GPSA CONSTITUTION

We, the graduate and professional students of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, ratify and establish this constitution in order to provide for our mutual support and better advocate for our common interests.

ARTICLE 1 - Name and Membership
The name of this organization shall be the Graduate and Professional Student Association, thereafter the GPSA, of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The GPSA shall be the official organization of the graduate and professional students of the university, and shall represent all such students.

ARTICLE 2 - Non-Discrimination
The GPSA condemns discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, class, national origin, immigrant status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, parental status, pregnancy, age, physical or mental disability, or veteran status. Membership in the GPSA and the GSS shall be open to all students, and shall not be restricted on the basis of any of the aforementioned categories.

ARTICLE 3 - The Graduate Student Senate

1. The chief legislative body of the GPSA is the Graduate Student Senate, hereinafter the GSS. This body shall comprise representatives from each college, school, or other academic unit of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, which offers graduate or advanced professional degrees or graduate certificates.

2. Each college, school, or academic unit offering graduate or advanced professional degrees or graduate certificates which has less than fifty students enrolled in it shall have a single representative in the GSS. Colleges, schools, or academic units with greater than or equal to fifty enrolled students may have a second, voting representative in the GSS.

3. The process for choosing representatives shall be left to the discretion of colleges, schools, and academic units. Each such entity shall, however, have selected its representative by the beginning of the third week of the academic year.

4. Senators may, at the discretion of their colleges, schools, or academic units, serve multiple terms in the GSS.

5. There are to be a minimum of three GSS meetings during each fall and spring academic semesters. In order for a meeting to count against this minimum, a quorum of voting members of the GSS must be present. The presence of half of the members in the GSS shall constitute a quorum.

6. All meetings of the GSS shall be open.

7. Senators in the GSS shall serve on at least one internal and one administrative committee. There shall be five permanent internal committees—the Executive Committee, the Judiciary Committee, the Finance Committee, the Legislative Steering Committee and the Committee on Equity and Diversity. The GSS may create other committees on an ad hoc basis, or by amending its By-Laws. Committee chairs shall be relieved of the obligation to serve on an
ARTICLE 4 - Permanent Internal Committees

1. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
   a. The executive power of the GPSA shall be vested in an Executive Committee. This committee shall include a President, Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and such additional officers as are allowed or mandated by the By-Laws. The President shall serve as the chair of the Executive Committee, and the Vice President shall serve as the chair in the President’s absence.
   b. The President and Vice President shall be independently elected by a popular vote of the GPSA. These elections shall take place in the spring semester of each year preceding the academic year in which the President and Vice President are to serve.
   c. If the President is incapacitated, the Vice President shall assume the responsibilities associated with that office for the duration of the term. In the event that the Vice President is incapacitated, the President shall appoint a Vice President pro tempore to assume the Vice President’s responsibilities for the duration of the term. This appointee shall be approved by a two-thirds vote of the GSS.
   d. Other positions on the Executive Committee shall be filled by a Senator from the GSS. All chairs of internal committees within the GSS shall serve on the Executive Committee.
   e. The President and Vice President shall serve terms of one year. Students may serve in either office for multiple terms but must seek re-election each time.
   f. The President shall present recommendations for Senators to fill positions on the Executive Committee, including but not limited to those of the Secretary, Treasurer and permanent committee chairs, no later than the second full meeting of the GSS in a given academic year. The President’s nominations shall be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the Senate. In the event that a nominee is not confirmed, the President shall present a new nominee for the vacant position by the time of the next Senate meeting.
   g. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the following activities:
      i. Administering programs on behalf of the GSS;
      ii. Keeping the GSS and the GPSA informed of actions, events, and issues pertaining to both the Senate and to graduate and professional students at the university;
      iii. Serving as the liaison between the GSS and the Graduate School;
      iv. Setting the agenda for the GSS meetings;
      v. Proposing an annual budget for the GPSA and supervising the disbursement of funds.
   h. The Secretary, having been appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, shall be responsible for keeping minutes of all the GSS and Executive Committee meetings. These minutes shall be approved at subsequent meetings of the appropriate body, and shall be a matter of public record.
i. The Treasurer, having been appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, shall be responsible for making regular reports regarding the finances of the GPSA to the GSS and the Executive Committee. The Treasurer shall also chair the Finance Committee, about which see Article 4, Section 3.

2. THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
   a. The sole role of the GSS Judiciary Committee shall be to determine the constitutionality of measures passed by the GSS.
   b. The GPSA President shall appoint four Senators each year to serve as members of the Judiciary Committee. These appointments must be made before the second GSS meeting of the fall semester, and they shall be confirmed at said meeting. These Senators shall be referred to hereafter as Justices. Three of these Justices shall be the “primary members” of the committee and the fourth Justice shall serve as an alternate. The Judiciary Committee shall review all new, passed legislation, resolutions, and changes to the By-Laws to ensure that they do not conflict with the Constitution. In the event that a majority of the members of the committee judge a law, resolution, or By-Law to be in conflict with the Constitution, it shall cease to be valid immediately.
   c. The GSS shall, by a two-thirds vote, confirm the President’s nominees for Justices. In the event that the Senate does not confirm a nominee, the President must present a new appointee at the next GSS meeting.
   d. Members of the Judiciary Committee may sponsor bills and resolutions, but must not sit in judgment of their own work. In the event that a member of said committee sponsors a bill or resolution which passes the Senate, the alternate Justice shall replace the sponsor in the subsequent review process.
   e. Members of the Judiciary Committee may not co-sponsor legislation, resolutions, or changes to the By-Laws.
   f. The committee shall not sit in judgment over any other matters, including and specially disciplinary hearings. The only exception to this is in the case of impeachment proceedings against either the GPSA President or Vice President. In such a case, the Judiciary Committee shall act in accordance with the requirements of Article 6.

3. THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
   a. The Finance Committee is responsible for creating an annual budget for the GPSA and submitting it to the GSS for approval.
   b. The Treasurer of the GPSA shall chair the Finance Committee. Otherwise, membership in the committee shall be open to any GSS senators.
   c. The duties and responsibilities of the Finance Committee shall be further enumerated in the By-Laws to this Constitution.
4. THE LEGISLATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE
   a. The Legislative Steering Committee shall be responsible for aiding Senators in drafting proposals for legislation and resolutions.
   b. The chair of the Legislative Steering Committee shall be selected from the body of senators at the first GSS meeting of the year. The President shall present a recommendation for the chair to be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the GSS.
   c. Membership in the Legislative Steering Committee shall be open to any GSS senators.
   d. The duties and responsibilities of the Legislative Steering Committee shall be further enumerated in the By-Laws to this Constitution.

5. THE COMMITTEE ON EQUITY AND DIVERSITY
   a. The Committee on Equity and Diversity shall be responsible for identifying, evaluating, and advocating for issues pertinent to the graduate student experience in matters related to workplace issues and satisfaction, financial matters that relate to graduate study, matters that promote diversity and inclusivity, and issues of equity.
   b. The chair of the Committee on Equity and Diversity shall be selected from the body of Senators at the first GSS meeting of the year. The President shall present a recommendation for the chair to be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the GSS.
   c. Membership in the Committee on Equity and Diversity shall be open to any GSS senators.
   d. The duties and responsibilities of the Committee on Equity and Diversity shall be further enumerated in the By-Laws to this Constitution.

ARTICLE 5 - Impeachment
1. In cases of gross misconduct on the part of the President, Vice President, or a Senator, a member of the GSS may present a resolution calling for impeachment of the offending member. If this resolution passes by a simple majority, the three primary members of the Judiciary Committee shall conduct an investigation into the alleged misconduct. If the Judiciary Committee finds that there are sufficient grounds for impeachment, they shall call for a formal hearing before the entire GSS. The fourth member of the Judiciary Committee shall preside over this hearing, at which Senators shall have the right to question the accused member regarding the alleged misconduct and the members of the Judiciary Committee about their factual findings.
2. If a two-thirds majority of Senators finds that the accused member’s actions constitute gross misconduct and votes in favor of impeachment, the offending member shall be immediately removed from office.
3. In the event that the President is removed from office, the Vice President shall assume the vacant position for the duration of the term. The new President shall then appoint a Vice President from the GSS to finish the term. A two-thirds vote of the GSS shall be required to confirm this appointment. The same procedure shall be used to replace an impeached Vice President. If a Senator is removed from office, it shall be the responsibility of the
appropriate college, school, or academic unit to select a new representative within one month.

ARTICLE 6 - By-Laws to the Constitution

1. The Graduate Student Senate shall pass By-Laws to implement the provisions of this Constitution. By-Laws may be established, amended, and repealed by a two-thirds vote of the GSS at two meetings in the same academic year. Any vote on the By-Laws shall require advance notice of at least two weeks.
2. Any provision in the By-Laws found to be in conflict with the provisions of this constitution by the Judiciary Committee shall cease to be valid immediately, and shall afterward be stricken from the By-Laws.

ARTICLE 7 - Amendments and Ratification

1. Ratification of this constitution shall require both a three-fourths vote of the Graduate Student Senate and a subsequent three-fourths majority vote of the graduate and professional students of the university.
2. This Constitution may be amended with a three-fourths majority vote of the GSS and a subsequent three-fourths vote of the GPSA.