

By-Laws

Article 1. Definitions

Section 1.

GSS refers to the Graduate Student Senate.

Section 2.

Any references to “Villanova” or “University” denotes Villanova University as an entire institution.

Section 3.

Graduate Student refers to any person enrolled in a graduate program in any college at Villanova, regardless of credit hours or modality of program and who is in good standing with the University. Expulsion from Villanova immediately removes someone from the GSS entirely, regardless of appointed or elected position.

Section 4.

A graduate program is defined as a program that awards a postgraduate, non-certificate degree.

Section 5.

The College(s) refer to the five (5) colleges (along with their colloquial abbreviation) with graduate students at Villanova University:

- a. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS)
- b. College of Engineering (COE)
- c. M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing (Nursing)
- d. Villanova School of Business (VSB)
- e. Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law (Law School)

Section 6.

Semesters are defined as Fall, Spring, and Summer. The academic calendar refers to the Fall and Spring semesters.

Article 2. Mission and Purpose

The mission and purpose of the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) is to support the academic and non-academic well-being of the graduate student body at Villanova University.

Section 1.

The GSS will serve as the representative body of the graduate student community in all manners related to the graduate student experience at Villanova University.

Section 2.

The GSS will act in manner consistent with the University's Mission Statement:

Villanova University is a Catholic Augustinian community of higher education, committed to excellence and distinction in the discovery, dissemination and application of knowledge. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the University is grounded in the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition and advances a deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and reason. Villanova emphasizes and celebrates the liberal arts and sciences as foundational to all academic programs. The University community welcomes and respects members of all faiths who seek to nurture a concern for the common good and who share an enthusiasm for the challenge of responsible and productive citizenship in order to build a just and peaceful world.

Section 3.

The GSS will act as a liaison between Villanova University's administration, faculty, staff, and graduate students to promote effective communication strategies between each group.

Section 4.

The GSS will encourage communication, networking, and social interaction among graduate students through campus-wide events, hosted either by the GSS and through collaboration with others in the Villanova community.

Section 5.

The GSS will provide a forum for the graduate student body to discuss issues pertaining to the graduate student experience at Villanova.

Section 6.

The GSS will represent graduate student interests to the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff.

Article III. Membership

The GSS consists of General Members, Senators, and the Executive Board.

Article IV. General Members

Section 1.

Every graduate student currently enrolled in a graduate program is a General Member of the GSS.

Section 2.

Any General Member may become a Senator.

Section 3.

Any General Member who is employed as a Staff Member at Villanova may not serve as an Executive Board member.

Section 4.

Any General Member may be part of an internal committee unless otherwise specified.

Section 5.

General Members do not have voting power outside of General Elections or any committee in which they are a member of.

Article V. Senators:

Section 1.

Senators are General Members who are elected or appointed to represent the academic program (Academic Programs are listed in Appendix A) in which they are enrolled in. Graduate Students enrolled in dual programs may only serve as Senator for one program at a time.

Section 2.

Senators serve in their role for an academic year unless they are either replaced by their academic program director, they graduate from Villanova University and are no longer a graduate student, or they are expelled from the university. The academic program is responsible for filling any vacancies in a reasonable amount of time. A reasonable amount of time is between one (1) and (4) weeks of notice of vacancy.

Section 3.

The enrollment within each distinct program (masters and doctoral) during the Fall semester of each new academic year dictates the number of Senators.

- a. Programs with less than 500 students shall be allotted one (1) senator.
- b. Programs having between 500 and 1000 students shall be allotted two (2) senators.
- c. Programs with over 1000 students shall be allotted three (3) senators.

Section 4

If a new department or program is established or dissolved by the University, or there is an increase or decrease in the enrollment of an established department or program, a Senator shall be added (in accordance with its enrollment) to or removed from the GSS.

Section 5.

Each department may additionally appoint one (1) Alternate Senator for every Primary Senator they are allotted.

Section 6.

Each academic program is responsible to elect or appoint willing student(s) as their Primary and Alternate Senators by the third week of the Fall Semester.

- a. The Law School may appoint a senator in accordance with their own self-governing Student Bar Association of the Law in lieu of an appointed senator from their program director.
- b. Any pre-existing student group recognized by the Office of Student Involvement may appoint a senator in accordance with their constitution in lieu of an appointed senator from their program director.

Section 7.

The Executive Board reserves the right to review and modify in conjunction with the department or the SBA the selection process.

Section 8.

Departments oversee monitoring the integrity of their senators to ensure the constituents' and the department's needs are being met and are responsible for informing the GSS Secretary of any changes regarding their Senators.

Section 9.

Senators shall be recognized by the GSS based on attendance at Senate meetings.

- a. The Primary Senator(s) is responsible to sign in at the beginning each meeting with the Secretary.
- b. If the Primary Senator(s) is unable to attend a meeting, the Alternate Senator may act as their proxy with full voting power along with all other responsibilities bestowed upon the Primary Senator. The Alternate Senator may not vote in senate meetings unless they are acknowledged as the current acting senator by the Secretary at that time.
- c. A Senator will be determined "inactive" should they and their Alternate Senator both miss two consecutive meetings. To regain "active" status, the Senator must attend two consecutive meetings. Inactive Senators have no voting power and do not count towards quorum.

Section 10.

One (1) Senator is required to dispense meeting information to their program constituents.

Section 11.

Exceptions to the attendance policy, upon official request, may be made by the Executive Board.

Article VI. Executive Board

Section 1.

The Executive Board (EB) of the GSS is comprised of seven (7) elected officer positions:

- a. President
- b. Vice President
- c. Secretary,
- d. Treasurer
- e. Communications Officer
- f. External Affairs Officer
- g. International Student Affairs Officer.

Section 2.

Any Villanova University student enrolled Full-Time (as defined by their College) and is in good standing with the university may hold an Executive Board position.

Section 3.

Villanova Staff may not serve as an Executive Board officer.

Section 4. Executive Board Members may not serve as a senator for their academic program while they hold the Board position.

Section 5.

Any Executive Board member may call a vote on any Executive Board issue.

Section 6.

An Executive Board officer may concurrently hold an executive board position for a graduate student group recognized by the Office of Student Involvement EXCEPT for Treasurer. The Treasurer of the GSS Executive Board may not serve as Treasurer for any other student group at Villanova.

Section 7.

The Executive Board members shall not have voting powers in the matters of the Senate. However, if necessary, the President may act as tiebreaker.

Section 8.

The Acting GSS Advisor (the current Asst. Director of Graduate Student Engagement) is considered a non-voting member of the Executive Board and can be called upon as a tiebreaker.

Article VII. **Officers of the Executive Board**

Section 1.

Commented [JB1]: Trying to think through realistic projects each position can work on. Curious on your thoughts on the ones below.

The President will represent the entire graduate student body in all matters related to graduate student experience at Villanova. The President will act as the primary liaison between the GSS and University Administration. The President shall uphold the GSS Constitution and Bylaws and has authority of the implementation of GSS policy, as guided by the GSS and with support from the Executive Board. The President schedules, coordinates, sets the agenda, and presides over meetings of the General Assembly, Senate, and the Executive Board. The President, along with the VP, will write the Annual Report and has the power to remove and appoint committee chairpersons (with the backing of the Executive Board).

Section 2.

The Vice President assists the President in the execution of their duties. In absence of the President, due an inability to perform a particular duty or resignation, the Vice President will act in the capacity of the President to perform all duties. The Vice President will also oversee all internal committees and working group and will be the main contact person for external organizations and groups. The Vice President will also perform any duties that were assigned to them by the President.

Section 3.

The Secretary will be responsible for recording meeting minutes for the GSS General Assembly, Senate, and Executive Board. This includes taking attendance, recognizing active Senators, summarizing meeting minutes to interested GSS members, and maintaining GSS records. The Secretary will work with the President and the Communications Officer to oversee internal and external communication to the Villanova Community. The secretary will also perform any duties tasked to them by the President.

Section 4.

The Treasurer will be responsible for drafting and maintaining the budget and the other financial records of the GSS. This includes preparing and submitting the final budget, reporting any spending, coordinating reimbursements, and assisting with planning of GSS events with the Events Committee. The Treasurer may not be the Treasurer for any other organization while holding this position. The Treasurer will also perform any duties that were assigned to them by the President.

Section 5.

The Communications Officer will be responsible for maintaining communications to the Villanova Community. These communications may include a website, mailing list, any and all social media, and meeting announcements. The Communications Officer will also be the liaison to the undergraduate student government, Villanova University Student Government Association (GSA) and will attend GSA meetings. The Communications Officer will also perform any duties tasked to them by the President.

Section 6.

The External Affairs Officer will be responsible for coordinating relationships with organizations outside of Villanova University. The External Affairs Officer will be responsible for following national trends that affect graduate students and reporting issues to the GSS.

Section 7.

The International Student Affairs Officer will be responsible for monitoring issues, initiatives, and institutional, domestic, and international policies related to the well-being of the international students at Villanova University. The International Student Affairs must be an international student. The International Student Affairs Officer will assist Villanova with the integration of international students into the academic, cultural, and social life of Villanova and its surrounding communities. The International Student Affairs Officer will also perform any duties tasked to them by the President.

Section 8.

The President, Vice-President, and External Affairs Officer will further serve on the University Council as the three (3) graduate student representatives per the University Council bylaws.

Section 9.

Furthermore, the **Secretary and Communications Officer**, will further serve on the **Grad Council** as the two (2) graduate student representatives per the **Grad Council** bylaws.

Article VIII. Standing Committees

The following committees exist within the GSS. Each committee is expected to have at least two (2) members and will operate according to the self-operating guidelines approved by the Executive Board. The committees are required to communicate their activities to the general assembly through the executive board. Additional committees may be formed if needed.

Section 1.

The Social Event Committee is responsible for creating and promoting social events for graduate students. This can include collaboration with other departments or organizations. This is meant to foster the graduate student community and develop and maintain relationships between organizations on campus.

Section 2.

The Philanthropy Committee exists to identify opportunities for charitable work and organize appropriate action. The committee will organize at least one philanthropic event per semester during the academic year.

Section 3.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee exists to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion and provide visibility and community for graduate students at all levels at Villanova University and beyond.

Section 4.

The Budget Committee exists to support and advise the Treasurer. They shall monitor GSS spendings, create and submit the yearly budget, and report on the financial situation of the GSS.

Section 5.

The Election Committee is responsible for planning, conducting, and the supervision of all elections held in the name of the GSS.

Section 6.

The International Students Affairs Committee exists to support the international student population at Villanova. The International Students Affairs Officer will serve as chair of this committee.

Article IX Resignations

Section 1.

Resignations shall be accepted by the President, or in the case of the President's resignation, by the Secretary.

Section 2.

Resignations should be submitted in writing with as much notice as possible.

Section 3.

If for any reason an Executive Board officer is no longer a registered graduate student in good standing, the position will become vacant.

Section 4.

When an Executive Board position becomes permanently vacant (in contrast to approved absences), the GSS should follow the guidelines outlined in the GSS Election Process addendum.

Section 5.

Should an Executive Officer leave their position temporarily for any reason, they may apply for an Approved Absence (a written explanation of absence) that is verified by the Secretary or Vice President. The Executive Board may appoint an interim officer or distribute the duties of the vacant position amongst the remaining officers. An interim officer shall not have voting privileges on the Executive Board. If the Executive Officer cannot resume duties after 60 days, the GSS should follow the guidelines outlined in the GSS Election Process addendum.

Article X. Vacancies

Section 1.

Should the office of President become vacant:

- a. the Vice-President shall immediately assume the position of President and a new Vice-President shall be elected.
- b. If the Vice-President position is also vacant, the President's duties shall be assumed by another officer until a new President is elected. The order for this temporary succession shall be: Treasurer, Secretary, Communications Officer, External Affairs Officer, International Student Affairs Officer.

Section 2.

Should any other Executive Board office become vacant for any reason:

- a. less than one (1) month before the regularly scheduled elections, the remaining officers shall share the duties of the vacant position until a new officer is elected.
- b. more than one (1) month before the regularly scheduled elections, the vacancy shall be announced to all grad students immediately and election procedures shall commence.

Section 3.

In the event of an immediate post-election resignation (before the beginning of the new academic year), the new position shall be assumed by the election runner-up.

Section 4.

If a vacancy occurs and no nominations for that position are received, the Executive Board may appoint an interim officer or distribute the duties of the vacant position amongst the remaining officers. An interim officer shall not have voting privileges on the Executive Board.

Article XI. Impeachment

Executive Board members may be impeached if they are deemed unfit to serve due to nonperformance of duty or willful misconduct of office. In order to formally call for the impeachment of an Executive Board officer, a petition of charges listing the impeachable offenses must be signed by at least five (5) Senators and two (2) current members of the GSS Executive Board and presented at a Senate meeting or an Executive Board meeting.

Section 1.

If the criteria for a formal call for impeachment is met, the Executive Board member is immediately suspended from duty. The President or the next-highest officer will divide the duties amongst the other Executive Board Members until the matter is resolved.

Section 2.

The Executive Board shall designate an officer selected from the Election Committee to oversee the impeachment process and ensure the integrity of the proceedings.

Section 3.

The Impeachment Process Officer shall hold a special hearing open to all general members with the sole purpose of explaining the charges against the suspended officer. This hearing must be held at six (6) days and no later than twenty-one (21) days after the successful petition is presented at a Senate or Executive Board meeting.

Section 4.

At the Impeachment hearing, the Impeachment Process Officer may declare a special quorum of senators of one-third instead of 50% plus one as per the GSS constitution.

Section 5.

At the hearing, the accusing petitioners shall make an opening statement and the defendant may offer a rebuttal. Both parties have ten (10) minutes to speak and debate under the guidance of the Impeachment Process Officer to determine if removal of the accused officer is warranted.

Section 6.

If Quorum is met, the Impeachment Process Officer shall call on the Senate to vote to convict or acquit the defendant of all charges. If convicted, the defendant is to be immediately removed from office and the process for replacement must begin. If the defendant is acquitted, then the defendant is reinstated as if no charges were brought upon them.

Section 7.

No officer shall be tried twice for the same offense. If one or more officers are called for impeachment, separate petitions of charges are to be brought upon each defendant and separate hearings will be held.

XII. Meetings

There are three distinct types of GSS meetings. The dates and times of the meetings will be announced but only the Senate and General Assembly meetings will be opened to the public. A special meeting may be held if a situation arises that does not fit with the previously announced meetings.

Section 1.

Members of the Executive Board are required to meet bi-weekly or when called upon by the president.. The purpose of these meetings are to coordinate and execute the duties of the EOs.

Section 2.

Senate meetings shall be held at least monthly during the semester and shall be open to all graduate students. All meetings must be held online or in a hybrid format to facilitate accessibility. Meetings shall be no longer than 90 minutes and must allow for 15 minutes of open forum. All information in meetings must be recorded by the secretary and made available for public view on the GSS website. Meetings are allowed to run over 90 min if they serve a special purpose (for example election meetings). If this is the case, the President shall announce the purpose at the beginning of the meeting.

Section 3.

General Assembly Meetings, also known as Town Halls, must be conducted once an academic semester. The purpose of this Town Hall Meeting is to be an open forum for the GSS to share information with the general graduate student body. Further, all grad students can voice concerns, propose ideas, or in other ways engage with the GSS.

Article XII. Quorum

Section 1.

Quorum shall be reached when at least 50% of all active Senators AND at least three (3) Executive Board members are represented at a meeting.

Section 2.

The Secretary will notify that status of quorum to the President.

Section 3.

No business may be conducted without a quorum.

Article XIII. Amendments

Section 1.

Any senator can submit Amendment propositions with the backing of at least one other senator. The proposed Amendments to the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority of all Senators.

Section 2.

Amendment proposals must be made available for review at least four (4) weeks prior to the ratification vote.

Section 3.

The Constitution shall be reviewed and updated as needed at least once every five (5) years.

Section 4.

New and changes to existing by-laws may be passed by a majority vote in General Assembly meetings.

Section 5.

By-laws shall be reviewed and updated every year.

Section 6.

A copy of all former versions of the Constitutions and Bylaws must be kept for future references and all changes must be documented on the GSS website for the public. This shall be done by the Secretary until a Historian position is created.

Article XIV. Annual Report

The Annual Report shall be written by the President and Vice President at the end of the academic year to provide an overview of the GSS activities during that time period. The report shall also be submitted to OSI (Office of Student Involvement) during the re-registration period.

Article XV. Ratification

Ratification of this Constitution requires a vote of two-thirds of all Executive Board members.

Article XIIII. Dissolution

Initiation of a dissolution vote must be moved and seconded at a Senate meeting. A two-thirds vote of all present Senators is required to initiate a formal dissolution vote. Within two (2) weeks after the initiating dissolution vote, an open meeting for all Graduate Students will be held. A simple majority vote of all those in attendance is required for formal dissolution of the current constitution.