

**Graduate Employee Organization of Montana State University**  
**Constitution**  
*as adopted on October 28, 2021*

Article I. Name, Purpose, and Governance

Section 1

This union shall be known as the Graduate Employee Organization of Montana State University (GEO), an affiliate of MFPE and its national affiliates.

Section 2

The GEO commits itself to

- i. Represent members in employee relations with Montana State University.
- ii. Promote and protect the interests and welfare of members.
  
- iii. Promote member awareness of employee rights, current labor relation support systems, and the existing collective bargaining agreement.
  
- iv. Create, through collective bargaining and other available means, a tangible net improvement for all graduate employees while avoiding negative effects to anyone regarding wages, working conditions, or benefits.

The GEO shall be able to hold property and funds for the attainment of these purposes.

Section 3

The GEO shall be governed by this constitution and other actions taken by its central committee and/or membership consistent herewith.

Article II. Membership

Section 1

- i. Membership is available to all employees represented by the bargaining unit.
- ii. Employees can sign up for membership at any time.
  
- iii. Members shall support the purposes and objectives of the GEO.
- iv. Members must hold active membership in the MFPE and its national affiliates.
  
- v. Each member in good standing has the right to express opinions on all subjects before the GEO and participate in all activities of the GEO.

Section 2

- i. The membership year shall be September 1 through August 31.
  
- ii. Membership continues from year to year unless the member leaves the employ of the University or cancels membership by means established by MFPE.

- iii. Members pay dues pursuant to the local affiliate, state, and national dues structure on a pay-period basis. Members without appointments pay no dues.
- iv. Members without graduate appointments may go on leave status wherein they retain full governance rights for up to two consecutive, non-summer semesters. If members on leave fail to be appointed within three non-summer semesters, they cease to be members.

### Article III. Officers

#### Section 1

The GEO shall maintain the offices of president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

#### Section 2

- i. The term of office shall be one membership year.
- ii. If a vacancy occurs in the office of president, the vice president shall assume the duties of the president. A vacancy occurring in any other office shall be filled by appointment of the president until an election can be conducted.

#### Section 3

- i. All members have the right to make nominations and be nominated for office.
- ii. Regular elections shall be held each year during the spring semester.
- iii. When contested, elections shall be by secret ballot and shall require a majority or plurality of the votes cast. Otherwise, nominated officers will be elected by acclamation.
- iv. Elected officers assume offices on August 15<sup>th</sup> in the year elected unless the election's to fill an immediate vacancy, in which case the elected officer assumes office immediately.

#### Section 4

The GEO encourages ethnic and minority member participation in the governance and affairs of the union.

### Article IV. Duties of Officers

#### Section 1

The President shall

- i. Represent the GEO on all matters of policy and program.
- ii. Act as the sole official spokesperson for the GEO.
- iii. Chair the Labor/Management Committee.

- iv. Serve as first local affiliate delegate to governance bodies of the MFPE, NEA, and AFT.

## Section 2

The Vice President shall

- i. Chair the Grievance Committee.
- ii. Chair the Steward Council.
- iii. Serve as second local affiliate delegate to governance bodies of MFPE, NEA, and AFT.
- iv. Perform such other duties as delegated by the president.

## Section 3

The Secretary shall

- i. Maintain a public record of official agendas, minutes, and other GEO communications.
- ii. Chair the Communication Committee.
- iii. Serve as the third local affiliate delegate to governance bodies of MFPE, NEA, and AFT.
- iv. Perform such other duties as delegated by the president.

## Section 4

The Treasurer shall

- i. Maintain the funds of the GEO, disburse them upon authorization, and maintain records of receipts and disbursements.
- ii. Prepare financial reports.
- iii. Chair the Organizing Committee.
- iv. Serve as fourth local affiliate delegate to governance bodies of MFPE, NEA, and AFT.
- v. Perform such other duties as delegated by the president.

## Section 5

The Digital Communications Chair shall

- i. Moderate and maintain any and all GEO social media accounts, such that the union has a robust outward-facing presence.
- ii. Serve as webmaster for the GEO's website.

- iii. Lead the development and implementation of GEO digital communications policy, to maintain transparency and informativeness on the internet including social media, e-mail and the GEO website.
- iv. Communicate with social media followers, including responding to queries in a timely manner. The chair shall sign these messages with their own name unless the entire message has been agreed upon by a quorum of the Central Committee
- v. Regularly search for new ways to better engage members and eligible non-members via online communication, coordinating with the Outreach and Recruitment Chair as appropriate. This duty shall at minimum include monitoring and evaluating the GEO's social media performance and suggesting recommendations to adjust social media marketing strategy.
- vi. Construct and chair a Communications Committee, as necessary and especially for delegation in projects too large for the Chair to complete without compromising core duties in items i-v above.

## Section 6

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer shall

- i. Become and remain as knowledgeable as possible regarding best practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Montana State University and among similar graduate employee organizations at other institutions. In particular, the Officer shall develop a relationship with the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion and know that Office's resources well.
- ii. Analyze relevant federal, state, and local legislation as well as University and Montana University System policy related to protected class discrimination, harassment, affirmative action, Title IX, and the like, toward advising fellow GEO leaders on policy and practice.
- iii. Communicate with graduate employees whom GEO leadership underrepresents by gender, race or ethnicity, class, citizenship status, and other demographics, toward advising fellow GEO leaders on adjustments to practice that might make union membership and leadership more accessible and more compelling to all.
- iv. Collaborate with other officers to create, implement and monitor programs designed to identify and address matters of fair and equitable treatment for graduate employees.
- v. Make themselves known to membership as a resource on topics of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusivity, especially when pertaining to employment.

- vi. Construct and chair a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee as necessary and especially for delegation in projects too large for the Officer to complete without compromising core duties in items i-v above.

## Section 7

The Outreach and Recruitment Chair shall

- i. Plan and oversee campaigns to grow membership, including but not limited to organizing coordinated drives to enroll new members.
- ii. Serve as initial point-of-contact for prospective members.
- iii. Maintain the membership role through communication with University staff as well as with department stewards and individual members.
- iv. Become aware of campus and community events that could be opportunities to meet and recruit new GEO members and/or engage existing members through a shared activity.
- v. Organize social events for members and eligible non-members, including (but not limited to) semesterly campus-wide gatherings and regular departmental functions.
- vi. Construct and chair an Outreach and Recruitment Committee, as necessary and especially for delegation in projects too large for the Chair to complete without compromising core duties in items i-v above.

## Section 8

The Grievance Chair shall

- i. Serve as the point of contact for issues related to compliance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement, including (but not limited to) communicating to the University common complaints regarding payments and working conditions.
- ii. Coordinate with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer in the event of grievances related to discrimination.
- iii. When no grievances are active, act in an investigative role by following up on previous complaints and seeking to identify other graduate employees who were negatively affected by the same supervisor, department, or other offender.
- iv. When no grievances or direct follow-up cases are active, to find instances of graduate employees not being granted full rights of the CBA or otherwise being treated unfairly. This should include, but not be limited to, compiling communications about recent and/or common grievance issues so that information can be shared with GEO membership and, especially, the Steward Council.

- v. Construct and chair a Grievance Committee, as necessary and especially for delegation in projects too large for the Chair to complete without compromising core duties in items i-iv above.

## Section 9

The International Student Liaison shall

- i. Contribute to all Central Committee discussions by providing the perspective of one international graduate employee at Montana State University.
- ii. Engage fellow international students in regular communications, striving to become more broadly representative of various international graduate employees' interests and concerns at Montana State University. In particular, the Liaison will seek to identify questionable or needless differences in experiences between international graduate employees and U.S. citizens.
- iii. Develop and maintain avenues of communication, both personal and digital, with fellow international graduate students in order to communicate GEO activities and opportunities with them. This communication should also serve the purpose of creating many potential candidates to be the next International Student Liaison.
- iv. Investigate channels to work with the University to build a safer, happier, and otherwise better situation for international graduate employees. This includes (but is not limited to) staying abreast of general federal policies as well as specific relevant practices by similar graduate employee organizations at other institutions.
- v. Construct and chair an International Student Committee, as necessary and especially for delegation in projects too large for the Chair to complete without compromising core duties in items i-iv above.

## Article V. Stewards Council

### Section 1

Stewards shall serve primarily as members' representatives at the employing unit level. A steward's primary responsibility is to promote recruitment, participation and activism among members. Additionally, stewards may propose and vote on amendments to the constitution and by-laws

- i. To alter the constitution or bylaws, the Steward Council and Central Committee must follow the procedure as laid out in Article X

### Section 2

Stewards shall

- i. Assist as necessary the Central Committee in obtaining and maintaining a membership list provided to the Graduate Employee Organization by Montana State University Administration per the CBA
- ii. Assist in departmental orientation presentations and recruit new members from said orientations.
- iii. Enable and maintain communication between relevant Central Committee Chairs and graduate employees to ensure fair and equitable working conditions.
- iv. Host an open forum once per semester to address general questions from graduate employees.

### Section 3

The Stewards' Council shall meet at least once each fall and spring semester, then as further requested by the vice president.

## Article VI. Standing Committees

### Section 1

The GEO shall maintain the following standing committees

- i. Labor/Management (*Bargaining*) Committee
- ii. Grievance Committee
- iii. Organizing & Membership Committee
- iv. Communication Committee
- v. Social Committee

### Section 2

The central committee will form and dissolve ad hoc committees as necessary. They will approve all committee members and tasks.

### Section 3

- i. Committees must appoint a chair or two co-chairs to serve on the central committee. If this appointment is contentious, the president will appoint the chair.
- ii. Committees will strive to maintain minimum membership of 3 members.
- iii. Committees will submit agendas to the secretary at least 2 days prior to all meetings and meeting minutes within 3 business days after all meetings.

- iv. Communications from committees to the general membership will be centralized through the communication committee.
- v. Committee hosted socials will be centralized through the social committee.

### Article VII. Central Committee

#### Section 1

- i. The chairs of all committees constitute the central committee.
- ii. The central committee shall meet as deemed necessary, no less than monthly.
- iii. The president shall provide an agenda for and preside over all meetings of the central committee.
- iv. The secretary shall record minutes for all meetings of the central committee.

#### Section 2

The central committee shall

- i. Make public all agendas two days before meetings and minutes three days after.
- ii. Maintain a relevant mission statement and supporting policies and objectives.
- iii. Propose an annual budget and establish dues to support the budget.
- iv. Create and/or dissolve committees.
- v. Confirm committee members as recommended by committee chairs.
- vi. Schedule meetings of the member assembly.

### Article VIII. Member Assembly

#### Section 1

The member assembly shall be composed of all members of the GEO in good standing.

#### Section 2

The member assembly shall

- i. Serve as the final authority in governance matters.
- ii. Review and adopt policies, positions, and programs consistent with this constitution.
- iii. Annually adopt a budget and dues to support the budget.
- iv. Amend this constitution.
- v. Nominate and elect officers.
- vi. Hear and resolve member disputes.



- vii. Discuss collective bargaining and labor management issues.
- viii. Perform other such business as to protect and promote the interests of the GEO.
- ix. Possess the sole authority to recommend an all member strike vote. At least 90% of members voting shall be necessary to authorize a work stoppage.

### Section 3

- i. The member assembly shall meet each fall and spring semester.
- ii. At the spring meeting, members shall confirm or elect officers and approve a budget.
- iii. Members present and voting at a member assembly shall have one vote each.
- iv. If a member is unable to attend a membership assembly they may request the ability to vote-in-absentia as approved by the central committee.
- v. The central committee may convene a special member assembly.
- vi. Meeting agendas will be made public one week in advance and meeting minutes will be made public within one week after the assembly.

## Article IX. Authority

### Section 1

- i. The GEO shall comply with all requirements of MFPE and its national affiliates.
- ii. Should any provision in this constitution conflict with the official documents of either the state or national affiliate, said provision shall be declared null and void.
- iii. All GEO delegates to state and national governance bodies shall be elected in conformance with the requirements of the respective affiliate.

### Section 2

- i. All GEO meetings shall adopt rules of procedure consistent with this constitution and MFPE, NEA and AFT governing documents, and socially acceptable interactions with other human beings.
- ii. Robert's Rules of Order, latest revised edition, shall be the authority governing all matters of procedure not otherwise provided in this constitution.

## Article X. Amendments

### Section 1

- i. Amendments to this basic document may be initiated by the Central Committee, the Steward Council, or a quorum of 20% of dues-paying members.
  - a. Amendments may be proposed via writing at a Central Committee Meeting, Steward Council Meeting, or Member Assembly.
- ii. All amendments must be approved by a simple majority vote of the Steward Council at an official steward council meeting and a majority of the Central Committee in an official Central Committee meeting prior to submission in writing to all members of the Graduate Employee Organization.
- iii. Proposed amendments must have a minimum time for general membership to review of at least 21 days prior to the opening of general voting.
- iv. Amendments to the Constitution must be voted on at Member Assemblies.
- v. A majority of voters present at a General Assembly is required for constitutional amendments to pass.

## Section 2

- i. Amendments to by-laws may be passed by the Steward Council and Central Committee.
- ii. Votes for by-law changes must be made with at least two thirds majority of the Steward Council and two thirds of the Central Committee, in a Steward Council Meeting and a Central Committee Meeting, respectively.