

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
May 11 & 13, 2026  
Online**

**Graduate Archival Education Subcommittee  
(Prepared by: Colin Post)**

**BACKGROUND**

The Graduate Archival Education Subcommittee (GAES) requests an aspect of their charge to be revised: “Assist the Executive Office with issues relating to student chapters”

Provide historical context for the issue.

- At the close of the last cycle (c. May 2025), the GAES noted that no work had been done in relation to this part of their charge. Reviewing the past several years of the subcommittee’s work further revealed that no work has been done in relation to this charge for some time. This started a discussion that has carried over into the current committee cycle about what specific responsibilities the GAES has with respect to student chapters.

**DISCUSSION [for Action and Discussion Items, should not exceed 1 to 2 pages]**

The discussions among the GAES about this aspect of our charge have led in two related but distinct directions. Most immediately for the GAES, we believe it is necessary to clarify this part of our charge with more specific language that indicates particular actions the subcommittee should make with respect to student chapters. For instance, GAES currently conducts a regular review of the Directory of Archival Education to ensure that information about graduate programs is up to date. As part of this regular review, GAES could check in with program directors about the state of student chapters. The subcommittee remains open to taking on work as assigned by the Executive Office that is within scope, but absent language oriented toward particular actions (as is the case for the rest of the subcommittee’s charge) we anticipate that the subcommittee will continue to neglect any responsibilities toward student chapters.

The second topic that has arisen through these discussions about the subcommittee's charge is the overall health of student chapters and threats to the ongoing sustainability of this mode for student engagement with the organization. As graduate archival programs have increasingly moved to online and hybrid models, it has become harder for faculty and interested students to maintain engagement with student chapters. This trend has exacerbated existing issues that already make sustaining student chapters difficult: initiating and maintaining student chapters requires significant faculty effort that is typically not recognized or compensated; an uncertain labor market and broader societal stressors that new professionals face strains student engagement with SAA generally and in student chapters specifically. Through discussions among GAES members, leadership of the Student and New Professionals (SNAP) section, and SAA staff who work with

student chapters, the GAES advises that it is time for the organization to evaluate the current structure and processes for student chapters in order to make starting, joining, and maintaining student chapters more sustainable.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S) [for Action Items only]**

#### Recommendations

- That the SAA Council adopt the following revisions to the GAES charge: replace “Assist the Executive Office with issues relating to student chapters” with “Regularly assess health and status of student chapters with input from graduate archival program directors, faculty, and students”
- That the SAA Council convene a larger conversation with diverse stakeholders about issues impacting student chapter sustainability to inform the evaluation of current structures and processes for student chapters

**Support Statement:** The support statement provides a very brief rationale or summary of the recommendation. The naïve reader should be able to glean much of the intent of the motion by reading the support statement, without having to read the background and discussion. Many organizations publish only adopted motions and support statements in their minutes. Write the support statement as if this was SAA’s policy.

- Student chapters are an essential mode for students to engage with SAA, through current issues and trends in higher education, the archival profession, and society have made it more difficult for students and faculty to participate in student chapters. A clearer, more focused charge for the GAES with respect to student chapters and a larger discussion about next steps for the organization are positive steps to make student chapters more sustainable.

**Impact on Strategic Priorities: Describe** how the proposed recommendation addresses one or more of SAA’s strategic priorities. Or indicate that it does not.

- The recommended actions directly support goal 4.2 of the current strategic plan: “Create opportunities for members to participate fully in the association.” Student chapters are an important way for students to get introduced to SAA and build a foundation for long-term professional growth through the organization, but this pathway is currently not viable for many students in graduate archival education programs.

**Fiscal Impact: Where** adoption of a motion will have a fiscal impact on the organization (via either direct or indirect expenses), estimate that here.

- The proposed actions will have a negligible financial impact.