

Council of Graduate Students (COGS)

Constitution

Preamble

We the graduate students of Regent University, having been authorized by the Regent University Administration to form the Council of Graduate Students (COGS), do hereby set forth the following COGS Constitution.

Statement of Purpose

We believe that all Christians are admonished in the Scriptures to bear witness to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21) and have the power available through the Holy Spirit to do so (Acts 1:8). The purpose of COGS is to provide Regent University students with opportunities to reach out in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit to those who do not know Him. This organization is called of God to be a vehicle through which students can go out into the community and share their Christian faith and love with unbelievers. Moreover, the purpose of COGS shall be:

1. *To promote the University's commitment to biblical principles and spiritual development.*
2. *To advocate and represent the graduate student body's collective ideas, interests, and concerns to the Regent administration and vice versa.*
3. *To facilitate collaboration and community-building among the students of the University's constituent graduate schools.*
4. *To assist the Regent administration in fostering a quality academic environment.*

Article I

A. General Powers

Section 1. All authority expressed by and through the COGS Constitution is subject to approval by the Administration of Regent University.

(a). It is understood that the Administration of Regent University reserves the right to change or eliminate any procedure or action that is deemed inappropriate and not in accord with the standards established by the University.

(b). Such changes must be made in consultation with the organization's advisor and the organization (COGS). COGS can request a review of the decision or action by the University's Executive Vice-President.

Section 2. All powers and responsibilities herein designated shall be vested in the Regent University Council of Graduate Students (COGS).

Section 3. The Council's operations shall be governed supremely by this Constitution and secondarily by the COGS Bylaws, which must comply with the COGS Constitution.

Section 4. The Council shall be composed of Senators who are elected by the respective students in each of Regent's constituent graduate schools and a President who is elected by the Senators. Each school shall have the power to elect two (2) Senators to the Council. Each Senator will serve a one-year term. A senator may serve longer than the one-year term if no election took place for a new senator or no new senators applied, and the senator desires to continue to serve. To be eligible for election as a Senator or president, a graduate student must be in good academic, conduct, and financial standing with the University and must not be graduating before the expiration of the one-year Senate term sought. Additional qualifications are detailed in Article IV Section 5 of the COGS bylaws.

Section 5. The Council shall have the power to: elect Executive Officers to help govern the Council; manage and disperse the student fees that are collected by the University; prescribe the responsibilities of the standing and special committees; appoint members to the standing and special committees; propose the scholarships and stipends of committee members; decide the exact dates and times of the Council elections; enact all bylaws necessary and proper to carrying out its responsibilities and duties, pursuant to this Constitution; and propose amendments to this Constitution.

B. Objectives

Section 1. To identify specific areas where the efforts of this organization should be concentrated, according to the leading of the Spirit.

Section 2. To keep efficient records of the results of all efforts so that effective follow-up can be administered.

Section 3. To make prudent and Spirit-led decisions, according to Scriptural principles, regarding the use of the resources and finances of this organization, so that we will be good stewards of that which God has entrusted to us.

Section 4. To keep efficient records of all the financial dealings of this organization.

Section 5. To constantly seek to glorify and lift up the Lord Jesus Christ through all that is said and done in this organization.

Section 6. To meet on a regular basis in order to maintain the health of the organization.

Article II

A. Membership

Section 1. Elected positions in COGS are open only to graduate students currently enrolled at Regent University in the schools of Divinity, Government, Business, Law, Communication, Education, and Psychology.

Section 2. To serve as a senator on COGS, a candidate must win an election by the graduate students of the individual graduate schools during a general or special election or be appointed per the process detailed in Bylaw IV. 8.

B. Advisor

Section 1. COGS shall always have a Faculty or Staff Advisor committed to helping the organization carry out its objectives.

Section 2. The commitment of the Faculty Advisor shall be renewed annually.

Section 3. The Responsibilities of the Advisor are detailed in the Bylaws.

C. Executive Authority

Section 1. The executive authority of COGS shall be vested in its officers consisting of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Section 2. The officers of COGS must respect the opinion and advice of its Faculty/Staff Advisor and must fully consider all counsel from the Faculty/Staff Advisor.

Section 3. The Responsibilities of the Executive Officers are detailed in the Bylaws.

Article III

Executive Officers

Section 1. By a three-fourths vote, the Council shall elect Senators to serve as Executive Officers.

Section 2. The Executive Officers shall be the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section 3. An Executive Officer's appointment may be withdrawn for cause, by a three-fourths vote of the entire Council. No Executive Officer shall be removed without first having the opportunity to be heard by Council.

Section 4. If elected during the Spring Executive Board Election, an Executive Officer shall serve for the subsequent Summer and Fall terms. If elected during the Fall Executive Board Election, an Executive Officer shall serve for the subsequent Spring term. An Executive Officer may be re-elected, without term limits, as long as he or she meets the other Executive Officer requirements set forth in this Constitution and in the COGS Bylaws.

Section 5. A Senator whose term is about to expire and who may not be re-elected as a Senator (e.g., due to the one-year commitment requirement) is still eligible to be selected as President if that Senator will still be a University student for the duration of the next Presidential term. However, that student may not run for any other Executive Office, unless he or she has 6 months remaining on their Senatorial term.

Section 6. The President shall be a non-voting member of the Council, except in the event of any tie vote. The President shall also be an ex officio member of every standing committee.

Article IV

Committees

Section 1. The Council shall have organized committees as needed that attend to and address the needs and concerns of the Graduate student body. These committees will consist of Senators and Representatives from various graduate schools. The President of the Council shall have the authority to establish special committees as the need arises. The standing committees will be designated in the COGS bylaws.

Section 2. Except as provided in Article III, section 8, the President of the Council shall have the authority to appoint a Senator to chair a standing or special committee. No Senator shall chair more than one (1) committee at a time. Once appointed, a Senator's appointment as Chair of a committee may be withdrawn for cause by a two-thirds vote of the Council. No Chair shall be removed without first having the opportunity to be heard by the Council.

Section 3. A member of a committee may be removed, for cause, by a majority vote of the Council, upon the recommendation of the Chair of that committee. No member shall be removed without having the opportunity to be heard by the Council.

Article V

Elections

Section 1. In each election, the Senatorial candidate who wins more than fifty percent (50%) of the votes cast shall be the winner. In the event that no candidate garners more than fifty percent (50%) of the votes cast, a run-off election shall be held between the two (2) Senatorial candidates who won the two (2) highest percentages of votes cast. In a run-off election, the Senatorial candidate who wins more than fifty percent (50%) of the votes cast shall be the winner.

Section 2. In the event that a Senator's seat on the Council becomes vacant, the Executive Board can choose by majority vote whether to conduct a special election to be held within a timely fashion, or an interim appointment as defined in the Bylaws IV, 7, in order to fill the vacated seat for the remainder of the exiting Senator's elected term of service.

Section 3. When a Senator is elected to serve as President and he or she has not yet completed their elected term of Senatorial service, the school that the Senator represents shall elect two (2) Senators at the next general election. The Senatorial candidate who garners the highest percentage of votes in that election shall serve the normal one-year Senate term. The candidate who garners the second highest percentage of votes shall serve the remaining portion of the new President's Senate term.

Section 4. A quorum, as defined by a majority of the current Senators, must be in attendance in order to cast their vote for the election of the Executive Officers. If there is not a quorum, the election of the Executive Officers will be postponed for the next available meeting when the quorum can meet.

Article VI

COGS Bylaws

Section 1. The COGS Bylaws, shall govern the daily operations of the Council.

Section 2. A bylaw may not contradict the COGS Constitution.

Section 3. A bylaw may be proposed to the Council by any Senator, and it shall be enacted by a three-fourths vote of the Council. A proposed bylaw shall be disseminated to the entire Council in writing, and an enactment vote on that bylaw may not occur during the meeting in which it is proposed

Section 4. An enactment vote on the proposed bylaw will take place the meeting immediately following the meeting in which the bylaw was proposed.

a) Minor wording concerns or grammatical changes may be made to the proposed bylaw during the meeting of the enactment vote without delaying the vote for another meeting.

b) The Vice President will make the decision as to whether a change in wording or grammar is to be considered substantive or minor.

c) If the changes are deemed to be substantive the vote will be delayed for one week to provide ample time for each senator to review the proposed change.

Section 5. Before an enactment vote on a proposed bylaw may be taken, the Constitution and Elections Committee shall review that bylaw's constitutionality and provide the Council with any necessary recommendations for its modification.

Section 6. Except as otherwise provided, a proposed bylaw shall be made effective immediately upon its enactment.

Section 7. At the beginning of each Fall and Spring academic term, the Secretary shall make a copy of the COGS Constitution and the COGS Bylaws available to all Council members. The Secretary shall also ensure that there is always a copy of the COGS Constitution and the COGS Bylaws available, should any represented graduate student request to see a copy of these documents.

Section 8. A bylaw may be rescinded by a three-fourths vote of the Council. No bylaw may be rescinded during the same meeting in which the rescission is proposed.

Article VII

Amendments

Section 1. A represented graduate student may propose an amendment to the COGS Constitution by way of a petition that has been signed by ten percent (10%) of the University's represented graduate student body. However, a ratification vote on the proposed amendment may not be held except with the approval of the Council, by a two-thirds vote.

Section 2. The Council may propose an amendment to this Constitution, by a three-fourths vote of the Council.

Section 3. The proposed amendment must be discussed in an open forum at a general membership meeting. All graduate students, as general members, will be notified in advance of an amendment being discussed at an open and general meeting.

Section 4. The proposed amendment shall be voted upon by the University graduate students who participate in the meeting after the open forum.

Section 5. A vote to adopt an amendment will not be held until the meeting following the open forum discussion, and will be announced in advance to all the graduate students.

Section 6. To be ratified, a proposed amendment must receive affirmative votes from at least two-thirds of the University graduate students who vote in that general meeting.

Article VIII

Impeachment and Resignation

Section 1. The Council shall have the power to remove a Senator or President from office, for cause, by a three-fourths vote of the Council. The person who is being considered for removal shall not have a vote in the proceedings. Here “for cause” shall be defined as: failure to abide by the COGS Constitution and/or Bylaws, insubordination, violation of professional ethics, failure to perform reasonably assigned duties, failure to abide by the Regent University Student Honor Code, incompetence or other like reasons.

Section 2. No Senator or President shall be removed without having the opportunity to be heard by the Council before the impeachment vote occurs.

Section 3. The call to remove a Senator or President shall be presented to the Council in writing, in the form of a motion setting forth the reason(s) for impeachment.

Section 4. If a Senator or President wishes to resign, the person will meet with the President or Vice President and the Executive Director of Student Services to notify each party of his or her resignation.

(a) The person who wishes to resign will be asked to maintain their office until the end of the semester unless special circumstances will not permit them to do so.

b) The reason for resignation need only be disclosed to the staff member of the Office of Student

c) Special circumstances shall be defined as: death in the family, serious illness or hospitalization of immediate family member, or the senator’s own health is in jeopardy.

Section 5. In the event a Senator or the President is removed by the Council or resigns voluntarily, that person shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity on COGS in the future.

Upon removal, a special election or interim appointment shall be conducted to fill the vacant position.

Section 6. Scholarship Reimbursement

- a) The person leaving his or her position due to special circumstances will not be required to reimburse the tuition compensation for that semester. If the person leaving (either removed or resigning) does not remain on COGS for the remainder of the semester and does not leave due to special circumstances, the payment reimbursed to University from the departing person will be the entire COGS tuition allowance originally paid to that person for that semester.
- b) The Executive Director of Student Services in partnership with Dean of the school of the person in question will determine whether the person is deemed as leaving under special circumstances or if a full repayment is required.
- c) The person leaving the COGS position will forfeit all future compensation that he or she would have received from the University.

Article IX

A. Continuation of the Organization

Section 1. No later than the last month of each semester the membership of COGS shall select new leadership for the following academic semester.

Section 2. The membership shall select a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer to serve for a semester-long term. The mutual agreement and three-fourths vote of the membership shall select the officers. No officers will be placed in office without the mutual agreement and three-fourths vote of the membership.

Section 3. Executive positions vacated by officers of COGS shall be filled by appointment of the President. In the event the office of President is vacated, the Vice President will serve as President and fill his former position by appointment.

B. Constitution Dissolution

Section 1. If changed structures, unforeseen circumstances, or other unexpected events arise within the University and make this constitution outdated, the Council may create a new COGS Constitution, provided they adhere to the dissolution requirements that are set forth in Article IX, Section B.2 of this Constitution.

Section 2. In order for COGS to dissolve this constitution, the Council must unanimously agree that it needs to be dissolved. The Executive Director of Student Services must also agree that this constitution needs to be dissolved.