

University of Rhode Island Student Senate, Inc.

Constitution

Voted and Approved: [April 5, 2023](#)

Amended: October 2020; December 2020; March 2021; November 2021; [February 1, 2023](#)

ARTICLE I NAME

This organization shall be named the “University of Rhode Island Student Senate, Inc.,” hereafter referred to as the “Senate.”

ARTICLE II PURPOSE

The Senate shall serve to improve and enhance the quality and scope of education and life at the University of Rhode Island. The Senate (collectively and holistically its Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches) will accomplish this by providing an official, representative government through which the undergraduate student voice may be expressed and ensuring the effective representation of its constituents in University affairs and administration.

ARTICLE III POWER AND SCOPE

The Senate derives its power and legitimacy from the consent of the governed and must discuss matters brought before it by a constituent that affect its constituents as students or as citizens.

The Senate may establish, recognize, and promote activities for the enhancement of student life, recognize student organizations, and otherwise govern and advocate for its constituents. Student organizations may claim association with the University of Rhode Island only if recognized by the Senate. No organization will be denied recognition on a basis of political, religious, or philosophical viewpoint.

The Senate maintains its 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation status with the Rhode Island Secretary of State for the explicit purpose of protecting its members from questions of liability and ensuring that the Senate remains a distinct and separate entity from the University of Rhode Island and underlying affiliates thereof.

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

Only undergraduate students of the University of Rhode Island who have paid the Student Activities Tax may serve as members. Members may express themselves as they wish so long as their actions and utterances are in accordance with state and federal law. No person may hold positions simultaneously in multiple branches of the Senate, nor may they hold multiple ranking positions in a single branch.

Degree-seeking undergraduate students who are enrolled part time in at least six credits, who have paid a pro-rated Student Activities Tax, may serve as representatives from that at-large and college constituencies, or in any office of the cabinet or court provided that they meet all other eligibility requirements outlined in this document.

ARTICLE V EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Section A. Authority

The executive power of the Senate is granted to the President, who is assisted by the Vice President and advised by the Cabinet. The Cabinet carries out the instructions of the Senate in detail. Each executive officer has all power necessary and proper to fulfill their responsibilities, including the power to establish and appoint such officials as may be necessary to ensure the completion of their duties. The appointing officer retains all the responsibility of their office. Executive officers serve a term expiring on the Annual Meeting of the Assembly (as defined in Article VI. Legislative Branch).

Section B. President

The President provides leadership to the Senate, represents its interests and decisions, and makes at least one (1) nomination to each office of the Cabinet, except the Speaker of the Assembly, and each office of the Court (as defined in Article VII. Judicial Branch). All Presidential nominations to the Court and the Cabinet must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Assembly. The President may also dismiss officers of the Cabinet with the exception of the Vice President and the Speaker of the Assembly. They may veto acts of the Assembly, call special meetings, refer matters to committees, and appoint undergraduate students to University boards and committees. The President is a signatory of all Student Activities Tax revenue and all monies that are either in the Senate Accounting System or are otherwise controlled by the Senate.

Section C. Vice President

The Vice President may speak and act on behalf of the President in that officer's temporary absence and succeeds to the Presidency in the event of a permanent vacancy.

Should the Vice Presidency become vacant, the first office of the Cabinet appearing in this constitution that is not vacant succeeds to the Vice Presidency until the Assembly can elect a replacement. Only the President will nominate the Vice President.

Section D. Cabinet

Part 1. Director of Communications

The Director of Communications facilitates open communication and dialogue between the Senate and its constituents. The Director of Communications also maintains the Senate's instruments of organization, records and reports, and responds to requests for information regarding the proceedings and history of the Senate.

Part 2. Director of Treasury

The Director of Treasury maintains and is a signatory of monies and assets controlled by the Senate, as well as its internal accounts, and ensures the enforcement of the Senate's financial policy.

Part 3. Speaker of the Assembly

The Speaker of the Assembly chairs all meetings of the Assembly. The Speaker also appoints and removes the members of the Assembly's standing committees; removals are subject to the approval of the committee's chair. The Speaker of the Assembly is nominated and elected by and from the Assembly. Any officials duly appointed by The Speaker will serve as ex-officio non-voting members of the Assembly. The Speaker shall clearly communicate the instructions of the Assembly to the Cabinet. The Speaker may speak on behalf of the Assembly.

Part 4. Absences and Vacancies

In the event of the temporary absence of an officer of the Cabinet or the vacancy of such an office, the President will appoint a constituent of the Senate (as defined in Article VIII. Election, Section A Constituencies) to assume the duties of the office until the officer returns or until a successor is duly nominated and confirmed.

Part 5. Meetings

The Cabinet meets during each week that the Assembly holds a regular meeting, and such meetings are chaired by the President and attended by the Vice President.

ARTICLE VI LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Section A. Authority

The legislative power of the Senate is granted to the Assembly, which proposes, debates, and considers resolutions establishing and commanding action upon the Senate's policies. The Assembly may overturn a Presidential veto by a two-thirds (2/3) vote. The Assembly may overturn a Presidential veto by a two-thirds (2/3) vote.

Section B. Membership

The Assembly is composed of forty-five (45) representatives, who advocate for their constituents and serve on at least one standing committee. Representatives are elected by and from the constituencies that they are to represent and serve a term expiring on the Annual Meeting of the Assembly.

Section C. Meetings

The Assembly meets every week during which classes are held during the spring and fall academic terms, except when otherwise ordered by a majority of Chairs of standing committees. The first meeting of April is

the Annual Meeting. Seven (7) representatives may call for a special meeting of the Assembly.

Section D. Committees

Part 1. Delegation

Committees deliberate on, propose, and, when necessary, ensure action upon resolutions relevant to their areas of concern. Standing committees have areas of concern that are permanent in nature, while special committees deal with temporary issues.

Part 2. Standing Committees

Subpart a. Academic Affairs

The Academic Affairs Committee is concerned with matters of an academic nature and the rights of constituents as students.

Subpart b. Campus Affairs

The Campus Affairs Committee is concerned with matters occurring on University property.

Subpart c. Cultural Affairs

The Cultural Affairs Committee is concerned with matters of campus climate and the rights of constituents as citizens.

Subpart d. External Affairs

The External Affairs Committee is concerned with matters occurring off of University property.

Subpart e. Student Organizations

The Student Organizations Committee is concerned with the recognition and maintenance of student organizations and affiliates, and with the Student Activities Tax.

Part 3. Special Committees

The Assembly may establish any committee the area of concern of which is both temporary and not in conflict with the charge of a standing committee.

Section E. Officers

The chair of each committee is elected by and from the Assembly and appoints the vice-chair of that committee, which appointment must be approved by a majority vote of the Speaker and the other standing committee chairs. The chair of a committee is its presiding officer and spokesperson, and calls its meetings, while the vice-chair assumes these responsibilities during the chair's absence. In the event of the vacancy of a chair, the vice-chair serves as the chair until the Assembly elects a replacement. The chair and vice-chair of each committee must also hold a representative seat.

The Assembly or any committee thereof may establish and fill such positions as may be necessary to fulfill their instructions.

ARTICLE VII JUDICIAL BRANCH

Section A. Authority

The judicial power of the Senate is granted to the Court, which interprets and enforces the Senate's instruments of organization. The Court has all power necessary and proper to investigate matters on which it is to rule.

Section B. Membership

The Court is composed of five (5) Jurists, one of whom is named the Head Jurist by the Assembly. The Head Jurist chairs Court meetings and represents the Court's decisions to the Senate. Jurists maintain a comprehensive understanding of the Senate's instruments of organization. They serve a term expiring on the Annual Meeting of the Assembly.

ARTICLE VIII ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

Section A. Constituencies

Only undergraduate students at the University of Rhode Island who pay the Student Activities Tax may be in a constituency; all such students will be members of the At-Large Constituency. The On-Campus Constituency consists of students living on property that is owned or managed by the University of Rhode Island, while the Off-Campus Constituency consists of all other students. The First-year Constituency consists of students who were not enrolled at the University previous to the current academic year. The University College and each undergraduate, degree-granting college shall have a constituency consisting of all its enrolled students.

Section B. Assembly Elections

Part 1. Election

Undergraduate students may cast one (1) vote for each representative seat of which they are a constituent but may not cast multiple votes for a single candidate. The candidate receiving the greatest number of votes is elected.

Part 2. Apportionment

Each college constituency will be apportioned one (1) seat, the First-Year constituency will be apportioned five (5) seats, and the At-Large constituency will be apportioned eleven (11) seats; the remaining seats will be split between the On-Campus and the Off-Campus constituencies in proportion to the number of students in each. Any First-Year seat that cannot be filled will be reapportioned to an At-Large seat up for internal election by the Assembly.

Section C. Executive Elections

The offices of the President and Vice President are elected simultaneously, running together on an executive ticket as if a single candidate. Each member of the At-Large Constituency may cast one (1) vote for an executive ticket, and the ticket receiving the greatest number of votes is elected.

Section D. Referenda

The Assembly may place questions before its constituents during elections as referenda. Referenda will be decided by a plurality of votes cast

Section E. Ties

An election which cannot be decided by the electorate will be decided by the Assembly.

Section F. System

Votes are cast by secret ballot; write-in votes are allowed.

ARTICLE IX FUNDS

Section A. Taxation

Only the Senate administers and allocates the Student Activities Tax; changes must be approved by referendum and the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees.

Section B. Distribution

Revenues from the Student Activities Tax may only be allocated to a budget by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly and may only be spent to benefit the Senate's constituents in manners which do not discriminate based on viewpoint. Monies and assets may not be expended without the written order of two (2) of an account's signatories. The Assembly may allocate funds to any recognized student organization or affiliate.

Section C. Restrictions

No Student Activities Tax revenue may be spent in support of political parties, as distinct from student organizations with clear party affiliation, or candidates running for political office, nor may it be spent to convert persons to a religion.

ARTICLE X IMPEACHMENTS AND DISCIPLINE

Members may be impeached or penalized for failing to responsibly uphold the duties of their position or for criminal acts.

It is the purview of the Court to determine the validity and soundness of a charge, but the burden of the Assembly to determine and assign appropriate penalties. The rights, duties, or offices of a member may only be removed or abridged by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the full Assembly, and only after a fair trial.

ARTICLE XI INSTRUMENTS

This Constitution has authority over all other documents produced by the Senate, which may enact and maintain policy handbooks and by-laws, and over all recognized student organizations and affiliates.

The Senate's instruments of organization are equally binding all to whom they apply.

ARTICLE XII AMENDMENT

Amendments to this Constitution may be approved only by three-fourths (3/4) of the Assembly and must have been distributed to the Assembly at least four (4) weeks before they are voted on. Amendments must be ratified by referendum put before the At-Large constituency to become permanent.

Amendments which solely correct spelling, punctuation, terminology, or numerical standard, or which must be made to bring this document into compliance with Federal, State, Local, or University policy, may be made at any time by order of the President. Such amendments need not be approved by the Assembly or ratified by referendum.

All amendments shall be outlined below the constitution.

Amendment I. Elimination of Summer Assembly (October, 2020)

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate struck the language from Article VI. Legislative Branch. Section A. Authority:

“During the Summer, this authority is granted to a group of seven (7) representatives elected by the Assembly” from Article VI, Section A of the constitution and abolished the Summer Assembly.

Executive Order 21/22-03 (November, 2021)

The President of the University of Rhode Island Student Senate issues corrective language for Article IX. Section A. Taxation.

Changing “Rhode Island Council on Postsecondary Education” to “University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees.”

Amendment II. Elimination of Court Elections (December, 2020)

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate struck the language from Article VIII. Elections and Referenda:

Section C. Executive Elections

The offices of the Cabinet are elected by the Assembly, each member thereof casting one (1) vote for each office. The candidate receiving a majority of votes is elected if they are not a representative

Section G. Court Elections

Jurists are elected by a panel composed of the Jurists, an equal number of delegates elected by the Assembly, and the Vice President. The candidate receiving a majority of votes is elected; each member casts one (1) vote except for the Vice President, who chairs, and may only vote in a tie.

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate altered the language from Article V. Executive Branch

Section B. President

The President provides leadership to the Senate, represents its interests and decisions, and makes at least one (1) nomination to each office of the Cabinet, except the Speaker of the Assembly, and each office of the Court (as defined in Article VII. Judicial Branch). All Presidential nominations to the Court and the Cabinet must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Assembly. The President may also dismiss officers of the Cabinet with the exception of the Vice President and the Speaker of the Assembly. They may veto acts of the Assembly, call special meetings, refer matters to committees, and appoint undergraduate students to University boards and committees. The President is a signatory of all Student Activities Tax revenue and all monies that are either in the Senate Accounting System or are otherwise controlled by the Senate.

Section D. President

Part 5. Speaker of the Assembly

The Speaker of the Assembly chairs all meetings of the Assembly, and they and their duly appointed officials serve ex-officio as non-voting members of the Assembly. The Speaker also appoints and removes the members of the Assembly’s standing committees; removals are subject to the approval of the committee’s chair. The Speaker of the Assembly is nominated and elected by the Assembly. The Speaker shall clearly communicate the instructions of the Assembly to the Cabinet. The Speaker may speak on behalf of the Assembly.

Amendment III. Elimination of Instruments (March, 2021)

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate altered the language of “Moderator” to “Speaker of the Assembly” in Article V, Section D, Part 5.

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate altered the language of “elected” to “confirmed” in Article V, Section D, Part 6.

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate struck the language from Article VI. Legislative Branch. Section D. Committees. Part 2: Standing Committees. Subpart f: Instruments Committee:

Subpart f. Instruments

The Instruments Committee is concerned with the Senate's instruments of organization.

Amendment IV. Elimination of the Roles of Directors of Information and Operations

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate struck language pertaining to the Directors of Information and Operations after voting to remove those positions from the Executive Board.

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