

Bylaws of the Graduate Student Advisory Board

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Bylaws of the Graduate Student Advisory Board

Section 1. Preamble

1.A. Introduction to the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB):

Recognizing the critical importance of student input in shaping educational experiences, the Division of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) at Caltech has established the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB). This board is a strategic alliance with the Director of EAS Programs for Student Success (DPSS), designed to integrate student perspectives into the fabric of our institute's programs and policies, thereby continuously elevating the quality of our educational environment.

Role of GSAB Representatives:

In alignment with our mission, GSAB representatives will collaborate closely with the DPSS, engaging in outreach and programmatic efforts that encompass a holistic approach to student services. By contributing insights, recommendations, and feedback, we aid in crafting innovative programs and serve as a dynamic link between the division's initiatives and the diverse student body, ensuring a fluid exchange of ideas and information across all levels of the academic spectrum.

Affiliation with EAS and DPSS:

The GSAB operates under the auspices of the EAS Division, in close collaboration with the DPSS. This partnership underscores our commitment to fostering an academic environment where student perspectives are not only heard but are integral to the decision-making process, ensuring a thriving, inclusive, and forward-thinking educational journey for all students at Caltech.

1.B. Introduction to the Bylaws

Purpose of the Bylaws

The bylaws of the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB) serve as the foundational document that outlines the governance structure, roles, and responsibilities within the Board. They provide a comprehensive framework for the efficient and effective functioning of the GSAB, ensuring that all activities are conducted in a transparent, consistent, and orderly manner.

Function of the Bylaws

The bylaws function as a set of rules by which the GSAB operates. They are designed to facilitate the smooth functioning of the board by providing a clear protocol for addressing various situations and challenges that may arise. The bylaws help to maintain the integrity and purpose of the GSAB, supporting its mission to enhance the educational experience and quality of life for students within the Division of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) at Caltech.

Ethical Compliance and Governance

In accordance with Section 9: Ethical Guidelines, all actions undertaken by the GSAB and its members must adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct. This section delineates the ethical principles that guide board members, including integrity, honesty, respect, fairness, and professional conduct. It is imperative that *all* board activities and decisions are in strict compliance with these guidelines to uphold the trust and respect of the student body and the broader EAS community.

By adhering to these bylaws and the ethical standards set forth, the GSAB ensures that its work not only advances the interests of the student body but also reflects the values and principles of the EAS division and Caltech as a whole.

1.C. Graduate Student Advisory Board Creed

Our Identity:

We are a collective of dedicated students from the Division of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) at Caltech, brought together by a shared commitment to enhance the quality of life and educational experience for all students within our division. As members of the EAS Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB), we embrace diversity, seek inclusivity, and advocate for the well-being and success of our peers.

Our Purpose:

Our primary goal is to serve as a bridge between the student body and the EAS administration, specifically collaborating with the Director of EAS Programs for Student Success (DPSS). We are here to lend our voices, insights, and visions toward the continuous improvement of student-centric programs, policies, and initiatives. Through our collective efforts, we aim to foster a supportive, engaging, and enriching academic and social environment for every student.

Our Commitment:

1. *To Listen*: We pledge to actively listen to the diverse voices and perspectives of our peers, ensuring that all feedback, concerns, and suggestions are heard and valued.
2. *To Collaborate*: We commit to working collaboratively, both among ourselves and with the DPSS, to develop and implement solutions that address the needs and aspirations of the student body.
3. *To Advocate*: We promise to be proactive ambassadors and advocates for the programs and resources designed to benefit the Caltech student community, ensuring they are accessible, equitable, and effective.
4. *To Innovate*: We vow to approach our roles with an open mind, creativity, and a willingness to explore new ideas that can enhance student life and learning experiences.
5. *To Grow*: We acknowledge that this journey is also one of personal and professional growth. We are committed to supporting one another, learning from our experiences, and developing skills that will serve us well beyond our tenure on the board.

Our Actions:

- We will meet regularly - prepared and ready to engage in meaningful discussions.
- We will maintain a transparent, respectful, and constructive dialogue with all members of the EAS community.
- We will actively participate in the planning, promotion, and execution of initiatives that build community and support student success.
- We will be diligent in our efforts to keep the broader student population informed and involved in our activities.

Section 2. Membership

2.A. Eligibility Criteria:

To be eligible for consideration to serve on the GSAB, the applicant:

- Must be a current graduate student enrolled in the Division of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) at Caltech.
- Must demonstrate a commitment to enhancing the quality of life and academic environment for EAS students.
- Should possess strong communication and collaboration skills.
- Must be in good academic standing with the university.
- Must have demonstrated a consistent record of integrity and ethical behavior as a student, as evaluated by the current GSAB and the DPSS, prior to their application.

2.B. Application and Selection Process:

- Interested students must submit an application, including a brief statement of interest and a summary of relevant experience or skills.
- Applications will be reviewed by the GSAB, which will recommend candidates based on the criteria of diversity, experience, and potential contribution.
- Final selections (voted on by a simple majority of current GSAB representatives) will be reviewed by the DPSS, who will determine academic and institutional integrity eligibility, then return their recommendations to the GSAB, which will then vote on final acceptances/rejections.
- Any representative may choose to vote *for or against* any applicant under consideration for any reason. Representatives are encouraged to, but may choose not to, disclose their rationale. Votes by representatives must be respected, regardless of their outcome.
- Applicants will then be informed of their selection or rejection by the current Secretary.

2.C. Term Length and Limits:

- Representatives will serve for one year starting in January and ending in December, with the possibility of re-election for one additional year.
- The term limit is designed to ensure fresh perspectives and opportunities for more students to contribute.

2.D. Expulsion of a Sitting Representative:

Initiation of Expulsion Proceedings

- Any representative may raise a motion for the expulsion of a sitting representative if they believe there has been a violation of the GSAB's Code of Conduct and Ethics (see **Section 9.D.**) or any other instance outlined in **Section 2.E.**
- The motion must be submitted in writing to the Chair, clearly outlining the grounds for proposed expulsion.

Defense and Deliberation Process

- The representative facing expulsion will be given a formal notice and an opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing and, if desired, in person during a special session of the board.
- Both the accusing representative and the accused will have the opportunity to present evidence and arguments before the board.
- A neutral party, such as the DPSS or an external mediator, may be invited to oversee the proceedings to ensure fairness.

Voting on Expulsion

- After deliberations, the expulsion will require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of all sitting representatives to pass.
- The vote should be conducted by secret ballot to maintain impartiality.

2.E. Grounds for Expulsion:

1. Breach of the code of Conduct and Ethics (see **Section 9.D.**), including acts of discrimination, harassment, or any other behavior deemed unbecoming of a representative.
2. Failure to maintain good academic standing with the university.
3. Non-attendance at a specified number of board meetings without valid reason.
4. Inability to fulfill the duties and responsibilities associated with the board membership, as assessed by a simple majority vote of the board.

2.F. Disqualification of an Applicant:

An application may be disqualified for consideration (as opposed to *rejected*, when an applicant has been considered, but not selected for any reason) for reasons such as:

- A documented history of conduct that violates the university's or GSAB's code of ethics and conduct.

- Failure to meet academic or other eligibility criteria set forth by the GSAB and confirmed by the DPSS.

Review and Decision Process

- The GSAB, in collaboration with the DPSS, will review the conduct and qualifications of applicants.
- Disqualification of an applicant will be considered based on a comprehensive review of their past behavior and adherence to the code of conduct.

Final Decision

- A simple majority vote of the GSAB is required to disqualify an applicant.
- The decision and its rationale will be documented and kept on record, ensuring transparency and accountability in the selection process.

2.G. Special Appointment Clause:

Authority to Appoint: The Chair is granted the executive power to make special appointments to the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB) under the following circumstances:

- When not more than five representatives have been inducted (completed their GSAB orientation and training), necessitating immediate action to maintain board functionality.
- To enhance the diversity and effectiveness of the board.
- To address a clear need for expertise in a specific area or to ensure representation from a particular group within the Division of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) student body that is currently underrepresented on the GSAB.

Conditions for Appointment:

- Under normal circumstances, special appointments made by the Chair must be justified in writing, detailing the necessity and rationale for the appointment based on the criteria outlined above, and presented to the existing board members. A simple majority approval of the present and voting members is required to ratify the appointment.
- In scenarios where *not more than five representatives have been inducted*, the Chair may enact the Special Appointment Clause with *only* the approval of the Director of EAS Programs for Student Success (DPSS), to ensure the GSAB can function effectively without delay.

Limitations:

- The total number of special appointments made by the Chair shall not exceed two members in any given term (except in the case where less than five representatives have been inducted) to prevent an imbalance of appointed versus elected members.
- Special appointees shall serve until the end of the current term and may stand for election in the subsequent standard selection process if they wish to continue serving on the board.

Transparency and Review:

- The Chair *must* report each special appointment and the justification for it in the next regular meeting of the GSAB, or to the DPSS in the case of less than five representatives actively serving on the board.
- The provision for special appointments will be reviewed annually as part of the GSAB's bylaw review process to assess its effectiveness and necessity.

Section 3. Officers and Duties

3.A. Positions and Responsibilities:

- Chair
 - Facilitates board meetings, ensuring productive discussions and adherence to the agenda.
 - Acts as the liaison between the GSAB and the DPSS, aligning board activities with EAS goals.
 - Develops and codifies best practices for board operations.
 - Coordinates activities of representatives to ensure balanced participation and workload.
 - Serves as an active member of the EAS DEI Committee, communicating GSAB's progress, efforts, and concerns.
 - Approves the agenda prior to each GSAB meeting.
- Vice Chair
 - Assists the Chair in their duties and stands in during their absence. This may include attending/presenting at EAS DEI Committee meetings in the case of the Chair's absence.
 - Oversees the Coordinators for each committee, guides their efforts, tracks their progress, and reports updates to the Chair.
 - Oversees specific projects or initiatives to ensure progress and success.
 - Engages all representatives in discussions and decision-making processes.
- Secretary
 - Solicits input to meeting agendas prior to each GSAB meeting.
 - Records detailed minutes of all board meetings and publishes them for the student body.
 - Manages and organizes board documents for easy access by representatives.
 - Supports communication between the board, DPSS, and students, ensuring transparency.
- Communications Manager
 - Liaise between DPSS, GSAB and other student committees and clubs in regard to communications and promotions.
 - Submit website recommendations to DPSS.
 - Collaborate with DPSS on the creation of flyers and marketing materials.
 - Support the promotion of GSAB and DPSS activities/initiatives.
 - Serve as the primary point of contact for GSAB's social media.

3.B. Election and Term of Office:

- Officers are elected from the GSAB by representatives through a simple majority vote. Ties may be broken by the current or previous Chair.
- Officers serve for one year, coinciding with their term on the board. Officers may not run for the same position two years in a row, but may run for higher ranking positions if they exist (this is to eliminate concerns of disagreement in leadership roles).

3.C. Succession and Vacancies:

- In the event of an officer's resignation or inability to serve, an interim officer may be appointed by the Chair until a special election can be held.
- A special election should be conducted within 30 days to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term.

3.C. Appointments:

- Should there be an officer vacancy that must be filled before the convening of a GSAB meeting, the Chair may appoint a representative of GSAB to act as an acting officer in the respective role until a vote can be held.

Section 4. Meetings

(See external document)

4.A. Frequency and Scheduling:

- Regular board meetings should be held monthly, or as deemed necessary by the Chair.
- Additional special meetings may be called by the Chair or at the request of at least one-third of the representatives.
- Meeting dates and times should be established at the beginning of each term to accommodate the majority of representatives.

4.B. Agenda Setting:

- The Chair, in consultation with the Vice Chair and Secretary, will set the agenda for each meeting.
- Representatives must submit items for discussion *at least one week* before the meeting to be included in the agenda, except in special extenuating circumstances as deemed acceptable by the chair.
- An agenda should be circulated to all representatives at least 48 hours before the meeting.

4.C. Attendance and Participation Requirements:

- Representatives are expected to attend all scheduled meetings unless excused for a valid reason.
- Representatives must notify the Secretary in advance if they are unable to attend a meeting.
- Continuous non-attendance (e.g., missing three consecutive meetings without a valid reason) may be grounds for review and potential expulsion from the board.
- Representatives who miss a meeting will forfeit their professional development funds for that month, except for one excused absence permitted per calendar year.

4.D. Quorum and Voting Procedures:

- A quorum for meetings will be defined as over half (50% + 1) of the representatives.
- Decisions are typically made by a majority vote of the representatives present, provided a quorum is met.
- Voting can be conducted through show of hands, voice, or anonymous ballots, depending on the nature of the decision.

Section 5. Voting

5.A. Voting Structure:

- Simple Majority: Most decisions will be made by a simple majority vote, where more than half of the representatives present (quorum) must agree.
- Supermajority: For significant decisions, such as amendments to the bylaws or expulsion of a representative, a supermajority vote of two-thirds (2/3) of all board representatives is required.

Majority Requirements:

To Reiterate:

- A simple majority is over 50% of the votes cast by representatives present and voting.
- A supermajority requires two-thirds (2/3) of the total membership of the board, not just those present.

5.B. Voting Methods and Procedures:

- In cases except a tie-breaking vote, the Chair will not vote.
- Representatives must be present (either in person or virtually) at the meeting to vote, except in special circumstances where proxy voting may be permitted by the chair.
- Votes can be conducted openly or by secret ballot, depending on the sensitivity and importance of the matter being voted on.
- The Chair will be responsible for collecting and counting votes in a transparent manner.

5.C. Tie-Breaking Protocols:

- In the event of a tie, the Chair has the casting vote to break the tie.
- If the vote involves a conflict of interest for the Chair, the direction of the Vice Chair's vote will assume the tie-breaking role.

Section 6. Committees

6.A. Committee Oversight:

The Vice Chair will serve as overseer for the Coordinator of each committee formed and will report actions and updates from the committees to the Chair and the Board. The Chair will refer to the Vice Chair for most decisions regarding committees.

6.B. Standing and Ad Hoc Committees:

- Standing Committees: Permanent committees established to handle ongoing responsibilities and areas of interest, such as Academic Affairs, Student Welfare, and Outreach. These committees may be formed and headed by any GSAB representative.
- Ad Hoc Committees: Temporary committees formed to address specific short-term projects or issues as they arise.

6.C. Committee Formation and Dissolution:

- The formation of new committees, whether standing or ad hoc, requires a simple majority vote of the GSAB.
- Committees can be dissolved by a similar majority vote when their objectives have been achieved or are no longer relevant.

6.D. Roles and Responsibilities:

- Each committee will have a Coordinator *appointed* by the GSAB Vice Chair, responsible for leading the committee's activities and reporting back to the Vice Chair.
- Committee members will be drawn from the wider student body, with addition of serving representatives if additional expertise is needed.
- Committees are tasked with researching, planning, and implementing initiatives within their purview, and must present their findings and progress to the Vice Chair regularly.

Section 7. Financial Provisions

7.A. Funding and Budget:

- The GSAB will receive an allocated budget from the EAS Division to support its activities and operations.
- The budget will be used for expenses such as event hosting, marketing, professional development, and other board-related activities.
- The Chair, in consultation with the DPSS, will provide an annual budget to the GSAB.

7.B. Financial Oversight and Reporting:

- The GSAB must adhere to Caltech's financial policies and guidelines in managing its budget.

Section 8. Amendments to the Bylaws

8.A. Proposal of Amendments:

- Any representative can propose an amendment to the bylaws.
- Proposals must be submitted in writing to the Secretary *at least one week* before a scheduled board meeting to be considered.
- The proposed amendment should be discussed and thoroughly reviewed by all representatives prior to the voting meeting.

8.B. Voting Requirements for Amendments:

- Amendments to the bylaws require a supermajority vote of two-thirds (2/3) of all representatives. This ensures that significant changes to the bylaws are made with broad consensus.

8.C. Implementation of Changes:

- Approved amendments will take effect immediately, unless the amendment specifies a different effective date.
- The Secretary is responsible for updating the bylaws document and ensuring that the most current version is accessible to all representatives.

Section 9. Ethical Guidelines

9.A. Conflict of Interest Policy:

- GSAB Representatives must disclose any personal, financial, or professional interests that may be seen as a conflict of interest with their duties on the GSAB.
- Representatives with a conflict of interest regarding a particular issue should recuse themselves from discussions and voting on that issue.
- Representatives should recuse themselves from voting on any issue (especially those pertaining to applicants to GSAB) if they feel that they have a strong relationship with the involved party. This is to reduce bias in decision making. Representatives may still speak on behalf of said party, but should recuse themselves from voting on their behalf.
- If any GSAB representative suspects a conflict of interest concerning another representative, they should voice this concern, first to the involved representative so that they may recuse themselves, and then to the board of representatives if that representative still refuses to recuse themselves.

9.B. Non-discrimination Policy:

- The GSAB is committed to providing an inclusive environment free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic protected by law. Any violation of this policy will result in proceedings for expulsion of a sitting representative.
- All board activities and decisions must comply with this policy to ensure fairness and equity.

9.C. Record Keeping and Transparency:

- Accurate records of meetings, financial transactions, and decisions made by the GSAB should be maintained and available for review to ensure transparency and accountability.
- The Secretary is responsible for overseeing the management of these records.

9.D. Code of Conduct and Ethics:

General Principles

1. Integrity and Honesty: Representatives should act with integrity and honesty in all dealings related to the GSAB, ensuring that their actions promote the Board's best interests and are free from personal gain.
2. Respect and Fairness: Treat all individuals with respect, courtesy, and fairness, regardless of their background, position, or contribution in alignment with **Section 9.B**. Encourage a culture of open dialogue and constructive feedback.
3. Confidentiality: Maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information discussed in meetings or obtained through board activities, unless disclosure is legally mandated or agreed upon by the board.

Professional Conduct

4. Responsibility: Representatives should fulfill their duties and responsibilities with diligence and commitment, attending meetings regularly, participating actively in discussions, and completing assigned tasks timely.
5. Collaboration and Teamwork: Work cooperatively with fellow representatives and the broader community, promoting teamwork and collective problem-solving.
6. Conflict Resolution: Address disagreements and conflicts constructively, seeking mediation or guidance from senior representatives, DPSS, or relevant institute offices if necessary.

Ethical Decision-Making:

7. Transparency: Make decisions transparently, providing rationale and avoiding hidden agendas to build trust and accountability.
8. Impartiality: Make decisions impartially and objectively, without favoritism or bias, ensuring fair treatment and equality.
9. Compliance: Adhere to all applicable laws, regulations, and institute policies, staying informed about changes that may affect the board's operations.

Reporting and Accountability:

10. Reporting Misconduct: Encourage the reporting of unethical behavior or misconduct without fear of retaliation. Ensure there are clear procedures for reporting and addressing such issues.
11. Accountability: Representatives are accountable for their actions and decisions and should be prepared to explain and justify them when required.