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# Name of Organization

The name of the organization is the Biomedical Graduate Student Association, referred to additionally as the BGSA.

Instructions for Registration

The BGSA will register annually with the Student Organization Resource Center (SORC) through the student organization directory online portal.

# Acceptance and Compliance to Registration Requirements and Limitations

The BGSA and its membership accept and will fully comply with the requirements and limitations of registration.

# Limits of Registration

The BGSA and its membership accept and will fully comply with the limits of re-registration.

# Annual Re-registration

The BGSA will submit its annual re-registration application during the re-registration period following the election of new officers.

# Purpose

The Biomedical Graduate Student Association (BGSA) is an organization that represents the graduate students of the School of Medicine and includes the Training Programs in Biomedical Informatics, Cell Biology and Molecular Physiology, Cellular and Molecular Pathology, Clinical Research, Computational Biology, Molecular Biophysics and Structural Biology, Immunology, Integrative Systems Biology, Microbiology and Immunology, Molecular Genetics and Developmental Biology, Molecular Pharmacology, Molecular Virology and Microbiology, and Neuroscience. Its purpose is to foster academic and social interactions among graduate students within these training programs and with other members of the University community. We shall function as a support network for all biomedical graduate students and facilitate communication between students, faculty, and administration.

# Membership Requirements

1. Membership is open to currently enrolled Pitt students as defined herein.
2. All members must accept and comply with all of the requirements and limitations of registration as a condition of membership.
3. Membership in the BGSA is voluntary and all risk of personal injury, property damage or other losses that occur incidental to membership or participation in activities are assumed solely by the student organization and/or individual member(s) or non-member participant(s). Accordingly, the University of Pittsburgh, its officers and agents shall not be responsible nor liable for any claims or causes of action for damage or loss of property or personal injury of any kind or nature which may arise out of or are incidental to the conduct of any organization's activities or that of any individual's participation in any group-related activity. It is further understood and agreed that it is the responsibility of the officers of the organization to assure that all of the organization's members and non-member participants in all activities sponsored by the BGSA are fully informed and advised of this ASSUMPTION OF RISK, and in the event any individual member or participant should express or indicate non-acceptance, the organization's officers shall forbid participation and/or membership of such individual. In regard to the organization member or non-member participant Assumption of Risk, the BGSA acknowledges that the University recommends that the organization members and non-member participants make every effort to arrange for the acquisition of liability insurance sufficient to protect all participants against those risks being assumed. For sport-related organizations, the University recommends that each individual have insurance sufficient to allow for any risks by participation, accident or by deficiencies in physical health.
4. No hazing or illegal discriminatory criteria for membership, including those listed in the University of Pittsburgh's non-discrimination policy, will be used as a condition for membership in the organization. These factors include race, color, religion (except for religious organizations which may restrict membership to those who share their faith-based beliefs), national origin, ancestry, sex (except same sex organizations permitted under Title IX), age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability or status as a veteran. This non-discriminatory policy will be applied in a manner consistent with the requirements of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and other laws applicable to student organizations.
5. Any student enrolled in a graduate program in the School of Medicine (PhD, Masters, Certificate) whose activity fee contributes to the BGSA is automatically considered a member of the BGSA (hereby known as “members”)*.* Students who do not meet these requirements are ineligible to be members of the BGSA.
6. There are no financial obligations for membership aside from the payment of the activity fee, as described in (5).

# Membership Procedures

All School of Medicine graduate students whose activity fee contributes to the BGSA are automatically members of the BGSA upon matriculation into their graduate program. Students remain members of the BGSA until such a time as they graduate or leave the School of Medicine. Students who take a leave of absence from their graduate studies are considered inactive during the leave of absence, and regain active member status upon resumption of their graduate studies.

# Officers, and Officer Responsibilities and Duties

The organization shall have the following officers:

## Executive Board

**President:** Responsible for administrative duties of the organization including chairing the board and preparing the agenda for each meeting. The president shall also serve as the BGSA representative to the Graduate Studies Council for the School of Medicine. The President should also assist officers, and should help with planning of events and activities when needed.

**VP of Records:** (formerly Secretary) Responsible for recording the minutes at the monthly BGSA meetings and for maintaining a record of attendance at these meetings. If a motion is put to vote, responsible for recording the vote and for ensuring the eligibility of all voters. Responsible for ensuring that practices of the BGSA are in line with the guidelines established in the BGSA Constitution. Functions as the Vice President for the purposes of SORC registration. Stands in for the President if the President is unable to perform his/her duties for any reason.

**VP of Finances:** (formerly Treasurer) Responsible for presenting a monthly update of the balances and recent expenditures from each of the BGSA accounts. Responsible for knowing what the funds in each account may be used for, and for communicating this to the VP of Programming and other members when applicable. Responsible for compiling an annual budget each year in coordination with the President, and with other members of the Executive Board if necessary; this budget must then be given to the Graduate Studies Office each April. Responsible for compiling an annual budget report, to be completed in June or July of each year and available to the Graduate Studies Office and to each program. Responsible for issuing reimbursements to BGSA members who have submitted receipts for approved out-of-pocket expenses. Functions as the Business Manager for the purposes of SORC registration. Stands in for the President if the President and the VP of Records are unable to perform the duties of that position for any reason.

**VP of Communications:** (formerly Webmaster/VP/Publicity Officer) Responsible for compiling the quarterly BGSA Newsletter, including soliciting updates on past events from the VP of Programming and student publications from Program Representatives. Responsible for updating the BGSA website with information about upcoming events, student publications, and other pertinent information at least monthly. Responsible for designing flyers for upcoming events and distributing the flyers to all BGSA members by email and posting flyers around campus.

**VP of University Relations:** (formerly the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) Representative) Responsible for attending the monthly GPSG meeting, updating the GPSG about the activities of the BGSA and the graduate programs in the School of Medicine, and reporting back what was discussed at the monthly GPSG meetings to the BGSA. Responsible for identifying contacts in other schools within the University to collaborate with on events and for working with the VP of Programming to organize such events. Note, based on GPSG Bylaws, the VP of University Relations cannot be a current GPSG Executive Board member.

**VP of Programming:** (formerly Events Officer) Responsible for planning professional and social events for BGSA members. This includes identifying opinions for these events, informing the BGSA council of the expected and actual cost, coordinating with the venue to identify a date for the event, collecting any fees related to the event, and informing the VP of Communications of pertinent information about the event so that a flyer can be made. Responsible for completing pre- and post-event forms for all events, and returning these to the VP of Finances.

## Representatives

**Program Representatives:** Responsible for communicating BGSA information to other members of their program, including information about upcoming events and opportunities sponsored/endorsed by the BGSA. Responsible for collecting information about recent publications from program members, and passing that information along at least quarterly to the VP of Communications for timely updating of the website and newsletter. Responsible for reporting concerns of members of their program to the Executive Board for resolution. Individual programs may establish additional duties for their Representatives that go beyond the stipulations defined by the BGSA.

**IBGP First Year Representatives:** Same responsibilities as Program Representatives. Additionally, the IBGP Representatives are responsible for organizing two BGSA events: an “End of Semester” happy hour in December, and a ski trip in the winter (typically February).

# Meetings

The BGSA executive board and program representatives shall meet at least once per month. All meetings are open to any BGSA member who wishes to participate. Meetings are typically held on the first Monday of every month at a time and location agreed upon by the President and members. If the first Monday of the month is a University holiday, the meeting will be held the second Monday of the month. Any BGSA member may submit a topic for meeting discussion provided it is submitted to an Executive Board member by the Friday preceding the scheduled meeting. The Executive Board may also call a meeting of the general membership as it deems necessary.

Finance

Budgets for BGSA events will be approved at general meetings via majority vote. All financial transactions for the BGSA shall be approved by the VP of Finances and comply with approved budgets. BGSA members who make purchases on behalf of the organization will be reimbursed by the VP of Finances. Alcohol purchases must be approved by the School of Medicine Graduate Studies Office. The Biomedical Graduate Student Association shall fully comply with the University fundraising policies and procedures for registered student organizations. The BGSA will not maintain an outside bank account if it receives funding from the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG). The BGSA will receive funds from the Graduate and Professional Student Government each fiscal year. By the April BGSA meeting, the VP of Finances will have developed a budget for the upcoming year that will be shared with the Graduate Studies Office, including the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies of the School of Medicine. By the July BGSA meeting, the VP of Finances will have prepared an expense report for the current year. After approval by the BGSA President, the budgets will be shared with the graduate program directors of the School of Medicine.

# Adviser

The BGSA adviser will be a dean or staff member from the School of Medicine Office of Graduate Studies and should attend all BGSA meetings. The adviser will serve to guide the Officers when necessary, to conduct hearings for removal of officers, to hold records of the organization, and to assist in dealing with the University administration.

# Activities

The BGSA will sponsor professional development and social events to promote interactions among graduate students and the greater University community. Each August, the BGSA shall host an Orientation Picnic in conjunction with the School of Medicine graduate studies office. The BGSA will host an annual Research Symposium, to be held annually in the fall semester; and a Science Careers Seminar Series, to be held each summer. Examples of other professional development events previously organized by the BGSA include a Comprehensive Exam panel in the winter, a Writing Seminar, and various speaker events.

Throughout the year- preferably monthly, though at the discretion of the VP of Programming in conjunction with the other Officers- the BGSA will host social events for its members, including but not limited to networking events, outdoors trips, and cultural activities throughout Pittsburgh. The IBGP Representatives are responsible for organizing an “End of Foundations” happy hour in December, and a ski trip in the winter (typically February). Finally, the BGSA may collaborate with peer organizations to host transdisciplinary professional and social events.

The BGSA will furthermore promote service and outreach to the community by providing opportunities for its members to judge local science fairs, passing on information regarding professional development activities taking place locally, nationally, and internationally, and engaging in other scientific activities as deemed appropriate by the Executive Board and Representatives. These activities have in the past included fundraisers to support relief after natural disasters, visiting local schools to judge student science fairs, and community service.

# Voting Privileges

Voting privileges are limited to currently enrolled Pitt student members in good standing with the organization. See below for specific details about voting in different situations.

## Voting in the annual election

Any member of the BGSA may vote for officers in the annual election.

## Officer Eligibility

1. Each person may hold only one officer position at a time, whether an Executive Board or Representative position.
2. There is no limit to the number of terms that an individual can serve in any role.
3. Two people are permitted to share an Executive Board position as co-vice presidents, provided that they enter into this by mutual agreement and that they run and are elected together on the ballot.
   1. The President position may not be shared.
4. **Executive board:** Any member who wishes to run for an Executive Board position must first establish participation in the BGSA by attending 3 meetings within the span of one year (defined as the span between October and the following September). The count of meetings resets each October for members who have attended less than 3 meetings in the previous year. However, once a member has attended 3 meetings between any October and the following September, they are eligible for the abovementioned privileges for the remainder of their graduate career.
5. **Representatives:** Any member of the BGSA may run for the position of Program Representative or IBGP Representative (hereby known as “Representatives”).
   1. First-year IBGP students are eligible to hold the position of IBGP Representative only. First-year students in other programs are eligible to hold the position of Program Representative only. Students are not eligible to hold an Executive Board position until they have completed one year as a BGSA member, as well as met all other requirements for the position.
   2. Each program (including IBGP) must have at least one, and no more than three, graduate students serving as program representative.

## Election of Officers

1. Elections will be organized by the President and VP of Records (hereby known as organizers of the election”) They will be held online, yearly between the May and June meetings of the BGSA Council, preferably within one week of the May council meeting. The results will be tallied using the online voting system and announced through email to al BGSA members. An officer is elected by a simple majority of votes cast.
   1. The exception to the timing of these elections is for the first-year IBGP representatives for the class that will start the following Fall semester. They will be nominated and voted for by the end of September.
2. All BGSA members will be able to vote for all officer positions (including all Program Representatives and IBGP First Year Representatives).
3. All BGSA members who are seeking election to an Executive Board or Representative position, as described above, are *required* to submit a statement to be published as a part of the online election. The statement should be sent to the organizers of the election following the September meeting of the BGSA Council, following a timeline set forth by the organizers of the election. This statement must include the individual’s name, program, and year in the program; describe the individual’s reason for running for the position; and note their previous involvement with the BGSA. Statements should be no more than 250 words in length.

## Terms of Office

New officers will officially assume their roles at the July meeting (first Monday of July that does not conflict with the July 4th holiday). Between the close of elections in May and the July meeting, outgoing and incoming officers are responsible for meeting to ensure a smooth transition, including transferring any accounts to the new officer’s name (i.e. SORC classifications, website access, Outlook Group owners, etc.).

The exception to terms of office is for the first-year IBGP representatives, who will assume their duties at the October meeting, after their September elections. Thus, first-year IBGP representatives serve from October until the following June (coinciding with matriculation into their new PhD programs)..

## Voting at meetings

1. A BGSA member who wishes to vote on motions presented at BGSA Council meetings must first establish participation in the BGSA by attending 3 meetings within the span of one year (defined as the span between October and the following September). The count of meetings resets each October for members who have attended less than 3 meetings in the previous year. However, once a member has attended 3 meetings between any October and the following September, they are eligible for the abovementioned privileges for the remainder of their graduate career.
2. BGSA members who are elected as Representatives are immediately eligible to vote on motions at BGSA Council meetings, even if they have not previously attended 3 meetings in the span of one year, as described above.

## Voting Powers of Officers

Officers retain all voting rights, both in the annual election and at meetings. The President will only vote in the event of a tie.

# Removal of Officers

Any Officer can be removed from their position by the following procedure:

1. Any BGSA member may request a hearing to remove an Officer by notifying the President (unless the request is to remove the president, in which case the VP of Records should be notified). The name of the Officer, the name of the complainant, and the reasons for removal should be stated in the document.
2. The President (or VP of Records) shall convene a hearing with the following in attendance: the Executive Board, the complainant, and the BGSA faculty advisor. If the accused Officer is a Program Representative, the other Program Representatives from that training program shall also be in attendance. Copies of pertinent documents will be distributed to those involved at least one week prior to the hearing date. The hearing must take place within four weeks of the initial request by the complainant.
3. The BGSA faculty advisor shall conduct the hearing. The complainant shall state his/her reasons for desiring the removal of the Officer and present any evidence he/she feels necessary. Likewise, the accused Officer will have the opportunity to respond to the charges. The VP of Records (or the president in the case that the request is to remove the VP of Records) shall insure that the organization’s rules are adhered to.
4. Questions may be asked by any member present at the hearing, with the understanding that both parties may have the opportunity to respond.
5. The BGSA faculty advisor may call an end to the questioning when he/she feels enough evidence has been presented to reach a decision.
6. The Executive Board and Program Representatives in attendance shall decide by a majority vote whether to retain or remove the accused Officer. The accused Officer may not vote.
7. The hearing request and a written summary of the hearing (kept by the VP of Records, or the President in the case that the request is to remove VP of Records) will be kept on file by the BGSA faculty advisor.

# Vacancies

1. In the event that **an Executive Board position is not filled during the elections**, the following steps must be taken:
   1. The outgoing and incoming Executive Board members may make recommendations to the President of individuals they believe are suitable to fill the necessary role. It is not required that the recommended individuals previously expressed interest in the open position (i.e., by being a candidate during regular elections), but they must be eligible to hold an Executive Board position as described under “Officer Eligibility 4”.
   2. The incoming President may accept or reject the suggestions of the Board. The incoming President is responsible for approaching individuals of his/her choosing, following the close of elections but before the November BGSA Council meeting.
   3. *If the President is able to find an individual to fill the open position*, that individual must send a written letter of acceptance to the President, which will then be read to the BGSA Council at the next monthly meeting. This comprises the President’s proposal to the Council that their nominee be confirmed to hold the position. All members who are eligible to vote at BGSA meetings (as described under “Voting at meetings 1”) will then vote to elect the nominee. If a majority vote elects this nominee, their duties begin immediately.
      1. *If the newly-elected individual is a Program Representative*, that position may be filled following the guidelines under section 3 below.
   4. *If the President is unable to find an individual to fill the open position by the November meeting of the BGSA Council*, the President must assume the responsibilities of the role until such time as an individual is found to take on the role. At any point during the year, the President may initiate the actions listed in 1.a-1.c.
      1. If multiple Executive Board positions are vacant at any point during the year, the President may delegate another Executive Board member to assume the responsibilities of any of the vacant positions such that the President is only obligated to fulfill the duties of one vacant Executive Board position, in addition to the duties of President, at any given time.
2. In the event that **a Program Representative position is not filled during the elections**, the following steps must be taken:
   1. The President must contact the members of the training program to identify an individual to assume the Program Representative role. This may be done in conjunction with the exiting Program Representative(s) and/or the program director from that training program.
   2. When such an individual is identified, that individual must send a written letter of acceptance to the President, which will then be read to the BGSA Council at the next monthly meeting. All members who are eligible to vote at BGSA meetings (as described under “Voting at meetings 1”) will then vote to elect the nominee. If a majority vote elects this nominee, their duties begin immediately.
   3. Every program must have elected a Program Representative by the November BGSA Council meeting.
3. In the event that **an Executive Board member graduates or leaves school before the end of his/her term, *or* is removed by disciplinary action**, ***or* is otherwise unable to continue in his or her role** the following steps must be taken:
   1. All Program Representatives must be polled to determine whether any of them are willing to assume the responsibility of the vacant Executive Board position. If one Program Representative is willing, they must submit a statement to the President indicating so. This statement must include the individual’s name, program, and year in the program; describe the individual’s reason for running for the position; and note his his/her previous involvement with the BGSA; and should be no more than 250 words in length. If more than one Program Representative expresses interest in holding the position, all interested Program Representatives must submit such a statement. At the final BGSA Council meeting at which the departing Executive Board member is in attendance, a simple majority vote will determine which Program Representative will assume the role.
   2. If no Program Representative is willing to assume the vacant Executive Board Position, the steps listed in section 1 must be put into action. If the vacant position is not filled by the second meeting after the Executive Board member has left school, the President must assume the duties of that position beginning at that meeting and until such a time as a suitable replacement is found.
   3. **If the departing Executive Board member is the President**, the VP of Records should assume the duties of the role of President in addition to the duties of the VP of Records position. No replacement to the VP of Records position will be elected.
      1. If the President is filling the role of VP of Records at their time of departure, a new VP of Records shall be elected who will also assume the duties of the role of President. If the vacant position is not filled by the second meeting after the President has left school, the VP of Finance must assume the duties of that position beginning at that meeting and until such a time as a suitable replacement is found.
4. In the event that **a Program Representative graduates or leaves school before the end of his/her term, *or* is removed by disciplinary action, *or* a Program Representative fills an Executive Board vacancy**, the following steps must be taken:
   1. *If the program in question previously had more than one Program Representative elected for the year*, no further action is necessary as the program still retains representation on the BGSA Council.
   2. *If the program in question previously had one Program Representative elected for the year*, the exiting Program Representative, in conjunction with the BGSA President and their program director if necessary, must contact the members of their training program to elect a new representative.

# Committees

For a BGSA member to request the formation of a committee, they must submit a request to the President. This request must include the following:

1. The proposed name, function, composition, and goals of the committee
2. The name of the requested Chair of the committee and a description of the responsibilities of the Chair.
3. Whether the request is to form a Standing Committee or an Ad Hoc committee.
   1. If the request is to form an Ad Hoc committee, the request must also include a dissolution date by which the requestor anticipates the goals of the committee will be met. Requests to persist the committee past that date requires new approval of the committee by the BGSA.

The President will present this request at the next meeting, and the formation of the committee will be approved with a majority vote from the members present at that meeting. This discussion may also include whether the committee should be given Standing or Ad Hoc status.

Other guidelines for Committees are as follows:

1. The Chair and all members of any BGSA-sponsored committee must be BGSA members. Whether or not a committee Chair or member has attained voting power at BGSA meetings (see Voting at Meetings), they may vote on committee objectives at committee meetings.
2. As long as a committee exists, its Chair or a representative of the Chair must attend each BGSA meeting and provide an update of the committee’s progress. A committee will be dissolved if no update is provided at two consecutive BGSA meetings.
3. Standing committees must be reapproved following elections each year at the October meeting, or can be terminated during the monthly meetings with a motion from the Chair of the committee and a majority vote. Ad hoc committees may persist over elections without reapproval.
4. Ad Hoc committees that anticipate requesting a second extension of their dissolution date may instead choose to petition for Standing Committee status.

# Amendment Process

The process of amending this Constitution shall be as follows:

1. Any member may communicate a written amendment proposal to the President or VP of Records.
2. The proposed amendment must be clearly explained in the document, which will then be submitted to the Graduate Office by the Executive Board for preliminary approval.
3. Once approved by the Graduate Office, a copy of the proposed amendment must be distributed to the entire voting membership of the BGSA and brought to the next monthly BGSA meeting for discussion and voting. The distribution should occur no less than 3 days prior to the scheduled meeting.
4. A two-thirds (⅔) majority vote of the membership present at that meeting will be necessary to pass an amendment.
5. The approved amendment will be kept on file with this Constitution, and the Constitution will be modified such that it is apparent which section has been amended.
6. All Constitution additions, revisions, and deletions must be reported to the SORC. This is the responsibility of the VP of Finances.

# External Affiliations

The BGSA has no external affiliations.

# Publications Code

In compliance with the Publications Code for Student Organizations, all publications of the organization will comply with current copyright laws, be distributed according to policies and procedures, refrain from expressions that are considered obscene or libelous according to current statute, advocate or incite the material interference or physical disruption of the educational process of the peace, order and decorum of the campus, or that advocate or incite imminent, lawless action or the violent overthrow of the government and identify the organization as publisher and specify that the group is a certified student organization at the University of Pittsburgh.