

Sam Houston State University

Student Government Association

CONSTITUTION
Revised Fall 2014

We the students of Sam Houston State University, in order to assume the rights and responsibilities of self-government, promote the welfare of the student body, guide student activities, promote academic excellence, develop the spirit of democracy and promote loyalty to the ideals of the University, do hereby adopt and establish this constitution.

ARTICLE I. THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Section 1: This organization shall be known as the Student Government Association of Sam Houston State University.

Section 2: The Student Government Association shall represent the student body, which consists of all full-time and part-time students who are duly registered at Sam Houston State University and shall exercise its authority through the constitution as hereinafter provided.

Section 3: The governing structure of the Student Government Association of SHSU shall consist of two distinct areas: Legislative and Judicial. No person serving in one of these areas shall exercise any power properly belonging to the other, except as hereinafter expressly directed or permitted.

Section 4: The Student Government Association is the highest organization of the student community

ARTICLE II. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Student Government Association of Sam Houston State University are as follows:

1. To act as the official voice of the student body.
2. To democratically represent the student body.
3. To promote the welfare of the student body.
4. To promote Academic excellence.
5. To provide opportunity for student development in the responsibilities and mechanics of democratic government and citizenship.
6. To assist in the determination of University policies by providing sound leadership in the expression of student body attitudes.

7. To promote a liaison among students, faculty and administration.

ARTICLE III. LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Section 1. All legislative powers, except as otherwise specifically provided, shall be vested in the Student Senate of the student body of SHSU. The Student Senate shall be the one official group that shall identify student opinion and formulate student policies.

Section 2. The Student Senate consists of the Student Government Association President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Chief of Staff, and Senators elected by colleges.

(a) The membership of the Senate shall consist of ninety (90) Senate seats.

(b) The maximum number permitted per college, in concerns to student senate seats, is fifteen (15) senators.

(c) Non-majors are considered to be in the College of Sciences Caucus.

(d) If a prospective member's college of major is full, that member shall be allowed to be classified into the college of their minor if said minor is derived from another college.

Section 3. Candidates for the office of Student Senator must have completed at least 12 SHSU hours and must be in good academic standing. Each candidate for the office of Student Senator must be a member of the constituency for the office to which he seeks election, as determined by the candidate's major. No candidate may be on academic or disciplinary probation while seeking the office.

Section 4. A Student Senator must at all times be member of the constituency he represents. Otherwise, he will immediately resign and seek an opening in the appropriate caucus.

Section 5. The tenure of office for Student Senators will begin on June 1 of the school year in which elected and shall terminate May 31 of the school year in which they served.

Section 6. In all cases of vacancies in the Student Senate, except where otherwise noted in the constitution, prospective candidates shall be required to attend two (2) Senate meetings and two (2) committee meetings prior to meeting with the caucus where the vacancy occurs. Then the caucus will interview the prospective candidates and the chairman of the particular caucus, of his/her appointee, shall bring the caucus' recommendation before the Senate where he or she must receive 2/3 majority vote of the Student Senators present and voting in order to fill the vacancy.

Section 7. A recall of an elected member of the Student Government may be called by a petition of thirty percent (30%) of his constituency voting. The recall petition must reach 30% within 60 days after the petition is filed. If the recall election is passed by a majority of the constituency voting in as recall election, a special election shall be held to fill the vacancy.

Section 8. The Student Senate shall represent the student body by exercising the power to:

(a) Identify student attitudes and formulate student positions.

(b) Promote the welfare of the student body.

- (c) Participate in the recognition of new campus organizations.
- (d) Recommend to the University President two students, in addition to the Student Government Association President and Vice President, to serve on the Student Service Fee Advisory Committee.
- (e) Establish, by a two-third (2/3) vote of its members present and voting, such additional standing committees as are needed to perform its necessary and proper functions beyond those listed in Article III, Section 9a.
- (f) Establish such special committees as are needed to perform its necessary and proper functions.
- (g) Determine the line of succession to the office of Student Body President
- (h) Elect such internal officers it deems necessary and which are not provided for in this constitution.
- (i) Censure, by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership of the Student Senate, Student Government Association officers, Student Senators, and students in appointive positions whose appointment must be approved by the Student Senate.
- (j) To call, with a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the membership of the Student Senate any member of the student body before the Student Senate for an inquiry to establish and clarify information as pertaining to the Senate.
- (k) Establish such by laws and procedures as are necessary for the proper functioning of the Student Senate by two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and voting.
- (l) Take all action, which shall be necessary and proper for exercising the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the Student Senate of SHSU. The Student Senate may call special sessions of the Senate with fifty (50) percent of the membership in agreement. The special session must be called by the President of the Student Body and held within three (3) class days upon delivery of the petition allowing time for proper notification of the Senators unless otherwise stated in the petition.
- (m) Impeach executive officers, its own members and justices of the Student Courts.
- (n) Override the President's veto by two thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate present and voting within two (2) Senate meetings after the veto.
- (o) Confirm nominees to the Student Senate and Presidential appointments by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate present and voting before the nominee can take office.
- (p) Rescind any Presidential appointment by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the membership.
- (q) Approve, by a two-thirds vote, corrections in the SGA governing documents solely in order to correct spelling or grammatical mistakes. Such corrections shall take effect immediately.

Section 9. The Committee structure of the Student Senate shall be established as herein provided:

(a) The Standing committee of the Student Senate and their areas of responsibility shall be as follows:

1. Department of Student Affairs shall be responsible for interaction with the student body. Its mission will include relations with the media, coordinating SGA events, and recruitment. The Department of Student Affairs shall also be responsible for gauging the concerns of the student body and reporting them to the Senate.

2. Department of University Affairs shall be responsible for representing students to the university administration. Department level officers will be expected to meet regularly with university vice-presidents and establish working relationships throughout campus.

3. **Department of External Affairs** shall be responsible for representing students to the City of Huntsville, Walker County, the Texas Legislature, the United States Congress and other outside entities.

4. **Department of Internal Affairs** shall be responsible for the day to day operations of the Student Government Association and for establishing and enforcing the Rules and Regulations of the Student Government Association. Its membership will include the Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer and shall be chaired by the Vice President.

5. **Department of Rules and Regulations** shall be responsible for insuring the effectiveness of SGA governing documents, and shall insure that such rules and parliamentary procedure is correctly interpreted and followed. The department shall also be responsible with orienting Senators to the SGA governing documents.

6. **Department of Public Relations** shall be responsible for all communications between students and the Student Government Association to increase participation and understanding of recent and pending actions and how the student body can get involved.

(b) The Department of Internal Affairs shall have the authority to regulate the areas of responsibility of a Student Senate standing committee.

(c) The *Chief* of each standing *Department*, with the exception of the Department of Internal Affairs shall be student Senator appointed by the SGA President with a two-thirds (2/3) approval of Senators present and voting at a Senate meeting. The tenure of chiefs shall last from their confirmation until May 31st of the school year in which they were confirmed. The President shall appoint nominees for all vacant positions of chief of the various departments on or before the third meeting of a long semester. If no appointment has been made for a vacancy, nominations shall be in order from the senate floor: such nominations shall still require a two-thirds (2/3) vote from the Senate.

(d) *Departmental* and subcommittee membership shall be open to all students of Sam Houston State University.

(e) The *Department Chief* shall have the authority to appoint such *Department-level officers* as he deems necessary, this is to include, but not limited to, *Department Secretary* and *Subcommittee Chairs*. *These officers may be recalled by the Senate with a 2/3rds vote.*

Section 10. All meetings of the Student Senate shall be open to the public unless the Student Senate enters into executive sessions by two-thirds (2/3) consent and votes by two-thirds (2/3) majority to clear the galleries.

Section 11. The Student body shall have the power to propose measures and to enact or reject the same at the polls; independent of the Student Senate, except where otherwise noted in this constitution. An initiative petition containing the signatures of 20% of the Student Government Association shall be required to call an initiative election. The measure shall be held within 20 class days after the presentation of the petition to the Student Government Association President. Any measure that receives the approval of the majority of the Student Government Association voting in an election shall be forwarded to the Student Government Association President for implementation after receiving approval from the University President.

Section 12. The student body shall have the power to approve or reject at the polls any measure passed by the Student Senate. A petition containing the signature of 20% of the student body shall be required to call a referendum to be voted upon by the Student Government Association in a referendum election. It shall be held within the twenty (20) class days after the presentation of the petition. If the measure receives the approval of the majority of the student body voting in a referendum election it shall be forwarded to the Student Government Association President for implementation after receiving approval from the President of the University.

ARTICLE IV. STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Section 1. The chief officer shall be the Student Government Association President whose term of office shall begin June 1 and shall end May 31. He shall be elected at large by the Student Body during the spring semester. In the event that the President is unable to fulfill the duties of his office or upon his removal or resignation from office, the Vice President shall assume the office of President. No person who has previously held the office of President for two elected terms may again become a candidate for this office.

Section 2. There shall also be a Student Government Association Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Chief of Staff. These officers shall be elected at large from and by the Student Body during the spring semester. The term of office for these officers shall coincide with the term of office of the Student Government Association President.

Section 3. All officers shall have attended three (3) long Academic Semesters as a full time student with two of those Semesters at Sam Houston State University upon filing for office. An overall Grade Point Average of 2.5 is required. The officer candidate shall not be on disciplinary or academic probation at any time while seeking or holding the office.

Section 4. The duties of the Student Government Association President shall include:

- (a) The presentation of the legislative program to the Student Senate at the beginning of each semester.
- (b) The presentation of periodic messages upon the state of the Student Government Association to the Senate.
- (c) The execution of all legislation of the Senate for which the President shall be responsible to the Senate.
- (d) The power to veto or sign all legislation passed by the Student Senate within five calendar days of the Senate.
- (e) The responsibility to preside over Student Senate meetings.
- (f) The authority to issue the oath of office on the night the Senators are accepted into the senate.
- (g) The appointment of an Attorney General.
- (h) The selection of all Senate Committee Chairmen as outlined in Article III Section 9 Subsection C.

(i) The responsibility to act as the chief of economics and establish an outlined budget to be presented for the approval to the Senate in mid-September each year with assistance of the SGA Treasurer..

(j) To be one of the two signatures on all accounts. The other being that of the Treasurer.

Section 5. The Student Government Association President shall be empowered to:

(a) Convene special sessions of the Student Senate.

(b) Recommend to the Student Senate such measures as shall be necessary and expedient.

(c) Establish and appoint such administrative committees as necessary and issue executive orders.

(d) Enter into agreements with agencies and organizations outside of the university community by working in conjunction with the appropriate committee with two thirds (2/3) consent of the Student Senate and the approval of the University President.

(e) Represent the student body personally and through dealings with agencies and organizations outside the university community that have been approved by two-thirds (2/3) consent of the Student Senate.

(f) Appoint an Administrative Assistant as necessary in fulfilling the duties of office.

(g) Assume such other executive powers not denied by the Constitution by approval of a simple majority of those Senators present and voting at a formal Senate Meeting.

(h) Have the option to appoint a Parliamentarian, Sergeant-at-Arms, and other agents of the chamber, if seen as a necessity.

Section 6. The duties of the Student Government Association Vice-President shall include:

(a) Presiding at all meetings of the Student Senate in absence of the President.

(b) Assisting the President in fulfilling the executive functions of the Student Government Association as well as assuming the duties of the President when so directed by the President.

(c) Serving as the Chairman of the Department of Internal Affairs and head of the Election Commission.

(d) Be one of the two signatures on all accounts when the President is unavailable.

(e) Perform all other duties incident to such office.

Section 7. The Vice-President shall be empowered to:

(a) Assume the office of the Student Government Association President upon the inability of the President to fulfill the duties of the office as determined by the Student Senate, resignation, or by removal from office.

Section 8. The duties of the Student Government Association Treasurer shall include:

(a) Keeping a complete and accurate record of all transactions of the Student Government Association, which shall be subject to review by the senators.

(b) Being a member of the Internal Affairs Department

(c) Preparing a written monthly report to be given to the Student Senate at the last meeting of each month.

(d) Performing all other duties incident to such office.

(e) Assisting the President in the implementation of chief of economics.

(f) Being one of the two required signatures on all accounts.

Section 9. The duties of the Student Government Association Secretary shall include:

- (a) Keeping the minutes of all meetings of the Student Senate and Senate Executive meetings.
- (b) The taking of the official roll call at each meeting
- (c) Conferring with all members of the press concerning clarification of the Senate's transactions.
- (d) Reporting Senate meeting absences to the caucus chairman and the Rules and Regulations Committee Chairman.
- (e) Assigning an accurate number to each bill presented before the Senate.

Section 10. The duties of the Chief of Staff shall include:

- (a) Regulate daily proceedings of the office, serving as the chief officer presiding over the Executive Student Assistants
- (b) Serve as a policy advisor to the President
- (c) Manage and facilitate the office hours of the senate
- (d) Serve as the chief political liaison, promoting civic duties
- (e) Shall serve as a member of the Department of Internal Affairs
- (f) Appoint such Executive Assistants as deems necessary in fulfilling the duties of the office. The Senate shall be empowered to remove Executive Assistants by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate present and voting.

Section 11. Student Government Officers shall be voting members of the Student Senate except the President who shall vote in case of a tie.

Section 12. In any vacancies in the office of the Student Government Association Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Chief of Staff, the Student Government Association President shall appoint a replacement with two-thirds (2/3) approval of the Senate present and voting. In any vacancy in the office of President, the following lines of succession shall be implemented to fill that office: Student Government Association Vice-President.

ARTICLE V. JUDICIAL BRANCH

Section 1. All Judicial authority of the Student Government Association shall be vested in the Judicial Branch.

Section 2. The supreme judicial authority shall be vested in one Supreme Court.

- (a) The Supreme Court shall consist of nine justices, one of whom shall be the Chief Justice.
 1. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall be any member of the University community.
 2. No Justice may serve on the Student Senate during his term of office.
 3. Four justices shall be university faculty or staff members.
 4. Five justices shall be currently enrolled students of Sam Houston State University who have attended for at least four consecutive semesters and are not members of the Student Senate or Election Commission.

(b) All decisions of the Supreme Court shall be delivered in writing, outlining their constitutional interpretation and opinions. They shall be open to inspection by any person at reasonable times, and shall be published in the school newspaper, The Houstonian.

(c) A quorum of the court shall be five justices, one of whom shall be the Chief Justice. All decisions must be made by a simple majority of the Justices present and voting.

(d) The original jurisdiction of the court shall extend to cases of:

1. Disciplinary action.

2. Constitution and By-laws interpretation.

3. Election controversies of the Election Commission shall be appellate jurisdiction.

(e) The Supreme Court shall have appellate jurisdiction over all Student Government Association lower courts approved by the Student Government Association Student Senate.

Section 3. The President of the Student Government Association shall appoint four faculty/staff members to sit on the Supreme Court with two-thirds (2/3) approval of the Student Senate present and voting.

Section 4. The President of the Student Government Association shall appoint five students to sit on the Supreme Court with two-thirds (2/3) approval of the Student Senate present and voting.

Section 5. Every effort will be made to keep the Supreme Court fully staffed at all times. If a vacancy is created, members of the Senate may nominate candidates for consideration by the President.

Section 6. The Student Senate shall have the power to establish such lower courts as it deems necessary.

(a) The Student Government Association President shall appoint lower Court Judges with two thirds (2/3) approval of the Student Senate present and voting.

(b) Lower Court Judges shall be any members of the University community.

ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Amendments to the Constitution shall require a favorable vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Student Body voting in a Constitutional Referendum. This shall be held no later than twenty class days after the presentation of the petition to the Student Government Association Vice-President.

Section 2. The student body shall have the power to propose amendments to this Constitution. A petition containing the signatures of 20% of the student body shall be voted upon by the student body within at least twenty class days after the presentation of the petition to the Student Government Association Vice-President.

Section 3. Upon ratification of a Constitutional amendment(s), the amendment(s) shall be incorporated into the Student Government Association Constitution upon approval of the Sam Houston State University President.

ARTICLE VII. RATIFICATION

Section 1. Ratification of this Constitution shall require a favorable vote of at least a majority of the members of the Student Senate present and voting at a meeting, and approval of a majority of the student body voting, in a Constitutional referendum.

Section 2. Upon the ratification of this Constitution and the approval of the University President, all other previous Sam Houston State University Student Government Association Constitutions shall be null and void.