

# **Constitution of International Studies Graduate Students Association at the University of Miami**

## **Mission**

We are a graduate students association that seeks to make the International Studies graduate program globally competitive. The student association will serve as the primary intermediary between the student body and faculty, as well as the broader graduate student association at the University of Miami.

## **Vision**

Our aim is to create a sense of community and shared purpose among all graduate students pursuing an international studies degree. We want to create an environment that fosters exposure to different academic and professional opportunities for all graduate students. Acting as a council for all graduate students, we seek to foster an environment of shared commitment towards studying international affairs.

## **Goals**

Involve and represent students in academic affairs  
Promote professional development for graduate students  
To encourage student participation with student government  
Promote open channels of communication between the graduate student body, faculty and administrative personnel  
Promote a culture of open communication and accountability for student needs  
Launch a website to make available all information about the association and post a calendar of activities

## **By-laws**

### **Article I: Name**

This organization shall be named International Studies Graduate Students Association; it may also be referred to as ISGSA.

### **Article II: Purpose**

- a. The purpose of the ISGSA is to represent graduate students at the International Studies Department and serve as a link between graduate students, faculty, professional staff, administrative staff, and any other organization within or outside the University of Miami
- b. The objectives of the ISGSA shall be to involve and represent students in academic affairs, promote professional development for graduate students, encourage student participation with student government, promote open channels of communication between the graduate student body, faculty and administrative personnel, promote a culture of open communication and accountability for student needs

### **Article III: Affiliation Statement**

This organization shall be affiliated with the Department of International Studies.

### **Article IV: Responsibility**

The ISGSA shall comply with all University of Miami policies and procedures, including but not limited to those policies set forth in the Student Rights Responsibilities Handbook, as well as local, state, and federal laws.

### **Article V: Membership**

#### **Section 1. General Membership**

- a. Membership to the ISGSA shall be open to all University of Miami graduate students currently enrolled in the Department of International Studies (at least part time), that are in good academic standing who have paid their Student Activity Fee. ISGSA shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, handicap, age, sexual orientation, or political and religious affiliation in any of its policies, procedures, and practices. Non-voting members may be extended to interested faculty, administrators, staff members, and alumni of the University.
- b. Active membership in ISGSA is defined as those students who are pursuing a graduate degree and are currently enrolled with at least one credit at the Department of International Studies
- c. Benefits of active membership include the right to vote at general body meetings, the right to present issues and put them up for discussion at general body meetings, and attend academic, professional, and social events organized by the ISGSA

#### **Section 2. Executive Board**

The composition of the executive board will be as follows: four permanent elected officers (governing members) consisting of a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, GSA Senator, and an appointed Web Master. All these positions will be nominated and elected by the INS graduate student body except for the Web Master who will be appointed unanimously by the four elected members. Voting members will consist of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and GSA Senator.

##### a. Positions

###### **1) President**

- i. Voting member
- ii. Represents INS graduate students at faculty meetings
- iii. Presides over all meetings
- iv. Serves as a moderator in all meetings to ensure that they are run in a timely manner, covering all the issues in the agenda
- v. Provides an agenda for all meetings a week in advance

- vi. Makes sure that elections are held in a timely manner.  
Presides or organizes an elections committee in due time
- vii. Serves as a spokesperson for graduate students at the INS department
- viii. Chairs at least one committee of activities (either academic or professional), and serves as an advisor to the rest

## **2) Vice-President**

- i. Voting Member
- ii. The primary responsibility of the Vice-President will be communications. The Vice-President will be in charge of taking minutes at the council meetings and making those available for the entire graduate student body
- iii. Handles the dissemination of information regarding research or educational opportunities related to international studies, which shall be distributed by the Vice-President
- iv. Assisting the running and organization of social gatherings for graduate students
- v. Will be first in line for being President, should one of the voting officers default
- vi. Chairs one committee of activities

## **3) Treasurer**

- i. Voting member
- ii. Represents INS graduate students at faculty meetings
- iii. Runs the budget
- iv. Presents the budget and earmarks
- v. Communicates any budgetary changes
- vi. Oversees running and funding of social gatherings
- vii. Chairs at least one committee or subcommittee of activities (academic or professional)
- viii. Approves any activity that requires funding from the charter.  
Proposals for activities should be turned in at least two weeks in advance

## **4) GSA Senator**

- i. Voting Member
- ii. Serves as an official spokesperson of the INS graduate students to the University community
- iii. Reports back any issues being discussed at the GSA that may affect INS graduate students
- iv. Chairs the social committee
- v. Works along with the Vice-President and Web Master in ensuring that communications are kept current and distributed far and wide
- vi. Responsible for press releases and media relations in consultation with the President

## **5) Web Master**

- i. Appointed member
- ii. Keeps the website updated with all pertinent news and information about coming events, and meetings

#### **6) Faculty Advisor**

- i. A Faculty advisor may be proposed to advise the association as needed. The role of the faculty advisor will be voluntary and shall not include voting privileges
- ii. E-Board members may nominate a faculty advisor. After the nomination there will be a vote among all E-Board members if there is more than one nominee
- iii. A simple majority will suffice to elect a faculty advisor. If there is no winner, votes will take place on a second round
- iv. If the first choice for faculty advisor declines; the process shall start over from nominations

#### **b. Eligibility Requirements**

To be eligible for any of the ISGSA executive board positions, the candidate must be an active graduate student with good academic standing at the Department of International Studies

#### **c. Length of Term**

The term in office for Executive Board members shall consist of one academic year, starting with the fall semester

#### **d. Installation**

Installation of new Executive Board members will occur at the end of the spring semester and is to be facilitated by the exiting executive board

#### **e. Vacancies/ Succession**

If a vacancy occurs in the position of the President or Treasurer, it shall be filled by the Vice-President first, the GSA Senator second, and the Web Master third. If a vacancy occurs in either of the positions of Vice-President, GSA Senator or Web Master, it will be filled by an extraordinary election process

#### **f. Impeachment/ Removal of Executive Board**

##### **Section 1. Petition**

Two-thirds of the Executive Board must agree, or two-thirds (2/3) of active members must sign a petition to ask for impeachment of an executive board member

##### **Section 2. Process**

Active members, the Executive Board, Advisor, and Officer being impeached must be notified at least two weeks in advance of the impeachment hearing. The impeachment hearing must occur while classes are in session

### **Section 3. Hearings**

The moderator of the impeachment hearing will be the faculty advisor. Three fourths (3/4) of active members must be present in order for the impeachment hearing to begin. Each side will be given the opportunity to present their case and the active members may ask questions. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of active members present is needed for conviction and removal

## **Article VI: Elections**

### **Section 1. Timeline**

Elections will be held in the spring semester at a time and place left at the discretion of the board

- a. All elections of officers shall last seven days, concluding with the announcement of results on the seventh day
- b. Elections will be held during the first two weeks of April and announcements of results shall be given by the last week of April, the latest. The chair of the elections committee will make sure that these timetables are met

### **Section 2. Procedures**

- c. Any member may nominate an active member for any office prior to the election. Elections are done by secret ballot and require majority vote. Voting takes place by a secret ballot procedure and proxy voting is not allowed. In the event that no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a runoff election between the two top candidates shall be held immediately. The runoff elections shall follow the same procedure

#### Facilitation:

- i. The elections committee will be formed by February 1<sup>st</sup> each year
- ii. The President will act as the chair of the elections committee and the Vice-President will act as co-chair
- iii. In cases where either the President or Treasurer run for re-election, chairmanship shall pass to Vice-President first and GSA Senator second
- iv. In case all governing officers seek to run for office for a second time, the four officers will vote for a new elections committee among active members of the graduate student body

#### Eligibility:

- i. Any active member of the ISGSA is eligible to run for all positions for officers

- ii. Executive board members may be eligible for reelection for one more term only
- iii. Impeached executive board members shall never be eligible to run for an Executive Board position again

Nominations:

- i. Nominations for executive board positions shall be opened no later than four weeks prior to the election
- ii. Candidates may be nominated for more than one position, however, he or she shall make clear which of the positions he or she is willing to run for
- iii. Any active member of the ISGSA can nominate a fellow graduate student who is an active member of the organization to run for representative office
- iv. A candidate shall be able to nominate him or herself
- v. A candidate for office need not to be present at the election, but he or she must accept their nomination either in person at a general meeting, or in writing to the President
- vi. Current nominations lists shall be sent to ISGSA members no later than one week prior to the election

Voting:

- i. All active members of the ISGSA are eligible to vote (see art. V)
- ii. Candidates will be allowed to give a timed presentation on their platform and why they feel they should be elected to a specific position

**Article VII: Advisor**

The advisor of the ISGSA shall be a full-time faculty, administrator or staff member at the University of Miami.

- 1) A Faculty advisor may be proposed to advise the association as needed. The role of the faculty advisor will be voluntary and shall not include voting privileges
- 2) E-Board members may nominate a faculty advisor. After the nomination there will be a vote among the four governing officers if there is more than one nominee
- 3) A simple majority will suffice to elect a faculty advisor. If there is no winner, votes will take place on a second round
- 4) If the first choice for faculty advisor declines; the process shall start over from nominations

**Article VIII: Meetings**

## **Section 1. General**

- a. General member meetings will be held at least three times officially during the course of a semester. The first annual meeting will be held within the first two weeks after the start of classes. The required quorum for the first meeting will be at least two voting members from the Executive Board, and six active members. The second meeting will be held a week after midterms (per academic calendar), and the last meeting will be held during the last month of classes
- b. Minutes shall be taken at all meetings by the Vice-President. These minutes shall be published and distributed to graduate students within one week of said meeting. Copies of the minutes shall be stored electronically. Individuals may offer comments off the record, and where appropriate, a motion may be offered to replace all references to a named individual in the minutes with an alias
- c. Meetings will be kept running for a maximum of two hours. The President shall make sure meetings are running smoothly and on time, any issues left without being addressed will have to be rescheduled for an extra meeting
- d. In the event of a possible delay due to natural disasters or any other unforeseeable circumstance that forbids an actual physical meeting, provisions shall be made to hold a teleconference or an electronic meeting via instant messaging. Quorum for an extraordinary meeting of this sort will consist of the four governing officers

## **Section 2. Executive Board**

Executive Board meetings will be held every two weeks. However, if there are important issues that require immediate attention, any of the Executive Board members may be able to call for an emergency meeting amongst officers to be held within 24 hours.

## **Section 3. Special Meetings**

Special meetings will be held on a need-to basis. Special meetings may be called by either a petition of six members submitted to the Vice-President or by a vote of any of the voting officers. The President shall then schedule a meeting within seven days at a suitable time for the petitioners and Executive Board members. Other faculty members shall be invited if at least six petitioners ask for it or the President and Vice-President consider it unanimously necessary

## **Article IX: Committees**

### **Section 1: Standing Committees**

Chairmanship of all committees will be reserved first for officers from the governing body. Other active members of the association may participate as chairs of subcommittees or secretaries of committees. There are three committees proposed; of those, subcommittees can be formed

A) Academic

- The academic committee will organize colloquiums. Working alongside faculty members, the purpose of this committee will be to organize monthly colloquiums in which faculty members or doctoral students that are close to graduating may present their research
- A manuscript will be provided early on by the presenter, and all the attendees will engage in serious discussion with the aim of advancing knowledge in the international affairs arena

B) Professional

- The professional committee will be in charge of organizing monthly brown bag sessions in which professional matters will be discussed in an informal fashion
- This committee will try to make sure that all graduate students benefit from these sessions, to include those seeking a professional career in a non-profit, for-profit, as well as an academic environment

C) Social

- The social committee will be in charge of organizing social events to bring the INS community closer
- Chairmanship of the social committee will be primarily reserved for the Vice-President or GSA Senator, or both
- A social gathering will be organized to be scheduled within the first two weeks of classes
- The social committee will have to meet at least a week before the start of the Fall semester
- If there are too many socials being proposed, the social committee can break away into subcommittees; for which chairmanship may be opened to active members of the ISGSA
- Subcommittees may have different chairmanship and different composition even, but President and Vice-President will have to ratify them
- All events that need funding will have to submit a budget for approval two weeks in advance to the Treasurer. A portion of the budget may be earmarked for socials, if the budget for socials in any term has been exhausted, the chairman of a subcommittee may still carry out his/her project if a proper fundraising strategy is proposed to the governing body and approved by at least a simple majority

**Section 2: Special Committees**

- Special committees may be appointed by a motion introduced by any of the Executive Board members and ratified by the general body through an election at any meeting
- If there is a specific topic that does not fall within any of the standing committees, a motion to create a fourth committee might be introduced at

a meeting by any active member of the ISGSA, and should be seconded by all governing members and at least a simple majority of the meeting attendees

## **Article X. Discipline**

### **Section 1. Reasons**

Any officer failing to attend at least 3/4 of all meetings and events in any given semester OR who is not performing his duties will be removed from office. Any officer not meeting minimum attendance requirements or who is not performing their respective duties. Any member who falls below compliance with University requirements for membership, OR who is determined as having been disruptive to activities or events associated with ISGSA.

### **Section 2. Process**

Any officer whose conduct falls under that conduct described in Section 1 will be given a written warning and an opportunity to respond to the warning and explain their situation. The officer team will review the situation. A 2/3-membership vote must be obtained to remove an individual. An election will be held immediately to fill any officer vacancy.

### **Section 3. Consequences**

The officer that has been deemed by a 2/3-membership vote to be in violation of his/ her duties and/ or to be disruptive in meetings or activities shall be removed and replaced by a unanimous appointment by the executive board.

## **Article XI. Amendments to the Constitution**

### **Section 1. Submission**

Amendments to this Constitution shall be submitted to the President or Vice-President of the ISGSA in writing for submission to the active members for a vote

### **Section 2. Vote**

A vote of 3/4 active members is needed for the adoption of any amendment

### **Section 3. Final Approval**

Amendments must be presented to the Committee on Student Organizations for approval prior to implementation

## **Article XII. Dissolution of the Organization**

### **Section 1. Process**

The International Studies Graduate Students Association may be dissolved after dissolution is approved by the Executive Board, and by a vote of 3/4 active members, provided that a notice of the vote on the dissolution is furnished to all active members at least sixty (60) days prior to the vote

**Section 2. Obligations**

Upon dissolution, the Executive Board will utilize assets of the organization to pay all obligations and expenses of the organization

**Section 3. Approval**

Notice of dissolution must be presented in writing to the Committee on Student Organizations