

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The Undergraduate Senate Rules of Debate and Decorum

ARTICLE I. PURPOSE AND AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Purpose

This document shall be known as the Rules of Debate and Decorum for the Undergraduate Senate which shall provide basic operating procedures for meetings of the Senate and govern the activities of its committees, members, and all those who would speak before it.

Section 2. Amendments

The Rules of Debate and Decorum (RDD) shall be considered binding for all legislative terms. However, the RDD can be amended by any Senator by a two-thirds (%) vote of the Undergraduate Senate in the form of a bill. Bills amending the RDD shall be sent to the Committee on Rules and Privileges following their introduction into the full Senate.

ARTICLE II. PROCEDURES ON THE FLOOR

Section 1. Addressing the Senate

Subsection i. Senators Seeking Recognition

Members may seek recognition by either raising their placard, raising their (virtual) hand, or notifying the presiding officer in a manner that does not inhibit the present discussion. The presiding officer may also determine, when necessary, a more suitable method of seeking recognition through the issuance of a Legislative Order. When two or more members seek recognition, it is the privilege of the presiding officer to determine the order in which recognition will be granted in a decision that may not be appealed.

Subsection ii. Other Members Seeking Recognition

The President, Vice President, Comptroller, and Secretary of the Student Government, the Director for the Center for Advocacy and Student Equity, the Programming Board Directors, the Judicial Board of the Student Government, and all Undergraduate Council Executives shall retain the right of recognition and can do so in the same methods outlined for Senators.

Subsection iii. Granting Speaking Rights

Speaking rights may be granted to a person who does not enjoy such rights should a Senator of the Undergraduate Senate make a motion to do so. Such a motion will require a two-thirds (2/3) vote. This person, however, will not be allowed to make motions or vote and will be expected to conform to all rules of debate and decorum in the Senate.

Subsection iv. Decorum

Members of Student Government speaking before the Undergraduate Senate will not be interrupted, except for intervention by the presiding officer or the Parliamentarian. If any member feels there is not an appropriate level of decorum during such time that they control the floor, they may pause and demand decorum on the floor which is to be enforced by the presiding officer. Such time used to enforce decorum on the floor shall not be counted against

a presenter's time, and the presiding officer enjoys the right to maintain decorum in whichever way they feel adequate.

Section 2. Questioning

Throughout Senate meetings, Senators retain the right to ask questions about relevant matters or Student Government and Senate procedures. Senators may do so through a point of inquiry at any time so long as a member is not actively speaking. All questions must be directed to the presiding officer or the Parliamentarian but the presiding officer may allow other members of Student Government to answer so long as that member has speaking rights.

Section 3. Motions

Subsection i. Purpose

Members of Student Government retain the right to issue motions during meetings of the Undergraduate Senate. Each motion must be directed to the presiding officer or the parliamentarian. Motions made by Senators of the Undergraduate Senate take immediate precedence and must be addressed by the presiding officer immediately in the order in which each motion was made in the event of multiple motions being entertained on the floor.

Subsection ii. Motion

Motions that may be issued by Senators of the Undergraduate Senate may include, but are not limited to, motion to waive first reading, motion to adjourn or recess, motion to table, motion to amend, motion to begin/extend/close questioning or debate, and motion to reconsider.

Subsection iii. Censure Motion

A censure motion shall be a method of punishment that the Senate may choose to pursue if it feels that removal is not currently warranted by the circumstances at hand. If a censure is passed, it must be given to the offending officer by the presiding officer within twenty four (24) hours of the motion passage. Once an individual has been censured, they must appear at the next meeting of the full Undergraduate Senate to be questioned by the Undergraduate Senate. If the Undergraduate Senate chooses to pursue removal after it has censured the offending officer, it must wait seven days before filing removal charges. The Undergraduate Senate is not required to censure an officer before removing them.

Section 4. Voting

Subsection i. Definition

All legislation brought forth before the Undergraduate Senate must be voted on. By default, all legislation will be voted on through the implementation of an unrecorded voice vote conducted by the presiding officer. At any time, Senators of the Undergraduate Senate may motion or move/request a change to the voting process within the descriptions and requirements outlined in this section.

Subsection ii. Voice Voting

Voice voting shall be the default mechanism for the consideration of all motions and pieces of legislation. The default format for a voice vote shall be unrecorded where all Senators are asked to state their position on the matter at hand. The presiding officer will call firstly for all Senators in favor to state 'aye', then for those against to state 'no', and finally for those abstaining to state 'abstain'. After the presiding officer has completed this process, they shall call the result to be as they deem accurate from what they heard.

Subsection iii. Recorded Roll Call Voice Voting

Any Senator may request for a voice vote to become recorded. They may do so at the start of a voting period on any legislation or motion by requesting a recorded roll call voice vote or, also called a roll call vote. This request cannot be overturned, and should a Senator make it, a roll call vote must be conducted. Roll call votes shall be conducted as follows: the presiding officer shall call for the Clerk or their designee to call the names of each Senator in the order they see fit and provide each Senator with a reasonable amount of time to respond. Senators shall then

respond with 'aye' for yes, 'no' for no, and 'abstain' for abstain. Should any Senators not respond, or choose to pass, the Clerk or designee shall return to them at the end by calling their name once more. Failure to respond upon the second calling of a Senators name shall result in their vote being recorded as 'Not Voting' and shall be counted as an abstention.

Subsection iv. Calls for Division

If any Undergraduate Senator feels the presiding officer called the results of an unrecorded voice vote inaccurately, they may make a call for division. Should that call be made, a recorded roll call voice vote will subsequently be performed by the Clerk of the Undergraduate Senate, or in their absence, the presiding officer or their designee.

Subsection v. Secret Ballot

Secret ballot voting shall be either an anonymous Google Form created by the Undergraduate Clerk or designee sent only to Undergraduate Senators OR the submission of anonymous paper ballots collected and subsequently counted by the Clerk or designee. The Clerk will then state the votes cast for each ballot option and the overall result. All nomination confirmation votes shall be voted on by secret ballot as the default mechanism for voting. Any Senator may change the voting process on a nomination confirmation with a motion to vote by voice which shall require a simple majority to pass. Under no circumstances may any legislation or any motions be voted on by secret ballot.

Subsection vi. Unanimous Consent

Undergraduate Senators may motion for any matter to be voted on via unanimous consent instead of the typical voting process. They may do so at the start of the voting period on legislation or at the end of a procedural motion. For example, a motion to close debate would typically require a voice vote with a two-thirds (¾) majority but a Senator may instead motion to "close debate by unanimous consent" to change the process to no longer require a voice vote. This process would then entail the presiding officer to ask if there are any objections from Undergraduate Senators. Should there be no voiced objections, then voting will be concluded and the motion or legislation will have passed. However, should a member object to the motion for unanimous consent, then the voting process shall resort to roll call voting. Motions for unanimous consent do not require a second to be performed.

Subsection vii. Abstentions

Senators who abstain on any vote shall not count towards the total number of votes cast. Meaning that abstentions shall count neither for, nor against, a simple or two-thirds (%) majority.

Subsection viii. Voting by Proxy

Undergraduate Senators unable to attend meetings of the Undergraduate Senate or Committee meetings of the Senate may elect to use proxies as substitutes to cast votes in their stead. Proxies must be American University undergraduate students but shall exclude all stipended members of the executive branch. During voting procedures, the Clerk of the Undergraduate Senate must refer to the proxy as "Senator - proxy" in order for the vote to be recorded. Proxies maintain the full privileges granted to a Senator however, they may be instructed as to how to vote by the Senator they are proxying for.

Subsection ix. Voting by the Speaker

The Speaker is only permitted to vote on legislation whenever their vote affects the outcome. Subsection x. Announcing the Outcome of Voting

The presiding officer is required to announce the outcome of voting once the voting process is completed and the Clerk of the Undergraduate Senate must record it as such.

ARTICLE III. LEGISLATION

Section 1. Overview and Restrictions

Subsection i. Bills

All bills shall be seen twice before the Senate, unless a motion to waive first reading is successful by a two-thirds (%) vote. The presiding officer shall refer bills to their relevant committees following the completion of the first reading. This shall be communicated to all Senators during the meeting. All bills shall be passed with a simple majority unless they amend the governing documents and shall be considered binding only for the duration of the legislative term they were passed within.

Subsection ii. Resolutions

All resolutions shall be passed with a simple majority and shall be considered the binding opinion of the Undergraduate Senate only for the duration of the legislative term they were passed within.

Subsection iii. Directives

All directives shall be passed with a simple majority and shall be considered binding only for the duration of the legislative term they were passed within.

Section 2. Proposing Legislation

Subsection i. Overview

Only members of the Senate may propose legislation. The Speaker and the Speakers cabinet will provide for the proper means of submitting material upon assuming office by the issuance of a legislative order. This process shall be binding for the duration of the legislative term or until a new legislative order is issued altering that process. Members of the Undergraduate Senate may also introduce legislation upon the completion of all listed matters of New Business on the agenda. Exactly identical pieces of proposed legislation, that being those with no edits or changes, may not be submitted more than once within a single meeting of the Undergraduate Senate.

Subsection ii. Cosponsoring Legislation

Any member of the Undergraduate Senate may cosponsor legislation should the original sponsor allow it. Undergraduate Council Executives may also cosponsor legislation in an honorary capacity should they seek to do so.

Subsection iii. Standard Format

It is the responsibility of the presiding officer of the Undergraduate Senate to format all legislation and documents of the Senate in a uniform fashion. These duties may be transferred to the Clerk, the clerks appointed staff, or any other member or tangential member of the Speakers cabinet. The text of all legislation and governing documents shall be in the font named Georgia in type size ten (10).

Section 3. Consideration of Legislation

Subsection i. Overview

All legislation shall undergo the following processes when introduced into the full Undergraduate Senate: authors' introduction, questioning, debate, voting. Bills that are in their first reading shall only undertake authors' introduction and questioning. Throughout all steps in the consideration of legislation, the presiding officer shall continue to have the sole right of recognition and may do so in the process outlined in Article II of the Rules of Debate and Decorum. The presiding officer shall not have the right to change any of the procedures for the consideration of legislation described herein.

Subsubsection a. Authors' Introduction

The authors' introduction shall be set at five (5) minutes and allow the sponsor and any cosponsors time to explain their legislation. Should the authors conclude their introduction in less than five minutes, they may yield the remaining time. Additionally, should the authors require additional time, any Senator may motion for

an extension of the authors' introduction period which shall require a simple majority to pass.

Subsubsection b. Questioning Period

The questioning period shall be set at five (5) minutes and allow all Senators and other members of Student Government that retain speaking rights a chance to ask questions pertaining to the legislation at hand. Should there be no remaining questions before the five minutes has elapsed, the presiding officer may, with the consent of the authors, choose to close questioning. Additionally, should it become necessary, any Senator may motion for an extension of the questioning period which shall require a simple majority to pass. Questions in the questioning period are allowed to be directed at a member of Student Government who is not the presiding officer or Parliamentarian. However, questions must fit within expected decorum and the presiding officer or the Parliamentarian may rule questions out of order should they violate the Ethical and Judicial Standards or the expectations of decorum outlined within the Rules of Debate and Decorum.

Subsubsection c. Debate

The debate period shall be unlimited. However, members of Student Government with speaking rights shall only be allowed to speak twice for no more than a minute each time. Members may, however, receive additional time should another member yield their time after being recognized by the presiding officer to that member. Debate can be closed with a two-thirds (2/3) majority following a motion to close debate by a Senator. When no additional members are seeking recognition, the presiding officer may deem the period to be closed and they may proceed to voting.

Subsubsection d. Amendments

It is during the debate period that Senators may introduce amendments to the legislation at hand. Amendments are made through a motion and require a second. Following the second, the amendment will then undergo authors introduction, questioning, debate, and voting this time setting introduction and questioning at two (2) minutes each. With the exception of the time limit, the rules and procedures shall be identical to that of the consideration of legislation. Following the vote on the amendment, the legislation will be updated by the Undergraduate Senate Clerk if needed, and the debate period will resume.

Section 4. Refusal of Legislation by the Presiding Officer

The presiding officer is only empowered to refuse consideration of legislation brought forth before the Undergraduate Senate if such a proposal violates University regulation or local, state, or federal law, or advocates violation of the same. Should the presiding officer be obligated through the preceding clauses to strike down legislation, they will make every effort to not only fully articulate said reasons for doing so but also work with the sponsor of the offending legislation to correct any flaw(s) or inconsistencies that resulted in their action to strike down the brought forth legislation. Senators are encouraged to work with the Speaker, Parliamentarian, and the Speakers cabinet to fix the offending legislation.

ARTICLE IV. NOMINATION CONFIRMATIONS

Section 1. Overview

All nomination confirmations shall begin in the Committee on Rules and Privileges and will be added to the Agenda by the Speaker when they are notified of a nomination. A nominee shall proceed to a vote before the whole Senate if they pass the Committee by a simple majority.

Section 2. Consideration of Nominees

Subsection i. Overview

All nominees shall undergo the following processes in both the Committee on Rules and Privileges and the full Undergraduate Senate: nominee introduction, questioning, debate, voting. Throughout all steps in the consideration of nominees, the presiding officer shall continue to have the sole right of recognition and may do so in the process outlined in Article II of the Rules of Debate and Decorum. The presiding officer shall not have the right to change any of the procedures for the consideration of legislation described herein.

Subsubsection a. Nominee Introduction

The nominee introduction shall be set at five (5) minutes and allow the nominee to introduce themself, their goals for the position, and any relevant information they wish to share. Should the nominee conclude their introduction in less than five minutes, they may yield the remaining time. Additionally, should the nominee require additional time, any Senator may motion for an extension of the nominee introduction period which shall require a simple majority to pass.

Subsubsection b. Questioning Period

The questioning period shall be set at five (5) minutes and allow all Senators and other members of Student Government that retain speaking rights a chance to ask questions to the nominee on any relevant experience, goals for the position, and anything else that may be relevant. Should there be no remaining questions before the five minutes has elapsed, the presiding officer may, with the consent of the nominee, choose to close questioning. Additionally, should it become necessary, any Senator may motion for an extension of the questioning period which shall require a simple majority to pass. Questions in the questioning period are allowed to be directed at the nominee, however questions must fit within expected decorum and the presiding officer or the Parliamentarian may rule questions out of order should they violate the Ethical and Judicial Standards or the expectations of decorum outlined within the Rules of Debate and Decorum.

Subsubsection c. Debate

The nominee shall not be present in the space where debate is being conducted while it is being conducted. The debate period shall be unlimited. However, members of Student Government with speaking rights shall only be allowed to speak twice for no more than a minute each time. Members may, however, receive additional time should another member yield their time after being recognized by the presiding officer to that member. Debate can be closed with a two-thirds (2/3) majority following a motion to close debate by a Senator. When no additional members are seeking recognition, the presiding officer may deem the period to be closed and they may proceed to voting.

Subsection ii. Voting

All nominees shall require a simple majority in order to pass through the Committee on Rules and Privileges and be confirmed by the full Undergraduate Senate. All nomination confirmation votes shall be voted on by secret ballot as the default mechanism for voting. Any Senator may change the voting process on a nomination confirmation with a motion to vote by voice which shall require a simple majority to pass.

ARTICLE V. COMMITTEE CHAIR ELECTIONS

Section 1. Overview

All committee chair elections must be on the agenda sent out prior to the start of the meeting they are conducted within.

Section 2. Election Procedures and Voting

Subsection i. Election Procedures

All Committee Chair elections shall undergo the following processes: nomination period, nominee introduction, questioning, debate, voting. Throughout all steps in the committee chair elections, the presiding officer shall continue to have the sole right of recognition and may do so in the process outlined in Article II of the Rules of Debate and Decorum. The presiding officer shall not have the right to change any of the procedures for the consideration of legislation described herein.

Subsubsection a. Nomination Period

Upon the start of the committee chair election period, the presiding officer will ask the full Undergraduate Senate if there are any nominations. At this time, Undergraduate Senators may seek recognition to nominate a fellow Senator to the relevant committee chair position. Following the nomination, the presiding officer will ask for a second on the nomination. If there is a second, the presiding officer will then ask the Senator if they accept the nomination. Should the Senator accept, they will then be added to the agenda and be placed on the ballot. Nominees will give their presentation and have their questioning period in the order in which they were nominated.

Subsubsection b. Nominee Introduction

Upon the start of an individual's introductory period, all other nominees for that same position shall be removed from the room. The nominee introduction shall be set at five (5) minutes and allow the nominee to introduce themself, their goals for the position, and any relevant information they wish to share. Should the nominee conclude their introduction in less than five minutes, they may yield the remaining time. Additionally, should the nominee require additional time, any Senator may motion for an extension of the nominee introduction period which shall require a simple majority to pass.

Subsubsection c. Questioning Period

The questioning period shall be set at five (5) minutes and allow all Senators and other members of Student Government that retain speaking rights a chance to ask questions to the nominee on any relevant experience, goals for the position, and anything else that may be relevant. Should there be no remaining questions before the five minutes has elapsed, the presiding officer may, with the consent of the nominee, choose to close questioning. Additionally, should it become necessary, any Senator may motion for an extension of the questioning period which shall require a simple majority to pass. Questions in the questioning period are allowed to be directed at the nominee, however questions must fit within expected decorum and the presiding officer or the Parliamentarian may rule questions out of order should they violate the Ethical and Judicial Standards or the expectations of decorum outlined within the Rules of Debate and Decorum. Following the completion of the questioning period, the nominee will exit the room and the next nominee will be allowed back in.

Subsubsection d. Debate

Following the conclusion of all nominee introduction and question periods, there shall be a period of debate. All nominees for the position being considered will be removed for the duration of the debate period. The debate period shall be unlimited. However, members of Student Government with speaking rights shall only be allowed to speak twice for no more than a minute each time. Members may, however, receive additional time should another member yield their time after being recognized by the presiding officer to that member. Debate can be closed with a two-thirds (2/3) majority following a motion to close debate by a Senator. When no additional

members are seeking recognition, the presiding officer may deem the period to be closed and they may proceed to voting.

Subsection ii. Voting Procedures

Following the conclusion of debate, all nominees will be allowed to return and all Senators will vote by secret ballot. Undergraduate Senators must all be allowed to vote for any of the nominees, to abstain from voting, or to write-in an additional candidate. The Clerk will report the vote totals and the nominee who commands a plurality of the votes will be elected Chair of that committee.

ARTICLE VI. SENATE COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

Section 1. Operating Procedures

Subsection i. Overview

Committees shall operate under the rules and procedures outlined herein. Any rules and procedures of Undergraduate Senate committees not explicitly mentioned in the Rules of Debate and Decorum shall be at the discretion of the committee's presiding officer. However, committees should operate in a similar fashion as the full Undergraduate Senate does as outlined in the Bylaws and Rules of Debate and Decorum.

Subsection ii. Speaking Rights

All undergraduate students and members of Student Government shall have full speaking rights in all Undergraduate Senate committee meetings with the exception of the Committee on Rules and Privileges and the Special Committee on Finance. Speaking rights in the Committee on Rules and Privileges and the Special Committee on Finance shall be granted by the presiding officer of the committee as they see fit; however, the speaking rights of members of the committee shall never be abridged. Anyone speaking in committee is expected to conform to the rules outlined in the Ethical and Judicial Standards and the Rules of Debate and Decorum.

Subsection iii. Voting Rights

Only Undergraduate Senators who have been assigned to, or elected to, the committee may vote on legislation and motions. While other Senators may be present, they cannot vote within a committee they are not a part of.

Section 2. Deputy Chair

Subsection i. Election

At the first committee meeting held of the legislative term, the committee chair shall conduct an election for the deputy chair of that committee. The process for electing a deputy committee chair shall be identical to that of the process for electing a committee chair in the full Undergraduate Senate. Should the deputy chair resign or be removed, the committee chair shall place the deputy chair election on every subsequent agenda until the position has been filled.

Subsection ii. Role

The deputy committee chair shall serve as presiding officer in an acting capacity when the committee chair has resigned or is unable to attend a meeting. A deputy committee chair shall also assist the committee chair in the administrative tasks of the committee should the chair request such support.

Subsection iii. Removal

Deputy committee chairs may be removed from their position by a vote of no confidence held within the committee. This process will be identical to that outlined in the Bylaws regarding the removal of committee chairs and the Speaker.

Section 3. Consideration of Legislation

Subsection i. Legislation Referred to Committee

Upon referral, the committee will consider the legislation before the next regularly scheduled full Undergraduate Senate meeting. Should the committee fail to meet and consider the referred legislation by the next regularly scheduled Senate meeting, the legislation will be considered to have cleared the committee by default. The sponsor will make themselves available for presentation and questioning at this meeting. The committee process for the consideration of referred legislation shall be identical to that of the consideration of legislation within the full Undergraduate Senate. When the debate period has concluded, the committee will vote on the legislation. Should that vote pass, it shall be sent to the Undergraduate Senate Clerk with any and all amendments passed by the committee. Upon the second reading of this legislation, the presiding officer of the committee, or their designee, shall report on what amendments were made and any relevant points of discussion.

Subsection ii. Legislation Originating in Committee

Resolutions and Directives may originate in an Undergraduate Senate committee. The consideration of that legislation shall be identical to that of the consideration of legislation within the full Undergraduate Senate. When the debate period has concluded, the committee will vote on the legislation. Should that vote pass, it shall be sent to the full Undergraduate Senate for their consideration.

Section 4. Committee Meeting Agenda & Notes

All committee meeting agendas and notes should be reported to the Undergraduate Senate Clerk and Historian for official records to be recorded in the Undergraduate Senate history.

ARTICLE VII. AGENDA OF THE UNDERGRADUATE SENATE

Section 1. Overview

Subsection i. Format

While the presiding officer generally enjoys the right to format the agenda in whatever way they wish, the following sections shall be required: Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of the Agenda, Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes, Public Comment, Reports from the Officers, Old Business, New Business, Public Comment, Good of the Order, and Adjournment.

Subsection ii. Publishment

The Agenda of the Undergraduate Senate shall be made available to all members of the Student Body and Student Government at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the start of the meeting.

Section 2. Section Guidelines

Subsection i. Public Comment

Public comment shall be a designated time which provides the opportunity for any student or faculty/staff member to address the Senate. The two (2) sections of public comment held in every Senate meeting shall be no less than (3) minutes each. The presiding officer enjoys the right to enforce an appropriate level of decorum during this time.

Subsection ii. Reports from the Officers

All Student Government Executives shall provide a report detailing their activities as well as any new initiatives they wish to pursue at every other Undergraduate Senate meeting during the Reports from the Officers section of the agenda. Additionally, the Executives are expected to make themselves or a member of their cabinet available at every meeting for questioning both during this section and throughout the meeting.

Subsection iii. Good of the Order

Good of the Order shall be a time during which any member of Student Government may address the Undergraduate Senate for the purpose of expressing opinions or making statements designed to improve the Senate. The presiding officer enjoys the right to enforce an appropriate level of decorum during this time.

Section 3. Submission of Legislation for the Agenda

When a piece of legislation is submitted to the presiding officer, it will be placed on the agenda for the closest regular meeting. At that time, the Undergraduate Senate Clerk will assign the legislation a number and report it by number and title.

ARTICLE VIII. GENERAL OPERATIONS OF THE UNDERGRADUATE SENATE

Section 1. Suspension of the Rules

At any time during an Undergraduate Senate meeting, Undergraduate Senators may motion to temporarily suspend specific rules in order to operate under different ones. This motion must be specific in what rules are being suspending and for what purpose and shall require a two-thirds (¾) vote of all Undergraduate Senators present

Section 2. Role of the Parliamentarian in the Senate

The Parliamentarian shall serve as the sole authority on the Undergraduate Senate's meeting procedures to ensure compliance with the governing documents and the Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure. As a non-partisan member of the Student Government, it shall be the responsibility of the Parliamentarian to ensure the Senate and its members act in accordance with the governing documents.

Section 3. Maintenance of the Journal

It is the responsibility of the Undergraduate Senate Clerk to ensure careful records are kept of Senate meetings with attention paid to attendance, content of presentations, questioning, debate, member's voting records, and Senate procedure. Should there be no Clerk, the Parliamentarian can be charged with recording the minutes by the Speaker. A senator may also attest to the minutes.

Last Updated: January 2022 By: The Seventeenth Undergraduate Senate Speaker Ashley Bastin Senator Ryan Hale Senator Andrew Gamble