



# Graduate Student Assembly

WELCOME DOCUMENT

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**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**



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September 2018

Welcome to UNL's Graduate Student Assembly! I could not be more excited that you're joining us this year, and am so grateful that you've stepped up to represent your graduate and professional student colleagues. I'm confident that your work here this year will help make life better for graduate students at UNL.

This packet is meant to familiarize you with how the GSA works during its monthly meetings, and with the baseline responsibilities of all GSA members, including you. You'll read about the roles of GSA's executives and committees, and hopefully get a basic understanding of how these roles fit together. Then, you'll read about where you'll fit into this constellation, and what's expected of you this year. Finally, you'll read about how the assembly gets things done during our monthly meetings—you'll learn the basics of how bills come to the floor, what kind of bills we pass, and how you can bring a bill to the floor.

Still, it's important for you to know that much of the important work that GSA does happens outside of our monthly meetings, and there are literally infinite opportunities for you to get involved. The GSA ensures that graduate and professional students are represented on a plethora of university-wide committees whose work has real import for our academic freedom, compensation, course offerings, healthcare, student fees, access to technology, access to campus facilities, and many other areas that affect our experience at UNL. Further, GSA executives constantly dialogue with every level of UNL administration in hopes that graduate and professional students' perspectives and experiences are never neglected in how decisions are made and implemented at UNL.

In addition to liaising with administration, GSA has many initiatives to make life better for graduate and professional students. In the past two years, through our GTAP and SPGP programs, we've awarded roughly \$26,000 in grants for graduate students' conference travel and professional development. Finally, the GSA organizes, sponsors, and promotes scores of events throughout the year. These events facilitate connections among graduate and professional students, and create opportunities for networking, professional development, socializing, advocacy, or even just sanity maintenance.

I hope this small glimpse of what GSA does sensitizes you to all the further opportunities you have to become involved, or inspires you to spread the word to others who might want to become involved. Our doors are always wide, wide open, and we are thrilled when any graduate and professional student wants to become a part of what we do. If you want to know more about the breadth or specifics of what GSA does, or what's written in this packet, please don't hesitate to flag me down after a meeting or to e-mail me at [gsa@unl.edu](mailto:gsa@unl.edu). I'm so looking forward to getting to work with you this year—let's get to it!

Julia  
GSA President, 2018-2019

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER DESCRIPTIONS

The GSA is helmed by an Executive Committee that comprises the President, Executive Vice President, Vice President of Student Affairs, Vice President of Representation, Vice President of Finance and the chairs of every committee. On the next two pages, you'll find descriptions of the President's and Vice Presidents' minimum formal responsibilities, as outlined by the GSA bylaws. These five positions are unique in that they cannot concurrently serve as department representatives, and cannot vote with the assembly. However, all of these officers play roles beyond those outlined here.

**President: Julia Reilly, [gsa@unl.edu](mailto:gsa@unl.edu)**

- Represents GSA to wider university community
- Coordinates meetings of entire assembly and of executives
- Meets with Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Dean of Graduate Studies at least once per semester
- Serves on the Academic Planning Committee, Graduate Council, and ASUN Executive Committee
- Represents UNL GSA at the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students
- Elected by entire graduate student body in March ASUN elections,

**Executive Vice President: Shawn Ratcliff, [vicepresidentgsa@unl.edu](mailto:vicepresidentgsa@unl.edu)**

- Records GSA meeting minutes
- Appoints representatives to the standing committees
- Serves on Graduate Council
- Represents GSA in the ASUN Electoral Commission
- Elected by entire graduate student body in March ASUN elections

The VPs of Student Affairs, Representation, and Finances are each elected by the GSA at the first meeting after the installation of new President and Executive Vice President. They may lead GSA meetings or take minutes in the absence or request of the President and Executive Vice President. They must all have served at least one semester in GSA and cannot serve concurrently as department representatives.

**Vice President of Student Affairs: Alexandra Martin, [vpstdaffairsgsa@unl.edu](mailto:vpstdaffairsgsa@unl.edu)**

- Coordinates activities with other graduate student and professional student organizations
- Serves on Parking Advisory Committee and Executive Vice Chancellor's Student Advisory Board

**Vice President of Representation: Chelsea Stehle, [vrepresentationgsa@unl.edu](mailto:vrepresentationgsa@unl.edu)**

- Maintains list of members and ensure attendance of representatives
- Nominates graduate or professional students to university-wide committees
- Nominates all at-large GSA representatives

**Vice President of Finance: Lara Ismert, [vpfinancegsa@unl.edu](mailto:vpfinancegsa@unl.edu)**

- Maintains current ledger of GSA finances and balances budget within allotted ASUN budget
- Provide monthly financial reports at assembly meetings
- Coordinates with ASUN Treasurer and all budgetary committees and officers
- Coordinate funding opportunities within and external to the university

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C O M M I T T E E S

Every GSA representative is required to serve on a committee. After the first assembly meeting of the academic year, once the Executive Committee has solicited your preferences on where you'll do your committee service, you'll be assigned to a committee. Once assigned to a committee, you are required to attend meetings of that committee, and to help the committee fulfill its mission. Each committee will have one or two chairs or co-chairs, and these chairs serve on the GSA Executive Committee. Committee chairs are typically elected in the first meeting after the election of the GSA President and Executive Vice President, but are occasionally elected at later meetings. Committee chairs will choose when and how often their committees meet, and will coordinate with committee members to ensure that the committee accomplishes its mission for the academic year.

#### **Social Events, Chair: Vincent Perez**

The Committee for Social Events plans, coordinates, and executes social events for all graduate students, including those for Graduate-Professional Student Appreciation Week (GSAW), and organizes and staffs all GSA activities during new graduate student welcome. The committee helps increase graduate and professional student work-life balance, as well as increases engagement and networking opportunities. During the previous academic year, the Social Events committee hosted an Ice Cream Social, a welcome back pizza social, a bowling social, a game night, and Graduate Student Appreciation Week.

#### **Graduate Travel Award Program (GTAP)**

The Committee for GTAP oversees the promotion and process of awarding travel grants to undergraduate and graduate students of good academic standing who are presenting original work at an academic conference or performance. Grant applications are reviewed by faculty members and graduate students, and the process is competitive; about 10% of applicants win GTAP awards each cycle. In the past academic year (including Summer 2017), with the help of more than 30 faculty reviewers and more than 50 peer reviewers, the GTAP Committee has awarded \$12,000 in grants to 28 deserving students in a variety of colleges and departments.

#### **Quality of Life, Chair: Rupinder Sandhu**

The Committee for Quality of Life seeks to improve and draw attention to graduate and professional students' quality of life. Last year's Quality of Life committee successfully organized two campaigns against federal taxation of graduate students' tuition waivers: HuskerOut and HuskerOut 2.0. They also hosted a series of coffee hours connecting graduate students to GSA committees.

**Academic Affairs, Chair: Anthony Juritsch**

The Committee for Academic Affairs seeks to ensure fair academic practices for graduate students. During the previous academic year, the committee successfully circulated a survey to graduate students to gain better insight on graduate students' roles, experiences, support and compensation. Furthermore, the committee collaborated with ASUN's Academic Affairs committee on booth events and created a welcome informational packet for new GSA members.

**Diversity and Inclusion, Chair: Luz Sotelo**

The Committee for Diversity and Inclusion encourages and promotes the participation of graduate and professional students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, income levels and geographic locations in the university community. It ensures that GSA is accessible and relevant to the diverse graduate student community. Last year, committee members represented GSA and the graduate student body at the LGBTQA+ History Month Dinner and the Professional Women's Summit, and co-hosted the 'Out in Academia' panel discussion with the LGBTQA+ Resource Center at UNL. Further, they organized a 'Coffee & Cookies' hour at East Campus and championed the HuskerOut 3.0 initiative to raise awareness about sexual assault.

**Professional Development. Co-Chairs: Matt Thompson and Noelle Atieno**

The Committee for Professional Development helps expand professional development opportunities to graduate students at UNL. The committee helps coordinate the Special Projects Grant Program (SPGP), which funds unique and creative professional development projects implemented by graduate students. The committee also organizes and hosts events to prepare graduate students for the academic and non-academic job markets and connect students with potential employers. Last year, the committee worked with Career Services to host networking event during the STEM career fair, and hosted a career planning workshop for international graduate students.

### **Eligibility**

1. Full-time graduate or professional student of represented department or program.
2. Cumulative grade point average greater than or equal to 3.0.
3. Not on academic or disciplinary probation.

### **Duties**

Duties of representatives include, but are not limited to:

1. Attending all GSA meetings, unless excused by the VP of Representation.
2. Attending all meetings of your assigned GSA committee, unless excused by committee chair(s).
3. Assisting your GSA committee in fulfilling its mission.
4. Disseminating information about GSA meetings, events, and other opportunities.
5. Meeting with your department's GSA, graduate chair, or Director.

Neglecting assembly and committee duties or committing any action unbecoming of an officer or representative of GSA may result in removal of the representative and vacancy of their department, subject to a disciplinary hearing and assembly vote.

### **Absences & Alternates**

1. 2 excused and 1 unexcused absence allowed per academic year
2. Refer to *Attendance Policy*

When a department's primary and alternative representatives miss two assembly meetings without an approved excuse, the department is declared vacant.

### **Vacancy**

A department's failure to appoint and maintain a GSA representative during the previous and current academic years will render **all** graduate student members of the department ineligible for:

1. ASUN-GSA Special Project Grants
2. ASUN-GSA Graduate Travel Awards

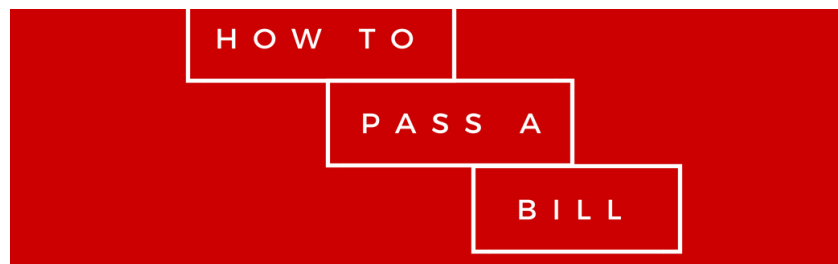


### **Notifying GSA of Absences**

- Direct all of your absence requests to Chelsea Stehle, the VP of Representation, at [vrepresentationgsa@unl.edu](mailto:vrepresentationgsa@unl.edu) no later than 24 hours prior to the scheduled GSA meeting.
  - The VP of Representation will let you know she's received your question and whether your absence is excused.
    - If you request an excused absence less than 24 hours before the scheduled GSA meeting, the VP of Representation will consider the request on a case-by-case basis.
  - If the VP of Representation doesn't grant you an excused absence, you may appeal to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee's decision is final.

### **Maximum Absences Allowed**

- GSA representatives are only entitled to two excused absences per academic year.
- GSA representatives (both principal and alternate) will be informed of their first unexcused absence no later than 48 hours after the absence takes place.
- A second unexcused absence will be reported to both the representatives (principal and alternate) and the Graduate Chair or Program Director. The VP of Representation will then request the appointment of a new individual to serve as that department's representative. The graduate chair may choose to re-appoint the current representative.
- If a department or program fails to appoint a representative, the Graduate Chair or Program Director will be notified of their department's lack of representative after two assembly meetings during which their department lacks representation.
- If a department or program accrues two unexcused absences (either by actual absence of the representative, or failure to appoint one), and does not rectify this situation by appointment or re-appointment of a representative, the department or program seat shall be considered vacated. Vacated department seats will be replaced by at-large representatives.
- Departments or programs that vacate their seats are ineligible for SPGP and GTAP funding in the following academic year.



## ***Guidelines and Standard Procedures for Bills***

*Graduate Student Assembly of University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

### **Purpose of GSA Bills**

The GSA exists to “exercise the student governance of affairs solely involving graduate students at the University, as well as collaborate with the ASUN Senate, officers, and committees on issues affecting the entirety of the University’s student body.”

Bills are crucial to carrying out this mission. The GSA passes three kinds of bills:

#### ***1. Appropriation Bills / Internal Affairs:***

These bills approve the appropriation of funds from the GSA budget. Spending bills are also often related to particular events organized and run by the GSA. Internal affairs bills might not concern the allocation of funds, but might create an ad hoc committee, or an event with no funding. Both appropriations and internal affairs bills pass with a simple majority.

#### ***2. Resolutions***

Resolutions are bills which declare a policy position. They may concern external affairs, such as a resolution in support of hurricane victims or national tax policy. More often, they should concern internal university affairs, such as graduate students’ academic freedom. These bills often set the stage for further GSA advocacy on an issue. They pass with a simple majority.

#### ***3. Bylaw amendments***

Bylaw amendments change the GSA bylaws. They must be submitted in writing to the GSA Executive Committee, which votes on whether to bring the proposed amendment to the assembly as a whole. If the Executive Committee votes to bring the proposed amendment to the assembly, they will electronically disseminate the proposed amendment and the accompanying bill at least one week before the assembly meeting. Passing a bylaw amendment requires the approval of three quarters of the assembly members. Once passed by the GSA assembly, a GSA bylaw amendment must be presented to the ASUN Senate, which can approve or kill the bylaw amendment, but cannot introduce any modifications. A two-thirds vote of ASUN Senators is needed to kill a GSA bylaw amendment.

### **Bringing a Bill to the Assembly**

Most bills originate in a committee. If you want to bring a bill to the assembly, we recommend you first propose the bill to the relevant committee, and the committee chairs can help you draft the bill. If that committee does not want to sponsor the bill, you can still bring it to the floor as an individual. For help drafting bills, please reach out to Julia at [gsa@unl.edu](mailto:gsa@unl.edu) for formatting help.

### **Timeline for Introduction**

In order to honor respect representatives' time and make sure the parliamentary process runs as it should, you must submit a near-final copy to Julia *at least seven days* before the GSA meeting. If you do not submit a copy of the bill at least seven days before the GSA meeting, it will not be included on the agenda.

If a bill could not have been submitted seven days prior to the GSA meeting—for instance, if it is a resolution on an event that happened five days before the scheduled GSA meeting—you may submit a bill to be introduced under emergency status. To do this, e-mail a copy of the bill to the President, and she can circulate it to the assembly, although it will not appear on the meeting agenda. You should also bring enough hard copies of the bill to circulate to the entire assembly. Then, at the assembly meeting, a representative can introduce a motion to bring the legislation to the floor through emergency status. If the assembly approves this motion through a simple majority vote, the assembly can then question, discuss and vote on your bill.

### **Debate on Bills**

Once at the assembly, bills are submitted to debate following Robert's Rules of Order:

- First, the sponsor of the bill will provide a short introduction outlining the rationale and goal of the bill.
- Next, the sponsor will hold the floor and take questions from the assembly.
- Finally, the assembly will debate the bill and perhaps introduce amendments. Amendments are made by saying, "I move that..." and outlining the change or addition precisely. This requires a second, and then debate and a vote on the amendment before returning to the bill as a whole. One of the executives will make changes to a projected draft of the bill in real time.
  - *Please bear in mind that stylistic (non-substantive) changes to wording are not the point here. To accommodate a variety of views and use our time together well, we aim for language that's **acceptable**, but perhaps not ideal, to all. Assume the bill has been carefully written, and has been reviewed by many eyes.*

Once passed, the bill is signed by the President, goes into immediate effect, and is posted on the GSA website.