



Senate Minutes

Monday, January 27th, 2025

9:00 PM, Kyle Morrow Room, Fondren Library

[Student Association Public Notice Listserv Link](#)

[Resolution/Project Tracker](#)

[Attendance Sheet and Voting Record](#)

[Livestream via Zoom](#)

[Robert's Rules of Order](#)

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call & Adoption of the Agenda
- III. Announcements

[Senior Committee Application Reminder](#)

Jae: we have a senior committee application. Reminder right now we have one applicant and they're not a senior, so. They're a great application. But to chair this committee, you need to be a senior. So if no one applies to chair this committee, there will be no senior gala So tell your colleges to apply. It's a very minimal time commitment position, maybe like one or two hours a week. So I guess I can definitely extend it because if no one applies, we can't really choose people. But people to apply. And then, yeah,

[Development & Alumni Relations - Rice Owls Give Back](#)

Eva: Hello Hello everybody My name is Eva Frankabella. I work in alumni relations. We're current students, but make sure that you know about your alumni association as students and as you become graduates. But what our program is, is Rice Gives Back. So I remember if you read it the night last year, it took place in the RMC. And just kind of a day for us as Rice students as a population to write thank you cards to deliver to our fans, stewardship constituents, and things like that. And highlighting the phrase, it's kind of like leaving it better than you found it. Like, a nonprofit doesn't necessarily mean



money. It means just like giving back to what they need to do. So it's going to be on February 6th. And you know it's going to be going out Monday. We're still finalizing the number of locations that we have across campus. We will have a table on the RMC. If anybody would like to help with that, like staffing that day, we are going to provide pens and note cards. We'll have snacks there, stickers, things like that. But if anybody is interested in tabling that day, feel free to contact me. Jae has my email address. And will send the minutes notes. And then, yeah, just kind of, I know Rice is so special to all of us in different ways. So just kind of being able to say thank you to the people that are still supporting it as current students and then going from there. So does anybody have any questions?

Matab: What day will this happen again!

Eva: February six

Sarah: I know in the past there has been coffee vouchers and snacks at each table Is that going to change with the stations more spread out this year?

Eva: So we are going to have snacks at every station across campus. We do have stickers, and we have stickers for each of residential colleges, too. They're just going to entice more. And then we're going to have coffee vouchers for the first 50 participants at each station, too, such as Or whatever I can find in my swag closet. Any other questions? Awesome. Well, once again, my name is Eva Frankabella, and my next ID is EF30. If you guys have any questions, too, thank you so much. It's very nice. Thank you. good night

Winter Storm Rice Staff Donations

Jae: And another thing is the president's cohort organized donations for winter storm staff. So staff.came in, like H &D staff, facility staff, that came in during the winter storm to start eating and give us food, all of that. So So know there's been talks on whether this is verified or not, but it's organized by the president's cohort, and it's just Sarah's venmo account yeah, and we're going to have this for a week, and then transfer the money to the staff that came in during the winter storm. I guess not officially verified, but between the 12 of us, they're like working things, each other accountable. Don't need to dis if you can, and your



mouth, and also share it with your friends, share it with your colleges. Any questions? Cool.

IV. Reports

Office of Financial Aid Presentation + Q&A

Paul: I'm Paul Magnetta, the executive director of Financial Aid for the Rice University. I've been here for 13 years. Two years in the director role. So I wasn't sure exactly what you guys wanted for the state of financial aid. It's a lot of slides here, but I'm not going to go through them all alone. I'm going to fly through the important ones, and then leave time for questions. So just some quick statistics. So about 86% of Rice students graduate debt free. Everybody said this is as of the 23, 24, years. We're currently in the 2024, 25 years, and the numbers aren't final just yet, so I don't have that information to share out at this point. First year aid offers, for that year, were \$63,233. So it was just more than tuition and fees on the average aid. Some students, of course, get more, some get less, but that leaves an average responsibility about room and more, at \$15,800 for those on the aid. We have a zero common policy, and what that means is that students that are receiving aid this day, there's not a loan in that need-based aid package. Students can borrow to help with that family contribution, and that's why we do still have students graduating with some debt, but that number's come down significantly over the years. And this first almost \$152 million last year in grants and scholarships across the undergraduate population. And all of that leaves, let's be the top five, best value among national universities. All right, so one of the things that happened this year that really impacted our office was fast and simplification. You guys might have heard of this. This was a result of a Consolidated Appropriations Act that passed in 2020 that incorporated two bills, the Future Act and the Fast and Simplification Act. What this aimed to do was expand pell Grant eligibility, which is a federal grant for need-based students, and it also aimed to streamline the FAFSA application down from something like 130 questions down to a 10 or 15 minute application. So there were some other unintended consequences, I think, from the FAFSA bill. And I'll go through some of the top three changes that happened from the FAFSA. So there was an EFC to



SAI. EFC just means Expected Family Contribution, SAI and Student Aid Index. So that was just a terminology change. But through that change and through a formulaic change, they were expanding L Grant eligibility for that. The number of college students also changed and how that was factored in on the FAFSA. So previously, the number of college students would reduce the family contribution that the FAFSA would calculate. The FAFSA no longer takes into account the number of college students. So a family with one in college versus a family with two in college, if everything else is the same, income assets, family size, they would have the same student aid index in regard. So that was a change in the FAFSA. Overall, household size is still a factor. And I'll talk about these other pieces with how we still calculate aid with the number of college students. And then the last change was, or the other big change was the FTI consent. FTI simply means Federal Tax Information. So the FAFSA to streamline this, they automatically move the information that you've reported to IRS through your tax returns over onto the FAFSA once you give consent. But in order to give consent, your parents have to provide their consent as well as the students. And so each of those individuals has to have an FSA user ID. Whereas before it was just one parent and then the student now it's usually both parents will need that FSA user ID. So how did these affect Rice? The EFC and SAI, it really did impact us because we use primarily the profile, the CSS profile, and an institutional methodology formula to determine our need-based aid. And what this says is, the reason that we use this is because the majority of our aid, about 95% of our grants and scholarships comes from Rice. Only about 5% comes from federal and state sources. The number of college students also had little impact on Rice students. The CSS profile and our institutional methodology still factor in the number of siblings in college as they're pursuing an undergraduate education. Some families did lose federal eligibility because of that number of college students changed on the FAFSA, but in those cases, it typically did not cause any change to the overall aid of students receiving it rights. The FTI consent, it did result initially in more incomplete applications than we typically have due to that application process. And last year we stepped up ...so that we could make sure we sorted out all of



those aid-affiliated applications. So we began with this school year and we typically do with about 10% of our applicants incomplete and at this point we're down to almost none. Right, so the Rice Investment, I just wanted to touch a little bit on the Rice investment. I'm not gonna go too much in detail about it. We have three categories here, 75 and below, family incomes of 75 and below, receive full tuition fees or more, and this all assumes typical assets for those families as well. We ran the middle group where they can receive at least full tuition and then the higher middle-income group can receive at least half tuition. Due to this initiative, we're now at our five-year point of being in the Rice investment as an initiative of Rice. And through that, we've awarded over \$650 million in financial aid over that period of time, which is a lot of 54% increase in aid that we've offered over the previous five years. So comparing that. Through this initiative as well, before the Rice investment started, about 25% of Rice graduates were finishing with student debt. And as you saw earlier, that number is now down to about 14%. And the CSS profile accounts, I know we get a number of questions on why do we ask for both of these applications. As you see, there are some differences in methodology on what the FAFSA will consider versus the profile and our institutional methodology. The FAFSA, again, that allocates federal funds. The CSS profile, in our opinion, allows us to better allocate Rice financial aid. It provides a more accurate evaluation for families. It lets us take into account other things like private school tuition, and home equity and emergency relief, health insurance and these other types of things. And then the CSS profile is also able to be completed by broader population of students. The FAFSA is limited to US citizens, and to the residents, and a certain number of eligible residents. The CSS profile, on the other hand, can be completed by not just your US citizens and the permanent permanent but also undocumented students, and international students. So, again, it allows us to allocate our aid to the populations that we wanna serve. I have a spinal and work-saving loan to marinate. The purpose of this is just to highlight that we do have other types of self-help aid, but I also wanted to touch on merit-aid, because Rice does offer merit-aid. That's simply offered at the time of admission, but I did wanna just



highlight that one of the things that makes us unique about our merit aid is that it is additive to the need-based aid. So students who are receiving both need-based aid and merit aid, merit aid is not reducing the need-based aid unless it's bumping up to the cost of the tenants. We do have a loan if they're on that. And then current students, if they're re-applying for aid, those aid packages for next year will come out until around mid-June, but families can't estimate what their package may be in the coming year by using tools such as My Tuition and the net price calculator, which are available on our website. And it's the profile timeline, or or application timelines for this coming year. So October 1st, it is past year, the CSS profile became available, and then on December 1st, the FAFSA became available. So the FAFSA was again delayed this year, but not as far as it was last year. And so because of the delay in the FAFSA, we didn't move our due date or our priority date for the profile of the FAFSA to March 1st. They gave families more time to complete the applications for next year. And then mid-June is when we plan to release financial aid packages for the next year. So it'll start receiving notices at that point. All right, so I think I made my time. I'll hang around for some questions. I don't know, which time we have for questions. We have about five minutes. I can take a few questions

Isabella: I just have a question regarding the Trump administration. One of his sort of talking points has been eliminating the Department of Education, and I know a lot of students have anxiety about the FAFSA because of that. So do you see that potentially, having an impact on the financial aid process? And of course, nothing has happened yet, but in case it did.

Paul: So my understanding from, so we're on a number of committees, we've been NASFA, which is the National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators. We participated heavily with the college board, and a number of sessions and meetings I've been in, what the indications are is that that would be a very difficult thing to do because it would take an act of Congress in order to eliminate the Department of Education. President Trump cannot do that through an executive order, or anything like that. So it would be a difficult thing to take place. I think if it did happen, there's funds would still need to go somewhere. So



it would probably be pushed out to the states somehow, but that's all speculative at this point. Again, I think it would be a very difficult thing to actually do

Sara: I was wondering if you could speak at all to the current ongoing lawsuit surrounding financial aid. I don't know if there's status updates on that, or the financial aid office's response to what's occurring, just anything that you can say.

Paul: Unfortunately, I cannot comment on any ongoing lawsuits. I know we settled one, but the administration of that particular lawsuit, this would be the 5-6-8 lawsuit, is handled by another organization, Rice is contracted, but the most recent one surrounding the non-custodial parent contribution, that one I'm not able to comment on.

Abigail: I had a question because the Trump administration recently issued a memorandum about dispersing financial aid or federal funds just to programs that support DEI and, or among other things that do not line with his agenda. And how do you see this impacting Rice, since you did say that 5% of our funding does come from federal and state sources, and the Trump administration does not want your money going to schools that might have DEI programs or things like that.

Paul: I'm not aware of any changes on that end of Rice. No, the aid that I'm talking about, the funds that I'm talking about are federal student aid. So that's directly to a student and not pertaining to DEI or anything like that. As far as beyond that, yeah, I wouldn't be able to comment because I'm not knowledgeable about those terms.

Elena: why does financial aid account for scholarships like outside scholarships over a certain amount against your financial aid and what does that change?

Paul: That's a good question we receive quite often. And so our outside aid policy is, one, we don't know when a student is admitted to Rice what outside scholarships that students will bring in. And if we knew at the time, we would factor that in to the aid package at that point. We meet 100% of the demonstrated need. We're one of the very few institutions that do that in combination with being need-blind. If you combine need-blind with being a no-loan institution as well as meeting 100% of demonstrated need, there's about



20 to 25 schools in the nation that meet all of those categories. But in order to do that, one of the pieces too is just to responsibly allocate the fines so that they will last for perpetuity. And one of those symptoms is that outside aid, when it comes in, it's gonna reduce the **set up** aid portion, which is the work-study component first, and then anything over that will reduce the need-based screens. We do have some other options that are available to students. So we do allow a one-time allowance over the four years for a student to use their scholarship funds towards a technology purchase. So student can request to use up to \$2,000 for their scholarship towards that technology purchase. That can be a laptop, a tablet, accessories that go with them, or whatever is needed in that area. So they're not losing that additional \$2,000. So that's the exact allowance as well that we've done. We've loosened some of the documentation that we used to require a receipt, these other things. Now we just need to email from the student to specify what their plan is on the floor, but it's only one time over the four years. I think we have time for one more

Dorrian: I'm just wondering about when you guys are looking at financial aid for everybody. Is there a ceiling that you guys are working with, and especially for kind of continuing students, when there are tuition increases that affect them? Do you move that ceiling or how does that process work? If you're a continuing student, and there's no major change in your family's finances, can you expect major differences in financial aid offers?

Paul: It's a good question. So you're talking about a ceiling on an individual student, is that what you're referring to, or are you talking about an overall ceiling? (I meant more overall for all Rice Students). Okay, so we're in a pretty fortunate position that as long as I've been here before, and as long as I know, we haven't been, we have not received a sort of ceiling, but we do have a ceiling individually, and that would be the cost of attendance. So in our cost of attendance budget for a student, we include tuition, fees, room more, there's personal expenses, estimates, books and slides, and transportation. These are all part of our cost of attendance budget. We get the need for the student, but after we've determined that for the second family contribution differences, it is their



demonstrated need, and that's our limit on the need-based aid for the student. When tuition increases, if you're in the Rice Investment group, for example, in the tuition category for the full tuition, if tuition increases and your income assets are similar this year as the year before, then you should expect a similar package. You expect tuition to be covered in that case. And then, whatever your expected family contribution was calculated as, you should expect something similar if there haven't been any major changes in your family circumstances. And we do review each case on an individual basis. There's somebody reviewing each application that comes through. We're not auto-packaging anything, we're not just running in tune, putting the packages out there. Each person is individually reviewed. I think that we're in support. We can do one more.

Student Newspaper: I'm curious, earlier today, the White House announced that effective tomorrow, it would be ceasing all federal grant money. How does that affect financial aid, at Rice especially when we're getting part of it through the federal grants?

Paul: I was not aware. I have not seen that release the first week. So I'd have to go back and review that and see what that says. Like, in the past, though, I can say when there have been for example, a government shutdown, federal student aid has not been impacted. The disbursement of federal student aid has not been impacted by that. But I'd have to review that individual release before I get comments on that. So, sorry. Thank you so much.

Jae: Thank Thank so much. Thank you so much. I I the different rights offices have come with a little presentation. It's obviously not like any or every question that I might have to answer now, but it's just an introduction to that. In the future, when you all have questions, especially our student leaders, who to direct them to, and also who also have a call to email address in the minutes, so if you have any follow-up questions, you can reach out to them as well.

Spring 2025 SA Elections Timeline - Natalie Wang, Director of Elections

Jae: And then we have the spring presentation from Natalie

Natalie: Hi, guys. I'm just going to go over some information regarding the upcoming spring election. So first, all the positions that you can run for. So we



have the executive positions. We have the president, internal vice president, external vice president, secretary, and treasurer. And then for the honor council positions, we have four representatives from the sophomore, junior, and senior classes. And then for the blanket tax organizations, we have the Thresher editor-in-chief, RSVP co-chairs, the Rice Program Council President, Cabinet Editor, university court chair, KTRU Station Manager, Rally Club President, Rice Woman's Resource Center President, and Civic Duty Vice President. As for the election timeline, so today's just an intro to the upcoming spring election. And then this Friday on 31st, I will be holding an info session for interested applicants. So this is just for you to come and get an idea of what the different positions do to see if this is what you actually want to run for. And then on the fifth, your petitions. So the hard copy of petitions will be due to the RMC info desk. And then on the sixth, your campaign statements and pictures will be due to me through SA elections email. And if you choose not to submit a statement or a picture, you will have to submit a waiver. So it'll either be one or the other. And then on the 10th, there's also a candidate meeting with me. So if you are running, I highly recommend coming to this. This is where I'll be going over all of the rules and regulations regarding the election, set the finances, and all that stuff. So definitely come to that if you're gonna be running for a position. And then on the 12th to two days after that meeting, the campaigning does begin at 7 a.m. So bright early in the morning. And then the campaigning period will be two weeks, same as the special election. And then on the 26th, the campaigning period will end. And after that, the voting period begins. So the voting period will be a week. So on March 5th at noon, and that is also when the campaign finance forms are due to me via my email, SA elections email. And then the next day, the results will be announced at noon. All right, so for campaigning, campaigning, as I said earlier, begins on February 12th at 7 a.m. That is Wednesday. And the campaigning will end on February 26th at noon. So the two-week timeline. Then voting will begin right after campaigning and the period ends. And then the voting will last up until March 5th. All right, so for campaigning rules, it's basically the same as the special election. No emails, including the use of listserves or



email list to tell or encourage people to vote in any way. And you cannot bribe people to vote either. And then also no outside influence. So a person or organization that is not affiliated with the Rice cannot interfere with this election. Also for social media, if you are gonna be posting on social media, you have to tag the official SA account. And social media accounts and websites can remain up after the campaigning period ends, but you can't be active on it anymore. And then for flyers, candidates have to get permission before posting flyers in any buildings. So for example, the RMC, if you wanna post a flyer up in the RMC, you have to get a stamped by the info desk. And then after the campaigning period ends, you have to take down all the flyers that you have put up during the campaigning period. And then for posters, just follow the Rice policies for putting up posters anywhere. And then for building, say, a special election, just make sure that you're following all of the building rules, so each building does have specific rules of where you can put flyers or posters. Okay, and then for the SA website, there are campaign statements and photos will be posted on Wednesday, February 12th, when campaigning begins. And then your statements and pictures will remain until the voting period ends. All right, and then for the finance, and all of this I'm saying is also in the handbook, also in more detail, and I'll also be going over this during our candidate meeting. But for the presidential candidates, you'll be reimbursed up to \$100. For non-residential candidates, you'll be reimbursed up to \$75. And cause and counter causes can be reimbursed up to 250. And then everyone who is running has to turn in the campaign finance form to me by March 5th at noon through the email. And even if you don't spend anything during the election, so you spend \$0, you still have to turn in your campaign finance form. And if you are late, then you can be disqualified from the election. And then money includes all campaign-related expenses, so any food that you use, printing or social media, online advertising. And then donations and donated items will also be counted towards the campaign finance purchases. So some examples of things you spend money on, you can spend money on food, marketing, printing, stickers, buttons, shirts, or anything like that. If you are unsure about anything, you can ask me during the meeting. And then some



things you cannot spend money on, so no alcohol, events with alcohol, or any illegal substances or anything against the rice code of conduct. You cannot bribe people for endorsements. You cannot use it for personal expenses. And again, I'll be going over this again during the candidate meeting as well. All All and so the reimbursement form is different from the campaign finance form. So the campaign finance form, you'll be sending to me and the essay advisor before the reimbursement forms, you'll only be sending those to our advisor. Yeah, okay, so for the campaign finance forms, you can't be reimbursed, that's the only thing you turn in. So for reimbursement, make sure you also turn in your pedicure reimbursement form, your business meeting and entertainment expense form, and all of your itemizer seats for everything that you use during the campaign period. Okay, so additional finance information. If you're printing anything from rice printers, request your itemize print log from the help desk, and then attach that to your pedicache form for reimbursement. A form should be submitted to the Student Center to be reviewed by our advisor, which is authorized approval for our forms. And then after forms have been reviewed and signed, then you'll submit them to the cashier's office where they were the final submission where they will give you your reimbursement. And then these are the forms, they're just attached to the slides, and then reimbursement forms. And then these are two facts I'm sure you already know, so I will not be reading through those. And then here's the handbook and the campaigning bylaws. Please read these before we start campaigning. Any questions?

Trevor: Where do we get a form for the positions?

Natalie: You can either print the forms out yourself on the handbook, or I will make some copies and put them at the info desk in the RMC.

Hong Tai Woo (Thresher): Do you know what was mentioned and when I say the results will be?

Natalie: March 6 around noon any other questions?

V. [Constitutional Revisions Committee Amendment Proposals](#)



Jae: If you wanna run, so if you have any questions, all your pondering on it, you can also ask those in those sessions and this was pretty rushed, but session will be more detailed.

Trevor: Thank you. Hello everyone, my name is Trevor and this is Zach and I'm the Deputy Parliamentarian. And today we'll be presenting the proposals from the Constitutional Revision Committee. So first and foremost, I'm going to give a big thank you to Crystal, Zach, Abigail, Justin, Morgan and Isaiah. Basically our meetings were supposed to be in an hour a week and got them in two hours a week and they did a lot of hard work. And then for the purposes of this presentation, this will just be a brief overview of all of it. We have a ton of resources in the folder that's linked on the agenda and I believe Jay emailed it out. So my suggestion would be to read it through the bills. If you have questions, we have a document with all the reasoning and everything. All of our meetings and the recordings of those meetings are in that document as well. And then if you have questions, I'm happy to answer them. I want to be as transparent as possible and answer your questions. So yeah, we want to spend a lot of time today just answering your questions more than presenting every single amendment.

Zachary Weinbrum (deputy parliamentarian): So as you can see here on the table of contents, we've kind of separated our over a month. There are around 100 changes into four major groups. The first one is to clarify stuff basically. A lot of it is just grammar mistakes and formatting mistakes and then sometimes we'll clarify certain powers and where they belong. The next one is the structural changes. As you can see, they alter the structure of the student association. Those are quite major. The blanket tax, blanket tax organizations, and blanket tax process change sort of the financial system that we have here with the essay. And then finally, the election changes are very important but they basically change some certain election procedures.

Trevor: Perfect. And we wanted to go real quickly into like why we think we need these changes. Clarity is really important. After the Ucourt case that overturned the **Newer** Constitution, there are a lot of internal contributions within not only



the Constitution but with our bylaws in the Constitution. And that makes it nearly impossible to govern the rules. So we want clarity. We want to make sure that all those rules are equitably applied. Other than Ucourt cases, I'm not going to talk about Ucourtcases in front of you all, but I can tell you all, we have had a whole bunch of Ucourt cases this year. And we don't want that. We don't want more Ucourt cases. And part of the problem is that our Constitution is just, I'm being honest, a mess. So the other thing is equity. Like we want to be able to equitably apply the rules and procedures in the Constitution. That's not possible when there are internal contradictions and problems with our processes and systems. Final thing is this is something that could basically change the Student Association in a way that would make progress, would ensure that we can have a Constitution that lasts, and that allows us to effectively govern.

Zachary Weinbrum (deputy parliamentarian): So basically I think the way we want to do this is we want to kind of get through everything and then we can take questions on specific action items once we're done with the presentation. So if you guys can let us keep going we're going to go one by one. So amendment number one is clarification toward changes, as I said. You can kind of see up there, but basically we're renaming the Executive Council cabinet. We're clarifying this sentence rule in the Student Association. We clarify NSRs to represent new students at their own residential colleges. We remove a lot of redundant language. We correct many typos, a lot of typos, and a lot of grammatical errors. And then we just basically specify key details. We have a document as... sent out. It has a, so there's the legalese CA 1-4. It's basically the same exact thing in the reasoning document, except we have gone through every single change and we have written a reason for every single thing that we did. And then we even summarized it into one sentence at the end of every change. So if there's anything in here that you don't know what it does exactly, you can read the text and you can read the summary upon the document. And then finally we just changed the public approval committee to the Student Activities Committee, which we already used at Jargon and Ems.



Trevor: so next are the structural amendments. I might be a 2D in this, but basically simplifying the conflict of interest policy. Clear thresholds for contract approvals, basically over 2000 and Senate under 2000. It's the executive committee. We clarify the executive committee meetings are closed and the president can basically invite whoever to those meetings. But those meetings are basically already effectively closed, so it doesn't really change anything. The executive committee would now set the agenda instead of just the president putting it together. So we want to generate more discussion ahead of senate meetings and thoughtful conversations about legislation before it's on the agenda. Add in the presidential veto, which kind of offsets the, it offsets two things. One is that we lowered the threshold for a lot of the legislation, so we want there to be a check from the executive branch. And then the next thing is with the power being taken away from the president to solely set the agenda. This would allow for some accountability and it would also allow for another check on the legislature and greater separation between the executive and legislature. The minimum time for social elections goes from three to eight weeks. This is just because we want, if someone's going to get appointed, we want them to have time to govern. We don't want them to get in office and be campaigning and running for an election right away and have no time to govern. Expands and clarifies the IVP and EDP rules. Yeah, it doesn't change a whole lot. It just makes sure that our constitution is in alignment with the name, so like if it's an internal vice president, the constitution's very clear on what that means and say with EVP. And then we change committees to commissions and those would be renewed yearly by each senate so it could be more administratively focused and there's more accountability there. So basically you could create new commissions targeted towards specific projects each year. And then finally the executive committee would be non-voting in the senate. The reason for this is like we would want, we want there to be equitable representation from every residential college in the senate and that can't happen when the executive committee is also voting. But we also empower executive committee with the check on the legislature with the veto power so it's not like we're disempowering



anybody. We just think it would create a more equitable system if we had two people from each college representing the senate making up the legislature. So more structural changes.

Zachary Weinbrum (deputy parliamentarian): So basically the major change that we're doing is we're giving the senate final authority over the budget. You can read more about the language in there. Basically it's just an oversight by the Senate. We also work with votes during closed sessions. That's a democratic thing that we believe we need to do. We allow executive committees and Senate to call special meetings. This already existed. We just made sure we clarified that for the executive committee. You can read that in the language also. We make the presiding member the tie-breaking vote in the senate. So this is exactly how it works in the US senate. Now that we're removing veto power of the executive committee, should there be a tie, we believe that there should be a way for the president who has sovereign power to initiate that. We also have changed the threshold for two different things, as Trevor mentioned. We're lowering the threshold for passage of by law and this to majority vote. So you can read the reasons for that. It's very lengthy but to sum it up, we believe that bylaws are how we govern. And it just wouldn't be very effective if the laws that we did require two-thirds and extensive notice periods and stuff like that you can read those exact changes. But the idea is to make us a more efficient democratic body. The same thing with resolutions is the majority vote. It's very hard to get two-thirds of a resolution. It doesn't really make sense because a resolution is a resolution. So we lower the threshold of that. Finally we overhauled the impeachment process. And basically it's just to make it a lot more due process. There's a chance for a response period in it. You can also clarify that a voting member has to sponsor legislation. Now that we removed the executive committee's voting power, we really wanted to ensure that there's no outside sort of influences. So in a sense if there is an outside person that wants to propose legislation, we want to make sure that at least one person in here who was democratically elected as a voting member has reviewed the legislation and has somewhat contributed to the task. And then we removed basically it's the



police but you can review legislation via another piece of legislation and the document constitution is very, very long. So we tried to remove things that don't actually have any legal power. So we removed that redundant language. And then we also said it was able and has always been able to remove blanket tax organization leadership. However, it referenced something called Section 8 judicial powers, which was something in the very old constitution. So basically then there was just issue in terms of what is referencing what and what the procedures are. So we just de facto use the procedure proceedings for essay on blanket tax. And then finally, in order to add and remove blanket tax status, we are adding a constitutional member procedure that already is kind of like that at the moment.

Trevor: Yeah, so now moving on to blanket tax amendments. We moved the review of blanket tax funding, not the review of organizations receiving blanket tax funding to manually because we think if an organization is ready to become a blanket tax organization, each administration should have the opportunity to look at that. And so, yeah, those are the goals there. Also, the restructures, the blanket tax committee to remove conflicts of interest. So we have the essay treasurer, three essay senators, and three students who are now elected or appointed positions in the blanket tax board. The goal here is right now we have three leadership positions from blanket tax organizations. And the problem there is that either you need every blanket tax organization present to ensure that their interests are represented, or basically you have an automatic conflict of interest each year even though you switch off. It just creates a bad look and the student association senators are elected to allocate this money. And so in seven, but three student association senators and three people who aren't elected or appointed in any blanket tax organization. There's no one to influence that. There's no problem. And so, yeah, those are the goals there. Oh, we also added the requirement. Yeah, you already said this. This is in both sections though because you got to change both. And then removes RSVPs blanket tax status from the constitution which they agreed to.



Zachary Weinbrum (deputy parliamentarian): In terms of elections procedures, it's very just my name, but the major change that we did versus very small provision in the Constitution, that basically if a violation of electoral rules occurred in an ongoing election, let's say this upcoming presidential election and a person running in a position did something wrong, the election director could basically nullify their position that they've held the entire past year and permit them from running for the entire next year. So we just removed the fact that you could just delete their current position. You could still impeach them, but the fact that it was given to the elections director we felt was the extremely strong undemocratic power. You can read the language that it's just legalized. And then we included products in the categories of things basically as Director of elections mentioned. When you use a product from another council organization, you need to reimburse them. It didn't exactly say the work of products, it was just implied, so we included that. And then we kind of made sure that we separated, kept the processes the same between initiatives and referendum, but there was a lot of confusion between what is a referendum and what is an initiative. So we just ensured that referendums are political questions, one political question, and initiatives is a process for enacting legislation, being constituent of power.

Trevor: Yeah, so that concludes our presentation. I hope we left a lot of time for questions. Yeah, we have a ton of resources. We want to answer your questions. We want to make these changes so that our constitution is more effective so we can serve students better. So, thank you.

Jae: We won't do too many questions right now because the point of presenting this today was that we all have time to go back and read it, and then also my Trevor and Zach mentioned, this is like the redacted version, the over-redacted version. So, in the folder that I emailed you all with the agenda, there's line by line and description, and kind of like the reason it for each change, but next Senate, in the following Senate, we'll have much more time to discuss individual changes that everyone disagrees with, have thoughts about. We can also do some questions right now since we have a lot of time. we'll do Ria first



Ria (Thresher): Hey yea I'm Ria One question I have about your second constitutional amendment. You are adding a brand new section that says, the general membership of Senate shall have ultimate authority over the student association budget, the blanket tax and the blanket tax organizations. Just to start, I'm curious what you mean by ultimate authority and why you chose those words exactly.

Trevor: Yeah, so ultimate authority was chosen, and this was something that was transferred from the last referendum that was approved and properly approved. So, the goal with that was to say that you can set the word final. The idea there is that the student association Senate has the final say on the finances and the budgets of allocating the blanket tax that we collect and give to blanket tax organizations. So, ultimate authority is just that this deliberative body that is elected has the final say. That answers your question. I hope it does.

Angelo Will Rice Senator: So, I saw some of the changes you made that essentially, from what I understand, that the power of the executive branch has vested a lot more under the new constitution under the solely president, given that the other executive members can no longer vote, but they do not have the veto power. And then in my perspective, I believe that even though we want to have this idea of the executive branch, legislative branch, all this stuff, and then today is not that deep, and the executive branch, I remember them, were technically elected. So, what made you want to remove the power to vote from every executive member essentially?

Trevor: Yeah, so currently only four of the executive members actually vote, because the president doesn't vote currently. He's a tie breaker in cases where it ties. But the idea there was not to disempower executive committee members. We actually gave them more power within the executive committee to shake the agenda. Among the IVP, the EVP, the Secretary, the Treasurer, now there will be discussions in the executive committee on what's going to be on the agenda next meeting, which is something that was formally only controlled by the president. The idea of not having them in the Senate, I do think it's important that there's equal representation for each college. I think the other thing that's really



important that I like the idea of doing this is when you have a legislative branch that's separate from an executive branch, you have to have more collaboration between the two to coordinate. And I think that's the idea of the veto power, that's the idea of the executive committee setting the agenda, and that's the idea of having the legislature being solely elected from the residential colleges with the senator and the president. Thank you.

Jae: It's not working but uh we'll do Yumn

Yumn: you. I noticed that one of the constitutional amendments it requires that for a resolution even close to Senate, it must be introduced and sponsored by at least one member of Senate. What inspires this? I mean that leaves less opportunity for students outside of Senate to be able to introduce resolutions.

Trevor: Yeah, so that was already in the constitution, I believe. The referendum is already in the Senate. So, yeah, there's already there the... all the G answer to the specific change, but the idea behind that obviously is that like if you can't get the support of a single member in this body that's voting under legislation, it like probably should be on the agenda because we couldn't find the single person to support or contribute to it. It's not that we don't want people to contribute and the other thing is this isn't changing anything. Like it's already in the constitution, but you can present that.

Zachary: Yeah, I haven't memorized exactly which but I'm almost pretty certain that however early it existed and the idea of it is that resolutions of the Senate and the Student Association are separate from your referendum and the initial process. So resolutions are supposed to be speaking on behalf of the... in a sense it is the Student Association, but it's mostly the Senate. The idea is that as a Senate, we're a democratic body, it would not really make sense for an individual person that is not a voting member to introduce a resolution that bypasses all of the referendum process because we want people to be able to speak on their opinions even if they're not in this room and that is why the referendum process exists. And we also feel like there are 24 voting members in here. All it requires is that someone has reviewed the text and has at least discussed it and contributed a little bit to the fact that fact not removing any citizen decision-making



procedures and just clarifying that that has to happen in order to be presented at the Senate.

Yumn: So one of my statements I was looking at, Constitution No. 2 and it says for Article 4 Section 5.8 or 517 actually saying all legislation must be sponsored and introduced by this one voting member of the Senate was contributed to its text. With that in mind, thanks for your response.

Sara (Thresher): Uh Sarah from the Thresher So in the CNA 3 on page 3 where you are talking about the new members of the Blanket Tax Committee, could you go into a little more detail on the reasoning for getting rid of all of the Blanket Tax Organization leaders on the committee? Like what about that is beneficial?

Trevor: Sure So the idea behind getting rid of the Blanket Tax Leaders on the committee is that it creates like a clear conflict of interest when Blanket Tax Leaders are making decisions on the committee. And obviously like they don't vote on their individual budgets like they accuse themselves. However, like there's a clear incentive for someone, whatever organization is, or at least the appearance of self-interest there. And I think that's not a good thing for Blanket Tax Organizations to be putting that position unless every Blanket Tax Organization is there and present.

Sara: But if they can't vote on their own budgets, how are they acting in their own self-interest? They're not acting.

Trevor: Well, the amount of money is like a bucket. So if I take out a bunch of money for other organizations, I'm going to be less on myself. So by making decisions for other Blanket Tax Organizations and allocating their money, it's easy to be more for yourself. And I'm not saying anybody's done this. What I'm saying is they create the appearance that there shouldn't be. And it's not fair for other Blanket Tax Organizations who aren't on the committee.

Sara: And the Senate is a Blanket Tax Organization, right? So the Senate is picking what they get and what the other organizations get out of that bucket?

Trevor: Yeah, so the difference is that the Senate is an elected position that is elected to oversee the budget of the Student Association and of every Blanket Tax Organization. So like this body is a deliberative body, that taxes students and



collects that money that is distributed it. So senators don't have a conflict of interest in the same way that the U.S. House or the U.S. Senate is on committees to distribute their own budgets. And then basically they end up voting in the Senate or the House. So it's no different than common practice in, I guess, the U.S. or the world.

Ria: I have a question actually. Are senators voted to oversee this or is the Treasury voted to oversee this?

Trevor: Senators are voted to oversee this because they have final authority on the budget.

Ria: I served on the Blanket Tax Committee for a year. ... has been on it for a year. Neither of us have heard from you about this amendment. You've never approached us and asked about, like, our thoughts. We're curious if you have approached any other Blanket Tax Board or any Blanket Tax Board leader or anyone on the committee or even the Treasurer and told them about this because until I saw the agenda email, we had no idea. So this is kind of, you know, we wouldn't have to have this conversation with you not in front of the entire Student Association.

Trevor: And I'm happy to have that conversation. The Constitutional Revision Committee has been working for six months now to put these together

Ria: 6 months and we haven't heard from you?

Trevor: Well, we hadn't finalized the amendments until we got back from break. I'm happy to talk with you about them, but that is the reason we're here. We're giving you four weeks to talk about them. And again, I'm happy to talk to you in private about this if you would prefer. But we thought this was a good change that we have the mandate to do this as the Constitutional Revision Committee. And if you have further questions or points of discussion, we're happy to have those. I'm sorry you were caught off-guard

Benjamin: Benjamin, baker NSRI'm curious about this, concerned with the new change that you were talking about earlier. Can you introduce legislation that this could potentially disenfranchise new student reps and the entire executive committee if this has passed and no longer able to introduce things? Is there a



concern that this could cause a gist of what I'd say? For example, the Parliamentarian will change the Constitution and then you can't because it has to go through a senator first. I think this could further hinder the fact that these people are not able to do things

Trevor: That's a good question. One thing I would say is that this is not a change from the current text of the Constitution because this party, this is all legislation, must be sponsored and introduced by at least one member of the Student Association, this legislation has contributed substantially to its text. So basically we change that to be a voting member. The idea of that was, like I said, that one voting member would approve it. That's something that we could discuss possibly looking into changing if you don't think that's a big issue. The goal is never to obviously disenfranchise anybody. The goal is to stay basically consistent with what was in the Constitution already. But yeah, we're happy to discuss that and if that's something that's in its concern about, we want everybody to propose legislation. We just think that it would be good for one voting member to at least be on board with it, but we could definitely talk about it.

Jae: Felipe, you still have your question?

Felipe: If I can remember what it was. I think the question is how often does the President just throw away stuff on the agenda? I don't know, Jae, if you just send out a people. I just don't see how, I guess, taking away the exec committee votes, but letting them decide the agenda is still balanced and how giving the President a veto, how that is still balanced. It doesn't feel like any questions there.

Trevor: So just to clarify your question, are you talking about between the Executive Committee and the President or the Senate and the President? Okay, so with the Executive Committee right now, the possibility to take away is the vote, the idea in the Senate, obviously, the idea behind that is that there's equal representation from each college. And that the Senate would be a legislative body that represents basically each college equally. The giving the Executive Committee the power to set the agenda, the idea there is, yes, to empower the Executive Committee to set the agenda, which is big. But it's also that there's more scrutiny ahead of time on legislation that makes it before the Senate so



that basically good bills are making the Senate. Now, I will grant you that has not been as big of a problem this year as it has in the past. But I do think it's good to have conversations ahead of time in the Executive Committee with discussion in this force is that deliberation. On the veto power, you're offsetting lowering two thresholds to majority votes from two-thirds, and you're offsetting the Executive Committee. Because the Executive Committee in our eyes is supposed to be a team working towards one goal. And so when the President has the veto power, that's also on the half almost of the entire Executive Committee as the President is the head of the Executive Branch. And so I guess that would be my thing. We don't want the Executive Branch working against each other within. That just creates more problems than it solves, I guess. But I do see your point.

Jae: Yes, to kind of answer a little bit of a question a little bit. I...But I think that deciding the agenda is a broader term for conversations with administration and discussion, topics, and areas of advocacy. So obviously, we're in agreement to see whether or not this particular change. But if it were to pass, I think it would just be aligning, like just dividing the present role within this, within a larger group, and having them align to the work that the President does compared to the work that we are But any other questions, and like Trevor mentioned, the Constitutional Committee provisions could be asked a lot about this, but we're also presented this early so that it gives us multiple sentences to dedicate a big amount of time to our questions. And when we decide to put these changes on the spring election ballot, we can go through them change by change. So what we want to propose is to invite a lot of people. So yeah, it's not like an all-in-one-thing moment. So lots of room for discussion. And yeah, for whatever change are perfectly passionate about, please go to the Fender and read more context and more description on that particular change. And also, the date get undecided. But we're also organizing at least one, but hopefully two, like, I guess, more town hall-ish sessions where, like, y'all, of course, but also the general student body can come and ask those questions about the Constitutional changes. So those will be happening before the election, that was all. So this is just like starting the process, not ending it. So like, not everything that we've, not



every change we propose here will go out to the student body. And again, like, whatever we do crowd to the student body, it's up to them what they choose to pass because we won't do it by all-in-one-thing, like last year. Well, that wasn't the case, like last year's administration... "we have a vacancy to fill"

VI. Immediate Consideration

Appointment of Temilolu Fabuyi to the Blanket Tax Committee

- *"Hello! I'm Temilolu Fabuyi, a sophomore at Hanszen majoring in Economics and Hanzsen's Senator. I am excited to join the Blanket Tax Committee and help ensure our student organizations on campus have the funds they need to function and enrich the experiences of Rice students."*
 - a) **Temi:** Hi I'm Temi...
 - b) **Jae:** is there a motion vote all together

VII. New Business

- ☰ Senate Bylaw Amendment #2 To Establish the Academics Commission
- ☰ Senate CA #1 To Clarify the Student Association Constitution
- ☰ Senate CA #2 To Enhance the Governance Structure of the Student Associa...
- ☰ Senate CA #3 To Reform the Blanket Tax Process
- ☰ Senate CA #4 To Improve Election Regulations
- ☰ Senate CA #5 Adjusting the Blanket Tax to Account for Inflation
- **Jae:** "There are a lot of noncontroversial acts" and uh cool we also have a by-law amendment to establish the academic commission. say a few words
- **Crystal:** Hello? Yeah, basically we want to add back the academic commission. We used to have one, I can't remember if it was last year or before, but we ended up getting rid of it. Due to several reasons, including one, that the university standing committees, they don't even have an academic committee anymore due to admin stuff. So yeah, a lot of students have a lot of input on the undergraduate curriculum, grading policies, professors and stuff like that. So we want to create this



commission again to give them the opportunity to advocate for students on that stuff.

- **Jae:** Amazing, and if we have any, we'll have time to talk about this again next weekend or week after. This is three prior notice. And the last thing we have is, I don't think any of the questions is, uh, Trevor and Zach touched on this, but we have another constitutional amendment to adjust the blanket tax to accommodate for inflation. So we had many presentations on this last Senate, last Senate or this Senate before, but basically raising the blanket tax from \$85 for undergraduate students to \$90 for undergraduate students. I think that the title is a bit misleading because to combat inflation, we have to raise it to, well, like \$100, \$115, \$120. We'll only raise it a little bit, but that still gives us \$22,000 more dollars to distribute to all current blanket tax organizations, all potential future blanket tax organizations, and also to student organizations of which we have \$365, maybe more now through the initiatives fund. So, yeah, any questions on this? I know Thomas has put in a lot of work
- **Yuv:** what work have you done so far
- **Thomas:** Yeah, so we've surveyed students as well as clubs and Blanket Tax organizations. So with students, we got more than, like, 100 responses so far. And, yeah, there are both, like, opinions and support and I guess overall, like, I feel like the five-star system there right now is at, like, 3.6 stars. And with the Blanket Tax organizations, yeah, we're setting up a survey to them and we also have discussions with them and, like, they did, like, express, like, kind of, like, their current situation, how they've been more strapped than they used to be, their events have certain expectations and, like, it's, like, a lot harder to meet them now where it's just, like, yeah, finance is tougher. So, yeah.
- **Jae:** Yeah, and in the main piece of the talk, we've often more, like, we should, like, try to work with the current budget before, like, before increasing it. We've seen, like, this year, last year, past year, like, we're always, like, we always have Blanket Tax organizations, like, much less



than they asked for and we never have enough initiatives to fund events that we think would benefit the student body. So we're, like, kind of building the case that, yes, we are spending this, like, responsibly, we cut, like, KTRU one-page campaign, laser, remote budget, and then we also removed the Blanket Tax orgs since they've had ineffective leadership for quite some time now. So we are, like, doing all we can to work with the budget on behalf of both the increased student body and also massive inflation, like, a \$5 increase in our big ask. And one thing that I forgot to mention is, next Senate, so next Monday, we'll have a semi-record online, prepared by Thomas myself and a couple of NSRs. The case for raising the Blanket Tax, I guess, we'll have, like, testimonies from Blanket Tax orgs, like, audits from previous year, it's, like, the need, the benefit, all of that. And is any student going to read it? No, but we're, like, trying to show that we've done the research, like, yeah, this is, like, a well-thought-out, well-contained, recent Blanket Tax. So we'll have, like, a report ready for you all by next Senate, so we can go to that clinic together next Senate as well. But we're just proposing this now because, like, two weeks prior on this, all of that.

- **Yuv:** I think we appreciate data

VIII. Adjournment

Jae: Yea so please leave suggestions and see y'all next week