



## GSO Senate Resolution 25.04

### **A Resolution to Ratify the Declaration of Independence of the Graduate Student Organization at Syracuse University**

**Author(s):** Rules & Administration Committee: (Chair) Roger Rosena (GSO Vice President & Chair of the Senate); (Members) Daniel J. Kimmel (GSO President & Chief Executive Officer); Avery A. Welna (GSO President Pro Tempore of the Senate); Joseph Beckmann (GSO Parliamentarian)

**Sponsor(s):**

**Date(s):** 26 March 2024 (Introduced); 30 April 2024 (Voting Date)

**Action(s):** Passed (28 Yes, 2 No, 0 Abstain)

**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,** the principle of shared governance has led institutions of higher education for over a hundred years;<sup>1</sup> and,

**Whereas,** extending this principle to students led to the establishment of the Graduate Student Organization of Syracuse University as a student government in 1968, for the purpose of representing and promoting the interests of graduate students and the University community;<sup>2</sup> and,

**Whereas,** the GSO has actively participated in the shared governance of Syracuse University since that time, faithfully discharging its mission as a representative deliberative assembly to establish policies and pursue initiatives that are in the best interests of all graduate students at Syracuse University consistent with the principles outlined in its Constitution;<sup>3</sup> and,

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<sup>1</sup> See "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities", AAUP, 1920

<sup>2</sup> See GSOC, Preamble.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

**Whereas,** the GSO affirms that this principle of shared governance is best upheld and this purpose best fulfilled when the GSO functions as “an independent organization free from internal or external coercion”, as graduates determined it to be and to remain;<sup>4</sup> and,

**Whereas,** over the past decade or more, a series of administrative developments subjecting the internal processes of the GSO to increased administrative oversight and control has corroded the long-held independence of the GSO; and,

**Whereas,** for example, graduate students were undemocratically stripped of their right to elect their own representative to the Board of Trustees, a right faithfully practiced since it was attained in the 1970s;<sup>5</sup> and,

**Whereas,** for example, members of the SU administration have recently insisted that the GSO is a Recognized Student Organization (RSO) of some form and therefore subject to the regulations expressed in the RSO Handbook designed for undergraduate student organizations, though the GSO established itself as and remains an independent graduate student government, not an RSO of any kind; and,

**Whereas,** for example, the power of the GSO Senate<sup>6</sup> was usurped through the unilateral removal of a duly-elected Officer of the GSO executive board; and,

**Whereas,** there have been several other attempts over the past five years to undermine the remaining independence of the GSO by imposing various dicta onto the GSO through its University appointed “Adviser(s)” under the pretext that the GSO is an RSO unable to govern its own affairs; and,

**Whereas,** GSO Officers, Cabinet members, Senators, and other Members have made several attempts to address this list of affronts, yet each issue has nonetheless gone without expedient remedy, if not swept aside entirely; and,

**Whereas,** each of these issues could have been and would be prevented by a written, binding agreement (hereinafter a “Charter”) delineating the relationship between the GSO and Syracuse University; and,

**Whereas,** the GSO maintains the hope that the current leaders of Syracuse University wish to solve these problems in cooperation with graduate students and their elected representatives; therefore be it,

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<sup>4</sup> GSOC, Preamble.

<sup>5</sup> See GSO Senate Resolution 24.01, “A Resolution Opposing the Disenfranchisement of SU Graduate Students & Calling for Elected Representation and Voting Rights on SU’s Board of Trustees”.

<sup>6</sup> GSOC, Article II, Section 13(o).

**Resolved,** that the GSO hereby requests that representatives of Syracuse University meet with representatives of the GSO—including the President, as Chief Executive Officer, the Vice President, as Chair of the Senate, and any other Members they so appoint—to draft a Charter to clearly delineate the relationship between the GSO and Syracuse University; and be it,

**Resolved,** that the GSO hereby ratifies the enclosed *Declaration of Independence of the Graduate Student Organization at Syracuse University* which propounds foundational principles to guide negotiations and items for inclusion in the Charter; and be it,

**Ordered,** that the GSO President, Officers, and Cabinet Members inform the relevant university administrators of the requests contained herein and, alongside GSO Senators, advocate for their realization until such is achieved.



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT  
ORGANIZATION AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

## **Preamble to the Graduate Student Organization Declaration of Independence**

We, the Graduate Students of Syracuse University, in order to foster greater representation of graduate student interests and concerns, hereby reaffirm the Graduate Student Organization and its Senate to be an independent and autonomous entity at Syracuse University. The Graduate Student Organization serves as the elect student government of graduates at Syracuse University, its Representatives laboring under principles of deliberative democracy to establish policies and pursue initiatives in the best interest of all graduate students at Syracuse University consistent with the mission and principles outlined in the GSO Constitution. The GSO has so served since its establishment by graduate student delegation in the year 1968 in the wake of the student and civil rights movements, and in this service shall it persist. The GSO is a government of the graduate students, by the graduate students, for the graduate students, and we therefore declare that it shall remain an independent and autonomous organization free from internal and external coercion.

## **Article I. The Graduate Student Organization as a Student Government & Autonomous Entity**

**Section 1.** The Graduate Student Organization shall be recognized as an independent and autonomous student government, established on the firm principles of self-governance and participating in University shared governance as a full and equal partner.

- a) The Graduate Student Organization is unique, independent from any other Recognized Student Organization (RSO), representing graduate students from all schools and programs in federal Assembly, reserving its right to authorize and administer Departmental and Non-Department Recognized Graduate Student Organizations (RGSOs) in a manner consistent with the mission and principles outlined in the GSO Constitution and the Legislation of its Senate.
- b) The Graduate Student Organization, therefore, is neither an RSO nor should be classified as such by external parties, and shall not be unilaterally subjected to the regulations expressed in the RSO Handbook, and shall maintain full and equal negotiating power over the regulations expressed in the RGSO Handbook.
- c) The Graduate Student Organization and its Members, so affirmed in the GSO Constitution, recognize and abide by the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Code of Student Conduct, and applicable state and federal law, though understanding that the aforementioned University Policies neither grant SU administrators unfettered power to intervene in GSO systems of self-governance nor simply to dictate the direction of GSO policies and practices.

**Section 2.** The Graduate Student Organization shall be recognized as independent from the direct governance of The SU Graduate School, its Dean, administrators, and staff, while working alongside and with them as partners for the common good of the graduate student body and University community.

- a) The Graduate Student Organization was established to be a self-governing body fashioned to work alongside The Graduate School and SU administrators, but not to function as an extension of the administration.
- b) The Graduate Student Organization shall not be subject to the direct management, whims, and directives of The Graduate School, its Dean, administrators, and staff, though reaffirming that The Graduate School as a Service Provider is a valued partner in business and advocacy.
- c) The Graduate Student Organization understands that the Dean of the Graduate School presently possesses an externally (i.e., University) appointed fiduciary

responsibility regarding GSO finances, and therefore affirm that such fiduciary responsibility must be exercised not in the best interest of the Dean or of The Graduate School but only in the best interests of, care for, and good faith toward the GSO and its Members while otherwise refraining from unilateral interference in GSO sovereignty over its fiscal decisions.

## **Article II. The Right of the GSO to Independently Appoint Advisers**

**Section 1.** The Graduate Student Organization maintains the right to self-governance as a full and equal partner in University shared governance and therefore reserves the right to appoint its own Adviser(s).

- a) The Graduate Student Organization shall have the right to appoint its own Adviser(s) from among SU faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the University Community, through a formal process of Executive Appointment & Confirmation by Majority Vote of the GSO Senate that is consistent with the Appointment & Confirmation processes articulated in the GSO Constitution.
- b) The Graduate Student Organization shall Appoint and Remove Advisers as it so chooses, on an as-needed basis at the discretion of the Graduate Student Organization.
- c) After Confirmation by Majority Vote of the GSO Senate, the Appointment shall not be considered Official until the Advisor-elect signs an Advisor Contract with the GSO Chief Executive Officer, outlining and confirming the timeframe and terms of the GSO-Adviser Partnership.
- d) GSO-appointed Advisers (including but not necessarily limited to) shall:
  - i. Sign an Advisor Contract with the GSO Chief Executive Officer, outlining and confirming the timeframe and terms of the GSO-Adviser Partnership;
  - ii. Neither dictate GSO policy and processes nor the interpretation and application of GSO policy and processes;
  - iii. Be faculty, staff, or administrators actively working on the SU campus;
  - iv. Remain informed about the GSO and its Constitution, mission, and purpose, providing advice when needed or requested;
  - v. Support GSO Officers and Cabinet Staff in the understanding and administration of their constitutional duties, in administering GSO programs and initiatives, in organizing events, and in facilitating transitions of Office;
  - vi. Serve as a resource for advocacy planning and organizing, as well as a resource of knowledge on the campus community and, upon request, a liaison to other units of the University;

- vii. Encourage GSO Representatives to understand and apply democratic principles, including the recognition of diverse opinions and rights;
  - viii. Offer periodic meetings with the GSO Officers and Cabinet Staff, especially upon request, and attend GSO meetings and events when invited;
  - ix. Be available for the evaluation of advocacy and initiative ideas, articulate campus policies and procedures, and help eliminate/reduce barriers to GSO advocacy and initiatives when necessary;
  - x. Facilitate discussions among GSO Executive Officers, Cabinet Staff, and Members, and mediate interpersonal conflicts that arise when requested;
  - xi. Maintain a relationship with the GSO Officers, Staff, and Members of the organization.
- e) Should the duly elected Adviser be unable to fulfill the duties above, or should the Adviser exercise the duties above in a manner that expresses conflicts of interest or ill intent, the GSO may reconsider the renewal of their tenure as Adviser.
- f) The Graduate Student Organization shall have the right to remove an elected Adviser from their position by Majority Vote of the Senate should the Adviser be unable to fulfill their duties, or should the Adviser exercise their duties in a manner that presents conflicts of interest or ill intent.

### **Article III. The Right of the GSO to Independently Select the Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Trustees & All Other Graduate Student Representatives and Liaisons to the University Community**

**Section 1.** The Graduate Student Organization reserves the right to select any and all Graduate Student Representatives to the University Community to advocate, promote, and represent the interests of graduate students.

- a) The Graduate Student Organization at Syracuse University shall have the right to elect a Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Trustees.
- b) The Graduate Student Organization reaffirms, per its Constitution, that the President & Chief Executive Officer remains the recognized and primary representative of the graduate student body to the Board of Trustees, the University administration, and to all other units of the University.
- c) The GSO refuses to acknowledge or affirm the legitimacy of the Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Trustees appointed by and working for the Dean of the Graduate School under the recent, unilaterally imposed process, which compromises genuine graduate student representation to the University's highest decision-making body by functionally rendering the Graduate Representative a Representative of the



University and which grievously undermines graduate student trust in university processes and institutions of representation and shared governance.

#### **Article IV. The Right of the GSO to Ownership & Sovereignty over GSO Funds Gathered from Graduate Students via the Graduate Student Activity Fee**

**Section 1.** The Graduate Student Organization shall retain full ownership and sovereign control over the student activity fee collected from graduate students by the University on behalf of the GSO. The funds collected from graduate students by the University on behalf of the GSO, though stewarded by the University, are neither owned by the University nor part of The Graduate School budget.

- a) The Graduate Student Organization shall set the amount of the fee, pursuant the Constitution of the Graduate Student Organization.
- b) The Graduate Student Organization shall allocate the fee, pursuant the Constitution of the Graduate Student Organization.
- c) Neither the Dean of the Graduate School nor any other administrator shall unilaterally revoke or annul the lawful allocation or expenditure of GSO funds that has been approved by the GSO Senate and/or its Officers.
- d) The Graduate School and its Dean shall exercise fiduciary responsibility regarding GSO finances in democratic consultation with the GSO and its Officers and shall exercise such fiduciary responsibility solely in the best interests of, care for, and good faith toward the GSO and its Members while otherwise avoiding conflicts of interest and refraining from unilateral interference in GSO sovereignty over its fiscal decisions.

#### **Article V. On Policy & Other Disputes between the GSO and Representatives of Syracuse University**

**Section 1.** If there arises a dispute between the GSO and a Representative of Syracuse University regarding the interpretation and application of policy, or another matter, which cannot be resolved democratically and amicably by the two parties, there shall be a process involving a mutually agreed upon third party to mediate and remedy the situation.

- a) The President and other Officers of the Graduate Student Organization are empowered to negotiate the terms of a process for settling such disputes with Representatives of Syracuse University.

- b) The process shall not be considered official until presented to and ratified by the Senate of the Graduate Student Organization and signed by the GSO Chief Executive Officer and Representatives of the University.
- c) The Graduate Student Organization retains the right to negotiate adjustments to the process in the best interests of graduate students when necessary.

## **Article VI. Powers of the GSO**

**Section 1.** This Declaration reaffirms the powers granted to the GSO in its Constitution and governing documents and shall not be construed to limit the grant of powers to those specifically enumerated herein.