

# The Constitution of the Vanderbilt Student Government

## PREAMBLE

We the undergraduate students of Vanderbilt University, in order to: form a cohesive and responsible student government, act on behalf of students needs and interests, establish partnerships with members of the faculty and administration, contribute to strengthening the bonds among members of the student body, improve the cultural, social, recreational, and intellectual character of the campus, and empower undergraduates to foster a living-learning community, do hereby establish this Constitution for the Vanderbilt Student Government of Vanderbilt University.

## ARTICLE I. Names, Powers, Objectives

### Section I. The Name of the Organization

The name of this organization shall be the Vanderbilt Student Government of Vanderbilt University, hereafter in this Constitution referred to as VSG.

### Section II. Purposes and Objectives

The purposes and objectives shall be:

- a. To empower the undergraduate student body;
- b. To advise and make recommendations to the administration on policy matters;
- c. To provide a forum for relevant campus issues that is accessible to student leaders;
- d. To develop character and leadership aptitude within the body;
- e. To contribute to the sense of community and connection across campus;
- f. To engage students in the intellectual and social life of the University;
- g. To promote the total well-being of each undergraduate student.

### Section III. Membership and Officer Eligibility

#### Clause 1: Membership

All duly registered undergraduate students of Vanderbilt University shall be party to the Vanderbilt Student Government and shall be subject to this Constitution and its official documents..

#### Clause 2: Officer Eligibility

As a requisite to entering office, all duly elected or appointed officers shall be required to have a minimum 2.5 cumulative grade point average, live on campus (including Greek housing), and be a full-time student.

Elected or appointed officers may only hold one position at a time.

## **ARTICLE II. Governmental Composition and Structure**

### **Section I. Executive Board**

The Executive Board shall consist of:

- a. Student Body President
- b. Executive Vice President
- c. Speaker of the Senate
- d. Speaker of the House
- e. Chief of Staff

The requirements of these offices are given in Article III of this document.

### **Section II. The Senate**

The Senate shall be composed of the Speaker of the Senate, six Senators and four School Council Presidents. The powers of this body and the requirements of its members are given in Article IV of this document.

### **Section III. Committees**

There shall exist a body of committees overseen by the Executive Vice President. These committees shall be governed according to the statutes on committees.

The powers and compositions of these committees are given in the statutes to the constitution.

Ad hoc committees may be created at the discretion of the executive board.

### **Section IV. The House**

The House shall be composed of the Speaker of the House, Area Coordinators, Area Representatives, and House Presidents. The powers of this body and the requirements of its members are given in Article VI of this document.

### **Section V. The Cabinet**

The Cabinet shall be composed according to Article VII of this document.

## ARTICLE III. The Executive Board

### Section I. The Student Body President

#### Clause 1. Elections

The Student Body President shall be elected by the undergraduate student body by means of a simple majority vote annually. All fully enrolled undergraduate students of Vanderbilt University shall be eligible to participate in the voting process. The presidential candidate shall choose a running mate to serve as Executive Vice President. A presidential candidate shall have served no less than one full academic year as an officer of VSG.

#### Clause 2. Duties

The duties of the Student Body President shall be:

- a. To have administrative responsibility for carrying out the agenda of VSG;
- b. To serve as the official representative of VSG to University committees, student groups, and visiting dignitaries on campus;
- c. To have executive oversight and veto power over all motions passed by both the House and Senate;
- d. To make all official appointments as outlined by the constitution to ensure the adequate and efficient administration of VSG related functions and institutions, to be confirmed by a simple majority vote of confirmation by both the House and Senate;
- e. To establish, under the auspices of VSG and with confirmation of membership by both the House and Senate, *ad hoc* committees to address pressing student issues which may arise and do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Standing Committees herein established.

### Section II. Executive Vice President

#### Clause 1. Elections

The Executive Vice Presidential candidate shall run on a ticket with the Student Body Presidential candidate. A vice presidential candidate shall have served no less than one full academic year as an officer of VSG.

#### Clause 2. Duties

The duties of the Executive Vice President shall be:

- a. To oversee and serve as an *ex-officio* member of the VSG committees;

- b. To serve as a liaison between VSG Committee Chairs and the Executive Board;
- c. To promote the agenda of VSG and the Student Body President at campus events and with University administrators;
- d. To maintain VSG Committee time requirements, as submitted by VSG Committee Chairs, of House Presidents and Judicial Vice Presidents;
- e. To help establish and enforce guidelines for *ad hoc* committees;
- f. To serve as Student Body President in the event that the President is unable to fulfill his or her duties or is removed from office.
- g. To appoint a new Executive Vice President who shall be confirmed by the Senate and the House in the event that the President leaves office before the end of his or her term.

#### Clause 3. Vacancy and Succession

Should the Executive Vice President resign or be unable to carry out his or her duties, the Student Body President shall nominate a new Executive Vice president subject to confirmation by the Senate and the House.

### **Section III. Speaker of the Senate**

#### Clause 1. Elections

The Speaker of the Senate shall be elected by a simple majority vote by the standing Senate immediately following the election of the Student Body President and Executive Vice President of each year. The Speaker shall have served on the Senate during the year directly preceding his or her term of office.

#### Clause 2. Duties

The duties of the Speaker of the Senate shall be:

- a. To preside over the Senate.
- b. To coordinate and set the agenda for all Senate meetings.
- c. To oversee and coordinate all activities of the Senate.
- d. To maintain accountability for individual Senators and their performance academically, socially and in respect to his or her office.
- e. To serve as chief representative of the Senate to the Executive Board.
- f. To vote on senatorial resolutions only in the event of a tie.

#### Clause 3. Vacancy and Succession

Should the Speaker of the Senate resign, be removed from office, or be unable to carry out his or her duties, the Student Body President shall

nominate a current member of the Senate to the position of Speaker of the Senate, subject to a simple majority vote of confirmation by the Senate.

#### **Section IV. Speaker of the House**

##### Clause 1. Elections

The Speaker of the House shall be elected by a simple majority vote, by the standing House immediately following the elections of the Student Body President and Executive Vice President. The Speaker shall have served on the House during the year directly preceding his or her term of office.

##### Clause 2. Duties

The duties of the Speaker of the House shall be:

- a. To preside over the House.
- b. To coordinate and set the agenda for all House meetings.
- c. To oversee and coordinate all activities of the House.
- d. To maintain accountability for individual House members and their performance academically, socially and in respect to his or her office.
- e. To serve as chief representative of the House to the Executive Board.
- f. To vote on house resolutions only in the event of a tie.

##### Clause 3. Vacancy and Succession

Should Speaker of the House resign, be removed for office or be unable to carry out his or her duties, the Student Body President shall nominate a current member of the House subject to a simple majority vote of confirmation by the House.

#### **Section V. Chief of Staff**

##### Clause 1. Appointment

The Chief of Staff shall be appointed by the Student Body President following the election of Speakers of the Senate and House. The Senate and the House shall confirm this appointment by a simple majority vote. One full year of involvement in VSG is required for eligibility of appointment.

##### Clause 2. Duties

The duties of the Chief of Staff shall be:

- a. To manage and oversee the VSG budget.
- b. To oversee the VSG cabinet
- c. To serve as the chief representative of cabinet on the Executive Board.

### Clause 3. Vacancy and Succession

Should the Chief of Staff resign be removed from office or be unable to carry out his or her duties, the Student Body President shall appoint a new Chief of Staff. This appointment shall be confirmed by a simple majority vote of both the Senate and House.

## **ARTICLE IV. The Senate**

### **Section I. Composition**

The Senate shall consist of:

- a. Speaker of the Senate
- b. Six Senators, each with one vote
  1. Three Arts and Science students
  2. One Engineering student
  3. One Peabody student
  4. One Blair student
- c. Four School Council Presidents, each with one vote
  1. One Arts and Science Council President
  2. One Engineering Council President
  3. One Peabody Council President
  4. One Blair Council President
- d. A non-voting Honor Council Representative

### **Section II. Elections**

The Speaker of the Senate shall be elected according to Article III, Section 3, Clause 1 of this document.

The Senators shall be elected by the undergraduate student body in a simple majority vote following the election of the Executive Board.

The School Council Presidents shall be elected according to their school's respective constitution.

The Speaker shall ask the Honor Council to appoint a representative during the first week of the school year.

### **Section III. Duties**

The duties of the Senate shall be:

- a. To represent the best interests of the undergraduate student body.
- b. To voice student concerns regarding academic affairs.
- c. To vote on all resolutions presented to the Senate.
- d. Senators shall co-chair a VSG committee.
- e. School Council Presidents shall oversee their respective school council and are responsible for all procedures, agendas and activities in their respective committees.
- f. The Senate must maintain a quorum of no less than 2/3 of its members present in order to vote on any matter.

## **ARTICLE V. VSG Committees**

### **Section I. Composition**

The VSG Standing Committees shall be determined by the statutes to the constitution.

Additional ad hoc committees shall be created whenever the President deems it necessary, in order to ensure the efficient functioning of VSG. The leadership of this committee shall be confirmed by a simple majority vote of both the House and the Senate.

Each Committee shall consist of:

- a. Two co-chairs
  1. One Senator, whose placement shall be determined by the Executive Board.
  2. One undergraduate student to be appointed by the Student Body President and confirmed by a simple majority vote of the Senate and the House.
- b. The Executive Vice President as an *ex-officio* member

House Presidents and Judicial Vice Presidents shall commit no less than ten hours to the committee to which they are assigned by the Executive Board. Their involvement shall primarily include the implementation of projects and events that fall under the structure and functioning of their respective committee.

### **Section II. Duties**

1. To seek student input from constituents falling under the jurisdiction of their respective committees.
2. To report House President and Judicial Vice President involvement

and actions to the Executive Vice President.

3. To continually improve student and campus life through the resources and appropriate channels of their committee.

## **ARTICLE VI. The House**

### **Section I. Composition**

The House shall consist of:

- a. Speaker of the House
- b. Non-voting Programming Directors, henceforth referred to as PDs
  1. One PD for the Commons Area
  2. Additional PDs for the upperclassmen areas as deemed necessary by the Executive Board
- c. 24 Area Representatives to represent each of the six residential areas on campus: the Commons, Highland Quad, Branscomb, Alumni Lawn, Towers, and Kissam
  1. The number of representatives from each area is proportional to the size of the areas, and is to be decided at the discretion of the Attorney General
  2. One Area Representative will represent students living in Greek and off-campus housing

### **Section II. Elections**

- a. The Speaker of the House shall be elected according to Article III, Section 5, Clause 1 of this document.
- b. The PDs shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House during the Spring semester following the election of the Speaker of the House, pending ratification in the Senate.
- c. The Area Representatives and House Presidents shall be elected as is outlined in Article VIII, Section III.

### **Section III. Duties**

The duties of the House shall be:

- a. To represent the interests of the undergraduate student body.
- b. To voice student concerns regarding residence life.
- c. To vote on all resolutions presented to the house.
- d. The House shall maintain a quorum of no less than 2/3 of its members present in order to vote on any matter.



## **ARTICLE VII. The Cabinet**

### **Section I. Composition**

The Cabinet shall be composed of the following officers:

- a. Chief of Staff
- b. Treasurer
- c. Attorney General
- d. Other offices shall be determined by the Statutes to this document

All Cabinet members shall be appointed by the Student Body President and confirmed by the standing Senate and House.

The Attorney General may appoint a Constitution Committee for review of constitutional issues presented to VSG.

The Treasurer may appoint a Finance Committee to review and manage budgetary issues presented to VSG.

### **Section II. Duties**

1. The duties of the Chief of Staff are outlined in Article III, Section V, Clause 2 of this document.
2. The duties of the Treasurer are to oversee the calendar budget and finance committee, including purchase orders and reimbursement requests as further outlined in Article XII.
3. The duties of the Attorney General shall be:
  - a. To act as chief parliamentarian of VSG.
  - b. To oversee all VSG elections.
  - c. To be responsible for ensuring the legality of VSG activities with respect to all VSG and University policies.
  - d. To initiate investigative procedures for removal from office in accordance with Article IX.
  - e. To maintain a complete and accurate record of all resolutions which are formally considered by the House and Senate.
  - f. To appoint and oversee the Constitution Committee.
4. The duties of the Constitution Committee shall be determined by the Attorney General annually. Members of this committee shall be VSG Officers and shall be selected by the Attorney General.

## **ARTICLE VIII. House Councils**

### **Section I. Composition**

House Councils shall be composed of the following members:

- a. House President
- b. Hall Representatives

### **Section II. Function**

The House Councils shall serve as a communication link between the individual houses and VSG. They shall also plan and execute programs of interest to their houses. Each House Council shall assume the responsibility for enforcing regulations made under the provision of Residential Autonomy.

### **Section III. House Autonomy**

Each House shall have autonomy to determine and to enforce, in conformation to duly established University rules and procedures, its regulations in the following areas.

- a. Areas, occasions, and time for the use of alcoholic beverages (legal age permitting).
- b. Hours of visitation.
- c. Provisions for quiet hours.
- d. Liability of residents for guests.
- e. Required attendance at House Council meetings.
- f. Sale of condoms.
- g. Any other item, change, or additional service deemed appropriate jointly by the Office of Housing and Residential Education and the voting members of VSG.

### **Section IV. Elections**

Within 30 days of the first day of classes in the fall semester, on dates determined by the Attorney General, each area shall select its designated number of Area Representatives and each house shall select its House President by a majority vote under such guidelines as the Attorney General may establish.

In order to appear on the ballot for his or her area or house, a potential candidate must submit a petition for candidacy to the Attorney General signed by twenty-five verified residents of that area or house by a date determined and communicated by the Attorney General.

### **Section V. Area Representative**

Clause 1. Duties

The Area Representative shall:

- a. Represent the interests of the undergraduate student body, specifically, those interests of his or her Area.
- b. Attend all sessions of the House of Representatives and vote on all resolutions presented to the House chamber.
- c. Find a proxy from his or her residential area to represent that area's interests at a session of the House if unable to attend.
- d. Plan and help implement quality programming for his or her area.

#### Clause 2. Vacancy in Office

A vacancy in the office of Area Representative shall be filled immediately by a candidate selected by the Attorney General.

### **Section VI. House President**

#### Clause 1. Duties

The House President shall:

- a. Assist the Area Representatives in all of their duties.
- b. Serve on the Residential Conduct Board.
- c. Preside over their residence hall's House Council, and cooperate and communicate with Residence Life Staff and Faculty in Residence.
- d. Plan and help implement quality programming for his or her house and area.
- e. Appoint Hall Representatives to assist with the aforementioned duties, as he or she deems appropriate.

#### Clause 2. Vacancy in Office

A vacancy in the office of House President shall be filled immediately by a candidate selected by the Attorney General.

### **Section VII. McGill Project**

VSG shall formally recognize The Constitution of the McGill Project, as well as the constitutions of the respective colleges within the University. The McGill dorm officers shall appoint one officer to represent McGill to VSG in the role of House President. This member shall be elected in accordance with the McGill constitution. The McGill Project participants shall be party to the VSG constitution and its statutes, and may also exercise House Autonomy as outlined in Article VIII section III of the VSG constitution.

### **ARTICLE IX. Vacancies and Removal From Office**

## **Section I. Removal of Elected Officials**

### Clause 1. Petitions of Removal

Upon receipt of a petition containing the signatures of ten percent of an elected official's constituency, the Attorney General shall begin an investigation into the questioned affairs of the official and shall report his or her findings to the Senate.

### Clause 2. Votes of No Confidence

If the Senate or the House shall, by two-thirds vote, show no confidence in an elected official, the Attorney General shall begin an investigation into the questioned affairs of the official and shall report his findings to the Senate.

### Clause 3. Failure to Fulfill the Duties of Office

If an official is repeatedly absent from meetings or fails to fulfill his or her post, the Attorney General shall begin an investigation into the questioned affairs of the official and shall report his findings to the Senate.

### Clause 4. Removal from Office

If two-thirds of the Senate shall decide after hearing the investigation report of the Attorney General that there shall be adequate grounds for removal from office, the elected official in question shall lose all rights, powers, and privileges of his or her office.

### Clause 5. Replacement of Elected Officials

After an elected official shall have been removed by VSG, the Attorney General shall hold a special election for the vacant office.

## **Section II. Removal of Appointed Officials**

### Clause 1. Votes of No Confidence

- a. If the Senate or the House shall, by a two-thirds vote, show no confidence in an appointed official, the Attorney General shall begin an investigation into removal of the official and shall report his findings to the Senate and the House.
- b. Should the official in question be the Attorney General, the Executive Vice President shall conduct the investigation and report his or her findings to the Senate.

### Clause 2. Removal from Office

If two-thirds of the Senate shall decide after hearing the investigation report that there shall be adequate grounds for removal from office, the appointed official in question shall lose all rights, powers, and privileges of his or her office.

### Clause 3. Replacement of Appointed Officials

After an appointed official has been removed by VSG, the position shall be filled in the same way as the original appointment.

## **ARTICLE X. Parliamentary Procedure**

### **Section I. Roberts Rules of Order**

All meetings of VSG shall be conducted under Robert's Rules of Order and overseen by the Attorney General.

### **Section II. Quorum and Voting**

All voting members of VSG shall receive one vote.

In order to vote on a resolution, two-thirds of the elected officers must be present.

All resolutions must be passed by a simple majority vote in both the Senate and the House and be approved by the Student Body President.

The Attorney General shall review all resolutions passed by both the House and the Senate and advise the President on the legality of the resolution in regards to the VSG Constitution and University Policy.

If the Student Body President shall Veto a resolution, it may then be reintroduced in its chamber of origin. If the resolution receives a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers, the veto may be overridden without the President's consent.

### **Section III. Resolutions**

Resolutions may be initiated by any student or officer of VSG, but must be co-authored by a voting member of the Senate or House.

All resolutions must be passed in identical form by the Senate and signed by the Student Body President to be valid.

### **Section IV. Statutes**

The Senate and House shall have the power to enact and alter Statutes pursuant to this document.

## **ARTICLE XII. Finances**

### **Section I. VSG Budget**

The VSG Statutes shall govern the budget.

### **Section II. House Programming Budgets**

Each house and residential area shall receive funding based on the number of residents per house at a rate determined by the Chief of Staff.

## **ARTICLE XIII. Amendments and Revisions**

### **Section I. Initiation of an Amendment to the Constitution**

An amendment to this Constitution may be presented by any member of the Senate and the House to both the Senate and the House.

### **Section II. Ratification of the Amendment by the Senate and House**

In order to appear on the ballot for a referendum, any proposed amendment must receive a two-thirds majority vote by both the Senate and the House.

### **Section III. Ratification of the Amendment by the Student Body**

A proposed amendment shall appear in its complete written form in a referendum vote.

A simple majority vote by the undergraduates of the University shall be required for ratification of this Constitution or any proposed amendments.

[Last updated on June 29, 2008 by Attorney General Jared Anderson]