



The Student Government Association (SGA)
Accountability and Ethics Handbook
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ARTICLE I – ACCOUNTABILITY

Section 1. Duties and Adherence to the By-Law

Subsection A. Executive Branch

1. Attendance

a. General Body Meetings

- i. All Executive and Cabinet members are required to attend all General Body Meetings through the Committee Reports portion of the agenda, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA By-laws.
- ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 1. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning as to his or her situation.
 2. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Constitution and By-laws Committee for review.

3. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning as to his or her situation.
 4. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues five unexcused absences, he or she will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.
 - a. If an Executive or Cabinet member is dismissed from the SGA, he or she may appeal to the Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Speaker of the Legislature at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal.
- iii. If there is legislation on the second week of the legislative reading calendar for which an Executive or Cabinet member either serves as an expert or in which the legislation was sent to his or her committee, he or she must remain in attendance until the bill in question has been debated and voted upon. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.
- b. Executive Cabinet Meetings
- i. Every Cabinet member must attend every Cabinet meeting, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA By-laws.
 - ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 1. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning as to his or her situation.
 2. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Constitution and By-laws Committee for review.
 3. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning as to his or her situation.
 4. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues five unexcused absences, he or she will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.
 - a. If an Executive or Cabinet member is dismissed from the SGA, he or she may appeal to the Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Speaker of the Legislature at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal.
 - iii. Regardless of attendance, each Cabinet member is required to fill out a Cabinet Updates Document before the start of each meeting when provided with one by the Chair of the Cabinet, unless physically unable to do so.
 1. The Chair of the Cabinet has the discretion to issue a progress review to any member who fails to carry out this task on a consistent basis.
 2. If the member then fails to submit the progress review to the chair in a timely manner, the member will be brought before the Constitution and By-laws Committee for review.

- iv. In the case of Full Executive Cabinet Meetings, each Executive member is held to the same standards as written in i through iii of Section 1, Subsection A-1-b.
- c. Executive Board Meetings
 - i. See the SGA By-laws.
- 2. Decorum
 - a. General Body Meetings
 - i. All Executive, Cabinet, and Committee reports are to be as concise as possible, as per respect for the length of the meetings. If reports begin to continue for an unreasonable amount of time, it is at the discretion of the Speaker of the Legislature to limit the executive board member who is speaking.
 - ii. When not participating in the legislative agenda, all Executive and Cabinet members are regarded as gallery observers, and should keep conversation to a minimal frequency and volume. The Speaker of the Legislature reserves the right to dismiss members of the gallery who serve as distractions.

Subsection B. Legislative Branch

- 1. Attendance
 - a. General Body Meetings
 - i. All Legislative members are required to attend all General Body Meetings except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA By-laws.
 - ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 - 1. If a Legislative member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning.
 - 2. If a Legislative member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Constitution and By-laws Committee for review.
 - 3. If a Legislative member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning that their actions may result in dismissal.
 - 4. If a Legislative member accrues five unexcused absences, he or she will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.
 - a. If dismissed, the member will have until the next voting meeting to submit an appeal to the SGA Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Speaker of the Legislature at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal.
 - b. Committee Meetings
 - i. All Legislative members are required to sit on at least two committees, and are required to attend all meetings of the committees upon which they sit, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA By-laws.
 - ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 - 1. If a Legislative member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning.

2. If a Legislative member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Constitution and By-laws Committee for review.
 3. If a Legislative member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning that their actions may result in dismissal.
 4. If a Legislative member accrues five unexcused absences, he or she will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.
 - a. If dismissed, the member will have until the next voting meeting to submit an appeal to the SGA Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Speaker of the Legislature at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal.
- c. Training Sessions and Retreat
- i. All Legislative members are required to attend all legislative training sessions and retreats, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA By-laws.
 - ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 1. If a Legislative member accrues an unexcused absence, the member will receive a formal warning.
 2. If a Legislative member accrues a second unexcused absence, he or she will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.
 - a. If dismissed, the member will have until the next voting meeting to submit an appeal to the SGA Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Speaker of the Legislature at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal.
- d. Finance Workshops
- i. If a Legislative member is absent from retreat, and therefore misses the finance workshop that is included, the member will have his or her right to vote suspended on legislation that requires funding until he or she attends an appropriate finance workshop substitute.
 - ii. Legislative Budget Workshops
 1. All Legislative members are required to attend all Legislative Budget Workshops, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA By-laws.
 2. If a Legislative member is absent from a Legislative Budget Workshop, unexcused or excused, the member will forfeit his or her ability to debate, write, and vote on budget-related legislation.
 3. Legislative members who are absent from a Legislative Budget Workshop for an excusable reason will be provided the opportunity to make up the Legislative Budget Workshop in advance of the meeting in which the budget will be voted on. Upon completion of a make up budget workshop, the Legislative member will regain the ability to debate, write, and vote on budget-related legislation.

- iii. Legislative Appeals Workshops
 1. All Legislative members are required to attend all Legislative Appeals Workshops, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA By-laws.
 2. If a Legislative member is absent from a Legislative Appeals Workshop, unexcused or excused, the member will forfeit his or her ability to debate and vote on the appeals.
 3. Legislative members who are absent from a Legislative Appeals Workshop for an excusable reason will be provided the opportunity to make up the Legislative Appeals Workshop in advance of the meeting in which appeals will be voted on. Upon completion of a make up appeals workshop, the Legislative member will regain the ability to debate and vote on the appeals.
 - e. SGA Sponsored Events
 - i. Over winter break, Legislative Leadership will verify the accuracy of each Legislative member's recorded attendance of SGA sponsored events according to his or her mid-year report.
 - ii. If a Legislative member is not on pace to fulfill his or her required attendance of SGA sponsored events as of the end of the first semester, the Speaker of the Legislature will notify the member of his or her situation.
- 2. Office Hours
 - a. If office hours are not being completed as stated in the SGA By-laws, the representative in question will be required to report to the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - b. If the representative in question does not report to the Constitution and By-laws Committee, he or she shall provide an explanation to the Legislature at the next General Body Meeting.
- 3. Constituent Outreach
 - a. All representatives are responsible to complete an hour of constituent outreach weekly.
- 4. Service Initiatives
 - a. Fall Semester
 - i. Representatives must submit bimonthly service initiative progress reports to the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - b. Spring Semester
 - i. Representatives must submit monthly service initiative progress reports to the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - c. Once a service initiative is completed, and the Constitution and By-laws Committee is notified, submission of progress reports will no longer be required.
- 5. Sponsor Legislation
 - a. Legislative members are required to sponsor at least one piece of legislation during his or her term.
 - b. The Legislative Leadership will maintain records as to which representatives have sponsored legislation, and will address those who have not done so.

Section 2. Performance Reviews

Subsection A. Executive Branch

1. The Constitution and By-laws Committee may request that any member of the Executive Branch submit a performance review.
2. Executive Members
 - a. Executive members shall submit a Mid-Year Report to the Chair of the Executive Cabinet, as well as the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - b. Executive members shall submit an Annual Report to the Chair of the Executive Cabinet, as well as the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - c. Executive members are to participate in one-on-one meetings with the Chief of Staff, at the discretion of either the President or Chief of Staff.

Subsection B. Legislative Branch

1. The Constitution and By-laws Committee may request that any member of the Legislative Branch submit a performance review.
2. Committee Performance Reviews
 - a. Standing committees shall submit an Initial Report to the Chair of Committee Board that shall consist of committee goals and a list of members.
 - b. Standing committees shall submit a Mid-Year Report to the Chair of Committee Board, as well as the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - c. Standing committees shall submit an Annual Report to the Chair of Committee Board, as well as the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - d. Ad hoc committees shall submit a report to the Speaker of the Legislature and the President, as well as the Constitution and By-laws Committee, upon completion of objectives.
 - e. Committee members shall submit an anonymous review of the chair of each committee that they sit on at the discretion of the Chair of Committee Board.
3. Legislative Performance Reviews
 - a. Legislative members shall submit a Mid-Year Report to the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - b. Legislative members shall submit an Annual Report to the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - c. The Mid-year and Annual Reports shall outline the following:
 - i. Legislation written thus far
 - ii. Committee work
 - iii. Constituent outreach
 - iv. Attendance at SGA sponsored events
 - v. Legislative contacts
 - vi. Service initiative update
 - d. Legislative members shall participate in a one-on-one meeting with the Legislative Leadership by the third General Body meeting in October. Legislative members shall participate in additional one-on-one meetings at the discretion of the Speaker of the Legislature.

Section 3. Investigations

Subsection A. Procedure

1. Investigations into the conduct of any member of the Student Government Association are to be administered by the Constitution and By-laws Committee upon written request.
2. Upon receipt of a written request, the Constitution and By-laws Committee shall discuss the merits of the request. If the request is deemed to have sufficient cause for an investigation, the Constitution and By-laws Committee shall open an investigation.
3. Once an investigation is open, the Constitution and By-laws Committee shall notify the accused party of his or her referral via email.
4. Both parties, accused and claimant, shall be required to testify before the Constitution and By-laws Committee. Both parties shall have the option to submit further written testimony; however, this does not preclude them from testifying in person.
5. The Constitution and By-laws Committee may request any pertinent information. All information that is requested of the parties must be submitted. This includes:
 - a. Emails and other correspondence
 - b. Responding to questions while testifying
 - c. Relevant documents

If, during the course of the investigation, it is discovered that any party is concealing any pertinent information, they will be considered impeding the investigation. The penalty for impeding an investigation is a recommendation for impeachment.

6. After all information is submitted to the Constitution and By-laws Committee, the committee shall deliberate on the referral and come to a decision. Upon arriving at a decision, the committee will produce a written report and take necessary action.
7. The Constitution and By-laws Committee shall present the written report to the Legislature only in circumstances in which the decision of the committee is to recommend that the Legislature carry out any of the actions listed in Article V, Section 4, Subsection C-9 of the SGA By-laws.

ARTICLE II – ETHICS GUIDELINES

Section 1. Code of Conduct

Subsection A. Respect

1. One should treat others, as they would like others to treat oneself. One should not treat others, as they would not like others to treat oneself.
 - a. If a member has an issue with the performance of another individual in the organization, they should first address them in private.
 - b. Members should not single out other members of the organization in a public setting without first making every effort to do so privately.
2. SGA members should treat the work environment with the respect that members would treat their own personal environment or they would expect others to treat their own personal environment.

Subsection B. Honesty

1. During official meetings, and in official reports, if any SGA member purposefully states falsities to another member, it will be considered an act of perjury, punishable by recommendation for impeachment.
2. SGA members are expected to accurately and honestly report the completion of required activities.

Subsection C. General Body Meeting Decorum

1. When addressing other representatives, SGA members are to refer to them as “the Honorable...” and then their position title.
2. SGA members should not be talking unless they have explicitly been given the floor.
3. Members of the gallery should remain quiet and respectful during the course of meetings. If they need to have a conversation, they should leave the room to do so.
4. SGA members should not leave their seats to talk with other individuals.
5. Laptops should remain closed from the start of the General Body Meeting until the end of Speaker’s Time, with the exception of the Legislative Secretary and the Legislative Coordinator and Parliamentarian.
6. Food shall not be eaten from the start of the General Body Meeting until the end of General Announcements and Student Concerns.
7. The direction of conversation during debate should remain on task, and not deviate to tangents that are not essential to the topic at hand.
8. SGA members should remain conscious of the public nature of SGA General Body Meetings; what may be appropriate in other settings may not be appropriate at an open meeting.
 - a. When speaking at a meeting, refrain from using any profanity or derogatory slurs.
9. Dress Code
 - a. All Legislative members are required to dress in business casual for General Body Meetings, as defined by the Speaker of the Legislature during the SGA Retreat.
 - b. All Legislative members are required to dress in business formal for General Body Meetings when specified in advance by the Speaker of the Legislature, typically as a result of, but not exclusively, a special guest speaker.

Subsection D. Communication Decorum

1. For all SGA Listservs, one should express oneself as if it is a public forum.
2. Proper etiquette should be used when typing messages and/or emails to other members of the organization, as well as to others on behalf of your position for the SGA.
3. Never send an email or message that you would be embarrassed about being read aloud in a public setting.

Section 2. Reporting Misconduct

Subsection A. Knowledge of Misconduct

1. Any member of the SGA having reason to believe that a member of the SGA has demonstrated conduct in violation of the SGA Constitution, the SGA By-laws, or the SGA Accountability and Ethics Handbook should report the matter, through either writing or email, to the Chair of the Constitution and By-laws Committee. Allegations addressed to another member, committee, or committee chair shall be promptly

forwarded to the Constitution and By-laws Committee.

Section 3. Conflicts of Interest

Subsection A. Definition

1. Any SGA member who holds an executive membership to a student group is required to recuse himself or herself from voting on the topics regarding the student group they belong to.

Subsection B. Chain of Command

1. Executive Branch
 - a. All Executive Board members should report all issues to the Chief of Staff.
 - b. If the issue pertains to the Chief of Staff, the member should report directly to the President.
 - c. The Chief of Staff and the President should relay all reported issues to the Chair of the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
2. Legislative Branch
 - a. Legislature
 - i. All Legislative members should report all issues, to the Speaker of the Legislature.
 - ii. If the issue pertains to the Speaker of the Legislature, the member should report to the Speaker Pro Tempore.
 - iii. The Speaker of the Legislature and the Speaker Pro Tempore should relay all reported issues to the Chair of the Constitution and By-laws Committee.
 - b. Committee Chairs
 - i. All committee chairs should report all issues pertaining to their specific committees to the Chair of the Committee Board.
 - ii. If the issue pertains to the Chair of the Committee Board, the committee chair should report to the Speaker of the Legislature.
 - iii. The Chair of Committee Board and the Speaker of the Legislature should relay all reported issues to the Chair of the Constitution and By-laws Committee.

Subsection C. Representative Positions

1. During any situation in which an SGA member is required to lobby on behalf of the SGA, he or she is to accurately represent the views of the organization, while not expressing his or her personal opinions.

Section 4. Civil Rights and Harassment

Subsection A. Discrimination

1. SGA members shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, age, class standing, disability, country of origin, or any other basis prohibited by applicable law.

Subsection B. Comfort and Safety

1. SGA members shall strive, to their best ability, to make all members and non-members feel comfortable and welcome in the organization.
2. If an SGA member causes any individual to feel uncomfortable or unsafe, the target may address the issue personally or enlist a trusted member to tell the offender to cease the behavior in question.
3. If the offending party does not cease, or the action is more serious, the target can write a formal complaint to the Constitution and By-laws Committee, and the committee shall review the incident(s) and the offender's membership of the SGA.

Section 5. Gifts and Transactions

Subsection A. Gifts

1. SGA members shall not accept gifts from an SGA recognized student group including, but not limited to:
 - a. Graft (monetary gifts)
 - b. Tangible Gifts
 - c. Food (while representing the SGA)
2. If there is an accusation of accepting gifts, the SGA member will be required to come before the Constitution and By-laws Committee, and will face the possibility of dismissal from the SGA.

Subsection B. The Transacting of Votes

1. SGA members may not sell, trade, or lend his or her voting rights.
2. Any attempt to participate in a transaction involving SGA votes is punishable by recommendation for impeachment.

Section 6. Use of SGA Finances and Resources

Section A. Responsible Behavior

1. SGA members are to refrain from using public resources - that have been allocated for use by the SGA - for the purpose of private gain or personal use; this includes SGA funds, equipment, supplies, facilities, as well as other resources.

Section 7. Press and Media

Section A. Interacting with the Press and Media

1. SGA members should only speak with the media when confident about the topic of discussion.

2. If contacted by a reporter, SGA members are to contact the Director of Communications after being interviewed.
3. If an SGA member is unsure about a certain topic of discussion, it is advised that he or she direct the reporter to contact the Director of Communications.
4. SGA members shall review and follow, to the best of their ability, the “Talking Tips to the Media” that shall be distributed during the SGA Retreat.

Section 8. Representation and Conduct

Subsection A. Student Government Association

1. SGA members shall have a strong understanding that SGA exists for the students first and will show that by actively listening to our constituents and tailoring our work around their needs and concerns.
2. SGA members shall respect the University, their peers, and themselves.
3. SGA members shall respect and adhere to the provisions of the Student Honor Code.
4. SGA members shall strive to uphold ethics and accountability, as well as uphold honesty and reliability.
5. SGA members shall constantly seek to better the University through their actions and initiatives.
6. SGA members shall strive to provide the most opportunities for our peers, and strive to exceed the expectations of his or her specific roles.
7. SGA members shall strive, to the best of their ability, to meet official time commitments and manage his or her time and personal commitments.

Subsection B. Office Being Held

1. The purpose of the SGA is to act as a representative body for the undergraduate student population at the University of Maryland. When voting on an issue, it is pivotal that all SGA members consider the opinion of his or her constituency rather than voting based solely upon his or her personal opinion.