

The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students

# 101 Ways to Build an Effective Graduate- Professional Student Organization

4th Edition

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Based on the 3rd edition by Linda Hudson & John Daniels University of North Texas, 1995.



## Introduction

This 4<sup>th</sup> Edition marks fifteen years of this useful manual, *101 Ways to Build an Effective Graduate-Professional Student Organization*. As a keystone in the NAGPS services to graduate and professional students across the US, this manual frequently undergoes updates. Since its original publication in 1993, technology has drastically changed the way that student organizations are built and operated. For those of you who have read previous editions, we encourage you to take another look at the updated recommendations and best advices.

The creation of this manual dates to spring 1993 at the NAGPS South-central Regional Conference at the University of North Texas. During a day-long discussion of the ways to build an effective graduate-professional student organization (GPSO), the delegates, all members of their respective graduate-professional student organizations, considered three different aspects of graduate-professional student government: (1) how to start a graduate-professional student organization, (2) how to add some governmental functions to an organization, and (3) how to turn a semi-governmental organization into a fully independent government. The University of North Texas Graduate Student Council taped the discussions and later used them to create the original version of this manual.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Editions, we added the experiences of other students from around the country. Now, in this 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, we have updated the manual, taking into consideration the changing roles of technology in student government. With some new ideas and improvements on existing suggestions, the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition continues in the spirit of supporting graduate and professional student organizations across the United States.

This guide does not represent some unattainable ideal. All the following suggestions for student government are in place and working effectively somewhere in the United States. The manual concentrates on down-to-earth, practical advice for student leaders, all the way from the most important principles to keep in mind (do not attack the system, work within it), through examples of projects and programs (student loan programs, e-newsletters, and orientation videos), to the best techniques for winning independence from the undergraduate-dominated student government (get the faculty and the administration on your side before negotiating with the undergraduates). We hope that other student leaders will benefit from the things that we have learned in the preparation of this manual. We hope that you will too!

To give you a sense of the diverse contributors to this manual over the years (and to gratefully acknowledge their input), here is a list...

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## General Principles

1. Work with the administration and faculty, not against them.

University administrators and faculty members usually react well to people who try to take a helpful, cooperative approach to solving problems. Those same people almost always react negatively to students who assume a confrontational attitude. If student leaders irritate the administration enough, they can easily make a situation worse than it already is. Far from solving a problem that graduate and professional students face, attacking the administration may harden their attitudes so much that the problem may never be solved. In the long run, more can be achieved through cooperation than through confrontation.

2. Assume a down-to-earth attitude when dealing with the administration and the faculty.

Abstract, idealistic discussions rarely produce anything of immediate benefit to the university in general or to the graduate and professional students in particular. Nevertheless, talks with administrators and faculty sometimes drift into generalities rather than specifics. That situation might develop because administrators want to avoid doing anything specific, but students sometimes aggravate the problem by going to the opposite extreme, trying to reform the whole system in one semester. Try to solve specific, limited problems. Do not try to save the world in one week. For example, if you want to get more graduate and professional students on university governing committees, do not go to the administration with that general principle. Decide what committees you want to obtain representation on. Put them in order by preference and pick the two or three that you want the most. Now, go to the administration and ask for those two or three.

3. Try to keep the university student-oriented by reminding the administration and the faculty of student concerns.

Some teachers and administrators adopt the attitude that the university would be a great place if it were not for the students. Fortunately, this view is a minority one. In state schools, the administration has the additional problem of having to please the state legislature. In many schools, the faculty has to publish in order to further their careers. Thus, the administration and the faculty may forget that the original objective was to educate students. As the voice of graduate and professional students, your organization should try to keep such tendencies from dominating the policies of the university. Sometimes simply reminding them is enough, but on occasion you may have to find a more dramatic way to get their attention.

4. Remember that you represent all the students, not just one group.

In a few cases, your group may only represent a certain percentage of the graduate and professional students. For example, you may be part of a union of graduate employees of the university. Or, you may only represent the students in one school, such as business. Most of the time, however, by name and by tradition, you speak for all of the graduate and professional students. Try to keep that fact in

mind at all times. For example, any time that you are trying to get the university to spend more money on something of benefit to graduate students, remember that the school has only a limited amount of funds. Any increases that you get for one area may be at the expense of another area. A new day-care facility may mean a cutback at the health center. Sometimes the university can find new funding to offset increases, but do not assume that the well will never run dry.

5. Develop a core of dedicated members who will always come through for the organization.

Some student leaders assume that they need a large organization in order to accomplish anything. The truth is exactly the opposite. In fact, in most organizations, a core group of twelve to fifteen members does most of the work, even if many more people attend the meetings. So try to find a handful of dedicated members. Do not let the small number of those interested in student government discourage you.

6. You will have to make special efforts to get graduate and professional students involved.

Most graduate and professional students have job and family responsibilities in addition to their school work. Because they are so busy, they often avoid taking on extra duties, such as membership in a graduate student organization. You can overcome this problem, but only by convincing them that a GPSO is a worthwhile project. Once they join, you will have to work hard to keep them by making their duties interesting and by requiring only a few hours a month from each member. In addition, try to make each active member feel that their contributions are important to both you and the organization.

7. Representatives should conduct themselves in a professional manner when participating in university committees.

The people who run a university regard it as an important job, and they expect the same attitude from those who work with them. If your representatives behave in a business-like manner that reflects the responsibility of serving on a university committee it will facilitate being invited to participate in other important capacities.

8. Always give credit where credit is due.

Many times administrators, faculty, and graduate and professional students go beyond the call of duty. They go the extra mile to support your organization and members when they do not have to. Be sure to thank your friends when they come through for you. Try to return the favor if possible. If they do something for you, look for something to do for them. In short, always remember who your friends are, do not ask too many special favors, and try to accept any criticism that they offer in a positive light.

9. Try to find a reliable source of funds.

You can do many things without funds, such as serving on committees and holding meetings, but you can only go so far without money. Publishing a newsletter, attending conventions, staging events, and

joining national organizations require a budget. You do not need a big budget. A few thousand can go a long way, and there are a number of places to find them. Perhaps the dean of the graduate school will allot some funding for you. Maybe you can get some contributions from local businesses. Perhaps alumni would be willing to contribute funds to support your activities (make sure to work in coordination with the alumni affairs office). You could sell ads in a publication that you produce. The best source of funds, though, is student services fees. To obtain a share of those, you must apply to a committee that decides how to split them amongst the various student organizations and offices. The process can seem like running a gauntlet, but the effort will probably be worthwhile. One caution is in order. Once you get a budget, be sure that the administration of the university and the various departments do not consume your funds behind a mask of bureaucratic red tape. There are various financial requirements at a university that can have a serious impact on your operating budget.

10. Choose a name that reflects the type of organization that you have.

Graduate student organizations come in many shapes and styles. Many start as a voluntary organization of graduate and professional students with common interests. Such groups often take the name of the graduate-professional student association (GPSA). Many keep this name, even after they become something quite different. Over time, such associations often acquire some governmental functions: they begin to speak and act on behalf of graduate and professional students at their university. Other types of names used to reflect the varying degrees of representation include: Graduate Student Council (GSC), graduate student advisory committee (GSAC), and graduate student senate (GSS). Eventually, some GPSOs evolve into full-fledged governments. They become the official voice of the graduate and professional students, as agreed between the student body they represent and university administration. For example, these governmental duties usually include receiving funding directly from student fees. With this responsibility, it may be appropriate to include "Government" in the name of the organization.

## Basic Rules

### 11. Keep confidential matters confidential.

Once you begin to achieve some success, members of your organization will be asked to serve on committees that deal in sensitive, confidential matters. Be sure committee members maintain that confidentiality. In some cases, they can talk about the committee work in general terms. For example, if you serve on the graduate appeals committee, you cannot talk about the specific appeals that you hear, but you can relate to outsiders the general reasons why appeals are accepted or rejected. In a few cases, though, total silence will be required. This rule also applies to sensitive topics that you have to deal with. Try to clear such subjects with the administration before going public with them. For example, if you are going to report on a controversial topic in your newsletter, you should run the article by them before publishing it. They may suggest some changes that you can live with and will make them very happy. Of course, if you have to say something that they do not want you to, so be it. Just remember that you can often inform graduate and professional students in a manner that will not irritate the administration or the faculty.

### 12. Concentrate meetings on informing the members.

Have meetings center on the discussion of what each member has learned in their respective committee meetings and in their departments. Even rumors can be an important source of information. Try to focus on information that will affect the status of graduate and professional students. Of course, appointments, elections, and money matters will take some time, but the concerns of graduate and professional students are your main reason for existence. If you run your meetings right, your members will be better informed than anyone else on campus, including the administration. This situation develops because you will hear what is going on among the students and in the departments, while the administrators often do not hear such things.

### 13. Keep meetings short and to the point.

The meetings should rarely be more than one hour in length. You can accomplish this objective by keeping the discussion focused on the business at hand. The meetings should not be gab fests, but rather short reports by each member of the news that everyone wants to hear. In most circumstances, reports on a single topic should not exceed five minutes. Only when a major issue arises should you let the discussion run longer, and even then, discussions of more than twenty minutes become repetitious. Remember that most problems cannot be solved by simply talking about them. Your objective is to inform people so that they can then take the appropriate action.

### 14. Hold meetings on set dates, at set times, at the same place.

People have a hard enough time remembering to come without you continually changing when and where. Consistency allows people to make commitments and set calendars. Of course, the meeting time should be one that allows most members to attend. Popular class times do not qualify.



15. Call members before every meeting in order to ensure good attendance, in addition to emailing and posting in the online announcements.

Some members will not need to be reminded. If you know who those individuals are, you can leave them off the calling chain so that they do not feel bothered (or, ask them to be responsible for making some of the calls to others). Usually, graduate and professional students are very busy and both need and appreciate a timely reminder. Experience in some GPSOs has shown that calling improves attendance by twenty to fifty percent.

16. Make certain that you have a reliable place to receive mail.

You will need to receive mail not only reliably, but quickly. If your members serve on committees, announcements and agendas will have to reach them in the few days between the call of a meeting and its actual occurrence. If you belong to NAGPS, almanacs, updates, convention announcements, and ballots will have to reach you. Every year, many such items are returned to NAGPS because the addressee could not be found. If you use university funds, reports, forms, and applications will have to find you. There is no greater thrill than learning your budget has been reduced to zero because you missed a filing deadline that was announced in a document that never reached you. Do not use the name or address of an officer. Officers leave frequently, and they often fail to change the organization address when they leave. So your mail gets lost. Try to use a permanent address. If you have an organization office, great; use its address. Otherwise, you may have to resort to using the office of the dean of the graduate school. This method will almost certainly mean delays in getting your mail, so avoid it if possible. A post office box may be the answer, but be careful. If you let the rent lapse on the box, all of your mail will get lost.

## Organizing a GPSO

### 17. Do your research.

The first step in beginning a GPSO is determining the need for the organization. Find out all that you can about the graduate and professional student population on your campus. Are they represented on the undergraduate government? How? Do graduate and professional students actively participate in the undergraduate government? Why or why not? How many graduate and professional students are on your campus? How many departments or programs offer graduate degrees? Are there graduate or professional student organizations in departments or colleges? Also know what other campuses are doing. Do your peer institutions have GPSOs? How do they operate? How are they funded? Utilize NAGPS and other universities in the area in order to get this kind of information. Remember that ultimately colleges and universities are competing for the best and brightest students, and if you can successfully argue that University X across town supports their graduate and professional student organization, then it helps to build support for creating a similar group on your own campus.

### 18. Build support with administration and faculty.

In order to succeed as a GPSO, having the approval and support of the administration is key. After you've determined WHY you need a GPSO, it's time to convince key administrators, particularly the graduate dean and the administrator who oversees the student government and organizations. Involving administrators from the beginning of the process is important, as it establishes a flow of communication that will help you to build a successful organization. Open communication with administration also denotes a willingness on your part to work with, not against, the system. It is also important to build this relationship because it is likely that initially much of your funding will come at the good wishes of these administrators.

In addition to the administration, you should establish a good relationship with key faculty members, including those who are a part of the faculty governance. This body typically has a great deal of say on issues like committee appointments, and tends to have an affinity for graduate students who will one day be their peers.

### 19. Plan for the long-term and the immediate future.

Attempting to do both of these things at the same time is challenging, but necessary. First, plan small steps to get your group organized. If you do not already have a small group of students committed to building the GPSO, work with your graduate dean to identify other graduate and professional student leaders across campus and build a coalition. This should be a small group initially, ideally 7-10 people who will commit to the GPSO.

Your coalition should develop two timelines. First, what do you hope to accomplish in the next academic year? Second, what do you see for the GPSO 2 years down the road? 5 years? It is important to see where you want the organization to be in the distant future in order to lay a solid foundation for that goal as you create the group. For example, if you ultimately hope to be funded by

student fees, you will need to make long-term plans to accomplish that, while also identifying sources of funding for the interim years. Gaining student fee funding can be extremely complex, and will often require either a vote of the student population or the university's governing body (Board of Regents), and sometimes both.

20. Create a structure and governing documents for your organization.

Every organization needs a set body of rules to govern them. You should draft both a constitution and by-laws for your GPSO in the first few months. This process will require several things. First, you must determine what students your GPSO represents, and how you will select individuals to serve as representatives. You have many options for representation. Some GPSOs allot one representative for every department that offers a graduate degree; others allow for proportional representation by department or by college. You may also want to include at-large representatives in the group.

After determining your representative structure, you will also need to determine how representatives become a part of GPSO. Again, there are several options. You can ask for volunteers or nominations, or you can require elections. In the early days of building a GPSO, it is important to remain flexible on this in order to get more people involved. The more complex and involved the process for serving as a representative to GPSO, the less likely you are to fill these positions, so it is a good idea to keep the process simple initially. For example, if you have one representative for department, you can simply ask the department chair graduate chair to provide you with the name and contact information of one student to serve as their departmental representative, and allow the department to decide how they will select that student. Some will pass the task along to their departmental graduate organizations; some may simply ask for volunteers, while others will select a student themselves. Remember that as the GPSO matures you can change this process.

In addition to determining representation, you will also need to decide about executive leadership. What will the leadership team look like? How many people do you need and in what roles? Do you want a chair or co-chair in charge? Should there be multiple vice-presidencies devoted to different areas? What titles will you use for the executive leadership?

As a basic rule at minimum you will need an executive leader, a financial controller, and a recording secretary. Other positions to consider include a vice-president and a parliamentarian or ombudsman. Many GPSOs choose to have vice-presidents that work specifically with outside groups, like other campus organizations and NAGPS, and another who works with the GPSO and takes on traditional vice-presidential duties, like overseeing GPSO committees. You may also want a separate position for communications and/or public relations.

21. Put your plan in motion.

Once your initial leadership team has agreed on a structure for the GPSO, it is time to begin operating as a GPSO. This includes becoming recognized as a legitimate campus organization. Often this process is conducted through student affairs or a similar office. Taking this step is important, because it gives

you access to resources reserved for official student organizations. In addition, the willingness to work within the existing system, even while you may fully intend to overthrow said system, will help to smooth the way with administrators, faculty, and the existing undergraduate government.

You should populate the representative body using whatever process you've determined. You will also need to elect officers to fill the executive leadership team. The first election may necessarily be from among those who have been a part of the small group building the GPSO, and you may also want to include the first group of representatives as potential candidates. This can seem a bit like a dictatorship at first, but it is important that the first leadership team be familiar with the GPSO that has been built, and be committed to helping the organization grow. It may also be easier to begin with a group of officers elected from within your initial group so that when the representative body begins meeting there will be clear leadership and goals already in place, keeping in mind the need to be flexible and responsive to the ideas and concerns of the representative body.

You should carefully consider the eligibility for officers, as well as the process of selecting them. As you begin your GPSO, it is unlikely that having a campus-wide campaign and vote of the graduate and professional student population is feasible. You may want to limit eligibility to those who are currently serving as either an officer or a representative and have the electors be the current representative body. There are, of course, several other strategies you could pursue, including accepting nominations from any graduate and professional student and allowing the representative body to vote, or you could allow each department a vote. The important things to remember are these: you want to ensure that potential officers have a solid base of knowledge about GPSO and you also want to make the elections fair and democratic, so that as many graduate and professional students are represented as possible.

## 22. Be active and relevant from day one.

Once you've put the GPSO in action, you need to ensure that the campus community sees the need for the organization. This means identifying key areas of concern, as well as working to foster a greater sense of community among the graduate and professional students on campus.

You can start small and still be successful. Some ideas for low-cost events include planning social gatherings at local spots, with GPSO purchasing appetizers for the first hour (or to a set limit determined beforehand). You can also plan GPSO gatherings at already planned events, like museum showings, or free concerts on campus. These social gatherings are a good way to identify key concerns among the graduate and professional students. As a new organization, you should think strategically about how to pursue change, and which changes are both feasible and necessary. For example, the cost of health insurance coverage for dependents may be a primary concern on your campus. While recognizing that in the first year you likely won't be able to convince your campus to provide lower-cost alternatives, you could begin by asking the administration to develop a task force to explore the issue and engage in a dialogue about it. This will ensure that GPSO is a part of the discussion in the future as well.

## 23. Get noticed.

Work to get GPSO members serving on campus committees. Ask the student newspaper to cover your GPSO meetings and events. Plan activities for National Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week. Ask to make a presentation about GPSO to the undergraduate government and the faculty governance. Work with your graduate studies office to be a part of new student orientation. Remember, the more people on campus who know about GPSO and are impressed by the work you are doing, the more likely you are to accomplish the long-term goals you have set for GPSO.

24. Keep a record of the process.

It is important to keep good records as you build your GPSO. This will not only benefit future officers and representatives, but will also help the GPSO to move forward strategically. A part of good record keeping is devising a strategy to ensure that future executive leadership teams are knowledgeable about the GPSO, its history, and long-term goals. To that end, you may choose to have your elections at the end of the academic year, so that students who have served as representatives for one year are potential leaders.

It is a good idea to have the executive leadership team draft clear job descriptions for the role they fill, and to pass those materials along to future leaders. Other key information to collect includes pertinent contact information—who to speak with at the dean’s office, the chancellor or various vice-chancellor’s office; leadership of the undergraduate government; key allies among the faculty or staff. Knowing this kind of information from the start helps new officers to continue to build the good relationships you’ve nurtured. In fact, you may want to schedule meetings with key administrators and introduce the new leadership team to them in the weeks before they begin their official duties.

## Increasing Involvement

25. Follow a set pattern with your member recruiting.

Recruiting varies considerably depending on how your members are selected. Some general rules do apply though. Try to fill your ranks once a year. A large turnover is a very disruptive event in an organization, and you should try to avoid it as much as possible. When you do go through it, turn that disruption into a virtue. Generate publicity in order to attract the best members that you can get. Invite prospective members to attend meetings before they are selected. Such exposure usually weeds out the people who really are not suited to your organization. Of course, you should be on the lookout for good members throughout the year. Even organizations with rigid structures have vacancies, and you should try to find good candidates to fill them.

26. Ask administrators and faculty members to recommend students who would be a valuable addition to student government.

The people who run the university do have good ideas and judgments. They certainly have some idea of which students would be likely to do a good job for your organization. Department heads are frequently the best sources of leads for new members. They are often close enough to the students to know who is well suited to your needs. Of course, do not use only this method if you can help it, but it makes a good starting point. The simplest way to handle this idea is to send letters to all department heads asking for nominations to your organization. Busy students are more likely to become involved if they feel it is encouraged by their department head.

27. Contact all student organizations on campus that may have graduate or professional student members.

Students who are already active in other student organizations are excellent possibilities for further involvement in student life. The active members of departmental honor societies are especially good in this respect, because they have already demonstrated some skill at being a student and some desire to become involved in campus activities. Having strong networks with other campus organizations is invaluable.

28. Tell your friends and your classmates about your organization.

Word of mouth is still the best way to create interest and build a solid organizational structure. Of course, since you know these people already, you should be able to assess how these individuals could contribute to your organization. Personalized nominations are more meaningful.

29. Make personal contact with prospective members before they actually join.

If it at all possible, call your prospects and talk to them about what being a member involves. Even if your selection process is based on student elections, having a conversation with those who are going to run can save you a considerable amount of grief later. Many people do not know what is involved.

Sad to say, some will want to become members for the worst of reasons. Sometimes a simple chat about both the benefits and the responsibilities of membership will encourage the good prospects and discourage non-altruistic candidates. Of course, if they are really interested, you should invite them to a meeting, where they can actually see what they are about to become involved in.

30. Persuade graduate and professional students that they can benefit from joining your organization.

Often, you only need to tell them the benefits in order to get them to join. By joining the GPSO, they can add a valuable line to their resume. If they then also serve on one or more university governing committees, they can add even more impressive lines to their resume. By being a part of a GPSO, graduate and professional students can improve their personal visibility with administration and faculty, which improves their chances of receiving honors and scholarships while still in school. For those who are going into academia for a career, learning how the structure of a university functions will be a significant plus in their academic careers.

31. Use university committees as a way to gather members.

Sometimes students are interested in specific university committees, so you can get them to join your organization in order to gain access to that committee. Occasionally this method will work in reverse. Some committees pick students from the entire student body without consulting your group. You should check out these students to see if they might want to join your organization too, a move which could help your GPSO to gain access to that committee, while providing the student involved with more information to improve his or her service on the committee.

32. Have guest speakers at some meetings.

Certain speakers can enliven a meeting considerably and provide valuable information to the members. In certain cases, the information can flow the other way as well. In follow-up question and answer sessions, your members can tell an important administrator or faculty member some of your concerns about his or her area of expertise. For graduate and professional students, excellent guests include the head of the library, the head of computing services, the provost, and the chancellor. Specialized guests can also be very useful, such as an expert on how schools can conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

33. Inform incoming graduate and professional students about the organization and try to recruit them within a few months of entering school.

The sooner that you get a prospective member involved in your organization, the more likely that such a person will be able to remain a member for a long time and thus acquire the knowledge and experience needed to achieve some of your long-range goals. Network with department representatives at orientations.

A good way to reach incoming students is to send a letter explaining the scope and focus of your GPSO and giving the date, time, and location of the first GPSO meeting for the coming semester. In addition, have one or more of your officers present at the new student orientation, either operating an information table or making a presentation to the students.

34. Explain to new members the benefits and responsibilities of membership before they join.

This procedure has already appeared in other sections of this manual. Nevertheless, it is so important that it deserves its own special treatment. Many GPSOs have severe problems with members joining and then disappearing. In large governmental organizations, this problem can cause major headaches with matters like obtaining a quorum. Having a talk with prospective members before they join can reduce this problem considerably. You are not trying to scare them away. You just want them to understand what they are getting involved in. You are not trying to talk them into it either. You just want them to understand how they can benefit from becoming a member and doing a good job. Experience shows that about twenty percent will back out when they find out what is involved. Twenty percent more will actually become more enthusiastic about joining. The other sixty percent seem to be unaffected by the whole procedure.

35. Cooperate with other student groups to improve your representation of minorities and international students.

Multicultural clubs and organizations are essential to creating supportive campus environments. Ask them to recommend prospective members or liaisons to your organization. Work with them to publicize their events. Incorporate them into your planning of events, or volunteer to co-sponsor events with them. Your GPSO should represent all graduate and professional students.

36. Create an award for your outstanding members.

You can create a special award that goes to your top member or members of each year. This special recognition not only rewards those who have earned it, but it can inspire those who will be coming back next year to work toward receiving that recognition. To make it work, you need to give the award special treatment. Make its presentation a special ceremony at your final meeting of the year. Give the winner a small plaque. Add the winner's name to a large continuing plaque on permanent display in a prominent place, say the graduate school office.



## Communications and Publicity

37. Run consecutive advertisements in the campus newspaper explaining the benefits of being a part of graduate-professional student organization.

Include in the ads what GPSOs accomplish for graduate and professional students. Provide information about meeting times, dates, social events, guest speakers, projects, and phone numbers of contact persons. Estimates are that you have to run it three times to get the average person to see it once.

38. Get the student newspaper to run an article on your organization.

Newspaper editors are usually searching for article ideas. Always have news coverage when guest speakers talk before your group or when something noteworthy takes place for your organization. When any member of your organization gets publicity, be sure that they include that they are a member of the GPSO. Photo opportunities can create additional publicity.

39. Get positive publicity at every opportunity.

Volunteer to assist the administration in campus-wide functions. Participate in campus-wide events by having information booths, posters, and displays. Visibility is the key to name recognition and acceptance by students, faculty, and administration. Make your organization the place for graduate and professional students to be seen and heard in a positive light. Get the reputation as the organization that gets things done. If your group gives awards, scholarships, or special recognition, have the recipient's photo submitted to the student newspaper. Try to get the school TV station, if any, to video tape your meetings and show them on the air.

40. Post notices of graduate government organizational meetings in departmental offices, student unions, libraries, classrooms, and e-mail bulletin boards.

Visibility brings awareness. If enough people see your organization's name enough times you will become an important and viable part of graduate student life. Some students only enter certain buildings or take certain paths. Cover all possibilities.

41. Create a small information brochure about your GPSO.

The brochure should be designed to fit on both sides of a piece of paper, 11 x 14, horizontally typed, and folded three times to fit in an envelope. Thus, it would contain short descriptions of various topics in the resulting six columns of the folded brochure. The graduate school could mail the brochure to potential and incoming graduate students, and the GPSO could distribute them at orientations and put them on bulletin boards. The brochure should include an interest form that the students can fill out and mail in. A good way to catch the reader's eye is to include a pie chart showing the various ways the administration allocates student fees.

42. Develop a graduate-professional student newsletter.

Publish the newsletter once or twice a semester (or more frequently if you can). Distribute paper copies to department mailboxes, administration, faculty, teaching fellows and assistants. Place other copies in lobbies and areas where graduate and professional students congregate. Email copies to as many campus list-serves you can.

Make the newsletter short and to the point. Graduate and professional students have little time to read extraneous material. Make the newsletter informative with headings such as "things no one ever told me about graduate school." Concentrate on accomplishments, upcoming events, and issues. Present a positive image to administration, faculty, and your graduate student body through the newsletter. Keep gripes for your meetings. Show graduate and professional students that graduate student government is involved with the administration on their behalf. Present short articles on topics of interest to graduate and professional students, such as: changes that affect them, legal questions, and departmental and administrative changes. Clear sensitive, or questionable, matters with the administration before publication. Some concerns are cleared up more easily if handled quietly.

43. Improve the graduate-professional student newsletter with all sorts of jazzy features and columns.

The ideas for features and columns are almost too numerous to mention, but here are a few. Provide brief summaries of hot topics under the heading "graduate issues update." Tell the students about key figures in the GPSO under the label "meet the officers." Inform the rest of the school about the developments in particular departments under the headline "spotlight on ...." Summarize GPSO meetings under the heading "inside the GPSO." Provide publicity for an outstanding graduate student under the label "cameo student." Inform the graduate and professional students about possible pitfalls that they face under the headline "things to keep in mind." Tell the students about ways to pay for school, including scholarships, under the heading "creative funding." Attract the interest of the graduate and professional students by picking a "TA of the month." Remind students of important academic deadlines under "important dates."

Collect questions from your constituents and have them answered. The questions asked would indicate to the administration and your organization how effective their information system is working. An effective way to emphasize this part of your communication efforts is to have the dean of the graduate school handle the column under the heading "Ask the Dean." Of course, the dean can choose what questions to answer and may duck the hard ones, but some good answers will usually result.

44. Establish an effective method of distributing the newsletter electronically.

You may choose to use a print copy and distribute that to certain locations every month. However, in addition to emailing the newsletter to program and department representatives, you should post it on your own website and provide links to that page in campus e-news and the websites of your GPSO, the office of graduate studies, and other key web pages. It is a good idea to print copies to include in the mailings to graduate and professional students and persons requesting information for graduate school.

45. Have a functioning website.

Preferably, host your website independently so that you have freedom over the layout and content. Make sure it is maintained and easy to use. Have the School of Graduate Studies and all of the professional schools post links to your website. Keep the information up-to-date and easy to find.

46. Make sure you have a way of contacting all graduate and professional students.

As most graduate and professional students know, most information comes to them via the grapevine. Usually the administrator of your campus network will be happy to help you set this one up, although it may not be possible to have direct access to the entire graduate-professional student email list, you should have an administrator who can distribute your emails to those lists.

47. Create a regional or state newsletter or network to share ideas and concerns with other graduate and professional students in your area.

State-level networks have proved incredibly successful in terms of advocacy (especially since the state legislature has a very direct role in higher education). Often we think our situations are unique or especially difficult. We may find that others share our problems or have found solutions. Some graduate and professional students are better off than we; some are worse off. Some teaching assistants get perks such as parking privileges; others do not. Some have health insurance; others do not. Some TAs have training, some do not. By sharing information we all benefit in some way. Sharing how we cope with difficult situations often helps others find solutions to problems they thought insurmountable. You may find that some schools have resolved issues by a variety of means and methods. Knowledge is power. Shared knowledge is even more powerful.

## Governance

48. Ask the administration and the faculty to add graduate and professional students as voting members on university governing committees that directly affect graduate and professional students.

Committees are the life blood of most universities. They make the preliminary decisions on most matters, preliminary because the top people can overrule the decisions before they go into effect. When you first organize your GPSO, aim for getting representatives on the key committees, the ones that most affect graduate and professional students. You will have to ask the administration and faculty for permission to serve. Be nice about it. Just ask, giving your reasons. They will probably let you start out on two or three committees to see how your people do. If you do well, you can ask for more positions with some confidence of getting them. Before you start, make the decision as to what you regard as the key committees. One view is that a key committee is one that has an immediate impact on most students, as opposed to one that has longer range significance or affects a smaller number of students. On that view, some of the key committees include the following (the names may change, but the objectives will not): if you have a separate graduate school, you probably have a graduate council that sets overall policy, approves new courses, examines course changes, considers the creation of new degrees, and sets standards for admissions. The graduate appeals committee rules on appeals of graduate school rules, such as degree time limits, GRE and GMAT minimums, and other exceptions to rules. The parking regulation committee sets parking policies, including the rates and locations of the various classes of parking. The union board of directors decides on policy issues for the student union, like food prices, staff requirements, and employee salary levels. The honors day committee organizes the day that recognizes academic and service achievements throughout the university. The student service fees committee determines how student fees are spent, including hopefully your very own budget. The university library committee sets budgets and policies for the libraries, including such matters as how much each department can spend on monographs and periodicals. The service advising committee recommends ways to improve service by the administration to students. The information resource council decides how to spend fees for computer labs and research computers.

49. Over time, persuade the administration and the faculty to add students to virtually every university-wide governing committee.

The administration will gradually accept your presence on committees if you do well. As you pick up momentum, committee appointments will almost fall in your lap. It is the first few that are the hardest. Of course, if you fail, you may get no more at all. Assuming you succeed, some of the other committees that you might want to pursue follow (again, concentrate on the goals, not the names): the university planning council decides on the development of university policies and the construction of buildings. The university program council determines what forms of entertainment or enlightenment will appear in the student union, like movies and speakers. The fine arts committee chooses the fine arts entertainment that will appear on campus, like classical musicians and ballet troupes. The institutional review board reviews requests by anyone connected with the university to conduct research with

human subjects. The committee on the status of women recommends ways to improve the status of women on campus. The animal research committee reviews requests by anyone in the university community who wants to do research with animals. The accreditation committee studies the university and prepares a report for use by the accrediting agency when they come to visit.

50. Provide feedback to the administration to help shape policies in ways that will protect graduate and professional students.

Impress the administration and faculty with the value of graduate student government, and they will cooperate. Earn the confidence of the administration and faculty, so that they will turn to you whenever they need assistance. If you develop a good working relationship, they will listen to your views and sometimes act on them. With the various pressures on any administration, you can never assume that they will be looking out for the students' best interests. A good example is student course fees. In many universities, these fees are rising rapidly. Even worse, many of them are not listed in the course schedule, so students do not know how much they will have to pay for a course until they receive their bills. If you point out this fact to the administration, they might try to improve the situation by at least having the fees specifically listed in the schedule. They might even put pressure on the departments to keep the fees under control. Unless you object, however, they are very unlikely to take any action.

51. Try to get the administration to improve parking for the graduate and professional students.

Parking is probably the second most important concern to many students, after tuition and fees. In some cases, the students are upset about the lack of parking. In other cases, it is the high price of the parking. Both situations are aggravated when a university provides inexpensive, reserved parking to faculty and staff while giving the leftovers to the students. Try to improve the parking, but realize it will be a slow, hard struggle. Even minor changes can make a difference. At one university, the GPSO made life much easier for some students by simply persuading the university to change the expiration dates on one class of sticker. New stickers in that class were not available each semester until after the beginning of the semester, which meant that students had to make two trips to the parking office, one to buy a temporary permit and another to buy the permanent sticker. The date change made the previous semester's sticker good until the next semester's selling date for permanent stickers, thus saving one lengthy wait in line each semester. The parking was not any better, but the hassles were reduced considerably.

52. Try to improve the health insurance situation for graduate and professional students at the university.

Graduate and professional students have a difficult time obtaining good health insurance at reasonable prices. Some can obtain it where they work, but many do not have that option. Some schools provide group plans for students, but the coverage under such plans is often minimal, amounting to no more than protection against a major hospital stay. Try to help in this matter. Perhaps you can persuade the university to find a better student plan. Maybe you could start a program to reimburse students for

part of their medical insurance expenses, such as paying part of their health insurance premium or covering their deductible for a doctor visit. You might want to introduce your students to the NAGPS services health insurance plan, which is available nationwide.

53. Organize a letter-writing campaign on an issue of major interest to the students.

Students get excited about various issues from time to time, usually with very good reason. You can channel that excitement into a useful form by organizing a letter-writing campaign. People do read letters, especially politicians, and sometimes they act when they receive enough of them. If you are attending a state university, a good campaign could result from the decision of the state legislature to raise tuition. Another possibility could be a protest against the federal government deciding to tax teaching assistant income and research grant income.

54. Persuade the administration to improve housing available to graduate and professional students.

At some universities, graduate and professional students can find all the adequate, low-cost housing that they need. At many others, a shortage exists, especially close to the school. You could try to get the university to improve that situation. Many options are available. Undergraduate dorms are usually too noisy for graduate and professional students, so the university could open a dorm exclusively for graduate and professional students. The university could purchase an apartment complex just off campus and run it as graduate housing. Of course, the ideal may be small duplex-style units for graduate and professional students and their families. A related idea is to have housing create a university bed and breakfast that would offer overnight accommodations for commuters.

55. Try to help the administration to make the campus safer.

On many campuses, the safety of the students is a major concern. Big city universities often have major problems with the crime that spills over from neighboring communities. Your GPSO could work on alleviating this problem. In conjunction with the campus police, you could install strategically placed emergency phones. You could improve the lighting in areas that have heavy nighttime traffic. You could offer an escort service for students trying to reach their cars or their housing at night.

56. Work to improve local transportation.

In some cities, local transportation is more important for students than parking. You could work to make student access to such transportation easier. Persuade the city to run buses into the campus, or ask the university to run a shuttle to nearby transportation lines. Of course, an on-campus shuttle for a large university would be an excellent service.

57. Address a specific important grievance of the graduate and professional students by forming an ad hoc committee.

Occasionally a single issue will so agitate graduate and professional students that some form of immediate, specific action will become necessary. One approach to such a situation could be to organize a special, one-issue committee to seek a solution. The committee could consist of students, plus any faculty and administrators who would agree to serve. Of course, the best situation would have the administration sanctioning such a committee, but you can form one even without that approval.

58. Issue a policy statement on an issue that has many of the graduate and professional students upset.

If an issue is important, but not so earth-shattering as to require a special committee, you might want to issue a policy statement. You can send the statement to the administration and the faculty in letter form and to the media as a press release. Of course, such a statement is not a substitute for your usual method of working with people to try to find solutions for problems, but on some issues putting your views down on paper for all to read might help.

59. Persuade the administration to provide you with a budget from student service fees.

The general question of finding a secure source of funds is discussed elsewhere. One specific source is, however, the best and deserves special attention. At most universities, the students pay fees designed to provide services to them. These fees cover a multitude of things, including the support of athletics, the school newspaper, and the student union. If you can add your own organization to this prestigious list, you may say that you have arrived. The application and hearing process may well be a considerable amount of work, but success should establish you as a force on campus.

60. Try to obtain a set financing arrangement from the administration.

If possible, you should try to take the next logical step up the financing ladder, an amount-per system. You usually have to be a full-fledged student government to get such an arrangement. The two situations often go hand-in-hand. If you are a student government, definitely work toward this goal. Options include a set amount per student (say \$1.00 per student per semester, a set amount per course (say \$0.25 per student enrolled in each course), a percentage of student fees (say ten percent of the total collected), and a percentage of total student government funds (say the percentage of graduate and professional students equals the percent of the funds).

61. Join NAGPS and work on the national level.

NAGPS can be an effective voice for graduate and professional students. It represents more than half a million of them. It works with other organizations, such as the council of graduate schools, on common problems. It sends letters to key national figures recommending ways to improve the position of graduate and professional students. It holds a national convention where graduate and professional students can exchange ideas and discuss possible solutions. It tries to publicize the value of graduate and professional students in the educational system by working through media people. It operates a national information exchange.

62. Communicate to elected officials the concerns of graduate and professional students.

National and state officials can have a major impact on graduate and professional students in both public and private schools. For public schools, virtually all of life can be affected by state laws and state financial policies. For private schools, federal student loan and grant programs can have a major impact. On a more indirect level, federal and state policies affect the conduct and the funding of research, the operation of electronic networks, the protection of minority rights, etc., etc. Etc. You can try to change policies on these issues by contacting those in charge, whether they are in the executive or the legislative branch. Just remember -- do not lobby! You cannot afford either the time or the money. Try instead to inform them about the needs and concerns of graduate and professional students.

63. Produce a graduate student orientation video and place copies in the media library and online.

If your school does not have a live orientation for new graduate and professional students, produce a video that can accomplish the same purposes. The new students can then go to the library or your website and learn about the multitude of services available to them from the various parts of the university.

64. Try to get a child care facility set up on campus.

Graduate and professional students often have children. Having a reliable care center on campus to watch the children while attending class or performing other academic is an invaluable service and helps promote equity in access to higher education. One of the recurring issues in graduate student newsletters relates to child care facilities. Some schools offer paid centers, some operate on a co-op basis, and some act as a clearing house for time swap share care.



## Programming

65. Host social gatherings for graduate and professional students.

Host a series of social events for graduate and professional students. Sometimes include spouses, special friends, families, and significant others. These events could include picnics, barbecues, and gambling nights, as well as formal and informal dances. You might have a series of gatherings at a local restaurant or pub. Perhaps you could hold a reception for graduate and professional students and have refreshments. Invite the administration and faculty too. They may not come, but at least they know you exist because you invited them.

66. Distribute a brochure that lists the rights and responsibilities of graduate and professional students.

Ideally, you should have a general brochure that applies to all graduate and professional students, plus one that applies only to those who work for the university as teaching assistants and research assistants. For the TAs, you can cover subjects like hiring policies, allowed workload, minimum wages, sick leave policies, workers' compensation, termination policies, student records, and grievance procedures. The brochure could be an asset to the administration and could be distributed throughout the campus. Your group gets the credit, the publicity, and the brownie points with administration. Here again your group is making a visible contribution to the university. When your GPSO asks for something, your concerns will be received more favorably if the administration does not sense the only time your group is vocal is when there is a problem. Present a cooperative image and one of contributing to the university.

67. Operate an emergency, small loan program for graduate and professional students.

Most student emergencies arise from the expenses for books, tuition and fees, publishing theses and dissertations, and rent money. Student loan money does not always coincide with these expenses. Your program would help graduate and professional students over the tough spots. You would charge a low rate of interest, and the university would cooperate in collection by withholding grades for those who do not repay. Graduate and professional students are usually fairly responsible. Only drop-outs have ever presented a problem. All you need to get started is the seed money, and the university may help with that need.

68. Organize a graduate student research presentation day.

Graduate and professional students frequently have difficulty finding places to present their research, so organize a day just for them. Critique papers and projects prior to formal presentations. Set up a program to video tape presentations for review by students. Organize the project by disciplines. The various types of research should include paper presentations, poster sessions, visual arts displays, and research demonstrations. Possible titles include "research exposition," "research symposium," "scholars day," and "research colloquium." The project gives students and your organization opportunities, experience, and publicity.

69. Give awards for outstanding student papers, theses, or dissertations.

Even if you do not have a special day to exhibit student research, create awards for outstanding work. It will generate interest in your organization as well as publicize it. You are performing a service for students, presenting faculty an opportunity to showcase their outstanding students, and giving administration an additional incentive to offer incoming graduate and professional students. Cash awards can be small or large. Just remember that graduate and professional students need all the money and support they can get.

70. Provide stipends to graduate and professional students for travel expenses when presenting papers at scholarly association conferences.

Graduate and professional students really cannot afford to travel to these conferences, but they need to go to get their careers off the ground. You will need to design forms and guidelines, and spread the word around campus. You will also need to organize a committee to judge the applications and make the awards. Be sure to publicize that your group is responsible. It should help with recruiting members.

71. Award research grants to graduate and professional students.

Finding funds to support research is one of the hardest things a graduate student can do. Work with schools and departments to create and sponsor the program. Find good judges to evaluate the applications. Again your organization gets free publicity when winners are announced.

72. Award small scholarships to outstanding graduate and professional students.

Although the amounts are small, every little bit helps. Of course, the scholarship will look good on the vita. In addition, at some state schools, any scholarship award inside the university can convert an individual from an out-of-state to a resident for the duration of the scholarship, which will save a bunch on tuition. Again awarding scholarships provides your organization with free publicity.

73. Organize a special graduate and professional students' awards program.

Graduate and professional students frequently work quite hard for little recognition. If your university has no large-scale program to provide such recognition, you can work to create one. The amount of organization required will be massive, and the cost of the plaques will not be small, but you can begin modestly and build yearly. Nevertheless, the administration and the faculty should appreciate your efforts and your organization should itself receive significant recognition.

74. Print t-shirts specific to the interests of local graduate and professional students.

Good subjects for such t-shirts are myths that haunt graduate and professional students: research funding is available, statistics is easy, graduate advisors will tell you exactly what you need to know, teaching assistants work only twenty hours a week, all graduate and professional students are funded through assistantships, tuition and fees will not go up in the foreseeable future, and a graduate degree will guarantee employment. T-shirts can be sold at booths at campus-wide events and thus give

publicity to your organization, or they can be presented as rewards for special service as officers and committee members. You may wish to wear your shirts on meeting days, giving an added boost to morale and creating yet another source of publicity.

75. Sponsor a student awareness week for drugs, alcohol, aids, environmental issues, multicultural issues, and/or women's issues.

Many schools have these events anyway, but you can join with other organizations to cosponsor them or help organize them. By cooperating with other groups, you illustrate that your organization represents all students. Such efforts should gain support for your special programs and increase your name recognition. You can build a reputation as a fair and unbiased organization.

76. Organize a graduate student orientation.

Student orientation requires long-range planning. Organize the orientation through the various schools so that orientation meets the needs of all students in all disciplines. Create a packet of useful information for graduate and professional students that the graduate school can distribute to prospective and incoming graduate and professional students. The packet contains essential information about your university and the services that graduate and professional students are most interested in obtaining: housing, libraries, computer services, transportation, fellowships, health and safety, and child care. Some schools videotape the presentations and make them available through the media library. By getting faculty and administration to make special presentations, you increase awareness of your organization and the beneficial things that you do. Administration, faculty, and students tend to support those things in which they are most involved. Broad involvement will increase your acceptance, visibility, and effectiveness as representatives of the student body.

77. Conduct a survey of graduate and professional students to learn their needs and interests.

The survey should be short and to the point. Make it simple by having check off answers, ratings, or multiple choices. By asking students about their needs, you also find what their interests are and get potential members to serve on committees. Some surveys ask specifically if there are certain committees that students will serve on. The survey becomes a source of potential members, and it can serve as a beginning point for creating interest in your GPSO. The survey should be part of graduate student orientation.

78. Host an open forum where graduate and professional students can question major figures in the administration.

If you do not have a specific issue to address, such as cuts in services, raises in tuition, or decreases in graduate assistant positions, you can simply ask a prominent member of the administration to come to answer student questions. Some schools have monthly brown bag luncheons and publicize the events well in advance in order for students to plan for specific questions. The forum can also provide an opportunity to the associate dean, chief of police, or financial aid person to showcase a special program or get publicity.

79. Participate in NAGPS' graduate & professional student appreciation week.

Create interest in GPSO by publicizing national graduate & professional student appreciation week. You may wish to coordinate and promote something your organization does during NAGPS week to get additional news coverage. Host a forum, hold a seminar, host a reception, give awards, but use the week to your advantage to build membership and increase interest. Some schools take advantage of this week to publicize how many graduate and professional students are on campus, what percentage are grads, the ratio of grads to undergrads, how many graduate degrees vs. Undergraduates degrees are awarded each year, or how graduate vs. Undergraduate programs are offered. The graduate student body is much larger than most graduate and professional students, faculty, departments, or schools realize. By taking into account the numbers and ratios involved, a better grasp of what share graduate and professional students contribute to the university helps bring additional focus on graduate student programs and government.

80. Organize a local workshop to train teaching assistants on how to do their jobs.

Many assistants complain that they do not receive proper training and do not know what to expect. Often assistants learn only through failure, thus creating unnecessary problems for themselves. The workshop should begin with general principles and guidelines of the university. The next step should be to divide into schools or departments and have their issues and programs addressed. Lastly, each department should have their professors provide a personal guide of what they expect of their graders and how they want their individual classes and grading procedures handled. In essence, the professor's guide should be similar to a syllabus and be a contract for employment. Too many times the assistant attends class lectures, grades two hundred exams, keeps all class records, runs errands, does research for the professor, creates the exams, and is expected to attend social events where the professor speaks. By having guides published, a more equitable work load can be created, because some professors require little of their assistants, while others expect everything. The NAGPS information exchange has many examples of such material, which are available on request from the national office.

81. Send teaching assistants to the national TA training conference to learn how to improve all aspects of their life and performance.

Many graduate and professional students do not get interested in the GPSO until their last years of graduate school, thus aggravating problems in retention and continuity. Get graduate and professional students interested in the GPSO early in their academic careers by sending them to the TA conference, which is a biannual event held in the fall of odd-numbered years. The site and dates of the next one are available from the NAGPS national office. Involvement in the training conference should bring growth and improvement for students and your organization.

82. Operate a pub, coffee house, lounge, or cafeteria for the graduate and professional students.

The pub/grad house idea is one of the fastest growing and newest ideas for promoting graduate student life. One concern of administrations is that graduate and professional students are not part of

student life and do not develop the loyalty for the university that translates into monetary support later in life. Many graduate and professional students commute, burrow into their private departments and dens of specialty, and fail to enter into the broader spectrum of university life. Grad houses provide an inexpensive place for graduate and professional students to meet and socialize. Some serve beer at a discount, provide a microwave, freezer, copy machine, computer, printer, and bulletin boards. The facility is run by the graduate and professional students, thus providing additional income for graduate and professional students.

83. Start a chapter of Alpha Epsilon Lambda, the nation-wide, campus-wide, honor society for graduate and professional students.

AEL is a campus-wide honor society exclusively for graduate and professional students. It has high standards and strict guidelines. Requirements for membership are based on a combination of grades, leadership, and service to graduate and professional students. AEL provides an additional means for graduate and professional students to increase their visibility and improve their vitas. Most important, it provides an excellent way to reward graduate and professional students for having an outstanding school career. Having a chapter can also provide some students with a good incentive to join your GPSO, because membership in a GPSO provides the credit for service to students that is needed to achieve AEL membership.

84. Publish a graduate-professional student yellow pages.

Graduate yellow pages provide a service to graduate and professional students while they help raise money for the GPSO. Selling ads for local businesses that are of special interest to graduate and professional students helps increase awareness of the graduate student market. Reviews by fellow students and a star rating system add to the credibility of the publications. Include reviews of restaurants, apartments, and transportation. You may wish to coordinate your guide with local chamber of commerce materials that are provided free of charge, such as maps, free services, local entertainment, religious and counseling services, parks and recreation areas, and recycling guides.

85. Loan small items to people who live in campus housing.

Often students need the short term loan of kitchen utensils, linens, hangars, and other items. Having a rummage closet full of household items does not immediately sound like a function of a GPSO, yet it is one that some groups provide, and some students, especially foreign students, find it very helpful.

86. Publish a handbook/guide for graduate and professional students to help them get around on campus.

Whether you call it a handbook or a guide, this publication should tell the graduate student the basics about surviving on your campus. Possible topics include the climate, campus housing, food, parking, apartments, transportation, banks, counseling, mail, shopping centers, student union, book store, special services, important phone numbers, library, computer access, off-campus jobs, registration

procedures, and graduate student government. The guide should also include a student survey to be mailed or deposited at a convenient campus location.

87. Publish a guide for graduate student employees of the university.

This guide would provide most of the things the student employee needs to know about benefits, services, insurance, monetary compensation, special rates for teaching assistants, access to credit union services, and schedules of stipends and pay periods. The guide provides information on what is required on the job, time sheets, payments of fees and other expenses, tax status, residency, vacations, registration requirements, intellectual property, copyrights, appointment process, and training. The guide should include application deadlines, selection procedures, duties, ethics situations, and grading policies, and it should have student surveys to identify their evaluations and interests.

88. Offer a workshop on doing theses and dissertations.

Cooperate with the administration to sponsor these events. The project places the GPSO in a position to come in contact with every graduate student on campus. It can be an annual or a biannual event. Cover topics like writing abstracts, observing ethical and editorial guidelines, funding research, making sure it is an original contribution. Follow up by organizing a support group that meets once a month. The NAGPS national office has a wealth of material on this topic available on request to the information exchange.

89. Offer a workshop on the ways to apply for permission to do human subjects research.

The federal government has enacted strict standards for those who do research with human subjects. If you want to do such research, you will have to fill out an extensive application to obtain the necessary permission. Your university probably has a committee that reviews such applications. This process can be very difficult for graduate and professional students to accomplish. Your GPSO could help by finding an expert who could offer students a workshop on the subject. Your efforts may never be more appreciated.

90. Offer a workshop on ways to apply for permission to do research with animal subjects.

Animal research is also subject to controls administered by a review committee. If you want to do research, you must convince the oversight committee that you meet the requirements by filling out the appropriate applications with the proper answers. Just as with human research, this process can be difficult. Although more help is generally available from the professors in these areas, your university may be an exception. If you find that situation, offer a workshop to the poor souls who are about to enter the mine field.

91. Offer a workshop on how to use campus web services and other cyber-tools.

As the types of internet and web-based research and publishing tools expand, it is increasingly important for graduate and professional students to become savvy users. Offer workshops on how to

get access to university-hosted personal web pages and how to develop those, as well as other tools like wikis and blogs. Also, if available, have workshops on how to publish their research in open-access forums.

92. Publish a graduate-professional student phone directory.

If your university does not have a graduate student phone directory, you might want to publish one. Sell ads to raise funds. Include university phone numbers and other important information usually found in such publications. Including addresses is probably not a good idea, because irate undergraduates might seek out graduate and professional students that give them bad grades.

93. Offer a workshop on how to apply for grants.

Graduate and professional students need to know how to write grants. With the increasing shortage of funding, the grant process becomes more critical. Some departments are in a position to educate students better than others as to how to write grants. Offer to co-sponsor a grant writing workshop. You will provide a service to the students and bring prestige to your university when the students receive grants.

## Becoming Independent

94. Most campus-wide student governments are run by undergraduates, so try to have a good working relationship with them.

On many campuses, one student government serves both undergraduates and graduates. Since the undergraduates are usually numerically superior, they tend to run that combined student government. In such a situation, the GPSO is usually a semi-governmental body. It has some government-like functions, but the real power lies in the campus-wide government. The GPSO exists either as an arm of the graduate school, as a part of just one of the schools of the university, or as an adjunct body subservient to the main student government.

If your organization is not a true governing body, and undergraduates control the actual student government, try to work with the undergraduates on those matters that affect you both. Sometimes you will have to depend on them for your funds. Often you will have to depend on them to accept your recommendations of graduate and professional students for various committee positions. You must work hard at maintaining the link with the undergraduates, because they frequently care little for your interests or concerns. If you let that link break down, the consequences can be disastrous. One solution is to invite student government officers to attend your GPSO meetings, where they can learn the concerns of graduate and professional students. Another possibility is to have meetings between your GPSO officers and student government officers. Communication is vital, so try to improve it any way you can.

95. Undergraduate and professional students and graduate and professional students have fundamentally different needs and interests.

Those student leaders who sit in both a GPSO and an undergraduate-dominated student government often note a significant difference in attitude and approach. Undergraduate leaders usually divide their time between such traditional concerns as beer bashes, fraternities and sororities, parties, and intermittent tests, and such hot political issues as environmentalism, minority rights, gay and lesbian rights, and women's rights. Graduate leaders are interested in all these things, but they are far more likely to be concerned with the never-ending struggle of the graduate student to juggle work, school, and family, while fighting a budget that barely covers the bare necessities. After you listen to a thirty-minute discussion of spending four thousand dollars on a new costume for the football team mascot, you may have a hard time figuring out how you are going to reach an understanding with the undergraduate leaders. A GPSO meeting would be far more likely to discuss the question of improving the university library. In a similar vein, the graduate representative to the university library committee will likely be quite vocal, while the undergraduate representative may not utter a sound. Despite the differences between communities it is important to realize the goals of the undergraduates and make sure the needs of graduate and professional students are addressed within their initiatives.

96. In the absence of any words to the contrary, the administration and faculty will assume that the campus-wide student government adequately represents the graduate and professional students.



The administration and the faculty have their own worries. They typically do not concern themselves with an issue such as, "does campus-wide student government fairly represent graduate and professional students?" As a rule, administrators do not enjoy controversy. This inertia conceals the fact that graduate and professional students are frequently the real unrecognized and unaccepted minority on campus. The squeaky wheel gets the grease, and graduate and professional students are usually too busy trying to get everything done to complain about the injustice of the system. As a student leader, you have to live with that fact. You may try to rectify it, but you will certainly have to figure out how to get your job done despite it.

97. Campus-wide student governments usually give the graduate and professional students less than their fair share of the available funds.

One consequence of the dominance of student government by undergraduates is that graduate and professional students get the short end of the financial stick. Typically graduate student organizations have budgets that run about ten percent of those of the campus-wide student government. When asked, the undergraduates argue that the money they spend is for the good of all, not just undergraduates. A glance at their budget will probably provide ample evidence of the untruth of such a statement. Few graduate and professional students will find costumes for university mascots worthy of large expenditures. If the truth be known, some graduate and professional students would cancel the homecoming parade and spend the money on a graduate research day. Of course, an enlightened graduate leader will say that there is room for both, but he or she will also point out that there are far more homecoming parades than there are graduate research days.

98. Consider using "good ole boy politics" in your struggles with separate graduate-professional student needs from those of undergraduates.

If the undergraduate student government rules the roost and controls a large annual operating budget, set out to change the situation for the better. Don't change the system - make the system work for you. Use the traditional southern method of "good ole boy politics," which relies on hard work, big smiles, and seeking the solutions to everyone's problems. Step one, get involved in campus politics. In a good year, only a small percent of the students on your campus vote, so the graduate student votes could swing any election. Your job is to point out how important your constituency is. Try inviting all the candidates for student body president to come to your meetings to speak about their platforms. Along with this invitation, remind the candidates that there are a large number of graduate and professional students on campus. This tactic should attract their attention and bring them to your meeting. Once you've heard them, your problem is how to deliver the votes. Do not forget, the idea is not so much to deliver the votes, as it is to befriend every future student body president. Try to make a good first impression on the candidates. Be careful of winding up on the losing side in the election. Try hard to get out your vote. Talk to fellow students and urge them to vote. You might even ask professors for permission to pull entire graduate classes out of class to take them to the voting polls. You must start your campaign early if you hope to get a significant number of graduate and professional students to the polls. You might even consider running a graduate student for student

body president. Step two, all of your events should be graduate and undergraduate student friendly. Create events that both undergraduates as well as graduate and professional students will enjoy. Each event you host, invite the entire student body, as well as faculty and staff. Whether you are having a party, or recruiting new council members, or hosting fund raising ventures, all are welcome. Don't let anyone say your GPSO only serves graduate and professional students. Keep in mind, today's undergrad is tomorrow's grad student. Step three, get involved in all aspects of campus life. If you assign a member of your GPSO to a function, be sure that person is the first one there and the last one to leave. If an organization needs assistance, they should know that the GPSO is the place to call. Your graduate organization should be the best friend to the entire campus community. Why should you care about the rest of the campus? "Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," work with everybody. If everybody relies on your group to be there for them in a jam, you're making friends, allies, and a body of people who owe you a favor. Your GPSO will become invaluable to the campus community, and everybody will owe you a favor. You will become a part of the network of "good ole boys and girls" who run the university.

99. Think long and hard before deciding to make your GPSO a separate graduate student government.

Despite all the negatives that are associated with being subservient to an undergraduate-dominated student government, they pale by comparison with the struggle that may await you if you do battle with them to win your independence and your share of the money. Occasionally the battle for independence is relatively easy, but far more often it is nasty indeed. It may not be worth it. You may not succeed. You may lose all the goodwill that you have built up over the years. Of course, those who have already achieved independence say it is worth the price, but be aware that there is a price. Certainly increased funds will allow you to do far more for graduate and professional students. Do not forget, however, that the new freedom carries with it greater responsibility. Your members will have to do more work. You will have to have a full-fledged student services fees committee of your own. You may have to decide such questions as how much graduate and professional students will contribute to the university's athletic programs, and the university will probably not accept "nothing" as an answer. The rules under which you operate will become tighter and much more rigidly enforced. In short, evaluate the cost and benefits to becoming independent based on your school's situation.

100. Get the approval of administration and faculty before you try to achieve independence from the undergraduates.

If you can get the powers-that-be (deans, vice presidents, provost) behind your idea before you talk to the undergraduates, the battle may be over before the fighting starts. Frequently, these powers support independence. Perhaps they understand how different most graduate and professional students are. Perhaps they are having a difficult time with an undergraduate government that has forgotten rule number one and devotes its efforts to attacking the administration. Whatever the reason, the administration and faculty may give you the green light. Of course, this tactic will not always work. They may say no. They may say yes until the undergraduates scream and then change

their minds. Nevertheless, you may be able to pull the rug out from under the undergraduates, so give it a try.

101. If all else fails, take aggressive action to force a total separation from the undergraduates.

This final bit of advice actually violates the very first one. Nevertheless, always remember that your first loyalty is to the students. Usually, separation will require an amendment to your student government constitution. Draft an amendment and submit it to the student assembly (which may be called the student senate, the student legislature, etc.) for approval. If the assembly rejects it, seek publicity for your cause. Submit memos to the administration. Persuade the student newspaper to carry articles about your efforts. Circulate petitions among the students that will force the student government to hold a referendum on separation. Stage boycotts of student assembly meetings. After you try everything else, consider suing the administration to force the separation. Even at this point, however, you should suggest the possibility first. Only actually resort to legal action if the administration tells you to take a flying leap. Lawyers are expensive, and administrators will usually listen to reason, given a little time.