

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE TRINITY UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT BODY

Last Amended: September 2024

PREAMBLE:

As students of Trinity University, we have both a vested interest and a responsibility to see that our University operates at the highest level with a sustained interest in providing the best possible Trinity experience for all.

In order to ensure this standard is upheld, we as a student body hereby establish the Trinity University Student Government Association. As a recognized student representative organization, Student Government Association will give direction and voice to student concerns, safeguard the provisions outlined in the Student Rights and Responsibilities, and provide a framework for activities and services for students. We do ordain and establish this Constitution of the Trinity University Undergraduate Student Body to direct our governing entity, provided that no part of this Constitution nor any action taken under its authority shall conflict with the policies of Trinity University.

ARTICLE I: MISSION

- Section 1. 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.
- Section 2. 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.
- Section 3. 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.
- Section 4. SGA reserves the right to make studies, reports, and recommendations advocating student rights, needs, and interests to the college community, administration, Board of Trustees, and the public.
- Section 5. 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 & 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.
- Section 3. All officeholders will sign an accountability contract upon taking office. The accountability contract will specify the duties of the office and hold officeholders responsible for fulfilling these duties. These duties will be decided on and outlined by the incoming President and Vice

President.

- Section 4. All officeholders should strive to best represent the interests of the entire undergraduate student body, as well as those of the University community at large.
- Section 5. 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. Officeholders who fail to meet this threshold will be removed.
- Section 6. 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 filled via the process described in Article IX, Section 3.
- Section 7. The membership of the Senate shall be divided by their class standing as determined during the campus-wide election. Each class shall be represented by five Senators.
- Section 8. In order to minimize conflicts of interest, no undergraduate student may occupy the following combinations of positions concurrently:
- SGA office holder and Academic Honor Council member, Trinitonian editor in chief or managing editor, Mirage editor in chief or managing editor, president/chair/director or its equivalent of Student Programming Board, Student Ambassadors, Trinity Diversity Connection, Greek Council, and Trinity University Volunteer Action Committee.
- Section 9. The President and Vice President must, by the semester following their assumption of office, be full-time undergraduate students with at least four semesters of full-time enrollment at an accredited college or university.
- Section 10. Candidates for President and Vice President must have prior experience in SGA, serving as an office holder or in some other capacity.
- Section 11. All SGA members shall be formally sworn-in by the Dean of Students or a proxy. The oath of office is as follows:

As a member of the Student Government Association of Trinity University I will represent my fellow students, as well as the University community, responsibly, completely, and transparently throughout my time in office.

ARTICLE III: THE PRESIDENT

The privileges and responsibilities of the President shall be to:

- Represent SGA's interests and opinions to the students, administration, and faculty.
- Schedule, prepare agendas for, preside over, and maintain the efficient and orderly function of all meetings.
- Call additional SGA meetings on personal initiative or after petition by four SGA officeholders. Officeholders must be notified at least twenty-four hours in advance of the additional meeting.
- Meet regularly with the President of the University.
- Nominate, for approval by the President of the University, undergraduate students for appointment to committees, conduct-related boards, and the Academic Honor Council.
- Serve as a liaison between student members of the University committees and SGA.
- Appoint cabinet members and committee chairs to assist in the everyday activities of the organization,

including serving as parliamentarian, taking minutes, assisting in the allocation of the student activity fee, and communicating with the greater student body.

- H. Create and appoint members to ad hoc committees as deemed necessary.
- I. 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).
- J. Uphold and enforce the constitution and bylaws at all times.
- K. Ensure that "The Student Rights and Responsibilities" is upheld.

ARTICLE IV: THE VICE PRESIDENT

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

- A. Oversee the process of allocating the student activity fee.
- B. Serve as the accountant for SGA's personal funds.
- C. Act as SGA's liaison to the Faculty Senate and Graduate Student Association.
- D. Temporarily assume the responsibilities of the President in their absence.
- E. Assume the office of the President in the event of the permanent absence or removal of the President.
- F. Report directly to and meet regularly with the President and carry out any additional duties delegated by the President.
- G. Design and implement the administrative record keeping procedures for funding as approved by the Senate.
- H. Organize the completion of the end of the funding year report, which shall be submitted to Student Involvement.
- I. Collect and archive all funding requests, proposals, evaluations, and other applicable forms submitted by petitioning parties for future reference.

ARTICLE V: THE SENATORS

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. Oversee all campus-wide SGA elections and referendums.
- D. Establish and enforce the procedural guidelines for organizations seeking to apply directly for funds and to approve or reject these requests.
- E. Represent the undergraduate student body in any alteration of "The Student Rights and Responsibilities."

ARTICLE VI: THE JUDICIARY

Section 1: Council of Review

- A. The Council of Review is composed of...
 - a. Judicial Chair
 - b. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Chair
 - i. It shall be the Judicial Chair's discretion if the DEI Chair needs to be involved in proceedings as a non-voting member.
 - c. Four non-SGA members of the Student Integrity Panel
 - d. SGA's Advisors

- B. In instances where a member of or an action taken by SGA is accused of violating the constitution or bylaws, it shall be the duty of the Council of Review to investigate the nature of the violation. The Judicial Chair shall act as liaison during the process and present the facts to the Council of Review as well as provide any other needed information.
- C. If the Council of Review holds that the constitution or bylaws were violated, the Council will overturn the action in question and write an official opinion to guide future interpretations of the governing documents.
- D. In the event that the Council of Review finds an officeholder responsible for violating the constitution impeachment proceedings are automatically triggered per the process outlined in Article VII, Section 4 of this document. This action should be limited to extreme circumstances in which an officeholder acted unethically, irresponsibly, and/or maliciously.

ARTICLE VII: THE ADVISERS

SGA shall be advised by:

- A. Two designated employees chosen by the Vice President for Student Affairs.
- B. Senator Emeritus - The incoming President and the incoming Vice President reserve the right to jointly appoint up to three graduating seniors to serve as Senators Emeriti. After being approved by a majority of Senate quorum, they shall act as advisers to SGA for the spring term but will not hold a vote. When choosing Senators Emeritus, the President and Vice President will consider groups that are underrepresented in the current Senate in an effort to fill gaps in representation and provide a voice to all students.
- C. Additional faculty and staff advisors may be approved by a two-thirds vote of Senate quorum.

ARTICLE VIII: PROCEDURES

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

Section 1. Meetings

- A. SGA shall hold public meetings at a minimum of twice per month during the academic year.
- B. Meeting agendas and minutes shall be published in a forum that is accessible to the public at least 24 hours in advance.
- C. While meetings are always open, the Senate may vote by simple majority to enter into an executive session. Executive sessions are closed to the public, but the discussion that occurs therein shall still be recorded in the minutes.
- D. Meetings shall include a designated time for guests to provide commentary.

Section 2. 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.
- C. A motion passed by the Senate may be vetoed by the President if done so within seven calendar days. A veto triggers an automatic re-vote in which two-thirds majority vote of the Senate quorum is required to override the veto in and revert to the original decision. If the Senate fails to override the veto, the motion in question dies and may not be reintroduced in its original form.
- D. The Vice President shall vote on motions only in the case of a tie in the Senate.
- E. 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.
- F. Senators' votes are to be considered public information and shall be recorded in the minutes.

Section 3. Removal from Office

- A. Members of SGA are subject to removal if they fail to comply with the attendance policy outlined in Article 3 Section 1 of the bylaws.
- B. Removal is not to be confused with impeachment as defined below. Removal is an automatic mechanism that does not require a vote by the Senate.

Section 4. Impeachment

- A. Any officeholder may be removed from office via impeachment if they betray the confidence of the student body to the extent that they are deemed unable to perform their duties.
- B. The impeachment process may be initiated by:
 - a. a digital petition with a TU ID from 250 members of undergraduate students to the President
 - b. a simple majority vote of the full Senate
 - c. obtaining the number of demerits specified within Article VI, Section 5 of the bylaws
- C. The President must bring impeachment proceedings before the Senate before any other official business can be conducted.
- D. The officeholder considered for impeachment may not vote in their own impeachment proceedings, nor those of any others that occur during the same meeting.
- E. The Judicial Chair shall preside over the proceedings in order to avoid conflicts of interest.
- F. Approval by two-thirds of full Senate membership is required to impeach any officeholder.

Section 5. 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 two-thirds 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 IX: 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 advisors or their designated proxy 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 the election committee and shall be completed by no later than the last day in March.
- B. The newly elected SGA shall assume office on the last day of the spring semester.
- 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 15 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 spring election, seniors may vote for: President, Vice-President.

Section 3. Vacancies

- A. In the event of a vacancy in an elected office of SGA, except President, SGA shall fill the vacant position(s) for the remainder of the unexpired term as promptly as possible
- B. SGA 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 Senate shall vote on the final appointment(s), as described in Article IX, Section 1, Subsection C. The selected candidate must obtain a simple majority of the Senate quorum. The newly elected Senators may not vote until the meeting following their election.
- 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 X: 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. All allocations shall adhere to the Student Organization Handbook.

Section 1. Structure

- A. SGA shall have the authority to recommend to the Associate Vice President for Finance the amount of the student activity fee for approval by the Board of Trustees.
- B. Each year, SGA shall receive 88.9% of the student activity fee for allocation to student groups. SGA shall receive a separate 3.25.% of the said 88.9% of that student activity fee each year for its own operations.
- C. The designated advisor, per article VII, 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's principal treasurer.

Section 2. 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 Social Fraternities and Sororities. 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. 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.
- D. 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 3. Appropriations

- A. SGA is responsible for distributing the Student Activity Fee (SAF) to University Sponsored Organizations (USOs), Campus Publications, Recreational Sports, Student Affairs, groups of students and individual students in the form of funding proposals and requests from the student body.
- B. Any student reserves the right to present a funding request.
- C. Only USOs, Campus Publications, and Recreational Sports may present funding proposals.
- D. A funding request is defined as any amount that is requested for a specific event, item, or function. Funding requests under \$1,500 are heard and voted on by the Finance Committee starting in August. They are not brought before the general Senate for a vote unless a decision is appealed by the organization making the request. Funding requests that are over \$1,500 will be brought before the Senate. Specifics regarding the procedure for funding requests can be found in Article VII Section 1 of SGA Bylaws.

- E. A funding proposal is defined as any amount that is requested by a USO, Campus Publications, and Recreational Sports for a yearly budget. Specifics regarding the procedure for funding proposals can be found in Article VII Section 2 of SGA Bylaws.
- F. In order to protect the autonomy and freedom of the campus press, Campus Publications may be allocated no less than the average of its last 5 allocations unless they choose to request a lower amount.
- G. Recreational Sports may be allocated no less than the average of its last 5 allocations 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 SAF.
- H. For organizations which must be funded their 5 year average: if the approved amount cannot be fully funded by the current year's budget, it will be taken from next year's budget.
- I. To guard the University's long-term interests, SGA must allocate USOs annual funding that is adequate for them to fulfill their designated roles in campus life.
- J. SGA cannot outright deny a USO its operating budget or revoke its USO status unless that action is endorsed by the Vice President of Student Affairs. Thereafter, SGA will work with representatives from Student Affairs and the affected USO to develop an alternative funding model.
- K. In order to monitor spending and promote fiscal responsibility USOs shall provide SGA with monthly and mid-year budget reports so that spending can be monitored. At the end of each fall semester, USOs 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 USO 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.
- L. Organizations and events that do not comply with SGA and University policies may incur reduced allocations or loss of opportunity for future funding.
- M. Additional allocations may not be given until the organizations have fulfilled the finance committee contract.