Welcome to the Baylor Graduate Student Association Assembly! Thank you for committing your time and energy to this organization. GSA exists to foster good citizenship among Baylor graduate students and to promote a holistic, integrative approach to graduate education. Your involvement as a representative is crucial to turning this vision into a reality. Over the past few years, GSA has achieved increased visibility and influence on the Baylor campus, and with your help, we can continue this growth in the coming academic year. By supporting GSA programs, promoting events, and serving as departmental advocates, you will demonstrate to the Baylor community that graduate students are caring and committed individuals who are eager to invest in our university. Thank you for your willingness to serve, and we look forward to working with you!

The GSA Leadership Council

**EXECUTIVE CABINET**

Rachel Renbarger, President  
Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Psychology

Becca Cassady, Executive Vice President  
Ph.D. Student, English

Joshua Smith, Vice President of Communications  
Ph.D. Candidate, Religion

Tyler Prochnow, Vice President of Operations  
Ph.D Student, Health, Human Performance, and Recreation

Ted Cockle, Secretary  
Ph.D. Student, Higher Education

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Jake Randolph, Policy Committee Chair  
Ph.D. Student, Religion

Reyna Johnson, Social Life Committee Chair  
Ph.D. Student, English

Liz Marvel, Academic Affairs Committee Chair  
Ph.D. Candidate, History

Elizabeth Lund, Service Committee Chair  
Ph.D. Student, Political Science

**FACULTY ADVISOR**

Dr. Chris Rios  
Assistant Dean, Baylor Graduate School
**GSA Mission Statement**

The Baylor University Graduate Student Association is a community that strives to enrich the quality of academic and social life for students of each graduate program of Baylor University as well as advocate the rights of these students and voice their concerns. GSA fulfills this mission by pursuing events, programs, and initiatives in keeping with the vision statement, given below.

**Vision Statement**

An excellent graduate experience takes a holistic, integrative approach to graduate education that invites engagement in compelling scholarship and research, facilitates enriching careers, nourishes personal well-being, and cultivates a culture of belonging and collegiality.

**Representative Responsibilities**

**Primary Representatives:**
The GSA constitution stipulates that primary representatives must attend at least 75% of the monthly Assembly meetings. If you are unable to attend an Assembly, you must ensure that your Alternate Representative attends. Please inform the Executive Vice President if you or your alternate will be unable to attend meetings due to scheduling conflicts, so that a new representative may be appointed immediately.

Regarding specific roles, you are required to serve on one of the four GSA committees and to assist with any activities or events planned by your committee. You are also responsible for voting on motions proposed at the Assembly and electing GSA officers. Through voting as well as active participation in Assembly discussions, you are primarily responsible for ensuring that your department’s needs are represented within GSA and to the Baylor administration. You will receive an email prior to each Assembly outlining the main items to be addressed at the meeting; this is to allow you to gather feedback from your department when necessary and prepare for active participation.

Your secondary but equally important responsibility is serving as a conduit of communication from GSA to your department. You will regularly receive emails from the GSA Executive Cabinet about GSA events or announcements. You are required to forward these emails to your departmental colleagues within 24 hours of receiving the email. You are also required to carbon copy (Cc:) the Executive Vice President and Vice President of Communications onto these emails.

Beyond relaying information about events and Assembly news, you will also provide your department with information about Graduate School resources and available opportunities for personal and professional growth. Information about these resources are available on the GSA website and in the forthcoming appendix of this handbook. If at any time you need assistance in fielding questions from your department about available resources, please direct inquiries to the Executive Vice President.

**Alternate Representatives:**
Alternate representatives are not required to attend Assembly meetings except in the absence of the primary representative. However, you are encouraged to come as often as possible and to actively participate on one of the committees. In the absence of the Representative, you are required to attend the Assembly and vote on behalf of your department.
Joint Responsibilities:
Primary and alternate representatives share responsibility for ensuring that their department’s needs and concerns are represented within GSA. Representatives serve as the primary way for the Baylor graduate student body to advocate for their needs and wants to the university administration. Therefore, we ask that you remain attentive to conversations occurring within your programs about the quality of life among Baylor graduate students. When appropriate, bring these conversations to GSA and the Baylor administration for further consideration. Your advocacy and timely communication are critical to GSA’s ability to represent all graduate students effectively and enables you to developing creative solutions to problems within the Assembly context.

GSA Committees

Social Life Committee
The Social Life Committee organizes and plans events that encourage community among Baylor graduate students. This includes GSA’s four largest events: Grads on the Water (in the summer), the Football Tailgate Mixer (in the fall), and the bi-annual Graduate Student Days at the Waco Downtown Farmers Market (once in the fall and spring semesters).

Academic Affairs Committee
The Academic Affairs Committee seeks to invite graduate students into a community of compelling scholarship and research, prepare graduate students for enriching careers both inside and outside academia, and cultivate an interdepartmental culture of belonging and collegiality. The primary ways in which the Academic Committee currently seeks to meet these goals is through the 3-Minute Thesis Competition in the fall and the Graduate Student Research Showcase and Appreciation Picnic in the spring.

Policy Committee
The Policy Committee works to promote and improve Baylor University policy development and enhancement as they relate to graduate students and advocate for their unique needs. Some examples of previous successes include health insurance, parental leave, spousal and childcare benefits, and support for international graduate students. The Policy Committee also takes the lead in refining and applying GSA’s Strategic Vision, originally known as the Paradigm Project.

Service Committee
The Service Committee seeks to create, facilitate, and promote opportunities for graduate students to serve fellow graduate students, the university, and the local community, thereby helping to foster a more rounded and holistic graduate student experience. Examples include the Graduate-Undergraduate Mentorship Program (GUMP). The Service Committee continually seeks to discover what service looks like at the graduate student level, and will work to facilitate new ways for graduate students to engage in philanthropic activities within the Baylor and Waco communities.
GSA Signature Events

Ice Cream Social (Social Committee) – July 10, 2018

Grads on the Water (Social Committee) – August 4, 2018

Grad Student Day at Waco Downtown Farmer’s Market (Social Committee) – August 18, 2018

GUMP Kickoff Dinner (Service Committee) – September 18, 2018

GSA Tailgate (Social Committee) – October 6, 2018

3-Minute Thesis Competition (Academic Committee) – November 6, 2018

Dialogue with Baylor Leaders (Policy Committee) – late November 2018

GSA Service Event (Service Committee) – January 21, 2019 (MLK Day)

Grad Student Day at Waco Downtown Farmer’s Market (Social Committee) – February 9, 2019

Graduate Student Appreciation Picnic and Research Showcase (Academic Committee) – April 4, 2019

Survival Snacks (Service Committee) – Finals Week

*Dates are subject to change.* Additional events may be added throughout the academic year. Look for email announcements from the Executive Cabinet. We also highly encourage Reps to “Like” the GSA Facebook page and Twitter (@Baylor_GSA) accounts!

GSA Assembly Dates

All GSA Assemblies are held from 12:00-1:00pm on the first Thursday of each month listed below. Most are held in the Student Union Building (Baines Room). Watch for emails from the Executive Cabinet and updates on Facebook for details.

August 15, 2018 (during New Graduate Student Orientation)

September 6, 2018

October 4, 2018

November 1, 2018 (Location changed to North Village Community Center)

January 17, 2019

February 7, 2019

March 7, 2019

April 11, 2019
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GSA Vision Statement
An excellent graduate experience takes a holistic, integrative approach to graduate education that invites engagement in compelling scholarship and research, facilitates enriching careers, nourishes personal well-being, and cultivates a culture of belonging and collegiality.

ARTICLE I – The Graduate Student Association
1. The name of the organization shall be the Baylor University Graduate Student Association (GSA).

2. The membership of the organization shall consist of all graduate students at Baylor University enrolled in programs that fall under the oversight of the Baylor Graduate School.

3. The GSA shall be governed by an Assembly of Representatives and a Leadership Council consisting of an Executive Cabinet and Committee Chairs. The Executive Cabinet shall consist of a President, Executive Vice President, Vice President of Operations, and Vice President of Communications. The Committee Chairs shall consist of the Social Committee Chair, the Academic Affairs Committee Chair, the Policy Committee Chair, and the Service Committee Chair.

ARTICLE II – The GSA Assembly
1. The GSA Assembly shall be composed of one Representative from each graduate department at Baylor University, chosen by the graduate students of that department for a term of one academic year.

   An Alternate Representative, who shall attend the Assembly in the absence of the Representative, shall be chosen by the graduate students of that department for a term of one academic year.

   Every Representative and Alternate shall be a graduate student enrolled in the department they represent.

   The times, places, and manner of choosing Representatives and Alternates shall be prescribed by each graduate department by the graduate students thereof.

   Each Representative shall be required to attend three quarters of the Assembly meetings during the term of office.
2. The GSA Assembly shall meet at least once monthly during the academic year, except for the month of December.

3. Assembly procedure shall be determined by Robert’s Rules of Order, most recent edition, unless otherwise specified by this constitution.

   The GSA President shall preside over the Assembly, but shall have no vote, unless the votes be equally divided.

   Each Representative shall be allowed to speak and make proposals to the Assembly.

   Each Representative shall have one vote on any proposals or elections submitted to the Assembly.

4. The Assembly shall determine GSA policy. It shall propose, plan, and approve any public events or endeavors sponsored by the GSA.

   The Assembly shall investigate complaints and concerns of graduate students and make recommendations to the University on such issues.

   The Assembly shall hear reports pertinent to the graduate student body from graduate students and University officials.

   The Assembly shall elect the officers of the GSA.

5. Any graduate student, including Alternates, may attend the Assembly as a non-voting observer, but the Assembly shall go into a closed session upon a majority vote.

6. The Assembly shall include four standing committees: an Academic Affairs Committee, a Social Life Committee, a Policy Committee, and a Service Committee.

   Each Representative shall be required to serve on one standing committee. A Representative may be transferred to a different committee at the discretion of the GSA President.

   Temporary committees may be formed by the order of the President.

   Additional standing committees may be formed with the approval of a majority of the Assembly.

**ARTICLE III – Leadership Council**

1. The Leadership Council serves as the administrative head of the Graduate Student Association and shall consist of five Executive Cabinet members and four Committee Chair members.

2. The Executive Cabinet shall include a President, Executive Vice President, Vice President of Operations, and Vice President of Communications, who shall be elected by a majority vote of the Assembly and serve for one-year terms. The Executive Cabinet shall also include a
Secretary, appointed by the Graduate School as part of their Doctoral Administrative Fellowship, usually for a multi-year term.

3. The Committee Chairs shall consist of the Social Committee Chair, the Academic Affairs Committee Chair, the Policy Committee Chair, and the Service Committee Chair. The Committee Chairs shall be elected by a majority vote of the Assembly and shall serve for one-year terms.

4. Elections for all Leadership Council positions, with the exception of the Secretary, shall be held in February or March prior to the beginning of new officer terms. Terms begin at the New Representatives Luncheon in April and end in April of the following year. Candidates for Leadership Council positions shall be elected based on a majority vote from the Assembly. No one shall be eligible to run for a Leadership Council position who is not enrolled as a graduate student at Baylor University for the duration of the anticipated term of office.

The Assembly shall offer a majority vote of confidence or no confidence for the Secretary during the spring elections, unless the Secretary is entering the first year of their appointment, in which case the vote shall be offered at the September Assembly meeting.

5. In addition to participating in the monthly Assembly meetings, the Leadership Council shall meet weekly during the academic year, and at such other times as are necessary for the execution GSA business.

6. Any member of the Leadership Council may be removed from office for serious infractions or misdemeanors by a vote of two-thirds of the Assembly.

7. The voluntary resignation before the end of the term of office of any GSA officer shall be submitted to the Executive Cabinet, and an emergency election shall be held at the following Assembly meeting.

8. The President and Executive Vice President shall enforce this constitution and any resolutions of the GSA Assembly and Executive Cabinet.

9. A GSA Chaplain shall be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Assembly at the beginning of each academic year. The Chaplain shall be charged with leading prayer at GSA Assembly meetings and other GSA events.

ARTICLE IV – Executive Cabinet Positions

President
The President is responsible for all GSA affairs, serves as the external face of the organization, and functions as the official representative for the Baylor graduate student body.
Essential Functions

- represent and advocate for the GSA and graduate students to the university administration
- lead monthly GSA Assemblies in collaboration with the Executive Vice President
- lead weekly GSA Leadership Council meetings in collaboration with the Executive Vice President
- set the GSA's annual agenda in collaboration with the Executive Cabinet
- co-host New Graduate Student Orientation in collaboration with the Executive Vice President
- create and disseminate GSA messaging in the form of speeches, announcements, etc.

Secondary Functions

- advise the Executive Vice President and Vice President of Operations on the GSA budget as needed
- act as host at GSA events in collaboration with other Cabinet members and Committee Chairs
- support the Executive Vice President and Vice President of Communications in networking with student leaders and Waco community leaders as needed

Time Commitment: averages 8-12 hours per week

**Executive Vice President**
The Executive Vice President manages GSA's internal organizational functions and assists the President with external affairs.

Essential Functions:

- advise and assist the President in representing the GSA and graduate students to the university administration
- co-host New Graduate Student Orientation
- supervise the Vice President of Communications in monitoring GSA representative activities and networking with other student leaders
- assist the Vice President of Operations in creating and maintaining the annual budget, and supervising Committee Chairs as needed

Secondary Functions:

- plan and co-lead monthly GSA Assemblies with the President
- plan and co-lead weekly GSA Leadership Council meetings with the President
- assume the office of the Presidency in the case of the removal of the President from office, or in such cases as the President is unable to perform the office, until such time as the President can resume the office or a new President is elected by the Assembly

Time Commitment: averages 6-10 hours per week

**Vice President of Communications**
The Vice President of Communications is responsible for monitoring GSA representatives’ activity and communication, networking with other student leaders throughout the university, and handling GSA media and promotions.
Essential Functions:
- monitor the timeliness of GSA Representative communication and serve as first point of contact for representatives’ emails to the Cabinet, handling special complaints or requests in collaboration with other Cabinet members as needed
- promote GSA resources, events, and activities on social media accounts
- collaborate with the Executive Vice President to build relationships with student leaders throughout Baylor, particularly undergraduate Student Government and the graduate housing community coordinators
- take photos, videos, and other forms of media documentation at GSA events

Secondary Functions:
- maintain the online GSA event calendar, email account, and website
- promote Baylor and Waco resources, events, and activities on social media accounts
- assist the Service Committee Chair in networking with Waco community leaders to explore opportunities for graduate students’ involvement

Time Commitment: averages 4-6 hours per week

Vice President of Operations
The Vice President of Operations is responsible for overseeing GSA’s logistical needs and event coordination.

Essential Functions:
- serve as the GSA treasurer
- coordinate GSA events in collaboration with the Committee Chairs
- supervise room reservations and placing catering orders
- schedule weekly Cabinet meetings and monthly Assemblies

Secondary Functions:
- advise and assist the Cabinet with special projects or events at the President’s discretion
- assist the Secretary with logistics for New Graduate Student Orientation

Time Commitment: averages 4-6 hours per week

Secretary
The Secretary provides administrative support within the Executive Cabinet and maintains continuity between Leadership Councils, as part of their graduate assistantship within the Graduate School.

Essential Functions:
- advise and assist the President and Executive Vice President with coordinating New Graduate Student Orientation
- take minutes during weekly Cabinet meetings and monthly Assembly meetings
- supervise the Life on the Grad Line program in collaboration with the Academic Affairs Committee Chair
Secondary Functions:
• advise the Cabinet on Graduate School and GSA practices and protocols as needed
• advise and assist with leadership transitions and provide institutional context for decision-making as needed
• advise and assist the Cabinet with special projects or events at the President’s discretion

Time Commitment: averages 3-5 hours per week

ARTICLE V – Committee Chair Positions

Social Life Committee Chair – The Social Life Committee Chair focuses on meeting two specific goals from GSA’s educational paradigm: cultivating a culture of belonging and collegiality, and nourishing personal wellbeing. Practically speaking, this means that the Social Life Committee Chair is responsible for planning and hosting events that facilitate a holistic graduate experience by offering students the opportunity to connect with colleagues in casual settings, spend time with their families, and relax in the midst of busy semesters. The chair is responsible for working with the rest of the committee to plan the following events: Grads on the Water (twice in the summer), the Graduate Student Days at the Waco Farmers Market (once in the fall and once in the spring), and the Graduate Student Tailgate (mid-fall). The chair may also handle small-scale events, such as working with local movie theaters to offer discounted showings of particular films. The chair works with the committee to plan every detail of the event, including choice of venue, budgetary decisions, catering options, and additional entertainment or giveaways. The chair then delegates tasks to the committee and ensures that everything is completed in an efficient and economic manner. The Social Life Committee Chair will also work closely with the Director of Operations to ensure that events run smoothly. While the number of hours required per week varies, over the course of each semester the Social Life Committee Chair can expect to invest around 20-30 hours into GSA.

Academic Affairs Committee - The Academic Affairs Committee Chair focuses on meeting three specific goals from GSA’s educational paradigm: inviting graduate students into a community of compelling scholarship and research, preparing graduate students for enriching careers both inside and outside academia, and cultivating an interdepartmental culture of belonging and collegiality. The primary ways in which the Academic Affairs Committee currently seeks to meet these goals is through supervising the Life on the Grad Line workshops, along with organizing the 3-Minute Thesis Competition in the fall and the Graduate Student Research Showcase and Appreciation Picnic in the spring. For Life on the Grad Line, the Academic Affairs Chair is part of a planning committee that sets workshop dates, topics, and speakers at the beginning of the academic year. Most of the logistical issues for these workshops are handled by the Graduate School Liaison, but the Chair will assist if necessary. Regarding the two events, the Academic Affairs Chair guides the Committee through issues such as choice of venue for each event, decisions about how to spend the budget (prioritizing expenses like food and prizes), establishing guidelines and judging criteria, and publicizing each event, in line with GSA’s goals and priorities. Once the Committee makes these decisions, the Chair is responsible for delegating event tasks to representatives and ensuring that each task is fulfilled in a timely and efficient manner. The Chair may also be involved in advocating for graduate students on university issues involving academic policy and is responsible for communicating graduate students’ academic concerns to the GSA Executive Cabinet. In the future, goals for the Committee include finding new ways to expand opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration, increasing awareness of graduate student research across campus, and broadcasting the academic excellence of Baylor graduate students outside the Baylor community. While the
number of hours required per week varies, over the course of each semester the Academic Affairs Committee Chair can expect to invest around 30-40 hours into GSA.

Policy Committee - The primary role of the Policy Committee Chair is to guide GSA representatives who desire to advocate for the specific needs of graduate students. In recent years, the Policy Committee has addressed concerns such as health care and parental leave. Now the committee has been tasked with the important project of answering the question, “What does an excellent graduate student experience look like?” and work this year has resulted in the creation of a paradigm to describe the ideal experience. The primary task of the Policy Committee in the coming years will be to both refine and apply this paradigm to Baylor graduate students, and the role of the Chair will be to facilitate this process. Thus, the position of Policy Chair requires commitment to this project, in terms of time, energy, and creativity. Practically, this has meant running bi-weekly focus groups, meeting with the administration, and working closely with the GSA executive cabinet among other tasks. However, of all the committee chair positions, Policy requires the most adaptability, given the broad range of concerns that come under the committee’s purview, and thus the Policy Committee Chair should expect some fluctuation in her or his responsibilities.

Service Committee – The Service Committee exists to create and promote opportunities for graduate students to serve the university and local community, thereby helping to foster a more holistic graduate student experience. The committee’s primary focus is the Graduate-Undergraduate Mentorship Program (GUMP). The chair serves as the main coordinator for GUMP. This includes overseeing the mentor and mentee application process, working with the rest of the committee to match applicants, and overseeing the program workshops (typically one in the fall and one in the spring). The application process, which takes place early in the early fall semester, is certainly the most time consuming and includes coordinating the pairing of mentors and mentees and notifying participants of their partners. However, GUMP is but the first of hopefully many venues for graduate-student service. The chair will therefore be in charge of facilitating new ways for graduate students to engage in philanthropic activities within the Baylor and Waco communities, whether that be organizing a food drive for Christmas on 5th or organizing graduate students to serve as tutors in local schools. The chair will lead the committee in forming collaborative relationships with community leaders and recruiting graduate student volunteers for various projects or programs. Important qualities for this committee chair include innovation, flexibility, and enthusiasm for the service aspects of the GSA mission.

ARTICLE VI – Amendment

Amendments to this constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Executive Cabinet at least one month prior to ratification.

A proposed amendment shall be deemed valid upon receiving a vote of two-thirds at a regular Assembly meeting.

ARTICLE VII – Ratification

A vote of two-thirds at a regular Assembly meeting shall be sufficient for the establishment of this constitution as the supreme governing document of the GSA.