

GRADUATE
STUDENT
ORGANIZATION
AT SYRACUSE
UNIVERSITY

FISCAL POLICY

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I. Introduction

Please contact the Comptroller at gsocomptroller@syr.edu if there are any questions or concerns about the provisions for using funds. If you are not familiar with GSO pre-approval or reimbursement procedures, please contact the Comptroller before any spending occurs. Pre-approval is required for all reimbursements.¹

The GSO budget will consist of funds allocated at the annual GSO Senate budget meeting. The funds allocated at this meeting can include both the Operational Budget² set by the University and projected fee revenues for the upcoming Fiscal Year. To maintain the ability of the GSO to fund its operations and programming, the GSO shall maintain a reserve within Carry Forward³ of a minimum of \$50,000. This reserve may be used only when acute funding emergencies arise, and only with the approval of the GSO Executive Board and notification of the GSO Senate. As the GSO is a non-profit organization, it will strive to keep unspent funds to a minimum to prevent the accumulation of a large Carry Forward fund, except in the case of specific long-term GSO goals.

Changes to this document may be made by the Comptroller, with Senate approval obtained at the next Regular Senate Meeting. The Comptroller, in consultation with the Finance Committee, will make periodic review of this document to ensure it matches with university policies and GSO Senate directives.⁴

II. Recognized Student Organization (RSO) Provisions for Using Funds

Organizations must meet their stated categorical requirements as follows before using any allocated funds from GSO.

- A. Registration and Recognition - To receive funds from the GSO, all organizations must be recognized and in good standing with the GSO. Good standing is defined as being registered with the GSO and approved by the Finance Committee, while organizations with both graduate and undergraduate members must also register with the Office of Student Engagement. The Registered Graduate Student Organization Handbook, located on the GSO website, contains registration requirements and procedures.⁵
- B. RSO Budget Allocation - At least 20% of the total GSO Operational Budget will be allocated to RSO programming between both the annual budget of RSOs and Special Programming. Funding for academic RSOs,⁶ whose membership numbers are easily verified, shall be on a \$25 per student basis, capped at \$5,000. Funding to RSOs not representing an academic program will be allocated in response to their update form submitted to the Vice President of Internal Affairs or successful

¹ As the GSO operates exclusively by reimbursement (except in rare circumstances), pre-approval ensures any graduate student who spends money up front will be reimbursed. Pre-approval guarantees that the expense does not violate GSO or University policies that might endanger reimbursement.

² The Operational Budget is the amount of money guaranteed to the GSO by the University Budget Office for planning the GSO Budget. It is purposefully conservative and the actual student fee revenues are traditionally larger.

³ Carry Forward is the University's term for the unspent revenues of previous fiscal years.

⁴ The Comptroller will update the links in this document as website changes occur.

⁵ [Link to the Handbook](#). For re-registration procedures, see page 5. For starting a new RSO, see page 8.

⁶ For the definitions of "Academic" and "Non-academic" RSOs, please see page 3 of the Handbook linked in the previous footnote. Note: Non-academic RSOs are referred to as "Non-Departmental Organizations" in the currently available edition of the Handbook.

Start-Up application. Non-academic RSOs will be allocated \$300 and, like Academic RSOs, have access to Special Programming once per semester.

By default, all organizations will receive the same base dollar amount of funding, \$300. Organizations certified as representative of one or more academic programs by the Finance Committee will receive either this funding amount or an amount of money per student represented, whichever is higher.⁷

- C. RSO Provisions for Using Special Programming - Organizations funded from the Annual Budget may apply for Special Programming funds once per semester. Organizations must submit a budget for all their annual spending to be eligible to apply for Special Programming. Organizations that register partway through the academic year and whose Startup Applications are successfully reviewed by the Finance Committee may receive funds equal to the base dollar amount of funding provided to other organizations in the annual budget, \$300.⁸
- a. Approved Registered Student Organizations funded from the Annual Budget may apply for Special Programming once per semester.
 - b. Each Special Programming application may contain more than one event.
 - c. When applications which involve co-sponsorship by or support from other GSO groups are viewed, a representative from each co-sponsor will be invited to be present at the Finance Committee's meeting. We require confirmation of co-sponsorship either by the representative of the co-sponsor who attends the meeting or in writing beforehand. When considering Special Programming applications with requests for outside funding (either from co-sponsors or from organizations, groups, departments, etc. outside the GSO) any requests still pending at the time of the Finance Committee's meeting with the submitting group will be ignored and will not be included in the Finance Committee's discussion concerning the application.
 - d. Dollar amounts, not ranges, for specific costs are recommended for a Special Programming application. Requests which do not have sufficient information may not be heard by the Finance Committee, at the Finance Committee's discretion. These groups will be invited to reapply. The Comptroller will inform the Senate of any applications that the Finance Committee declined to hear at the next Regular Senate Meeting.
 - e. Special Programming applications require that the group be registered and in good standing with the GSO.
 - f. Cost per graduate student shall be a factor in the consideration of the application by the Finance Committee.
- D. RSO Officer Training to Request Funds - All organizations will present to the GSO the name and contact information of two officers who will be responsible for the request of expenditure from GSO funds. These two officers must attend the RSO training offered at the beginning of the Academic year and are the only persons allowed to authorize expenditures on the organization's account.⁹ Funding requests submitted by officers who have not attended the training will not be considered. The President and Comptroller of that organization will be considered default

⁷ This guarantees that an Academic RSO will receive at least \$300 even if the number of graduate students in the program it represents is lower than the per student basis would allow.

⁸ This sentence on Startup Applications and funding for new RSOs is here because the startup funding application and process is the exact same as for Special Programming.

⁹ This requirement can also be found in the RSO Handbook, page 5 (1.d.). [Link to the Handbook](#).

signatories for that organization.

- E. Adherence to University Standards - Funding for organizations is contingent upon organizational adherence to the Syracuse University standards for student organizations.
- F. Failure to Re-Register - Organizations which do not re-register must register as if they are a new RSO.
- G. Service Availability - All funding of campus wide service organizations will be open to all fee-paying graduate students.
- H. Restrictions on Special Programming and Startup Funding - Special programming funding and startup funding will be open only to Syracuse University, non-College of Law recognized student organizations.
- I. Funding Qualifications for Undergraduate-Only Organizations. Undergraduate organizations are eligible to apply for special programming funds only if they are working on an event in conjunction with a graduate student organization or can demonstrate how graduate students will actively be assisting with and participating in an event. Acceptable forms of evidence are joint funding applications specifying the collaboration with a graduate student organization, documented graduate students working with the organization on a program or a letter from a graduate student organization stating their interest in the event being proposed. All undergrad organizations must first apply to SA before applying to the GSO for funding; applications submitted without first being submitted to SA will be rejected.
- J. Funding for Joint Undergraduate/Graduate Organizations - Joint undergraduate/graduate organizations are eligible to apply for special programming funds. Undergraduate/graduate organizations should be prepared to demonstrate to the GSO Finance Committee and the GSO Senate that graduate students are active members of their organization, through membership lists or other similar documentation.
- K. Funding for Service Providers - Campus-wide service providers that are supported by GSO student fees will be required to adhere to the following GSO policies. A list of these providers is maintained on the GSO website. The GSO is under no obligation to fund any campus-wide service organization on multiple year agreements. These organizations must submit a budget each year to be considered for funding by the Finance Committee.

III. Registered Student Organization Policies and Requirements

- A. RSO Budget Year - Each organization's budget runs over the course of the University's Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30).¹⁰
- B. RSO Funding Limit - Each organization may not request reimbursements more than the amount

¹⁰ An RSO's budget must follow the University's Fiscal Year, rather than Commencement to Commencement, because the general GSO Budget runs according to the University Fiscal Year. To run RSO budgets from Commencement to Commencement would be to have several months overlap with the wrong GSO general budget.

allocated by the GSO Senate, either by the RSO Annual Budget or by Special Programming.

- C. GSO funds awarded to organizations are primarily intended to facilitate the academic or professional growth of graduate students. Events with a social purpose must take place on University Property or within Onondaga County.
- D. Pre-Approval Requirement - The GSO is under no obligation to commit or reimburse any finances or purchases that were not pre-approved by the GSO Comptroller or Finance Secretary, nor will the GSO be obligated to reimburse expenditures requested after the date of the event, without prior approval. To ensure expenditures will be paid, consult with the GSO Comptroller or Finance Secretary to fill out an expenditure preapproval form.¹¹ Pre-approval forms must be submitted at least ten (10) business days before an event, with additional time required for events with special considerations.¹²
- E. Officer Pay - Registered organizations shall not use funds to pay their leadership any form of compensation.
- F. RSO Internal Recordkeeping - Organizations are responsible for keeping accurate, complete, and up-to-date information on all expenses incurred throughout the year. This information should be organized and maintained in such a manner that the GSO Comptroller may access it within 24 hours' notice. The organization may request budget information from the GSO Comptroller at any time. The organization must meet with the Comptroller to resolve any budgetary disputes. Resolutions to disputes are subject to approval by the GSO Executive Board. If no detailed records are provided to the GSO Comptroller by the organization, the GSO records shall be considered as accurate.¹³
- G. Special Programming/Startup Funds Requirements - All organizations applying for special programming funds or startup funds are required to do the following:
 - a. Fill out the appropriate Special Programming/Startup Funds Application.¹⁴ Applications should be submitted at minimum a month before the anticipated event and should be turned into the GSO Comptroller at least seven (7) days before the next GSO Finance Committee meeting.¹⁵
 - b. Submit a full organizational budget specifying how all GSO funds allocated for the academic year will be or have been spent.
 - c. Itemize all anticipated expenses.

¹¹ [Link to the Pre-Approval webpage.](#)

¹² Please see the "Planning Ahead" section at the end of the document for specific timing requirements.

¹³ The purpose of this requirement is to prevent planning and expense errors on the part of the RSO for lack of budget information.

¹⁴ [Link to the Special Programming/Startup Funds webpage.](#)

¹⁵ Specific dates for Special Programming/Startup Funds deadlines are listed on the above linked webpage. The deadlines are set seven (7) days before the Finance Committee meetings established by that Committee for the semester.

- d. Be prepared to justify the level of graduate student involvement and the benefits of the activity to the graduate student population and university community. Please provide a breakdown of all expected costs and a list of all additional sources of funds committed or received to date. As a rule, for groups that are a combination of graduate and undergraduate or law students, the GSO will fund the percentage of the event that is proportional to the percentage of graduate students involved in the organization.¹⁶
 - e. If requested, make an appointment to meet with the Finance Committee. Have a representative at the meeting who can discuss the nature of the request.
 - f. If special programming funds are allocated and confirmed by the Senate, then the organization's authorized signatory may spend funds in collaboration with the GSO Comptroller. Organizations are not to spend allocated monies without pre- approval from the GSO Comptroller.
 - g. Organizations are only eligible to receive special programming funds once per semester. They can apply for funding for multiple events in one application.
 - h. An organization receiving special programming funds cannot decline the funds and then reapply for special programming within the same semester.
- H. Yearly Funding Request Deadline - All requests for expenditure of any funds in a GSO account for the current Fiscal Year must be submitted to the GSO office no later than May 15th.¹⁷
- I. RSO Planning Responsibility - It is the responsibility of organization and department representatives to plan accordingly for the entire year.
- J. RSO Standing Requirement - GSO funds allocated to organizations which are not in good standing¹⁸ for a period of 14 days at any time after the first regular meeting of the GSO Senate during the Fall semester will be returned to the GSO's Special Programming budget.
- K. GSO Programming Funding - GSO programming may also be funded through the Special Programming fund, with Senate approval.
- L. Expense Reporting - The Comptroller shall be provided accurate, timely records of GSO office and programming related expenses to ensure proper recordkeeping. The GSO Vice President of Internal Affairs and GSO Vice President of External Affairs will submit Expense Pre-Approval forms for expenses to ensure they conform with the budget approved by the Senate and ensure accurate recordkeeping by the Comptroller.

¹⁶ This proportional rule stems from the GSO's mission to fund and support graduate students.

¹⁷ This deadline follows the University's strict End of Fiscal Year deadline, which is different year to year, but usually the second Monday in June. No processing of any kind happens after this date to allow reconciliation and end-of-year accounting. The May deadline here allows for any processing lag from the time of submission prior to the strict University deadline.

¹⁸ "Good standing" here refers to the requirements outlined in footnote 4, above. Those are the same requirements that are necessary for an organization to be registered with the GSO, as noted in I.A., "Registration and Recognition."

- M. SU Service Requirement - No GSO monies will be transferred to any Syracuse University department or administrative account except for payment for services rendered as proven by receipt, invoice, or contract.

IV. Income Policies for RSO Fundraising Accounts

- A. GSO Income - The GSO cannot take in any income of any kind other than the revenue from graduate student fees. All income policies here refer to fundraising accounts, which are distinct from the Annual Budgets approved and allotted to RSOs by the Senate.
- B. Distinction from GSO - Organizations wishing to fundraise must set up a separate account at the Graduate School to use as a depository of funds. Fundraising Accounts are entirely separate and distinct from GSO Annual Budgets. Contact the GSO Comptroller to start the process of setting up a Fundraising Account for your RSO.
- C. Graduate School Authority - The creation of these fundraising accounts and each individual fundraising activity must be approved in advance by the Graduate School. The Graduate School is the approving authority for Fundraising Accounts.
- D. RSO Income Reporting - The purpose of all income generated from GSO sponsored events must be explained in writing in any applications for special programming funding and must be adhered to by the organization. The GSO Comptroller must approve changes in plans for income. Failure to report income will result in loss of all remaining funds and a two-year ban on GSO funds.

V. Equipment Policy

- A. Equipment Purchase - Equipment should not be purchased with GSO monies except when other options are not available. Organizations should strive to rent or use university or departmental equipment when possible.
- B. Donation of Purchased Equipment - When equipment can't be borrowed or used, all equipment purchased with GSO funds shall be donated to an approved university department or center or, if unwanted, an approved local organization. Under no circumstances should individuals within an organization keep equipment.
- C. Exceptions - Exceptions to these rules include any advertising equipment to be used over multiple years, such as banners, or equipment with a one-time usage, such as disposable food serving items.
- D. Substitution of Syracuse Equipment - Equipment related to or in substitution of Syracuse University or Syracuse City infrastructure shall not be purchased with GSO funds.

VI. Carry Forward Policy

- A. Fundraising Accounts - Funds in fundraising accounts will be carried over indefinitely unless Syracuse University policy provides another limit. Fundraising Accounts are beyond the authority

of the GSO.¹⁹

- B. RSO Budgets - Unused funds in RSO Annual Budgets return to the GSO at the end of the Fiscal Year.²⁰

VII. Application of Financial Policies

The GSO Comptroller will maintain the intent of the policies contained within this document. The Comptroller shall negotiate agreements with any individual organization or department in execution of this document or Senate-approved budget. The Executive Board must approve any such agreements.

VIII. Income Policies for RSO Fundraising Accounts

The following information is required before any commitments for reimbursements will be considered.

- A. Contact Information - Name, address, phone number, and a contact person of the organization or department making the request (i.e. the authorized signer) must be on all forms.
- B. Vendor Information - Vendor names, address, phone number, and a contact person from whom the services are being requested. Please include the vendor's federal tax identification number on the form.
- C. Social Security Number - If an individual is being paid or reimbursed, it is mandatory to have their social security number for the purpose of payment. We cannot pay anyone who does not have a social security number or federal tax identification number.
- D. Estimates of Expense - It is necessary to have written estimates from vendors, speakers, performers, or anyone to whom the GSO will disburse funds. Please note that Syracuse University is tax exempt, and no taxes will be paid on materials or supplies. Contact the GSO Comptroller for any exceptions to the tax rules that do not pertain to materials or supplies.
- E. Details of Event - All details of an event should be known before any requests are made. These details include the event title, date, and venue of the event. If you have requested a room on campus through Student Centers and Programming Services, it will be necessary to show confirmation of that room to the GSO Comptroller. This will ensure that the event has been approved as an official campus event and should follow all university policies.
- F. RSO Budget - All organizations have a file in the GSO. This file consists of all expenditures that were processed or committed to their account. Organizations may see their own respective files with consent of the GSO Comptroller. This does not however eliminate organizations' obligation to keep their own records of expenses.²¹
- G. Pre-Approval Requirement - Remember that no commitments, whether verbal or written, shall be made by any student, organization, department, or respective representatives unless the

¹⁹ Please ask your RSO department administrator or faculty advisor about the specifics of your Fundraising Account.

²⁰ The RSO Annual Budgets are internal allocations made by the GSO Senate. Unused monies by the GSO go into the GSO Carry Forward account at the end of the Fiscal Year.

²¹ Please see footnote 12.

expenditure request has been officially pre-approved. Such oral agreements will be deemed void by the GSO, and any potential liability will remain with the organization.

- H. Outside Vendor Contracts - Neither an organization nor the GSO itself may sign a contract on behalf of Syracuse University. All contracts with outside vendors need to be approved by the University Comptroller before they can be acted upon. Only the University Comptroller, not the GSO Comptroller, can sign or enter a contract on behalf of the University.

IX. Information Needed to Process Reimbursements

Syracuse University has vendors available that comply with the tax-exempt rule. A list of these vendors is available at the GSO office.²² Students should consult with the GSO Comptroller concerning making any purchases with their own money if they expect to be reimbursed. The GSO, along with Syracuse University, encourages the use of university vendors to receive full reimbursements for items purchased. Any reimbursements made to an individual require the signature of the GSO President or Comptroller, the individual making the request, and an authorized signatory for Syracuse University.

All reimbursements must be pre-approved by the GSO Comptroller. If a purchase is made with an outside (i.e. non-SU designated) vendor, tax will be applied to the total cost and the university will not honor the total reimbursement. When requesting reimbursement, it is essential to have the following information:

- Name of person to be reimbursed
- Permanent address, phone number
- Reason for purchase
- Amount of reimbursement (original receipts must be attached)
- The reimbursable amount must coincide with the amount indicated on the receipts.
- Proof of the expense (pictures, emails, etc.)

It will be necessary for payment to have the social security number of the person to be reimbursed indicated on the form.²³

X. Executive Pay

Elected GSO executives earning full time pay will be paid a monthly stipend with their total compensation divided into 12 equal payments. Elected GSO executives not earning full time pay will be paid half on June 1st (the first day of their executive term) and the remaining amount May 1st. If an elected official is removed from office via impeachment or resign, they are not entitled to any remaining pay. This payment structure may be modified by the Senate via instructions contained in the Annual Budget.

XI. Appeal Policy

- A. Any decision of the GSO Comptroller may be appealed by the Executive Board.
- B. Any decision of the Executive Board may be appealed or overturned by the Senate.
- C. The Senate makes final decisions on all funding decisions regarding the budget and special programming requests.
- D. Please see the GSO Comptroller to arrange an appeal.

²² This vendor list changes over the years and may not be readily available. Contact the GSO Comptroller with vendor questions.

²³ [Link to the GSO Reimbursement Webpage.](#)

XII. General Policies and Exclusions

- A. **Advertising** - The GSO will pay for advertising but encourages groups to use the most cost-effective means of advertising at its disposal. Free advertising is available through GSO social media accounts, the Syracuse record events calendar, e-mail listservs, the GSO website, and fliers posted across campus (which may need approval from the GSO). Further advertising options include but are not limited to the Daily Orange and other campus publications and programs. Due to rising advertising prices, we encourage groups to exhaust free advertising methods prior to requesting those with significant additional costs. All GSO sponsored public events should be advertised in the graduate student monthly newsletter by contacting the GSO Vice President of External Affairs.
- B. **Duplicating and Printing** - The GSO will pay for printing of advertising materials if necessary, so long as those materials are reproduced at a university copy center or the business offering a lower bid for the job.
- C. **Travel** - Special programming funds may not be used to fund travel for individual students, groups, field trips, or other excursions off campus unless such travel has a professional or academic purpose. Approved travel by personal automobile will be reimbursed on a mileage basis, not as reimbursement of gas expense. Please check with the Comptroller for the current mileage rate. Other travel will be reimbursed as actual expense. Special Programming funds may be used to reimburse for travel when approved under normal procedure.
- D. **Gifts, Prizes, Dues, and Donations** - These will be decided on a case-by-case basis but are unlikely to be approved.²⁴ Events designed to generate a donation to an organization outside of Syracuse University may be funded, but the GSO funds used shall be last in, first out. (GSO supports the event by guaranteeing a certain level of funding. If the proceeds of the event exceed the amount of funding guaranteed, then the GSO will commit no funds and the proceeds of the event will be used to pay for the event. Any money left over will be directed to the group's fundraising account. If the proceeds do not exceed the amount of funding guaranteed by the GSO, then the funds committed by the GSO will be equal to the amount guaranteed minus the dollar amount of the proceeds. In this case, no money is put in the group's fundraising account.)
- E. **Honorariums** - All payments to people for services rendered must be accompanied by a contract, signed by the appropriate university official, or memorandum of understanding. Because of the necessary paperwork required by the University and the IRS for speakers on campus, the GSO will not directly pay invited speakers, but reimburse the relevant academic departments.²⁵ Under no circumstances will cash or check be advanced to any person without a contract. Please contact the GSO Comptroller for the appropriate procedures.
- F. **Reimbursements** - Reimbursements must always be accompanied by an official, detailed, and verifiable receipt or invoice showing payment details. Reimbursements will only be made to those individuals with a social security number or to corporations possessing a federal tax identification

²⁴ University policy prohibits the reimbursement of gift cards that are considered a "cash equivalent." Please contact the GSO Comptroller for details about specific requests. [Link to University policies on gifts.](#)

²⁵ RSOs seeking to pay an invited speaker must therefore work with their department and seek reimbursement of the department from the GSO.

number.

- G. **Off Campus Events** - Organizations using GSO funds are free to use their allocated funds anywhere they choose, provided that special programming funds do not violate the travel policy outlined above. This does not exempt organizations from the alcohol policy below.
- H. **Alcohol** - The GSO will not fund, in part or in whole, any event that takes place where alcohol will be present unless certified serving staff oversees alcohol distribution.²⁶
- I. **Exclusions** - The GSO will not pay for the following items in RSO funding requests: massages, conference attendance, business cards, stationery, stamps, tuition, or stipends for enrolled students on campus.²⁷

XIII. Catering Policy and Procedure

All events or functions that take place on university grounds must be catered by the university unless prior arrangements have been made through the food services department. There are no outside vendors permitted to disburse food on university grounds unless food services have been notified and has given their approval; this is for health and safety purposes.

Steps to follow when arranging a catered event:

- Verify your event's location with events scheduling and wait for their confirmation on availability. This step must precede an official request for GSO funds.
- Get an itemized list of all the foods and beverages you want to order.²⁸ If specific foods are not available through food services, other arrangements can be made through outside vendors. Once this list has been compiled and costs have been estimated in writing, make your request for GSO funds.
- The GSO assumes no liability for damages done to facilities by attendees or for any other liability created by the host organization. Acceptance of GSO funding will be construed as an acceptance of liability for the event. Student organizations will not hold the GSO liable for any negligence caused by said organization. Organizations are not under any obligation to accept funds from the GSO once an allocation has been approved by the Senate.

XIV. Miscellaneous—Planning Ahead

SU vendors: Ten (10) business days prior to the day of the event.

Campus Catering: Fourteen (14) business days prior to the date of the event.

Outside Food Vendor: Food may be ordered from outside vendors only with SU Catering's approval, and the approval of the University Comptroller. This must be done fifteen (15) business days prior to the date of the event.

Catering with Alcohol: For the alcohol at catered events, SU Catering requires thirty (30) day notice to

²⁶ If you are planning to have an event catered with alcohol, please note that catering requires a minimum 30-day notice to acquire the necessary liquor licenses.

²⁷ These exclusions are in place to prevent RSO funds being used for the personal expenses of an individual.

²⁸ This can be found on the SU Catering website. [Link to SU Catering Menus](#).

acquire the necessary liquor licenses.²⁹

Equipment: You must provide a comparison between **three vendors** for the lowest price of comparable items. All requisitions for such purchases take a minimum of 4 weeks to clear and be ordered.

Items for resale and fundraising: you must see the GSO Comptroller for details before ordering any items.

²⁹ [Link to the SU Catering timeline](#). Please note that this timeline does not include GSO approvals.