The Constitution of the Trinity University Undergraduate Student Body

Article I: Mission

The Student Government Association of Trinity University (SGA) shall serve as the organization of elected students which advocates for the development and advancement of student interests both inside and outside of the University community. SGA shall strive for transparency in all of its actions and fiscal allocations while working to support the greatest diversity of ideas and activities pursued by the student body and its organizations. SGA shall endeavor to cultivate and maintain positive and informed relationships between the students and the administration, faculty, and staff, ensuring that student interests are represented any time a policy or proposal affecting the student body is introduced. Above all, the officeholders of SGA shall serve in the most responsible and representative manner possible for the duration of their terms of office, in accordance with the constitution and bylaws.

Article II: Membership and Participation

Section 1. All full-time members of the undergraduate student population shall both be endowed the right to participate in campus-wide elections and be subject to this constitution and its bylaws.

Section 2. The officeholder positions shall be President, Vice President, and Senator. Officer positions shall be the President and Vice President.

Section 3. All SGA officeholders and registered election candidates must have and retain a cumulative grade-point average greater than or equal to 2.5, as determined by the Office of the Registrar.

Section 4. All officeholder positions in SGA shall be obtained through a campus-wide election, except when a seat is vacated before its term has expired, which shall be the jurisdiction of a special assembly as described in Article VII, Section 2.

Section 5. The membership of the Senate shall be divided by their class standing as determined during the campus-wide election.

Section 6. In order to minimize conflicts of interest, no undergraduate student may occupy the following combinations of positions concurrently:
• Student Government Association officeholder and SGA-recommended Conduct Board member
• Student Government Association officeholder and SGA-recommended Academic Honor Council member
• Student Government Association officeholder and Trinitonian editor in chief or managing editor
• Student Government Association officeholder and Mirage editor in chief or managing editor
• Student Government Association officeholder and Residential Life Staff member
• Student Government Association officeholder and the president/chair/director of the following organizations: Student Programming Board, Student Ambassadors, Trinity Diversity Connection, Greek Council, and Trinity University Volunteer Action Committee
• Residential Life Staff member and SGA-recommended Conduct Board Member
• Residential Life Staff member and Mirage editor in chief or managing editor
• Residential Life Staff member and Trinitonian editor in chief or managing editor
• SGA-recommended Conduct Board member and SGA-recommended Academic Honor Council member
• SGA-recommended Conduct Board member and Trinitonian editor in chief or managing editor
• SGA-recommended Academic Honor Council member and Trinitonian editor in chief or managing editor

Section 7. The President and Vice President must, by the semester following their assumption of office, be full-time undergraduate students with at least Junior standing, based on academic credits as determined by the Office of the Registrar.

Article III: The President

The privileges and responsibilities of the President shall be to:

A. Represent SGA’s interests and opinions to the students, administration, and faculty.
B. Call additional SGA meetings on personal initiative or after petition by four SGA officeholders.
C. Meet regularly with the President of the University.
D. Nominate, for approval by the President of the University, undergraduate students for appointment to committees, conduct-related boards and the Academic Honor Council.
E. Serve as a liaison between student members of the University committees and SGA.
F. Appoint coordinators and committee chairs to assist in the everyday activities of the organization.
G. Create and appoint members to ad hoc committees as deemed necessary.
H. Authorize the use of SGA funds to pay bills and transact any other official business [up to an amount set by that year’s senate].
I. Uphold and enforce the constitution and bylaws at all times.
J. Ensure that “The Student Rights and Responsibilities” is upheld.
K. Address the Senate on every issue to be voted upon in a manner specified in a Modus Operandi passed and agreed upon by a two-thirds majority of the Senate.

Article IV: The Vice President

The privileges and responsibilities of the Vice President shall be to:

A. Act as SGA’s liaison to the Faculty Senate and Graduate Student Association.
B. Temporarily assume the responsibilities of the President in his or her absence.
C. Assume the office of the President in the event of the permanent absence or removal of the President.
D. Report directly to and meet regularly with the President and carry out any additional duties delegated by the President.
E. Schedule, prepare agendas for, preside over, and maintain the efficient and orderly function of all meetings and Special Assemblies in a manner specified in the bylaws.
F. Oversee the process of allocating the student activity fee.
G. Serve as the accountant for SGA’s personal funds.

Article V: The Senators

Section 1. The duties and responsibilities of the senators shall be to:

A. Assume an advocate role for the grievances of any individual student, organization, or student group.
B. Articulate the undergraduate student body’s opinion to the administration by issuing resolutions on matters affecting the student body and by engaging the University administration on behalf of the students.
C. Each Senate member should serve in one of the divisions outlined in the bylaws.
D. Hold public meetings at least twice a month during the academic year.
E. Fill a Senate vacancy that will not be filled during annual election in the Fall semester.
F. Oversee all campus-wide SGA elections and referendums.
G. Establish and enforce the procedural guidelines for organizations seeking to apply directly for funds and to approve or reject these requests.
H. Represent the undergraduate student body in any alteration of “The Student Rights and Responsibilities.”

Article VI: Advisors

SGA shall be advised by:
● Dean of Students
● Director of Student Involvement (SI)
● Senator Emeritus- Three Senator Emeritus positions shall be filled by Seniors. Two senators shall be elected by members of the senior class and the third shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Senate by the usual means. They shall serve as advisors to SGA for the spring term. A Senator Emeritus will hold a vote on the senate floor; however, if absent from meeting, a Senator Emeritus will not count toward the quorum of the Senate. A Senator Emeritus may chair Ad hoc committees but not standing committees.

Article VII: Procedures

Throughout this section, a quorum shall be defined as a simple majority of the Senate. There must be a quorum for a vote to move forward.

Section 1. Voting

A. Senators shall be afforded the opportunity to vote on all issues.
B. For a motion to pass, it must be approved by a simple majority of the Senate quorum. A motion passed by the Senate may be vetoed by the President, but a veto may be overridden by a two-thirds majority vote of the Senate quorum.
C. The Vice President shall vote on motions only in the case of a tie in the Senate.
D. All officeholders may vote on matters that are not official business but are related to miscellaneous internal procedures. The President shall determine the nature of the vote at the time it is to be taken.

Section 2. Special Assemblies

A. A special assembly shall be a meeting called by the President to conduct removal hearings or to fill any vacancy in an elected office. The special assembly shall be composed of all officeholders and be presided over by the President.
B. Any appointment of any officeholder shall require approval by a simple majority of the Senate quorum.

Section 3. Removal from Office

A. Any officeholder may be removed from office. The removal process may be initiated by a written petition from 250 members of undergraduate students to the President or by a simple majority vote of a Senate quorum.
B. The President must convene a special assembly to consider a removal no later than ten days after the process has been initiated.
C. The officeholder considered for removal may not vote in the special assembly.
D. The Vice President shall assume the duties of President for the duration of the special assembly if the President is the officer being considered for removal, or if a simple majority of the special assembly quorum votes that the President may have a conflict of interest.

E. In the event that both the President and Vice President are both unable to preside over the special assembly due to conflicts of interest (or another reason), a Senator may be elected to preside by a simple majority of the quorum.

F. Approval by two-thirds of full Senate membership is required to remove any officeholder from their position.

Section 4. Amendments and Ratification

A. Proposals to amend the constitution must be brought forth to the Senate at least one week prior to the Senate vote on the proposed change. Proposals to amend or replace the constitution must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Senate quorum.

B. Once approved, it shall be submitted to the undergraduate student body for a campus-wide vote, in which two-thirds of the votes cast by the student body shall be necessary to ratify the amendment.

C. Amendments to the constitution not approved by a simple majority of the Senate quorum may be brought to a direct vote by the undergraduate student body. A petition signed by 250 undergraduate students is necessary to call such a vote. Two-thirds of the votes cast by the student body shall be necessary to pass the amendment.

D. For minor stylistic updates to the constitution that do not change the actual content of the document (for instance, replacing the name of an organization mentioned in the constitution with a new name that the organization has formally adopted), the change may be made to the constitution if it is supported by a unanimous vote of the entire Senate.

E. In the case of the ratification of an entirely new constitution, the election provisions shall go into effect immediately upon ratification. Unless specified otherwise, the subsequently elected body will function under the rules and procedures of the newly approved constitution.

F. To establish, modify, or rescind the bylaws, the Senate must receive a one-week notice to consider the changes prior to voting, and it must be approved by a simple majority vote of the Senate quorum.

Article VIII: Elections

A campus-wide election or referendum shall be one in which all undergraduate students are eligible to vote.

Section 1. Election Committee

A. The President shall appoint a neutral election committee, with the approval of the
Senate, to conduct and tabulate votes in campus-wide elections.

B. No member of the election committee may be a candidate in the election.

C. Members of the election committee may not campaign for or against a candidate or referendum from their appointment until the end of the elections, as described in the bylaws.

D. Elections shall be further regulated as specified in the bylaws.

Section 2. Campus-Wide Elections

A. The filing deadlines and voting dates for the general election shall be set annually by SGA by the end of the summer and shall be completed by no later than the last day in November.

B. The newly elected SGA shall assume office on the first day of January.

C. The President and Vice President must be elected by a majority of the votes cast. If there is no majority, a run-off election between the two candidates with the most votes shall take place within one week of the regular election. If a candidate for President or Vice President is unopposed, the election shall proceed with the option to vote “no confidence.” If the “no confidence” vote receives more than 50%, then another election for that position shall be held.

D. Senate candidates shall be divided into separate class categories based on their academic standing. Transfer students should confirm their class status with the election committee. Appeals on final determination of class status from any candidate shall be decided by the election committee.

E. If 20 candidates, including five in each class category, have not filed for Senate positions, the election committee may extend filing deadlines.

F. Students may cast no more than five votes for their class category. In the initial vote count, candidates who receive the five largest amounts of votes in their class category shall be declared winners.

G. In the fall election, seniors may vote for: President, Vice-President, and two Senator Emeritus positions.

Section 3. Vacancies

A. In the event of a vacancy in an elected office of SGA, except President, SGA shall call a special assembly, as described in Article VI, Section 2, to fill the vacant position(s) for the remainder of the unexpired term.

B. The special assembly shall fill vacancies on the basis of a published open application process for qualified individuals. Following receipt of all applications, applicants shall be invited to present their candidacy with the Senate.

C. The special assembly shall vote on the final appointment(s) as specified in Article VI, Section 2.

D. A vacancy in the President’s position shall be filled through a campus-wide election conducted by SGA under election guidelines in the SGA constitution and bylaws.
Section 4. Miscellaneous

A. The election rules governing campus-wide elections may not be altered during the two weeks prior to any election.
B. The general election and referendums shall be run by an election committee. Any other campus-wide election shall be run by SGA, as needed.
C. If a student petition by at least three-fourths of the number of students who had voted in the previous election requests a new campus-wide election of the entire SGA, an election committee shall be convened and conduct a campus-wide vote within two weeks after SGA’s receipt of the petition. Any petition must be submitted at least two weeks prior to reading days.
D. Candidates may not promise any student a committee, conduct board, or other appointment prior to being elected.

Article IX: Student Activity Fee Distribution

Throughout this article, a proposal shall refer to an organization’s year-long budget. A request shall refer to an organization’s request for funds for an individual event or need.

Section 1. Structure

A. SGA shall have the authority to recommend to the Associate Vice President for Fiscal Affairs the amount of the student activity fee for approval by the Board of Trustees.
B. Each year, SGA shall receive 94% of the student activity fee for allocation to student groups. SGA shall receive a separate 2% of that student activity fee each year for its own operations.
C. The Director of Student Involvement will serve as an accountant for all Student Activity Fee transactions. They shall oversee the budget, serve as a resource to the Senate, and assist the Vice-President in preparing the End of the Year Financial Report. The director’s fiscal duties shall not overlap those of the SGA Vice-President in their capacity as SGA treasurer.

The Vice President Shall:

A. Serve as the accountant for SGA’s personal funds. Design and implement the administrative record keeping procedures as approved by the Senate.
B. Organize the completion of the end of the year report, which shall be submitted to SI.
C. Collect and archive all requests, proposals, evaluations, and other applicable forms submitted by petitioning parties for future reference.
D. There are four categories of funding:
   a. Programming funds support events that directly benefit the student population at large (unless SGA approves an exception). Programs supported by such funds should be well-advertised with reasonable notice and must comply with all
University policies and procedures as described in the Student Handbook. All types of student groups as well as individual students can apply for programming funds.

b. Operations funds are allocated to University Sponsored organizations, Student Affairs, Campus Publications, and recreational sports to support their operational costs.

c. Travel funds are allocated to all student groups with the exception of Fraternities and Sororities, Student Affairs, and recreational sports. Individual students and groups of students may apply for travel funds as well. Only 10% or less of the total Student Activity Fee may be allocated towards travel. Travel funding for second semester may be requested during the first semester.

d. Physical resource funds are allocated to University Sponsored and Registered organizations, as well as Student Affairs, to purchase equipment relating to the organization itself or the student population at large.

e. Student Affairs shall have access to the fee in order to sponsor and manage certain programs. They may receive: programming funding for events such as late night and weekend non-alcoholic programming or early semester social programming aimed at retention; operations funding for poster and banner making supplies which would be made available to all students; and physical resources funding for items such as music equipment, laminators, and die cutters. Student Affairs may not receive travel funding.

Section 2. Procedures for Funding Request

A. All petitioning parties must submit their requests (including an itemized budget) for review by the Finance Committee provided it is under $1500.

B. SGA shall accept requests for funds from all students and student organizations beginning in January.

C. After the general SGA election in November, end-of-the-year funding requests shall be the jurisdiction of the former SGA Senate. Funding requests for the following year shall be the jurisdiction of the recently-elected SGA Senate with the exception of the month of January, which shall be the jurisdiction of the previous Senate.

D. Requests for events and activities taking place at the end of the Senate term and the month of January should be made prior to the following year’s SGA taking office.

E. Specific liaison duties shall include:

   a. Initiating contact with the person submitting the funding request.

   b. Arranging for the person submitting the funding request to sign a funding contract and complete further documentation.

   c. Advising the person submitting the funding request on the funding process.

   d. Completing a summary of expenditures for the End of the Year Report.

   e. Ensuring that the allocated funds are spent according to the procedures and policies outlined by SGA.

   f. Arranging for the person submitting the funding request to complete the
evaluation form after an event is hosted.

F. For these requests, the Senate shall pursue a two-step process.
   a. First, the Finance Committee shall vote to approve the concept of the request provided it is under $1500. The decisions possible in this step are either approval, request for revision or additional information, or denial. If the Finance Committee decides collectively that the request needs additional information or a revision before the Senate makes its decision, it may table the request and request that the person submitting the funding request attend the next scheduled meeting.
   b. If the request is approved, SGA shall, as the second step of the process, deliberate to estimate how much funding to allocate. SGA reserves the right to change the original estimated amount.
   c. If the Finance Committee denies the request, an organization can appeal to present in front of the entire senate.

G. Those receiving funding shall be required to sign a funding contract that, if violated, may result in a withdrawal of funding, a rescinding of the approval, a fine, and/or a revocation of privileges to request funds for a specified time in the future.

H. All invoices and receipts must be turned into the University business office no later than two weeks after the event.

I. Reimbursement requests must be submitted no later than two weeks after the event. Proper receipts are defined as follows: They must have an itemized list of the items purchased.

J. Proper receipts are required for all reimbursements in cases when funding must be distributed after the event for which it is allotted.

K. Requests for exception to any of these policies may be made to the SGA Senate.

Section 3. Procedures for Funding Proposals

A. All petitioning parties must submit their proposals (including an itemized budget) for review by the Senate.

B. SGA shall accept proposals for funding from University Sponsored organizations, Campus Publications, recreational sports, Student Affairs, individual students, and groups of students.

C. University Sponsored organizations, recreational sports, and Campus Publications may submit their proposals beginning in the third week of March. Proposals must be submitted by April 1st.

D. For these proposals, the Senate shall pursue a two-step process. First, the Senate shall vote to approve the concept of the proposal. The decisions possible in this step are either approval, request for revision or additional information, or denial. If the Senate decides collectively that the proposal needs additional information or a revision before the Senate makes its decision, it may table the proposal and request that the person submitting the funding proposal attend the next scheduled meeting. If the proposal is approved, SGA shall, as the second step of the process, deliberate to estimate how
much funding to allocate. SGA reserves the right to change the original estimated amount.

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H. Items listed on the receipt should be limited to those being requested for reimbursement (no personal items on the same receipt).

I. SGA shall not reimburse expenses incurred through taxes for groups who can seek tax exemption. Tax exemption forms may be used by the group to avoid accruing tax costs.

J. Requests for exception to any of these policies may be made to the SGA Senate.

K. In order to protect the autonomy and freedom of the campus press, Campus Publications may be allocated no less than the average of its allocations over the previous 5 years.

L. Recreational Sport may be allocated no less than the average of its allocation over the previous 5 years unless they choose to request a lower amount. Should a Club Sport cease to exist the money allocated towards that Club Sport must be returned to the Student Activity Fee.

Section 4. Accountability

A. University Sponsored organizations shall provide SGA with monthly budget reports so that spending can be monitored.

B. At the end of each fall semester, University Sponsored organizations must submit mid-year reports detailing how their budgets have been spent so far and how the budget is expected to be spent in the next semester. If a University Sponsored organization has spent an inordinately low amount of its budget without having pending allocations, SGA may, upon discussion with the organization and approval by the Senate, reallocate the remaining portion of the organization’s budget.

C. If a party breaches the aforementioned receipt policy and SGA repeals funding, the planners of the event shall be responsible for reimbursing SGA.

D. Parties that do not comply with SGA and University policies may incur reduced allocations or loss of opportunity for future funding.

E. In the case of organizations which must be funded the average of their allocations over the past five years, the amount will be taken from next year’s budget.

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