Advisor and announced on the fourth day after voting closes by 11 p.m. on the third day. All results and documentation shall be retained by the Office of Student Life for one calendar year.

**Section 3 – Elections Packets/Orientation Meeting.** Completed election packets will include the following information:

1. The candidate's full name, student identification number, address, contact information (email and phone number); and
2. The candidate's statement (150 words or less) outlining the candidate's goals, ideas or important on-campus issues; and
3. All candidates must attend a candidate orientation meeting near the beginning of the academic term. The meeting shall consist of an explanation of the Elections Code, an overview of the Election's timeline, and a question and answer period.

**Section 4 – Elections Promotions/Campaigning.** All General Election promotions and campaigning materials must adhere to the Saint Mary’s posting policy and meet the following guidelines:

1. All candidates, including write-in candidates, shall conduct their campaign in accordance with the provisions included within this Graduate Student Association Elections Code; and
2. All candidates shall be listed on the ballot under the name specified in the candidate application packet. All subsequent literature, including signs, fliers, buttons, stickers, advertisements, and other campaign materials, must read the candidate’s name exactly as it appears on the ballot; and
3. Harassment as defined within Saint Mary’s code of conduct is prohibited. This includes verbal, written (print or electronic), and physical abuse by any candidate; and
4. Advertising or campaigning which is libelous or slanderous is prohibited; and
5. “Campaigning” includes any verbal or non-verbal action that promotes the election of an official or write in candidate(s). This includes any materials that promote the election of a candidate(s); and
6. “Verbal campaigning” shall be defined as persuasive speaking to a prospective voter(s) that promotes the candidate’s election; and
7. “Active campaigning” shall be defined as the distribution of any material which promotes the election of a candidate(s); and
8. Campaigning may begin no earlier than the day after the electronic elections have been posted (not including break). The campaign period ends at 10 p.m. on the day before elections end (not including break); and
9. No partisan election materials of any kind shall be worn or displayed by any person assisting in implementing the General Election, counting ballots, and/or working the election; and
10. There shall be no advertising or campaigning that interferes with classroom instruction without the consent of the professor or instructor; and
11. An original of all printed and/or electronic campaign material(s) must be submitted to the Office of Student Life before distribution to determine ownership of the printed campaign materials and accountability of a candidate for said materials; and
12. There shall be no verbal or written campaigning (fliers, buttons, stickers, signs, etc.) during GSA meetings.

**Section 5 – Violations of the Elections Code.** All complaints of the Elections Code violations shall be presented, in writing, to the Administrative Advisor. All complaints shall be submitted by the first day of voting unless the complaint involves events after the first day of voting. After reviewing the complaint and determining its validity, the Administrative Advisor will coordinate the meeting of the GSA Review Committee. The GSA Review Committee will include the following individuals:

1. Administrator Advisor as an ad hoc member and chair of the committee; and
2. Four (4) non-GSA, non-partisan students selected by the Office of Student Life; and
3. A faculty representative selected by the provost or designee.

**Section 6 – GSA Review Committee Procedures.** The GSA Committee shall rule on a complaint within two business days of its submission. A two-thirds majority vote of the

committee shall be required for a complaint of a violation to be upheld. All committee members must be present for review by the GSA Review Committee of complaints or violations to be official. To afford the accused candidate substantive due process, both the candidate and the complaint's author shall be invited to the review meeting, and both shall be allowed to speak for and against the accusation.

**Section 7 – Penalties for Violations of the Elections Code.** Violations shall range from the GSA Review Committee reprimand to disqualification from the General Election. Any candidate who accumulates three or more reprimands or does not comply with the conditions in the reprimand shall be disqualified from the election. If a candidate is disqualified, the candidate(s) with the next highest vote count for that seat shall assume the vacated seat.

**Section 8 – Vacant Positions.**

1. The President will appoint Vacant executive board positions, requiring a two-thirds ratification vote by the Senate; and
2. The Vice President will coordinate the selection of vacant senator positions. Specifically, the Vice President will narrow down the applicants to qualified candidates, in alignment with the GSA Constitution guidelines, to bring in front of the GSA Senate at a GSA meeting for review and selection voting.

**Article IX – Removal from Office.** A member of the Executive Board may be sanctioned or removed from office on the grounds of not upholding the Constitution, Bylaws, election process, and/or Saint Mary's College Student Code of Conduct in accordance with the bylaws, by a three-fourths affirmative vote of no confidence by the whole GSA Senate. Notice of the hearing must be given to the member in question at least five business days prior to the meeting at which the removal is to be debated and voted upon. The member in question has the right to speak in their own defense before the vote takes place.

**Article X – Line of Succession**

**Section 1. President.** In the event of a vacancy in the office of President, they will be succeeded by the Vice President for the unexpired term of office. In the event, the Vice President is not available, the President position will be assumed according to the line of succession listed below:

1. Treasurer
2. Secretary

**Section 2. Executive Branch.** In the event of a vacancy in the Executive Branch, the President will appoint individuals to the board following candidate interviews. Individuals must meet essential criteria outlined in the GSA Constitution and need a two-thirds ratification by the board.

**Section 3. Senate.** In the event of vacancies in individual GSA Senate seats, the Vice President will coordinate with the Elections Committee to hold an impromptu election for GSA members within the given Graduate School to vote a new senator into office. If there is still no replacement for the vacancy after the impromptu election, then the President and remaining Senator of the Graduate School shall appoint someone to fill the vacant position.

## **Article XI - Officer Transition and Leadership Training**

**Section 1. GSA Student Leadership Training.** The current GSA Senators and Executive Branch Officers shall plan one transition meeting (scheduled during a GSA Senate meeting) with newly elected and appointed GSA officers and senators the week of the Spring Semester (not including break) to observe the process of the GSA meetings and receive student leadership training.

**Section 2. GSA Officer Transition Training.** Newly elected and appointed officers and senators shall be trained in their new office positions by the current officers, senators, advisors, and the Office of Student Life immediately following elections. GSA training shall be mandated for all GSA elected and appointed officers and senators.

**Section 3. Transition Period.** Within the period following the GSA elections or appointment, the GSA officers and senators shall contact the GSA officer-elect to initiate a transitional period to review the office's duties, procedures, and responsibilities. Transition topics may include but are not limited to incomplete projects or projects to be initiated, information considered pertinent to the effective operation of the GSA, and how to work effectively with university personnel, student groups, and the campus community.

**Section 3. GSA Officer Record Responsibilities.** Officers must keep, file, and maintain records of minutes, agendas, reports, contacts, budgets, the GSA Constitution and Bylaws, issues, activities, and/or programs that fall within their scope of office and were initiated, developed, and/or created by said person. These records must be kept in the student officer's GSA handbook and passed on to the succeeding officer.

## **Article XII – Structure and Operations**

### **Section 1. GSA Senate Branch Meetings.**

1. GSA Senate meetings will occur monthly, and coordinated at the beginning of each academic term unless otherwise specified; and
2. Robert's Rules of Order will be the standard for developing agendas and running meetings <https://robertsrules.com/>; and
3. Non-members may be invited to present to the GSA and may lead discussions or questions and answer sessions limited to their presentations.
4. General assembly structure/meeting format is as follows:
  - A. Opening Business
    - a. Call to Order
    - b. Roll Call
    - c. Review of Minutes
    - d. Review of Agenda
  - B. Public Forum
    - a. Open to any member of the Association or public to ask a question or make a comment concerning Graduate Student Association's business. Anyone who may be knowledgeable in the given subject matter may answer the question. Any question that cannot be answered at that time will be treated as a question to be discussed by the Senate at the next meeting.

- C. Docket
  - a. Agenda items for debate and action approved by the Institutional Affairs Board before the Senate meeting.
- D. New Business
  - a. At the close of docketed business, any senator may make a motion to discuss new business, which must be seconded by an additional Senate member.
- E. Reports
  - a. Updates from the school senators
  - b. Committee Reports
  - c. Vice President for Finance
  - d. Vice President for Student Organizations
  - e. Graduate Student Association President
  - f. Vice President for Administration
- F. Closing Business
- G. General Announcements
- H. Notice of next meeting

**Section 2. GSA Executive Branch Meetings.**

1. GSA Executive meetings will occur regularly at the discretion of the President, at a date and time not in conflict with GSA Senate meetings; and
2. GSA Executive meetings will be “closed meetings” limited to GSA Executive Board members and Advisors; and
3. As determined by the GSA Executive Board, non-GSA Executive Board members may be invited to meetings for discussion, question and answer sessions or presentations.

**Section 3. Closed Sessions.** All meetings of the committees covered in GSA bylaws shall be open to the public with the following exceptions: GSA committees may hold closed sessions to consider the appointment, dismissal, or sanctions of GSA Executive Board Member, GSA Senator, or individuals running for office; to hear complaints and/or charges against GSA Executive Board Member, GSA Senator, or individuals running for office.

**Article XIII Committees**

**Section 1 – Standing Committees.** The following are recognized (recommended) as GSA standing committees:

1. Judicial Committee (JC)
  - a. The Vice President chairs the JC, and
  - b. Membership on the Judicial Committee will consist of a Senator representative from each college; and
  - c. The JC shall be the judicial body of GSA responsible for interpreting the bylaws, Constitution, and all other governing documents, policies, and operating procedures of GSA; and
  - d. The JC shall have the power to declare as void acts found to violate conflict with the above-mentioned documents; and
  - e. The JC shall have the power to enforce legislated penalties; and
  - f. The JC shall operate according to procedure per the University; and

- g. Any member of the GSA Senate or any SMC graduate student may bring a case or appeal a GSA decision to the JC.
- 2. Finance Committee (FC)
  - a. The GSA Treasurer chairs the Finance Committee; and
  - b. The FC shall be empowered to make recommendations to the GSA Senate regarding the allocation of funds; and
  - c. The FC shall maintain constant communication with the financial officers of SMC; and
  - d. The FC shall act as the preliminary approvers of fund allocation before final approval by the SMC Senate.
- 3. Student Resources and Events Committee (SREC)
  - a. The SREC shall pursue projects increasing on-campus resources – academic and recreational – for students; and
  - b. The SREC shall attend administrative meetings regarding resources through campus offices; and
  - c. The SREC shall communicate with GSA the changing statuses of resource availability on campus.
  - d. The SREC shall pursue creating, implementing, and planning events intended to benefit graduate students or provide networking social opportunities; and
  - e. The SREC Shall work with offices and organizations on campus to provide opportunities for engagement to graduate students.
  - f. Other GSA student member volunteers may be appointed to be part of a standing committee to assist with its operations. The student must be voted in at a General Assembly/Senate Meeting.
- 4. Elections Committee (EIC)
  - a. The Elections Committee shall work to create, run, and maintain online elections for the Graduate Student Body at the required intervals stated in the Elections code and regulations earlier in the document.
  - b. Other GSA student member volunteers may be appointed to be part of a standing committee to assist with its operations. The student must be voted in at a General Assembly/Senate Meeting.

## **Article XIV**

### **Section 1: Recognition of Chartered Clubs**

To be officially chartered by the Graduate Student Association, any club or organization must go through the chartering process.

1. The organization must attend and participate in the new student organization process, upon submitting all required forms an organization will be registered.
2. The organization presents its completed Constitution, mission statement and charter petition to the Vice President for Student Organizations for review. The organization will then meet with the GSA and petition for their charter.
3. Any registered organization has until the end of the subsequent semester to petition to be chartered.
4. Denied applicants may attempt to charter again in a subsequent semester. Approved applicants are then approved by the GSA by a simple majority affirmative vote.

5. The Graduate Student Association recognizes charters approved by the GSA as provisionally approved.
6. All provisionally approved clubs must provide a presentation to the Graduate Student Association Senate, in which they must receive a two-thirds affirmative vote to officially be chartered.
7. Any club or organization can be disbanded by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Graduate Student Association Senate.

**Section 2: Pre-existing Graduate Student Clubs:** Previously existing Graduate Student Clubs and Organizations shall be grandfathered into the approval process upon the inauguration of the GSA.

**Article XV – Amendments**

Amendments to the GSA bylaws may be offered by all GSA Senate or Executive Board members. These bylaws shall be effective upon approval of a two-thirds majority vote by the GSA Senate.

**Article XVI – Ratification**

GSA Senate and GSA Executive Board member(s) shall have the authority to review and ratify the GSA bylaws with a two-thirds affirmation vote of the full-seated Senate. The GSA Constitution and Bylaws set all absolute precedents.