

# **Student Government Association**

## **Senate Standing Rules**

Revised: September 7, 2023

### **Rule I**

#### **Supplemental Qualifications, Expectations, and Procedures**

##### **Section 1: Supplemental Qualifications for Senators**

- A. In addition to those minimum qualifications stated in Article II, Section 3 of the CONSTITUTION of the Student Government Association (SGA), all applicants to SGA must:
  - 1. Present a Slip of Good Standing from the Registrar's Office;
  - 2. Submit a typed, one-page (1) personal statement.
- B. When applying to fill a vacancy on the Senate between regularly scheduled elections prospective members of SGA are required to:
  - 1. Follow the instructions for the qualification of Senators as laid out in Article II of the SGA CONSTITUTION and Rule I, Section 1.A of these rules;
  - 2. Participate in an interview process with the majority of the SGA Executive Board.
- C. In the event that there are over ten (10) vacancies left after an election period, prospective members may be allowed to submit an application to fill the vacancies and then be confirmed by a two-thirds (2/3) Senate vote.

##### **Section 2: Probationary Period**

- A. Any prospective member of the Senate that seeks to fill a vacant position between regularly scheduled elections must participate in a probationary period not to exceed three (3) weeks in length.
- B. The probationary period for prospective members shall consist of the following:
  - 1. Attendance at two (2) General Senate meetings.
  - 2. Learning and understanding the various committees of SGA.
- C. The prospective member should meet with the Vice President of Senate Affairs to discuss which committee(s) the prospective member is interested in and be able to discuss why he or she is interested in the committee.
- D. Prospective member's contact information must be submitted to the Vice President of Senate Affairs before beginning the probationary period.
  - 1. Contact information for the prospective member shall be disseminated to the committee chairs to which the person is assigned.
- E. Prospective members shall not receive, nor be assigned, any materials purchased by SGA for the express use of the members and officers of the Senate unless they are confirmed as members of the Senate.
- F. This section does not apply to those officers and Senators who are elected during a regularly scheduled general election.

##### **Section 3: Expectations of Senators**

- A. Senators are expected to:
  - 1. Promptly and regularly attend Senate meetings;

2. Act in a professional manner consistent with any position of responsibility;
3. Adhere to the rules and regulations of the SGA Constitution, Senate Standing Rules, Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, Election Code, and Judicial By-Laws;
4. Act as a liaison between the students, administration, faculty, and staff;
5. Address issues that are important in the improvement of campus life and student experience;
6. Dress in accordance with Rule II, Section 3;
7. Maintain decorum in accordance with Rule I, Section 5;
8. Perform Office Hours in accordance with Rule I, Section 4.

#### Section 4: Office Hours

- A. All Senators shall be required to perform two office hours per week throughout the course of their term in office during the Fall and Spring semesters, excluding the first week, and the last two weeks of these semesters.
- B. Office hours shall be considered valid while performing duties relating to committee assignments, official SGA events, and within the parameters of specific areas of authority. General Senate meetings shall not be considered as part of a Senator's valid office hours.
- C. Senators missing 4 office hours within a period of 2 weeks without reasonable cause (family death, illness, leave of absence, or other accepted reasons) are subject to a bill of impeachment.

#### Section 5: Decorum

- A. Decorum shall be defined as the respectful and mindful manner by which one conducts themselves with others to reflect in the best light upon themselves, their office, and the organization of which they are a member.
- B. SGA members, with the realization of their holding public office, must agree to respect the rights and opinions of others despite their personal feelings or objections and shall not behave in a manner that reflects negatively on the Student Government Association or Texas A&M University-Commerce. Such behavior may not constitute neglect of duties or a breach of the SGA Constitution, Standing Rules, or other organizational by-laws for action to still be taken to correct the individual's behavior or protect the organization from further incidents.
- C. SGA members take upon themselves the realization that with any public office must come a reduced expectation of privacy and shall therefore conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the situations they may find themselves.

#### Section 6: Statement on Membership

- A. Senate is a serious organization designed to meet the needs and protect the rights of Texas A&M University-Commerce students. This responsibility is not to be taken lightly, nor is it to be ignored during a Senator's tenure in office. The oath of office, as laid out in Article VII, Section 2.A of the SGA CONSTITUTION, should be held in the highest regard by any member of the Senate.
- B. These qualifications are not only for acceptance into the Senate, but must be maintained throughout a Senator's tenure in the Senate. Senators are expected

to demonstrate honesty, integrity, and good character as they are qualities sought by the Senate. Additionally, proven leadership abilities, or at least the desire to make a substantial contribution for the benefit of the students; university; and campus life, are needed in order for the Senate to fulfill its role as an organization.

Section 7: Election of Officers of the Senate

- A. All Officers of the Senate, as delineated in Article II, Section 9 of the SGA CONSTITUTION, shall be elected by a plurality vote of the Senate.
- B. In the event that there are over ten (10) vacancies left after an election period, prospective members may be allowed to submit an application to fill the vacancies and then be confirmed by a two-thirds (2/3) Senate vote.

Section 8: Provision of Nominee Information

- A. When a prospective member, applying to fill a vacancy within the Senate, is deemed fit to fill such a position by the Executive Board and is then nominated by the SGA President, sitting Senators shall be provided with that prospective member's personal statement on goals before the nomination shall be approved by the Senate.

**Rule II**  
**Meetings of the Senate**

Section 1: Open Meetings Clause

- A. All meetings of the Senate shall be open and public to guests, except when considering confirmation, impeachment, or reprimands.
- B. If proceedings of impeachment or reprimand for a member of Senate are underway, the member in question shall excuse themselves before deliberations begin. They shall be afforded five (5) minutes to defend themselves before the Senate hearing and will be subject to questions from the Senate before they are to excuse themselves from the room.
- C. During the confirmation hearing for nominations to fill vacancies in the Senate, Executive Board, Officers of the Senate, Election Board, or Supreme Court the nominee(s) considered shall excuse themselves from the room.

Section 2: Conflict of Interest

- A. The rights of Senators shall not be abridged, except in such cases as defined in Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, the CONSTITUTION, or these rules.
- B. Senators are advised to take into consideration their proximity to a situation, issue, or organization that is requesting assistance from SGA. As Senators are also students, many issues before Senate may affect them, though they are required to remain impartial in their decision-making.

### Section 3: General Meeting Attire

- A. The dress for general Senate meetings shall be business casual.
- B. Senators may choose to wear their provided polo with jeans.

### Section 4: Absences

- A. Being that attendance and participation are integral in the successful operation of Senate, excessive unexcused absences will not be tolerated. Therefore, any Senator or Senator-elect who has four (4) or more unexcused absences from a general meeting of the Senate will be subject to review by the Internal Affairs Committee. Once the situation is reviewed, the Internal affairs committee will determine and issue the necessary sanction (which may include a bill of impeachment), or if determined necessary, organize a judicial board hearing and recommend a sentencing which may include impeachment. Any Bill of Impeachment shall follow the guidelines as set out in Article VI of the SGA CONSTITUTION.
- B. Because the successful operation of Senate requires active participation in committee and the prompt attendance of Senators at meetings the following standards are hereby established for committee meeting absences and tardies to general meetings:
  - 1. For every two (2) unexcused committee absences recorded, one (1) unexcused absence from a general meeting of the Senate will be recorded;
  - 2. For every three (3) unexcused tardies recorded, one (1) unexcused absence from a general meeting of the Senate will be recorded.
- C. Excused absences shall be defined as follows:
  - 1. Participation in authorized University activities, like class, recognized by the Advisor;
  - 2. Confinement due to illness with a medical excuse;
  - 3. Death in the student's immediate family as recognized by the Advisor;
  - 4. Obligation of a student at legal proceedings.
  - 5. Any extenuating circumstance, per the advisor's and Internal Affairs discretion.

### Section 5: Quorum

- A. During the Fall and Spring semesters of the academic year the requirements for quorum will be delineated in Article II, Section 6 of the SGA CONSTITUTION.
- B. Meetings over the Winter and Summer may only be conducted with forty-eight (48) hours prior notice to Senators and quorum shall be defined as two-fifths (2/5) of voting members.

## **Rule III**

### **SGA Committee and Office Operating Procedures**

### Section 1: Committee Chair Descriptions

- A. The chair of a committee is responsible for leading members of their individual committee in the achievement of their goals and responsibilities. They are also responsible for overseeing their committee, its meetings, and delegating tasks to

other committee members. Chairs are also responsible for ensuring the completion of assigned tasks regardless of whether the chair has delegated it to another member. The committee chair shall be the spokesperson of the committee and directly report back to the Vice President of Senate Affairs or the Executive Board in the event that the Vice President of Senate Affairs is unavailable, or the position is otherwise vacant.

## Section 2: Committee Descriptions

### A. Campus Life:

The purpose of this committee is to ensure quality service throughout three major areas related to student life: Residential Living and Learning, the university food service provider, university food pantry. This committee will work directly with Residential Living and Learning to make sure student concerns regarding housing are being addressed by the University. The committee will also work closely with the food service provider contracted by the university to ensure superior and quality food service, while addressing student concerns and needs. In addition, the committee will work closely with the campus food pantry to ensure student needs are being met. Furthermore, the committee will work to ensure that all students have equal opportunity and access to TAMUC resources. Other duties associated with this committee will be to identify and breakdown barriers to help guide in subsequent efforts and communicate all findings throughout the Senate to build knowledge.

### B. Campus Safety and Wellness:

The purpose of this committee is to alleviate any and all concerns involving the safety and well-being of students at the University. This committee will work closely with the University Police Department as well as the Executive Board to handle safety and emergency management issues. This committee is also responsible for setting up and running traffic appeals, as well as researching and reporting back findings on the issues pertinent to this campus. Furthermore, the committee will work with the Morris Recreation Center, the Counseling Center, and Student Health Services to address student concerns and promote physical and mental health awareness across the university.

### C. Academic Affairs:

The purpose of this committee is to review emerging academic issues and to strengthen the Senate's commitment to ensuring equal educational opportunity for every student. This committee shall research issues and report to Senate appropriate measures to communicate to the faculty, staff, and administration of the University that will address specific issues with the academic well-being and integrity of the University.

### D. Internal Affairs:

The purpose of this committee is to promote and develop unity among senators. This committee shall develop meaningful events and trainings for the Senate, as well as reward the outstanding efforts performed by Senators in the fulfillment of their duties. They will be responsible for reviewing the governing documents of SGA on a yearly basis and proposing any amendments to said documents.

Additionally, they will be in charge of enforcing Senate documents and taking disciplinary action when required

F. External Affairs:

The purpose of this committee is to promote engagement throughout both the campus and the community through collaborative programs, diversified and inclusive events, and facilitated service projects. The committee will work closely with the Public Relations committee to assist them with advertising events. In addition to the above duties External Affairs Committee shall also provide meaningful activities that invest the student body with the Senate.

Section 3: Ad Hoc Committees

- A. Ad hoc committees may be formed by the President through a suggestion by Senate member, or Advisor. The purposes of the ad hoc committees are to give certain issues closer attention and solve an issue. Membership on an ad hoc committee may be students at-large appointed by the President and overseen by the Vice President of Senate Affairs. Ad hoc committees established as a non-standing committee do not cease after a Presidential term, but rather an issue is resolved or the committee is seen as unnecessary.

Section 3: Materials Purchased by SGA

- A. All materials purchased for the SGA office are for the exclusive use of Senators, Officers, the Office Assistant, Election Board, Supreme Court, and Committees.  
B. Materials are only to be used for official SGA business.

Section 4: SGA Office Assistant

- A. The SGA Office Assistant shall undertake the following duties:
1. Order and Replenish Office Supplies;
  2. Regularly check the official SGA email and direct any and all issues to the appropriate Senator or Officer;
  3. Carry out reasonable, minor requests of SGA Officers, Officers of the Senate, and Committee Chairs.
- B. Note that the SGA Office Assistant serves as the face and representative of SGA during their office hours. The existence of the Office Assistant is not a replacement by which members of the Senate may assign their personal duties and obligations as individual senators, committees, or officers. The Office Assistant is only a part-time, student worker position and as such should not be over-burdened.

Section 5: Office Care

- A. The SGA office should remain free and clear of clutter, mess, and personal belongings.  
B. Committees, Senators, and Officers should make the effort to clean up after their use of the office.

**Rule IV**  
**Process and Classification of Legislation**

## Section 1: Origin of Legislation

- A. Only Senators may introduce a piece of legislation for consideration.
- B. Legislation may be suggested by:
  - 1. Any Executive Officer;
  - 2. Any established committee of SGA;
  - 3. Any student of Texas A&M University-Commerce;
  - 4. Any member the Texas A&M University-Commerce administration, faculty, or staff.

## Section 2: Major and Minor Legislation

- A. Major Legislation shall be defined as the following:
  - 1. Amendments to the SGA Constitution;
  - 2. Amendments to the Standing Rules, Judicial By-Laws, or Election Code that have not been reviewed and approved by the SGA Internal Affairs Committee;
  - 3. Referenda referred to SGA by the University Administration or Faculty Senate;
  - 4. Yearly SGA budget appropriations.
- B. Minor Legislation shall be defined as the following:
  - 1. Appropriations Bills allocating money for projects, charity, or organizational assistance;
  - 2. Amendments to the Standing Rules, Judicial By-Laws, or Election Code that have received review and approval from the SGA Internal Affairs Committee;
  - 3. Bills or Resolutions that order any Executive Officer, Officer of the Senate, Committee, or Senator to execute some definite obligation with regards to the areas under their authority;
  - 4. Resolutions that state fundamental and continuing policy or which state a theory of Senate, or express the Senate's feeling toward an issue;
  - 5. Nomination of individuals to office.
- C. Resolutions do not require approval of any executive officer and shall be considered binding on all issues within the purview of the authority of the Student Government Association. All resolutions passed for issues outside the authority of SGA shall be considered and clearly marked as non-binding.
- D. Senate shall have at least a one (1) week prior notice of Major Legislation, which shall consist of the distribution of one-copy of the proposed legislation to each senator and executive officer so that Senate may have adequate time to review said legislation for discussion.
- E. The Senate does not require prior notice for Minor Legislation, but such notice is suggested for the Executive Officers and Senate as a mark of respect and good form. Note the importance and/or possible controversial nature of the legislation as a guide to your use of discretion when determining if notice should be given.
- F. Notification of the Senate Chair is required for new legislation to be introduced with at least twenty-four (24) hours prior notice before a scheduled meeting. Any legislation that a Senator fails to notify the Senate Chair of with respect to the time frame provided, shall be introduced only with the consent of the Chair, or two-

thirds (2/3) consent of the Senate.

### Section 3: Legislative Process

- A. When legislation is introduced, and a copy is not distributed in advance to give prior notice, a copy of the legislation must be provided to every senator and executive officer at the meeting it is introduced.
- B. The author of legislation, or a designee of his choosing, may introduce the legislation through the first reading.
- C. Senate shall engage in debate and introduce amendments if needed.
- D. If amended, at the conclusion of debate the Senate Chair shall read the legislation as amended and the Senate should proceed directly to voting procedures. If the legislation is not amended, at the conclusion of debate the Senate Chair shall entertain the motion to move to directly to voting procedures.
- E. During voting procedures any further commentary, or amendments to the legislation are out of order and shall not be allowed.
- F. If the legislation receives a plurality of votes it shall be considered passed, except in cases of amendment to the Constitution, Standing Rules, Judicial By-Laws, Election Code, and nomination to or impeachment from office. During these instances two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate must vote in favor for the legislation to pass. Please note, this section is not binding upon any designated floor motions as provided by parliamentary procedure in Robert's Rules of Order, Revised.
- G. Legislation may only be considered during the session in which it was introduced. A session of Senate shall be defined to encompass one (1) year, beginning at the time the newly elected Senate takes office, following a regularly scheduled election.

### Section 4: Voting

- A. Voting may occur with any method mentioned within Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, during meetings of the Senate, or its committees.
- B. During confirmation hearings all voting shall be conducted via a show of hands or secret ballot.
- C. During proceedings of impeachment or reprimand all voting shall be conducted via secret ballot.

## **Rule V Debate and Privilege of the Floor**

### Section 1: Recognition

- A. To obtain the floor, a member must raise their hand to gain recognition from the



chair to speak, except in those cases defined within Robert's Rules of Order, Revised.

- B. The Senate Chair must recognize any Senator who alone is asking for recognition. In the event that more than one Senator is seeking the floor the Chair shall choose who to recognize from amongst those seeking recognition.
- C. When a member is recognized by the Chair, they shall address their remarks in a civil tone.
- D. At no time may more than one (1) person have the floor.
- E. No person shall speak more than five (5) minutes unless their time is extended by unanimous consent of the Senate.
- F. There shall be no limitation on the number of times a member may seek the floor, nor the amount of time for the debate, unless such a limitation is agreed upon before debate begins on a specific topic. A plurality of votes shall constitute an agreement on limitation of debate. If such a limitation is agreed upon, it may only be altered by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate.

#### Section 2: Relevancy and Restrictions

- A. The chair shall have the authority to rule dilatory any motion, except the Motion to Reconsider, which thereby stops the forward progress of that motion.
- B. Senators may appeal the ruling of the Senate Chair, including dilatory rulings, by making the Motion to Reconsider, which requires two-thirds (2/3) majority to overturn.
- C. When an amendment has been moved and seconded, no other primary amendment may be discussed until the amendment under consideration has been disposed of.

### **Rule VI Privileges of Senators and Guests**

#### Section 1: Rights of a Senator

- A. See Rule II, Section 2.A for further rights of Senators.
- B. The following are rights of Senators:
  - 1. Voting in general Senate meetings;
  - 2. To introduce and sponsor legislation;
  - 3. To make or second motions or nominations;
  - 4. To address meetings of the Senate or its committees.

#### Section 2: Rights of Guests

- A. In all meetings of the Senate or its committees, guests shall be afforded the following rights:
  - 1. To attend such meetings;
  - 2. To address such meeting during the time slot provided in the agenda.
- B. These rights shall not be abridged except in those cases provided in these rules or the SGA CONSTITUTION.
- C. Guests shall be defined as any person who is not a Senator, Executive Officer, or an Ex-Officio Member of the Senate.

- D. Any guest attending a meeting of the Senate or a meeting of its committees, or having been granted the privilege of addressing such a meeting, shall abide by, and be subject to all rules, customs, and regulations governing the conduct of the bodies mentioned.

Section 3: Advisor's Address

- A. The advisor and/or the Dean of Campus Life and Student Development shall make an address to the Senate by the third meeting of each Fall semester.
- B. This address shall consist of, but is not limited to:
  - 1. Decorum of Senators and Executive Officers;
  - 2. Duties and Responsibilities of the Senate.

**Rule VII  
Appropriations**

Section 1: Budget, Initial Budget Appropriations, and Re-appropriations

- A. The Treasurer shall present the net total of the SGA budget remaining at the first general meeting of Senate each month during Fall and Spring semesters.
- B. With the beginning of the Spring Semester, the Treasurer may submit for approval to the Senate a revised budget that re-appropriates the amounts designated to each committee, depending on need. Any special appropriations for events, projects, charity, or organizational funding assistance already approved by Senate during the Fall may not be defunded during the process of re-appropriations, but only through a separate legislative motion.

Section 2: Expenditures Beyond Those Budgeted

- A. Expenditures above and beyond the approved appropriations in the annual SGA budget must be authorized in the same manner as described under Rule IV of these rules.
- B. The Treasurer shall include a statement reflecting the net total of the budget as a result of the appropriation bill being considered upon request.

**Rule VIII  
Senate Archives**

Section 1: Archive of Senate Activity

- A. The Historian shall keep an official recorded archive in regards to the work of the Senate. Which shall consist of, but is not limited to:
  - 1. Hosted and Sponsored Events;
  - 2. Resolutions;
  - 3. Photographs;
  - 4. Agendas;
  - 5. Minutes;

6. Surveys or other pertinent documents.

Section 2: Senate Procedural Archives

- A. The Parliamentarian shall keep an official recorded archive that contains the most up to date version of the SGA Constitution, Standing Rules, Judicial By-Laws, and Election Code. Said officer shall also ensure that a copy of Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, be kept in the SGA office for review.

**Rule IX**  
**Special Cases and Suspension of the Rules**

Section 1: Special Cases

- A. In cases where the SGA Constitution, Standing Rules, or other by-laws make no declaration of procedure, refer to Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, for clarification.

Section 2: Suspension of the Rules

- A. The Standing Rules shall continue to be in force for each session unless suspended during a meeting.
- B. Any motion to suspend the rules shall only apply to the general meeting in which the motion was made.
- C. On a motion to suspend the rules, the object of the suspension must be specified, with a specific time limit set in meeting for the suspension.
- D. The Standing Rules may be suspended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate present.

**Rule X**  
**Amendments to the Standing Rules**

Section 1: Amendments

- A. The Senate Standing Rules may be amended by the Senate at any time by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate.
- B. Any amendments should follow proper procedures as laid out in these rules.

**Amendment I**  
*Adopted 2012-2013*

Section 1.B of Rule I Currently Reads:

“1. Attendance and participation at four (4) committee meetings;”

The amended text reads:

“1. Attendance and participation at two (2) committee meetings;”