



STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CONSTITUTION

Approved by Senate: January 2017 | Ratified by Student Body: February 2017

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PREAMBLE

We, the students of Valdosta State University (VSU), in order to form a democratic, efficient, and responsible student government; to represent, lead, and unify the student body, to decide and act responsibly for the students' interest, and to work with the Faculty, Staff, and Administration of the university in the pursuit of our mutual interest, do hereby establish the Student Government Association of VSU and adopt this Constitution.

The Student Government Association applies only to the internal governance of the SGA. If any part of the SGA Constitution conflicts with Board of Regents (BOR), University Systems of Georgia (USG) and or VSU policies and procedures; then BOR, USG, and VSU policies and procedures will be adhered to.

ARTICLE I: THE ORGANIZATION

Section 1: Name

- A. The name of this organization shall be the Student Government Association, hereinafter referred to as the “SGA,” of Valdosta State University, hereinafter referred to as “VSU.”

Section 2: Membership

- A. All students, by virtue of their enrollment at VSU, hereinafter referred to as “the student body,” shall be subject to this Constitution, the SGA By-Laws, the Student Body Statutes, and the University Code of Conduct as it appears in the VSU Student Handbook.
 - 1. The right to vote in any student body election or referendum shall not be denied to any currently enrolled VSU student.
 - 2. All students shall be subject to the rules and regulations of the university, but these rules shall at no time and in no way abridge the students’ rights as defined under the Constitution of the United States of America or of the state of Georgia.
- B. Non-Discrimination & Diversity Policy
Membership and all privileges, including voting and officer positions, shall be extended to all students without regard to age, ethnicity, gender, disability, color, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, or sex and gender identity.

Section 3: Purpose

- A. The primary purpose of the SGA shall be to represent and voice the concerns of all students of VSU in all university matters, while creating legislation and developing programs and activities of practical value to the student body.

Section 4: Branches of Government

- A. The SGA shall be divided into two branches: the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch.
- B. No power or authority belonging to one branch shall be applied to the other unless otherwise stated in this Constitution.

ARTICLE II: LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Senate.

Section 1: Apportionment

- A. The Senate shall be divided into four Chambers: the Chamber for Campus Affairs, the Chamber for Academic Affairs, the Chamber of Finance, and the Chamber of Civic Service and Public Relations.
 - 1. The Chamber of Campus Affairs shall consist of no more than fifteen seats.
 - 2. The Chamber of Academic Affairs shall consist of no more than twenty seats.
 - 3. The Chamber of Finance shall consist of no more than five seats
 - 4. The Chamber of Civic Service and Public Relations shall consist of no more than five seats.
- B. All members of the Senate must be qualified under the Elections Code of the SGA By-Laws.

Section 2: Powers and Responsibilities of the Legislative Branch

- A. The Senate shall formulate such policies, regulations, and recommendations that shall relate to the student body. The specific powers and responsibilities of the Senate are as follows:
1. The Senate shall have the power to make recommendations on issues relevant to the general welfare of the student body including, but not limited to, student conduct regulations and academic affairs.
 2. The Senate shall have the power to make statutes governing the operations of the SGA.
 3. Senators shall document and show proof of five (5) hours of SGA related work for every four (4) weeks throughout the Fall and Spring semesters.
 - a. These hours will not include mandatory meetings of the Senate and Chambers.
 - b. SGA related work shall include but is not limited to: writing legislation, communicating with the student body on behalf of SGA, and community service.
 - c. These hours will be provided to the Vice President at the first meetings in October, November, December, February, March, and April.
- B. Voting
1. The Senate member must be present in order to vote on any item or issue; there shall be no voting by proxy.
 2. A quorum of the Senate shall be considered two-thirds of all members of the Senate on roll and must be present in order to conduct official business (a first reading of proposed legislation is allowed in the absence of quorum, however no voting may take place).
 3. The Senate shall have the power to override an SGA Presidential veto on any statute or recommendation by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire voting membership of the Senate.
- C. Appointment
1. The Senate shall approve all of the SGA President's appointees by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate that is present.
- D. Impeachment
1. The Senate may, by a majority (50% +1) vote of the entire voting membership of the Senate, bring charges of impeachment against any SGA Executive Officer or Senator.
 2. A three-fourths (3/4) vote of the entire voting membership of the Senate is required to remove any SGA Executive Officer or Senator after a recommendation of impeachment has been approved by the Senate.

The Senate has no power of impeachment against Executive Cabinet members. It is the sole power of the President of the SGA to remove his/her executive cabinet appointees after confirmation from the Senate

Section 3: Terms and Qualification of the Senate

- A. Members of the Senate may not: be a member of the SGA Judicial Council, the manager or managing editor of any campus communication funded by student activity fees, or hold any executive position in the SGA unless otherwise stated in this Constitution.
- B. Every Senator shall be required to take the oath of office as administered by the University President or the Vice President of Student Affairs.
- C. A Senator's term of office shall run from the date of their swearing in or confirmation to April 30th, as prescribed by the Elections Code of the SGA By-laws.

Section 4: Senate Vacancies

- A. Any vacant seat in the Senate to be filled shall be announced by the presiding officer of the Senate within one week of its occurrence.
- B. Any Senator may suggest nominations from the floor to fill any Senate vacancy. During discussion of a nominee, any Senator may make a motion to table the matter for one week before a confirmation vote is made. The Senator must provide a valid reason for the motion. Such a motion shall then take precedence over a motion to vote to confirm the nominee, and a vote to table the matter will take place immediately.
- C. All nominees to fill vacant seats must meet all requirements to hold office as prescribed in the Elections Code of SGA By-Laws.
- D. No person may be nominated or elected to the Senate if that person has served in the Senate or on the Executive Board within the semester of his/her nomination, unless otherwise approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate that is present.
- E. Persons wishing to be nominated, in order to fill a vacant seat within the Senate, must attend two consecutive meetings of the Senate before receiving a nomination.
- F. The Legislative Branch may fill any Senate seat left vacant after the annual fall and spring elections.
- G. The Executive Branch shall require an application process for senate seat vacancies.

Section 5: Officers of the Senate

- A. Officers of the Senate shall be: The Speaker of the Senate, the Parliamentarian, the Speaker of Campus Affairs, the Speaker of Academic Affairs, and the Speaker of Finance and Speaker of Civic Service and Public Relations. The Speaker of the Senate and Parliamentarian shall be nominated by any member of the senate and must be confirmed by an instant runoff ballot no later than the first meeting following the Spring elections. Speakers of the Senate shall be nominated by their respective Chambers and approved by their Chambers by a majority vote. These appointments must be made during the first Chamber meeting following the appointment of the Speaker of the Senate. These rules may not be suspended by the presiding officer nor by a Senate vote.
- B. The following duties and powers shall be vested in the office of the Speaker of the Senate
 1. Shall be a voting member of the Senate.
 2. Will perform all duties and responsibilities of the SGA Secretary in their absence.
 3. May be a member of any Senate Chamber
 4. Shall appoint members to Senate Chambers under circumstances outlined in the SGA By-Laws.
 5. Shall take up special task, projects, or incentives as deemed necessary in regards to both internal and external matters

6. Shall work in consort with the SGA President and Vice President to ensure that legislation approved by the Senate is considered by the Administration (and/or other authorities) and is enacted with expediency, when possible.
- C. The following duties and powers shall be vested in the office of the Parliamentarian:
1. Shall be a voting member of the Senate and will perform all the duties and responsibilities of the Speaker of the Senate in the event of their absence.
 2. May be a member of any Senate Chamber
 3. Shall be responsible for ensuring all members of the executive board and Senate adhere to the SGA Constitution, and SGA By-laws.
 4. Shall act as an advisor to the presiding officer on matters of parliamentary procedure.
 5. Shall assist the Speaker of the Senate in all necessary matters as determined by the Speaker.
- D. The following duties shall be vested in the office of the Speaker of Campus Affairs:
1. Shall perform all the duties of the Vice President in their absence.
 2. Shall be a member of the Chamber of Campus Affairs, and shall preside over meetings of their Chamber.
 3. Shall report on matters pertaining to the content of meetings of their Chamber during meetings of the entire Senate
 4. Shall be a voting member of the Senate, with all rights and privileges thereof during the regular session of the Senate.
- E. The following duties shall be vested in the office of the Speaker of Academic Affairs:
1. Shall be a member of the Chamber of Academic Affairs, and shall preside over meetings of their Chamber.
 2. Shall report on matters pertaining to the content of meetings of their Chamber during meetings of the entire Senate.
 3. Shall be a voting member of the Senate, with all rights and privileges thereof during the regular session of the Senate.
- F. The following duties and powers shall be vested in the office of the Speaker of Finance
1. Shall perform all the duties of the Comptroller in their absence.
 2. Shall be a member of the Chamber of Finance and shall preside over meetings of their Chamber.
 3. Shall report on matters pertaining to the content of meetings of their Chamber during meetings of the entire Senate.
 4. Shall be a voting member of the Senate, with all rights and privileges thereof during the regular session of the Senate.

- G. The following duties and powers shall be vested in the office of the Speaker of Civic Service and Public Relations
1. Shall be a member of the Chamber of Civic Service and Public Relations and shall preside over meetings of their Chamber.
 2. Shall report on matters pertaining to the content of meetings of their Chamber during meetings of the entire Senate.
 3. Shall be a voting member of the Senate, with all rights and privileges thereof during the regular session of the Senate.

Section 6: Meetings of the Senate

- A. The Senate shall assemble weekly throughout the year with the exception of the summer semester and any periods of time that VSU is closed (including but not limited to winter and spring breaks). The executive board shall attend these weekly meetings.
- B. These meetings of the SGA shall be open to all members of the University community.

Section 7: Chambers of the Senate

- A. The Chambers of the Senate and their duties shall be defined in the SGA By-Laws.

Section 8: Establishment of By-Laws

- A. The By-Laws of the SGA shall be established by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate that is present.

Section 9: SGA Code of Conduct

- A. A code of conduct may be established by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate that is present. Such a code of conduct shall only be in effect for one year following its approval, and must be reapproved or amended at the time of its expiration.
- B. Changes to the code of conduct are subject to approval by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate that is present.
- C. The code of conduct shall be maintained by the Vice President, Speaker of the Senate, and Parliamentarian of the SGA.

ARTICLE III: EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Section 1: Composition

- A. The Executive Branch of the SGA shall consist of the offices of President, Vice President, Comptroller, and Secretary.
- B. The purpose of the Executive Branch shall be to supervise, maintain, and advise on policies, regulations, and recommendations that are formulated by the Legislative Branch in the interest, convenience, and necessity of the student body.
- C. The Executive Branch will initiate and maintain projects of interest for the students, which have been approved through the proper channels and shall recommend to the Legislative Branch any legislation deemed necessary.

Section 2: Terms and Qualifications of the Executive Board

The President, Vice President, Secretary, and Comptroller:

- A. Shall be an enrolled student in good standing at the university at the time of election and maintain that standing throughout their term of office.
- B. Shall hold office from the date of their swearing in until April 30 of the following calendar year, and be elected by the voting student body as prescribed in the Election Code the SGA By-Laws.

- C. Shall not be a member of the Student Judicial Council, the Campus Activities Board, or the manager or managing editor of any campus communications funded by student activity fees.
- D. Shall not hold a position in the Legislative Branch during their term of office.
- E. Shall be required to take the oath of office as administered by the University President or the Vice President of Student Affairs.

The President and Vice President must be a member of SGA before being elected OR must attend (8) meetings of the Senate of each of the two semesters immediately preceding their terms (16 meetings in total).

Section 3: Duties of the SGA President

- A. Shall serve as the liaison between students, faculty, staff, administration, and the community.
- B. Shall execute, supervise, and maintain all such policies, regulations, and recommendations as formulated by the Legislative Branch.
- C. Shall represent the students of VSU at official university functions.
- D. Shall appoint members to committees and councils of the university as requested by the Faculty, Staff and Administration.
- E. Shall have the power to call a special session of the Senate, shall be an ex officio member of all boards and committees of the SGA excluding those of the Legislative Branch, and shall see that all actions taken by the Senate are executed.
- F. Shall call a joint meeting of all divisions of the SGA once each Fall and Spring semester, at which time the President shall report on the State of the Association.
- G. Shall serve as the University delegate to the Student Advisory Council of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and shall have the authority to appoint Student Advisory Council delegate(s).
- H. May be appointed to any standing university committee or board other than those of the SGA, or may appoint a representative to serve in such capacity.
- I. May remove from office any Presidential appointee to the Executive Cabinet.
- J. May veto within one week of passage, any recommendation or statute of the Senate, but may be over-ridden by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire voting membership of the Senate.
 - 1. The power of vetoing any measure by the SGA Senate before its passage and before its acceptance by the student body, in part or as a whole, is solely vested in the Office of the SGA President.
 - 2. Any bill passed by the Senate must be approved by the President within ten (10) days of its passage.
 - 3. All bills that are approved by the Senate and sanctioned by the President will be signed with the President's signature to signify acceptance of the bill.
 - 4. Any bill not approved by the President within the allotted ten (10) day period shall be null and void.

Section 4: Duties of the Vice President

- A. Shall assist in managing operations of the Chamber of Campus Affairs and the Chamber of Academic Affairs
- B. Shall attend meetings of the Chamber of Campus Affairs and the Chamber of Academic Affairs and assume the duties of absent Speakers at these meetings.
- C. Shall preside over meetings of the entire Senate.
- D. Shall hold regularly scheduled meetings with the student-held seats on the university committees and boards and regularly report such meetings to the Senate.
- E. Shall assist in the coordination of meetings between senators and academic departments
- F. Shall communicate information and concerns of the President to the Senate outside of Senate meetings
- G. Shall serve in any capacity that will assist the SGA President in the execution of actions taken by the SGA.
- H. Shall assume the duties and responsibilities of the President in the event that the President of the SGA is vacated for any reason.
- I. Shall assume any duties that may be delegated by the President.
- J. Shall ensure that academic verifications of grade point averages of all of the members of SGA are conducted at the beginning of each semester to ensure all individuals are qualified.
- K. Shall ensure that all constitutionally mandated Senator work hours are documented and fulfilled.
- L. Shall meet with Officers of the Senate at the beginning of each semester to discuss the Vice President's and Senate Officers' goals for the semester.

Section 5: Duties of the SGA Secretary

- A. Shall be the recorder of the Senate, unless deemed otherwise by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate that is present, and will assume any other duties delegated by the presiding officer of the Senate.
- B. Shall attend meetings of the Chamber of Civic Service and Public Relations and assume the duties of an absent Speaker at these meetings.
- C. Shall maintain attendance records of Senate members and guests to meetings, and inform SGA members of their official attendance related expulsion from the SGA .
- D. Shall organize all business to be conducted on the Senate meeting agendas and disseminate in a timely fashion.
- E. Shall disseminate Senate meeting minutes to all members of the Senate as well as the student body through the designated communication channels in a timely fashion.
- F. Shall be responsible for dispatching all legislation requiring executive action to the President of the SGA.
- G. Shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining all records and files that pertain to the SGA.
- H. Shall coordinate supply orders and event reservations on behalf of the SGA.
- I. Shall assume any duties that may be delegated by the President and Vice President.

Section 6: Duties of the SGA Comptroller

- A. Shall attend meetings of the Chamber of Finance and assume the duties of an absent Speaker at these meetings.
- B. Shall supervise the proper expenditure of all monies of the SGA and shall give a monthly report on these expenditures by email to the Senate, and SGA secretary to be published on the SGA university website
- C. Shall maintain records of all business transactions which involve funds of the SGA.
- D. Shall have the responsibility of informing the members of the SGA of all actions taken by the university that involve the use of funds derived from the members of the SGA.
- E. Shall be responsible for the preparation of the budget for the SGA funds.
- F. Shall coordinate Chamber meetings with students and organizations wishing to gain funds from the SGA.
- G. Shall monitor the business conducted by the Planning and Budget Council of the University.
- H. Shall assume any other duties delegated by the President and Vice President.

Section 7: Executive Board Vacancies

- A. In a case where all Executive Board positions become vacant:
 1. If the President of the SGA is vacated, the Vice President prescribed in the SGA Constitution and By-laws shall assume the duties of the President and be sworn in by the Vice President of Student Affairs during the next immediate Senate meeting. The office of the Vice President shall then be considered vacant.
 2. If the Vice President is vacated, the Speaker of Campus Affairs, as prescribed in the SGA Constitution and By-laws, must relinquish his/her position as Senator in order to assume the office of SGA Vice President.
 3. If the Speaker of Campus Affairs cannot assume the Vice Presidency, the Speaker of Academic Affairs must relinquish his/her position as Senator in order to assume the office of SGA Vice President.
 4. If the Secretary of the SGA is vacated, the Speaker of the Senate, as prescribed in the SGA By-Laws, shall assume the duties of the SGA Secretary and must relinquish his/her position as Senator in order to assume the office of SGA Secretary.
 5. If the Comptroller of the SGA is vacated, the Speaker of Finance, as prescribed in the SGA By-Laws, shall assume the duties of the Comptroller of the SGA and must relinquish his/her position as Senator to assume the Office of SGA Comptroller.
 6. Those appointed to fill a vacant seat on the Executive Board shall be approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire voting membership of the Senate. In the event an appointee is not approved, a special election must be held to fill any vacancies as prescribed in the SGA By-Laws.

ARTICLE IV: FINANCES

- A. The right of the SGA to control its financial resources and any disbursement is a right of the organization. It is the life of the SGA, and rightfully belongs to the students in a representative and democratic government. No one shall have the authority to delegate away this right.

- B. Federal Law, the state of Georgia and its agencies, and the BOR of the state of Georgia shall have the only recognized authority to restrain this right.
- C. All financial actions taken by the SGA must follow the appropriate policies and procedures established by VSU, USG, and the Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS).

ARTICLE V: IMPEACHMENT, CENSURE, and REMOVAL

Section 1: Power of Impeachment

- A. The Senate shall have the sole power to hear all actions of impeachment against any official of the SGA. Any branch of the SGA may institute impeachment proceedings against any of its members.
- B. Impeachment proceedings must be submitted to the Senate, which has the sole power of impeachment.
- C. When sitting for the purpose of impeachment, the Senate as a whole shall be under oath.
- D. No member shall be impeached without a majority (50%+1) concurrence of the entire voting membership of the Senate.
- E. Judgment in the cases of impeachment shall extend to removal from office and disqualification to hold any office in the SGA until the next regular election.
- F. No SGA members that are not members of the Senate may begin, suggest, or in any way imply the necessity of impeachment of any member of SGA, as only Senators have the power to initiate impeachment proceedings.

Section 2: Rights of Impeachment

- A. Any person impeached by the Senate may appeal to the Student Judicial Council.
- B. If the Student Judicial Council is unable to reach a decision, for whatever reason, the verdict of the Senate shall stand.
- C. The decision of the Student Judicial Council is the final word on impeachment.

ARTICLE VI: DUE COMPENSATION

- A. The members of the Executive Branch of the SGA shall receive due compensation for their services, which shall not increase or decrease during their term of office as recommended by the Student Activity Fee Allocation Committee.

ARTICLE VII: LEGISLATION

Section 1: Resolutions

- A. Shall be drafted to express an official position of the Senate on behalf of the student body.
- B. Shall be submitted to the Speaker of the Senate for semantic revision before appearing before the Senate.
- C. Shall require one reading at a Senate meeting. The Presiding Officer shall entertain debate and amendment, and the Senate will vote on the proposed resolution.
- D. Shall require a majority vote (50%+1) of the Senate present at time of presentation.

Section 2: Bills

- A. Shall be drafted to alter any code or other governing document other than the Constitution.
- B. Shall be submitted to the Parliamentarian for semantic revision before appearing before the Senate.
- C. Shall require one reading at a Senate meeting. Upon the first reading, the Presiding Officer shall entertain debate and amendment, and the Senate will vote on the proposed bill.
- D. Shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate present at the time of presentation.

Section 3: Amendments

- A. Shall be drafted to make deletions or insertions to the Constitution.
- B. Shall be submitted to the Parliamentarian for semantic revision before appearing in front of the Senate.
- C. Shall require a first and second reading at a Senate meeting. Upon first reading, the Presiding Officer shall not entertain debate. At least one week shall transpire between the first and second reading. Upon second reading, the Presiding Officer shall entertain debate and amendment, and the Senate will vote on the proposed amendment.
- D. Shall require a two-thirds vote of the Senate.
- E. Shall require a majority approval of the student body through a referendum.
- F. Shall be approved by the Vice President of Student Affairs/Dean of Students for review and commentary or shall take effect one week after being delivered to the Vice President of Student Affairs/Dean of Students.

ARTICLE VIII: CONSTITUTIONAL RATIFICATION

Section 1: Constitutional Amendment

Amendments or revisions to this Constitution shall require approval by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire voting membership of the Senate, and approval by a majority vote by the student body via referendum. Following any amendment, all online documentation of SGA's Constitution shall immediately be updated, and all members of SGA shall receive an updated copy of the Constitution.

Section 2: Constitutional Approval

This Constitution shall take effect when approved by the voting majority of the student body via referendum.

- 1. In the event the SGA Constitution is amended or ratified during the fall or spring semesters, the SGA shall be given three (3) consecutive Senate meetings following ratification to make any necessary changes to the Association. Any vacant positions resulting from ratification of this constitution do not require an election to fill; vacancies shall be filled by existing members of SGA.

Section 3: Constitutional Supremacy

Upon ratification, this Constitution and its associated documents shall supersede all previous governing documents, which shall be deemed null and void.