

# American University School of Public Affairs Graduate Student Council Bylaws

*Adopted Pro Tempore*

August 8, 2020



## **ARTICLE I – Purpose**

1. The purposes of the American University School of Public Affairs Graduate Student Council (hereafter referred to as the SPA GSC) shall be:
  - a. To advocate for the needs and interests of all graduate students in American University’s School of Public Affairs;
  - b. To serve as a liaison between graduate students and the School of Public Affairs administration and the Graduate Leadership Council;
  - c. To foster graduate student academic and professional development; and
  - d. To provide opportunities for social interaction and community service both within other graduate schools of American University and the District of Columbia at large.

## **ARTICLE II – Composition**

1. The primary decision-making body, the SPA GSC executive board, shall be composed of five officers (see Article III), elected at large from among the SPA graduate community (as described in Article VI). The SPA GSC shall also be composed of one elected Student Representative from each of the SPA academic graduate degree offerings, one elected Student Representative for the International Student Ambassador Program, and the three elected SPA GSC Committee Chairpersons. All members of the SPA GSC must be current graduate students (full- or part-time) in SPA and must be willing and able to serve their entire elected term.

## **ARTICLE III – Executive Board Officers**

1. The executive board shall consist of a President, a Vice President, a Communications Director, a Finance Director, and a Chief of Staff.
2. Duties required of all executive officers shall be as follows:
  - a. To fulfill their obligations as Executive Officers as defined below and in official Statement of Purpose documents;
  - b. To attend relevant training sessions as required by the Center for Student Involvement (CSI);
  - c. To attend all business meetings and social events of the SPA GSC as voting members or designate proxy in a time of absence; and

- d. To advise all Committee Chairpersons; and
  - e. To maintain a professional and respectful demeanor in their interactions with all executive officers, committee chairpersons, members of the GLC, SPA and university wide staff and faculty, as well as other stakeholders whose relationship is impactful upon the representation of the SPA GSC.
3. Duties of the President shall be as follows:
- a. To act as the sole official representative of the SPA GSC, its executive board, and of SPA graduate students to all campus constituencies (if the President is unavailable, they shall designate a proxy to fulfill relevant duties);
  - b. To serve as the spokesperson at SPA events upon requests, for instance, orientation;
  - c. To schedule, set the agenda for, and run all SPA GSC full council and executive board meetings;
  - d. To attend meetings of the AU Graduate Leadership Council (GLC), SPA Undergraduate Council, and other relevant bodies as necessary from the SPA GSC;
  - e. To execute their voting power on the GLC in accordance with the SPA GSC Bylaws and in the best interests of their constituents as well as full council;
  - f. To maintain formal and informal communication with relevant constituencies within SPA and University administration;
  - g. To govern elected representatives, with the advice of the executive board, and appoint SPA graduate students to such SPA committees as may be constituted by the Dean and/or Senior Associate Dean, SPA Council, or other such bodies;
  - h. To serve as the chief presiding officer along with the Chief of Staff during Bylaws revision and Executive Board transition meetings; and
  - i. To oversee the execution of duties and activities of all executive officers, department/program representatives, and committee chairpersons.
4. Duties of the Vice President shall be as follows:
- a. To serve as proxy for the President to run meetings in their absence as well as attend events upon request when the President is unable;
  - b. To manage the relationship between SPA GSC and *The Public Purpose Journal*;
  - c. To manage and coordinate events with Graduate Leadership Council, *The Public Purpose Journal*, and other on campus organizations;
  - d. To book spaces on and off campus for SPA GSC events (like the Spring Gala), assist with the coordination of these events, and oversee the successful implementation of events put forth by the three SPA GSC committees;
  - e. To manage the duties of the Communications Director including but not limited to the creation, approval, and dissemination of external print media for publication; and
  - f. To execute any other duties as delegated by the President.
5. Duties of the Communications Director will be as follows:
- a. To record and disseminate the minutes of all SPA GSC business meetings;
  - b. To develop and execute a social media plan;
  - c. To write and disseminate statements addressed to the student body upon the President's discretion;
  - d. To handle email correspondence and route it to the appropriate executive officers;

- e. To create external print media for publication; and
  - f. To maintain the GSC website.
6. Duties of the Finance Director shall be as follows:
- a. To prepare and submit an annual SPA GSC budget;
  - b. To monitor the implementation of said budget and ensure adherence to deadlines and contracts;
  - c. To keep an accurate log of all SPA GSC expenditures;
  - d. To manage and handle *The Public Purpose Journal* (PPJ) budget;
  - e. To oversee any changes to the budgets needed throughout the academic year;
  - f. To keep the SPA GSC informed of its financial status through regular updates and advise programming based on such status; and
  - g. To receive relevant financial training from the Center for Student Involvement.
7. Duties of the Chief of Staff shall be as follows:
- a. To serve as the parliamentarian by interpreting and administering the bylaws and mitigating internal disputes;
  - b. To oversee the drafting and amending of bylaws;
  - c. To ensure that all business and full council meetings operate in accordance with parliamentary procedures;
  - d. To advise executive officers of parliamentary procedures;
  - e. To oversee elections of committee chairpersons and program representatives in the Fall and Spring semesters;
  - f. To oversee the cleanliness and fully stocked nature of the graduate student lounge and pantry;
  - g. To enforce proper disciplinary protocol if a member of the SPA GSC is failing or unwilling to fulfill their duties;
  - h. To oversee all appointments to the council; and
  - i. To oversee the day-to-day operating activity and manage the internal affairs of the SPA GSC.

#### **ARTICLE IV – Student Representatives**

1. There shall be one student representative elected to the SPA GSC by his or her peers for each SPA graduate degree offering and the International Student Ambassador Program.
2. Duties of the student representatives are as follows:
  - a. To attend all full council meetings and attend official SPA GSC events as available. If unable to attend, the Chief of Staff must be notified of the absence at least 24 hours before the scheduled meeting, except in emergency situations;
  - b. To serve as a liaison between the SPA GSC and their respective academic departments/programs, convey their constituents' interests at SPA GSC full council meetings, and communicate pertinent SPA GSC information to their constituents; and
  - c. To attend all departmental meetings, as necessary;
  - d. To co-host and encourage attendance at town hall meetings, and any other school wide events;
  - e. To create programs specific to their academic departments/programs;

- f. To be active participants in their assigned committees; and
- g. To submit committee and/or representative reports to the President for all full council meetings.

#### **Article V – Chairs and Committees**

1. There shall be three standing committees of the SPA GSC, with the following duties:
  - a. The Academic Affairs and Professional Development Committee:
    - i. To plan and execute monthly academic and professional development opportunities for the SPA graduate students;
    - ii. To liaise with relevant administration officials concerning ongoing and upcoming professional development series;
    - iii. To submit committee reports to the President for all full council meetings; and
    - iv. To assist in the planning of the Spring Gala.
  - b. The Community Service Committee:
    - i. To plan and execute at least two community service opportunities per semester;
    - ii. To submit committee reports to the President for all full council meetings; and
    - iii. To assist in the planning of the Spring Gala.
  - c. The Social Committee:
    - i. To plan and execute monthly social opportunities for SPA graduate students;
    - ii. To submit committee reports to the President for all full council meetings; and
    - iii. To assist in the planning of the Spring Gala.
2. Each committee shall be composed of a Chairperson, who is elected by their peers. The election shall conform to the parameters as established by the Chief of Staff. The elected chair retains final responsibility for their committees' duties and actions.
3. The Executive Board reserves the right to form additional committees to address SPA GSC business.
  - a. The formation of a new committee shall be approved by the Executive Board by a 3/5 vote.
  - b. The approved new committee will be placed on a one semester 'trial period' during which time the Executive Board will determine if the committee will become a permanent standing committee.
4. The committees must follow the budget as set by the Finance Director.

#### **ARTICLE VI – Elections**

1. All current SPA graduate students may vote in any SPA GSC executive board officer elections, for committee chairpersons, and for a representative for their respective academic department.
  - a. Voting will be done through electronic means;

- b. The election timeline will be at the jurisdiction of the Chief of Staff to establish and ensure its proper implementation; and
  - c. Election results and data will be published in full to the entire SPA graduate community within no more than 24 hours of polls closing.
2. Election Rules and Protocols for SPA GSC executive officers shall be as follows:
  - a. Candidates shall be enrolled (full or part time) for the entirety of their term;
  - b. Before beginning their term of office, elected candidates must vacate all other offices of AU clubs or organizations in which those candidates hold financial signatory or decision-making power;
  - c. Students previously dismissed from the SPA GSC board are ineligible to seek election for any position; and
  - d. Elected officers may not participate in any board activity until after they are sworn in at the transition meeting with the outgoing board following the spring semester.
3. Election Rules and Protocols for SPA GSC program representatives and committee chairpersons shall be as follows:
  - a. Elections must take place by the end of the third week of the fall semester;
  - b. The Executive Board will solicit applications for the positions of SPA GSC program representatives and committee chairpersons by the second week of September of the fall semester;
  - c. For program representative positions, candidates must be enrolled in the academic program for which they are running and meet other eligibility criteria;
  - d. For committee chairpersons positions, any SPA graduate student meeting all eligibility requirements may apply to run; and
  - e. In the event no person applies to run for a program representative or committee chairperson position, the executive board shall appoint a student to fill the vacancy as they see fit.
4. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the President:
  - a. The Vice President shall assume the presidency;
  - b. If the Vice President does not assume the presidency, a special election will be conducted;
  - c. A new President must be elected not more than fourteen days after the Vice President declines to assume the presidency. All students eligible under Article VI to run for the office of President may run, including but not limited to current members of the SPA GSC; and
  - d. If no person declares their candidacy for the presidency, the Chief of Staff shall appoint a temporary President, to be approved by a full committee vote; and
  - e. In such an event, the Chief of Staff may not appoint themselves.
5. In the event of vacancy of any other executive office:
  - a. A special election will be held for that office. The new executive officer must be elected not more than fourteen days after notice of the vacancy; and
  - b. If no person declares their candidacy, the Chief of Staff shall appoint a temporary officer, to be approved by a full committee vote.
  - c. In such an event, the Chief of Staff may not appoint themselves.

6. In the event of a committee chairperson or program representative vacancy:
  - a. The Executive Board will appoint a student to fill the vacancy.

#### **ARTICLE VII – Business Procedures**

1. A quorum consisting of 3/5 of the SPA GSC executive board is required for all business meetings, be they in person or virtual.
  - a. At the beginning of each administration, the Executive Board shall determine appropriate guidelines regarding proxy and digital votes;
  - b. The President has jurisdiction to determine when business meetings are virtual; and
  - c. Business meetings shall be conducted at a minimum, on a bi-weekly basis, at the discretion of the President.
2. Voting procedures shall be as follows:
  - a. For removal of Executive Board members, committee chairpersons, and program representatives, a 4/5 majority of the existing full committee is required to pass a motion;
  - b. For amending the bylaws, a 4/5 majority of the existing full committee is required to pass a motion;
  - c. For the issuing of all statements, a unanimous Executive Board and plurality of the committee chairpersons is required;
  - d. For other measures, a 3/5 majority of the existing full committee is required;
  - e. In the event of amending the bylaws, each unique change to the bylaws shall receive its own separate vote;
  - f. In the event of a tie, the executive board shall determine a method to break that tie.
3. Additional meetings of the Executive Board shall take place as the President deems necessary.
4. In the event that the SPA GSC issues a public statement, letter, resolution, or any other document, and also approves a budget or appropriations over \$500, the process shall be as follows:
  - a. The Communications Director shall write the draft, with initial approval given by the Executive Board and subsequently the final approval given by the full council;
  - b. Program representatives and committee chairpersons shall provide potential revisions; and
  - c. Upon completion, pursuant to Article VII: 5.b, the full committee shall vote to approve the documents.
5. Any expense over \$1000 must be approved by a 4/5 majority of the Executive Board and simple majority of the committee chairpersons and program representatives.
6. Accessibility and Inclusion at all SPA GSC Events:
  - a. The SPA GSC shall request a Sign Language Interpreter and/or CART on AU-ASAC. (<http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/ASAC-Interpreter-Request-Form.cfm>). The request shall be made when the SPA GSC knows that someone who needs the

service will attend. Advertisements shall note, “interpreter/CART provided upon request.”

- b. These requests may be made up to two weeks prior to an event.
- c. The SPA GSC shall ensure venues are inclusive and wheelchair accessible. Inclusion features include: elevators; ramps at main entrance; no tight spaces; entire floor plan on a single level (no separate-level area); gender-neutral restrooms and/or wheelchair-accessible restrooms.
- d. The SPA GSC shall request specific details on accessible amenities and scout the venue before each event.

## **ARTICLE VIII – Impeachment and Removal of SPA GSC Members**

1. Any Executive Board member, program representative or committee chairperson, is subject to impeachment or removal from the SPA GSC for any of the following infractions:
  - a. Failure to perform their listed duties of office;
  - b. Failure to attend two consecutive meetings of the SPA GSC or Executive Board, without prior permission or adequate notification given to the President and/or Chief of Staff;
  - c. Misappropriation of American University funds or property;
  - d. Conduct directly violating these bylaws;
  - e. Conduct that habitually and/or irrevocably damages the image, negotiating position, or reputation of the SPA GSC, GLC, or other SPA entities; and
  - f. Conduct that does not adhere to the American University Code of Conduct or Washington, D.C. law, including but not limited to harassment, theft, or academic misconduct.
2. Impeachment and removal of members shall be overseen by the Chief of Staff, unless they are the member under impeachment consideration. In this case, impeachment shall be overseen by the President. Removal is a process by which the Chief of Staff terminates a program representative or committee chairperson from SPA GSC for the above infractions. Impeachment of an Executive Board member may be raised by any member of the SPA GSC in a full business meeting through a standard motion to introduce Articles of Impeachment. The processes for both are as follows:
  - a. Removal: The Chief of Staff may terminate a program representative or committee chairperson with the approval of 4/5 of the Executive Board. Upon official notice of termination, the member may request an appeal hearing in front of the Executive Board within 48 hours by emailing the Chief of Staff and President. An Executive Board hearing shall be convened within two weeks of the request. During the interim period, the member shall be considered suspended in abeyance and retain their duties in full. The Executive Board shall make a unanimous decision on the appeal within no more than 48 hours.
  - b. Impeachment: In a regular business meeting, Impeachment of an Executive Board Member may be introduced by any regular voting member of the SPA GSC. Such a motion must introduce Articles of Impeachment against the Executive Board Member. The process shall be as follows:
    - i. Motion to introduce Articles of Impeachment and vote on the motion
    - ii. Full reading of the Articles of Impeachment

- iii. Motion to proceed with Impeachment Hearing and vote on motion
    1. This vote shall require a 2/3 majority of members present and will conclude day one of Impeachment activity.
  - iv. Either at the next business meeting or at a special Impeachment Hearing (scheduled within no more than two weeks' time), the Articles of Impeachment shall be read in full by the presiding officer (the Chief of Staff, or, in the case of their Impeachment, the President). Then, the subject of the Articles of Impeachment may plead their case to the full committee. They shall have unlimited time to do so, and every voting member must be present for the duration of their plea. Failure to appear at the Impeachment Hearing shall abdicate their right to defense, and a binding decision shall be made in absentia.
  - v. Following this, the SPA GSC shall debate the Articles of Impeachment. Each voting member shall have five minutes to speak in favor or against the Articles of Impeachment. Upon the conclusion of debate, the presiding officer shall ask for a final reading of the Articles. The presiding officer shall then call the question, to be voted on by a recorded roll call vote.
  - vi. In order for the vote to pass, there shall be no less than a 4/5 majority. Every member is required to vote, and may vote "Aye," "Nay," or "Present. Full abstentions shall not be allowed.
  - vii. The presiding officer shall read out the results of the vote to the committee of the whole. If the motion passes, the presiding officer shall declare the subject of the Articles impeached. The Impeached member shall be immediately considered removed and vacate their title. This announcement shall conclude the meeting, and the council shall adjourn.
    1. The subject of the Articles of Impeachment is entitled to resign at any point during the Impeachment process, thus ending the process immediately.
3. Upon the vacancy of a position as a result of Impeachment or Removal, the SPA GSC shall proceed filling the vacancy as described in Article VI.

#### **ARTICLE IX - Ratification**

1. These bylaws shall be considered ratified upon adoption by unanimous vote of the Executive Board;
2. If ratified, these bylaws shall take effect immediately; and
3. These bylaws may be amended at any time upon a 4/5 vote of the full committee.