

PROJECT CHARTER OF THE:

GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM PLANNING COMMITTEE (GSSPC)

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1 Program Overview

1.1 Program Description

The Graduate Student Symposium Planning Committee (GSSPC) is a group of graduate students responsible for the tasks associated with the planning of a symposium for an American Chemical Society (ACS) National Meeting; this includes, but is not limited to, topic selection, fundraising, speaker recruitment and logistical arrangements. The GSSPC is also charged with ensuring the continuation of the GSSPC by recruiting and mentoring a successive group of graduate students.

The GSSPC was created in spring 2005 to formalize an existing group of University of Illinois graduate students planning a symposium for the spring 2006 (231st) ACS National Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. These students were recruited by Dr. Cathy Middlecamp, then Program Chair for the Division of Chemical Education (CHED), in a continuing effort by CHED to involve graduate students in the ACS, in general, and at national meetings, in particular.

Though the Atlanta symposium is the first organized by the GSSPC, it is the third planned by graduate students. The first was presented at the 228th ACS National Meeting in Philadelphia, PA (fall 2004) by students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the second at the 230th ACS National Meeting in Washington, DC (fall 2005) by students from several institutions. The GSSPC built upon lessons learned during the first two symposia to organize the Atlanta event and to prepare this Charter.

1.2 Program Scope

1.2.1 Product Scope

The products of each GSSPC are two-fold: (1) a symposium to be held at an ACS National Meeting, and (2) a new, viable GSSPC for the subsequent year. While the topic of each symposium is left to the discretion of each GSSPC, this topic should, of course, be relevant to the chemical community. Possibilities include technical topics (e.g., nanotechnology), “soft” programming (e.g., careers) and topics contributing to the larger themes chosen by ACS (e.g., natural disasters). Each type of programming presents a different set of challenges in terms of drawing an audience and recruiting speakers. Additionally, each GSSPC should make themselves aware of previous ACS and GSSPC symposia so as not to duplicate recently selected topics. Each GSSPC will enjoy significant flexibility in speaker selection, symposium format and duration, and any related social events, as long as the event is adequately funded and meets the goals enumerated in section 1.3, Program Objectives.

Recruitment and mentoring of a next-generation GSSPC (nGSSPC) is vital to the continuation of this project. Potential groups must be evaluated to identify those that are most enthusiastic and committed. Mentoring activities will include involving the nGSSPC at the symposium of the current GSSPC, updating the *GSSPC Handbook*, and making contact information of GSSPC members available to the nGSSPC.

1.2.2 Project Scope

To successfully deliver the products outlined above, each GSSPC will be involved in a number of activities; they are listed here with a brief description. For more detailed information about these

tasks, consult section 2.6, Stages, and the *GSSPC Handbook*.

- **TEAM BUILDING:** One graduate student will recruit peers to form a GSSPC, adhering to the recommendations outlined in section 2.2, Organization and Responsibilities.
- **TOPIC SELECTION:** Members will select a topic that is relevant, on the cutting edge of chemistry and of a scope suitably covered by a symposium.
- **INSTITUTION INTERFACE:** Members will investigate and make use of resources available at their institution(s), which may include financial accounts, procurement, offices and meeting rooms, computer accounts, sorting and mailing, graphic design and printing, phone lines, etc.
- **ACS INTERFACE:** Members will cooperate with an ACS division Program Chair and Symposium Chair to register the symposium, arrange the symposium logistics, apply for Presidential status, solicit cosponsorships from ACS affiliates and divisions, and otherwise make full use of available ACS resources.
- **FUNDRAISING:** Members will identify potential sources of financing—for example, corporate sponsorships or institutional grants—and pursue such sources to fully fund the symposium.
- **BUDGETING:** Members will establish and maintain a budget to ensure completion of the task within the financial means, as determined by fundraising success, of the group.
- **ADVERTISING:** Members will advertise the symposium by appropriate methods, which may include word-of-mouth, website, email, flyers, and ACS publications.
- **CONTRIBUTOR RECRUITMENT:** Members will identify and invite a range of talented speakers, panel members or poster presenters as befits the chosen symposium format.
- **UPDATE DOCUMENTATION:** Members will maintain appropriate documentation for their activities, updating this Project Charter and the *GSSPC Handbook* and producing a summary article for distribution to ACS and financial sponsors following successful completion of the symposium.
- **RECRUIT NEXT GSSPC:** Members will identify and mentor a new GSSPC, vetting applicants for commitment and enthusiasm and making an effort to involve a variety of accredited, PhD-granting institutions.

1.3 Program Objectives

The GSSPC was created to simultaneously satisfy the needs and desires of the ACS, the ACS sponsoring division or committee, and chemistry graduate students. In general, the objective of each GSSPC is to continue to meet these needs while maintaining the sustainability of the project. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To provide a national forum in which graduate students may make their views known.
2. To provide an outlet in which graduate students can develop their professional network and leadership skills.

3. To provide a sustainable source of quality programming for the ACS sponsoring division or committee.
4. To encourage current and future membership in the ACS by targeting programming to the newest generation of professional chemists.

1.4 Outstanding Issues

As of the issue date of this Charter, the following questions have yet to be resolved:

The GSSPC was begun by, and currently resides under, CHED, which may not be the most logical location for the GSSPC. Rather, the Young Chemists' Committee (YCC) seems the most appropriate choice for housing the GSSPC in the long term. The exact nature of this relationship and the timing of the official switch from CHED to YCC, including transfer of funds awarded for a 2005 Innovative Projects Proposal, have yet to be determined. This Charter serves, in part, as the GSSPC's proposal for this relationship. Listed below are the main points addressing the GSSPC-sponsoring division relationship and their location in the Charter.

- The GSSPC will:
 - Remain, in composition, independent of the sponsoring division (Section 2.2, Organization and Responsibilities).
 - Recruit and mentor the next GSSPC (Section 2.4, Support Outputs).
 - Provide \$2000 to the next GSSPC (Section 2.5, Risk Management).
 - Work with the sponsoring division to apply for long-term grants (Section 2.5, Risk Management).
 - Submit bimonthly reports to the sponsoring division for review (Section 2.7, Reporting Mechanisms).
 - Prepare a final report for the sponsoring division (Section 2.7, Reporting Mechanisms).
 - Present oral reports to the sponsoring division open meeting at two National Meetings (Section 2.7, Reporting Mechanisms).
 - Involve the sponsoring division in deciding upon changes to the *GSSPC Handbook* and this Charter (Section 2.7, Reporting Mechanisms).
- The sponsoring division will:
 - Provide a repository for GSSPC material, such as the *Handbook*, Charter, graduate student email list, other electronic files, excess or long-term funds.
 - Maintain a financial account and non-profit tax ID, if possible, for the GSSPC (Section 2.3, Support Sources).
 - Provide a permanent, dedicated email address and webspace (Section 2.3, Support Sources).
 - Work with the current GSSPC to apply for long-term grants (Section 2.5, Risk Management).

- Locate a new GSSPC, in the event of collapse of the current GSSPC (Section 2.5, Risk Management).

Availability and fluidity of financial resources will be vital to the future of the GSSPC. Currently, the GSSPC maintains an account through the local university, but makes use of the tax status and tax identification number of the ACS. This is not appropriate in the long term. Possible solutions include: using accounts and tax status of the local institution, using accounts and tax status of the ACS, or creating an independent account and obtaining non-profit status for the GSSPC itself.

The ACS has, at its disposal, many resources and it is currently unclear to which of those resources the GSSPC may have access. In particular, the contact information for ACS members, national chemical companies and degree-granting institutions would be potentially useful for fundraising and advertising. The GSSPC, ACS and sponsoring division or committee must work together to determine guidelines for appropriate use of ACS resources.

Several aspects of the GSSPC program have yet to even be experienced. This Charter contains only an estimation of the challenges that will arise at latter stages of the symposium planning and mentoring processes. In particular, this is true of the GSSPC mentoring relationship, documentation update protocols, and the symposium logistics timetable. These will be revisited following successful completion of the first GSSPC.

1.5 Terminology

ACS American Chemical Society

CHED Division of Chemical Education

GAB Graduate Advisory Board

GSSPC Graduate Student Symposium Planning Committee

nGSSPC Next generation GSSPC, that which is recruited by the current GSSPC to plan a symposium for the subsequent year

OASYS ACS's online abstract submission system

pGSSPC Previous generation GSSPC, that which was responsible for recruiting the current GSSPC and planned a symposium for the previous year

YCC Young Chemists' Committee

2 Project Approach

2.1 Quality Objectives

As discussed in section 1.2.1, Product Scope, the GSSPC delivers two products: (1) a symposium at an ACS National Meeting, and (2) a new GSSPC. The successes and failures of each GSSPC in producing these two items should be evaluated and results included in updates to the *GSSPC Handbook*.

To evaluate the success of the symposium, the GSSPC should observe:

- **ATTENDANCE** Symposium interest generated among chemists should be gauged by carefully monitoring attendance levels at symposium sessions and any associated events.
- **SUBMISSIONS** The number and variety of submitted abstracts provide another indicator of the interest. The quantity, topic, and demographic variety of contributions should be noted.
- **FEEDBACK** Both formal and informal methods should be used to solicit feedback on the symposium's organization, content and effectiveness. Questionnaires can be distributed to attendees, participants and planners. Unsolicited emails and candid conversations may also be taken into account.

To evaluate the success of recruiting efforts, the GSSPC should observe:

- **APPLICATIONS** The number of potential applicants indicates interest generated by effective advertising and word-of-mouth.
- **MENTORING RELATIONSHIP** Feedback from the nGSSPC provides insight into the quality and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.
- **HANDBOOK UPDATE** A thorough review and revision of current *GSSPC Handbook* material and this Charter ensures continued improvement of GSSPC products.

A final indicator of success is sustainability. Each GSSPC that delivers quality products contributes positively to a GSSPC legacy. The continued existence of the GSSPC is a potent indicator of the successes of each GSSPC that preceded it.

2.2 Organization and Responsibilities

Adhering to the following three guidelines during team formation will ensure adequate manpower to complete the tasks outlined in section 1.2, Program Scope. First, the project team should consist entirely of students from a single institution or multiple nearby institutions; such geographic localization allows for regular, face-to-face meetings. Second, a group size of four to six students will spread out the required workload while easing the communication difficulties inherent to larger groups. Finally, team members should span a range of years so that an entire team does not encounter institutional degree requirements (e.g., preliminary exams, thesis defenses) at the same time.

To meet objective two in section 1.3, Program Objectives, it is crucial that the project team remain autonomous and egalitarian. For these reasons, the project team should consist exclusively of graduate students. Inclusion of postdoctoral students, undergraduate students or professors disrupts the natural equivalence of graduate students, potentially undermining the professional skills development objective. Similarly, over-involvement of ACS or sponsoring division/committee members compromises the group's independence, also inhibiting skills development. Still, a GSSPC should make full use of ACS members and other knowledgeable individuals as invaluable resources, as covered in section 2.3, Support Sources.

The responsibilities of the GSSPC are covered briefly in section 1.2.2, Project Scope, section 2.6, Stages, and in greater depth in the *GSSPC Handbook*. The roles to be played by individual members, however, are left to each GSSPC. This flexibility allows each group to assign tasks based on the interests and competencies of individual members.

2.3 Support Sources

There are three principal groups to which each GSSPC should look for assistance and advice: members of the previous generation GSSPC (pGSSPC), ACS officials, and local institution-based service providers including research advisors. The success of a GSSPC may, in fact, hinge upon a team's adequate use of these resources. However, it is important to recognize that, while each of these groups has an interest in GSSPC success, ultimate responsibility for completing the tasks outlined in section 1.2, Program Scope, lies solely with the current GSSPC.

The mentoring relationship between the GSSPC and their predecessors is vital to the success of this project. There are three ways in which this mentoring relationship takes effect. First, the *GSSPC Handbook* is meant to be a repository for all the lessons learned by past GSSPCs. This should be consulted frequently by the current committee. Second, a GSSPC should make efforts to attend and be involved in the symposium of the pGSSPC. Involvement may take the form of shadowing and assisting the member of the pGSSPC whose responsibilities most overlap the current member's. Finally, the GSSPC should remain in contact with members of the pGSSPC, requesting assistance or clarification of the *GSSPC Handbook* when necessary. Obviously, following completion of their symposium, the GSSPC will then perform the above functions in the role of mentor, as outlined in section 2.4, Support Outputs.

The ACS has useful resources for many symposium-planning tasks, ranging from event logistics to fundraising and advertising. Though many details can be found in the *GSSPC Handbook*, it is the responsibility of each GSSPC to seek out new ACS resources in an effort to fully utilize all that the ACS offers. The Program and Symposium Chair of the ACS sponsoring division will serve as primary contacts within the ACS. The ACS sponsoring division may be able to provide start-up loans, financial accounts, webspace and an email address to the GSSPC; see section 1.4, Outstanding Issues.

A GSSPC's home institution provides a final, invaluable set of resources, which may include financial accounts, procurement, office and meeting rooms, computer accounts, sorting and mailing, and graphic design and printing. The exact nature and availability of these support services will, of course, depend on the individual school, so each GSSPC must put considerable effort into unearthing all possible institutional resources.

Research advisors deserve special mention in the local resources category, as they have the abilities both to provide invaluable perspectives and expertise, and to severely hinder an individual's participation. It is recommended that advisors be informed of intentions regarding involvement in the GSSPC prior to making the commitment; a lukewarm advisor response should not be treated lightly. For more on ensuring advisor support, see section 2.5, Risk Management.

2.4 Support Outputs

Each GSSPC will provide support to the nGSSPC in three ways: onsite mentoring, offsite mentoring and through the maintenance and revision of GSSPC documentation. These efforts are geared toward ensuring the success of the nGSSPC and, therefore, the sustainability of the program.

Onsite mentoring occurs at the symposium of the current GSSPC, which should make every effort to actively involve the nGSSPC in details of the symposium. A possible mechanism for encouraging involvement is shadowing, in which individuals from the GSSPC are followed and assisted by an individual from the nGSSPC, preferably one who's responsibilities in the group most resemble their own.

Offsite mentoring makes up the rest of the interaction between the GSSPC and nGSSPC, beginning with selection and ending with the completed symposium of the nGSSPC. Communications will likely be exclusively via telephone and email. Though it is the responsibility of the nGSSPC to initiate discussions, the GSSPC should ensure that updated contact information is always available to the nGSSPC.

Following completion of the symposium, the GSSPC should evaluate its activities, analyzing successes and failures according to section 2.1, Quality Objectives. The results must be organized and synthesized into updates for both the *GSSPC Handbook* and this Charter, and the new versions of both transmitted to the nGSSPC.

2.5 Risk Management

Sustainability of the GSSPC, as a long-term program, depends intimately on the continued success of each GSSPC. This feature presents several risks, each hinging on a specific failure of a particular GSSPC. The potential dangers are outlined below, along with suggestions for risk mitigation and protocols to be used in the event of a total failure.

The inability of a GSSPC to pay for its symposium, either due to inadequate fundraising or faulty budgeting, is a major risk factor. To minimize this possibility, each pGSSPC will leave \$2000 to the current GSSPC. This money will normally be used as a start-up loan, for expenses incurred by the GSSPC prior to the fundraising campaign and repaid subsequently, but in an emergency, can also be used to pay for the symposium. Emergency use will lead to an increased burden on the nGSSPC, which must replace the initial \$2000 without the benefit of its use. In short, risk is alleviated by spreading financial responsibility over three GSSPCs. Additionally, it is recommended that the ACS sponsoring division work in concert with the GSSPC to secure long-term funding grants, through the ACS or external sources, which may also be used in an emergency; see section 1.4, Outstanding Issues. Finally, the GSSPC will submit an initial budget estimate and regular updates, as outlined in section 2.7, Reporting Mechanisms, to the ACS sponsoring division, which will ensure that spending is appropriate.

The failure of a GSSPC to recruit an nGSSPC poses perhaps the greatest risk to sustainability of the program. To ease the recruiting process, it is suggested that each GSSPC make an effort to advertise to PhD-granting institutions; increased recognition of the GSSPC among faculty and administration is likely to result in increased awareness among graduate students. Second, names and emails of graduate students who attend GSSPC symposia will be collected and retained as potential recruits for subsequent GSSPCs; this list must be regularly edited to eliminate those who are no longer students. In the event of a total recruiting failure, it will be the responsibility of the ACS sponsoring division to locate a new GSSPC; see section 1.4, Outstanding Issues.

Withdrawal of advisor support can seriously hinder an individual's ability to participate in the GSSPC. To mitigate this risk, members should maintain open communication with their advisors, both before joining the GSSPC and throughout the symposium-planning process. If an advisor does withdraw support, the individual must reduce his involvement, transferring responsibilities to other members.

Loss of a committee member can arise for many reasons, including personal emergencies, graduation and loss of interest. Careful selection of the committee, as outlined in section 2.2, Organization and Responsibilities, will reduce the effects of such a loss. For foreseeable departures, thoughtful assignment of individual responsibilities and early involvement of other committee members will

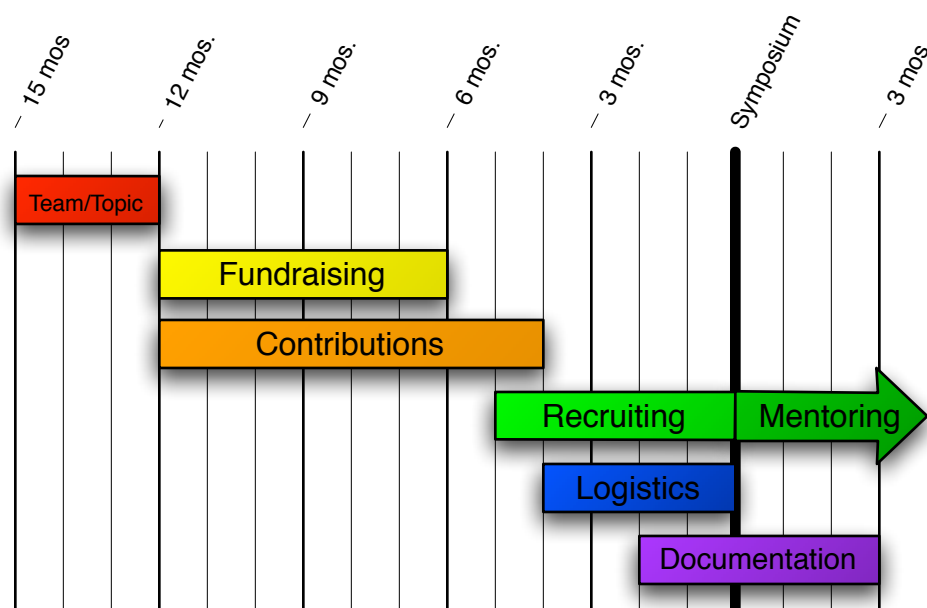


Figure 1: Timing of Project Stages

ease the transition. Finally, all members should have at least a superficial understanding of the activities of all others, most easily accomplished by thorough reporting at biweekly meetings, so tasks can be readily assumed by a teammate, if necessary.

Inadequate recruitment of presenters would result in cancellation of the symposium and, therefore, provides the basis for the final risk. It is recommended that each GSSPC secure commitments from several speakers (as invited or featured contributors) well in advance of the symposium. OASYS, the ACS online abstract submission system, should be closely monitored while it is open. If numbers are low, the GSSPC must use its contacts to garner enough abstracts to support the symposium.

2.6 Stages

The major stages required to deliver the products outlined in section 1.2.1, Product Scope, are depicted in the figure and described below. For more detail about the tasks associated with each stage, including cost and effort estimates, see section 1.2.2, Project Scope, and the *GSSPC Handbook*.

- **TEAM & TOPIC:** This stage involves selecting a team, assigning initial roles and responsibilities, defining and clarifying a topic, and checking for duplication of that topic in the history of ACS and GSSPC symposia. It occurs 12-15 months before the symposium. Objectives of this stage include building a team to meet the criteria in section 2.2, Organization and Responsibilities; engaging each GSSPC member by establishing roles; and defining the topic such that it is clear to potential sponsors and contributors. The team and topic should be introduced to the ACS community at the symposium of the pGSSPC.

- **FUNDRAISING:** To successfully complete this stage, the GSSPC must identify potential funding sources, prepare and submit solicitation packages and follow up with targets to obtain adequate sponsorship. Objectives of the fundraising stage, which occurs 6-12 months before the symposium, include developing a viable fundraising strategy, identifying sources receptive to this strategy, preparing professional solicitation packages or grant applications, and obtaining funding sufficient to finance the symposium and replace any start-up loans.
- **CONTRIBUTORS:** This stage, which occurs 4-12 months before the symposium, includes determining symposium format, identifying potential contributors, sending invitations or advertising for general submissions and finalizing the program. Objectives are to choose a symposium format suitable to the topic, identify and attract high-profile, well-reputed speakers, obtain commitments from several contributors prior to abstract submission and finalize a program which appropriately spans the scope and depth of the chosen topic.
- **RECRUIT nGSSPC:** Beginning 5 months before and continuing to 12 months after the symposium, the GSSPC must recruit the nGSSPC, build a mentoring relationship and update documentation. Objectives include initiating contact—through advertising, the established contact list or personal relationships—with multiple graduate students; selecting the nGSSPC based on commitment and diversity; and ensuring success of the nGSSPC by mentoring, updating the *GSSPC Handbook*, and remaining an available resource throughout the tenure of the nGSSPC.
- **MEETING LOGISTICS:** Logistics planning, including arrangements for rooms, food, media, moderators, contributor travel and lodging, and GSSPC travel and lodging, occurs 0-4 months before the symposium. Objectives of this stage are to enhance the GSSPC's reputation by running a smooth, professional symposium; increase recognition of GSSPC symposia by obtaining ideal locations and Presidential status, if possible; and ensure comfort of contributors and attendees by providing food, beverage and media.
- **DOCUMENTATION:** This stage involves evaluating the success of the GSSPC as outlined in section 2.1, Quality Objectives, compiling and organizing all materials acquired throughout the symposium-planning process, and updating GSSPC documentation. It begins 2 months before and finishes 3 months after the symposium. Objectives include maintaining and re-defining, as necessary, the GSSPC; contributing lessons learned to the general body of GSSPC symposia-planning knowledge; and making final communications to financial backers and the ACS sponsoring division.

2.7 Reporting Mechanisms

Adequate communication between team members is vital to the success of the GSSPC. The group should engage in biweekly, face-to-face meetings to address the status of all subprojects; issuing an agenda in advance and maintaining minutes will maximize effectiveness of these meetings. Email and other contacts are not regulated by this Charter, but will be necessary for project success.

Bimonthly, short updates detailing progress and current budget status should be submitted to the ACS sponsoring division for feedback. A final report, summarizing the entire project, should be delivered to financial backers. This summary and a statement detailing the proposed changes to the *GSSPC Handbook* should be distributed to the ACS sponsoring division and the pGSSPC. Copies of

	pGSSPC	nGSSPC	Financial Sponsors	ACS Sponsors	GAB
Bimonthly Updates				✓	
Biannual Oral Reports				✓	✓
<i>Handbook</i> Changes Proposal	✓			✓	
Final Summary			✓	✓	
Updated <i>Handbook</i> , Charter		✓		✓	✓

Figure 2: GSSPC Reporting Obligations

the updated *GSSPC Handbook* and Project Charter should be given to the ACS sponsoring division, the nGSSPC, and the Graduate Advisory Board (GAB) of the Division of Graduate Education. In addition to written reports, each GSSPC will present two oral reports at National Meeting to both the GAB and the sponsoring division. These reporting responsibilities are summarized in the above table.

3 Document Change Control

Revision	Date	Author(s)	Brief Description of Changes
1.0	11/10/05	Marja F. Engel	Initial GSSPC Charter