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ADOPTED 10-11-2019
I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

As a standing committee of the Graduate Student Association (GSA), the Graduate Financial Allocation Committee (GFAC) is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and making decisions regarding funding of proposals submitted by Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) and all other funding opportunities provided by the GSA. This funding comes solely from the Student Assessment Fee paid by graduate students on main campus. All proposals are evaluated to ensure that they meet the two primary goals of the GSA: increasing graduate student participation in the University community, and guaranteeing that graduate student needs and concerns are being represented.

II. GENERAL RULES AND GUIDELINES

1. In accordance with the University Policy on Discrimination, funding shall not be determined on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, protected disability, veteran status, height, weight, or marital status.

2. In order to apply for and receive funding from the GFAC, each graduate registered student organization and Mixed RSO must have at least one designated member who serves as a representative on the GSA Senate. Designated members must attend all monthly GSA general body meetings as scheduled.

3. Being a recipient of Student Assessment Fee (SAF) funds should not be interpreted as meaning that funded organizations are associated with or controlled by Western Michigan University; the University is not responsible for the organizations’ contracts, acts, or omissions.

4. Requests for funding of events or operational budgets will be denied if they do not benefit the graduate student community or benefit only a few individuals in the graduate student community. Mixed Registered Student Organizations that apply to the GFAC for funding must follow the guidelines defined in 4b. In cases of Mixed RSOs, at least one (1) graduate student member must be present at the GFAC meeting to present their proposal(s).
   a. Registered Student Organizations will be considered graduate organizations when their membership is comprised of at least 50% by graduate students.
   b. Registered Student Organizations will be considered mixed organizations when their membership is comprised by less than 50% of graduate students.

5. Annual caps on each Graduate Student RSO’s funding will be $750.00 for operational expenses and $5,000.00 for events. Annual caps for Mixed RSOs will be up to $500.00 for operational expenses and up to $3,000.00 for events. RSOs may seek funding twice per academic year, as long as they do not exceed these annual caps. The academic year runs from Summer II through Summer I of the following year.

6. All funding applications must be submitted by the application deadline corresponding with the GFAC meeting in which they want to be considered, as listed on GSA’s website at http://www.wmich.edu/gsa/funding. In the case of applications for events; the event in question cannot take place between the application deadline and the GFAC meeting of that month.
7. Requests for reimbursement of an event will be denied.

8. All University and legal requirements regarding the disbursement and use of SAF will be enforced. The Office of Student Engagement will manage the transfers and will work with the sponsoring group and the GFAC Chairperson to ensure compliance.

9. Any RSO wholly or partially funded by the GSA must include the words: “Student Assessment Fee Funded” or “SAF Funded” on all publications and promotional material (radio, television, newspapers, flyers, social media, etc.), other than classified advertisements. The absence of this message will be considered a misuse of funds and will be penalized with a written warning. Warnings will be kept for two academic years. If the Organization commits the violation above mentioned after a written warning, they might not be allowed to apply for funding for the rest of the academic and the one that follows. The GSA logo must also appear on all aforementioned materials for any event for which the GSA has provided funding. Logos can be found on the GSA website at: http://www.wmich.edu/gsa/funding.

10. When applying, all sponsoring groups must submit electronic draft copies of the aforementioned materials to the GFAC Chairperson at gfac-info@wmich.edu, clearly demonstrating that the SAF phrase and GSA logo are present. Failure to do so may result in the denial of future funding.

11. All RSOs requesting funding from the GSA are required to complete RSO Orientation online every academic year. RSO Orientation are available through ExperienceWMU and is offered by the Office of Student Engagement. Further information about this orientation can be found by contacting their office or going to their website at: https://wmich.edu/studentengagement.

12. Under no circumstances will GFAC funds be transferred to a student account at a bank outside of the University. GFAC funds will only be transferred to an existing University account.

III. USE OF FUNDS, RULES AND GUIDELINES

1. Funds may be used for operations, events, or other purposes already approved by the GSA. Funds are expected to be spent only for items budgeted for and approved by the GFAC. Misuse of GFAC allocated funds may result in the suspension of future SAF funding.

2. Funds must not be awarded for the personal benefit of individuals or private corporations, charitable organizations or programs, financing political candidates and/or campaigns, religious purposes (i.e. worship, devotional exercises, proselytizing), or to finance any activity contrary to the laws of the State of Michigan and/or the Federal Government. Proposal for fundraising purposes will be denied.

3. Any awarded SAF funds not used by the RSO for the purposes they indicated in their application will be funded back to the GSA at the end of the fiscal year (or sixty days
after the end of the event). If your event date changes after initial funding by the GSA, you are required to notify the GFAC of that change.

4. Operational funding must be used to offset the expenses of running the organization, such as, but not limited to, activities that occur on a regular basis, general office supplies, advertising, or food and beverages.

5. Operational funding for food and beverages will not exceed 50% of the total amount requested and awarded, and not more than $250 for Mixed RSOs or $375 for Graduate RSOs per academic year.

6. Event funding must be used in the planning, organizing, and implementation of the events, such as but not limited to, speaker fees, room and equipment rentals, food and beverages for the event, or promotional products.

7. Event funding for food and beverages will not exceed 50% of the total amount of funds requested and awarded, and not more than $1,500.00 for Mixed RSOs or $2,500.00 for Graduate RSOs per academic year.

8. All RSOs that are awarded event funding from the GSA must submit a self-evaluation report and final summary of actual expenses to the GFAC no later than 30 days from the date the event took place. Failure to submit this report will jeopardize future GSA funding to the RSO. A self-evaluation form can be found at http://www.wmich.edu/gsa/funding

9. All forms (Funding Application, Self-Evaluation, GSA logo) can be downloaded from the GSA website under the funding tab at http://www.wmich.edu/gsa/funding and must be used for GFAC consideration.

IV. REVIEW CRITERIA

The funds managed by GSA come solely from the Student Assessment Fee (SAF) paid by main campus graduate students. The following eight questions will be the primary points of consideration for the GFAC, when reviewing proposals submitted by RSOs for funding purposes. While proposals do not necessarily need to meet all of the following criteria, those that do so will be given more favorable consideration by the GFAC. If the proposal does not meet a substantial proportion of the criteria, please be prepared to justify why the proposal should be funded.

1. Does the proposal enrich the academic, cultural, social, and professional experiences of the graduate student community?

2. Does the proposal increase graduate student participation in the University community?

3. Does the proposal ensure that graduate student needs and concerns are being represented?

4. Does the organization submitting the proposal have a large number of graduate student members?

5. Does the activity promote interaction between graduate students, graduate faculty, and University administrators?

6. How many graduate students are involved in the RSO?
7. How many graduate students would benefit from the proposed funding request?

8. Does the group submitting the proposal have additional sources of funding to offset the project’s costs and could the organization demonstrate a compelling rationale for lacking additional sources of funding?

V. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

1. All organizations seeking funding from the GSA must become Registered Student Organizations through the Office of Student Engagement. More information can be found at https://wmich.edu/studentengagement and https://wmich.edu/studentengagement/rso/finances respectively. Organizations must be an active RSO for at least eight weeks before they can apply for funding. An RSO representative must complete the online RSO Orientation by the Office of Student Engagement before they apply for funding.

2. Any Graduate or Mixed RSO that has been active for at least eight weeks must complete and submit a complete GFAC Funding Application available at https://wmich.edu/gsa/funding. The GFAC Chairperson may be contacted with questions or for assistance in preparing the proposal at gfac-info@wmich.edu.

3. For event funding requests, RSOs are required to send at least one representative to defend their application at the GFAC meeting; the time, location and date of that meeting would be communicated in advance by the GFAC Chairperson. The GFAC Chairperson will inform the RSO’s representative that their proposal has been received, whether it is accepted as following the guidelines, and that they are on the agenda for the next GFAC meeting for funding consideration. If the GFAC Chairperson does not contact the RSO within three (3) business days, the RSO should contact the GFAC Chairperson via email and copy the GSA president (gsa@wmich.edu) to ensure that their application was received. Failure to attend the meeting and present the proposal will result in the denial of the proposal.

4. Graduate student RSOs and Mixed RSOs are not required to defend their operational funding request, unless otherwise indicated by the GFAC, or if the organization opts to do so.

5. If a proposal does not follow the funding guidelines, the proposal will be denied and returned to the RSO. Therefore, it is recommended that RSOs submit their proposal as far in advance as possible. The GFAC Chairperson may be available to work with RSOs to improve their proposal. However, this advisement is not meant to take the place of an RSO reading and following these guidelines.

6. The GFAC will review all proposals received at the monthly GFAC meeting and make decisions regarding RSO funding proposals. The Committee’s Chairperson must report their decisions to the GSA at the general body meeting. All approved funds will be transferred to the appropriate University Fund and Cost Center. The Committee’s Chairperson will notify all RSOs via email the final decision within five (5) business days of the Committee’s monthly meeting. If a request is denied or partially funded, the GFAC Chairperson will provide the RSO with the reasons why the request was denied.
7. The Committee must be comprised of at least Six (6) members; the Chairperson, and five graduate students who volunteer to serve as members. Moreover, any graduate student can be part of the Committee at any given time prior notification via email to the Chairperson. In addition, the Associate Director of Leadership and Volunteer Services or designee will function as the Committee’s advisor.

8. The Committee’s Chairperson shall act as a moderator without voting rights. Moreover, although any graduate student can participate in discussions, only the five (5) volunteer and registered committee members shall have voting rights.

9. The Committee’s quorum is achieved when 60% of the voting members are present. Final decisions cannot be made without meeting this quorum. In the event the Committee’s Chairperson is unable to attend, the Association’s President shall chair the meeting; in the event that the GFAC Chairperson and the GSA President cannot be present, the Association’s Parliamentarian shall chair the meeting.

10. In the event the Committee cannot meet, a review committee with the power of approval or denial can review the proposed budget and/or funding request. This committee shall be comprised of the GSA President, the GFAC Chairperson, the Associate Director of Leadership and Volunteer Services (or designee), the Parliamentarian, and at least two other graduate students. A representative for the RSO will also be required to attend in order to explain the purpose of the RSO and to provide a detailed description of their funding request.

11. If a decision is made to deny or partially approve an application, organizations can appeal the GFAC decision directly to the GSA President. If the GSA President feels that the appeal is warranted, the appeal will be brought up for discussion at the following monthly GSA Executive Board meeting. A representative from the RSO appealing the GFAC’s decision must be present at this monthly GSA Executive Board meeting to present the reasons for their appellation. Any appellation must be approved by absolute majority vote of the Executive Board members.

12. Prior to events, all Independent Contractors must have their signature notarized. The director of the Office of Student Engagement, a student RSO representative, and the contractor will be required to sign all Independent Contract forms. The signature of the Director of the Office of Student Engagement verifies the release of funds. Further guidance and clarification on these matters are discussed in the RSO Orientation provided by the RSO Financial Advisor through the Office of Student Engagement.

13. All invoices and payments must be submitted within thirty (30) days after the event took place. If funds are refunded to the GSA and there are still outstanding payments, the RSO will be responsible for those payments.

14. Funds are available until exhausted, at which time a notice will be placed on the GSA website.

VI. OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

1. RSOs seeking funding from the GFAC are also encouraged to seek funding from other
sources at the University and within the community. In addition to the GFAC, the Western Student Association (WSA) has an allocation committee to which RSOs can apply for funding. WSA’s website is: http://www.westernstudentassociation.org/. Further funding information may be found through the Office of Student Engagement or the RSO Financial Advisor.

2. Additionally, RSOs are encouraged to engage in fundraising activities or seek other sources of funding within the community to supplement funding that may be awarded by the GFAC.

VII. GFAC FUNDING APPLICATION FORMS

Please complete the GFAC Funding Application Form as found at http://www.wmich.edu/gsa/funding and submit this with all other applicable documents electronically via ExperienceWMU. Required documents for each grant type are listed below.

1. Certification Grant: In addition to the completed ExperienceWMU form, applicants must upload an updated resume or curriculum vitae; a letter of recommendation from a faculty member (preferably an adviser); and copies of an unofficial transcript (available for download on the WMU portal).

2. Conference Grant: In addition to the completed ExperienceWMU form, applicants must upload an updated resume or curriculum vitae; a letter of recommendation from a faculty member (preferably an adviser); and copies of an unofficial transcript (available for download on the WMU portal).

3. Data Collection Grant: In addition to the completed ExperienceWMU form, applicants must upload an updated resume or curriculum vitae; a letter of support from a dissertation or thesis director or committee member; copies of an unofficial transcript (available for download on the WMU portal); an itemized budget for the items to be covered by the grant (including specific types of gift cards for incentives); a copy of the approval letter from the Institutional Review Board (if applicable); and, for any hired professional (such as a transcriptionist), a rationale for hiring, a completed independent contractor form, a completed W9 form, and an invoice.

4. RSO Event Funding: In addition to the completed ExperienceWMU form, applicants must upload a roster of current organizational members; a detailed budget for the event; supporting documents as rationale for each budget item; a four-slide PowerPoint presentation to be used during the RSO presentation; and, for any hired professional (such as a DJ or speaker), a resume, a written rationale for hiring, a completed independent contractor form, a completed W9 form, and an invoice.

5. RSO Operational Funding: In addition to the completed ExperienceWMU form, applicants must upload a roster of current organizational members; a detailed budget for operational expenses; supporting documents as rationale for each budget item; and a brief description of how the RSO will use the proposed items.

VIII. AMENDMENTS TO GFAC FUNDING GUIDELINES

1. These Guidelines are subject to be amended under the discretion of the GSA Senate. In the event of changes to these guidelines, the interested party will be able to find them on the GSA website: http://www.wmich.edu/gsa/funding.
2. The Parliamentarian of GSA shall form a committee consisted of GSA members to review and propose amendments to these guidelines.

3. Proposed amendments will be presented to the Constitutional Committee for approval through voting procedures.

4. Amendments will take full effect as soon as they are approved, unless otherwise indicated by the amendment itself or as a condition for its approval stipulated by the Association’s general body.