



FALL 2026

GASF Fall 2026 Curriculum

Global Affairs Strategy Forum at Penn State Harrisburg

A semester plan for consulting practice, global affairs debate, Model United Nations, professional exposure, and student leadership.

This curriculum explains what GASF is, what members will learn, how each meeting will work, what preparation is expected, and how the semester's activities build toward the Model United Nations conference, United Nations Headquarters trip, and on-campus case competition.

Prepared for members and officers | September through December 2026

Learn • Practice • Represent • Lead

Curriculum overview

The semester is designed as a progressive learning experience rather than a series of unrelated meetings.

What GASF is

The Global Affairs Strategy Forum is a student-led learning community that connects consulting, public policy, global affairs, debate, and Model United Nations. Members learn how to analyze difficult problems, research evidence, represent different perspectives, communicate recommendations, negotiate with others, and present ideas clearly. Activities are open to Penn State Harrisburg students from every major, and no previous consulting, debate, or Model United Nations experience is required.

What GASF will do this semester

Fall 2026 is a foundation-building semester. GASF will train members through guided case preparation, mock consulting simulations, current-issues debates, Model United Nations preparation, podcast conversations, a two-day MUN conference, an educational trip to United Nations Headquarters, and a concluding case competition. The club will not accept pro bono client projects this semester. Pro bono consulting is professional work completed for a client without charging a fee; members will first build the skills, judgment, supervision habits, and professional standards needed before the organization considers that responsibility in a future semester.

How the program is organized

- Consulting track Structured problem solving, case interviews, research, recommendations, teamwork, and presentations.
- Global affairs and MUN track Country research, public speaking, moderated debate, negotiation, working papers, and resolutions.
- Professional exposure Podcasts, invited speakers, campus partnerships, and the United Nations Headquarters learning trip.
- Leadership and service Opportunities to facilitate sessions, chair committees, support events, create media, and welcome new members.

Program format

Most instructional meetings occur during common hours from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Members may join either main track or participate in both. Preparatory materials will be sent before debates, simulations, and MUN activities. Podcast interviews and guest sessions will be scheduled around participant availability and announced separately.

Semester learning outcomes

By the end of Fall 2026, an actively participating member should be able to do the following.

Outcome	What it means in practice
Problem definition	Convert a broad business or policy challenge into a clear question, objective, scope, and set of workstreams.
Structured analysis	Build issue trees, prioritize hypotheses, identify required evidence, and separate symptoms from causes.
Research and evidence	Find credible information, summarize it accurately, and connect evidence to a recommendation or policy position.
Consulting communication	Present a concise recommendation supported by logic, evidence, risks, and practical next steps.
Country representation	Research a country's interests and communicate a position that reflects the assigned delegation rather than personal opinion.
Debate and negotiation	Deliver an opening statement, respond to opposing arguments, negotiate language, and contribute to a working paper or resolution.
Teamwork and leadership	Divide work, meet deadlines, give useful feedback, facilitate discussion, and contribute responsibly to an event team.
Professional conduct	Participate respectfully, follow Penn State policies, avoid hazing and discrimination, and communicate concerns through appropriate channels.

Learning model

Each activity follows the same cycle so members improve through repetition.

1 Learn A facilitator introduces a tool, process, or rule with a short example.

2 Prepare Members research a topic, read a case, or develop an initial position before or during the meeting.

3 Practice Teams apply the method through a case exercise, speech, debate, negotiation, or written product.

4 Present Members explain their reasoning and receive questions from peers, officers, or invited reviewers.

5 Reflect Participants identify what worked, what needs improvement, and one action for the next session.

Evidence of participation

- A case problem statement, issue tree, or hypothesis list.
- A short recommendation, slide, or team presentation.
- A country brief, opening statement, working paper contribution, or resolution clause.
- Peer feedback and a personal reflection after major simulations.
- Operational contributions such as outreach, event logistics, photography, marketing, technology, or member support.

Feedback approach

The program is developmental and does not assign academic grades. Facilitators will give concise feedback on structure, evidence, clarity, teamwork, diplomacy, and delivery. Members should use feedback in the next activity so progress is visible across the semester.

Fall 2026 program calendar

The instructional sequence prepares members for the three flagship experiences at the end of the semester.

Date	Activity	Curriculum purpose
September 14	Welcome session and general body orientation	Understand GASF, select a track, and meet the leadership team.
September 23	Consulting case preparation	Learn the anatomy of a case and build a structured approach.
September 30	Global issues debate	Research and represent an assigned country on a current issue.
October 14	Consulting case simulation	Solve a timed team case and present an initial recommendation.
October 28	Global issues debate	Improve rebuttal, negotiation, and evidence-based speaking.
November 4	Consulting case simulation	Complete a more advanced case with stronger analysis and delivery.
November 9	MUN practice and conference preparation	Rehearse procedure, speeches, caucusing, and working papers.
November 14 and 15	GASF Model United Nations Conference	Apply diplomacy, negotiation, research, and public speaking in a two-day conference.
November 20	United Nations Headquarters trip	Connect classroom learning to an international institution and its work.
December 2	On-campus case competition	Demonstrate the semester's consulting skills in a team competition.

Timing Common-hour sessions are planned for 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Event-specific times and locations will be communicated through Discover East and email.

September 14 Welcome session and general body orientation

Understand the organization, the semester plan, and how to participate.

Learning objectives

- Explain the purpose of GASF and the relationship among consulting, global affairs, debate, and MUN.
- Identify the semester's events and the preparation required for each.
- Select one or more areas of participation and understand basic member expectations.

Session plan

Time	Segment	What happens
0-10	Welcome	Introductions, attendance, and a short explanation of why the forum was created.
10-25	Program overview	Review the consulting track, debate and MUN track, podcasts, trip, conference, and case competition.
25-40	How participation works	Explain preparation, team assignments, communication channels, and leadership opportunities.
40-52	Member interests	Members identify preferred tracks, skills they want to build, and ways they can help.
52-60	Next actions	Confirm September 23 preparation and answer questions.

Preparation

No advance preparation is required. Members should bring a phone or laptop for attendance and interest registration.

Member output

A completed interest form or verbal commitment identifying a preferred track and at least one semester goal.

Suggested facilitators President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Head of Consulting, and relevant directors.

September 23 Consulting case preparation

Learn how consultants turn an unclear problem into a structured plan.

Learning objectives

- Recognize the major parts of a consulting case.
- Write a focused problem statement and clarify the objective.
- Build an issue tree and select initial hypotheses.
- Organize a team approach before beginning detailed analysis.

Session plan

Time	Segment	What happens
0-8	Concept introduction	What a consulting case is and how case interviews differ from client projects.
8-18	Clarifying questions	Practice identifying the objective, scope, constraints, stakeholders, and success measure.
18-30	Structure	Build a mutually exclusive and collectively useful issue tree for the sample problem.
30-45	Team exercise	Small teams structure a new case and identify the evidence they would request.
45-55	Present and compare	Teams explain their structures and discuss different valid approaches.
55-60	Reflection	Record one strength and one skill to practice before October 14.

Preparation

Read the one-page sample case distributed before the meeting and note three clarifying questions.

Member output

A problem statement, issue tree, initial hypothesis, and list of required evidence.

Suggested facilitators Head of Consulting with the Vice President and case facilitators.

September 30 Global issues debate

Represent a country's interests using research, evidence, and diplomatic language.

Learning objectives

- Separate personal opinion from an assigned country position.
- Create a short country brief using credible sources.
- Deliver a concise opening statement.
- Respond respectfully to competing positions.

Session plan

Time	Segment	What happens
0-8	Procedure review	Explain speaking order, time limits, respectful disagreement, and the goal of the session.
8-18	Country caucus	Delegations compare research and agree on priorities, red lines, and possible compromises.
18-35	Opening round	Each delegation delivers its prepared statement.
35-50	Moderated debate	Delegates respond to arguments, ask questions, and defend policy choices.
50-57	Negotiation	Identify areas of agreement and draft one shared action.
57-60	Feedback	Facilitators comment on evidence, representation, tone, and delivery.

Preparation

Review the announced topic and assigned country. Prepare a one-page country brief and a 60- to 90-second opening statement.

Member output

A country brief, opening statement, and one negotiated proposal.

Suggested facilitators Debate lead, communications team, and MUN facilitators.

October 14 Consulting case simulation

Apply the September method under time pressure and present as a team.

Learning objectives

- Divide work efficiently and maintain a single team storyline.
- Interpret qualitative and quantitative evidence.
- Select a recommendation supported by the strongest findings.
- Deliver a clear five-minute presentation.

Session plan

Time	Segment	What happens
0-7	Case release	Teams receive the case, objective, rules, and expected output.
7-15	Structure and roles	Teams clarify the problem, build a workplan, and assign responsibilities.
15-38	Analysis	Review exhibits, test hypotheses, and identify the most important findings.
38-47	Recommendation	Agree on the answer, supporting reasons, risks, and next steps.
47-57	Presentations	Teams present and answer questions.
57-60	Feedback	Facilitators identify one improvement for the November simulation.

Preparation

Bring a laptop if available. Review the September 23 issue-tree notes and the presentation structure distributed by the consulting team.

Member output

A team recommendation with supporting evidence, risks, and next steps.

Suggested facilitators Head of Consulting, Vice President, and invited reviewers where available.

October 28 Global issues debate

Strengthen rebuttal, coalition building, and negotiation.

Learning objectives

- Use evidence to answer an opposing claim.
- Frame proposals around shared interests.
- Negotiate without abandoning a delegation's essential priorities.
- Draft practical and specific policy language.

Session plan

Time	Segment	What happens
0-8	Briefing	Review the issue, procedure, and standards for evidence.
8-20	Opening and questions	Delegations state positions and receive questions.
20-36	Moderated debate	Speakers defend proposals and respond directly to other delegations.
36-49	Caucus	Delegates form coalitions and negotiate a joint approach.
49-56	Drafting	Coalitions write two or three action clauses.
56-60	Debrief	Review persuasion, diplomacy, and areas for improvement before MUN.

Preparation

Research the assigned country and issue. Update the country brief, prepare rebuttal evidence, and identify two acceptable compromises.

Member output

A revised country brief, rebuttal notes, coalition position, and draft action clauses.

Suggested facilitators Debate lead, MUN facilitators, and communications team.

November 4 Advanced consulting case simulation

Improve analytical depth, executive communication, and response to questions.

Learning objectives

- Prioritize the analysis that matters most to the decision.
- Synthesize several findings into one coherent recommendation.
- Acknowledge uncertainty and identify implementation risks.
- Answer challenge questions without losing the main message.

Session plan

Time	Segment	What happens
0-6	Case release	Explain the objective, deliverable, evaluation criteria, and timing.
6-13	Structure	Teams clarify the question and create a focused workplan.
13-35	Analysis	Interpret evidence, perform required calculations, and test hypotheses.
35-44	Synthesis	Build the final recommendation, rationale, risks, and implementation actions.
44-56	Present and challenge	Teams present and answer reviewer questions.
56-60	Competition readiness	Identify final skills to improve before December 2.

Preparation

Review feedback from October 14 and come prepared to apply one specific improvement.

Member output

A concise executive recommendation and individual feedback goal for the case competition.

Suggested facilitators Head of Consulting, Vice President, Treasurer for resource coordination, and invited reviewers where available.

November 9 MUN practice and conference preparation

Rehearse the procedure and responsibilities needed for the November 14 and 15 conference.

Learning objectives

- Follow basic committee procedure and speaking rules.
- Deliver an opening speech within the assigned time.
- Participate in moderated and unmoderated caucuses.
- Draft and negotiate working-paper language.
- Understand conference conduct, logistics, and role expectations.

Session plan

Time	Segment	What happens
0-10	Conference briefing	Review committee goals, schedule, roles, dress expectations, and participant conduct.
10-20	Procedure drill	Practice motions, points, speaking-list participation, and chair recognition.
20-32	Opening speeches	Delegates deliver speeches and receive quick coaching.
32-45	Caucus simulation	Delegates form blocs, negotiate priorities, and choose drafters.
45-54	Working paper	Draft sample clauses and review formatting expectations.
54-60	Final readiness	Confirm assignments, materials, arrival expectations, and remaining questions.

Preparation

Complete the background guide, country research, opening speech, and initial policy priorities. Officers and volunteers should review their operational assignments.

Member output

A conference-ready position, opening speech, working-paper contribution, and confirmed event role.

Suggested facilitators MUN Secretary-General or designated conference lead, chairs, President, Secretary, and Events team.

November 14 and 15 GASF Model United Nations Conference

A two-day application of research, diplomacy, negotiation, procedure, and public speaking.

Educational purpose

The conference gives members an extended simulation in which they represent assigned countries, debate an international issue, negotiate with other delegations, and produce a written resolution or comparable committee outcome. It is the principal applied experience of the global affairs and MUN track.

Planned learning sequence

1. Opening session and committee orientation.
2. Country statements and agenda setting.
3. Moderated debate focused on the committee's core questions.
4. Unmoderated caucuses for coalition building and negotiation.
5. Working-paper and draft-resolution development.
6. Amendment, voting, reflection, recognition, and closing session.

Participant roles

- Delegates research and represent assigned countries.
- Chairs manage procedure, speaking time, and committee flow.
- Secretariat members coordinate academic quality and conference operations.
- Volunteers support registration, room management, technology, media, hospitality, and accessibility.

Expected outputs

- Country position or research brief.
- Opening statement and documented policy priorities.
- Meaningful participation in debate and negotiation.
- Contribution to a working paper or resolution.
- Post-conference reflection on diplomacy, preparation, and leadership.

November 20 United Nations Headquarters learning trip

Connect the semester's simulations to the work and setting of an international institution.

Educational purpose

The trip is intended to help members connect MUN procedure and global-affairs discussion with the history, spaces, functions, and public-facing work of the United Nations. The planned group size is approximately 30 students. Registration, transportation, final cost, required identification, and travel instructions will be communicated after arrangements are confirmed.

Learning questions

- What are the principal bodies of the United Nations, and how do their responsibilities differ?
- How do member states negotiate when their interests conflict?
- What role do staff, diplomats, civil society, and public communication play?
- How does the physical and institutional setting compare with a student MUN simulation?
- What career paths connect consulting, policy, international affairs, communications, and public service?

Member preparation

- Review the visitor instructions and all travel deadlines.
- Bring required identification and follow Penn State and venue conduct rules.
- Prepare two substantive questions connected to the semester's debates or MUN committee.
- Complete a short reflection after the trip connecting one observation to GASF coursework.

Expected output

A short individual reflection or group discussion identifying one institutional insight, one career insight, and one question for future study.

December 2 On-campus case competition

Demonstrate structured problem solving, teamwork, analysis, and executive presentation.

Competition format

1. Teams receive a case, objective, preparation rules, and evaluation criteria.
2. Teams structure the problem, analyze the supplied information, and prepare a recommendation.
3. Each team presents its recommendation and responds to reviewer questions.
4. Reviewers provide feedback and recognize strong analysis, teamwork, and communication.

Evaluation criteria

Criterion	What reviewers look for
Problem structure	A clear objective, logical workstreams, and focus on the most important questions.
Analysis and evidence	Accurate use of information, sound reasoning, and appropriate calculations.
Recommendation	A direct answer supported by findings, with practical actions and acknowledged risks.
Presentation	A coherent storyline, readable supporting material, confident delivery, and disciplined timing.
Questions and teamwork	Consistent team understanding, respectful collaboration, and clear responses to challenges.

Expected output

A final team presentation and an individual reflection comparing performance with the goals established after the October and November simulations.

Podcast and professional exposure program

One or two conversations may be recorded each month, subject to guest and production availability.

Purpose

Podcast interviews and guest conversations extend the curriculum beyond simulations. They introduce members to the daily work, career paths, ethical responsibilities, and communication practices of professionals in consulting, business, public policy, international affairs, technology, finance, government, and related fields.

Suggested monthly themes

September What consulting is and how students can begin preparing.

October How professionals research, communicate, and make decisions under uncertainty.

November Diplomacy, international institutions, public policy, or careers connected to global affairs.

December Case competition reflection, recruiting preparation, and skills to develop next semester.

Student production roles

- Research the guest and prepare thoughtful questions.
- Draft the episode outline and opening introduction.
- Host or co-host the conversation.
- Manage recording, consent, editing, accessibility, and publication.
- Create promotional content and summarize key lessons for members.

Quality standard

Episodes should have a clear educational purpose, accurate guest information, prepared questions, professional audio and visual presentation where applicable, and approval from the appropriate club leaders before publication.

Member expectations and community standards

GASF depends on preparation, respect, and voluntary participation.

Participation expectations

- Respond to meeting and event communications within the requested timeframe.
- Complete reasonable preparation for assigned cases, debates, country roles, or operational tasks.
- Arrive on time and contribute constructively to team activities.
- Use credible sources and distinguish evidence from opinion.
- Give respectful feedback and allow other members meaningful opportunities to speak and lead.
- Notify the relevant facilitator when an unavoidable conflict prevents participation.

Safety and inclusion

GASF follows Penn State policies and applicable law. Hazing, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, coercion, humiliation, and unsafe conduct are prohibited. Membership activities must remain voluntary, and members may refrain from an activity based on personal, religious, moral, or other sincerely held concerns without punishment. Concerns should be brought to the highest-ranking uninvolved officer, the faculty advisor, or the Office of Student Engagement as appropriate.

Attendance and records

The Secretary will maintain meeting records and use Discover East tools where appropriate for attendance and organizational documents. Participation records support event planning, communication, and recognition; they should not be used to pressure members into activities.

Professional conduct

Members representing GASF at meetings, conferences, trips, interviews, or public events should communicate accurately, protect private information, follow event rules, and avoid claiming authority to commit the organization unless that authority has been assigned.

Officer implementation guide

Leadership responsibilities turn the curriculum into consistent member experiences.

Role	Curriculum responsibility
President	Set agendas and the annual calendar, coordinate with the advisor and Student Engagement, and maintain overall program quality.
Vice President	Coordinate internal operations, support recruitment, and help organize consulting workshops and review sessions.
Secretary	Send notices, record minutes, maintain attendance and documents, and preserve an accurate history of activities.
Treasurer	Track finances, prepare funding requests, communicate financial limits, and support responsible purchasing.
Head of Consulting	Select cases, train facilitators, prepare materials, manage simulations, and coordinate competition content.
Program directors	Lead marketing, social media, events, membership, community engagement, communications, external relations, and technology work connected to each activity.
Faculty Advisor	Mentor student leaders, assist with procedures, review events as required, and support responsible decision making without taking over student governance.

Weekly operating rhythm

1. Confirm the objective, facilitator, room, materials, accessibility needs, and attendance method.
2. Send member preparation early enough for meaningful participation.
3. Conduct a brief officer check before the session and assign operational roles.
4. Run the session using the published objective and timing.
5. Record attendance, decisions, outputs, and follow-up tasks.
6. Review feedback and improve the next activity.

Member preparation templates

These short formats keep preparation consistent across sessions.

Consulting case preparation sheet

- Decision question What decision must the client or stakeholder make?
- Objective and success measure What outcome defines success?
- Context and constraints What facts, limits, timing, or stakeholders matter?
- Issue tree What major questions must be answered?
- Initial hypothesis What appears most likely, and why?
- Evidence needed What data or research would confirm or reject the hypothesis?
- Recommendation What should happen, supported by which findings?
- Risks and next steps What could go wrong, and what should be tested or implemented next?

Country research sheet

- Country and committee.
- National interests and current policy.
- Relevant alliances, regional relationships, and likely coalition partners.
- Key evidence from credible sources.
- Priority actions the country supports.
- Red lines or proposals the country is unlikely to accept.
- Possible compromises.
- Opening statement and two questions for other delegations.

Reflection sheet

- What did I contribute?
- What evidence or reasoning was strongest?
- Where did I lose clarity, structure, diplomacy, or time?
- What feedback did I receive?
- What one change will I apply during the next session?

End of semester completion standard

The curriculum succeeds when members can show growth through actual work.

A member who attends regularly, completes preparation, participates in simulations, and contributes to at least one flagship activity should finish the semester with tangible evidence of structured thinking, research, teamwork, public speaking, and professional communication. Members are encouraged to keep copies of nonconfidential case outputs, country briefs, presentations, reflections, and event contributions for their own learning records.

Recommended member portfolio

- One consulting issue tree or case structure.
- One team recommendation or presentation.
- One country brief and opening statement.
- One working-paper or resolution contribution.
- One reflection from the MUN conference, UN trip, or case competition.
- One leadership, marketing, technology, outreach, or event contribution.

Looking ahead

The Fall 2026 program creates the foundation for more advanced work in a future semester. Possible next steps include deeper case-interview training, specialized consulting tracks, a larger case competition, additional debates and conferences, professional partnerships, and carefully supervised client-facing work after the organization confirms readiness and follows all university requirements.

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