

25 September 2019

To the Purdue University Family,



It is my sincere pleasure to present the Purdue Graduate Student Government's **Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities** (GSBoRR). The GSBoRR is the result of a multi-year collaborative effort between PGSG and University administration to provide a broadly applicable, high-level expectation of a successful and efficacious graduate education experience.

In unequivocal terms: **the GSBoRR is not nor is intended to be utilized as enforceable University policy.** However, this document represents the mutually agreeable perspectives of graduate students via the PGSG<sup>1</sup>, Graduate School administration, graduate faculty via the Graduate Council<sup>2</sup>, and faculty at large via the University Senate<sup>3</sup>. The project has been reviewed by the Board of Trustees, President, Provost, Legal Counsel, Vice Provost for Student Life, Dean of Students, and Associate Dean for Student Rights and Responsibilities. As such, while the GSBoRR does not represent a set of enforceable rules, it is a solid foundation that informs graduate students and empower them to identify situations in which they should seek advice and advocate for themselves.

PGSG recognizes three related but non-overlapping University documents: (1) the "Purdue University Bill of Student Rights" which describes the relationship for all students, not otherwise specified, with the University, (2) "Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising" approved by the Graduate Council that provides faculty-to-faculty discussion on advising best-practices, and (3) the Graduate School "Policies and Procedures for Administering Graduate Student Programs" which provides important but incomplete discussion of graduate student rights and responsibilities. The GSBoRR is an extension of these documents, representing the true experience of our graduate students to inform other graduate students as a set of fundamental and collectively appreciated rights and responsibilities, even if acknowledged as aspirational. At its heart, the GSBoRR intends to promote active communication and an environment that fosters success and validates the importance of graduate students to the mission of Purdue University.

To my fellow graduate students:

Thank you for the dedication and hard work each of you provide that brings the prestige to our graduate programs. Remember always that your role as a graduate student is integral to the University, and that you matter well beyond the research you complete.

To our graduate faculty and University administrators:

In this process I have encountered so many of you who are the exemplary embodiment of mentorship and student support. Thank you for what you do and for your willingness to support this effort to provide foundation for our students.

Together, let us embrace the best of what we have and continue working toward an even greater culture of graduate education at Purdue University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TB".

Taylor W. Bailey  
President, Purdue Graduate Student Government

<sup>1</sup> Ratified by the Purdue Graduate Student Senate on February 27, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Endorsed by the Graduate Council on April 18, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> The immediate past version endorsed by the University Senate on November 19, 2018. At the time this letter was written, a reconsideration of University Senate endorsement is pending following a faculty referendum on January 6, 2019.

## **Introduction**

The Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities is an aspirational document drafted to serve as an agreeable set of standards to shape a standardized expectation of what the Purdue graduate student experience should be. This document is not enforceable university policy, but it demonstrates a commitment of students, faculty, and administration to a set of fundamental norms to promote the most positive graduate education culture and mutual success for everyone at Purdue. It shall inform all Purdue graduate students, irrespective of their roles as students, graduate staff, or fellows, to ensure that their time at Purdue is both enjoyable and efficacious, seeking to foster graduate student engagement with the principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, inclusion and diversity, discovery and research, teaching, learning, and shared governance.

### **I. Purdue Graduate Student Rights Article 1. Equal Educational Opportunity for Graduate Students**

1. Graduate students have a right to be informed of the rights described in this document upon enrollment and to be free of reprisals for exercising them.
2. Graduate students have the right to clear and specific written requirements for achieving an advanced degree upon admission into their graduate program including, but not limited to, course work, examinations, publication, and conference attendance. Information regarding time-to-degree, availability and administration of graduate assistant salary, and faculty placement options should also be accessible.
3. Graduate students have the right to reasonable and appropriate resources to successfully fulfill their research and academic obligations, acknowledging that the dynamic nature of research and availability of resources may sometimes require adaptation to alternative research approaches.
4. Graduate students have a right to respectful mentoring and advising relationships with faculty and all members of their graduate committee and to evaluation by their committee in accordance with fair procedures in matters of continuation within their program, based solely on the individual graduate student's academic and professional performance.
5. Graduate students have a right and should be encouraged to pursue academic and professional training that is relevant to their personal career path and that will make them competitive for their career goals after the completion of their program.
6. Graduate students have a right to access wellness resources, including programs for mental and physical well-being, to optimize their academic achievement and their contribution to the university overall.
7. Graduate students have the right to a clearly defined grievance procedure detailed within their graduate program's manual and to seek resolution without retaliation.

### **Article 2. Supportive and Constructive Workplace Environment for Graduate Staff**

1. Graduate staff working as administrative, professional, research, and/or teaching assistants have the right to clear and specific written job descriptions, responsibilities, and benefits (such as vacation and sick leave) that come with their appointment. This notification should occur prior to the start of employment, and staff members should be immediately informed in writing of changes.
2. Graduate staff members should understand the impact of their earnings on eligibility for student loans and salaries. Relevant university, college, department and/or graduate program resources, including human

resources and business office staff, should be responsive to graduate student inquiries about their working conditions.

3. Graduate staff have a right to structured and specific training to ensure that they can meet the expectation of their appointment.

4. Graduate staff have the right to a competitive salary relative to their colleagues in comparable departments in peer institutions, standardized to cost of living for an individual who is renting housing in the Greater Lafayette area. Graduate salary levels should be evaluated on a triennial basis by colleges and departments. The process and rationale for outcomes of evaluations should be made available to the pertinent graduate staff members.

5. Graduate staff have a right to an accurate written description of the availability, sources, and conditions for the continuity of financial and resource support for a graduate staff appointment, and immediate notice of any changes impacting continued support. If the conditions for employment change, contract obligations by both parties should meet all obligations. Only if the graduate staff leaves the position prior to the Graduate Staff Employment Manual minimums, should any obligation of tuition repayment beyond the graduate staff fee be executed.

6. Graduate staff with a benefit eligible appointment have a right to graduate staff leave and benefits, as defined by Human Resources, and to participate in the process for assessing benefit coverages, plans, and rates.

7. Graduate staff have the right to a clearly defined workplace grievance procedure detailed within their department's graduate program manual and to seek resolution without retaliation.

### **Article 3. Mentoring, Advising, and Performance Feedback**

1. Graduate students have a right to request consultation on all aspects of their progress within their degree program. Graduate students should receive regular and constructive feedback and guidance concerning their performance on a mutually agreeable schedule from all members of their graduate committee. Requests for meetings by either party should be met in a timely fashion, and feedback should be provided in writing when requested.

2. Graduate students have the right to change their major professor(s) and the right to alternative supervision; however, this right should be exercised judiciously and with respect to the investments a faculty member makes when accepting a student. In cases where the student's major professor departs from the university after the student's coursework has begun, the graduate student should be informed of all options available to continue studying. If a graduate program is to be discontinued, provisions shall be made for students already in the program to complete their course of study.

3. Graduate students have a right to prompt notification of any concern of their major professor, graduate committee, department, or the university related to their performance that may jeopardize their continued participation in their graduate program. Graduate students have the right to receive a fair opportunity to improve performance and address deficiencies subject to a reasonable, mutually agreed upon set of guidelines and timetable.

4. Graduate students have a right to question and refuse tasks that would impede progress in completing their program or that are not immediately related to their academic or professional development, unless these tasks are explicitly established within the requirements of their program or a staff appointment.

5. Graduate students have a right to full confidentiality in their communication with staff, faculty, and administrators, unless superseded by Title IX, FERPA, or other state or federal law.

#### **Article 4. Research Contribution and Authorship**

Graduate students have a right to fair treatment and attribution, including authorship, for significant contribution to ideas and work performed on faculty- or university-sponsored research. The norms and standards within the respective discipline or the implication of interdisciplinary research to authorship should be explicitly explained by the primary investigator and agreed upon by all participating researchers. Individual rights and responsibilities on research projects should be discussed as early as possible and communicated throughout the duration of the project, acknowledging that the dynamic nature of research may dictate transition of responsibilities or authorship positions once a project has been started.

#### **Article 5. Participation in Governance**

1. Graduate students have the right to consultation in the decision-making process of all departments and graduate programs when graduate students may be affected.

2. Graduate students have the right to representation in all university committees where graduate students may be affected, with voting privileges when appropriate and without fear of retaliation for exercising this right. Selection of graduate students to serve on university committees should be made in consultation with the Purdue Graduate Student Government.

### **II. Purdue Graduate Student Responsibilities Article 1. Graduate Student Engagement with the University**

1. Graduate students are responsible for understanding and carrying out the responsibilities that are described in this document and the implications to their time spent at the university.

2. Graduate students are responsible for fostering their own success. They should be diligent in carrying out their duties in a conscientious and timely manner and do their best to ensure stability for other students, faculty, programs, and departments with whom and wherein they work.

3. Graduate students are responsible for maintaining active and professional communication with their major professor. They should inform their major professor immediately of special circumstances that may preclude completion of their work. These circumstances could include, but are not limited to, the unique nature of the research, dire financial situations, civic obligations, family obligations, and religious obligations.

4. Graduate students are responsible for attending class and completing all assignments in accordance with the expectations established by their instructors and the academic requirements of their graduate programs.

5. Graduate students are responsible for taking the initiative in seeking information that promote their understanding of the academic requirements and the financial particulars of their graduate program and to be receptive of information and updates provided to them through multiple forms of communication, including Purdue e-mail.

6. Graduate students are responsible for informing the university of changes in address, phone number, enrollment status, or any other circumstance which could affect satisfactory progress in their program or financial aid and assistantship awards.

7. Graduate students are responsible for providing service to and actively participate in the governance of their program, their department, school or college, and the university community, and they should endeavor to

contribute to the administration and ongoing improvement of their graduate program, the graduate student government, and the university.

## **Article 2. Purdue Graduate Staff Responsibilities**

1. Graduate staff should recognize that a graduate staff appointment represents an obligatory average weekly time commitment to duties that may be uncoupled from their academic responsibilities. They are responsible for maintaining regular and open communication with their employer, to ensure mutual understanding of the expectations of their appointment, and to perform their duties as outlined and in accordance with institutional guidelines and policies.
2. Graduate staff with teaching appointments are responsible for upholding the highest level of academic integrity, professionalism, and diligence in their teaching practices.
3. Graduate staff with research appointments are responsible for upholding the highest levels of research integrity, consistent with the responsible conduct of research.
4. Graduate staff are responsible to understand their role and due diligence in fostering professional relationships with their advisors and university personnel.

## **III. Amendments to the Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities**

Any amendments to the Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities should seek endorsement from the Purdue Graduate Student Senate, the Graduate Council, and the University Senate.