Constitution of the Student Government Association of Barnard College

CONSTITUTION OF THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF BARNARD COLLEGE

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Constitution of the Student Government Association, Revised February 17th, 2015
PREAMBLE: We the members of the Student Government Association of Barnard College recognize this Constitution as our governing document intended to make clear the purposes, structures, and powers of this body.

Article I: PURPOSE
The name of the organization shall be the Student Government Association of Barnard College, hereafter referred to as the “SGA.” The SGA will facilitate the expression of opinions on matters affecting the Barnard community through active communication between students, administration and faculty.

SGA will promote and ensure responsible self-government, open dialogue, and action by selecting student representatives within fair and transparent elections and appointments processes. With various forums for collaboration, such as committees and weekly Representative Council meetings, all Barnard College students, by virtue of having paid student activities fees, are members of the SGA. Thus, SGA calls on all Barnard College students to take initiative in continuing the SGA's tradition of equitable self-government and to hold both administrators and students accountable to the College's larger mission, to foster women leaders and intellectuals.

The SGA is charged with gathering and expressing student opinion, actively representing student views, appropriately addressing student concerns, ensuring that college students are fully apprised of all information of impact to their undergraduate experience.

Article II: FINANCE
Section 1.
The responsibility of the SGA, subject to the statutory jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees, shall be to allocate money from the Student Activities Fee to the Governing Board at Barnard which recognizes student organizations.

Section 2.
Every member of the SGA pays a Student Activities Fee, proposed by the SGA Executive Board, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees and the Representative Council, as stated in Art. VIII, 3, 5. The administration of the Student Activities Fee is the sole responsibility of the elected officers of the SGA.

Section 3.
The Representative Council shall make budget recommendations to the SGA Executive Board. In order to approve the SGA budget as proposed by the Executive Board, it must pass through Representative Council by a majority vote.

Section 4.
All approved activities of the SGA shall qualify to be funded by SGA.

Section 5.
The Vice President of Finance shall report to the Executive Board on the amount of money in the budget surplus in the Spring Semester of each year. In the event of a surplus the Executive Board shall recommend several possible uses of the surplus to the Representative Council. At this time the Representative Council can propose alternative uses for the surplus. A simple majority vote of the Representative Council shall be necessary to accept the proposed use.

Section 6.
The Executive Board of the SGA may request in writing to the President of the College that the current student activities fee be changed for the following academic year. Any such recommendation shall be approved by a two thirds vote of the Representative Council.

Section 7.
The annual appropriation from The SGA Endowment Fund, established by the Board of Trustees, will be determined by the Executive Board and any other interested members of Representative Council in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer in the Fall of each academic year. The purpose of the Fund is to provide financial support for small projects or new activities that will enhance student life on campus.

Article III: THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, AND COMMITTEES
The SGA shall be composed of a Representative Council, an Executive Board, and a committee system.

Section 1. Representative Council
The members of the Representative Council with full voting privileges shall be:

Clause 1. Officers of the SGA Executive Board. The chair of the meeting may vote only in the case of a tie.

Clause 2. Officers who hold the positions of University Senator, Representatives to the Board of Trustees, Representative for Academic Affairs, Representative for Arts and Culture, Representative for Campus Policy, Representative for Campus Affairs, Representative for Student Services, Representative for Inclusion and Equity, Representative for Transfer, International, and Commuter Interests, Representative for Information & Technology, Representative for College Relations, and the Class Council Presidents and Vice Presidents of all four class years.
The purpose of the Representative Council shall be:

Clause 1. To legislate on matters related to student government and activities.

Clause 2. To investigate and present proposals and resolutions on matters related to the members of the SGA to the appropriate College committees or the Board of Trustees.

Clause 3. To interpret and initiate revisions to the Constitution and By-laws. The Representative Council shall have the power to accept and approve changes to the By-laws when they are deemed necessary.

Clause 4. To request that any elected or appointed committee member, officer, or representative report on her activities as they relate to the student government.

Clause 5. To invite, for the purpose of information or communication on matters related to the SGA, any administrator, faculty member, or non-Barnard affiliate to attend a Representative Council meeting.

Clause 6. To voice student opinions and concerns, facilitate communication and act as liaisons between the members of the SGA and the administration, and members of the SGA and the faculty.

Clause 7. To consider and approve all referenda to be placed before a vote of the entire SGA.

Clause 8. In order to appeal any action of the officers of the SGA, any member of the SGA may present a petition signed by twenty members of the SGA to the Representative Council. The rules of such petition procedures are outlined in the By-laws.

Section 2. The Executive Board

The purpose of the Executive Board of the SGA shall be:

Clause 1. To administer and oversee the work of the SGA in areas of student government and activities.

Clause 2. To ensure that decisions legislated through the Representative Council are carried out.

Clause 3. To draft a yearly budget, subject to the approval of the Representative Council.

Clause 4. To advise and approve all Student Activity funded organization spending throughout the academic year.

Clause 5. To propose and appoint ad hoc committees for the purpose of completing projects deemed necessary in the interest of the SGA.

Clause 6. To deal with matters pertaining to the SGA which are not specifically delegated to any committee, the Representative Council, any individual officer, or to the members of the SGA.
Section 3. Committees

Clause 1. The following are committees either chaired by an SGA Representative or are Barnard College Committees to which SGA sends representatives (see Committee Handbook and the SGA By-Laws):

1. Election Commission Committee
2. Committee on Policy
3. Appointments Committee
4. Campus Life Committee
5. Leadership Awards Dinner
6. Committee on Public Relations
7. Sustainable Initiatives Consulting Board
8. Student Academic Advisory Committee
9. Committee on Inclusion and Diversity
10. Housing Advisory Board
11. Food Advisory Board
12. Student Health Advisory Committee
13. Committee on Arts and Culture
14. Financial Advisory Council
15. Committee on Instruction
16. Barnard Library Academic Information Services Committee
17. Any other ad-hoc committee deemed necessary
18. Committee on Inter-College Relations

Article IV: ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Section 1.
All officers shall be elected by a plurality of the votes cast by the SGA, except for the officers of the class councils who shall be elected by the plurality of the votes of their respective classes.

Section 2.
All officers running unopposed shall be elected by a majority of the votes cast by the student body.

Section 3.
An Election Commission shall be created in every election in order to set forth the elections guidelines. The required class status for officers of the SGA, when elected during regularly scheduled Spring elections, shall be as follows:

Clause 1. The President shall be a rising Senior.
Clause 2. The Vice President for Student Government shall be a rising Junior or Senior.
Clause 3. The Vice President for Campus Life shall be a rising Junior or Senior.
Clause 4. The Vice President of Finance shall be a rising Junior or Senior.
Clause 5. The Vice President for Communication shall be a rising Junior or Senior.
Clause 6. The student representative to the Barnard College Board of Trustees shall be a rising Junior.
Clause 7. The Barnard College Senator to the University Senate shall be a rising Sophomore, Junior or Senior. A candidate may be a rising Senior if she has served two years on the Senate previously, or if the Elections Commission deems she has the necessary qualifications.
Clause 8. All other officers, excluding the Class Council officers, shall be rising Sophomores, Juniors or Seniors.
Clause 9. The class standing of each class council officer shall reflect the standing of their constituencies.

Section 4.
In the case of a special election, the student vying for the position must fall into the class standing as defined in Section 3.

Section 5.
All candidates must personally affirm prior to running for office that they are in good academic standing (defined as a 2.5 grade point average or higher). If elected, they must commit to maintaining this average in addition to fulfilling their duties.

Section 6.
Clause 1. An Election Commission shall be created in for each Election season in order to set forth the elections guidelines (for First-Year Class Elections in the fall, and Spring Elections for the entire student body).
Clause 2. The President, the Senior Representative to the Board of Trustees, the Junior Representative to the Board of Trustees, and the University Senator shall serve on the Elections Committee.

Section 7.
When a new position is created by the SGA a special election will be held in order to fill the position.

Article V: IMPEACHMENT

Section 1.
All officers on the Representative Council and serving as officers of their class councils whose positions are determined by student elections shall be brought up on impeachment charges for either:
Clause 1. Failing to fulfill the duties of their position as set forth in the By-laws or other concerns not having to do with absences from Rep Council meetings.
Clause 2. Attendance is mandatory at Representative Council meetings but if more than two meetings are missed during the semester, the VP Student Government may initiate a meeting with the officer in question to discuss the reasons for the absences.
Article VI: VACANCIES

Section 1.
A vacancy in the SGA occurs when a position has not been filled by election or appointment, or when an officer or committee member is removed from her position, resigns, does not keep up her academic standing, or is no longer registered at and attending Barnard College.

Section 2. The Appointments Committee
The Appointments Committee shall recommend students for appointment to fill vacancies other than the President of the SGA and the presidents of each class council.

Clause 1. The Appointments Committee shall consist of up to five appointed student members sought from the round of Applications at the end of the spring semester for the following year. They shall consist of students who do not hold an elected position, with the exception of the VP Student Government. If the position is not filled during spring appointments, those positions shall be filled during the Fall Appointments Process during the academic year of their service.

Clause 2. The VP Student Government shall chair the Appointments Committee. The appointed members shall remain anonymous to the entire student body and other members of SGA.

Clause 3. The Appointments Committee shall read all committee member and co-chair applications anonymously. Applications for Representative Council positions shall be read anonymously, and in the case of multiple applications, the committee shall make recommendations for two applicants to make a presentation at the Representative Council meeting.

Clause 4. Recommendations for the Representative Council shall be approved by a 2/3rd hand ballot.

Section 3.
In the case of a vacancy in the office of the President of SGA, the VPSG shall assume the responsibilities of the President. A new VPSG will be appointed.

Clause 1. In the case of a vacancy in any other Executive Board office, the members of the Executive Board shall make a recommendation to fill the vacancy. Clause 2. The VPSGA shall ensure that the appointments committee can make their recommendation independently of the Executive Board’s recommendation. The appointments committee’s recommendation will be made before the Executive Board’s recommendation.

Section 4.
In the case of a vacancy in any other Executive Board office, the President shall assume the responsibilities of that officer until someone is appointed.

Section 5.
In the case of a vacancy in the office of the President of any class council, the Vice President of the respective council shall assume the responsibility of the President. A new Vice President will be appointed.
Article VII: REFERENDA
Section 1. Obtaining a referendum is set forth as follows:
Clause 1. The Representative Council may initiate a referendum.
Clause 2. Any member of the SGA may petition the Representative Council to hold a referendum upon the presentation of a petition signed by 100 members of the SGA, stating the purpose of said referendum.

Section 2.
All referenda require approval by a simple majority vote of the Representative Council.
Clause 1. Abstentions shall not count in a tally, even if this means a simple majority cannot be attained. If abstentions make up a majority of the overall votes, there will be a revote until a simple majority is attained.
Clause 2. In the event that one Executive member, one non-Executive member and a third member of Representative Council agree that a vote is contentious, they can jointly override that motion and the motion will be re-voted, requiring a two thirds majority.

Section 3.
Once approved, the referendum shall be drafted by the VPSG. A simple majority vote of the Representative Council is required to approve the wording of the referendum.

Section 4.
Once the draft has been approved, the referendum shall be part of the ballot of the next general All-College election or a special All-College vote. The draft shall be posted on the SGA Website at least 24 hours before the election.

Section 5.
A simple majority of the votes cast by the members of the SGA shall be required for a referendum to pass.

Article VIII: AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION
Section 1. Amendments proposed by the Representative Council.
Clause 1. An amendment may be proposed to the Representative Council by any member of the SGA.
Sub clause 1.1 The draft of the proposed amendment shall be submitted to VPSGA two full weeks prior to the intended representative council voting date
Clause 2. A draft of the proposed amendment shall be posted on the SGA Website.
Sub clause 2.1 The draft of the proposed amendment shall be posted at least one full week prior to rep council’s vote
Clause 3. At the next meeting of the Representative Council, after the posting of the amendment, the amendment shall be presented for a vote of the Representative Council.
Clause 4. A simple majority vote of the Representative Council shall be necessary to accept an amendment.

Clause 5. Once accepted by the Representative Council, the amendment shall be presented to the SGA as a referendum in the next general all college election or a special all college vote (see Article VII).

Clause 6. Amendments related to changes in grammar or procedural internal SGA updates can be approved by a two thirds vote of the Representative Council, without having to be voted on in an all college election or a special all college vote.

Section 2. Revision of the constitution

Clause 1. Every three years, the Constitution shall be reviewed by a special ad hoc committee to be chaired by the Vice President for Student Government made up of 2 members of Representative Council, 2 members of the Committee System, and 2 students who are not members of Representative Council or a Committee.

Clause 2. The report of the ad hoc committee shall be considered at a meeting of the Representative Council. If the report proposes amendments then the procedures of Article XIII, Section 1 above shall be followed.

Article IX: RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1. Columbia University Student Councils and Governing Boards

Clause 1. The SGA shall honor all written partnership agreements made with other Columbia University organizations such as the Columbia College Student Council, the Engineering Student Council, the General Studies Student Council and other governing boards.

Clause 2. In the event that a member feels that the terms of the agreement have been broken, the relevant parties shall convene a meeting together with their respective advisors.

Section 2. Barnard College Organizations

Clause 1. The SGA shall honor all partnership agreements or Memorandums of Understandings made between itself and other Barnard College organizations such as the McIntosh Activities Council and the Governing Board at Barnard. Similar procedure shall be followed as stated in Section 1, Clause 2.

Section 3. Seven Sisters Coalition

Clause 1. The SGA shall participate in the Seven Sisters Coalition and send the designated Representatives as stipulated in the By-Laws and the Committee Handbook.

Clause 2. SGA shall host the Fall Leadership Conference once every six years, starting in Fall 2016.

Clause 3. SGA shall host the annual Spring Summit for the Coordinating Board members as needed.
Article X: THE POWERS OF THE CONSTITUTION

Section 1.
This Constitution, having been approved by the SGA, shall supersede all other committee guidelines and constitutions governing student-related matters.

Section 2.
In the case of a discrepancy in Section 1, the matter shall be decided by the General Counsel, in conjunction with the President of the College.