

**University of Connecticut School of Social Work
Graduate Student Organization**

This constitution was ratified via vote of the student body on November 12, 2019

Article I: School of Social Work Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

- a) The name of this body shall be the Graduate Student Organization of the University of Connecticut, School of Social Work (SSW).

Article II: Membership

- a) Membership in the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) shall consist of all University of Connecticut School of Social Work matriculated Master and Doctoral students who pay the student activity fee. All members are eligible to hold office if they meet the requirements, may attend Steering Committee meetings, submit and participate in petitions, and attend events sponsored by GSO and its affiliates.
- b) Membership of Executive Committee shall consist of the GSO Chair or Co-Chairs, the Secretary, and the Treasurer.
- c) Membership of the GSO Steering Committee shall consist of all Leaders of GSO Interest Groups, all Concentration Committee Representatives, all School Wide Committee Representatives, and the members of the GSO Executive Committee.
- d) Membership of GSO Interest Groups shall consist of the Interest groups Leader(s) and any matriculated Master and Doctoral students who wish to be involved with the Interest Group.
- e) Other GSO Participants may include, but are not limited to, Non-degree students, SSW Faculty, SSW Staff, alumni, and members of the community. Participants are permitted to attend events and meetings sponsored by GSO affiliates; however, the main beneficiaries of these events are matriculated Masters and Doctoral students.

Article III: Mission

- a) The Graduate Student Organization of the University of Connecticut (UConn), School of Social Work exists to create and strengthen a beneficial environment for its members, matriculated students. The GSO observes and celebrates diversity in all forms through student-led educational and social programs, community service projects, and advocacy opportunities. In accordance with the UConn School of Social Work's mission, the organization's function is to augment the students' academic experience. In pursuit of this mission, GSO models its conduct in accordance with the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics.

Article IV: Goals and Objectives

- a) To create community among students at the UConn School of Social Work.

- b) To serve as an advocate on behalf of the student body to the School's Administration.
- c) To assist students in their professional development by raising awareness on issues affecting the social work profession.
- d) To maintain diverse representation within the GSO in meeting its mission.
- e) To manage and allocate student activity funds to benefit its members.

Article V: Governance

- a) The GSO shall function as the official legislative and executive body of the student body of the Graduate School of Social Work of the University of Connecticut. Leadership and coordination of activities of the GSO shall be governed by a Steering Committee. Non-leader students may attend the executive and steering committee meetings, but will have no voting rights.
- b) Students currently in field may be able to use some of their hours towards their field placement as long as it does not interfere with professional obligations in the placement. Students should visit the Field Education Manual regarding details of this policy.
- c) Interest Groups and Concentration Committees of the GSO, here after referred to collectively as affiliates, are groups of students joined together by a common cause, interest, or purpose, or in the case of Concentration Committees, by their Concentration. Each affiliate receives funds that can be budgeted for specific educational and/or social events, guest speakers, food, etc. While participation in these affiliates may include faculty, staff, non-matriculated students, or community members, membership, including the control, operation, and responsibilities of the running of these affiliates, is made up and managed by matriculated Master and Doctoral students. All leaders must maintain and keep records of all events and planning done throughout the year. This is to ensure that incoming Chairs/Co-Chairs will have an understanding of the documented history of their group and its activities. Any affiliate that does not function with leadership representation for two consecutive fall/spring semesters will no longer be recognized as active by the GSO.
- d) School-Wide Committee Representatives on the GSO are students who represent the student body on various School of Social Work Administrative Committees. The Executive Committee and GSO Advisor are responsible for appointing students to serve on various school-wide committees. Students who have completed at least 1 year in the program are required for these positions. These committees are responsible for policy development, field education, educational reviews, etc.
- e) The leaders of the GSO shall be empowered to speak as the official voice of the GSO and of the student body, and to direct and organize the activities of the GSO. The Executive Committee and the Advisor of the GSO may appoint ad hoc committees to deal with specific issues or activities. The ad hoc committee will consist of members of the Executive Committee and other matriculated students as advised by the Chair/Co-Chairs of GSO.
- f) The GSO shall meet as a body at least four times per semester during the academic year and additional meetings may be called as necessary. Action on any business before the

GSO may be passed by vote of the majority of Steering Committee members. All meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, Revised. Meetings shall be publicized at least two weeks before the scheduled meeting time.

- g) The GSO shall review all expenditure requests and consider the reasonableness of each request prior to approving. Consideration should be given to the benefit to the student body and other similar considerations.
- h) The Director of Student and Academic Services shall serve as Advisor to the GSO, and shall be assisted by other designated staff members as identified.
 - i. The role of the GSO Advisor is to provide orientation to new student leaders; attend Executive Committee and Steering Committee meetings, as time permits; ensure policies and procedures are followed; attend Interest Group and Concentration Committee meetings and events, as time permits; and to work closely with all GSO Leadership and Interest Group Faculty Advisors to fulfill the mission of each Interest Group and the GSO as a whole.
 - ii. The GSO Advisor can appoint a designated representative to speak on the Advisor's behalf during GSO Executive and Steering committee meetings.
 - iii. The DSO will be advised by the Doctoral Faculty Advisor, who will attend DSO meetings as needed.
- i) Interest groups Faculty Advisor Policy:
 - i. All Interest Groups may choose to have a Faculty Advisor. The policy as established by the School of Social Work Dean's office should be referred to regarding the responsibility of the faculty advisor's role.
- j) Concentration Committees shall work with their Concentration Committee Faculty Chair or their designee to provide input and guidance as sought by the leaders for their area. It is understood that decisions regarding Concentration Committee business should remain student driven.
- k) Additional Faculty and Staff Participation in Interest groups and Concentration Committees:
 - i. Faculty and Staff members may participate in GSO Interest and Concentration Committees meetings and events as invited, however the intended recipients of funds used are the matriculated Master and Doctoral Students (see *Article II, Section e*). It is understood that decisions regarding the business of these groups should remain student driven.

Article VI: Executive Committee

- a) Make-up: The GSO Executive Committee shall consist of two Co-Chairs, if available, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and other Steering Committee members as deemed necessary. The members of the Executive Committee are self-nominated and voluntary. These positions can be held by First Year, Second Year, Advanced Standing, and Doctoral students. However, the secretary position must be fulfilled by an incoming Master student.
- b) Terms of Office: Executive Committee Members indicate their interest as soon as possible in the spring semester and must attend a Leadership Orientation in the summer (with the

exception of the secretary, if individual not yet identified). Ideally, these positions should be filled no later than April. Members shall serve throughout the summer as early as June and the following full academic year.

- i. Executive Committee members must attend scheduled Executive Committee and Steering Committee meetings. Leaders may request to be excused from these meetings due to a scheduling conflict. Reasons for an excused absence may include inflexible field hours, absence of childcare, or other reasons deemed appropriate. Leaders must notify the GSO Advisor or GSO Chair/Co-Chairs. All excused absences must be approved, in advance when possible, by the Executive Committee and GSO Advisor.

Article VII: Steering Committee

- a) Make-up: The GSO Steering Committee shall consist of all members of the Executive Committee, Interest Groups, Concentration Committees and School-Wide Committee members. The Members of the Steering Committee are self-nominated and voluntary. First Year, Second Year, Advanced Standing, and Doctoral students can hold these positions.
- b) Terms of Office: Steering Committee Members indicate their interest as soon as possible in the spring semester or early summer and must attend a Leadership Orientation in the summer. Ideally, the majority of these positions should be filled no later than June. Any leaders unable to make the Leadership Orientation must meet with a co-chair for training prior to serving on the Steering Committee. Members shall serve throughout the summer and through the following full academic year if possible.

Article VIII: Evaluation of GSO Secretary and Treasurer

- a) The Secretary and Treasurer of the GSO will undergo an evaluation on their performance at the end of each semester. If it is determined that the performance is less than acceptable/satisfactory then it will be determined if they shall continue in the position.
- b) The GSO Advisor will obtain a self-evaluation for both the Secretary and Treasurer at the beginning of December and April to ensure that both leaders have met their responsibilities and requirements. The GSO Advisor will review these evaluations with the GSO Chair/Co-Chairs.
- c) After submitting their self-evaluation, the Secretary and Treasurer will each meet with the GSO Advisor and GSO Chair/Co-Chairs to discuss their evaluation if it is a less than an acceptable performance rating.
 - i. Evaluations reflecting a less than an acceptable performance rating will be submitted to the GSO Chair/Co-Chairs for formal action and must be accompanied by a recommendation from the GSO Advisor; this may result in dismissal from the position.

Article IX: Recruitment of GSO Leadership

- a) The GSO leadership will consistently work to recruit new leaders and members of Interest Groups, Concentration Committees, and School Wide Committees. It is highly

recommended that affiliate leadership identify potential leaders for the coming academic year.

- b) Interested returning leaders should declare their intent to serve on the GSO Steering Committee by notifying the GSO Advisor at the April GSO Steering Committee Meeting or thereafter. Interested prospective leaders should declare their intent to serve on the GSO Steering Committee by notifying the GSO Advisor as soon as possible.
- c) In the event that more students express an interest in a specific position than there are spaces available, this position shall be determined by a vote of the GSO Steering Committee during a GSO Steering Committee Meeting.

Article X: Dismissals and Vacancies

- a) Dismissal Process:
 - i. Call for Dismissal: Dismissal proceedings may be initiated against any member of the GSO Executive and Steering Committees in accordance with the following procedures:
 - A. A member of the Executive or Steering Committee or GSO Advisor must make a call for dismissal one (1) month before the next Steering Committee Meeting. At that time the individual calling for a dismissal must provide to the GSO Chair/Co-Chairs and Advisor a written statement with evidence to support their reasoning for dismissal.
 - B. The individual facing dismissal must be notified within one (1) week of the written submission being received, that is, three (3) weeks prior to the Steering Committee Meeting.
 - C. The Executive Committee must notify the Steering Committee Leaders of the specific violations brought against the leader in question two (2) weeks prior to the Steering Committee Meeting.
 - D. Dismissal proceedings, including a description of the charges, discussion, and dismissal vote, will take place at the next scheduled Steering Committee Meeting.
 - E. A simple majority of Steering Committee Members is required to dismiss a leader.
 - F. In the event of a tie vote within the Steering Committee Leadership, the GSO Advisor casts the deciding vote.
 - G. The GSO Executive Committee shall have the sole responsibility of enforcing the dismissal.
 - ii. The Treasurer and Secretary may also be removed through the evaluation process. See *Article VIII*.
- b) Grounds for Dismissal: The following shall be considered grounds for dismissal for both GSO Executive Committee and Steering Committee Leaders:
 - i. That s/he has violated, disregarded, or breached the GSO Bylaws; the GSO Policies and Procedures; NASW Code of Ethics; UConn School of Social Work Policies or Procedures; University Policies and Procedures; is no longer fulfilling the job

requirements (See *Sub-Sections iii. through v.* of this section); or has violated the Student Code of Conduct.

- ii. GSO Leadership may face dismissal for a minimum of one (1) unexcused absence from a GSO Executive and/or Steering Committee Meeting within an academic year; this will be determined by members of the Executive Committee in consultation with the GSO Advisor. Additional unexcused absences will constitute ground for automatic dismissal.
 - iii. GSO Executive Committee Leaders may face dismissal if they fail to meet requirements listed in the By-Laws relevant to their specific role, including but not limited to:
 - A. Implement educational, community service, and social activities for matriculated students.
 - B. Complete and submit expenditure forms in accordance with appropriate procedures.
 - C. Submit all paperwork to the GSO Advisor or staff designee in accordance with appropriate procedures.
 - D. Manage their budget and related paperwork in accordance with appropriate procedures.
 - E. Meet additional requirements as determined by the University or its designee.
 - iv. GSO Steering Committee Leaders may face dismissal if they fail to meet requirements listed in the By-Laws relevant to their specific role, including but not limited to:
 - A. Implement educational and social activities around the identified population or cause that the Chair/Co-Chair is representing.
 - B. Complete and submit expenditure forms in accordance with appropriate procedures
 - C. Submit all paperwork to the GSO Advisor or staff designee in accordance with appropriate procedures.
 - D. Manage their budget and related paperwork in accordance with appropriate procedures.
 - E. Meet additional requirements as determined by the University or its designee.
 - v. GSO Leadership may face dismissal from their position if they are under academic or disciplinary review.
- c) Non-Dismissal Vacancies
- i. Leave of Absence: The Executive Committee may grant a leader a temporary leave of absence for up to seven (7) weeks within one academic year contingent upon an agreement between the requesting Leader and the GSO Executive Committee regarding their future in the position.
 - ii. Resignation: If any GSO Leader wishes to resign their position, they should submit their request in writing to the Executive Committee and GSO Advisor.
- d) In the Event of Vacancies:

- i. GSO leadership positions shall be declared vacant when any member is dismissed, granted a leave of absence, or resigns. It should be noted that this applies only to vacancies that occur during the academic year, not to positions that were not filled during the normal recruitment process for the beginning of the academic year. When a vacancy occurs, the following procedures should be followed:
 - A. Upon the declaration of a vacancy or a leave of absence, the GSO Chair/Co-Chairs shall have two (2) weeks to recommend leaving the position vacant, filling the position with a temporary appointment, or filling the position with a permanent leader. Chair/Co-Chairs recommendation shall be officially presented to the Steering Committee Leadership at the first official meeting following the initial two (2) week period. This process must occur prior to the start of the spring semester. After the start of the spring semester positions shall be handled in accordance with the procedures.
- ii. In the event of a vacancy on the Executive Committee or among the Steering Committee Leadership, the Steering Committee shall vote on the GSO Chair/Co-chair's recommendation to determine if the position should be filled, filled temporarily, or left vacant.
 - A. Filling Vacancies: If the GSO Leadership votes to fill a vacant position, a suitable candidate should be recruited in accordance with *Article IX*.
 - B. Temporary Appointment: If the GSO Leadership votes to fill a position temporarily, such as in the case of a leave of absence, a suitable candidate should be recruited in accordance with *Article IX*.
 - C. Leaving Position Vacant: If the GSO Leadership votes to leave a position vacant the GSO Chair/Co-Chairs will determine in consultation with the GSO Advisor if it is necessary to delegate the responsibilities of the vacant position to another leader, or if the responsibilities may be set aside for the duration of the vacancy.

Article XII: Amendments

- a) This constitution may be amended with a two-thirds vote of the members of the GSO Steering Committee.

Article XIII: Finances

- a) The GSO Steering Committee shall negotiate, through the University of Connecticut Administration, with the Board of Trustees, for the collection of activity fees from each member of the student body of the School of Social Work, and shall disburse these funds as described in *Article V, Section g*).

Article XIV: Ratification

- a) This constitution shall become effective upon a twenty percent (20%) vote for ratification by the matriculated Master and Doctoral students of the School of Social Work.

Article XV: Scope

- a) The School of Social Work GSO shall be administered under the supervision of the President of the University of Connecticut as prescribed by Sections 4-52 through 4-57a of the Connecticut General Statutes, the State of Connecticut Comptroller's Office, and in accordance with Connecticut State and the University of Connecticut policies, regulations, and procedures, including the Operating Policies and Procedures for Regional Campuses Trustee Accounts.
- b) Nothing in *Article I* through *Article XIV* shall be construed as license to deviate from the letter of intent of *Article XV*.