Charter
Cornell University
Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

As amended on September 15, 2015

PREAMBLE

To effect more extensive involvement in campus government, this charter establishes within the campus governance structure the requirements for a Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, elected by graduate and professional school students and concerned with those matters directly affecting graduate and professional students of Cornell University. Furthermore, this body may interact with and discuss issues of common interest with the Student, Employee and University Assemblies, and the Faculty Senate.

The purpose of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly is to ensure a direct focus for the continued involvement of graduate and professional school students in the governance of non-academic affairs and in the life of the University, as well as to foster an increased sense of community among all constituencies through shared responsibilities.

The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly will actively seek to involve Cornell's diverse graduate and professional student population in the Assembly's decision-making activities. Particular effort will be made to ensure that underrepresented groups have access to Graduate and Professional Student Assembly positions.

ARTICLE I: ESTABLISHMENT

Pursuant to the authority delegated by the Board of Trustees, the President of the University hereby establishes the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly. Articles I through X of this document constitute the Charter of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly.

ARTICLE II: AUTHORITY

Section 2.01: Scope of Authority

A. The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (hereinafter referred to as the GPSA) shall have a voice in those activities, program areas, and non-academic policies that affect graduate and professional students.

B. The GPSA shall serve as a body for the exchange of views between the graduate and professional student population and the administration.

C. The GPSA shall explore opportunities to enhance the role and function of graduate and professional students, and their contribution to the well-being of the University.
Section 2.02: Graduate and Professional Student Activity Fee

A. The GPSA, during the fall semester of odd-numbered years, through the authority delegated by the President of the University and the Board of Trustees, shall be charged with recommending the amount and the allocation of the Graduate and Professional Student Activity Fee, subject to the approval of the President of the University.

B. Neither an opt-out option nor an option to pay extra will be allowed to exempt a student from paying the Student Activity Fee.
   i. Exceptions may be considered if recommended and approved by the GPSA, and approved by the President of the University.

C. These procedures shall be reviewed by the Student Assembly, the GPSA, and a representative of the President of the University, at least every four years in a non-fee-setting year.

Section 2.03: Legislative Authority Over Policies

A. The GPSA shall have the authority to examine the University policies that impact graduate and professional school students.

B. The GPSA shall have the authority to make recommendations to the appropriate bodies and University administrators concerning these matters.

C. The GPSA shall be consulted with respect to the modification and development of non-academic policies, which directly affect graduate and professional school students.

Section 2.04: University Calendar

A. The Provost is requested to consult with the GPSA in the formulation of the University calendar.

B. The GPSA may review and ask for reconsideration of the calendar before it becomes final.

C. The GPSA may propose changes in the calendar to the Provost.

Section 2.05: Requests for Information from the President of the University

A. The GPSA may obtain specific information from the President regarding any subject which it requests to fulfill its responsibilities.

B. If the information requested is not provided, the President will report to the GPSA the reasons why the information cannot be furnished.

Section 2.06: Public hearings, forums, and referendums

A. The GPSA may conduct public hearings, forums, and referendums concerning topics of current graduate and professional student interest, and determine other appropriate ways to assess student needs and opinions.

Section 2.07: Committees
A. The GPSA may appoint graduate and professional students to serve on committees of the GPSA and other Assemblies that have designated seats for graduate and professional student representatives.

B. The GPSA may nominate graduate and professional students to serve on other University committees.

Section 2.08: Representatives to the Student and Employee Assemblies and Faculty Senate

A. The GPSA will interface with the Student and Employee Assemblies and Faculty Senate by sending one representative to each group as an ex-officio, non-voting delegate.

Section 2.09: GPSA Standing and Ad Hoc Committees

A. The GPSA will have authority over matters concerning the internal operation and maintenance of the GPSA, including the proposal of amendments to the GPSA Charter pursuant to Article X and creation of bylaws and procedures consistent with the obligations of the GPSA, as set forth in this charter for the GPSA.

B. The GPSA will have authority over matters concerning its standing and ad hoc committees and may establish standing and ad hoc committees, as are appropriate to the performance of its functions.

ARTICLE III: RESPONSIBILITY

Section 3.01: Reporting of Actions

A. Actions of the GPSA will be reported to the President of the University in writing by the President of the GPSA.

B. The GPSA will respond to the President of the University’s requests for information regarding GPSA actions.

C. The President of the University shall respond in writing to the GPSA recommendations pursuant to Section 2.03.A above.

D. The GPSA will report its actions in writing to the Employee, Student and University Assemblies and the Faculty Senate, in conjunction with reporting of the actions to the President of the University.

Section 3.02: Semi-Annual Report

A. The GPSA will present a semi-annual, written report at the end of each academic term to the President of the University and the graduate and professional student population.

B. The report will include:
   i. a summary of the GPSA’s work during the preceding term,
   ii. a description of any unresolved issues,
   iii. an exploration of issues that are expected to arise in the future.

C. The GPSA of the following year is required to respond formally to the unfinished business presented in the semi-annual report.

D. All members of the Cornell community will have access to this report.
Section 3.03: Agendas and pending resolutions

A. Agendas and pending resolutions will be distributed to the leadership of the other Assemblies at least 24 hours prior to the GPSA meeting at which they are to be presented.

B. Agenda and pending resolutions will be distributed to the GPSA at least 24 hours prior to the GPSA meeting at which they are to be presented.

Section 3.04: Objection to Actions

A. Objections
   i. Upon receipt of the semi-annual report of the GPSA, other constituent bodies may object, by a two-thirds vote at its next regularly scheduled meeting, to an action taken by the GPSA.
   ii. The objecting bodies will report back to the GPSA within five working days of the vote to object.
   iii. At its next regularly scheduled meeting, the GPSA will review the objection and either modify the original position to account for the objections of the other constituencies or will reaffirm the original action.
   iv. The GPSA shall report to the objecting bodies within five working days of reviewing the objection(s).

B. Reconciliation of the differences
   i. If the GPSA determines by a two-thirds vote that the action of another constituency body impacts its constituency, comparable procedures for the reconciliation of the differences will be pursued.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section 4.01: Graduate and Professional Student Rights

A. All graduate and professional students shall have the following rights to:
   i. Contribute to a rich academic and social community that benefits all graduate and professional students;
   ii. Regularly attend GPSA meetings and remain informed about issues brought before the GPSA;
   iii. Apply to and, if selected, serve on committees staffed by the GPSA,
   iv. Engage in discussion and, where appropriate, bring before the GPSA issues or concerns affecting graduate or professional students at the University;
   v. Bring before the GPSA resolutions concerning issues affecting graduate and professional students at the University.

B. Graduate and professional students shall have additional rights, should they become members of the GPSA.

Section 4.02: Overview of GPSA Membership

A. Membership in the GPSA shall be made available to all matriculated graduate and professional students of the University.

B. Members from demographic backgrounds reflecting the diverse nature of the University are especially encouraged to participate.
C. Membership shall consist of:
   i. Representatives selected from each graduate field and professional school (hereafter referred to as Field representatives);
   ii. Voting members.

Section 4.03: GPSA Field Representatives

A. Field representatives shall have the following responsibilities:
   i. Provide updates to constituents regarding GPSA events and initiatives, and solicit feedback where appropriate;
      1. Such communication will include information forwarded over the GPSA electronic mailing list, as well as any other information deemed appropriate by the representatives for dissemination to constituents.
      2. Members are encouraged to use existing communications channels within their fields or professional school or (if none exist) create a dedicated electronic mailing list.
   ii. Elect and empower the GPSA Voting members as described in Section 4.05;
   iii. Elect GPSA Officers and standing committee chairs;

B. The composition of Field representatives shall be:
   i. One representative elected in the fall from each graduate field (two from fields with over 100 students);
   ii. Three representatives elected by each professional school;
   iii. One elected representative from the Cornell NYC Tech campus in New York, NY and one elected representative from the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY (regardless of whether their field or professional school is already represented by a field representative);
   iv. The students in each individual field/professional school may prescribe their own election procedures. If not filled through election, a representative may be appointed by the field’s Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Dean of a professional school, subject to the approval of the students.

C. Field representatives may be removed by obtaining signatures from 51% of the matriculated students in the field/professional school.

D. Vacant seats remain open until a Field representative is selected by election or appointment.

E. Field representative seats are not transferable.

F. Field representatives may serve as many one-year terms as they like, but they must be elected or appointed annually.

Section 4.04: GPSA Voting Members

A. Voting members shall have the following responsibilities:
   i. Remain sufficiently informed about issues brought before the GPSA to cast informed votes on resolutions, formation of committees, and other matters;
   ii. Elect GPSA Voting members;
   iii. Elect GPSA Officers and standing committee chairs.
B. There shall be nineteen (19) Voting members, composed as follows:
   i. Two (2) graduate students enrolled in Master's degree programs.
   ii. Fourteen (14) from the divisions of the Graduate School as follows: three (3) from Humanities, three (3) from Biological Sciences, four (4) from Physical Sciences, and four (4) from Social Sciences.
   iii. Three (3) professional students, one each from the Samuel Curtis Johnson School of Business, Cornell Law School, and College of Veterinary Medicine.
C. Voting members do not count as Field representatives from their respective graduate fields or professional schools.

Section 4.05: Election of Voting Members

A. Registered students from Divisions defined by the Graduate School are eligible to run for Voting member positions:
   i. The 14 Voting members who represent the divisions of the Graduate School will be elected at the second to last GPSA meeting of the current GPSA term.
   ii. At this meeting, field representatives and Voting members shall form caucuses by Division to elect new Voting members from constituent fields.
      a. In the Physical Sciences, at least one seat shall be from an engineering field and at least one seat shall be from a non-engineering field.
      b. If no person is elected pursuant to the above procedure, the seat is thrown open as “at-large,” and a member may be elected from among the entire GPSA membership. The seat shall revert to its original Division designation at the next regular election.
B. The professional schools shall select one Voting member each by whatever means they choose.

C. Master’s Degree Specific Members
   i. The two (2) Voting members who represent graduate students enrolled in Master’s degree programs will be elected by GPSA members at the first regularly scheduled meeting of the fall semester.
   ii. Candidates for these seats must be enrolled in Master’s degree programs administered by the Graduate School.
   iii. At least one of the Master’s degree seats shall be from an engineering field.
   iv. If, by the third regularly scheduled meeting, no eligible candidate from an engineering field has been nominated for the engineering seat, the seat shall be opened to any student enrolled in any Master’s degree program administered by the Graduate School.
   v. If filled by a non-engineering student, the engineering seat reverts to its original designation at the next regular election.
   vi. If no Master’s degree students are nominated, these seats may remain vacant until eligible candidate(s) can be identified.

Section 4.06: Filling Vacant Seats
A. If one of the seats representing a Division of the Graduate School becomes vacant during the term of office, that seat is thrown open as “at-large,” and a member may be elected from among the entire GPSA membership.

B. A special election shall be held at the first regularly scheduled meeting following the existence of the vacancy.

C. Professional school seats vacated during the term of office shall be filled according to procedures outlined by the respective professional schools.

D. Both Field representatives and Voting members shall elect at-large members.

Section 4.07: Presidential Appointments

A. The President of the University may appoint one member of the administration to serve as a consultant to the GPSA at its meetings.

ARTICLE V: OFFICERS OF THE GPSA

Section 5.01: Definitions

A. The officers of the GPSA shall be the President, the Executive Vice President, the Vice President for Operations, and the Vice President for Communications.

B. The Counsel to the Assembly shall serve as an ex-officio officer of the GPSA.

Section 5.02: Officer Elections

A. Officers of the GPSA will be elected at the last regularly scheduled meeting of the current GPSA term.

B. All GPSA members shall be eligible to elect the officers of the GPSA.

C. The order of election shall proceed as follows: President, Executive Vice President, Vice President for Operations, Vice President for Communications, and Counsel to the Assembly.

D. To be elected to office, a nominee shall be subject to a majority approval of the GPSA members.

Section 5.03: Officer Responsibilities

A. President

i. It shall be the responsibility of the President of the GPSA to:

a. Assure the smooth and effective operation and maintenance of the GPSA,

b. Delegate responsibilities as needed to accomplish the duties of the office and the goals set forth in this Charter and associated Bylaws,

c. Chair, or appoint a delegate chair to, all meetings of the GPSA,

d. Transmit notice of the actions and recommendations of the GPSA,

e. Serve as spokesperson of the GPSA, correspond with the President of the University, enumerate actions taken by the GPSA, and submit the semi-annual year-end report to the University President.
B. Executive Vice President
   i. It shall be the responsibility of the Executive Vice President of the GPSA to:
      a. Assist the President as needed;
      b. Recruit graduate and professional students reflecting the diverse nature of the University to
         serve on the GPSA,
      c. Maintain an accurate list of members,
      d. Maintain attendance records at all GPSA meetings,
      e. Distribute the agenda and meeting materials for all GPSA meetings,
      f. Chair the Executive Committee of the GPSA,
      g. Chair meetings of the GPSA in the absence of the President.

C. Vice President for Operations
   i. It shall be the responsibility of the Vice President for Operations to:
      a. Chair the Operations and Staffing Committee,
      b. Maintain accurate lists of committee appointees,
      c. Maintain communication with committee appointees and chairs,
      d. Coordinate committee reporting procedures,
      e. Review and update the GPSA Charter and Bylaws,
      f. Chair meetings of the GPSA in the absence of both the President and Executive Vice
         President.

D. Vice President for Communications
   i. It shall be the responsibility of the Vice President for Communications to:
      a. Chair the Communications Committee.
      b. Oversee and manage the timely and accurate communication between the Executive
         Committee, the GPSA, the Graduate and Professional Student Community, and Cornell
         University.
      c. Chair meetings in the absence of the President, Executive Vice President, and Vice President
         for Operations.

E. Counsel to the Assembly
   i. It shall be the responsibility of the Counsel to the Assembly to:
      1. Help maintain continuity of the GPSA agenda between administrations,
      2. Keep track of GPSA history and precedents,
      3. Serve as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Executive Committee and the Operations and
         Staffing Committee, at the discretion of these committees.
   ii. The Counsel to the Assembly shall not be charged with performing any tasks other than advising the
       GPSA and the Executives, unless the Counsel wishes to take on a task.
   iii. Eligibility
       1. The Counsel to the Assembly is not required to be a current member of the GPSA.
       2. The Counsel to the Assembly must be a matriculated graduate or professional student at
          Cornell.
       3. The position may remain vacant if a qualified candidate is not found.
4. The Counsel to the Assembly must have previously served as a GPSA President, Executive Vice President, Vice President for Operations, or Vice President for Communications.

Section 5.04: Replacement of Officers

A. In the case that an officer resigns or is unable to perform the duties of the office, the following general procedures shall be used to find a replacement:

i. Nominees to fill officer positions during the current GPSA term shall be subject to a majority approval of the GPSA members.

ii. Elections will be held at regularly scheduled meetings.

B. The following specific procedures for the replacement of GPSA officers shall be used:

i. President
   a. The Executive Vice President shall assume the position of President.
   b. If the Executive Vice President declines the position, the GPSA members will elect a new President from among the Voting members.

ii. Executive Vice President
   a. The Vice President for Operations shall assume the position of Executive Vice President.
   b. If the Vice President for Operations declines the position, the GPSA members will elect a new Executive Vice President from among the Voting members.

iii. Vice President for Operations
   a. The Vice President for Communications shall assume the position of the Vice President for Operations.
   b. If the Vice President for Communications declines the position, the GPSA members will elect a new Vice President for Operations from among the Voting members.

iv. Vice President for Communications
   a. The GPSA Members will elect a new Vice President for Communications from among the Voting members.

v. Lack of Available Voting Members
   a. Should all eligible voting members refuse to be nominated to the any of the officer positions, the GPSA Members will elect a new officer from amongst the Field Representatives.

ARTICLE VI: COMMITTEES

Section 6.01: Establishment

A. The GPSA shall create and staff the standing committees pursuant to Section 2.10.

B. The GPSA may establish ad hoc committees, pursuant to Section 2.10, for the proper performance of its functions, and may prescribe their responsibilities and their membership.

C. The GPSA shall appoint representatives to University committees and assemblies.

Section 6.02: Standing Committees
A. The standing committees of the GPSA shall be the Executive Committee, Operations and Staffing Committee, Elections Committee, Appropriations Committee, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly Finance Commission (GPSAFC), the Communications Committee and other committees as described in the GPSA Bylaws.

B. The standing committees of the GPSA allow for focused, detailed work on issues of concern to the graduate and professional student body.

C. The standing committees may appoint sub-committees that report only to the standing committee. Membership of the sub-committee must consist of members of the respective standing committee.

D. A Voting member of the GPSA shall serve as Chair of each standing committee whenever possible, but other GPSA members may serve as needed.

E. Any matriculated graduate or professional student is eligible to serve on committees.
   i. At the last regularly scheduled meeting of the GPSA each term, the GPSA members shall elect, by majority vote, the chairs of the standing committees, with the exception of the Chair of the Appropriations Committee.
   ii. The Chair of the Appropriations Committee will be elected during the last regularly scheduled meeting of the fall semester. It is strongly encouraged that the Appropriations Chair have served on the committee for at least one semester prior to election.
   iii. If no suitable candidate can be found, a vacancy shall exist.
   iv. Vacancies in standing committee chairs that occur during the current GPSA term may be filled by majority vote of GPSA members at the next regularly scheduled meeting.
   v. The Vice President for Operations may appoint an acting chair from among the committee’s members or Executive Committee to serve until a new chair is elected.

ARTICLE VII: ESTABLISHMENT OF BYLAWS AND PROCEDURES

A. The GPSA may establish bylaws and other procedural rules that are necessary for the normal and efficient operation of the GPSA.

B. The adoption of such bylaws and rules will be subject to a majority vote of the Voting members.

ARTICLE VIII: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT ACTIVITY FEE

A. The GPS Activity Fee is mandatory for all graduate and professional students of the University and is used to support activities and programs that benefit the Cornell Community, in particular, its graduate and professional student population.

B. The President of the University delegated responsibility for setting and allocating of the GPS Activity Fee to the GPSA in a letter dated March 1, 1999. A set of guidelines are attached to said letter. The GPSA recognizes that along with setting and distributing the GPS Activity Fee comes accountability.

C. The GPS Activity Fee shall be established every two years — with the extensive participation and active input from the graduate and professional student body — by the last day of classes in the fall semester of the fee-
setting year. In the event that the GPSA cannot meet this deadline, the GPS Activity Fee shall be fixed at the amount and allocation in effect during the fee-setting year.

D. The GPSA shall establish three funding rules and procedures documents:

i. The GPSA Byline Allocation Procedures
   a. For the purpose of allocating the activity fee, this document’s rules and procedures hold the same weight and precedence as the GPSA Charter.
   b. Any changes to this document must be presented, in writing, at least one regularly scheduled meeting prior to the vote.
   c. Changes to this document require a 2/3 vote of the voting GPSA members.

ii. The GPSA Eligibility Criteria and Obligations for Byline Funded Organizations
   a. For the purpose of allocating the activity fee, this document’s rules and procedures hold the same weight and precedence as the GPSA Charter.
   b. Any changes to this document must be presented, in writing, at least one regularly scheduled meeting prior to the vote.
   c. Changes to this document require a 2/3 vote of the voting GPSA members.

iii. GPSAFC Funding Guidelines
   a. The Appropriations Committee shall present any revisions to the GPSAFC Funding Guidelines for majority vote of the voting members at least one meeting prior to a vote.
   b. The Appropriations Committee shall review the GPSAFC Funding Guidelines in non-activity fee setting years.

E. Funds from the Activity Fee will be allocated:

i. To the GPSA to help fulfill its mission and role in student government and advocating on behalf of graduate and professional students. Funds allocated to the GPSA are overseen by the Executive Committee in collaboration with the Chair of the Appropriations Committee.

ii. To the GPSA Finance Commission, no less than 35% of the total Activity Fee, to fund student organizations which contribute to the graduate and professional student experience at Cornell. Organizations must be registered with the Student Activities Office; further eligibility criteria and procedures are outlined in the GPSAFC Funding Guidelines, which are determined by the GPSA.

iii. Direct byline funding to organizations which surpass in size and scope those typically funded through the GPSAFC. Eligibility criteria, procedures and obligations for such organizations are outlined in the GPSA Eligibility Criteria and Obligations for Byline Funded Organizations.

F. Guidelines and procedures regarding the GPSAF shall be reviewed by the GPSA and a representative of the President of the University at least every four years in a non-fee-setting year.

ARTICLE IX: PROTECTION

Section 9.01: Community Rights

A. The GPSA and its committees shall respect and protect the rights of individual members of the Cornell community.
Section 9.02: Confidentiality

A. When a subject under discussion or examination requires the use of personal confidential information, all reasonable efforts shall be made to safeguard the confidentiality of this information.

ARTICLE X: CHARTER AND BYLAWS AMENDMENT

Section 10.01: Voting Requirements

A. An affirmative vote of a majority of the Voting members shall be required to amend the Bylaws and Procedures of the GPSA, and an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Voting members shall be required to amend the GPSA Charter.

Section 10.02: GPSA Charter Amendment

A. The GPSA Charter may be amended in one of the following ways:
   i. Upon signing of a petition by 100 Cornell graduate and professional students, any Graduate and Professional student may present an amendment to the GPSA for consideration.
      a. Within two regularly scheduled meetings after the presentation of the petition, the GPSA Voting members will discuss and vote on the proposed amendment.
      b. The form and wording of the amendment, as voted upon by the GPSA Voting members, shall be identical in form and wording to that of the petition.
   ii. Any GPSA member may present an amendment to the GPSA for consideration. Within two regularly scheduled meetings after such presentation, the GPSA Voting members will discuss and vote on the proposed amendment(s).
   iii. Any amendment must be presented in writing to all GPSA Voting members at least one regularly scheduled meeting prior to the meeting where the amendment will be considered.

Section 10.03: Bylaws Amendment

A. The Bylaws may be amended in one of the following ways:
   i. Upon signing of a petition by 100 Cornell graduate and professional students, any Graduate and Professional student may present an amendment to the GPSA for consideration.
      a. Within two regularly scheduled meetings after the presentation of the petition, the GPSA Voting members will discuss and vote on the proposed amendment.
      b. The form and wording of the amendment, as voted upon by the GPSA Voting members, shall be identical in form and wording to that of the petition.
   ii. Any GPSA member may present an amendment to the GPSA for consideration. Within two regularly scheduled meetings after such presentation, the GPSA Voting members will discuss and vote on the proposed amendment(s).
iii. Bylaw amendments must be presented in writing to all GPSA Voting members at least 24 hours before the amendment will be considered for a vote.

Section 10.04 Authority and responsibility

A. The amendments of those Articles of the Charter which appear under the headings, Authority, Responsibility, Membership, and Charter and Bylaws Amendment shall require, in addition, the approval of the President of the University.