

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Student Government FY21 SFAC Questionnaire

- 1. Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification**

Mission Statement:

“The Student Government Association exists to serve as the official voice through which student opinion may be expressed and empowered in the overall policy, decision making process, and services offered at the University of Houston. As such, the Student Government Association is committed to understanding the needs of students and advocating on their behalf. **Through continuous interaction with students, faculty, staff, and administration, the organization works to improve and enhance the quality of the student experience.**” – Student Government Website

How the 56th Administration Accomplishes Our Mission:

The University Administration, generally, views the Student Government as its best proxy for student opinion. Of course, depending on the individual Student Government Administration, this can be more or less true, and no Student Government Administration perfectly captures aggregate student opinion, but the 56th Administration accomplishes its mission: to involve students in the University's policy/decision making process.

The 56th Administration has worked tirelessly through outreach efforts to connect with students and involve them in the Student Government policy making process, in the most transparent way possible. The 56th administration works with Senators, Judicial members, and all branches of the Student Government to inclusively interview positions for student leaders. The 56th administration takes student opinion and works to transform policy to represent student choices and opinions.

Justification of the Student Government's Fee Allocation:

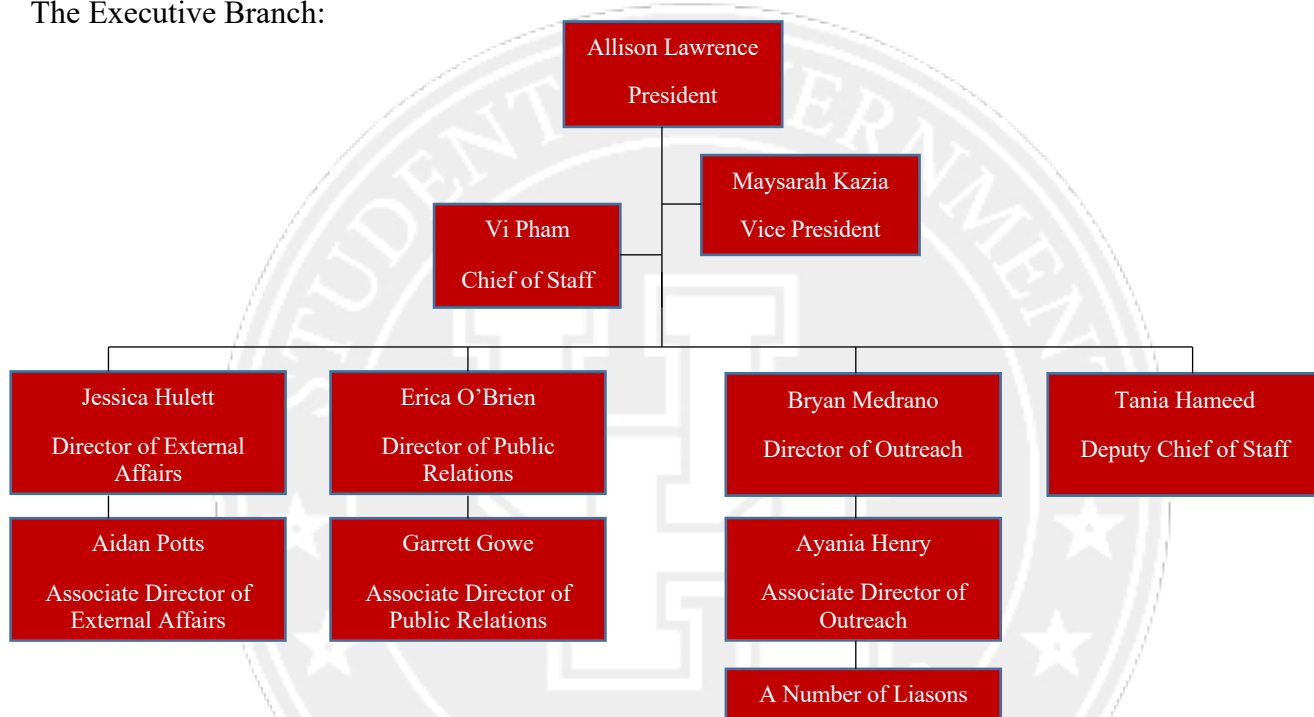
The Student Government is one of the University of Houston's longest standing, student led, institutions, dating back to the early 1930s. Since then, the University of Houston's Student Government has transformed into one of the most in-depth and influential Student Governments in the United States. The Student Government Association focuses on advocating for students through our policy. Through policies/events like Student Government's End the Stigma, Voter Registration tabling's, food drives in partnership with Athletics and Auxiliary Services, the establishment of disability access to Cougar Ride transportation systems, and supporting the continuation of the Cougar Pack safety escort program.

2. Provide an organization chart of your unit. Large units may need to have an overview chart and then more specific charts for each program. Where you have multiple staff in the same position (e.g. counselor, advisor, etc.), note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.

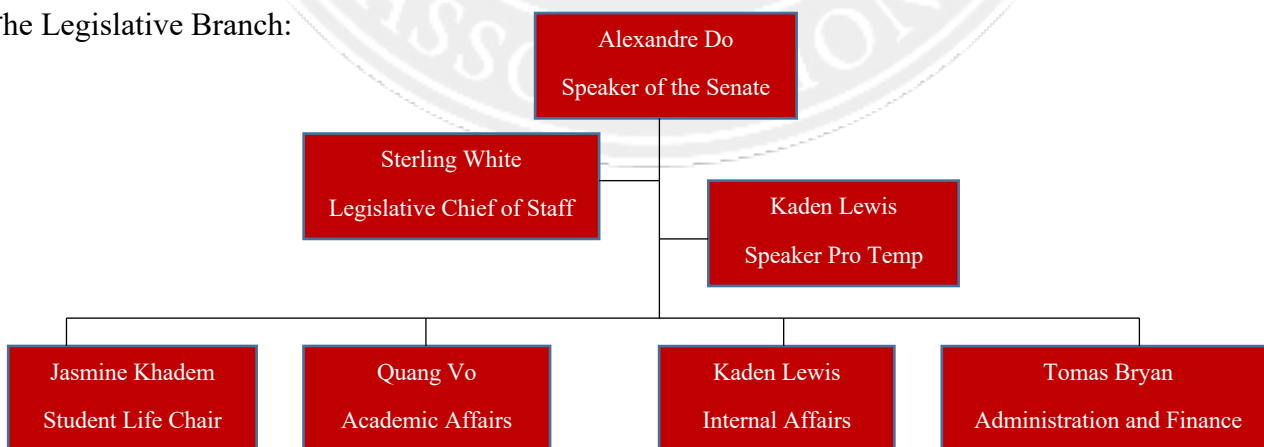
Overview:

The Student Government has three main branches: The Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the Judicial Branch. Each of these branches has an individual head, the President, the Speaker, and the Chief Justice, respectively. The Student Government also has a Justice Department which is newly independent from the Executive Branch, headed by the Attorney General. The Election Commission is also independent and overseen by the Chief Election Commissioner.

The Executive Branch:



The Legislative Branch:



Senate Seats:

Undergraduate-at-Large (4)

Graduate at Large (2)

College of Architecture (1)

College of Arts (1)

College of Business (4)

College of Education (2)

College of Engineering (3)

College of Hotel and Restaurant Management (1)

College of Law (1)

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (7)

College of Natural Science and Mathematics (4)

College of Pharmacy (1)

Graduate College of Social Work (1)

College of Technology (4)

Honors College (1)

College of Optometry (1)

The Judicial Branch:



The Justice Department:

Cameron Barrett
Attorney General

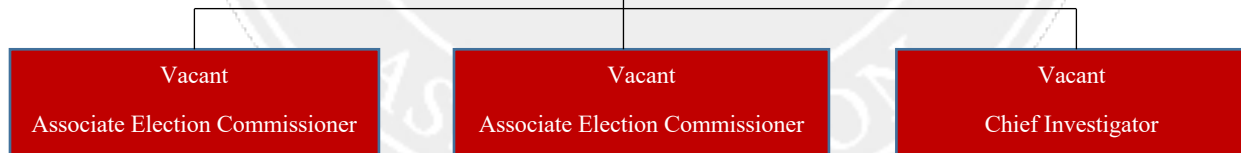
Kaitlyn Austgen
Deputy Attorney General

Karla Khine
Student Government Auditor

Victor Williams
Public Defender

The Election Commission:

Becka Harricharran
Chief Election



- 3. List your unit's strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2017-2018 academic year and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services (DSAES) Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate (links below). Please comment on your success in achieving these strategic initiatives/action steps. If a strategic initiative/action step changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new strategic initiatives/action steps, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these items.**

Food Insecurity/Homelessness

Main Goals:

- Look into opening a sustainable Food Pantry to students
- Provide reduced or free meal plans to homeless students
- Provide additional housing aid to homeless students

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”
- DSAES Strategic Goals: “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”

Action Steps:

- Work with on-campus partners to consolidate efforts and place a food pantry on campus
- Work with Auxiliary Services and the Department of Financial Aid in order to facilitate and manage the long-term process of providing low cost meal plans to homeless students
- Work with relevant on-campus partners to give homeless students priority designation for the Cougar Experience Scholarship

Providing a Safer Campus

Main Goals:

- Implement a program to escort students from more precarious places on campus back to their cars or residence halls
- Expand “Take Back the Night” to once a semester

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”
- DSAES Strategic Goals: “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”

Action Steps:

- Work with Administration and Finance in order to schedule and hire several paid positions for the Cougar Pack (safe-walk program developed by Vice-President Darusman)
- Work with Chief Moore and UHPD Public Relations to establish a once per semester Take Back the Night event

4. Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons served by each of your programs and any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting these data. If available, please provide program benchmarking data from comparable institutions.

The 56th Student Government attempts to capture as much production as possible. However, as is constant with Student Government, it remains a challenge to measure how effective each administration's advocacy is. "Advocacy" as a concept, the service the SGA provides, is always difficult to measure. However, the 56th Student Government took some steps to measure and/or provide transparency on every action we have taken.

Efficient turnover/turnaround:

The 56th Student Government is efficient. Rarely do we take "too long" to accomplish a goal. Deadlines are always met. Emails are always returned, and things are always put on paper, for all to see, should they desire. We have strived to fill all of our stipend positions to ensure that student fees are utilized wisely.

Keeping Meetings:

The 56th Student Government Administration is fairly modular, in the sense that, if the President cannot attend a meeting, the Vice-President, Chief of Staff, Speaker, etc., will attend in their place. This has allowed our Student Government to be more present and representative than recent years.

Putting things on paper:

The 56th Student Government encourages all members to negotiate their initiatives with the relevant administrators, and, when achieving their goals, taking an extra week or two, writing a bill, and informing the Senate of their finalized initiative through legislation. Legislation does not have direct impact, but it serves two big purposes: (1) it allows the Senate/Public to be informed on what exactly we are working on/have accomplished, and (2) it allows for feedback, which can potentially make one's policy more targeted/effective.

Concrete numbers:

Despite all of this, there are some things we can measure, as a Student Government. We have put on several programs from April 1st to this questionnaire being submitted.

The Student Government conducted two Food Drives in the month of September to benefit students struggling from food insecurity. In a food drive in partnership with Athletics the SGA collected and donated \$203 and over 400lbs of food in donations to Peeps Pantry. The Student Government utilized our resources to reach out to as many Registered Student Organizations as possible to gain support for the creation of a Green Fund on campus. After reaching out for several months we were able to gather 125 sponsors for the Green Fund that passed through our senate. Student Government pushed for outreach with our student workers and created a comprehensive survey to measure the experience of

student workers on campus in a survey that received 389 responses. In a food drive in partnership with Parking and Transportation, the Student Government Association saved students \$325 in parking citation relief. We held our annual event of End the Stigma in which we collected 138 student pledges to end the stigma which is 30 more than we collected in the previous administration.

5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2019) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections.

Budget Controls/Transparency:

The 56th Student Government saw the need for more transparency with the SGA budget, so the President advocated, and passed a full budget for FY20. The Chief Election Commissioner and Speaker have executive authority over their respective budgets. This has allowed for a more efficient and fair budgeting process, where the President can no longer control other Office's budgets. The FY20 budget has been adjusted from last year to change the budgeting per department.

- Senate Appropriations reflect 10% of the Student Government controllable budget
- The department of Public Relations had a budget cut to \$7,500 to fund other departments because we have an ample supply of merchandise
- The department of External Affairs received a budget increase to \$4,925 to fund annual events like End the Stigma and National Voter Registration Day and disability awareness events
- The Election Commission budget was increased to reflect our bylaws at 14% of the controllable budget (\$5,500)
- The Student Government Association banquet budget was reduced down to \$2000 to prevent an excess of food waste that occurs yearly at our banquet

6. If your unit concluded FY2019 with a Fund 3 addition to Fund Equity in excess of \$5,000, please describe the conditions which caused the addition and provide a line- item identification of the budgetary source(s) of the addition (i.e. lapsed salary, conference travel, etc.).

The Student Government Association returned \$3,649 at the conclusion of FY19. The Student Government's experienced a period of around two months where we did not have an Office Coordinator. Therefore, we were not paying that position's salary or benefits at that time. In addition to this, the Student Government Association increased stipends to match the minimum wage consistent with student employee policy resulting in a relatively low amount of money being returned to SFAC.

\$3,649 – Total Return

7. Please list your 2020-2021 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) that you intend to implement to accomplish your stated initiative.

Overview:

Typical themes for many past Student Governments Administrations and/or Student Government Parties include but are not limited to: A More Sustainable Campus, Better Health Services, and Higher Wages. This makes it difficult to expand on FY20 goals because each administration comes with a more or less unique platform, completely dependent on the outcome elections, so the FY21 goals will be determined, largely, after the Spring 2020 Student Government Election. However, I have included the FY20/56th Administration's larger goals.

Higher Wages for Students:

Main Goals:

- Raise the minimum wage of on campus student workers
- Create a Student Worker Bill of Rights to accurately educate and protect student workers
- Conduct a Student Worker survey to understand how to improve the student worker experience

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”
- DSAES Strategic Goals: “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”

Action Steps:

- Negotiated with Administration and Finance and University departments to raise the minimum wage for student workers on campus to \$8.00 per hour
- Created a survey in partnership with Human Resources and University Career Services to measure the student worker experience on campus
- Conduct research and gather information on the creation of a Student Worker Bill of Rights to protect students and educate departments

Better Health Services

Main Goals:

- Push for third party insurance in the Student Health Center
- Increase awareness of the Student Health Center and host events

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”
- DSAES Strategic Goals: “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”

Action Steps:

- Work with the Student Health Center to host meetings with private insurance carriers to create a contract for the credentialing process of third-party insurance
- Hosted HPV vaccination awareness week with tabling sessions to educate students on HPV

A Sustainable Campus:

Main Goals:

- Creation of a Green Fund
- Work towards a more sustainable campus
- Reduce plastic waste on campus

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”
- DSAES Strategic Goals: “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”

Action Steps:

- Conducting research with every high enrollment public Texas University to gather research on the Green Fund
 - Passage of a bill with over 100 student organizations sponsoring the creation of a Green Fund
 - Working with Auxiliary Services to reduce Plastic Number 6 on campus
- 8. Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2021 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the new base budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5% in your total FY2021 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.**

The Student Government would be greatly, and negatively, impacted by a 5% budget cut. The FY 20 budget SFAC allocated the Student Government is a base of \$151,459, meaning a 5% budget cut would total \$7,572.95. However, this only comes out of our discretionary budget. Our, current, discretionary budget, as a result of several, previous, Presidents requesting a cut, is at a modern- day low of \$35,742.56. This means a 5% cut in our budget would actually be realized as an over 21% cut in the money we get to spend to provide things for students directly. A Student Government discretionary budget of \$28,169.61 would likely mean one or more of the following:

- (1) Cutting the entirety of our marketing/outreach budget excluding the Election marketing;
- (2) Cut funding for our annual event of National Voter Registration Day;
- (3) Decrease in Senate Appropriations including tabling events and annual events;
- (4) Cutting all office amenities;

- \$3,000 National Voter Registration Day
- \$5,000-\$6,000 Marketing/Outreach Materials
- \$3,500 Senate Appropriations
- \$500-\$1,000 Office Amenities

9. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.

The Student Government receives no other sources of funding, other than Student Fees. The only other source of funding we have some experience with is small monetary and/or equipment donations from organizations/people generous enough to give. These are sporadic and inconsistent and did not happen in the previous fiscal year.

10. Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.

We are very aware and sensitive of potential overlap between the Student Government and other fee-funded units. We attempt to collaborate with other fee-funded units, supplementing anything they need, without obviating the need for their unique services.

The Student Government does not, currently, overlap with any other unit's service, outside of voter registration efforts. This is a good thing, however, because it takes a massive effort to register all students on a campus of our size.