Constitution of the Viterbi Graduate Student Association (VGSA)
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Viterbi Graduate Student Association Constitution
University of Southern California

Article I. NAME AND PURPOSE

Part A. Name

Section 1. The Name of this organization shall be the Viterbi Graduate Student Association, hereafter referred to as "VGSA"

Section 2. Neither the Name nor “square with text” emblem of VGSA shall be used for any purpose without the consent of the VGSA Executive Board

Section 3. This organization shall use its Name or its Name’s acronym, VGSA, in all correspondences and publicity materials

Part B. Purpose

Section 1. The Purpose of VGSA is to promote an inclusive and accessible community of graduate students of the Viterbi School of Engineering, so that they can freely share their interests and concerns with the University and each other. This Purpose shall be fulfilled through initiatives that support understanding, wellness, and development, and when necessary or appropriate, in collaboration with the Office of Graduate and Professional Programs (GAPP) and Office of Student Affairs

Article II. MEMBERSHIP

Part A. Requirements

a) Membership in VGSA is awarded to all graduate students who enroll in the Viterbi School of Engineering as full-time or part-time as defined by the University, and who pay the programming fee that is charged prior to the beginning of each academic year

b) Membership is terminated upon the member’s exiting of his or her graduate program or upon the member’s opting out of payment of the programming fee

c) Membership decisions shall not be influenced by age, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion or creed, political affiliation, disability, sex, or sexual orientation

d) All members shall adhere to the Purpose and Requirements of VGSA as described above
Article III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Part A. Voting Parties, "the Council"

Section 1. Executive Board

a) The VGSA Executive Board shall consist of the President, Executive Vice President, Vice President of Communications, Vice President of Finance, and Vice President of Programs

b) The Executive Board shall focus on the Purpose of VGSA and make decisions in the best interest of the organization

Section 2. Senators

a) The VGSA Senators shall be Viterbi graduate students elected by fellow graduate students of their respective departments

b) Each Senator shall report directly to the Executive Vice President and serve in a chair position under one of the other Vice Presidents (Communications, Finance, or Programs)

c) Senators shall be from the following departments:

   i. Aerospace & Mechanical Engineering
   ii. Astronautics & Space Technology Division
   iii. Biomedical Engineering
   iv. Computer Science
   v. Daniel J. Epstein Department of Industrial & Systems Engineering
   vi. Green Technologies
   vii. Department of Informatics*
   viii. Mork Family Department of Chemical Engineering & Materials Science
   ix. Ming Hsieh Department of Electrical Engineering
   x. Sonny Astani Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering

d) The number of Senators per department per semester shall be proportional to enrollment, in the pattern illustrated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department Enrollment</th>
<th>Number of Senators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001-300</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-600</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601-900</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>901-1200</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200-1500</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500-1800</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
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*Note: Informatics department has been combined with Computer Science.
Part B. Voting Parties, GSG

Section 1. GSG Senators

a) Requirements

i. There will be a total of 6 graduate student senators representing VGSA in GSG.

ii. The VGSA president and the VGSL automatically are selected as senators

iii. The remaining 4 senators may be selected by a process deemed fit by the current E-Board and the advisor depending on the number of applicants for the current semester.

iv. In the event that there are no senators to fill a post, the E-board may nominate interested candidates to the vacant positions.

b) Duties

i. The GSG senators will act as the representatives of VGSA in GSG. They will have to participate in the weekly meetings and abide by the rules and regulations of GSG.

ii. The GSG Senators have to be involved with one of the GSG Sub committees.

iii. They senators are eligible to vote and run for VGSA E-board positions during elections.

Part C. Non-voting Parties (Ex-officio)

Section 1. Advisor

a) Requirements

i. To be recognized as a student organization at the University of Southern California, VGSA is required to designate an official Advisor from the University’s faculty or staff

b) Duties

i. The Advisor shall review and sign the recognition application materials at the start of each academic year, and whenever VGSA officer information is updated or amendments are made to this Constitution

ii. Meet with Council members, as needed

Section 2. Viterbi Graduate Student Liaison

a) Address students’ concerns and inquiries with confidentiality

b) Represent the Viterbi graduate student body and act as the communication channel between students and administrators
c) Collaborate with student organizations, like VGSA and the Graduate Student Government (GSG), to help enrich the graduate student experience

d) Coordinate the Viterbi Graduate Mentors (VgradM) program to help new students transition into the Viterbi community

e) Participate as a GSG senator in GSG meetings and other required GSG activities

f) Appoint additional GSG senators as required by GSG

g) Communicate outcomes of GSG meetings to the Executive Board, whenever the President cannot

Section 3. VGSA Ambassadors

a) Viterbi graduate students who volunteer to be part of VGSA functions, including Council meetings, department-specific events, and VGSA-wide events

b) Ambassadors shall be mentored by senators from their respective departments
Article IV. DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Part A. All Executive Board members are required to:

Section 1. Attend VGSA Executive Board meetings and Council meetings

Section 2. Vote on proposals that are raised during VGSA Executive Board meetings and Council meetings

Section 3. Vote on funding requests during Executive Board meetings

Section 4. Attend all VGSA-wide events, unless arrangements are made with, and documented by, the Vice President of Programs

Section 5. Attend a majority of monthly activities that promote unity among the Council members

Part B. President

a) Be the spokesperson and chief liaison of VGSA

b) Oversee VGSA activities

c) Organize, conduct, and chair the Executive Board meetings and the Council meetings

d) Participate as a GSG senator in GSG meetings and other required GSG activities

e) Summon special meetings as needed

f) Regularly meet with the Advisor to address concerns of the organization and of its members

g) When appropriate, follow up with correspondences forwarded by the Vice President of Communications

h) Coordinate with persons and student organizations associated with VGSA events

i) For the good of VGSA, the President shall exercise his or her discretionary powers in matters that this Constitution does not anticipate or clearly define

j) The President shall work with the Council to amend this Constitution and/or its Bylaws, so those matters previously unanticipated or unclearly defined are no longer so

k) When there is a tie in a vote for a proposal that is raised during an Executive Board meeting or a Council meeting, the President shall approve or discard this proposal, even after the President has voted on it

l) Seek or provide leadership-enhancement activities for the Council members

Part C. Executive Vice President

a) Serve as the immediate supervisor of the Senators to ensure that they fully understand and fulfill their duties
b) Provide basic training for the Senators, and ensure the effectiveness of this training in the fulfillment of their duties

c) With standards approved and documented by the Executive Board, evaluate and regularly review contributions of the Senators

d) Organize, conduct, and chair Executive Board meetings and Council meetings whenever the President cannot

e) Manage VGSA property and supplies, and maintain documented inventory

f) Document deficiencies, damages, or changes in inventory; and implement and document corrective action that includes the purchasing, replacement, repair, or disposal of questionable inventory

g) Coordinating with VP Finance to plan and order food for the weekly VGSA meetings.

Part D. Vice President of Communications

a) Be the point of contact for initial communications with VGSA

b) Regularly maintain and update the VGSA website at viterbistudents.usc.edu/vgsa, as well as any platforms of social media created for the Purpose of VGSA

c) Generate, review, and revise a VGSA newsletter; and distribute an updated newsletter on the first Monday of each month during the academic term, or whenever appropriate

d) Transcribe minutes for Council meetings, and post them on the VGSA website within 48 hours of each meeting

e) Handle mail and e-mail correspondences of VGSA via vgsa@usc.edu

f) Generate announcements of VGSA events, and distribute them to Senators and/or GAPP personnel

g) Produce hard-copy flyers for VGSA events, and distribute them to Senators for posting

h) Assist GAPP with its communications activities, when appropriate

Part E. Vice President of Finance

a) Manage the budget and finances of VGSA

b) Be the point of contact for vendors and the University’s finance offices, and interact with them in a timely manner

c) Attend all GSG funding workshops

d) Be responsible for purchasing and VGSA budget requests

e) Maintain a record of budget requests, expenditures, and receipts, and close out budget grants
f) Track and be responsible for funding requests submitted to VGSA by other organizations

  g) Ensure that approved funding requests meet all post-approval requirements

Part F. Vice President of Programs

  a) Head the brainstorming, planning, executing, and evaluating of VGSA-wide events, which are not department-specific

  b) Head the brainstorming, planning, executing, and evaluating of monthly activities that promote unity among the Council members

  c) Reserve venues for VGSA meetings and VGSA-wide events, while also ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations of use of these venues

  d) Work with the Vice President of Finance to attain funding for VGSA events

  e) Work with the Vice President of Communications to ensure that information on VGSA events is successfully transmitted to the VGSA members and appropriate University staff

Article V. DUTIES OF SENATORS

  a) For non-academic concerns, be the point of contact for the students of their respective departments

  b) Attend weekly Council meetings, unless arrangements are made with, and documented by, the Executive Vice President

  c) Vote on proposals that are raised during Council meetings

  d) Assist with VGSA-wide activities, and post promotional flyers in the facilities of their respective departments

  e) Forward all official VGSA e-mails to the departments’ graduate-student advisors, so that the advisors can forward these e-mails to all students in their programs

  f) Maintain contact with department-specific organizations, i.e., “sub-umbrella organizations” per GSG definition

  g) Maintain contact with the departments’ graduate-student advisors

  h) Participate in a VGSA committee or chair position
Article VI. **CHAIRMANSHP\$S & COMMITTEES**

**Part A. Standing Chairmanships**

Section 1. Chairmanships reporting to the Vice President of Communications

a) A Newsletter Chair may assist with the VGSA newsletter

b) A Website Chair may assist with the VGSA website

Section 2. Chairmanships reporting to the Vice President of Finance

a) A Major Department Finance Chair may assist with funding requests for the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science departments

b) A Minor Department Finance Chair may assist with funding requests for all departments other than Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

Section 3. Chairmanships reporting to the Vice President of Programs

a) A Social Chair may assist with activities that promote unity among the Council members, especially a retreat

**Part B. Event Chairmanships**

a) The Executive Board may select a chairman for each VGSA-wide event, and this chairman shall report to the Vice President of Programs

**Part C. Modifying Chairmanships or Committees**

a) Modifications of chairmanships or committees are classified as amendments to this Constitution and thus may be proposed and/or approved by a simple-majority vote with quorum at a Council meeting

b) It is at the discretion of each vice president to appoint a Senator to serve in a committee or as a chairman

c) The duties and term of service of that chairman shall be clearly defined and approved by the appropriate vice president

d) The approved chairmanships, committees, and terms of service may be added to this Constitution

Article VII. **NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS, AND TERMS**

**Part A. Requirements for Running for, and Holding, Office**

Section 1. All officers and candidates for office must be holding VGSA membership during their candidacies and terms of service

Section 2. All officers and candidates for office must be in good standing with the University and must not be on academic probation

Section 3. All officers and candidates for office must be able to readily access the University Park Campus during their terms of service
Section 4. All officers must be paying the programming fee during their terms of service

Part B. Executive Board

Section 1. Nomination

a) Executive Board elections shall take place annually, at the second to last Council meeting of the spring semester or, if a position becomes open, at the second to last meeting of the fall semester

b) Each incumbent Council member is eligible to run for Executive Board positions, given his or her satisfaction of the Requirements for Running for, and Holding, Office

c) A Nomination for an Executive Board candidate shall consist of the candidate’s notifying the President, on a private medium, of his or her intent to run, 1 week prior to the election meeting

d) If an Executive Board position has no candidates, then a special election meeting shall be summoned early in the following semester to fill this vacant office. If there are no Nominations for this special election, then the Executive Board shall operate according to the Vacancies policies of this Constitution

Section 2. Elections

a) A member of the Ex-officio group shall serve as the moderator for the election and ensure the integrity of the election

b) Each candidate shall have 1 minute to deliver a speech. Candidates for President shall each have 2 minutes to deliver a speech. If a candidate is not able to attend the election meeting, he or she may submit a hard-copy speech to be read at the meeting by the Ex-officio moderator

c) In their speeches, each candidate shall explicitly disclose to the voters whether he or she is running to serve for one semester or the full academic year

d) Votes shall be on secret, hard-copy ballots and counted by the moderator

e) If a voter is not present for one of the speeches, he or she may be present for the remaining speeches for that position but may not vote for candidates running for that position

f) Candidates may not be present for speeches by other candidates of the same position for which they are running

g) If a candidate is not elected, he or she may run for other positions on the Executive Board

h) Candidates shall be elected in the order in which their positions are listed in Article III, Part A of this Constitution
i) A simple-majority vote with quorum at the election meeting shall be sufficient to elect an officer. If there are more than two candidates for a position, and no single candidate receives a simple majority of votes, there shall be a run-off round between the two candidates receiving the most votes. If additional candidates tied with either of these two runners-off, then the tying candidates shall also run off.

j) For a run-off round, candidates shall each have 1 minute to give a speech. Run-off candidates for President shall each have 2 minutes to give a speech.

Section 3. Removal from Office

a) An Executive Board member may be removed from office for failing to perform duties or violating the membership terms stated in this Constitution.

b) An Executive Board member subject to removal shall be notified on a private medium, at least 1 week prior to the meeting at which the aforementioned vote will take place.

c) A two-thirds majority vote with quorum at a Council meeting shall be sufficient for removing the Executive Board member from office.

d) Should the proposal for removal fail to attain the two-thirds majority vote, the Executive Board shall determine relevant corrective action to be reviewed with, and fulfilled by, the notified member, who shall retain his or her office until the end of the term as agreed upon at the time of election.

e) The Executive Board shall retain and hold in confidence documentation of such corrective action for one year from the date of review with the notified member, or until the notified member exits his or her graduate program.

f) The details and documentation associated with an Executive Board member’s proposed removal shall remain undisclosed to parties other than the Council and Advisor, unless University administration is necessitated by University policy to gain knowledge of the Removal from Office.

Section 4. Terms of Office and Vacancies

a) Per election event, the full term of service for each Executive Board member shall be from the last meeting of each spring semester until the end of the second-to-last meeting of the subsequent spring semester.

b) Per election event, the partial term of service for each Executive Board member shall be from the last meeting of the spring semester until the second-to-last meeting of the subsequent fall semester, or from the last meeting of the fall semester until the second-to-last meeting of the subsequent spring semester.

c) An Executive Board member may hold the same office more than once.

d) Should an Executive Board member decide to resign prior to the end of his or her term as agreed upon at the time of election, he or she shall promptly
notify, on a fixed medium, the outgoing and incoming Executive Boards, as well as the Advisor, of the decision to resign. Should a vacancy in office occur, there shall be another application procedure and election for all vacated positions. A resigning officer may not run in the election that opens as a result of his or her resignation.

e) During vacancy, the Executive Vice President shall assume the duties of the President, the Vice President of Finance shall assume the duties of the Executive Vice President, the Vice President of Communications shall assume the duties of the Vice President of Finance, and the Vice President of Programs shall remain so.

f) An outgoing Executive Board member shall transfer to the appropriate officer-elect and/or Advisor all resources endowed for performing his or her duties in office. Such resources are not limited to passwords, records, knowledge of the post, and durable goods.

Part C. Senators

Section 1. Nomination

a) To express intent to run for a Senator position, a VGSA member shall submit an application as instructed by VGSA.

b) The Executive Board shall review applications for satisfactory completion, as well as confirm with the Advisor the applicant’s satisfaction of the Requirements for Running for, and Holding, Office.

c) A candidate’s application shall become a Nomination upon review and approval by the Executive Board.

d) VGSA shall promote each Senator election at least 2 weeks prior to the opening of the election.

Section 2. Election

a) The Senator election shall take place near the end of the semester prior to the one in which the candidates are applying to serve.

b) If a department ultimately has only 1 Nomination, then a “vote of confidence” shall be prompted on the ballot.

c) The election shall be administered and monitored by an Ex-officio.

d) The Executive Board and Ex-officio shall agree on rules and protocols for the election process that ensure the integrity of the election.

Section 3. Removal from Office

a) Senators may be removed from office for failing to perform duties or violating the membership terms stated in this Constitution.
b) A Senator subject to removal shall be notified on a private medium, at least 1 week prior to deliberation of his or her removal

c) The Executive Board shall meet with the Advisor to deliberate the removal of a Senator

d) The Executive Board members shall vote on the removal of a Senator, and a simple-majority vote by the Executive Board members shall be sufficient to remove the Senator

e) Should the majority of the Executive Board vote against the removal of a Senator, the Executive Board shall determine relevant corrective action to be reviewed with, and fulfilled by, the Senator, who shall retain his or her office until the end of the semester

f) The Executive Board shall retain and hold in confidence documentation of such corrective action for one year from the date of review with the Senator, or until the Senator exits his or her graduate program

g) The details and documentation associated with a Senator’s proposed removal shall remain undisclosed to parties other than the Executive Board, Senator, and Advisor, unless University administration is necessitated by University policy to gain knowledge of the Removal from Office

Section 4. Terms of Office and Vacancies

a) The term of service for all Senators begins at the start of the semester in which he or she was elected to serve and ends when the next round of elections take place or if he/she graduates. (Whichever occurs first)

b) Should a Senator decide to resign prior to the end of the semester, he or she shall promptly notify, on a fixed medium, the Executive Board and Advisor, of the decision to resign

c) Should a vacancy in office occur, there shall be another application procedure and election for the vacant office

d) An outgoing Senator shall transfer to the appropriate officer-elect and/or Advisor all resources endowed for performing his or her duties in office. Such resources are not limited to passwords, records, knowledge of the post, and durable goods

e) Senators filling vacancies shall be sufficiently briefed and trained by the Executive Vice President

Article VIII. MEETINGS

Section 1. Council meetings shall be held once each week

Section 2. To vote on proposals or officers at any Council meeting, quorum must be established
Section 3. Quorum shall be defined to be one half of the number of all Executive Board members and Senators

Section 4. Council meetings shall be open to the Council members and Non-voting Parties (Ex-officio). With a simple-majority vote with quorum, Council meetings or portions of Council meetings may be opened to persons other than the Council members and Non-voting Parties (Ex-officio)

Section 5. Executive Board meetings shall be held once each week

Section 6. Special meetings
   a) A simple-majority approval by the Executive Board members shall suffice for summoning a special meeting. Notice of special meetings shall be communicated to the Executive Board and/or the Senators, on a fixed medium and at least 72 hours prior to commencement of the special meeting
   b) Special meetings shall proceed like a regular Executive Board meeting or Council meeting, unless specified otherwise at the time of approval

Article IX. FUNDING REQUESTS

Part A. Application Guidelines
   Section 1. These guidelines are only for events that are not considered to be joint events with VGSA
      a) Each funding application shall be submitted 4 weeks prior to the date of the event of application
      b) All applications must comply with the GSG Finance Laws and Funding Policy, as well as the VGSA-specific guidelines below
      c) The applying student organizations must be directly related to the Viterbi School of Engineering or must indicate that at least 50% of the attendees of the event of application will be graduate Viterbi students
      d) The event shall be accessible and free of charge to all graduate Viterbi Students
      e) The Executive Board’s decision of whether to fund the event of application shall be final and non-negotiable
      f) The Executive Board and relevant chairs and committees shall review funding requests once a week and notify the applicants of funding decisions at the end of each weekly cycle
      g) Durable goods that are not treated as prizes or giveaways (e.g., appliances, tools, furniture, clothing) shall not be funded

Part B. Application Procedure
   a) Funding applications shall be reviewed at weekly Executive Board meetings
b) Funding decisions shall be communicated no more than 12 hours after the Executive Board meeting at which the funding application was reviewed

c) Should the funding request fail to meet Article IX standards, VGSA reserves the right to deny funding

Part C. After Approval

Section 1. Prior to event occurrence

a) Appropriately display VGSA’s Name and “square with text” emblem on all promotional materials for the event, as specified by the Executive Board

b) Promotional materials must be visible to all VGSA members

Section 2. After event occurrence

a) Submit all required documentation to the Vice President of Finance. The funding applicant shall be responsible for ensuring the timely submission of all required documentation

Article X. AFFILIATIONS

Part A. University of Southern California

Section 1. VGSA is a recognized student organization at the Viterbi School of Engineering at the University of Southern California but is not part of the Viterbi School and/or University

Section 2. In all correspondences and business transactions, VGSA may refer to itself as an organization at the Viterbi School and/or University, but not as part of the Viterbi School and/or University

Section 3. VGSA accepts full financial and production responsibilities for all activities it sponsors

Section 4. VGSA agrees to abide by all pertinent Viterbi School and University policies and regulations. When the policies and regulations of VGSA differ from those of the Viterbi School and/or University, the policies and regulations of the Viterbi School and/or University shall take precedence

Section 5. VGSA recognizes and understands that neither the University nor the Viterbi School assumes legal liability for its actions, and that neither the University nor the Viterbi School is providing blanket indemnification insurance coverage for any VGSA activities, unless those activities expressly benefit and further the goals of the University and have received prior review, approval, and consent of Campus Activities, Risk Management, and/or General Counsel

Article XI. AMENDMENTS & BYLAWS

Part A. Amendments
Section 1. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote with quorum at a Council meeting

Section 2. Notification of a proposal for amendment shall be presented before the Council at least one Council meeting prior to the one at which the vote for amendment proposal is to be taken

Part B. Bylaws

Section 1. Bylaws may be added to, removed from, or modified in, this Constitution by a simple-majority vote with quorum at a Council meeting

Section 2. The terms and policies of this Constitution shall take precedence over its Bylaws
Article XII.  BYLAWS

Part A.  Expectations of Senators

a) Hold at least 1 department-specific event during each semester of service

b) Attend all VGSA-wide events, unless arrangements are made with, and documented by, the Vice President of Programs

c) Attend a majority of monthly activities that promote unity among the Senators and members of Executive Board