



The Constitution of the Student Government Association of the University of Houston

Amended on March 31st, 2016 (52nd Administration)

Preamble

We the students of the University of Houston, in order to provide an official and representative organization to receive student questions and suggestions, investigate student problems and take appropriate action, provide the official voice through which the student opinion may be expressed, encourage the development of responsible student participation in the overall policy and decision making processes of the university community, foster an awareness of the students' role in the academic community, enhance the quality and scope of education at the University of Houston, and provide means for responsible and effective participation in the organization of student affairs, do establish this Constitution for the Student Government Association at the University of Houston.

Article I. Name and Membership

Section 1.01 This Constitution establishes, under the laws of the State of Texas, a representative student government that shall be known as the “Student Government Association of the University of Houston

Section 1.02 All students shall be members of the Student Government Association of the University of Houston.

Article II. Bill of Rights

Section 2.01 As a component of University of Houston, a public educational institution of the State of Texas, the Student Government Association shall take no action abridging the rights, immunities and privileges granted to students under the Constitution of the United States of America, the Constitution of the State of Texas, U.S. federal law or under the laws of the State of Texas. Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to deny or abridge these rights, immunities and privilege

Section 2.02 No student shall be deprived of the right to vote in an election of the Student Government Association, nor shall any student be deprived of the right to vote on any measure put before the student body by the Student Government Association.

Section 2.03 Recognizing that a free press is an essential element of any free and representative government, no member of the press shall be denied access to any meeting of Student Government Association. In addition, no member of the press shall be denied access to legislation, minutes, or any other business record of the Student Government Association.

Section 2.04 All students of the University of Houston shall enjoy equal protection under the laws of the Student Government Association, without regard to race, nationality, creed, sex, age, academic standing, or sexual orientation.

Section 2.05 The only requirement for a student to hold elective office is that the student shall be in good academic and disciplinary standing with the University of Houston.

Article III. Structure of Government

Section 3.01 The Student Government Association shall consist of three separate branches of government: a legislature, an executive and a judiciary.

Section 3.02 No student shall simultaneously hold office in more than one branch of government.

Section 3.03 To protect the separation of powers of each branch of government, no person holding office in one branch of government shall be accountable to a person holding office in a separate branch of government, except as provided by this Constitution.

Article IV. Legislative Branch

Section 4.01 All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Senate of the Student Government Association.

Section 4.02 Representation

Clause 1: Each college or school within the University of Houston shall have representation in the Senate according to the proportion of students enrolled in the University of Houston as shown by the Fall Semester official statistics (“Twelfth Day Report”) of the Registrar’s office.

Clause 2: For each four (4) percent and/or part thereof that a college or school has of the university’s total enrollment, that school or college shall be entitled to one (1) representative.

Clause 3: In addition to the representation afforded to each college or school, four (4) at large undergraduate senators and two (2) graduate senators shall be elected in campus-wide elections. Voting for these seats shall be restricted those students of the same classification.

(A) For the purposes of at-large seats, professional students shall be considered graduate students.

(B) For the purposes of at-large seats, post-baccalaureate students shall be considered undergraduate students.

Section 4.03 Elections for Senate positions shall be held in the Spring semester of each academic year.

Section 4.04 Senators elected in the Spring shall serve one-year terms commencing with the call to order of the first Senate meeting in April and terminating at the call to order of the first Senate meeting of the following April or at such time as a duly elected Senator involved in a disputed election is eligible to serve.

Section 4.05 Vacancies

Clause 1: Senatorial vacancies shall be filled by appointment by the President of the Student Government Association with the advice and consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate present and voting.

Clause 2: Students appointed to fill senate vacancies shall complete the terms of the positions to which they are appointed.

Clause 3: If a Senate vacancy shall remain open beyond two consecutive regular meetings of the Senate, and the President fails to nominate an eligible candidate for the vacant position, the Senate shall have the power to fill the position through procedures defined by law. Rejection of a President’s nominee, within the given time period, shall reset the time allocated in this clause.

Section 4.06 Speaker of the Senate

Clause 1: The Speaker of the Senate shall be the presiding officer of the Senate.

Clause 2: The Speaker shall be a member of the Senate, and shall be elected by the Senate.

Clause 3: The Speaker shall appoint, with the advice and consent of twothirds (2/3) of the Senate present and voting, the chairpersons and members for each standing committee of the Senate

Clause 4: The Speaker of the Senate, while in office, shall receive a compensation for his or her duties. The Student Government Association shall not initiate any increase or decrease during their respective terms of office.

Section 4.07 The Senate shall have general legislative powers, including the following:

Clause 1: To approve and/or amend the budget of the Student Government Association;

Clause 2: To approve committees, commissions or boards as are needed to perform the functions of this Association;

Clause 3: To prescribe times, places and manners of holding elections;

Clause 4: To establish lower tribunals not set forth in this Constitution, which shall be subordinate to any judiciary established herein;

Clause 5: To make laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers and all powers vested by this Constitution in the Student Government Association.

Section 4.08 Meetings

Clause 1: The Senate shall convene at least biweekly while classes are in session. These meetings shall take place on Wednesday unless otherwise provided by law.

Clause 2: The Senate shall keep minutes of its meetings current and available to the public.

Clause 3: The Senate shall publish a bound copy of its proceedings (hereinafter referred to as the Senate Journal) at the end of each session to be permanently located in the SGA offices.

Clause 4: All minutes from the current session shall be made available to the public through the Internet.

Section 4.09 The Summer Senate

Clause 1: The Summer Senate shall consist of all senators able to attend during the Summer Semester. A Summer Senator need not be enrolled in classes, however, he or she must be able to attend meetings and carry on his or her usual duties and responsibilities on a regular basis.

Clause 2: “Senators able to serve shall so indicate to the Speaker of the Senate in writing and the Speaker may install them prior to that weeks meeting.”

Clause 3: No vacancy in the Senate shall be filled by the Summer Senate.

Clause 4: The Summer Senate shall have the power to pass legislation or take other actions as necessary.

Section 4.10 Legislation

Clause 1: Legislation pursuant to a fundamental policy or principle of the Student Government Association which shall, before it becomes law, shall be presented by the Speaker of the Senate within five (5) class days to the President of the Student Government Association.

- (A) If he or she approves the legislation, he or she shall sign it and it shall become law.*
- (B) If he or she disapproves the legislation, he or she shall return it to the Senate along with his or her written objections which shall be entered into the Senate Journal. The Senate shall then proceed to reconsider the legislation. If after such reconsideration, two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate present and voting shall agree to pass the legislation, it shall become law.*
- (C) If not action is taken by the President of the Student Government Association within fifteen (15) class days, the legislation shall automatically become law without his or her signature.*

Clause 2: Legislation involving action by areas or departments within the university, other than the Student Government Association, which shall have passed the Senate shall, before it becomes law, be presented to the President of the Student Government Association and/or the President of the University.

(A) Action by the Student Government Association President

- 1) If the President of the Student Government Association approves the legislation, he or she shall sign it and present it to the President of the University.
- 2) If the President of the Student Government Association disapproves the legislation, he or she shall return it to the Senate along with his or her written objections which shall be entered into the Senate Journal.
- 3) The Senate shall then proceed to reconsider the legislation. If after such reconsideration, two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate present and voting shall agree to pass the legislation, it shall be presented to the President of the University.
- 4) If no action is taken by the President of the Student Government Association within fifteen (15) class days, the legislation shall automatically be presented without his or her signature to the President of the University.

(B) Action by the President of the University

- 1) If the President of the University approves the legislation, he or she shall sign it and it shall become law.
- 2) If the President of the University disapproves the legislation, he or she shall return it to the Senate along with his or her written objections which shall be entered into the Senate Journal.

Article V. Executive Branch

Section 5.01 The executive power shall be vested in the President of the Student Government Association

Section 5.02 The President of the Student Government Association shall be elected by a majority of the members of the Student Government Association. Presidential candidates shall name a Vice Presidential candidate on their election application with whom they shall run for office jointly. Election ballots shall require members of the Student Government Association to vote for an executive ticket consisting of a Presidential and Vice Presidential candidate. The President and Vice President shall serve a concurrent one-year term commencing on the first day of April and terminating on the first day of the next following April or at such time as a duly elected President and Vice President involved in a disputed election are eligible to serve.

Section 5.03 “Not later than September 1 of each year, the Student Government shall solicit applicants for the position of Student Regent. Not later than November 1, the Senate Executive Committee shall select five applicants as the Student Government’s recommendations for Student Regent and send the applications of those applicants to the Chancellor. If the Senate Executive Committee is unable to meet before the deadline then the power to select the applicants is given to the Student Government Association President”.

Section 5.04 The President and Vice President shall at stipulated times receive a compensation for their services. The Student Government Association shall not initiate any increase or decrease during their respective terms of office.

Section 5.05 The President shall:

Clause 1: Be the official representative of the student body of the University of Houston;

Clause 2: Participate in discussion at Senate meetings with the same privileges as Senate members;

Clause 3: Give the Senate information concerning the state of the Campus and recommend for their consideration such measures as he or she shall deem necessary and expedient;

Clause 4: Call emergency meetings of the Senate when he or she deems such meetings advisable;

Clause 5: Appoint, with the advice and consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate present and voting, members to offices within the Executive Branch, including but not limited to Director of Finance and Director of Public Relations;

Clause 6: Assign tasks or duties to other members of the Executive Branch as he or she sees fit.

Article VI. Judicial Branch

Section 6.01 Composition

Clause 1: The Judicial Branch of the Student Government Association shall consist of a supreme judicial body known as the Student Government Association Supreme Court.

Clause 2: All lower courts, created by law or necessity as determined by the Chief Justice, shall be considered subordinate components of the Judicial Branch.

Clause 3: Any subordinate courts may be removed at any time by the body that created them, so long as there is no unfinished before or decided upon by the court in question.

Section 6.02 In the event of a vacancy, the Justices and/or alternates of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate present and voting. The President shall appoint, with the advice and consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate present and voting, a Chief Justice from the membership of the Supreme Court.

Section 6.03 The Supreme Court shall have original jurisdiction over any case in the Student Government Association. If a lower court or other tribunal shall have original jurisdiction over a case or controversy as specified by law, the Supreme Court shall have final appellate jurisdiction.

Section 6.04 At the discretion of the Chief Justice, alternate members may be selected from to form a panel of Justices in order to meet quorum.

Section 6.05 All rulings of the Supreme Court shall be final with no appeal.

Section 6.06 Members of the Supreme Court shall continue to hold office until such time as they discontinue enrollment as students at the University of Houston or are no longer in good academic or disciplinary standing with the University of Houston.

Article VII. Impeachments

Section 7.01 Anyone holding office in the Student Government Association may be nominated for impeachment if:

Clause 1: Three-Fourths (3/4) vote of the total number of senators approve nomination.

Clause 2: The President and Speaker of the Senate come into unanimous agreement to nominate, and Three-Fourths (3/4) of the senate present and voting approve nomination.

Section 7.02 All persons nominated for impeachment will stand trial in front of the Supreme Court.

Section 7.03 Persons impeached shall not hold any office in the Student Government Association for two years following the date of their impeachment.

Section 7.04 Persons accused or in violation of SGA attendance requirements are not required to go through the impeachment process, but are grounds for immediate dismissal by the head of the branch. Dismissal pursuant to this section may be appealed to the Supreme Court.

Article VIII. Amendments

Section 8.01 This Constitution shall take effect on the April 1st following acceptance of two-thirds (2/3) of the membership of the Senate and by a majority of voters in a duly authorized student election.

Section 8.02 Amendments shall become a part of the Constitution when ratified by a majority of the students voting in duly authorized elections.

Article IX. Ratification Clause

This Constitution shall take effect on the April 1st following acceptance of two-thirds (2/3) of the membership of the Senate and by a majority of voters in a duly authorized student election.