Organization of Black Graduate and Professional Students

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

The Organization of Black Graduate and Professional Students (OBGAPS) hereby dedicates itself to enhancing the experience of Black graduate and professional students at Vanderbilt University in order to advance the scholarly activities of the Black graduate students and ensure their matriculation from Vanderbilt. OBGAPS strives to facilitate a positive experience for students across the spectrum of the graduate experience which includes facilitating the transition into post baccalaureate programs as well as providing academic and professional support, opportunities for social networking and cultural exchanges, and service opportunities for its membership. This organization will strive to actively promote the interests of Black graduate students by working to bring the problems, concerns, and needs of the Black graduate and professional students to the attention of the university. In addition to these efforts, OBGAPS will serve to promote recruitment and retention of Black students as well as an increase in minority representation among students, staff, and faculty. OBGAPS will further seek to share elements of the Black culture with the larger Vanderbilt University community.

OBGAPS shall foster cohesion and collaboration among the various Black graduate and professional student organizations in order to fulfill the aforementioned goals. We, the members of the Organization of Black Graduate and Professional Students, do hereby establish this constitution to formalize the principles and procedures of this organization.

Article I. NAME

This organization shall be known as the Organization of Black Graduate and Professional Students, henceforth referred to as OBGAPS.

Article II. PURPOSE

Section 2.01 The purpose of the Organization of Black Graduate and Professional Students shall be to unify its members through the facilitation of programs that strengthen the community of Black graduate and professional students across disciplines in an effort to enhance the quality of life for its students. The mission of OBGAPS is to encourage and advance the academic excellence of Black graduate and professional students and promote positive social change. OBGAPS shall seek to fulfill this purpose by providing social, academic, political, professional, service, and cultural opportunities.

Article III. Objectives of OBGAPS

The objectives of OBGAPS shall be as follows:

Section 3.01 To serve as a social and emotional support system and avenue for networking for Black graduate and professional students as well as alumni.
Section 3.02 To work with the university administration and other Vanderbilt organizations to ensure that issues of diversity and sociocultural change are explored with the aim of enhancing the institutional environment with respect to Black representation.

Section 3.03 To provide an avenue through which graduate and professional students can connect with and serve the greater Black community both within the university and the Nashville community.

Section 3.04 To assist current and prospective students by providing information and resources in order to facilitate a successful and positive experience at Vanderbilt University.

Section 3.05 To assist the university in fostering the full persona, academic, and professional development of its Black graduate and professional students.

Section 3.06 To support programs, actions, and initiatives that foster to create an institutional environment that is conducive to the achievements of all graduate and professional students of Vanderbilt University.

Article IV. BASIC POLICIES

Section 4.01 OBGAPS shall be a non-profit, student-run organization. OBGAPS understands and shall be committed to upholding and abiding by all policies and requisites set forth by Vanderbilt University.

Section 4.02 OBGAPS including on behalf more than legislation shall not directly nor indirectly participate or intervene in any way, the publishing or distribution of statements for any political campaign of, or in opposition to, any candidate for the public office; or devote an insubstantial part of its activities to attempting to influence by propaganda or otherwise.

Section 4.03 OBGAPS shall cooperate with Vanderbilt University to support the improvement of education and promote an intercultural interaction in ways that will not interfere with administration of the University and shall not seek to control its policies.

Section 4.04 OBGAPS may cooperate with other organizations and agencies, but persons representing OBGAPS in such matters shall make no commitments that bind OBGAPS.

Section 4.05 All budgetary allotment from OBGAPS will be expended for the benefit of the Organization and its members pursuant to the policies of Vanderbilt University’s Student Finance Committee.

Article V. MEMBERSHIP
Section 5.01  Membership in OBGAPS is open to all students enrolled at Vanderbilt University who have an interest in supporting and promoting the mission, aims, and goals of this organization as stated in Articles II and III of the Constitution of OBGAPS. There shall be the following categories of membership: full membership, active membership, affiliate membership, and alumni membership.

Section 5.02  Full membership – To be eligible for full membership, an individual must (1) be currently enrolled in a graduate or professional program at Vanderbilt University, and (2) accept the terms of the Constitution of OBGAPS. Full members have voting privileges.

Section 5.03  Active membership – To be eligible for active membership, an individual must (1) be currently enrolled in a graduate or professional program at Vanderbilt University, (2) accept the terms of the Constitution of OBGAPS, and (3) attend at least 50% of general body meetings and either a) 25% of community service events or b) 25% of committee meetings of OBGAPS over the course of a given semester. In addition to voting privileges, active membership confers access to special amenities (e.g., double representation in OBGAPS drawings and raffles, special events admission, etc. as determined by the Executive Board).

Section 5.04  Affiliate membership – To be eligible for affiliate membership, an individual must (1) be an undergraduate or graduate student, faculty member, or someone with a personal or professional interest in graduate/professional education, and (2) accept the terms of the Constitution of OBGAPS. Affiliate members do not have voting privileges.

Section 5.05  Alumni membership – To be eligible for alumni membership, an individual must (1) be a Vanderbilt alumnus, (2) be in the process or have already completed a program of advanced study, and (3) accept the terms of the Constitution of OBGAPS. Affiliate members do not have voting privileges.

Section 5.06  OBGAPS members shall abide by the rules and regulations of Vanderbilt University. Membership may be withdrawn by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Executive Board in the event of a violation of the Vanderbilt University Student Conduct Code.

Section 5.07  All members shall be entitled to participate in all General Body meetings and activities of OBGAPS. All members are entitled to access to all services provided by the organization.

Section 5.08  Only full members shall be entitled to (1) vote in General Body meetings, (2) vote in elections and referendums, (3) nominate or second a candidate for election to the OBGAPS Executive Board, (4) receive the graduate student travel award stipend provided by the organization, and (5) to hold an officer position in the Executive Board.
Article VI. EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 6.01 The Executive Board of OBGAPS shall elect from its full membership the following officers:

A President;
A Vice President of Community Service;
A Vice President of Social;
A Treasurer;
A Secretary; and
A Parliamentarian.

Section 6.02 Officers shall be elected at the Annual Election Meeting during the month of April each academic year and hold office for one academic year.

Article VII. DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 7.01 Officers shall assume their official duties thirty (30) days after the Annual Elections and shall serve for a term of one year and/or until their successors are elected.

Section 7.02 The duties of the Executive Board shall be to promote the mission and objectives outlined in Articles II and III.

Section 7.03 The Executive Board shall carry out all resolutions and mandates of the General Body meeting of the organization.

Section 7.04 The Executive Board shall have the power to (1) appoint standing committee Chairpersons, (2) convene General Body meetings of the organization, and (3) to engage in financial undertakings to meet the interests of the organization.

Section 7.05 The President shall: (1) be the chief officer of OBGAPS and preside at all meetings; (2) represent the organization to Vanderbilt University including on committees and panels as designated by OBGAPS, the university, the Executive Board, or the General Body membership; (3) have the power and discretion to appoint or dispute another officer of the Executive Board to preside, whenever necessary; (4) have the power to appoint all committee chairpersons with the majority consent of the Executive Board; (5) take necessary steps to ensure adequate and proper representation of the organization on all external bodies and committees at official functions and on public celebrations or occasions; (6) act expeditiously at his/her sole discretion, whenever such an action becomes necessary, without convening the Executive Board, provided that such action shall be reported as soon as possible to the Executive Board for ratification; (7) submit reports on the state of affairs of OBGAPS periodically to the General Body and present all motions to the body present; (8) ensure that all activities of the organization fall within the mission and goals of OBGAPS as stated in the Constitution; (9) oversee all committee actions to ensure they are on task and aligned with the Organization mission and ideals;
(10) be one of the signatories in any of the financial transactions of OBGAPS; and (11) attend at least 90% of OBGAPS Executive Board and General Body Meetings.

Section 7.06 The Vice President of Social shall: (1) exercise the powers and be charged with the duties of the President in his/her absence or inability or upon request; (2) represent the organization to Vanderbilt University including on committees and panels as designated by OBGAPS, the Executive Board, or the General Body membership; (3) oversee all actions of the committee dedicated to the planning and implementation of social and networking events and functions to ensure that they are on task and aligned with the organization mission and ideals; (4) chair the Social/Networking Committee should need require; (5) represent OBGAPS as needed at OBGAPS functions, or at other special events hosted by other organizations or the University, contingent upon availability; (6) report all actions and information pertinent to OBGAPS from meetings and events attended to the Executive Board and/or General Body; and (7) attend at least 75% of all Executive Board and General Body Meetings.

Section 7.07 The Vice President of Community Service shall: (1) exercise the powers and be charged with the duties of the President or Vice President I in his/her absence or inability or upon request (2) represent the organization to Vanderbilt University including on committees and panels as designated by OBGAPS, the Executive Board, or the General Body membership; (3) oversee all actions of the committee dedicated to community service to ensure that they are on task and aligned with the organization mission and ideals; (4) chair the Service Committee should need require; (5) represent OBGAPS as needed at OBGAPS functions, or at other special events hosted by other organizations or the University, contingent upon availability; (6) report all actions and information pertinent to OBGAPS from meetings and events attended to the Executive Board and/or General Body; and (7) attend at least 75% of all Executive Board and General Body Meetings.

Section 7.08 The Treasurer shall: (1) manage all fiscal transactions and records on behalf of OBGAPS; (2) receive all monies of the organization; (3) shall keep an accurate record of receipts and expenditures, maintaining diligent and accurate financial records for reference and use by the Executive Board and University; (4) shall pay out funds in accordance with the approved budget and as authorized by OBGAPS; (5) prepare a financial statement for the year and before the end of the term of office; (6) keep the Executive Board, and as needed, the General Body, informed of all OBGAPS balances, debits, and credits; (7) complete all financial transactions and arrange all financial paperwork for any person/vendor/organization to include having the authority to sign any checks issued to any person/organization on behalf of OBGAPS; (8) be responsible for the process of getting funds from Vanderbilt University, namely the Student Finance Committee; (9) oversee the selection of a representative to the Student Finance Committee (10) liaise with the Executive Board and Fundraising Committee to conduct the organization budget and ensure that all non-accrual fiscal allotments are expended by the end of each academic year; (11) represent OBGAPS as needed at OBGAPS functions, or at other special events hosted by other organizations or the University, contingent upon availability; (12) report all actions and information pertinent to
OBGAPS from meetings and events attended to the Executive Board and/or General Body; and (13) attend at least 75% of all Executive Board and General Body Meetings.

Section 7.09  The Secretary shall: (1) be responsible for all official correspondence (written, electronic, and as needed, oral) of OBGAPS; (2) initiate email, written, and/or oral communications to ensure maximum access for all OBGAPS members to information and participation in meetings and functions; (3) maintain and consistently update the OBGAPS website to reflect the most current information regarding the organization; (4) maintain and consistently update the OBGAPS listserv such that it represents the most accurate list of the general membership; (5) lead promotional and marketing efforts for general body meetings and special events; (6) generate and maintain accurate attendance records at all meetings and functions to establish member and active member rosters; (7) be responsible for keeping accurate and comprehensive records of all Executive Board and General Body meeting minutes and be responsible for timely distribution of this record to the membership; (8) publish all minutes and attendance tallies in electronic and written form at his/her discretion to keep the General Body and Executive Board informed; (9) maintain an up to-date membership directory of current and alumni members; (10) maintain correspondence on OBGAPS functions with the membership to ensure maximum access to information and participation in meetings and functions; (11) lead all historian efforts, including but not limited to electronic photographic, video, anecdotal, formal records of meetings and special events, and the proper materials to transition the incoming Executive Board; (12) create and distribute a biannual (once per semester) newsletter to full, active, affiliate, and alumni members; (13) oversee the Communications Committee; (14) chair the Communications Committee should need require; (15) represent OBGAPS as needed at OBGAPS functions, or at other special events hosted by other organizations or the University, contingent upon availability; (16) report all actions and information pertinent to OBGAPS from meetings and events attended to the Executive Board and/or General Body; and (17) attend at least 75% of all Executive Board and General Body Meetings.

Section 7.10  The Parliamentarian shall: (1) be responsible for the implementation of parliamentary procedures as set forth in Article XVIII of the Constitution of OBGAPS; (2) assist the Secretary with communication efforts; (3) fulfill the duties of the Secretary in his/her absence; (4) have the power to receive (but not solicit) nominations for office; (5) establish and distribute regular guidelines which state specific rules and deadlines related to election proceedings; (6) ensure that all Constitutional and administrative election policies are adhered to; (7) oversee all actions of the committee dedicated to the membership and elections to ensure that they are on task and aligned with the organization mission and ideals; (8) chair the Membership/Elections Committee should need require; (9) ensure that the Elections Committee promptly tally the votes and declares the winners of elections prior to the adjournment of the last General Body business meeting of the year; (10) create and prepare for distribution agendas for meetings of the General Body; (11) represent OBGAPS as needed at OBGAPS functions, or at other special events hosted by other organizations or the University, contingent upon availability; (12) report all actions and information pertinent to OBGAPS from meetings
and events attended to the Executive Board and/or General Body; and (13) attend at least 275 75% of all Executive Board and General Body Meetings.

Section 7.11 The Student Finance Committee Representative shall: (1) attend 100% of the meetings of the Vanderbilt University Student Finance Committee; (2) represent OBGAPS on the University Student Finance Committee; and (3) report all actions and information pertinent to OBGAPS from meetings of the Committee to the Executive Board.

Article VIII. STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 8.01 The standing committees of OBGAPS shall be comprised of the Social/Networking Committee, Service Committee, Fundraising Committee, Communications Committee, and Membership/Elections Committee. Should these committees be vacant, an Executive Board member will be assigned to chair his/her respective committee and shall assume the responsibilities of that committee.

Section 8.02 The Social/Networking Committee shall be responsible for organizing and implementing activities and events that promote the social goals of OBGAPS and provide opportunities for networking. This includes but is not limited to the First Fridays events hosted by OBGAPS often in collaboration with other organizations the first Friday of each month. Vice President of Social shall liaise for the Social/Networking Committee.

Section 8.03 The Service Committee shall be responsible for organizing activities and events that promote service to Vanderbilt University and the surrounding communities. This includes but is not limited to coordinating participation in local and nationally organized volunteer projects, implementation of projects as set forth by OBGAPS, and collaboration with other organizations that promote service. Vice President of Community Service shall liaise for the Service Committee.

Section 8.04 The Fundraising Committee shall oversee the financial status of the organization and shall be responsible for maintaining the organizations treasury. It shall review and recommend the annual budget and generate fundraising efforts. The Treasurer shall liaise for the Fundraising Committee.

Section 8.05 The Communications Committee shall be responsible for designing and maintaining the various modes of information dissemination, such as the website and mailing list. It is also responsible for advertising OBGAPS events, projects, and activities to Vanderbilt University and the surrounding college/university and Nashville communities. This committee has a primary responsibility for enhancing and improving organization communications through technology. The Secretary shall liaise for the Communications Committee.

Section 8.06 The Membership/Elections Committee shall have the power to receive (but not solicit) nominations for office, establish regular guidelines, which state specific rules and deadlines. It shall be charged ensuring that all Constitutional and administrative
election policies are adhered to, and for promptly tallying the votes and declaring the
winners of elections prior to the adjournment of the last business meeting of the year. The
Parliamentarian shall liaise for the Membership/Elections Committee.

Section 8.07 All committees and chairpersons shall report the activities of the
committee to the Executive Board for approval. The Executive Board shall approve
activities prior to implementation in order to maintain that committee activities serve the
mission and goals outlined in the Constitution.

Article IX. AD-HOC COMMITTEES

Committees shall be created at the discretion of the Executive Board for managing the
affairs and events of OBGAPS, but may function only as long as authorized and no
longer than the term of office of the Executive Board which created them.

Article XI. ADVISOR(S)

Section 11.01 The OBGAPS Advisor shall be chosen and approved by the consensus of
the Executive Board.

Section 11.02 The Advisor must be a faculty or staff member of Vanderbilt University.

Section 11.03 The Advisor shall support, advise, and assist OBGAPS in the promotion of
the organization mission and goals as set forth in Articles II and III in the Constitution of
OBGAPS.

Article XII. NOMINATION AND ELECTION PROCEDURES

Section 12.01 All officers to the Executive Board of OBGAPS shall be elected Annual
General Election to be held during the month of April of each year. Officers will be
installed during April of each year. The term of office for each officer elected at the
General Election shall be for one year from the date of assuming office.

Section 12.02 All candidates must be full members of OBGAPS.

Section 12.03 Any full member interested in running, as a candidate for any officer
position of the Executive Board, must file an application with the Parliamentarian of
OBGAPS and submit a letter of interest/purpose to the Executive Board.

Section 12.04 The election rules and procedures shall be published in writing no later
than fifteen (15) days prior to the day of elections. The election rules shall consist of the
election rules adopted by the Executive Board of OBGAPS.

Section 12.05 The Officers shall be elected one at a time, starting with the President,
followed by Vice President of Social, Vice President of Community Service, Treasurer,
Secretary, and Parliamentarian.
Section 12.06 Those members meeting the requirements for full membership as set forth in Article V shall be granted voting privileges.

Section 12.07 Elections can be conducted by secret ballot. All ballots returned during the time constitute a quorum. Absentee ballots must be requested 48 hours before the election and hand delivered to the faculty advisor of the organization the day of the election.

Section 12.08 The chair of the Membership/Elections Committee shall collect and tabulate the ballots. The Membership/Elections Committee shall handle any election violation or contest. Violations occurring during the election shall be reported to the Elections Committee. Full members dissatisfied with the decision of the committee regarding an alleged violation or contest may approach the Advisor.

Section 12.09 Officers to the Executive Board can be re-elected by majority vote of the eligible full membership of OBOAPS. No officer shall hold an office in the Executive Board for more than two consecutive terms.

Section 12.10 In the event that the chair of the Membership/Elections Committee is a candidate for office, a member of the Executive Board shall be appointed to handle election proceedings for the office in which the chair of the Membership/Elections Committee is running, in accordance with Article XII.

Section 12.11 In the event that an elected officer is unable to fulfill his/her duties, the vacancy occurring in any office shall be filled within thirty (30) days of the vacancy for the non-expired term by a member elected by majority vote of the remaining members of the Executive Board. Should the presidency become vacant, the Vice President of Social shall assume the post of President, and the vacancy shall exist in the post of the Vice President of Social. The Executive Board may then fill by appointment the Vice President’s vacancy. If extenuating circumstances preclude election within thirty (30) days, the President/Vice President of Social may appoint an interim officer, with consensus from the Executive Board. Any interim officer must be either ratified or replaced by a full membership election within thirty (30) days of appointment.

Article XIII. IMPEACHMENT PROCEDURES

Section 13.01 Impeachment proceedings may be brought against an Executive Board member for the following reasons: (1) Extended negligence of duties. Negligence is defined as any dereliction of duty that is related to one’s responsibilities; (2) A lack of desire to serve in the best interests of the organization as evidenced by violation of the organization purpose or the constitution; (3) An inability to perform in the best interests of the organization, or an inability to properly represent the members of the organization. An Officer charged with one of the above violations may be removed for office by the following process: A written report by at least three members of the Organization, including at least one Executive Board member, must be presented to the meeting of the Executive Board. Written notification to the officer of the call for removal, asking the
officer to be present and prepared to speak at the next General Body meeting. The Executive Board member, against whom the impeachment proceedings are carried out, shall be given a fair chance to defend his/her position before his/her powers are ceased. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote is necessary to remove the officer.

Section 13.02 The President, in consent with the members of the Executive Board, shall decide on dismissing any member who is consistently absent in the meetings of the Executive Board,

Section 13.03 In the event of impeachment proceedings brought against the President, the process outlined in Section 13.01 shall be implemented, with the organization Advisor present and presiding.

Section 13.04 In case of impeachment, the vacant office will be filled within thirty (30) days of the vacancy in accordance with Article XII, Section 12.09 of the Constitution.

Article XIV. MEETINGS

Section 14.01 The Executive Board shall convene at least every thirty (30) days and shall frame and decide upon the procedure for its deliberations, with due regard to the mission and objectives stated in Articles II and III. The meetings shall follow the procedure set forth below:

Attendance
Review of minutes and Action Items
Officer reports
Guest reports
Decisions
Adjournment

Section 14.02 Beginning in April of each year, incoming Executive Board members will be invited to attend Executive Board meetings to facilitate smooth transition. In addition, the Executive Board will conduct a formal transition for the new Board, including handing over any paper materials, files, and other pertinent information.

Section 14.03 OBGAPS shall convene a General Body meeting on a monthly (once a month) at the discretion of the Executive Board. General Body meetings shall be convened at the call of the Executive Board. All General Body meetings are open to all the members of OBGAPS. The meetings shall follow the procedure set forth below:

Attendance
Officer reports
Committee reports
Decisions
New Business from the Board or General Body
Announcements
Presentation, activity, or cultural infusion
Adjournment
Section 14.04 General Body or Executive Board meeting format may be pre-empted by special events with Board consensus. All General Body meetings must be publicized by multiple methods beginning two weeks in advance of designated dates and times.

Section 14.05 A two-thirds (2/3) quorum of the Executive Board shall be necessary to make any decisions or make any recommendations for amendments to the Constitution.

Section 14.06 Any Executive Board member with a minimum notice period of twenty-four (24) hours can call an Executive Board Meeting provided all officers are notified.

Article XV. AMENDMENTS

Section 15.01 The Constitution is binding to all members of OBGAPSI However, the Constitution is not binding unto itself.

Section 15.02 Amendments to the Constitution may be proposed in writing by any full member of OBGAPSI. Notice of a proposed constitutional amendment shall be given at the Executive Board Meeting prior to the General Body meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be approved for referendums. Amendments shall be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting of the Executive Board.

Section 15.03 The amendment shall be presented to a referendum of the full members of OBGAPSI and shall require at least two-thirds (2/3) of the votes of those full members present at the meeting.

Section 15.04 The Parliamentarian shall receive proposals for amendments and supervise amendment proceedings in accordance with the parliamentary procedures stated in Article XII.

Article XVI. BY-LAWS

Section 16.01 The by-laws shall be considered an integral part of the constitution. They are a binding force and effective so long as the constitution remains binding and in full force.

Section 16.02 The Executive Board shall have the authority to establish the by-laws of OBGAPSI.

Article XVII. REFERENDUM

Section 17.01 The question to be decided by referendum shall be conveyed to the full members.

Section 17.02 Amendments will be effective immediately upon approval and must be added to the existing constitution in writing within 48 hours of the vote.
Article XVIII. STANDING DUTIES

Section 18.01 The rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the organization in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these by laws and special orders the organization may adopt.

Section 18.02 A two-thirds (2/3) vote shall be defined as two-thirds (2/3) of the OBGAPS members present in accord.

Section 18.03 Twenty-five percent (25%) of the total membership shall constitute a quorum.

Section 18.04 A majority shall be defined as one-half (1/2) of the OBGAPS members present plus one (50% + 1) being in accord.

Article XIX. RATIFICATION AND ENACTMENT

This constitution shall be ratified by two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the General Body, and it shall be enacted immediately.

Any constitution in effect prior to this document is rendered null and void. This constitution shall be reviewed on or after August 2014.