

# GPSA GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT

## I. Mission Statement

The interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture (GPSA) is intended to integrate knowledge and problem-solving skills from the agricultural sciences with those from ecology, the social sciences, and ethics. The program provides advanced training for students and facilitates interdisciplinary research focused on food security, environmental quality, and community development. By emphasizing scientific principles and analytical thinking, the program seeks to prepare students to address challenges to agricultural sustainability in Iowa and other regions of the world. By bringing together faculty from diverse disciplines, the program seeks to promote innovative research that reflects the university's commitment to public service and excellence in scholarship.

## II. Faculty

Every ISU graduate faculty member is eligible to serve on the faculty of the GPSA, providing the faculty member is approved to participate by her or his home department. All faculty members wishing to serve on the GPSA must submit a *curriculum vitae* to the coordinating committee, a brief statement of interest, and approval from the departmental executive officer of the home department. Admittance to the GPSA faculty is decided by a majority vote of current program faculty members. Individuals who are not members of the ISU faculty may serve as advisors to the program at the discretion of the coordinating committee. Although these individuals may not participate in program votes, they may become adjunct faculty members and serve on graduate committees of GPSA students after following procedures set by the ISU Graduate College.

## III. Students

The program seeks the highest caliber of students. Admission is based on a holistic evaluation of the applicant with particular attention paid to evidence of high scholastic aptitude and achievement and demonstrated interest and activity in sustainable agriculture. Applicants may come from any disciplinary background. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are required. Students shall typically be expected to have a GPA of 3.0 or better, class standing in the third quartile or better (as identified by the ISU Graduate College, and a total GRE score of 1000 for verbal and quantitative and 3.5 or above for the analytic section (or a total of 1500 for the older GRE scoring system). The GPSA encourages applications from students who can demonstrate academic excellence in other ways as well. For international students, a minimum score of 550 on the TOEFL exam is required. There are no prerequisite courses or degrees. However, the GPSA may offer provisional admission to students who are judged by the program to need stronger training in the natural sciences, the social sciences, or mathematics.

Application materials must be submitted to both the ISU Graduate College Admissions Office and to the Office of the GPSA Program Assistant. In addition to GRE scores, transcripts of all college work and three letters of recommendation are required (a complete list of application requirements can be obtained at the program website, [www.sust.ag.iastate.edu/gpsa](http://www.sust.ag.iastate.edu/gpsa)).

The GPSA has no application deadline. Applications are reviewed periodically during the fall and spring semesters. Enrollment will typically commence in August, with participation in SusAg 509, an intensive summer field course. To accommodate the scheduling needs of SusAg 509, students seeking admission to the program in August must apply early in the year.

Selection of students shall be by an admissions committee, which shall be appointed and approved by the coordinating committee. Typically faculty members shall serve on the admissions committee for no more than three consecutive years. The chair of the admissions committee shall be selected by admissions committee members and shall be responsible for coordinating the committee's activities in a timely and just manner. The admissions committee is responsible for insuring that students admitted to the program (1) meet the academic requirements of the ISU Graduate College, (2) shall have an academic supervisor who is a member of the GPSA faculty, and (3) shall have adequate financial support from grant funds, university assistantships, or other sources.

#### **IV. Administration**

A chair and an associate chair will administer the program, and each will be elected separately to a two-year term by the entire faculty of the program.

The chair is responsible for carrying out program policies, administering the budget, serving as a conduit between program faculty members and university administrators, supervising office staff, and insuring that inquiries about the program are answered. The associate chair assists the chair in carrying out administrative duties and represents the program when the chair is unavailable. After her or his two-year term is completed, the associate chair typically is expected to be a candidate for the chair's position. To become chair, the associate chair must be confirmed by a new election (see section VI). Rotation of the chair and associate chair positions among departments participating in the program is desirable.

Program policies shall be set by the program's coordinating committee. The coordinating committee is also responsible for appointing a Director of Graduate Education (DOGE) and for supervising five standing committees (admissions, curriculum, funding/development/promotion and publicity, and international) and various *ad hoc* committees. The coordinating committee consists of the program chair, the program associate chair, the DOGE, the Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture, the Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, a GPSA student representative, and one representative from each participating department. A department participates in the

program by having one or more members accepted into the GPSA faculty. It is at the discretion of each participating department whether or not to have a representative serve on the coordinating committee. Ordinarily, the chair and associate chair will not be considered their home department's representative on the coordinating committee. A departmental representative, when faced with a scheduling conflict, may designate a representative or proxy from the same department to attend a coordinating committee meeting, make comments and vote in his or her place. If a member of the GPSA faculty is not available to serve as a proxy, a non-member may be designated. The student representative can similarly designate a proxy from the GPSA student body.

The Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture and the Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture are *ex officio* members of the coordinating committee. Their participation in decision-making by the GPSA coordinating committee is desired, but not required.

Departmental representatives on the coordinating committee serve for two-year terms that start on 1 July. These two-year terms will be staggered such that half of the departmental representatives are replaced each year. At the inception of the program, half of the departmental representatives will be appointed to three-year terms, and half will have two-year terms.

Meetings of the coordinating committee may be convened regardless of numbers of attendees, although every effort will be made to schedule meetings to maximize attendance. A simple majority of the coordinating committee (i.e., the program chair and vice-chair, the DOGE, departmental representatives, the Wallace Chair, and the Leopold Center Director) is required for a quorum on any vote. Each member of the coordinating committee, including the chair and associate chair, shall have one vote. The decisions of the chair and associate chair may be overridden by a majority of the coordinating committee. Ties do not constitute an override. Cases of disagreement between the program faculty and either the chair, associate chair, or the coordinating committee shall be handled through referenda (see section VI, below).

Standing and ad-hoc committees shall be comprised of members of the GPSA faculty and students. Student members are encouraged to participate and to vote on all policy matters but will be excused from confidential discussions of individual students and applicants. Committee chairs will be determined by the committees and will normally serve two year terms from 1 July of even-numbered years until 30 June, two years later.

## **V. Meetings**

The chair will be responsible for convening meetings of the coordinating committee and the program faculty on a regular basis during the fall and spring semesters. Typically, the coordinating committee will meet monthly and the program faculty will meet once each semester.

## **VI. Elections and Referenda**

All members of the GPSA faculty are eligible to vote for the chair and associate chair of the program. Election to the chair and associate chair positions requires that at least 60% of the program faculty vote. Election decisions are determined by the majority of votes cast. In the event that no candidate receives a majority, a run-off election will be held between the two candidates for each position who received the highest number of votes. If no candidate receives a majority and the number two and number three candidates are tied for votes, then lots will be drawn by candidates two and three to decide who will run against the number one candidate.

Department representatives on the coordinating committee will be elected by caucus from within each respective department. All department representatives must be members of the GPSA faculty.

All elections will be held in spring semester of odd-numbered years. The chair and associate chair of the program shall assume their duties on 1 July of odd-numbered years and serve until 30 June, two years later. In the case of the need for mid-term replacement of the chair or associate chair due to resignation or other circumstances, a special election will be called by the coordinating committee.

In the event of major disagreements between the program faculty and either the chair, associate chair, or coordinating committee, issues may be decided by a referendum vote. A referendum may be brought forth to the program faculty at any time if at least three members of the program faculty communicate their support for it, in writing, to the coordinating committee. The referendum must be posted to the program faculty within one week of it being brought to the coordinating committee by the minimum of three program faculty members, with a time-limit for response of not more than two weeks. A majority of those voting must approve of a referendum for it to pass, and at least sixty percent the program faculty must vote for the results of a referendum to be valid.

## **VII. Changes in the Governance Document**

Changes to the governance document of the GPSA shall be proposed in writing to the faculty at least two weeks before a meeting of the GPSA faculty at which they will be considered. Provision shall be made for electronic ballots to be cast during a two-week balloting period. A valid vote on proposed changes to the governance document shall require that at least 60% of the GPSA faculty cast a ballot. A majority of those voting at the meeting and electronically must approve of a proposed change for it to pass.