CREATING A GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION
AT A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

A CREATIVE PROJECT (3 CREDIT HOURS)
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this creative project was to develop a manual that equipped colleges and universities with the tools to guide their efforts in creating a graduate student association – a voice for graduate students. “The transition to graduate or professional student can bring about new self doubt and self-awareness and can change relationships with family and friends” (Gasemer-Topf, Johnson, & Ross, 2006).

Graduate and professional student’s acclamation to graduate study and involvement with the university can lead to higher success in the classroom and co-curricular experiences. This creative project, “Creating a Graduate Student Association at a College or University,” overviewed the important social networking and professional development opportunities for graduate and professional students.

Colleges or universities without a student association to speak on behalf of its graduate and professional students may unintentionally disregard the important development of graduate and professional students. The value of creating a graduate student association lies in the opportunities it can bring to students, such as a unified voice on behalf of graduate students on a college or university campus. The association should be recognized as a legitimate source for graduate and professional student, which could enhance the graduate student experience.
This project extensively reviewed relevant literature and examined graduate student associations at other institutions. The manual included organizing a graduate student association, developing marketing and public relations plan, developing social and professional events and programs, outlining of funding and fundraising ideas, and other considerations crucial to creating a successful association.
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I am blessed to have a wonderful family, student affairs cohort, and friends who have supported me along the way. Their encouragements, thoughts, and prayers gave me the strength and motivation to follow my dreams and in doing so complete this project.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Where tremendous pressure has been placed on colleges and universities to provide services and educational contexts for the undergraduate student, there has been little attention placed on the graduate and professional student experience. However, more attention will continue to be given to these students as enrollment continues to grow at colleges and universities and administrators begin to survey the graduate student’s experience.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this creative project was to develop a manual that equipped colleges and universities with the tools to guide their efforts in creating a graduate student association – a voice for graduate students. This project was also developed to provide a model that students or administrators could follow at other colleges and universities. A student association could provide social networking and professional development opportunities for graduate and professional students. This project could help guide students or administrators in effectively starting or reviving a graduate student association. It also served to highlight and formulate developmental opportunities for graduate and professional students.
Significance of Project

The socialization of graduate and professional students along with their involvement in the university can create better experiences for students while enhancing the students’ overall development (Gansermer-Topf, Ross, and Johnson, 2006). Weidman, Stein, and Twale (2001) found that socialization among graduate and professional students was a developmental stage and played into role identity and commitment. Where it was important that graduate students interacted and learned from each other, theories and models integrated primarily from the undergraduate perspective also showed why involvement is a critical role in the graduate experience. Astin’s (1984) identity model advocated the importance and need for quality policies and student involvement opportunities outside of the classroom. Institutions benefit from high student involvement (Harper and Pontius, 2006).

“The transition to graduate or professional student can bring about new self doubt and self-awareness and can change relationships with family and friends” (Gansemer-Topf, Johnson, & Ross, 2006). Graduate students’ make-up ten-to-fifteen percent of the overall enrollment at colleges and universities, are primarily 25 years-of-age and older, and are part-time students (Komives and Woodard, 2003). Also, students bring with them a number of personal and professional experiences and responsibilities (Gansemer-Topf, Johnson, and Ross, 2006). Positive gains and outcomes are associated with engaged students in cognitive and intellectual skill development, college adjustment, moral and ethical development, persistence, practical competence, and psychosocial development and positive images of self (Harper & Pontius, 2006). Unfortunately, few departments and doctoral programs offer little opportunity for students to interact outside of one’s discipline (Brandes, 2006). By building involvement among graduate and professional students, there is high potential for isolated students to engage and
build a connection with the university. The culture and spirit of an organization is just as critical to its overall success (Bolman and Deal, 2008).

Graduate students need involvement plus community to build socialization efforts across campus (Harper & Pontius, 2006). Astin (1985) asserted that not only did involvement benefit students, but also educational policies and programs. Graduate and professional students wanted to build their communities (Brandes, 2006). One way in which administrators could guide graduate and professional student development was by having student affairs practitioners create and maintain student development opportunities (Brandes, 2006; Gansemier-Topf, Johnson, & Ross, 2006; Komives & Woodard, 2003). A number of colleges and universities have developed graduate student centers to foster learning, educational, and socialization opportunities for post-baccalaureate students. Finally, graduate and professional students can form associations, assemblies, or organizations to unite the student body (Brandes, 2006). No matter where the support stems from, a united and involved graduate student body could have positive outcomes in retention and satisfaction from students (Komives & Woodard, 2003; Harper & Pontius, 2006).

**Limitations of Project**

The first limitation of the project was the small amount of research on existing graduate student associations, assemblies, and organizations. Research was also slim on student government associations (SGA) or organizations.

This project was also limited in research on students who were a part of student government associations (SGA), particularly students who were graduate or professional
students. There was a great deal of research on student involvement as a whole; however, there was little literature on SGA graduate and professional students.

Finally, there was limited research on the graduate and professional student. As graduate and professional students contribute to the university, more attention is being given to them.

**Methodology**

Research on this project was gathered primarily from peer reviewed articles on Ebsco Host and books. Graduate Student Associations at other colleges and universities and surveys and articles from the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students were studied.

**Special Definitions of Terms**

There are several terms throughout this project that need specification for their meaning and purpose. The following definitions were used in this current study and set to aid in understanding terminology.

*Graduate Student Association:* An organization primarily organized to represent graduate and professional students, create social and professional opportunities for graduate and professional students, and meet the needs of graduate and professional students.

*Graduate or Professional student:* A post-baccalaureate student who continues study after graduation.

*Socialization:* The act and concept of graduate students interacting with fellow graduate students, advisors, student affairs professionals, teachers, university, and community.

*Student Involvement:* Involvement in programs or services for development outside of classroom and department.
Research on this project further proved the need to create a graduate student association to create social and development opportunities for graduate and professional students. Researchers have found that continued attention must be made to post baccalaureate students in transitioning to graduate study, health and wellness, social opportunities, student development, and building a graduate community.

Chapter Two provides a review of literature.
Chapter II

The purpose of this creative project was to develop a manual that equipped colleges and universities with the tools to guide their efforts in creating a graduate student association – a voice for graduate students. This project was also developed to provide a model that students or administrators could follow at other colleges and universities.

Review of Related Literature

Graduate study is a large enterprise in American universities. Students have many opportunities to grow and develop in the post baccalaureate role. This chapter provides an overview of literature which examines the role of graduate students on college and university campuses, and key concerns for a graduate student association.

Socialization of Graduate and Professional Students

Graduate and professional students do not share identical experiences during graduate school (Stein & Weidman, 2001). Unfortunately, many departments and programs offer little opportunity for students to mingle with other students (Brandes, 2006). Stein and Weidman (2001) reported two factors in understanding dynamics of departments and programs: 1) socialization as a developmental process, and 2) that it related to role identity and commitment. Baird (1995) viewed socialization as the critical agent conducting the socialization process because of its high influence in helping students define knowledge, its role of modeling academics, and offering practical help and advice. He also reported that students needed to feel at home with a program, and other students were critical to this process, however, the department could help.
Stein and Weidman (2001) conceptualized socialization through four stages. In stage one, anticipatory stage, an individual recognized his or her “behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive expectations” (p. 12). This stage related to pre-entry prepping and recruitment as students matriculated to a graduate or professional program. Next, the formal stage, or stage two, students found their fit, and role expectations remained idealized. In this early stage the novice observed the activities of older students and received formal instruction regarding the field of study. It was here that the individual found his or her natural fit and entered into the informal stage, or stage three. In stage three, the novice was immersed in culture and learned the informal role expectations based on interaction with others and communication. Last, in stage four, personal stage, the student’s personality and social structures merged to form an internalized state. Students found their professional identity and were comfortable with their self-image, accepting “value orientation” (p.15). Students moved through these stages as they journeyed through their program and discovered identity and purpose. Offices provided context where students could engage as professionals while learning new departmental cultures and reaching the personal stage (Gansemer-Topf, Johnson, & Ross, 2006).

**Student Stress and Health**

Graduate students’ high level of academic responsibility could lead to high levels of stress and to health related issues (Calicchia and Graham, 2006). Time constraints cause less time dedicated to stress reduction activities in social and personal scenes because of rigorous commitment to academics. Understanding and helping students with health and wellness issues has also become an important role of student affairs administrators (McClellan, 2008). Issues in health and wellness that could negatively affect the college experience included obesity and
physical activity, alcohol and other drugs, sexual behavior, sexual assault, violence, mental health issues, suicide and depression, stress and anxiety, eating disorders, learning disorders, ADHD, Asperger’s Disorder, and diversity issues. The authors indicated that special attention should be given to graduate, professional, and non-traditional level students with regards to these issues and in particular mental health. There must be balance in life’s components such as health, work, family and social relationships, and spiritual dimensions (Hagberg and Leider, 1988).

Caple (1995) reported counseling centers have found upward of 13% of their clients were graduate students. Health services’ primary concern should be to provide immediate medical attention, “encourage individual good health, and provide leadership in promoting the concept of a healthy campus” (Komives and Woodard, 2003, p. 349). Caple (1995) reported that graduate and professional students waited longer to seek help, and financial constraints also led to delayed health and dental care, along with neglecting healthy eating habits. Along the same line Pierro (2010) conceptualized health and wellness programs as a positive correlation to meeting the needs of a targeted audience. The author’s reported that student concerns included writing the dissertation, reducing stress, securing finances, and avoiding debt. Also, in a study by Caliccia and Graham (2006), assessing relationships between spirituality, life stressors, and social resources as buffers of stress concerning graduate students showed that spirituality and social support effectively acted as buffers to stress. The results also showed that spirituality has a limited ability to buffer stresses. Overall, life’s stress was composed of a number of factors including “physical health, home related stress, financial stress, work related stress, spouse or partner stress, stress related to children, . . . number of stressful negative life events” were independent of each other (p.316).
Student Development

“Graduate students have a different profile: most are part-time, at least twenty-five years old, and working” (Komives & Woodard, 2003). Arguably, graduate and professional students have different needs than undergraduate students. Student development theories and models are generally tailored to undergraduate students; however, some can be adapted to reflect graduate and professional students in enhancing their student involvement and learning (Gansemer-Topf, Ross, & Johnson, 2006). The authors reported that similar to student development theory, adult development theoretical approaches could also apply to graduate and professional students. Primary approaches included theoretical, developmental, transition, and contextual. In Chickering’s 1993 theory of Identity Development, he proposed that there were seven vectors that contribute to forming identity (Chickering, 1993). In his theory, students moved through the vectors at different rates and could deal with issues from more than one vector at any given time.

The first of Chickering’s (1993) vectors, developing competence, referred to the student’s “acquired intellectual and manual skills, and interpersonal competence” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn, 2010, p. 67). The second vector, managing emotions, reflected a person’s ability to understand and accept emotions. Next, moving through autonomy toward interdependence referred to increased emotional independence. This vector included attaining skills in problem-solving ability, and mobility. Chickering’s fourth vector, developing mature relationships, was the person’s development of intercultural and interpersonal relationships. The theory suggests that only when identity could be established, vector five, could interdependence, managing emotions, developing competence, and autonomy toward interdependence be reached. A person at this vector level identified the differences in development based on gender, culture,
and sexual orientation. Vector six, developing purpose, consisted of specifying vocational goals, personal interests, and activities. A person in this stage had started to follow one’s life interests. The last and final vector, developing integrity, included “humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence” (p. 69). Persons in the seventh vector progressed to a humanized value system, on to understanding core values, and on to authentic balance of social responsibility.

From Chickering’s (1993) work, he also maintained that good practices in undergraduate education entailed: 1) encouraged contact between students and faculty, 2) developed reciprocity and cooperation among students, 3) encouraged active learning, 4) gave prompt feedback, 5) emphasized time on task, 6) communicated high expectations, and 7) respected diverse talents and ways of learning (Harper & Pontius, 2006). These principles according to Chickering (1993) depended on the environment. Similarly, associations such as the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) have designed principles for student affairs practitioners that included: 1) engaged students in active learning, 2) helped students develop coherent values and ethical standards, 3) set and communicated high expectations for learning, 4) used systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance, 5) used resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals, 6) forged educational partnerships that advance student learning, and 7) built supportive and inclusive communities. The authors maintained that until graduate and professional students were guided by a set of principles, there would be continued disconnect between students, academic departments and programs, and campus wide student affairs divisions.

Harper & Pontius (2006) offered a set of philosophical principles to guide efforts in fostering graduate and professional student engagement and learning. Their seven principles
were based somewhat on Chickering and Gamson 1987 and ACPA and NASPA’s 1997 study group. Their principles included: 1) continually striving to eradicate marginalization among underrepresented students; 2) providing meaningful orientation to the institution beyond academic units; 3) investing resources in communication with graduate and professional students; 4) facilitating opportunities for community building and multicultural interaction across academic units; 5) partnering with academic schools and departments to create engagement plans for students; 6) enhancing career and professional development, and 7) systematically assess satisfaction, needs, and outcomes.

“Students learn by becoming involved” (Astin, 1999, p. 133). Astin (1985) defined involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to the academic experience. He theorized that the involvement has a behavioral component with five basic postulates. First, involvement referred to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various “objects.” Objects could be generalized to the student experience or preparing for a test. Second, regardless of its object, involvement occurred on a continuum. A student’s involvement varied from student to student and the degree of object interaction. Third, involvement had both quantitative and qualitative features. Fourth, the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program. Last, the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. Astin (1985) saw involvement as influencing a student’s development.
Graduate Community

Komives and Woodard (2003) were not surprised that graduate school deans and student affairs practitioners were surveying the services and programs for graduate and professional students. Colleges and universities debated that graduate assistants were in fact students not employees. Housing, health, counseling services, childcare and orientation programs were enhanced or instituted for graduate students. Student Affairs positions and programs have been designed to extend services to graduate students, place emphasis on students enrolled in distance learning programs, and develop or manage graduate student centers to promote graduate community (Komives & Woodard, 2003; Gansemer-Topf, Johnson, & Ross, 2006). Community can play a major role in the satisfaction of the graduate and professional student (Bakker and Krallman, 2005). Community takes the support and commitment of all faculties, staff and university personnel, and the student association.

Creating a graduate student center is one example of how a college or university could go about building a community for graduate students (Brandes, 2006). Brandes noted that a number of graduate programs around the country have created centers that housed graduate programming offices with amenities such as meeting rooms, lounges with tables and chairs for study and comfort, dining hall/cafés, game tables, TVs, and more. The centers serve as a place for students to gather, a primary cross-department socialization opportunity, and a centralized location for student services (Brandes, 2006; Gansemer-Topf, Johnson, & Ross, 2006; Weidman, 2001). Reexamining the services available to graduate students can open a wealth of opportunities for student affairs professionals in engaging students across all departments, and fostering graduate community (Harper & Pontius, 2006).
Yale’s McDougall Graduate Center is a case example where community has been built using the services, programs, and atmosphere they have created (Brandes, 2006). Before the construction of the center the average Ph.D. student received no professional development or student life services. He or she also experienced no community outside of academic departments. The center was first built in 1996 and slowly built up student participation. The first years centered on participation in school-wide, student initiated programs with one staff member. Now, the center has expanded to a comprehensive graduate student center with student life, careers and teaching, each led by a professional staff with four other professional and support staff. Graduate students at Yale now have out-of-class experiences similar to services and successes seen with undergraduate students.

Participating in student government was linked with greater-than-average increases in political liberalism, hedonism, artistic interests, and status needs, as well as with greater-than-average satisfaction with student friendships (Astin, 1985). Studies on the academic success as it relates to student involvement has found positive correlations with active students’ involvement (Ullah and Wilson, 2007; Carini, Kuh, Klein, 2006). “Contemporary student government associations, however, are often structured to fit the needs and schedules of full-time, traditional-aged students” (Miles, 2011). Miles (2011) reported graduate and professional adult learners can and must be incorporated into student government. The author addressed that it was not acceptable for traditional aged students to accept limited participation from adult learners. Furthermore, Miles contended adult learners had limited time availability for involvement compared to the traditional aged student. Consideration of times and programming should be examined in tailoring events and programs to the graduate and professional student population.
Graduate and professional students are an integral part of the university and contribute to the academic successes and the student culture at institutions of higher education. Their development and socialization was determined to be critical to their success (Chickering, 1993).

The methodologies for creating a graduate student association in Chapter Three detailed how the manual was organized to incorporate the social and development opportunities for graduate students.
Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this creative project was to provide a model that students or administrators at other colleges and universities could follow to start a graduate student association. The manual was designed to assist in developing a graduate student association and to be a model for current student associations looking for ideas in programming, and practices in engaging graduate and professional students.

Research was gathered from Ebsco Host, books, and refereed journals. The related literature was useful in communicating the issues and concerns for graduate and professional students and the potential these issues could have on higher education. Further, graduate student associations at other colleges and universities were examined to guide the importance and role of this creative project.

Examining graduate student associations at other colleges and universities helped direct this creative project. Research included organizational charts, programming, examination of constitution and bylaws, and services for students. The following institutions were chosen by the researcher and were further examined for the purpose of this project: Ball State University, Ohio University, The Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University, and Rice University. These schools were chosen because of their differences in geographical locations and institutional size and type.

Research comprised exploring colleges and universities governing guidelines and organizational structures, such as constitution and bylaws. The governing structures and organizational charts were also indicative of the size and support of the graduate student
association. For example, Ohio University’s Graduate Student Association included executive officers, committees, commissioners, elected senators, and department representatives. Researching the type of social and professional events and programs administered by the associations was the next step in this project design. The final step involved researching the services and resources available to graduate students. From formalizing a babysitter list to pointing graduate and professional students to the graduate writing center, universities were reaching out to students in a variety of ways.

**Creating a Graduate Student Association**

This section explains the components to creating a graduate student association. Each step contained tips and tools that graduate or professional students, or faculty and staff could use as a resource for starting a graduate student group on college and university campuses.

**Step One: Organizing a Graduate Student Association**

The first step (see appendix A), organizing a graduate student association, addressed the initial steps needed to set-up an organization. Step one also included advice from the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students on how to start a graduate student association. It also comprised forming a mission, goals and objectives, constitution, bylaws, and organizational chart.

**Step Two: Developing Marketing and Public Relations Strategy**

The second step (see appendix A) focused on marketing and public relations strategies for a graduate student association. The objectives and goals for this section were to assist new
student organizations in publicizing their group. From developing goals and objectives, to using social media and building a website, this section provided tips that organizations could use for the development of their brand.

**Step Three: Sample Social and Professional Events and Programs**

The third step (see appendix A) provided a sample of events and programs that a graduate student association could replicate or use as a foundation for expansion. This section not only described a sample of events, programs, and services, but described what compromised a “good” event or program.

**Step Four: Fundraising Ideas**

The final step (see appendix A) encompassed ways that a graduate student association could raise funds or push for mandatory student fees. Examples from other colleges and universities were used. Also, a statement of professionalism was included regarding serving alcohol at events or programs.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of the project was the small amount of research on existing graduate student associations, assemblies, and organizations. Research was also slim on student government associations (SGA) or organizations.

This project was also limited in research on students who were a part of student government associations (SGA), particularly students who were graduate or professional
students. There was a great deal of research on student involvement as a whole; however, there was little literature on SGA graduate and professional students.

Finally, there was also little research on the graduate and professional student. As graduate and professional students contribute to the university, more attention is being given to them.

**Summary of Creating a Graduate Student Association**

The steps to creating a graduate student association at colleges and universities were identified to assist graduate students, professional students, and professionals with tips to starting a student association. The steps included organizing a graduate student association, developing marketing and public relations strategy, developing sample social and professional events, and fundraising ideas and examples. Each step stood without restraint of the other step. However, all were needed to create an efficient graduate student association.

The next chapter, Chapter Four, provides a summary, conclusion, and final comments about this creative project. The content for each step appeared in Appendix A. In addition, Appendix A contained a manual for creating a graduate student association. The manual offered graduate and professional students a guide to organizing a graduate student association and developing marketing and public relations strategy. It also referred to a sampling of social and professional events and programs and contained fundraising and funding ideas for student associations. Appendix B included a sample constitution and Appendix C included information for creating Bylaws.
Chapter IV

Summary, Conclusion, and Final Comments

The purpose of this creative project was to develop a manual that equipped colleges and universities with the tools to guide their efforts in creating a graduate student association. This project was also developed to provide a model that students or administrators could follow at other colleges and universities. A student association could provide social networking and professional development opportunities for graduate and professional students. This project could help guide students or administrators in effectively starting or reviving a graduate student association. It also served to highlight and formulate developmental opportunities for graduate and professional students.

Summary of the Project

This Graduate Student Association manual can be used for newly forming graduate student organizations or existing organizations in creating and managing a student association. The manual (see Appendix A) is broken into four chapters to give administrators and students tools to form an organization. Step one, organizing a graduate student association, described the organizational framework that should be used to construct the student association. Step two, developing public relations strategy, referred to publicizing and marketing the organization and its events and programs. Step three, a sample of events and programs, showcased events and programs that colleges and universities are using in their organizations. Step four, fundraising and funding, were the
methodologies that other organizations went about raising and ensuring funding for their graduate and professional organizations. Last, Appendix B included a sample constitution and Appendix C described how to organize and write Bylaws.

**Final Comments**

Graduate and professional students contribute in many respects to the culture of the university. Their passion for their specific field of study and their interests in research strengthens the institution of higher education with graduate programs. Graduate and professional students’ interaction with the undergraduate students is just one way they enhance the college or university culture. However, universities should provide graduate students with resources to be successful in graduate work. Professional development and social networking are two opportunities to enhance the experience of these students on campus. However, continued support needs to be given to graduate and professional students to show them that they too are appreciated and valued by the institution. Student life and student spaces dedicated to graduate and professional students can provide them with the opportunity to be successful at a college or university. Institutions that recognize these students guide their development through graduate study and enhance their learning environments.

Having experienced starting a graduate student association, you have to be passionate about creating one at your college or university. When setting up the association at Ball State University I focused heavily on building a strong foundation and network of students who could carry the torch. My advice to any Graduate Student
Association is to push your organization each year to be even greater than it was the year before. To best meet the needs of graduate and professional students, listen to their concerns, conduct evaluations and assessments of your events and programs, and be creative with the type of events and programs you host on campus.
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Appendices
Appendix A

A Manual for Creating a Graduate Student Association

Creating a graduate student association gives graduate and professional students the power to assist students through the transition to graduate study, make new friends across the college or university, connect students to the institution, and direct students to leadership opportunities outside of their departments. This manual provides a guide to starting up a graduate student association at your college or university.

Step One
Introduction

Graduate and professional students have different needs than undergraduate students (Hannegan, 1999). Events should be tailored to graduate and professional students from how you market and publicize your events and programs to the type of social and professional events and programs. If you are to create a successful student association, you need to follow the 12 steps outlined below.

12 Steps to Creating a Graduate Student Association (Hannegan, 1999)

1. Identify common issues.
2. Form an interest group.
3. Meet with your elected student officials.
4. Meet with campus administration.
5. Invite elected student officials and administrators to your meetings.
6. Attend meetings of the existing student government.
7. Publicize your organization.
8. Pass an Official Resolution establishing your association.
9. Negotiate detailed agreements to split money, rights and responsibilities.
10. Authorize your Graduate Student Association with a campus-wide referendum.
11. Do whatever else necessary to create your GSA.
12. Making your new GSA work.
association, know the needs of your graduate student population.

Hannegan (1999), former president of the national Association of Graduate-Professional Students, developed twelve steps to starting a graduate student organization. Setting up the student association and rallying administrators and students is only part of what is necessary to get a graduate student association off the ground. So, if you have successfully followed Hannegan’s (1999) steps, you are ready to move along with starting your association. Naturally, a strong foundation will be part of what keeps students involved and graduate and professional students motivated to the work needed to run an organization. Next, we look at methodologies to framing and organizing a student association

**Constitution and Bylaws**

Write it, clean it, compare it, look it over, and clean it again. There is an odd excitement to forming a constitution and bylaws for an organization. A sound constitution and bylaws can stand the test of time leaving your mark on that organization. So when writing your formal documents be specific and do your research. One thing you do not want is a dirty constitution full of misjudgments, spellings errors, and grammar misusage. An unclean document can last as long as the cleanest constitution and bylaws.

It is important to know beforehand the difference between a constitution and bylaws. As defined by Salem State University “The constitution contains the fundamental principles of an organization and determines the responsibilities and rights of its officers and members,” whereas “The bylaws deal with the detailed procedures and
working guidelines of the organization and determine the routine operations of the organization.” See Appendix B for Ball State University’s sample constitution and Appendix C for sample Bylaws (Ball State University). As the constitution and bylaws will organize how the association is run, it is important to get it right. However, remember with the support of the association’s members, you can always move to amend where necessary.

**Roberts Rules of Order**

Order has been given to millions of meetings dating back to the 19th century using Robert’s Rules of Order (Robert, Evans, Honeman, Balch, 2004). For many American civic groups and organizations, these rules are used as parliamentary authority. Student government associations do not go without needed parliamentary procedures. These rules govern processes from when a person is allowed to speak to how members vote. The authors open the book with a series of questions relating to meetings gone wrong; “How many times have you been to a meeting that didn’t go well? Did it seem that the chair didn’t keep order?” (p. 1). So, when you’re putting together your constitution and bylaws, it would be a good investment of time to look into Robert’s Rules of Order and determine how to structure your organization.

**Leadership Philosophies**

Leadership philosophies are a form of symbols within organization. How you lead your organization is a crucial element to its success. From your communication
skills to how you delegate to your executive board, know your leadership style. Are you an autocratic leader (task driven), democratic leader (people driven), or laissez faire (neither task nor people driven) (Amsbary, Hickson, Smith, Powell, 2009). Kouzes and Posner (1999) created five leadership practices. The authors conceptualized these practices that they could be applied to leaders in groups and organizations. Their five practices are: 1) challenge the process, 2) inspire a shared vision, and 3) enable others to act, 4) model the way, and 5) encourage the heart. The authors viewed that exemplary leaders who best managed organizations were representative of all five principles. Along with best management practices, understanding how you administer power can better assist you with managing your organization.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) conceptualized five types of power. Understanding the types of power can better help you understand your management power style. It can also help you better understand how your group members are going to react to different “power” situations. First, coercive power was the power to punish and threat. This power was forceful and influential in nature. Second, reward power was considered the opposite of coercive power. It referred to a person’s ability to offer rewards – especially for compliance. Third, the author’s defined legitimate power as the type of power that came from authoritarian roles or from positions. These members of society are judges, police officers, and corporation presidents. Fourth expert power, referred to persons with
special knowledge and abilities. From plumbers to social media gurus, persons in this power group can be useful to your organizations! The last power type, referent power, sprung from relationships. The authors considered this the hardest type of power to achieve. Persons who achieved this power were usually well liked in an organization and their opinions respected. Now that you know about five types of power, think about your own place of power in your organization and how you distribute power.

Managers have to look at their organizations as a whole to create policy and manage their organization. Your leadership style should also be representative of how you manage your organization. Bolman and Deal’s (2008) four frames provided administrators, professionals, and businesses a four framed model to follow when looking at the overall model and services of the organization. The four frames included political, human resource, structural, and symbolic frames. The frames could be looked at through a single frame or through multiple frames. Using frames to assess departments, issues, or processes, can provide the student affairs administrator with a holistic view during evaluation. The authors referred the first frame, political, as “arenas, contests, and jungles” (p. 16). This frame represented the political affairs and overall environment present in an organization. The second frame, human resource, saw the organization as an extended family. This frame concerned itself with how an organization tailored to the individual. The third frame, structural frame, depicted the formal structure and framework of an organization. Its policies, goals, technology, etc. were the foundation to the other frames. The fourth frame, symbolic, emphasized the culture, symbols, culture, and spirit of an organization. All four frames are representative of how an organization
operates and all are dependent on each other. When creating a graduate student association keep in mind these frames and tailor it to how you envision your organization to run.

Step Two
Marketing and Publicity

Find a darn good marketing or publicity chair or publicity team. Effective publicity and marketing of your graduate student association may not be easy, and it could be labor intensive and grassroots heavy. So where do you start? Work with your board members to conceptualize a publicity plan to spread the word about your organization and its events and programs. If you believe in the work you’re doing, let that energy flow to your publicity efforts. Hannegan (1999) suggested using campus media as a tool to publicize a student association. This can be as simple as writing an opinion piece and sending it to the newspaper, radio station, posting it online, etc.

Think for a second of all of the ways you hear about events and programs on campus. There is a method to the madness. Internet, social media, flyers, and print advertisements are only a few of the common ways organizations go about publicizing their events and programs. Sticking to a static publicity format may only temporarily gain the attention of your audience. Think fluid publicity. Take your marketing and publicity a step further if you have to. Case example: You are bringing the director of the Kit Kat used a creative truck banner to advertise its Kit Kat bar.
Batman films to your campus. What is an uncommon way to publicize the program? If you thought let’s put a bat symbol in the sky, you were close. The answer is to have someone dress in a Batman costume. Purchase or rent a costume, pre-alert campus safety before you try this at your college or university, walk around campus as Batman passing out flyers. The outfit alone will attract attention. Publicity does not have to stick to formal and traditional methods.

There should be specific attention paid to adult learners. Adult learners may not be aware that student government exists. If they see a poster or receive an email about joining student government, they may dismiss it and may not think it applies to them. Miles (2011) found the following:

“If administrators want adult learners to become involved, they need to determine how to reach these students and how to demonstrate that these types of activities are worth their time. If student government is structured so that it is more accessible for adult students, it may become more accessible to other student populations” (p. 8).

Websites and social media sites have begun to run the gamut for how organizations are publicizing events and programs. “On the positive side, buyers and potential buyers can access your information directly, without interference. On the negative side, you are competing with hundreds of thousands of their information providers for a visitor’s attention” (Seitel, 2007, p.91). This is due to a number of factors including high internet and social media usage of the young, young at heart, and the old. Facebook’s has more than 500 million users, in over 70 translations (Facebook). To set
up an effective web campaign for and event or program use the following steps. First, organize the information on your website. If there is a flyer for an event or program, also upload and organize it on your website. Next, go to your social media pages and upload the information to those sites as events or other methods. Be consistent with your designs and information. Upload the same flyer designed for the website to the Facebook page. Creating a brand for the event will allow users to recognize through image the concepts you are trying to convey to them. Last, in a Mr. T impersonation, “I pity the fool who doesn’t use pictures and video.” The power of the internet is that it is easy to upload pictures and videos to tell stories. If you have an event or program and are able to create a “commercial” or short story regarding the event, go for it! Remember when we talked about static versus fluid marketing? Using photos and video are fluid concepts.

White space and design are critical factors that may help your publicity. Far too often there are really cool events that attract little participation because of poor publicity and marketing. It starts with the flyer! A good flyer is not too busy and tells a story. It should be crisp, unique and clean-cut. Here are some “things to remember” for flyer design: 1) Word art and clip art rarely sell products; 2) White space evokes clean and organized feelings; 3) Too simple and too busy flyers are unread; 4) Flyers should
tell who, what, when, where, why or how; and 5) Always double check for spelling errors or grammar misusage.

A good flyer has good design, and answers the five “Ws”: who, what, when, where, and why. Looking at the flyer to the right, you see that it does just that. The viewer would be able to gather all of the details about the event and its purpose. When designing flyers be careful to not overdo the design of your flyers. Too much can be unattractive to your audience. For example, keep the layout simple and clean. Use white space, it will help draw your audience to the flyer, and proof read. You lose credibility when your designs are unorganized and toppled with misspellings. Last look it over and have someone else look it over. An extra set of eyes can help ensure that your publicity materials will be well received by your targeted audience.

Step Three
Sample Schedule of Events and Programs

You can go several directions with your events and programs. In meeting the purpose of your organization as outlined in your constitution you should decide the core functions of your organization. Is your organization primarily government, social, professional development or a mixture? Most student associations will be somewhat of a hybrid meeting all three categories. Once the purpose for your organization has been decided, it is time to start planning meetings, events, and programs. Questions should be raised as to how often do you want to meet monthly, how many social and professional events should happen per month, and will there be a cost? These answers should be answered by the graduate and professional students at your institution. Send a survey to
them or put a poll online to determine their needs and interests. For the sake of simple design, you do not want to wear out the students with too many events and programs, but you also want to keep them interested in the association. Find the balance that fits your college or university. A simple way to organize your event is to include each month at least two general assembly meetings, two executive board meetings, two social events, and one professional event. Sample events and programs from The Pennsylvania State University, Rice University, and Rutgers University in the 2010-2011 academic year are exemplary of the type of social and professional events and programs that your student association can implement at your institution.

The Pennsylvania State University’s Graduate Student Association held several social and professional events that are unique to their student organization (The Pennsylvania State Graduate Student Association). Their social events included a graduate student gala, Halloween party, GSA Café – included music and food, and hiking excursion. Meetings were generally organized as senate meetings, general assembly meetings, and graduate council meetings. Next, Rice University’s Graduate Student Association’s events and programs were also heavily focused on the social aspect (Rice Graduate Student Association). Their social events included volunteering projects, pool party/ice cream social, lounge coffee break, picnics, beer night, free coffee and bagels, fundraisers, barbeques, and more. Their professional development events and programs included English corner, activities fair, election watch party, film series, CV and resume workshop, and teaching workshops. Meetings included cabinet and council meetings each month. Last, Rutgers University’s Graduate Student Association held social events
and programs each Thursday and some Tuesdays in their graduate student lounge (Rutgers Graduate Student Association). Free coffee, tea, and snacks were provided to graduate and professional students. Other social events included yoga, theme park trip, movie night, hiking trip, AIDS awareness, social hours, and a number of collaborations with departments and student groups. Their professional development included a speaker series on topics such as ethics, global poverty, and religion. Other professional development included career services, and film night. Their regular meetings were held at least once per month not including the executive committee meetings. Again, use feedback from the graduate and professional students at your institution to determine how many meetings, events and programs should occur each month. Their feedback will help you plan and organize your student association.

**Step Four**

**Fundraising and Funding**

As a new student group on campus and depending on how graduate and professional students are valued at your institution and what resources are available will also contribute to how your organization is funded. If your Graduate Student Association has not been around for some time or has never been around, as an organization, you might have to prove your worth to administrators and faculty. However, there is still the question of funding. Graduate Student Associations
can be funded through the university, the graduate school, student life office, fundraising, or a participation fee. It all depends on your college or university’s policies. When you have formalized your constitution and bylaws, gathered an interested group of students to serve as an executive board or committee members, and know how much money is needed to run your organization, it is time to determine how to fund your graduate student association. First meet with the appropriate administrators.

Start at the top. Meet with the President or Dean of the Graduate School and ask about funding possibilities and collaborations. Some graduate student associations are funded through graduate student fees. Bring this possibility to your administrators for the best advice for proposing a student fee. It is likely he or she would want to see sound proof that the student association is properly structured with a strong foundation. If further funding is needed, meet with student life representatives. Propose your plan and see what funding is available specifically for graduate students. Also, meet with your student government association. Research what funding is available to student organizations and whether it would be enough to fund your organization.

In the end when you have exhausted all possibilities of funding help from administrators, it might be time to fundraise. Yes, your classic bake sales and car washes might be needed to cover the cost to run your student organization. Fundraising ideas might include selling Graduate Student Association or graduate school t-shirts with the name of the university printed students who join your student association or who attend your events and programs. This can be negative to new organizations starting up, especially when your target audience is living off of fellowships, internships, or
assistantships. They are also likely to have families and children. How you fund your organization is just as important as its structure and how it is publicized. Students will pay just as much attention to this detail as all others.
References


Ball State University Graduate Student Association. (2011). *Graduate Student Association Constitution*. Unpublished manuscript, Graduate Student Association, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.


Miles, J. M. (2011). A critical review of adult learners and student government:


Appendix B

CONSTITUTION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

PREAMBLE
We, the members of the Graduate Student Association, subscribing to the policies and regulations of Ball State University, do hereby establish this constitution to govern the matters within our organization.

ARTICLE I – Name
The name of this organization shall be Graduate Student Association. Its acronym shall be GSA.

ARTICLE II – Purpose
The purpose of the Graduate Student Association is to provide for the common interests and welfare of graduate students by providing programs, professional development, and self enhancement tools to engage all graduate students to promote the interests of the graduate student population.

ARTICLE III – Membership
Section 1: Membership Eligibility. Only current graduate students are eligible to join the Graduate Student Association. Members can join by filling out the application form available by request from the graduate school.

Section 2: Non-discriminatory Policy. The Graduate Student Association shall not discriminate against any member by denying membership based on age, race, color, gender, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.

Section 3: Membership Responsibilities. Members of the Graduate Student Association shall attend monthly meetings, programs and services, and pay dues at the beginning of the semester in order to become active members and have voting privileges.

Section 4: Resignation: Members of the Graduate Student Association will be removed from membership if dues are not paid.

ARTICLE IV - Officers/Advisor
Section 1: Officers. Officers shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Marketing/Public Relations. A quorum of three-fourths of the total voting membership must be present to conduct a vote to select new members no later than the second meeting of the spring semester. Officers shall take office immediately following. Elected members shall serve one full academic year, beginning and ending in the spring semester.
Section Two: Executive Board. President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Marketing/Public Relations shall serve as the Executive Board. This board shall oversee all operations of the Graduate Student Association.

Section Three: Board Duties.

A. President
   1. Shall be responsible for the overall operation of the Graduate Student Association.
   2. Shall conduct all meetings.
   3. Shall make sure all executive board members are performing the duties pertained to their office.
   4. Shall serve as a liaison between the Graduate School, the Office of Student Life and GSA.
   5. Shall meet regularly with GSA advisor.
   6. Shall make sure GSA is abiding by the rules as outlined in the constitution.

B. Vice-President
   1. Performs the duties of the president in his or her absence, inability to serve, or by request of GSA advisor.
   2. Heads the evaluation and success of the organization’s programs and events.
   3. Formulates, implements, and oversees GSA’s strategic plan.
   4. Should head up all committees formed under GSA.

C. Secretary
   1. Keeps an accurate record of attendance at meetings, programs, and events regarding the Graduate Student Association.
   2. Takes meeting minutes at each meeting and distributes them to all members.
   3. Shall be responsible for arranging and distributing meeting agendas along with schedule of events pertaining to organization events and activities.
   4. Shall keep up-to-date records of all GSA members.
   5. Shall collect data from all officers regarding the annual report.

D. Treasurer
   1. Coordinates all fundraising efforts for GSA.
   2. Maintains responsibility for knowing the Student Government Association’s process for requesting money.
   3. Submit an annual report on the previous year’s income and expenditures.
   4. Should be responsible for acquiring food for socials and meetings when necessary.

E. Marketing/Public Relations
   1. Should develop a fall and spring semester newsletter.
   2. Shall handle any communication media associated with Graduate Student Association.
   3. Shall update all web features such as Facebook and Twitter.
   4. Responsible for GSA publicity materials such as brochures, pamphlets, pictures, etc.
Section Four: Advisor. The advisor to the Graduate Association shall attend meetings, programs and events and advise the executive board in overseeing the operations of the association as well as a liaison to the Office of Student Life and Graduate School. He or she should preferably be a graduate instructor with the university.

Section Five: Removal of Executive Board Member. A quorum of three-fourths the voting membership must be present in order conduct a vote to request the resignation of an officer with a majority vote needed to pass the vote.

ARTICLE V – Meeting
Meetings will be held bi-monthly. Specific dates and times shall be determined by executive board members before the beginning of each semester. At least one half of the executive board and voting membership must be present in order to conduct business at meeting settings. For voting on elected officers or to expel a member, one half of the voting membership must be present with a majority vote needed to pass a vote.

ARTICLE VI – Chapter Reports
Section One: At the beginning of each academic year, a revised list of active members and chapter goals and objectives shall be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Section Two: At the termination of each academic year, the following shall be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.

A. A list of newly elected Executive Board members.
B. A list of all members.
C. Annual Report.

ARTICLE VII – Parliamentary Authority
The rules as identified in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern the Graduate Student Association.

ARTICLE VIII – Amendments
For meetings in which the Graduate Student Association wishes to amend their constitution, no less than one-half of the voting membership plus one must be present and a majority vote is needed to pass an amendment. The proposed amendment must be announced at the preceding meeting. The amendment vote will occur the following meeting. The constitution should include the date it was last revised.

Also, the constitution shall be reviewed for revision every two years by the Graduate Student Association Executive Board. The Executive Board shall decide if amendments need to occur.
Appendix C

BYLAWS

Most organizations do not need bylaws, rather the information can be incorporated into the constitution itself and will suffice. Bylaws incorporate sections that have information and requirements that may change year to year. Larger organizations may find it necessary to add bylaws, in which case, sections should deal with the following areas:

I. Detailed material concerning members; that is rights, duties, resignation, and expulsion procedures. Provision for honorary, associate members, or honorary officers if the organization so desires.
II. Provision for initiation fees, if any, dues and assessments should be covered here; also details regarding delinquencies (i.e. fines, service hours, etc.).
III. Time and method of electing officers and duties of officers if they change from year to year.
IV. Duties, authority, and responsibilities of an executive council.
V. The names of the standing committees and the method of choosing chairmen and committee members. The duties of the committees should also be stated.
VI. The number or proportion of the group constitution a quorum if it changes or in the case of emergency situations.
VII. A method to amend the bylaws. Usually a majority vote, this process should be much easier than amending the constitution.