

# **The Skidmore College Student Body Constitution**

## **Preamble**

*We, the Students of Skidmore College, commit ourselves to the promotion of student governance, responsible citizenship, and academic excellence. While we operate under the authority granted by the Board of Trustees, our power to act, by necessity, comes from the Student Body itself. We seek to empower ourselves and serve as members of this College Community.*

*We shall advance the rights and privileges of students, the people for whom this College exists, and inspire ourselves to form an inclusive, accountable, and sustainable government.*

*We embrace our position and our duty while acknowledging that we are members of a community with diverse interests. We shall work to further the educational mission of Skidmore College by dedicating ourselves to participation in shared College governance.*

*Considering these goals, we do hereby reform and reconstruct the Student Government Association of Skidmore College in accordance with the following articles.*

## **Article I: Mission and Standards**

### **Section 1.**

Our place is to assert our position and our rights while acknowledging that we are members of a community. Students have both privileges and obligations, and while this Constitution asserts certain rights of Students, we acknowledge that the larger community demands a commitment to a shared mission. This Constitution is not a document in which specific by-laws or procedures shall be found, but rather one of principles that must lead the Student Body and outline a structure of governance.

The rights listed by the *Student Handbook* which are here incorporated, in addition to rights listed independently of the *Student Handbook*, are the duty of the Student Government Association (SGA) to establish and defend:

1. As members of the Skidmore community, Students enjoy freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, the press, and religion, and the right to petition, limited only by protection of property, safety, and mutual respect.

2. Freedom of Association and Participation

A. Students have the right to participate in the formulation of College policy by serving as members of appropriate committees.

B. Membership in all SGA clubs and organizations, including those affiliated with outside organizations, must be open to students who meet the criteria set forth in the respective charters and the Club Policies and Procedures.

C. Students with voting rights are eligible to hold elected or willingness-to-serve SGA Officer positions, on the condition of their good academic and social standing and a minimum current GPA of 2.5. Students are expected to self-regulate and report their violations of membership requirements.

D. Students have the right to free and fair elections, or, when appropriate, a fair appointment and selection process to become SGA Officers.

E. SGA shall ensure that all students petitioning, bringing initiatives, or otherwise participating in the policy-making or judicial process be treated with fundamental standards of fairness and guaranteed equal protection of policy.

### 3. Freedom of Inquiry and Speech

A. Students, independently and collectively, are free to examine and discuss all questions of interest. Students are free to support all causes through peaceful means and to debate opinions both publicly and privately.

B. Skidmore students may invite and hear the views and ideas of any person as long as the safety of all parties is ensured and applicable laws are followed.

C. The institutional control of campus facilities, subject to the reasonable expectations that are consistent with the primacy of courses and classroom settings, cannot be used as a device of censorship of the viewpoints of students or the content of speech, with the understanding that principles of academic freedom and open debate do not exempt any student from legal restrictions.

4. Rights that are not specifically herein granted but are not prohibited by applicable College policy shall belong to the Student Body.

5. These standards shall be the guiding principles of all actions taken by SGA and its officers. It is the responsibility of SGA as an organization to enforce these principles.

## **Section 2: Membership**

### 1. Voting and Participation Rights

A. All matriculated students at Skidmore College are subject to this Constitution.

B. All Students who pay the Student Activity Fee are entitled to participate in SGA as voters in all elections conducted by SGA. All such Students who also meet academic and social standing requirements may be candidates for SGA office. Students must not be studying off-campus to hold an officer position.

### 2. Officer Definition

A. SGA Officers are defined as any student who is elected or appointed to a position on SGA by the Student Body, or by a representative entity of SGA that is elected by the Student Body, excluding clubs.

- i. No student may hold multiple seats on any single committee, including the Senate.

B. Club Officers are not SGA Officers, but an individual student may be both an SGA Officer and Club Officer.

- i. Clubs may define their own leadership and officers, subject to the approval of the Senate and appropriate committees. Club Officers are subject to this Constitution, as well as all applicable rules, bylaws, and procedures.

## **Article II: Legislative**

The legislative authority of the SGA shall be vested in one Senate. The Senate shall implement programs and policies to establish and maintain the conditions of community life conducive to academic excellence, responsible citizenship, and individual growth.

1. The Membership of the Senate shall be: The SGA President as Chair, each member of the Executive Committee, each Class President, and Four Class Senators from each current class of the College. Senators shall be elected by their constituency, as defined in applicable bylaws and this Constitution. The Chair shall not vote on matters of Senate business.

- A. Class Senators shall serve as representatives of their class on the Senate, while also serving SGA and the institution as a whole. They are elected directly by their class.

- B. Class Presidents are the primary advocate for the interests of the members of their class. They are elected directly by their class.

2. The Senate shall have the authority to discuss, debate, and legislate on matters concerning:

- A. The SGA Bylaws, with the authority to amend any bylaw with the passage of a resolution by at least a 2/3rds majority

- B. Student life

- C. The chartering and de-chartering of clubs, the oversight of Club affairs and policies, and the creation or dissolution of all clubs, committees, and organizations

- D. The Student Activity Fee, SGA Finances, and the Annual Operating Budget

- E. The SGA's support or opposition to any issue deemed important to students

- F. Institutional policy

- G. The membership and rules of the Senate Body, in accordance with the stipulations of this Constitution

- H. Internal regulation and oversight of SGA Committee, Club, and organization stipulations on membership, by-laws, operating procedures, authority, or mission

- I. Awareness of and communication with the Student Body on matters of importance

- J. The confirmation, by two-thirds majority vote, of officers appointed by the SGA President, Executive Committee, and Student Events Council Chair.

- K. Acts vetoed by the President, with the authority to override a veto by a four-fifths majority vote

3. The Senate has the power to create and dissolve SGA committees, organizations, and other entities not specifically outlined in this constitution

- A. Senate must ensure that all have current by-laws, operating codes, and membership provisions

- B. Senate must provide for committee membership, budget status, by-laws, and other procedures.

The membership of all committees shall be defined by their respective operating codes.

- C. Senate must provide, at least, for groups on: budget and finance, to oversee the allocation of SGA funds with Senate's oversight; club affairs, to oversee all clubs and organizations, and new club chartering subject to Senate's approval; inclusion, for issues of inclusion and diversity practices; student life, to promote student issues and student policy College-wide; academic affairs, to engage students with the educational mission of the College and represent students to the Faculty; student events; Willingness-to-Serve coordination; and elections.
- D. The groups listed above may be renamed, consolidated, or otherwise amended as long as the issue areas remain accounted for by some SGA entity. All other committees are entirely subject to the vote and oversight of Senate.

4. The Senate may create its own officer positions for the purpose of its internal leadership. These positions may hold with responsibilities defined by a vote of the Senate, and these officers must be elected as current members of Senate. While the SGA President shall serve as chair of Senate, Senate may empower its members through the creation of such positions to lead, coordinate, or chair certain discussions or certain agenda items on a recurring basis.

5. The Senate may allocate seats on every SGA committee to be filled through a Willingness-to-Serve process. Seats left unfilled by regular elections may also be filled through the Willingness-to-Serve process, subject to requirements set by appropriate bylaws.

### **Article III: Executive**

The Executive power of the SGA shall be vested jointly in the SGA President and the Executive Committee. Each shall work together to perform executive functions, but each also has separate jurisdiction, expectations, and powers. Other Executive Officers shall oversee the functions of SGA in coordination with the SGA President and Executive Committee to assist in the administration of the SGA.

#### **Section 1. SGA President**

The SGA President shall be the highest-ranking officer of the SGA. They shall be the primary spokesperson and advocate of the student body. The SGA President shall be elected directly by the student body.

1. The SGA President shall:

- A. Enforce the rights, standards, procedures, and obligations of this Constitution.
- B. Enforce and implement all decisions and policies made by the Senate, Executive Committee, or other SGA entity, provided the policy or decision is in accordance with this Constitution and College policy. The SGA President may veto acts of the Senate, only after consulting with the Executive Committee and delivering specific objections to the Senate within ten days in which classes are held of an act's passage. A veto may be overridden by a four-fifths majority of the Senate.
- C. Appoint students to fill temporary vacancies of students on all SGA Committees, All-College Committees, Faculty Committees, and other positions.
- D. Advise all SGA Officers.
- E. Certify all SGA elections, having consulted with the groups and campus offices designated to oversee elections.
- F. Bring issues of student importance to the Administration, the College President, and the Board of Trustees.
- G. Bring issues of importance from the Administration, the College President, and Board of

Trustees to the Senate.

H. Chair the Senate and Executive Committee.

I. Sit on SGA and College Committees as dictated by SGA and Institutional bylaws and operating codes.

## 2. Succession of the Presidency

A. In case of the SGA President's inability to fulfill the duties of the office on a temporary basis, such as by personal emergency or illness, the Executive Vice President shall become Acting SGA President until such a time when the President declares to the Executive Committee in writing their ability to resume the responsibilities of the office.

B. If the SGA President is unable to complete their term, such as through removal from office or resignation, the Executive Vice President shall become Interim President until the seat is filled by an election of the student body.

i. If the Executive Vice President is unable to assume the duties of Interim or Acting SGA President, other members of the Executive Committee in descending Constitutional succession shall become the Interim or Acting SGA President until the seat is filled by an election of the student body. The SGA President may, with the consent of 2/3rds of the Senate, appoint students to fill vacancies on the Executive Committee created by such a process.

ii. If the Interim SGA President fills the SGA Presidency at a point during the academic year when there is insufficient time to hold an election for the permanent position of President, the Interim SGA President shall complete the term of the President. Such a time is defined as a vacancy that begins within eight weeks of the last day of classes in an academic year, unless the Senate, by a vote of at least two-thirds, approves another time.

## **Section 2. The Executive Committee**

The SGA Executive Committee shall be responsible for the administration of the SGA and serve to enhance all areas of student life by acting as a centralized decision-making committee. The Executive Committee shall be elected directly by the student body.

1. The Executive Committee consists of: the SGA President as Chair, the Executive Vice President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Financial Affairs, the Vice President for Student Life, the Vice President for Club Affairs, the Vice President for Institutional Diversity, and the Vice President for Engagement and Outreach. This list of Executive Committee positions reflects the order of succession.

A. Each member shall oversee the issue area of the SGA that corresponds to their title.

B. Each member shall sit on and/or chair other SGA, Faculty, or all-College Committees as dictated by SGA, Faculty, or all-College policy.

C. Each member shall have the opportunity to sit as an ex-officio of every SGA committee.

D. The Executive Vice President shall act as the designee of the SGA President when appropriate, oversee the coordination of new initiatives, and be responsible for the sustainability of initiatives within SGA as a whole.

2. The Executive Committee shall:

A. Liaise with College Administration and President, Faculty, and other bodies inside and outside of the College.

- B. In the absence of the Senate, have the authority to make decisions on behalf of SGA.
- C. Advise, administer, and lead the direction and policy-making process of the Senate.
- D. Submit recommendations and policies to the SGA Judicial Board, Senate, Faculty, the College Administration and College President, any College governance group, and the Board of Trustees.
- E. When appropriate, request reports from SGA Officers, Clubs, Committees, or other SGA entities for the purpose of gathering information and making informed policy decisions.
- F. Create and amend its operating codes independently of Senate, subject to review by the Judicial Board to ensure compliance with the Constitution and other bylaws.

### **Section. 3 Executive Operations Officers**

The SGA President shall, with the consent a majority of the Executive Committee, appoint students as Executive Operations Officers to fill positions created in appropriate bylaws by the Senate. Until and unless the Senate decides otherwise, there shall be: an SGA Clerk, SGA Director of Operations, and SGA Photographer.

### **Article IV: Judicial**

The Judicial power of the SGA shall be vested in a Judicial Board. This board shall work to guarantee every student is treated with fundamental standards of fairness and guaranteed fair representation in all SGA matters.

1. The judicial authority shall extend to; judicial review of all legislative and executive acts; interpretation of existing SGA policy; removal of SGA Officers; revocation of club charters; and suspension of SGA funds. The SGA Judicial Board will meet as deemed by members of the board, as outlined in the Judicial Board Operating Codes.

2. The SGA Judicial Board consists of the following: the Chief Judicial Board Officer and two Judicial Board Officers appointed by the SGA President and confirmed by the Senate by at least a two-thirds majority.

- A. In all judicial proceedings, members of Judicial Board who are also a party of a particular case, or those who have a financial or personal interest in its outcome, must recuse themselves from consideration and decision of the case.

3. The Senate shall maintain the operating codes of the Judicial Board.

### **Article V: Student Events Council**

The events planning authority of the SGA shall be vested in a Student Events Council (SEC). The Student Events Council shall foster community events for the Skidmore College student body. The Council shall be chaired by the Student Events Council Chair.

- 1. The Membership of the Student Events Council shall be: The Student Events Council Chair, the Student Events Council Vice Chair, the Student Events Council Treasurer, and subcommittee chairs as determined by the Senate.

- a. The Student Events Council Chair, Student Events Council Vice Chair, and Student Events Council Treasurer shall be elected directly by the student body.
2. The Senate shall maintain the operating codes of the Student Events Council.

### **Article VI: Impeachment and Removal from Office**

1. Any member of the Skidmore Community with SGA voting rights has the power to initiate an impeachment process to remove any SGA officer. Impeachment proceedings are initiated upon submission to the Executive Committee of a written or electronic petition signed by 1/6th of an officer's constituency, accompanied by a letter outlining the reasons for removal. Once the Executive Committee has received the signed petition, the SGA Judicial Board process shall begin. Once convened, the Judicial Board may then, according to its Constitutional authority and operating procedures, vote to remove said officer.
2. SGA and Club officers may be removed from their position or otherwise sanctioned by the Judicial Board for serious or repeated violations of SGA policy, College policy, and/or the law. The Executive Committee is not required to receive a signed petition to initiate removal proceedings for a breach of applicable laws and policies.

### **Article VII: Amendment**

1. Any part of this constitution is subject to amendment, which requires a 5/6th majority of the SGA Senate body and a 3/4th majority of a vote of the Student Body.
2. 1/3rd of the student body, through a signed petition delivered to the Executive Committee, may have an amendment placed on ballot of the next student-wide election. If the amendment receives a 3/4ths majority of the student body in that vote, the Senate may ratify the amendment by a 5/6th majority vote.
3. Amendments shall be listed within the document in the appropriate section replacing preexisting text when necessary, with a notation to indicate the date of ratification of the amendment. Amendments take precedence over pre-existing text.

### **Article VIII: Officer Tenure and Transition**

1. The terms of all SGA officers elected or appointed to serve during an academic year shall end at 4:20pm on the first weekday following Skidmore College Commencement of that academic year, regardless of when the position is filled. At 4:20pm, on that day, the following academic year's officer terms begin.
2. The Senate must, through applicable bylaws, provide for other considerations and situations related to officers' terms and transitions of power.
3. Clubs officer term stipulations must abide by applicable club policies and procedures.

### **Article IX: Status of the Constitution**

1. This Constitution supersedes and establishes all SGA by-laws, operating codes, and procedures.
2. To the extent of SGA's status within the institutional governance structure, this Constitution also applies to bylaws and operating codes for which this constitution provides.
3. The Student Government Association acknowledges that it is but one part of a larger shared governance structure and community, and this Constitution should not be used as a device to undermine the larger institutional structure.

#### **Article X: Ratification**

This Constitution must be approved by the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee, endorsed by the Board of Trustees, approved by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority of the SGA Senate, and ratified by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority of the student body provided at least 800 members vote.

Approved by the Twenty-Fifth Student Government Association Senate: **January 27, 2015**

Approved by the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee: **January 30, 2015**

Endorsed by the Board of Trustees: **February 20, 2015**

Ratified by 850 voting members of the Student Body of Skidmore College, with 95.5 percent in favor:  
**March 5, 2015**

The first effective date of this Constitution shall be May 18, 2015.