

Biology Graduate School Association

Article I. Club Name

The name of this organization will be Biology Graduate Student Association, or BGSA.

Article II. Goals for the BGSA

The UL Lafayette Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA) aims to build camaraderie and opportunity among Biology graduate students and foster better lines of communication between the students and faculty. One of our main objectives is to help students develop into professionals. We facilitate this by providing several workshops (C.V. writing, job market training) for students and sponsoring a graduate student symposium. We also hold specialized meetings aimed at addressing concerns specific to the requirements of the UL Lafayette Biology M.S. and Ph.D. degrees, such as sessions on writing, accountability, and pedagogical feedback. Furthermore, we organize several recreational and social events to strengthen our community. BGSA also provides a forum through which graduate students can voice their questions and concerns to faculty about leadership and program structure in an open and accommodating environment. Opening lines of communication will help students better understand faculty decisions and help faculty better understand and address students' concerns. This organization will adhere to all policies and regulations of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the University of Louisiana System. BGSA will be accountable to the Department of Biology and the graduate students we represent regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other forms of diversity we hope to foster in the department.

Article III. Membership

When students matriculate to our department, they automatically become members of our organization. In order to make the transition as smooth as possible, new students will be

supported and guided through their first year with the help of senior graduate students. The size of our organization is entirely dependent on the number of students in the Biology graduate programs at any given time; no dues are required of BGSA members. The BGSA is an inclusive organization, barring membership only to those who are not in the Biology graduate program. Membership shall not be denied on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual identity or disability.

Article IV. Officer Positions

The elected positions in the BGSA are President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer. The role of the President will be to preside over meetings, be responsible for communication between officers and members of BGSA and serve as one of two graduate student representatives in faculty meetings at the invitation of the department chair. The role of Vice-President will be to assist in the organization of meetings, be available to preside over meetings in the absence of the President and be the second representative for graduate students in faculty meetings. The President and Vice-President of the BGSA work directly with students and professors, including the faculty advisor, in relaying issues between the interested parties. This includes, but is not limited to, attending meetings of the Department of Biology Graduate Faculty upon invitation by the department chair. The Secretary will be responsible for maintaining meeting minutes, creating fillable online forms to allow graduate students to voice concerns to be addressed by the department, and will assist with the planning of social events. The treasurer will be responsible for any fundraising efforts and management of BGSA funds. Other responsibilities not found within the constitution are to be delegated by the President to whichever position the responsibility is most closely related to.

Should one of the elected positions be vacated, the remaining officers will temporarily appoint someone to fill their duties until emergency elections can be held. Emergency elections will be held within two meetings of the position being vacated, but otherwise will follow standard voting procedure.

Article V. Non-Elected Positions

In addition to elected officer positions, BGSA will have several appointed positions to facilitate communication among graduate students and assist with departmental service.

Students will be recommended by the elected officers to the Faculty Chair of the Colloquium Committee to commit one year of service to the Biology Colloquium Committee. Student representatives for this service will likely assist in selecting colloquium speakers, coordinating speaker visits, and making departmental announcements regarding colloquium.

The Ph.D. and M.S. liaisons are responsible for greeting incoming graduate students in their respective programs. Liaisons are expected to organize informal get-togethers for incoming and current students. Additionally, the liaisons are responsible for matching an incoming graduate student with an advanced graduate student mentor in a similar field, if available. These positions will have a year-long commitment and will also increase communication between students that have home labs in different buildings. One Ph.D. and one M.S. student from both V.L. Wharton Hall and Billeaud Hall will be appointed to these positions (four positions total).

There will also be two International Student Liaisons (one from V.L. Wharton Hall and the other from Billeaud Hall) to disseminate information to incoming international graduate students and provide support during their first year in the program.

As more departmental committees become available, there will be more appointed position available. All non-elected positions are filled by self-nomination and then appointed by majority vote by elected BGSA officers. Students may choose to hold more than one non-elected position. Elected officers cannot hold a liason position, but may serve on departmental committees Liaisons may also be dismissed by elected BGSA officers pending poor or unsatisfactory performance and will be dismissed with a majority vote. Should one of the Liaison positions be vacated, duties will be filled by the remaining Liaisons. For students who serve on the Biology Colloquium Committee, their assignment to and removal from the committee will be at the discretion of the colloquium chair.

Article VI. Electoral Process

Elections will be held in April. All graduate students, both M.S. and Ph.D., in good academic standing can stand for elections. Graduate students can nominate themselves for positions or be nominated by another graduate student; however, candidates may only run for one position. Nominations will be collected via online submissions. Nominees must confirm their interest after nominations close. These positions hold a term of one academic year (two semesters and one summer session beginning with Fall session). Elected officials may run for office the following year but may not run for the same position. That is, the current President cannot run for that position, but would be eligible to run for Vice-President or any other position. Elections will be conducted and tabulated by current BGSA officials through a secret ballot. The ballot boxes will be located within the main administrative offices of the Department of Biology for one week, ballots may also be cast online for members that may not stay on campus regularly. These online elections will be held in a way that permits anonymous one-time voting for each member.

Officers may be removed from office for dereliction of responsibilities or actions in violation of the student code of conduct or other code of conduct established by the BGSA. A motion to impeach may be brought by an elected BGSA officer. A motion to impeach may also be brought by any BGSA member with a petition signed by 25% of the BGSA membership and following the same process as in article XI. The BGSA officers and liaisons in good standing will congregate to discuss and take a vote for impeachment. This meeting will not be adjourned until a 2/3's majority decision is reached. The vacated seat will be filled through the process described in Article IV.

Article VII. Faculty Advisor

The faculty advisor supports the Biology graduate students. The advisor will not, however, be involved in any BGSA decision making or voting, although their input is certainly welcome. In

the event a new faculty advisor must be selected, there will be a period for nomination prior to the election of officers. The faculty member must be aware of and consent to nomination. The faculty advisor position would be decided at the same time as officer elections.

Article VIII. Fund Raising and Dues

BGSA activities will be funded by proceeds from various fundraising activities (book sales, bake sales, etc.) and from member donations. As no dues are required of members, fundraising events are an important part of the BGSA's lasting success. All fund-raising activities shall be carried out in accordance with the rules and policies of the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership.

Article IX. Meeting Times

Meetings will be held once a month during the academic year with the specific meeting time determined on a semester-to-semester basis. Meeting times will be selected based on a poll sent out to all members prior to the start of the following semester. The time and day selected will follow what the majority of responses indicate as the best time to meet. Emergency meetings may be called based on officer consensus and will be announced at least seven 7 days in advance.

Officer and liaison meetings will be held as needed.

Article X. Quorum

As graduate student schedules are somewhat unpredictable and absences due to classes and conferences are often necessary, we only require that 10% of Biology graduate students be present at BGSA meetings in order to proceed. The meeting must be presided over by at least one elected BGSA officer. If a new law needs to be passed, BGSA members will be alerted at least seven days in advance through their UL email account.

Article XI. Proposing Amendments

Any BGSA member can propose an amendment to the articles or by-laws. To do so they must bring this proposal to a BGSA meeting and present their reasoning. The proposal must be submitted to the BGSA officers at least ten days in advance of the meeting at which it will be considered, to allow the BGSA members to receive prior notice. After their presentation and a brief discussion period, there will be a vote in which a majority of members present must approve of the amendment for it to pass. Elected officers have the power to veto the amendment with a simple majority of elected officers, in the event that it does not agree with the intent or mission of the BGSA. BGSA members will have the ability to override a veto with a 2/3's majority vote by members at the meeting. Any major amendments shall be submitted to the UL Lafayette Organizations Committee for final approval.

BGSA By-laws

- We currently have standing in two departmental committees (Colloquium & Inclusion and Diversity); future BGSA officers can amend this by-law to facilitate committees as they see necessary
- Ad-hoc committees, temporary committees for addressing specific concerns, may be convened to explore specific topics or address specific concerns and provide recommendations to the BGSA. These committees will have access to formal support from the BGSA. For a member to propose an ad-hoc committee, they must first meet with the President and Vice-President of BGSA to discuss their proposal. The chief officers will then ask for the proposal to be included on the agenda for the upcoming BGSA meeting. At the meeting, the interested party must pitch their committee. The pitch cannot last longer than ten minutes. After the pitch, there will be a formal vote on whether or not to pass the proposal. If a majority votes yay, the proposal passes, and the committee can begin immediately.

- Elections will be held in April. All graduate students in good academic standing, from either M.S. or Ph.D. programs, can stand for elections. Graduate students can nominate themselves for positions or be nominated by other graduate students; however, candidates may only run for one position. These positions hold a term of one academic year (two semesters and one summer session). Elected officials may run for office the following year but may not run for the same position. That is, the current President cannot run for that position, but would be eligible to run for Vice-President or any other position. Elections will be conducted and tabulated by current BGSA officials through a secret ballot. The ballot boxes will be located in the main administrative offices of the Department of Biology for one week and disseminated virtually in a way that permits anonymous one-time voting.
- There will be multiple non-elected positions available for students that would like to be involved in departmental service. Commitments will be for an academic year. Examples of current positions include service on the Biology Colloquium Committee, Ph.D. and M.S. Liasons, and an International Student Liaison. Positions will be filled through self-nomination, however, if the service is not meeting expectations, the officers will hold a vote to end the commitment of the student early. A majority vote will be necessary to remove the student from their position.
- Robert's Rules of Order will be followed at all BGSA meetings.
- When graduate students matriculate to our department, they automatically become members of our organization. There are no designated duties for members, with the exception of the officers who must uphold the requirements of their position and the constitution. Members have the right to propose amendments to the constitution, meeting agendas, or general operation of BGSA. They have the right to schedule private meetings with the President and Vice-President to discuss BGSA or Department of Biology issues. -
- Only BGSA officers and appointees have mandated duties. Members are encouraged to participate in BGSA committees, meetings, decision making processes, and extracurricular activities. They are not, however, required to do so.

- With regards to expulsion, BGSA follows the rules of the UL Lafayette Department of Biology. That is, if any BGSA member is dismissed from the Biology department for any reason, they will consequently be removed from BGSA as well. Alumni of the UL Lafayette Department of Biology are not considered as eligible members of the BGSA, therefore, membership is terminated upon graduation. If an elected officer fails to complete tasks relevant to their role or is involved in misconduct, BGSA officials in good standing will congregate to take a vote for impeachment. This meeting will not be adjourned until a majority decision is reached.
- If a BGSA member wishes to propose an amendment to the articles or by-laws, they must bring this proposal to a BGSA meeting and present their reasoning. After their presentation, there will be a vote in which a majority of members present (which must be 10% of Biology graduate students or seven members) must approve of the amendment in order for it to pass. In the event that the amendment does not agree with the intent or mission of the BGSA, the officers have the power to veto the amendment. Members may then override the officer's veto with a 2/3s majority vote.