



GSO Senate Resolution 25.03

A Resolution to Censure the Conduct of Dean Vanable During the GSO Executive Board Meeting on 21 February 2025

Author(s): Avery A. Welna (President Pro Tempore of the Senate)

Sponsor(s):

Date(s): 26 March 2025

Action(s): Passed (21 Yes, 0 No, 9 Abstentions)

Chair of the Senate: Roger Rosena

President Pro Tempore of the Senate: Avery A. Welna

Parliamentarian: Joseph Beckmann

President of the Student Body: Daniel J. Kimmel

Whereas, in February 2025, The Graduate School discontinued the contracted officer pay of the former Director of External Affairs, and revoked her keycard access to the GSO Offices, thereby cutting her off from the means of carrying out the constitutional duties of her Office as well as from a means of living on which she had relied, though she had committed no offense and was not deemed unfit to serve by tribunal of the GSO Senate; and,

Whereas, The Graduate School undertook the above actions without consulting the GSO President or any other GSO Officer, Cabinet Staffer, or the Senate, and thus unilaterally removed a duly-elected Officer of the graduate student body, usurping powers of the GSO Senate and its Officers defined in the GSO Constitution;¹ and,

¹ E.g., **GSOC Article II, Section 13(k & o):** "The Senate shall have the power to: ... Elect all Officers ... [and] Serve as the exclusive forum for the Impeachment and removal of Officers pursuant to Article V."; **GSOC Article III, Section 2(i):** "Each Officer may receive a stipend for the year in which the Officer serves, if the Senate so directs."; **GSOC Article V, Section 1:** "A GSO Officer or member of the Staff shall be removed from office in a manner listed in this Article."

Whereas, the GSO Executive Board & Cabinet met with Peter Venable, Dean of the Graduate School, on 21 February 2025, to discuss this inappropriate exercise of power over the GSO's governing processes and to negotiate the immediate reinstatement of the former Director's officer pay and office access based on GSO Constitutional and University policy grounds; and,

Whereas, before and at that meeting, Mr. Venable refused to provide the written University policies by which he justified the decision to unilaterally remove a duly-elected GSO Officer, even when directly and repeatedly asked by the GSO President and other Officers for citations of the written policies that allegedly empower him to override the will of the GSO Senate; and,

Whereas, at that meeting, Mr. Venable weaponized an incomplete understanding of the GSO Constitution and general references to the undergraduate Recognized Student Organization (RSO) Handbook to justify the unilateral removal of a duly-elected GSO Officer, even when confronted with the written text of the GSO Constitution and passages of the RSO handbook that directly contradicted his position, whereupon he claimed "I am not a lawyer" and refused to engage in democratic deliberation; and,

Whereas, at that meeting, Mr. Venable denigrated and infantilized the Chief Executive Officer and other Members of the GSO Executive Board & Cabinet, and interrupted Members while they advocated for the reinstatement of their colleague and expressed legitimate concerns both with the Dean's policy justifications and present behavior, whereupon he claimed "I feel attacked" and demonstrated a staggering unawareness of the institutional power at play; and,

Whereas, at that meeting, Mr. Venable insinuated that the GSO could not manage its own autonomy in self-governance, and even attempted to shift responsibility for the unilateral removal of a duly-elected GSO Officer onto the Organization and its elected leaders; and,

Whereas, at that meeting, Mr. Venable demonstrated near complete disregard for the democratic powers and procedures of the Graduate Student Organization, and for its autonomy under the auspices of the Graduate Student Organization Constitution since 1968, and demonstrated profound disrespect for the role of GSO Officers in University shared-governance; and,

Whereas, at that meeting, Mr. Venable openly stated that it was a waste of time and a worthless endeavor for Officers of the Graduate Student Organization to struggle for the rights of graduate students, claiming that such efforts "do not help your constituents"; and,

Whereas, neither the GSO Constitution nor written University policy states that the GSO must have an Adviser appointed unilaterally by SU Administration, but standing policies otherwise permit student organizations to elect and enter into contractual agreements with their own Advisers; be it,

Resolved, that the Graduate Student Organization at Syracuse University condemns the conduct and abuse of power exercised by Mr. Venable, Dean of the Graduate School; and, be it,

Resolved, that the Senate of the Graduate Student Organization views the actions of Mr. Venable as opposed to the principles of deliberative democracy and shared governance, as well as opposed to the mission of the Graduate Student Organization and the interests of graduate students, and as displaying both a profound conflict of interest and a temperament unfit for "advising" the GSO; and, be it,

Resolved, the Graduate Student Organization at Syracuse University does not acknowledge Mr. Venable as its Adviser, neither having selected him to serve in such a role nor signed an Adviser Contract with him; and, be it,

Resolved, the Graduate Student Organization at Syracuse University, through the autonomy outlined in its own governing documents and charter, select its own Adviser; and, be it,

Ordered, that the GSO President deliver this Writ of Censure to Mr. Venable forthwith, and to any other parties that the GSO Executive Board & Cabinet deems prudent and necessary in continued advocacy on this matter.