

# **REESSA Constitution**

Drafted September 2002

Revised April 2004

Revised April 2007

Revised April 2010

Revised April 2011

Revised April 2014

Revised April 2015

Revised April 2020

Revised May 2021

Revised April 2023

REESSA is a representative body of all graduate students in the Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology. A crucial function of the REESSA is to increase student participation in department policy making. REESSA members elect a Board who are charged with the responsibility of holding regular meetings and maintaining financial records. At regular REESSA meetings, all members are invited to communicate student opinion on various matters regarding the Department, plan social events for graduate students, faculty, and staff, and elect members-at-large for various Department and University committees.

## **Article I. Name and Mission:**

- i. The name of the organization will be the name of the department followed by “graduate students’ association”. Hence, the name of the organization is the Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology Graduate Students’ Association (REESSA).
- ii. The main function of REESSA is to provide a framework that will allow organized administration of academic, political and social interests of graduate students in the Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology. Through this organization we hope to facilitate interactions between faculty, and graduate students, and enhance the quality of academic life. As such, the mandate of REESSA is three-fold:
  1. To provide official representation for graduate students within and outside the department.
  2. To promote the general welfare of graduate students.
  3. To serve and further the intellectual, cultural, social, and recreational activities of graduate students.
- iii. REESSA operates at the University of Alberta, subject to University of Alberta policies and procedures. All graduate students are automatically considered members of the Graduate Students’ Association (GSA), and are subject to the bylaws and regulations of the GSA. Each graduate department can elect one departmental councillor and appoint an alternate to the GSA. REESSA is expected to renew Student Group Services registration through Bearsden by the end of May each year. This group will also comply with all local, provincial, and federal laws and procedures.

## **Article II. Membership and Membership Dues:**

- i. Any graduate student (Masters and Doctoral) of the Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology is automatically included in this Association.
- ii. All graduate student members of REESSA are invited to participate in regular meetings, run for Board positions, and participate on Department and University committees. Post-Doctoral Fellows and Research Associates are also considered members of REESSA, and may participate in regular meetings and REESSA sponsored events, however, they may not run for Board positions or participate as grad reps on Department and University committees.

There are no membership dues.

### **Article III. REESSA Board:**

- i. The Board of REESSA is composed of eight executive members, two members at large, two transition members at large as well as committee members outlined in Article X.
- ii. The Board consists of the following positions:
  - Chair
  - Vice-Chair
  - VP Finance
  - VP External
  - VP Internal
  - VP Academic
  - VP Social
  - VP Sports
  - VP Communications
  - 2 Members-at-large
  - 2 Summer Transition Members-at-large
  - Committee members (see Article X for description)

*Specific Board responsibilities are outlined in Article X: Committees*
- iii. Selection of the Board should consider the makeup of the membership; hence the two members-at-large should represent programs, years or demographics not represented by the eight titled positions. There should be at least one PhD student (any program), and at least one executive or member-at-large from each of the following programs: Agriculture and Resource Economics, Rural Sociology, Risk and Community Resilience, if possible.
- iv. Should a REESSA Board member or committee representative be unable to fulfill their commitment, for whatever reason, or are negligent in performing their duties, the remaining members of the Board may invite the delinquent Board member to resign if at least three-fourths of the Board votes in support of a proposed motion. In the event that a Board member resigns, the remaining Board members will hold council to consider replacement candidates. A simple majority vote for a candidate nominated from REESSA's Board members is sufficient to appoint a replacement Board member for the remainder of the year until the AGM when a new Board is elected. We recommend that these roles are filled Chair, Vice-Chair, VP Finance, VP External and VP Communications.
- v. All elected committee members (see Article X) are also voting members of the REESSA Board.
- vi. Advisory members, which are non-voting members of the Board, may be nominated during elections or appointed by the Board throughout the year. These members will have voice but are not considered for quorum. This form of membership should only be utilized for those that are interested in formally participating in the REESSA Board, but are constrained by other scholarly commitments. (Ex. Travel for field work and/or other student group commitments OR when interest in REESSA exceeds the number of available Board positions.)

### **Article IV: Committees**

By serving on these committees, our graduate students have the opportunity to get involved with departmental policy and other decision-making activities that will affect all students in the department. A list of Departmental and University Committees is located in Article X.

- i. REESSA members serving on department and university committees are expected to solicit the opinions of the membership and contributing these thoughts at their respective, consistently-attended committee meetings and report back to the Board. They are also expected to keep all graduate students informed of committee plans, activities, and decisions by reporting either at general meetings, posting summaries on the website and/or bulletin boards and email.
- ii. If unable to attend a committee meeting, the student-elected committee member must inform the VP External in advance of any pressing matters that may arise at the committee meeting. The Board may then elect to send any member of the Board or have the student-elected member brief a suitable alternate. All matters that require communicating pertinent information to the members should be brought to the Board's attention.
- iii. All REESSA committee members hold voice and vote at REESSA Board meetings. If committee positions are left vacant then the REESSA Board will appoint a member or Board member to that position with a simple majority vote.

## **Article V: General Meetings**

- i. The entire REESSA membership shall be invited to meet at least once per academic year, (hereby referred to as the Annual General Meeting [AGM]) before the end of May, and more often if deemed necessary by the Board or if petitioned by ten percent of the members of REESSA. Committees and groups within REESSA will meet whenever required by that group.
- ii. Quorum at any General Meeting of REESSA shall consist of one-third of the current members of REESSA. This must include at least five Board members.
- iii. Quorum at any regular meeting of the Board shall consist of at least half of the Board.
- iv. Individuals that are not elected to the Board are encouraged to bring forth proposals and/or projects to the attention of the Board at any time.
- v. Notice of the AGM will be communicated through at least two of the following: the REESSA bulletin board, main office bulletin board, the lounge bulletin board, the Facebook group, the Discord Server and the REESSA website and/or the graduate student Listserv.
- vi. Motions are deemed passed with a two-thirds majority of the members present.
- vii. For any meeting of REESSA, written notice shall be distributed to all members of REESSA at least five working days prior to the meeting and shall clearly state all the business to be discussed at the meeting.

## **Article VI: Elections**

- i. The meetings of REESSA to elect the Members of the Board and Committee Representatives of REESSA shall be held in April or May. The AGM or a special meeting can be called for election purposes. Prior to any meeting of REESSA at which elections or by-elections are to be held, at least one week's notice must be given during which time the current Board shall accept written nominations. Written nominations must be accepted by the nominee. Nominations shall also be called for at the meeting, but no nomination shall be accepted without consent of the nominee.
- ii. Voting can occur at the meeting called for such a purpose, or online using a secure and agreed upon medium within two weeks of the nomination deadline. All REESSA members are eligible to vote.

- iii. Elections will be coordinated and overseen by a Board member appointed by the REESSA executive who is not seeking a second term in office.
- iv. Election results will be emailed out using the REES student Listserv and posted on the REESSA website, bulletin board or events board.
- v. All appeals, including recounts, must be submitted to the REESSA faculty advisor, who should be sought out and appointed by the REESSA Board after each election, by the start of the fall semester.
- vi. Impeachment and vacancy policy are outlined in Article III, Section IV.

## **Article VII: New Student Orientation and Mentoring**

- i. At least one Board member and one REESSA member shall attend the new student orientation to welcome and orient students to the department and to REESSA.
- ii. One Board or REESSA member will be responsible for pairing up new students with experienced students in the Mentorship Program.

## **Article VIII: Finances**

- i. The REESSA shall not be allowed to borrow monies from its members and/or other persons not associated with REESSA. The financial year of REESSA shall end on the final operating day of that REESSA Board before the Board of the next year is instated.
- ii. The Chair and VP Finance are responsible for the preparation and accounting of the book and records of each financial year. Two members, external from the REESSA Board shall serve as auditors. A suggested auditor is the Research/Academic Initiatives Coordinator.
- iii. The finances of REESSA shall be made public upon request and as an annual financial report at the AGM.
- iv. All finances belonging to REESSA shall be kept in an account belonging to REESSA, at a bank designated by the VP Finance of REESSA. The type of account will be the VP Finance's choice.
- v. Money from the fore-mentioned account shall be withdrawn and used only for the purposes approved by a majority vote at a REESSA meeting. On short notice, a meeting of the Chair, Vice-Chair and VP Finance can approve emergency spending of up to \$100 CDN.
- vi. Signing authority will be the responsibility of the Chair and VP Finance, with the Vice-Chair serving as an alternate. All three must sign the necessary documents at the bank at a mutually convenient time. Cheques must be signed by at least two of these signing authorities.

## **Article IX: Amendments to the Constitution**

- i. Any changes to the constitution will be made at the AGM by agreement of the members at the meeting with a required quorum of one-third of the current membership. Any member may propose amendments to the constitution. Proposed amendments shall be submitted, in writing, to the Vice-Chair of the Board fifteen days prior to the AGM. Any proposed changes to the constitution will be circulated to the membership at least five working days prior to the meeting.
- ii. Amendments to the by-laws of the REESSA must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the members present at the REESSA meetings.

- iii. The Board, with a two-thirds majority, may temporarily suspend or alter any by-law of REESSA at their discretion until such time that the proposed amendment to the by-laws can be debated and voted on by the membership of REESSA at the General Meeting.
- iv. In the event of an occurrence that is not covered by this document, Robert's Rules of Order shall apply.

## **Article X: Committee and other Representatives:**

- ❖ Department Council member: 1 seat
  - Expected to attend monthly meetings and report on REESSA's activities and report to the Board.
    - ◆ *appointed from the Board, preferably the Chair or Vice-Chair*
- ❖ Teaching and Policy member: 1 seat
  - expected to attend occasional meetings with faculty members
    - ◆ *Elect one member or appoint from the Board*
- ❖ GSA Council – REES Department councillor: 1 councillor and 1 alternate
  - expected to attend monthly and special meetings with GSA Council
    - ◆ *Attended or delegated by VP External*
    - ◆ *alternate position held or delegated by VP Internal*
- ❖ Communications – REES Department councillor: 1 seat
  - expected to attend occasional meetings with faculty members
    - ◆ *Attended or delegated by VP Communications*
- ❖ Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) – REES Department councillor: 1 seat
  - expected to attend occasional meetings with faculty members
    - ◆ *Elect one member or appoint from the Board*
- ❖ ALES Faculty Council member:
  - expected to attend occasional meetings with the Faculty
    - ◆ *Attended or delegated by VP Internal*

## **Article XI: Dissolution**

- i. The group may be dissolved by a two-thirds majority vote at a Special General Meeting convened for the purpose of which 90 days' notice must have been given in writing (email or paper) to all members. The group is automatically dissolved upon the dissolution of the Department of REES. Upon dissolution, the Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring that any remaining financial resources are donated to the Brett Cortus Memorial Scholarship or a charity chosen by a majority of the Board and the bank account is closed down. Any resources or group assets will be sold and donated to the Brett Cortus Memorial Scholarship or given to a charity chosen by a majority of the Board where appropriate, but will not be distributed to individual members.

## **Article XII: REESSA Board Duties**

### **Chair and Vice-Chair**

1. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall coordinate all business with Board Members and Committee Reps of REESSA.
2. The Chair or Vice-Chair shall coordinate interactions and representations with the Department, University administration and other parties to the benefit of REESSA.
3. The Chair, or at the Chair's option, the Vice-Chair shall chair all meetings of REESSA and of the Board.

4. The Chair prepares the agenda for all Board meetings and AGMs.
5. The goal is for the Chair and Vice-Chair to run the business of REESSA as a team, but in the case of disagreements it shall be the authority of the Chair which will override.
6. The Chair or Vice-Chair must be one of the two graduate student representatives to serve on Department Council.
7. The Chair or Vice-Chair will register next year's REESSA with the Student Group Services Registry.
8. The Chair or Vice-Chair will work to create/post pictures of all the grad students on the lounge bulletin board.
9. The Chair or Vice-Chair shall be responsible for providing the Department Chair of REES with a summary of the students' impressions concerning potential incoming academic staff members.
10. Identify weaknesses in REESSA for the current year and propose changes to strengthen REESSA for next year; this includes an annual review of the constitution.
11. In the case of absence of either the Chair or Vice-Chair, the other shall assume all of the responsibilities described in this constitution.

### VP Finance

1. The VP Finance shall be responsible for keeping account of all income and expenditures of REESSA and shall present a statement of such to a meeting of REESSA on request or at least annually.
2. The VP Finance shall prepare an annual report about revenues and expenditures to be discussed and approved by the Board and then the membership at the AGM.
3. In the absence of both the Chair and Vice-Chair, the VP Finance shall act in their place.

### VP External

1. The VP External is expected to run as the Department Representative - Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology (REES) in the ALES GSA executive election (nomination at the end of April).
2. The VP External will be the GSA Councillor shall attend and represent REES in the GSA Council Meetings. If they are unable to make a meeting, they may coordinate with their alternate GSA Councillor to attend in their stead.
3. All committee information should be presented back to the REESSA Board.

### VP Internal

1. The VP Internal is expected to attend the following committee unless unable to attend at which time they would delegate an alternate: ALES Faculty Council
2. The VP Internal will be the alternate GSA Councillor.
3. The VP Internal shall be responsible for nominating our students/professors and non-academic staff for GSA awards.
4. The VP Internal shall be responsible for communication with the undergraduate student associations such as the Faculty of ALES Undergraduate Association (FAUnA), Environmental and Conservation Sciences Students' Association, and Agriculture Club.

### VP Academic

1. The VP Academic will be the liaison with the REES Seminar Committee on academic event programming, primarily the Department Seminar Series.
2. The VP Academic shall hold a vote to invite two external speakers to give a department seminar: one economics-focused and one sociology-focused.
3. The VP Academic shall be responsible for organizing and running the REESearch Mingle event in the Fall Term.
4. The VP Academic shall coordinate or chair major academic events, such as the REESSA conference, student presentations, orientation, or any other academic activities proposed by REESSA.

## VP Sport

1. The VP Sport shall be responsible for organizing at least one physically active event per term (Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter). Priority for participation will be given to REESSA members and their guests.
2. The VP Sport shall present a report stating all activities at the AGM.
3. The VP Sport shall be responsible to assist in fundraising events throughout the year and a portion of which will be donated to the Brett Cortus Memorial Scholarship (BCMS) fund. Should the BCMS be cancelled, REESSA will contribute raised funds to local suicide prevention organizations on campus or otherwise.

## VP Social

1. The VP Social shall be responsible for initiating and organizing at least two social activities for each of the Fall and Winter terms with the assistance of other Board members. Priority for participation of all social activities will be given to REESSA members and their guests.
2. The VP Social (along with one other Board member, who will serve as the alternate) must attend at least one of the Alcohol Awareness Seminars, held twice a year, in September and January.
3. The VP Social shall present a report stating all activities which occurred throughout their term at the AGM.

## VP Communications

1. The VP Communications shall be responsible for taking minutes at all REESSA and Board meetings and distributing them to the Board members in a timely manner.
2. The VP Communications shall assist where needed in communications with the REESSA membership and the Department on behalf of the REESSA Board.
3. The VP Communications shall maintain REESSA's website with updated information about REESSA events and post materials of interest to the membership.
4. In the fall of each academic year, the VP Communications will coordinate a call for student profiles to be posted on the REES Department website, and remove the profiles of students who have already graduated.

## Members-at-large

1. Members at large should be representative of student demographics not represented by the diversity of students on the Board (i.e. Ph.D., 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year masters, international students, economics, sociology, gender).
2. Solicit feedback/opinions from REESSA membership.

## Summer Transition Members-at-large

1. Summer Members-at-large are to assist in the transition of the newly elected REESSA Board.
2. They may attend summer REESSA meetings and assist in the early planning of the year's events.
3. The Summer Transition Members-at-large end their duties the first day of the following Fall semester, but may choose to continue their duties until the next REESSA election.

## Advisory members

1. As non-voting members of the Board, Advisory members can assist other executive members in their roles and duties or start new initiatives.