

101 Ways to Build an Effective Graduate Student Organization

3rd Edition

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Introduction

The Spring 1993 NAGPS South-Central Regional Conference was a day-long discussion of the ways to build an effective graduate student government. The delegates, all members of their graduate student organizations, considered three different aspects of graduate student government: (1) how to start a graduate student association, (2) how to add some governmental functions to an association, and (3) how to turn a semi-governmental association into a fully independent government. The University of North Texas Graduate Student Council taped the discussions, with the objective of turning them into a how-to manual for use by graduate students throughout the United States.

We used those tapes as the starting point for this manual. We supplemented them with our combined eight years' experience in student government, plus ideas from various student publications from around the country. In the 2nd and 3rd editions, we added the experiences of other students from around the country.

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, electronic 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 trying to deal with the undergraduates). We hope that other student leaders will benefit from the things that we have learned in the preparation of this manual.

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University of Minnesota
University of New Mexico
University of Southern California
Utah State University
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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 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 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 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. You will encounter it though, and occasionally it will come to dominate a university. 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 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 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 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 students involved.*

Most graduate 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 GSO 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 association.

7. *Representatives should conduct themselves in a professional manner when attending committee meetings.*

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 members behave in a business-like manner, they will quickly endear themselves to the administration and faculty. If not, they will wear out their welcome in a hurry. The first impression is a lasting impression. You may not get another chance.

8. *Always give credit where credit is due.*

Many times administrators, faculty, and graduate 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 set aside some of his funds for you. Maybe you can get some contributions from local businesses. Perhaps alumni would be willing to contribute funds to support your activities. 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 among rival applicants. 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. Some universities take a slice of the funds at three different levels before you ever see them. Try to keep such slicing to a minimum.

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

Graduate student organizations cover a wide range. Many start as a simply voluntary association of graduate students with common interests. Such groups often take the name of the graduate student association (GSA). 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 officially for graduate students. They begin to appoint representatives to university governing committees. They advise the administration and faculty on matters of policy. They acquire a budget and spend money on behalf of the students. They are not full-fledged governments yet. They are in a gray area, no longer simply an association, but not yet a government. Some of these groups change their names to reflect their new status. Graduate Student Council (GSC), Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC), and Graduate Student Senate (GSS) are all popular choices. Eventually, some GSOs evolve into full-fledged governments. They become the official voice of the graduate students. They receive funding out of student fees. Indeed, they determine how graduate student fees are spent. At this point, some change their name to some form of Graduate Student Government (GSG). Of course, some groups are outside this spectrum. They have specialized functions, such as graduate employee unions or MBA associations. If you fit these patterns, however, you should try to follow these name guidelines.

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 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 students. Of course, appointments, elections, and money matters will take some time, but the concerns of graduate 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, or send them all e-mail messages.*

Some members will not need calls or messages. A few will even resent them. Simply leave those folks off the call or e-mail list. Most of the rest will need a reminder on occasion, and many will appreciate it. If you do not call, some will forget, and your attendance will suffer. Experience shows 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 GSO

17. Always start with the administration.

If you can get the administration to cooperate, your whole project will become much more feasible. Your best bets are the dean and the associate dean of the graduate school. Try to demonstrate to them the advantages to the university of having a thriving graduate student organization. First, such an organization will improve communications between the administration and the faculty. Established links between the students and the power structure will allow ideas to flow both ways. The administrators can express their concerns, and the students can voice their needs. Second, it will improve the public image of the university by giving it to the reputation of being responsive to the needs of graduate students. Third, accreditation bodies look for the presence of such a body at graduate schools when evaluating graduate programs.

18. Choose a method of selecting members that suits your needs.

You have three basic choices of how to obtain members: have them volunteer, have them appointed, or have them elected. In many ways, volunteers are the most satisfactory. They want to be there, so they usually serve better. Other considerations may override this factor. If you want to establish strong ties with administration and faculty, appointees may be superior. If the powers-that-be pick the members, they should be able to work with them easier. Of course, appointees may not represent the students very effectively. Election by the students might rectify that problem. Unfortunately, that method has its own defect -- those who can win elections are not always the same as those who can serve well. Of course, if you are a full-fledged graduate student government, you will probably have to use the election method. Some organizations have combined the methods by asking everyone to nominate the candidates: administration, faculty, and students (including self-nomination). Then the current members interview the candidates, explaining the benefits and responsibilities of membership, to see if they want to volunteer. If more volunteer than you have positions, then you hold elections.

19. Plan what you want your organization to become.

You should devote some thought to this question. Do not just fall into one situation after another. For instance, if you want to be a full-fledged government, you should construct a plan to achieve that objective, including a timetable. The more ambitious you are, the more you will need to plan everything. For instance, at some institutions, the relatively simple task of converting from appointed members to elected members has taken two

years to accomplish. Another example - to receive student service fees, you usually have to request them six to ten months in advance, and in many cases need to present the proposal as a referendum to be voted on by the graduate student body.

20. *Decide what type of representation you want.*

If your members are going to be more than just volunteers, you need to choose a form of representation. The two main choices are by department or by school and college. If you want to involve everyone, department representation is effective. Unfortunately, the size of your organization can become unmanageable. Larger universities can have more than one hundred departments. Many of these seats remain empty because no one wants to serve. In addition, the relative size of departments makes this scheme unrepresentative. Some departments have two or three students, while others have two or three hundred. Yet, each department has only one vote. You can ease this problem somewhat by giving large departments multiple seats, but the small departments still easily out vote the large ones. School or college representation solves some of these problems by keeping the organization small. You can give the larger schools more seats, and you can combine small schools into one seat. The problem with this method is that multiple departments have to combine to elect one representative. Since people tend to vote for those they know, the smaller departments tend to get out voted all the time. A possible solution is to create at-large seats and allow a committee of the current members to give those seats to election losers from small departments who appear to be worthy of membership. Some critics believe that solution is worse than the problem. A few schools ignore the whole mess by using volunteers, but searching for volunteers when particular schools are not represented.

21. *Make sure that knowledge of how things work is passed on to next year's membership.*

The worst problem your organization will face is losing the knowledge that the membership has worked so hard to gain. Graduate student organizations have even completely disintegrated and disappeared in a two-year period. One year your GSO is thriving. The people who produced all that activity leave. The next group approaches their task only half-heartedly. At the end of that year, no one takes their place. As if by magic, a GSO has disappeared from the face of the earth. To keep this fortune from befalling your GSO, you must find ways to preserve a continuity of knowledge. One way is to have carry-over members. This year's members do not have to run for re-election, or be reappointed, or whatever. All they have to do is sign a letter saying they will be back next year, and they are automatically a member. Experience shows this method works wonders. Someone who knows what they did last year is always there. Another method of preserving knowledge is to create officer's books. These books contain lists of things that must be done, deadlines for important reports and applications, plus instructions on how to do crucial things like applying for funds.

22. *Try to ensure that your officers are knowledgeable.*

If at all possible, try to have your officers be people who have served at least one year in your organization. One way to accomplish this objective is to have your elections at the end of the school year in anticipation of the following school year. Occasionally you will lose someone who gets a job or drops out of school, but this misfortune strikes far less among those who are elected to an office than you might think. Another method is

to require a certain amount of service before a person runs, say six months. Still another way is to have a nominating committee of the old hands pick those who will run for the top spots, but this control from the top is probably going too far. Whatever you choose, try to avoid like the plague having the student body elect your officers. Elect them yourselves from among your own number. As a rule, students do not vote in campus-wide student elections. Only well organized cliques participate, so those groups come to dominate the organization. Student elections can produce true representatives only when a significant portion of the students participate. So find some other way, if you can.

23. *Increase your knowledge of student government by joining state, regional, and national student government organizations.*

The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students provides a number of services to its members. One of the most important of these is the Information Exchange, which contains examples of virtually every idea that a graduate student organization has tried over the last decade. In short, your organization becomes part of a network of graduate students who share their constitutions, bylaws, newsletters, brochures, program outlines, etc. By calling the national office, you can gain access to the latest trends and developments that effect graduate students. They will send you examples of whatever you need or want. State and regional organizations can be especially important, because many issues that affect graduate students are local in nature.

INCREASING MEMBERSHIP

24. *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 people to fill them.

25. *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, at least part of the time. 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 through inter-campus mail asking for nominations to your organization.

26. *Send contact letters to all student organizations on campus that may have graduate 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.

27. *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 judge which ones would be a valuable addition to your group. You might even want to apply a little friendly pressure to the ones who would be especially outstanding.

28. *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 the bad ones. 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.

29. *Persuade graduate 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 GSO, 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 GSO, graduate 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.

30. *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 folks to see if they might want to join your organization, a move which could help your GSO to gain access to that committee, while providing the student involved with more information to improve his or her service on the committee.

31. *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 followup 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 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 with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

32. *Inform incoming graduate students about the organization and try to recruit them within 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. After administrators and faculty work with people for a while, they may be far more likely to trust their judgment and pursue policies that they recommend. A good way to reach incoming students is to send a letter explaining the scope and focus of your GSO and giving the date, time, and location of the first GSO 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.

33. *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 GSOs 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.

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

Almost every minority group has an organization. Try to get them to recommend prospective members. Work with them to publicize their events. Incorporate them into your planning of events, or volunteer to co-sponsor events with them. Your GSO should represent all graduate students.

35. *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

36. *Run three consecutive advertisements in the student newspaper explaining the benefits of being a part of graduate student government.*

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

37. *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 GSO. Photo opportunities can create additional publicity.

38. *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 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.

39. *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.

40. *Create a small information brochure about your GSO.*

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 GSO 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.

41. *Develop a graduate student newsletter.*

Publish the newsletter once or twice a month. Distribute it through department mailboxes to administration, faculty, teaching fellows and assistants. Place other copies in lobbies and areas where graduate students congregate. Make the newsletter short and to the point. Graduate 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 students that graduate student government is involved with the administration on their behalf. Present short articles on topics of interest to graduate students, such as changes that effect 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.

42. *Improve the graduate 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 GSO under the label "Meet the Officers." Inform the rest of the school about the developments in particular departments under the headline "Spotlight on" Summarize GSO meetings under the heading "Inside the GSO." Provide publicity for an outstanding graduate student under the label "Cameo Student." Inform the graduate 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 students by picking a "TA of the Month." Remind students of important academic deadlines under "Important Dates."

43. *Establish an effective method of distributing the newsletter.*

Have a set group of persons responsible for distribution to certain locations every month. Have extra copies placed in key areas. Take leftover copies to the graduate office to include in mailings to graduate students and persons requesting information for graduate school. If you are going to distribute it yourselves, divide the campus up by building and have each member handle one building. If the regular campus newspaper will cooperate, you can distribute your newsletter either in or on their normal newspaper boxes. Put an ASCII, text-file copy of the newsletter on any e-mail bulletin boards and on the local

gopher site. Of course, if you have the money to mail them directly to the students, by all means do so, and then send your leftover funds to the nearest impoverished GSO.

44. *Serve as a clearing house for information that graduate students need to know.*

Have a question and answer heading in the newsletter. Questions could be collected from the information-interest survey brochure, members, administration, and faculty. A suggestion-question box could be placed in the graduate school office or in the graduate student office. Some graduate students may ask questions in this way when they would never attend a meeting. 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.

45. *Create an electronic newsletter on your campus computer system.*

Place the newsletter on the campus network every month. You will not reach everyone, but you may contact some students and faculty you may not otherwise interest. In addition, you will illustrate that you are a progressive, forward-thinking organization, tuned in to the latest technology. If your campus has a Gopher system, make sure that your newsletter and other publications become a part of it.

46. *Organize an E-mail network among graduate students or a local news group for them.*

As most graduate students know, most information comes to them via the grapevine. Having an open-ended network would give an opportunity to keep the record straight and prevent misinformation from creating undue stress for students and administration. Also, graduate students get little positive feed-back. Often they feel discouraged and alone. Sharing our joys makes them twice the fun, and sharing adversity makes it half as difficult. Usually the administrator of your campus network will be happy to help you set this one up.

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

Often we think our situations are unique or especially difficult. We may find that others share our problems or have found solutions. Some graduate 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.

GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS

48. *Ask the administration and the faculty to add graduate students as voting members on university governing committees that directly effect graduate 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 GSO, aim for getting representatives on the key committees, the ones that most affect graduate 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 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 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 GSO 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 was reduced considerably.

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

Graduate 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 students.*

At some universities, graduate 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 students, so the university could open a dorm exclusively for graduate 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 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 GSO 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 students by forming an ad hoc committee.*

Occasionally a single issue will so agitate graduate 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 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 students equals the percent of the funds).

61. *Join NAGPS and work on the national level.*

NAGPS can be an effective voice for graduate 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 students. It holds a national convention where graduate students can exchange ideas and discuss possible solutions. It tries to publicize the value of graduate 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 students.*

National and state officials can have a major impact on graduate 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 students.

63. *Produce a graduate student orientation video and place copies in the Media Library.*

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

PROJECTS BY THE DOZENS

64. *Host social gatherings for graduate students.*

Host a series of social events for graduate 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 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.

65. *Distribute a brochure that lists the rights and responsibilities of graduate students.*

Ideally, you should have a general brochure that applies to all graduate 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 GSO asks for something, your concerns will be heard in a different light than if the only time administration hears from you is when you want something. Present a cooperative image and one of contributing to the university.

66. *Operate an emergency, small loan program for graduate 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 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 students are usually fairly responsible. Only drop-outs have ever presented a problem. All you need to get started in the seed money, and the university may help with that need.

67. *Organize a graduate student research presentation day.*

Graduate 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 both students and your organization opportunities, experience, and publicity.

68. *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 students. Cash awards can be small or large. Just remember that graduate students need all the money and support they can get.

69. *Provide stipends to graduate students for travel expenses when presenting papers at scholarly association conferences.*

Graduate 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.

70. *Award research grants to graduate 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.

71. *Award small scholarships to outstanding graduate 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.

72. *Organize a special graduate students' awards program.*

Graduate 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.

73. *Print T-shirts specific to the interests of local graduate students.*

Good subjects for such T-shirts are myths that haunt graduate 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 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.

74. *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 co-sponsor 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.

75. *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 students that the graduate school can distribute to prospective and incoming graduate students. The packet contains essential information about your university and the services that graduate 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.

76. *Conduct a survey of graduate 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 GSO. The survey should be part of graduate student orientation.

77. *Host an open forum where graduate 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.

78. *Participate in NAGPS' Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week.*

Create interest in GSO 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 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 students, faculty, departments, or schools realize. By taking into account the numbers and ratios involved, a better grasp of what share graduate students contribute to the university helps bring additional focus on graduate student programs and government.

79. *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.

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

Many graduate students do not get interested in the GSO until their last years of

graduate school, thus aggravating problems in retention and continuity. Get graduate students interested in the GSO 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.

81. *Operate a pub, coffee house, lounge, or cafeteria for the graduate 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 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 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 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 students, thus providing additional income for graduate students.

82. *Start a chapter of Alpha Epsilon Lambda, the nation-wide, campus-wide, honor society for graduate students.*

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

83. *Publish a graduate student yellow pages.*

Graduate yellow pages provide a service to graduate students while they help raise money for the GSO. Selling ads for local businesses that are of special interest to graduate students helps increase awareness of the graduate student market. Reviews by grad students and a star rating system adds 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.

84. *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 GSO, yet it is one that some groups provide, and some students, especially foreign students, find it very helpful.

85. *Publish a Handbook/Guide for graduate 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.

86. *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.

87. *Offer a workshop on doing theses and dissertations.*

Cooperate with the administration to sponsor these events. The project places the GSO 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.

88. *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 students to accomplish. Your GSO could help by finding an expert who could offer students a workshop on the subject. Your efforts may never be more appreciated.

89. *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.

90. *Offer a workshop on how to use Internet and E-mail.*

In many areas, electronic networks are becoming a valuable aid to doing research. Those graduate students who cannot use these tools are truly being left behind. The services available are legion. One is on-line access to libraries throughout the country. Another is electronic mail, which allows worldwide communication at no direct cost to the student. Yet another is access to list servers that provide information and discussion on virtually any subject imaginable. You could offer a workshop that teaches students how to gain access to the network and how to use it once they got on.

91. *Publish a graduate 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 students that give them bad grades.

92. *Offer a workshop on how to apply for grants.*

Graduate 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.

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

Graduate students frequently have children. Having a reliable place on campus to leave them while attending class would be an invaluable service. 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.

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 GSO is usually a semi-governmental body. It has some government-like functions, but the real power lies in the campus-wide government. The GSO 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 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 GSO meetings, where they can learn the concerns of graduate students. Another possibility is to have meetings between your GSO officers and student government officers. Communication is vital, so try to improve it any way you can.

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

Those student leaders who sit in both a GSO 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 GSO 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.

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 students.*

The administration and the faculty have their own worries. They do not normally concern themselves with an issue such as, "Does campus-wide student government fairly represent graduate students?" In addition, administrators are often reluctant to open the can of worms that student government finances usually is. As a rule, Administrators do not enjoy controversy. This inertia conceal the fact that graduate students are frequently the real unrecognized and unaccepted minority on campus. The squeaky wheel gets the grease, and graduate 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 students less than their fair share of the available funds.*

One consequence of the dominance of student government by undergraduates is that graduate 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 students will find costumes for university mascots worthy of large expenditures. If the truth be known, some graduate 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 the undergraduates. (Provided by Marcus Duke and Louis Monville of UCSB.)*

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 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 students to the polls. You might even consider running a graduate student for student body president. Step two, make every one of your events student friendly. Create events that both undergraduates as well as graduate 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 GSO only serves graduate students. Keep in mind, today's undergrad is tomorrow's grad student. Step three, get involved in all aspects of campus life. If you commit a member of your GSO to a function, be sure that person is the first one there and the last one to leave. If some organization needs assistance, they should know that the GSO 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? There are several old sayings that still hold true, and first and foremost is "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 GSO 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 GSO 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 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 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, even the price of winning might be high.

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 behind your idea before you talk to the undergraduates, the battle may be over before the fighting starts. Frequently, these powers may be quite willing for you to separate. Perhaps they understand how different most graduate 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 the 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.