Toolkit for GSG Representatives

University of Maryland, College Park (UMDCP)
Graduate Student Government
Spring 2019

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Welcome to Graduate Student Government!

Congratulations! You are now an elected representative in the UMDCP Graduate Student Government (GSG). Every enrolled graduate student is able to utilize the resources in the organization, participate and ask for advocacy from GSG. There are well over 10,000 graduate students at UMDCP—that is a LOT of constituents to consistently engage with and represent which is why we have program representatives as bridges between programs and our main shared governance organization.

This guide is a set of tools intended to help you be an effective representative throughout your term. In it, you can find an overview of the organization, tips and best practices, what to expect in assembly and committee meetings, a guide on how to write legislation, and a checklist to ensure you make the most of your experience as well as templates for legislation, resolutions and emails to inform and engage with your college dean, program faculty and staff and most importantly, your fellow graduate student who you represent.

By no means is this toolkit exhaustive of every issue you may encounter as a representative. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the Executive Committee or your fellow representatives. Speaking of, here are the emails for the executive team and the main listserv.

Emails to Know:

Role	Contact	What to Contact For
President	Gsg-president@umd.edu	Ideas, Questions, Concerns
VP for Legislative Affairs	Gsg-vpla@umd.edu	Assembly RSVP, proxy info, assembly info, Rules committee
VP for Academic Affairs	Gsg-vpaa@umd.edu	Academic affairs committee, academic policies, libraries, GRAD
VP for Financial Affairs	Gsg-vpfa@umd.edu	Event funding requests, budget and finance committee, student fee info
VP for Student Affairs	Gsg-vpsa@umd.edu	Student affairs committee, student affairs issues
VP for Public Relations	Gsg-vppr@umd.edu	Outreach help, media, website
VP for Diversity and Inclusion	Gsg-vpdi@umd.edu	Diversity and Inclusion committee, accessibility, diversity policies
VP for Government Affairs	Gsg-vpga@umd.edu	Legislative action committee, lobbying, advocacy,
VP for Community Development	Gsg-vpcd@umd.edu	Elections, social and sport committee,
Director of Operations	Gsg-office@umd.edu	General questions
GSG Assembly Listserv	Gsg-assembly@umd.edu	Something to share with all

About Graduate Student Government (GSG)

Who we are:

Graduate Student Government (GSG) is the official representative body for graduate students at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). Every graduate student is automatically a member of the organization and the purpose of the organization is to serve the graduate student community. GSG is comprised of the Executive Committee and elected legislative Assembly branch. GSG is funded by the UMD Graduate Student Activities Fee. We welcome representation from across colleges and programs.

What we do:

1. GSG formulates policies promoting and governing the activities and welfare of graduate students, and advises the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and Provost, the Graduate Council, the University Senate, the President, and any other relevant organization concerning matters affecting graduate students. In addition,
2. GSG is responsible for the allocation of the Student Activity Fee paid by graduate students and represents graduate student interests for all other Mandatory Fees.
3. GSG fosters and celebrates excellence in graduate student research.

Membership and Voting:

Representatives: Only currently enrolled graduate students are eligible to serve on GSG and must be elected by their program. Representatives attend monthly assembly meetings, serve on committees, and function as ambassadors between their program and GSG.

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee is comprised of elected members who do not have regular voting rights for legislation (with the exception of the VP for Legislative Affairs who is a tie-breaking vote). The Executive Committee members include the President and several Vice Presidents who each have specific additional responsibilities to lead and guide the Assembly members. Each VP is expected to work approximately five hours per week for the GSG. For this work, they receive an honoraria of $1,334 per semester. All executive positions are open for nominations during the general election in the spring.

The Executives are as follows:
- President
- Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Vice President of Community Development
- Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion
- Vice President of Financial Affairs
- Vice President of Government Affairs
- Vice President of Legislative Affairs
- Vice President of Public Relations
- Vice President of Student Affairs

Executive Staff (non-voting):
- Director of Operations
- Chief of Staff

Staff: GSG also has hourly staff members for short-term projects which may vary including GRAD Coordinator, Legislative Coordinator, Webmaster, etc. They are non-voting members but are permitted to co-sponsor legislation.

Assembly Meetings:

We meet monthly during the academic year at our General Assembly Meetings, which are open to all graduate students. Encourage other grads to come!

Important: *Attendance is mandatory!* Representatives should personally attend or send a proxy to all meetings. After three unexcused absences, a Representative may be expelled from the legislative body. If an Executive misses three assembly meetings, they will be cited with a Charge of Neglect and the Assembly will vote on impeachment.

Assemblies are where you can be an active voice in debate, vote, present legislation and resolution and the monthly time you can see and get to know your fellow program representatives. Food is provided!

Be ready for pre-assembly and post-assembly emails that will help prepare you for the topics each month, including a heads up on what you will be discussing and voting on. The post-assembly notes are provided for you to reformat and send out to your constituents as one of the multiple ways of keeping them informed.

Committees:

Every representative much join at least one standing committee, which typically meet once per month during the academic year. The standing committees currently are as follows:

Academic Affairs: Reviews University and Graduate School policies and develops GSG proposals on issues pertaining to the academic and professional development of graduate students. It also assists with the execution and management of Graduate Research Appreciation Day (GRAD).

Budget and Finance: Reviews Event Funding Requests (EFRs) from graduate students and graduate student organizations for the funding of graduate student activities. Members of the BFC are responsible for evaluating proposals in a fair, transparent, ethical and timely manner.

Diversity and Inclusion: Reaches out to cultural groups across campus in order to build stronger ties throughout the graduate student community and works to promote diversity within the GSG.

Elections: Supervises yearly GSG Executive Elections and midterm elections for representatives. The EC is in charge of setting up, assisting to generate interest in, and helping to facilitate GSG elections.

Governance: Presides over elections disputes, impeachment proceedings, and is the highest authority in the GSG concerning all matters of interpretation of the GSG Constitution, Bylaws, Executive Orders, and all other statutes.

Student Affairs: Considers issues such as housing, safety, transportation, and other issues pertaining to graduate student well-being.

Legislative Action: Ensures that UMD graduate students are in the minds of decision makers on a University, local, and state level and assists in the communication process. The committee monitors legislation to see how it might affect graduate students and lobbies elected officials on behalf of graduate student's interests.

Rules: Decides the agenda of the monthly GSG meeting. This includes all legislation or other items to appear, their order, and any appropriate time limits.

Social and Sport: Also known as community development, this committee manages graduate student programming and petitions for recreation services to reflect the needs of a diverse graduate student body. Programming includes sporting events, social events, and Grad Pub.

In addition to these standing committees, GSG has a seat on over 50 external councils, committees, task forces and boards around campus and the community. These include University Senate committees, City-University Partnership committees, the Graduate Council, Committee for the Review of Student Fees, Presidential commissions, the Provost's Advisory Council, and many more. If you are interested in joining an external committee, please contact the GSG President at gsg-president@umd.edu.

Governing Documents

The primary governing document for GSG is the Constitution, which can be found [here](). It is reviewed every five years. Changes must be approved by campus-wide vote by two-thirds majority, with at least 500 students voting.

The secondary governing document are the GSG Bylaws, which can be found [here](). It can be modified by two-thirds majority of the Assembly.

Tips and Best Practices

#1: Be A Connector

If you are reading this guide, it means you have made the choice to serve the graduate student community as a voting program representative, a part of the legislative Assembly. You now represent and serve a group of constituents who may or may not know about GSG and the resources that are in place to support them. You are now a connector and leader for your community.

The best way to serve in your representative role is by being a conduit, an advocate, and an initiator. Being connected is essential to connecting your program and department with relevant resources and news. Please share the following with your constituents:

Website: http://gsg.umd.edu
Email: gsg-office@umd.edu
OrgSync: https://orgsync.com/59961/chapter
Social Media: Facebook, Twitter

Many programs or departments have their own listservs, Facebook pages, or other means of connecting with one another. Let your constituents know you are by being an active member of those groups and starting in-person conversations. If your program has internal student groups or advisory committees, you can ask to speak to introduce yourself at one of their meetings. You can also reach out to specific student who you feel would be interested in participating in a GSG committee, sporting or social events, or other community activities.

#2: Engage in General Assembly Meetings.

To make full use of your experience in GSG, actively engage in General Assembly Meetings. Come prepared by reviewing the meeting agenda prior to the meeting and making a list of questions to ask or comments to make about the topics that are being discussed. Additionally, after identifying an issue that you are passionate about and relates to graduate students, you have the ability to propose legislation to be voted by the Assembly. Learn more about writing legislation in the "How to Write Legislation" section of this toolkit.

#3: Be an active committee member.

Attend committee meetings regularly and join multiple, if possible. If you are unable to attend a committee meeting, you can review the agenda ahead of time to offer the committee chair your thoughts on the topics being discussed and then review the meeting notes after the meeting to stay up-to-date on committee activities. When there are action items for the committee, volunteer to contribute a bit of your time.

#4: Sit on an external committee.

GSG has one or more seats on many external councils, committees, and boards around campus and the community. For example, these include University Senate committees, City-University Partnership committees, the Graduate Council, Committee for the Review of Student Fees, Presidential commissions, the Provost's Advisory Council, and many more. If you are interested in joining an external committee, please contact the GSG President at gsg-president@umd.edu.

#5: Find your successor.

It is important that your constituents have a voice and continuous connection to the larger graduate community. When you know you will be leaving GSG, please help find your successor via outreach to your program!

What to Expect in Assembly Meetings

Overview:

The Assembly meets monthly and typically includes:
- A guest speaker
- New business (including resolutions and legislation)
- Representative's forum
- Announcements

Rules of Order and Robert's Rules:

Assembly meetings are presided by the Vice President of Legislative Affairs and follow **Robert's Rules of Order**, which you can learn more about [here](#) and [here](#). Important parliamentary procedures include that:
- Only members of the Assembly may speak and must be recognized by the presiding officer;
- When speaking, members should state their name and program for the record; and
- The person speaking "has the floor" and may not be interrupted until finished speaking (with the exception if rules of meeting are suspended).

Voting:

When voting, representatives may vote either in favor, against, or abstain. There are four ways of voting:
- Vocal Vote
  - Affirmative is "aye" and negative is "no."
- Raising of Hands
- Paper Ballots
- Unanimous Consent
  - The presiding officer will ask for any opposition and silence means the motion carries.

What to Expect in Committee Meetings

Committee meetings are typically more informal than Assembly meetings and vary depending on the committee. The committee chair is expected to create an agenda before each meeting and distribute any necessary documents or information. Afterwards, they are expected to share meeting notes and any relevant documents from the meeting.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your standing committee assignment, please reach out to the GSG President.

How to Write Legislation

Any representative can write, sponsor, and co-sponsor legislation to be voted on in a General Assembly Meeting. Legislation is in the form of Resolutions, which express the

opinion of the Assembly, or Acts, which concern the governing documents of GSG or its budget.

Step #1: Come up with an idea.

Do you think there's something GSG should support, call for, or request at the UMD? The possibilities are endless, but be sure to do your research before drafting your legislation. Has something similar been proposed before? If so, did it work? If it failed, how could it be improved upon? Who does this legislation affect? What is the history of this issue at UMD and in GSG? Could this become a coordinated effort with other shared governance bodies, like SGA, RHA, or University Senate?

You can find samples of past legislation here.

Step #2: Write the legislation.

Legislation has five parts, which are explained in detail below. Please try to get your legislation formatted as correctly as possible, but know that it is the Rules Committee's responsibility to ensure that all legislation is formatted and labelled correctly before being introduced.

1. Title
   a. Ex.) "A Resolution Calling on the Board of Regents to Formally Review the International Student Fee"
   b. Ex.) "A Resolution Supporting the Current Trans Inclusive Campus Policies"
   c. Ex.) "A Resolution Requesting that President Wallace Loh Honor His Commitment to Retire in June 2019"
2. Summary
   .   This section is typically one sentence summarizing what the resolution is asking for and why.
3. "Whereas,"
   .   The "whereas" is the first half of the resolution explaining why the action should be taken, providing any necessary background information. Each "whereas" is a single sentence separated by a semicolon and the word "and."
4. "Therefore, be it resolved that..."
   .   This is the section wherein you specify what action should be taken to solve the issue described in the "whereas" section. Keep in mind that, if approved, it is the Graduate Student Government calling for this action, not an individual representative, and should be written as such.
5. Document Information
   .   Author(s)
   a.   Sponsor(s)
   b.   Date and Time of Submission
   c.   Date of Presentation

d.   Action(s) Taken

i. This includes a line for the Decision of GSG President, Signature of GSG President, and Date Signed.

Step #3: Find co-sponsors and build support.

Legislation must have at least on co-sponsor. However, the more co-sponsors you get to sign onto your legislation, the better. Before submitting legislation, contact other representatives to explain why this issue is important and garner their support as a co-sponsor. There is no limit on how many co-sponsors a piece of legislation may have.

Speaking with other voting members before the Assembly meeting can also help you anticipate what amendments or arguments against you may receive. You can try to work out disagreements before submitting your legislation.

Step #4: Submit your legislation.

Finally, you will submit your legislation to the Vice President of Legislative Affairs (VPLA) via gsg-rules@umd.edu.

It must be submitted to the Rules Committee no later than nine business days before the Assembly meeting at which you'd like it to be considered. The Rules Committee will review and help to edit your legislation, if necessary, in order to ensure it is ready to be voted on. Before your legislation is added to the Assembly meeting's agenda, a majority of the Rules Committee must vote in favor of doing so.

Step #5: Argue in favor of your legislation before the vote.

When your legislation is presented at the Assembly meeting, you will be given the opportunity to briefly explain it to the other members before the vote. The timed discussion period of which follows will allow for any member with a question or concern to address the Assembly and for you to respond. After the discussion, a member may motion for a vote on the legislation, to make an amendment, or to table the legislation until the next meeting.

Step #6: Wait for the GSG President's action.

The GSG President will either sign or veto, within 10 University working days, all legislation passed by the Assembly. If the legislation is neither signed nor vetoed within that time period, then the legislation is deemed approved.

Checklist to Make the Most of Your Experience

☐ **Familiarize yourself with the GSG Constitution and Bylaws!**

☐ **Attend all General Assembly Meetings. If you cannot attend, send a proxy!**

☐ **Follow all GSG Social media and encourage constituents to do so!**

☐ **Share GSG news, resources, events, etc. with you constituents on a regular basis. An easy way to do this is by emailing post-assembly notes and resolutions that pass!**

☐ **Introduce yourself to your program head/chair and your college dean and let them know about your role and ask how to best stay in communication and engage with program members!**

☐ **Attend and be active in all of your assigned standing committee meetings!**

☐ **Volunteer to sit on more than one standing committee on issues you care about!**

☐ **Share and tag GSG's social media posts!**

☐ **Write or co-sponsor legislation and resolutions. Reach out via the listserv to find co-authors and co-sponsors!**

☐ **Attend GSG's community and advocacy programs including GRAD, mixers, letter writing campaigns, advocacy days, etc.!**

☐ **Volunteer to sit on an external committee!**

☐ **Run for a position on the Executive Committee!**

☐ **Inform eligible groups you are involved with about the GSG event funding process!**

☐ **When the time comes, help find your successor!**

Templates

Post-Assembly Constituent Email Example 1:

Hello,

My updates from last night's monthly GSG Assembly session are below. The first two items are about potential opportunities for interest URSP students to get involved with. Hit me up if you're interested!

Contents:
1. OPPORTUNITY: City-University Partnership Housing and Economic Development Committee
2. OPPORTUNITY: "What Would You Like in the Grad Space at McKeldin"
3. International food festival
4. Parking permit for BIG 10 basketball games

1. OPPORTUNITY: City-University Partnership Housing and Economic Development Committee

Last week, I attended my first committee meeting as a member of the Housing and Development Committee for the City-University Partnership, which is a body that coordinates planning efforts of the University and the City of College Park. Their agenda covered issues including increasing home ownership in College Park, enhancing public spaces, increasing the number of graduate students residents in College Park and a planned development at College Park Metro West.

Their discussion on increasing the number of graduate students living in College Park is particularly relevant to us. On this matter, I offered the support of the URSP program and I will be meeting with two members of the partnership to discuss strategies as well as how URSP students could assist in this effort. **It would be great to have another planning student or two with me at this meeting, so if you are interested in attending, please let me know. The meeting is on Tuesday, November 13th at 11AM.** We will meet at Bagels and Grinds.

2. OPPORTUNITY: "What Would You Like in the Grad Space at McKeldin"

McKeldin libraries are trying to renovate the 5th floor a dedicated space for graduate students. The Associate Dean for Public Services, Gary White, and others will be holding a focus group regarding this issue. I can attend it but **if there is anyone else who would like to go in place of me, please let me know.** There are definitely folks in our program who are better equipped to have this discussion in terms of both design/space expertise and caring about a grad space in McKeldin... It is a great chance to get to know some administrators and get involved!

The deets: **Nov. 16th, 11-1 pm, at the McKeldin Libraries 5th floor** outside of the writing center. **Lunch is provided!**

3. International Food Festival
The Office of International Affairs (OIA) is working with dining services to host an international food festival tentatively on February 20, 2019, at North Dining Hall. **They are soliciting recipes for menu items for the festival.** You can submit your recipe [here](). Every recipe will be featured in the recipe book made by OIA.

4. Parking permit for BIG 10 Basketball games

I don't think this applies to anyone here but if you need to park in lots 4, 6, 9, or 11 during home Big 10 basketball games, you can apply for a permit to keep your parked there during those games.

Link to application: https://orgsync.com/59961/forms/331136
Link to Big10 home game schedule: https://umterps.com/schedule.aspx?schedule=365

Best,
Bilal

Post-Assembly Constituent Email Example 2:

Hi Everyone,

Please see below for the post-Assembly Announcements to distribute to your constituents!

Nominations OPEN for GSG VP Academic Affairs!
GSG is looking for a Vice President for Academic Affairs to serve out the remainder of the 2017-2018 term (through July 1). Because this is a midterm election, nominations and elections will happen on the floor of the next GSG General Assembly meeting on Friday, 2/09 at 2:30 p.m. To learn more about these positions, election procedures, and GSG, go to go.umd.edu/GSGmidtermJan18. Please consider running. We need you!

Accepting Applications: Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition

The Graduate School invites post-candidacy doctoral students from all disciplines to participate in the annual Three-Minute Thesis Competition (3MT). The 3MT competition challenges students to communicate the significance of their research projects to a non-specialist audience in just three minutes. This competition provides a unique opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to effectively explain their research to a general audience in an engaging and interesting manner.

The competition will take place during a two-week period in the Spring. First, during the week of **March 26th,** applicants will be invited to present their three-minute oral presentation to a Campus Selection Committee. The Committee will select up to 10 students to advance to the next part of the competition. For step 2 of the competition, students will be asked to present their 3MT during **Graduate Research Appreciation Day (GRAD) on April 4, 2018.**

Application Deadline: Applications to compete are due to the Graduate School by noon on **Friday, March 16, 2018.**

3MT Workshop Opportunity: We invite you to attend a workshop that is specifically designed to help students prepare a successful 3MT presentation. Please join us on **Tuesday, February 27 at 10:00 am** or **Wednesday, February 28 at 3:30 pm.** R.S.V.P. here.

The Graduate School will name a first-place and two runner-up award winners.
The first-place winner will receive:
  • $500 in research funds;
  • professional coaching sessions to enhance the 3MT presentation;
  • professional production of their 3MT video; and
  • will be the UMD representative for the Universitas 21 International Competition in Fall 2018.

The runner-ups winners will receive:
  • $250 in research funds; and
  • professional production of their 3MT video.

Contact: Questions can be directed to Assistant Director Robyn Kotzker in the Office of Funding Opportunities at rkotzker@umd.edu or 301-405-0281.

Thank you!

Adria

Introduction Email to Dean/Chair/Program Head Template

*In hopes this will be distributed to your whole program listserv

Dear _____,

This year I will be the representative for (insert program) within the Graduate Student Government. It is my honor to serve in this capacity and create a bridge between our department and the wider UMD community.

Graduate Student Government is the official representative body for graduate students at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). Every graduate student is automatically a member of the organization and the purpose of the organization is to serve the graduate student community. We meet monthly as a legislative body where we discuss and vote on legislation and resolutions intended to help better the overall graduate student community. As a program representative, I also serve on a GSG standing committee which actively works on topics integral to the success of graduate students.

I would like to ensure that I remain connected to you throughout the year as I engage with my program peers on issues that are the most relevant and of the most concern.

May I meet with you in the next 1-2 weeks to discuss how I can best relate to your office for the duration of my role?

With Appreciation,

Name

Resolution Update Email to Dean/Chair/Program Head Template

Greetings _____,

I wanted to reach out and update you on the recent resolutions that were passed during the monthly Graduate Student Government assembly.

Attached is/are the resolution/s that passed.

(Insert short description of resolution and importance)

Here are the following action items hoped for at the unit level. **(Insert action items)**

Please let me know if you have any questions about the resolutions or ideas for how to best support these resolutions in our department/program.

Thank you for your continued support of graduate students,

Name

GSG Resolution Template

- *When using template be sure to copy and paste into a new document and to insert line numbers.*

GSGA(insert assembly #)-R

[Descriptive Title]

Summary: [Brief statement summarizing the resolution that follows]

[The **Summary** should be limited to no more than two lines for clarity and conciseness.]

  WHEREAS, [Situational clause that logically explains the circumstances that lead to the conception and passing of the resolution in question]; and

  WHEREAS, [Situational clause]; and

  WHEREAS, [Situational clause]; and

["**WHEREAS,**" statements have no number limit.]

  THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT [Statement calling for the unified position of a certain population].

Author(s): [Name, title (4-letter program code)]

Sponsor(s): [Name, title (4-letter program code)]

Date and Time of Submission: [day month year]

Date of Presentation: [day month year]

Action(s) Taken:

_____

Decision of GSG President

_____ _____

Signature of GSG President   Date

GSG Legislative Act Template

- *When using template be sure to copy and paste into a new document and to insert line numbers.*

<div align="center">

GSGA38-AXX

TITLE:

</div>

Summary: [summary of act here]

FOR THE PURPOSE OF [insert rationale here]

BY AMENDING THE GSG BYLAWS AS FOLLOWS, DELETIONS UNDERLINED, ADDITIONS IN ITALICS:

[text of amendment here]

Author(s):   [Name, title (4-letter program code)]

Sponsor(s):   [Name, title (4-letter program code)]

Date and Time of Submission: [month day year]

Date of Presentation: [month day year]

Action(s) Taken:

_____
Decision of GSG President

_____   _____
Signature of GSG President   Date