ECSE Graduate Council Bylaws

Effective: November 19, 2025

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization shall be the **ECSE Graduate Council** (hereafter, the **ECSE GC**).

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The ECSE GC exists to improve the graduate student experience within the Department of Electrical, Computer, and Systems Engineering (ECSE) by (i) building community among graduate students, (ii) advocating for graduate student needs to departmental and Institute leadership, (iii) organizing social, professional, and wellness programming, and (iv) supporting initiatives that enhance learning, research, and everyday life for ECSE graduate students.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Equal Opportunity and Hazing

a) It is the policy of the ECSE GC to provide, to the maximum extent feasible, equal opportunity to all qualified individuals without regard to race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability for all aspects of the ECSE GC's activities.

b) The ECSE GC shall make reasonable efforts to ensure Masters', Co-Term and PhD students of the department are adequately represented.

c) Hazing, reckless or intentional endangerment to health, or forced consumption of alcohol or other drugs for the purpose of initiation into or continuing membership of the ECSE GC is strictly prohibited.

Section 2. Definition of Membership

a) **General Members** consist of all registered Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) students who are currently enrolled in graduate programs offered by the ECSE Department. General Membership is automatic upon enrollment.

b) **Council Members** are General Members who have been elected to hold an office. They serve as the primary voting body for day-to-day ECSE GC operations subject to a maximum of eight (8).

c) **Associate Members** (non-voting) may include but not limited to ECSE faculty/staff, ECSE alumni, and non-ECSE RPI students interested in supporting ECSE GC activities.

Section 3. Obtaining Membership

a) To obtain Council Membership, a General Member must be nominated by any active graduate student in the ECSE department and elected during the annual elections outlined in Article IV.

b) Associate Membership may be granted through approval by the ECSE GC upon receipt of

written request indicating such intent.

Section 4. Continued Membership

Every Council Member elected during annual elections shall hold office for one (1) year or until the next election cycle is completed.

Section 5. Voting Rights

a) **General Members:** Have the right to cast exactly one (1) vote in the annual election of Council Members.

b) **Council Members:** Have the right to cast exactly one (1) vote on internal Council business, officer appointments, and amendments to these bylaws.

c) A member loses voting rights upon loss of General Member status or for cause as determined through the disciplinary process in Section 7.

Section 6. Data Privacy and Communication Autonomy

a) **Communication Autonomy:** The ECSE GC shall maintain an independent communication channel (such as a university-hosted distribution list) to facilitate direct, uncensored dialogue with the General Membership.

b) **Data Stewardship:** To ensure compliance with Institute privacy regulations, membership contact lists shall be managed using Institute-approved platforms. The ECSE GC shall not store sensitive student records on private, non-secure personal devices.

c) **Confidentiality:** Individual member data is confidential and shall not be shared with third parties without explicit consent.

Section 7. Removal of Membership

a) A member may be removed for failure to comply with these bylaws or department policy, violation of the Student Code of Conduct, or violation of RPI Handbook of Student Rights & Responsibilities.

b) A member may be removed for failure to meet attendance requirements, defined as missing more than three (2) regularly scheduled meetings per semester without an excused absence.

c) **Process:** (i) A written complaint is submitted to the ECSE GC Council Membership; (ii) removal requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote of Council Members present and voting.; (iii) notice of decision and appeal options is provided in writing within five (5) business days.

ARTICLE IV. ELECTIONS

a) **Timing:** Elections shall be held annually. The default timing is the first week of November, unless the Council votes to move it to some other time.

b) Elections shall retain the following process:

    i. The Graduate Program Administrator (or Faculty Advisor) announces the election timeline at least two (2) weeks in advance;

    ii. nominations open for one (1) week and may be self-nominations;

     iii. voting occurs at a General Meeting or via secured online ballot open for 48 hours;

     iv. simple majority elects;

     v. ties are resolved by a runoff between tied candidates.

c) Students shall take office immediately upon announcement of election results, at which time the term of office for previous members shall expire.

d) Any member who suspects unfair conduct shall notify the Graduate Program Administrator for further scrutiny.

e) Vacancies on the Council may be filled by appointment with the approval of two-thirds of the voting membership of the Council.

ARTICLE V. OFFICERS

Section 1. Officers and Duties

1. The Officers of the ECSE GC shall consist of a President, a Secretary, and at least two (2) additional officers.

2. The President (Mandatory) shall:

    (a) Act as the primary spokesperson for the Council.

    (b) Preside over all Council meetings, or appoint a President Pro Tempore to do so if unable to attend.

    (c) Set the agenda for General and Council meetings.

3. The Secretary (Mandatory) shall:

    (a) Take minutes at all meetings and distribute them to Council members.

    (b) Maintain the official records and membership roster of the ECSE GC.

    (c) Be responsible for advertising meetings and events of the Council.

4. **Standard Roles for Reference** (The Council may elect members to these positions or define new ones as needed):

    (a) The Vice President shall act as President in their absence and coordinate operations not provided elsewhere.

    (b) The Events Coordinator shall plan social, professional, and wellness events and coordinate logistics.

    (c) The Publicity & Communications Coordinator shall manage outreach (email, social media) and maintain the web presence.

Section 2. Eligibility for Office

a) Only elected Council Members are eligible to serve as Officers.

b) No person may hold more than one Officer position concurrently.

c) If an officer cannot complete their term, they shall inform the Council immediately.

Section 3. Election of Officers

a) **Timing:** Officer elections shall be held annually at the first meeting of the newly elected Council. This meeting must occur within two (2) weeks of the general Council results announcement.

b) **Presiding Officer:** The outgoing Council President shall call this meeting and preside until the new President is elected. If the outgoing President is unavailable, the Graduate Program Administrator may preside.

c) **Process:**

    (i) Nominations for President are taken from the floor (self-nominations permitted).

    (ii) Voting occurs via show of hands by the Council Members present.

    (iii) A simple majority of the Council Members is required to elect.

    (iv) Once elected, the new President immediately presides over the election of the Secretary and remaining officers.

d) **Term:** Officers serve for the duration of their Council term (one year) or until their successors are elected.

Section 4. Removal from Office

a) An officer may be removed from their specific officer role (while retaining their Council seat) for failure to perform duties or violation of policies.

b) **Process:** (i) A motion to remove an officer must be made by a current Council Member; (ii) the motion must be discussed at a meeting with at least five (5) days' notice; (iii) removal requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote of Council Members present and voting.

Section 5. Succession and Vacancies

a) In the event of a vacancy in the office of the President, the Vice President (if one exists) shall become President. If no Vice President exists, the Council shall hold an internal election to fill the position.

b) Vacancies in other officer positions shall be filled by an internal election at the next regular Council meeting.

ARTICLE VI. MEETINGS

Section 1. General Meetings

a) The ECSE GC shall hold a minimum of two (2) General Meetings each Fall and Spring semester.

b) **Procedure & Quorum:** Meetings follow an agenda set by the President and distributed at least 24 hours in advance. Quorum for business is fifty percent (50%) of Council Members. Proxy or electronic participation may count toward quorum if allowed by the President. Actions pass by simple majority unless otherwise specified.

ARTICLE VII. POLICIES, STANDING RULES, AND BYLAWS

Section 1. Availability

a) All policies, standing rules, and bylaws shall be available to any student of the department or interested member upon request and shall be published wherever these bylaws are published. These bylaws must be published on the ECSE GC website, and on file with the ECSE department administration.

ARTICLE VIII. RATIFICATION AND AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Supremacy Clause

If any part of these bylaws violates or contradicts the policies of Rensselaer, the Rensselaer Union, or applicable laws, the contradictory parts are invalid.

Section 2. Ratification

a) These bylaws shall be effective immediately upon ratification by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of members with voting rights and subsequent approval of the ECSE department administration.

b) Amendments require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all Council Members at a General Meeting (provided one week's notice of the amendment was given), and subsequent approval by the ECSE department administration.

Section 3. Abrogation

Upon adoption, these bylaws abrogates previous governing documents relating to the ECSE GC without disrupting officers currently serving terms validly elected under a prior set of bylaws.