



RICE UNIVERSITY  
STUDENT ASSOCIATION

# The Constitution of the Rice University Student Association

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# 1. Name and Purpose

- a. **Name.** The Name of this organization shall be the Rice University Student Association.
- b. **Purpose.** The Mission of the Student Association shall be to give every student the opportunity to shape the undergraduate experience. To this mission, the Student Association shall provide channels of communication and cooperation among all part of the Rice community, provide a form of government for the coordination of student activities, provide a forum for the expression of student views and interests, maintain academic freedom and academic responsibility, enhance the value of the Rice undergraduate experience, and promote national and international understanding.

# 2. Membership and Policies

- a. **Membership.** All currently enrolled undergraduate students of Rice University shall be members of the Student Association and, accordingly, shall be required to pay the undergraduate Blanket Tax.
- b. **Senate.** Senate shall be the legislative body of the Student Association, speaking on behalf of the Student Association.
- c. **University Court.** The University Court is a separate entity from the Student Association, but it shall perform the judicial functions of the Student Association that arise under this Constitution.
- d. **Residential Colleges.** The Student Association is independent from the Residential Colleges. The Student Association and the Residential Colleges shall cooperate in matters of campus wide importance to further the interests of the undergraduate student body. The Student Association is not merely a council of Residential Colleges.
- e. **Student Organizations.** Undergraduate student organizations shall be governed by the Student Association. The Student Association will facilitate the creation and administration of student organizations in collaboration with the Office of Student Activities.
- f. **Policies**
  - i. *Nondiscrimination Policy.* The Student Association shall not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, disability, or veteran status.
  - ii. *Anti-Hazing Policy.* The Student Association shall not engage in any form of hazing, as defined by the Code of Student Conduct and any other applicable Rice University rules and regulations.
  - iii. *Conflict of Interest Policy.* Members of the Student Association shall not hold Student Association positions nor shall the business of the Student Association be conducted in such a manner that creates a conflict of interest or the reasonable appearance thereof. The President shall have the authority to determine whether an arrangement constitutes a conflict of interest or the reasonable appearance thereof unless overruled by a majority vote of Senate or by the University Court.

- iv. *Approval of Contracts.* No commitments or contracts shall be binding on the Student Association without the pre-approval of both the Office of Student Activities and a majority vote of either the Executive Committee or Senate.

**g. Meetings**

- i. *Open.* A meeting is considered open if the date, time, and location is announced to members of the Student Association at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting. Suitable mediums include the Student Association website, listserv, calendar, or through the emailed minutes from a Senate meeting.
- ii. *Closed.* A closed meeting is open to only committee members and guests invited at the chair's discretion.

- h. Public Record.** Matters of public record as expressed in this constitution and bylaws shall be maintained by the Secretary and be available to any member or organization of the Student Association and greater Rice community upon their request. Matters of public record shall be held for at least five years.

### 3. Executive Branch

- a. Executive Branch.** The executive authority of the Student Association shall be vested in the Executive Branch.

- i. The responsibility of the Executive Branch shall be to guide and coordinate the Student Association in accordance with the Student Association's mission and purpose. The Executive Branch shall be responsible for enforcing the actions and decisions of Senate. Further, the Executive Branch shall be responsible for upholding this constitution, in conjunction with Senate.

- b. Organization.** The Executive Branch shall be composed of the Executive Committee, the Executive Council (composed of Appointed Officers), the Student Association Committee Chairs, the University Standing Committee Representatives, and Standing and Special Committees.

**c. Executive Committee**

- i. *Membership.* The Executive Committee shall be composed of the elected officers of the Student Association, who shall be the President, the Internal Vice-President, the External Vice-President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer.
- ii. *Purpose.* The purpose of the Executive Committee shall be to facilitate and guide the activities and projects of the Student Association, Senate, and the Executive Branch in order to further the mission and purpose of the Student Association.
- iii. *Meetings.* The Executive Committee shall meet periodically at its discretion to discuss the activities and projects of the Executive Committee, the Executive Branch, Senate, and the Student Association. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be either open or closed at the discretion of the committee. The Executive Committee may, at its discretion, invite persons to attend its meetings.
- iv. **Executive Committee Roles**
  - 1. *President.* The President shall serve as the chief executive and official spokesperson of the Student Association. In consultation with the Executive Committee and in consideration of student input, the President

shall set priorities for the current term of the Student Association.

- a. The President shall prepare and present to Senate an overview of the President's vision, goals, and/or plan for the term.
  - b. The President shall keep Senate informed of all official activities of the Executive Committee.
  - c. The President shall be a nonvoting member ex-officio of all Student Association committees, except where otherwise specified.
  - d. The President shall delegate tasks to members of the Executive Committee and Executive Branch as appropriate.
  - e. *Succession Order.* In the event the President resigns, is removed from office, or becomes unable to carry out the duties as determined by unanimous vote of Senate, the Internal Vice-President shall immediately become President. If unwilling or unable, the External Vice-President shall immediately become President. If the External Vice-President is unwilling or unable, Senate shall call a special election for the office of President at its next regularly scheduled meeting to be scheduled two weeks from the date it is called.
    - i. Any vacancy created by the succession process in an office other than that of President shall be filled by the President by temporary appointment for a period no more than three weeks. Such a temporary appointment shall take effect immediately, subject to confirmation by a majority vote of Senate at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Senate shall call a special election to be scheduled two weeks from the date it is called for the vacant position at its next regular meeting.
    - ii. If the general election or second-round election is less than three weeks away, Senate shall not call a special election for any position.
2. *Internal Vice-President.* The Internal Vice-President shall be charged with coordinating and fostering communication between the various components of the Student Association. The Internal Vice-President shall additionally be responsible for assisting the President in ensuring that the Student Association, Senate, and Executive Branch function in furtherance of the mission and purpose of the Student Association and in compliance with this constitution.
  3. *External Vice-President.* The External Vice-President shall be charged with facilitating interactions and fostering communication between the Student Association and external groups, organizations, and individuals in the Rice University and Houston communities. The External Vice-President shall additionally be responsible for assisting the

President in representing the Student Association to the Rice University community and in soliciting input from members of the Student Association.

4. *Treasurer*. The Treasurer shall be charged with preparing the Student Association's annual budget according to the procedures in this constitution and bylaws and with managing the Student Association's funds accordingly. The Treasurer will also chair the Blanket Tax Committee as it sets the Blanket Tax budget, approves new Blanket Tax organizations, and manages the Initiative Fund.
  5. *Secretary*. The Secretary shall be charged with ensuring the transparency of Student Association activities by updating and maintaining records of the Student Association and distributing information about the activities of the Executive and Legislative Branches to members of the Student Association and any other relevant parties.
- d. Executive Council.** The Executive Council shall be Appointed Officers listed in the bylaws charged with the responsibilities in order to facilitate the operation of the Student Association. Appointed Officers shall be appointed by the President subject to approval by a majority vote of Senate. Members of the Executive Council shall serve until the end of the administration in which they are appointed, unless reappointed by the incoming President.
- i. *Required Positions*. While the composition of the Executive Council may change depending on the needs of an administration, the positions of Parliamentarian and Director of Elections must always exist due to their constitutional significance.
- e. Committees.** Senate shall have the power to form Student Association committees as outlined in the bylaws to further the mission and purpose of the Student Association.
- i. *Student Association Committee Chairs*. The Chairs of all Student Association committees shall be charged with the responsibilities of their respective committees in order to facilitate the operation of the Student Association. Student Association Committee Chairs shall be chosen according to the bylaws.
- f. University Standing Committee Representatives.** All representatives to University Standing Committees shall be charged with representing the interests of the Student Association to their respective committees and with relaying information from the University Standing Committees to the Student Association. University Standing Committee Representatives shall be chosen according to the bylaws and shall serve until the end of the current term of the Student Association.

## 4. Legislative Branch

- a. Senate.** The legislative authority of the Student Association shall be vested in Senate composed of:
- i. *Officers*. The elected officers of the Student Association shall serve as voting members of Senate and shall consist of the President, the Internal Vice-President, the External Vice-President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer.

1. The President shall be the chair of Senate and shall preside over all meetings at which he or she is present.
  2. In the event of the President's absence, the Internal Vice-President shall preside. If the Internal Vice-President is also absent, the External Vice-President shall preside. If the External Vice-President is also absent, Senate shall, by majority vote, designate a member to preside over the meeting.
- ii. *General Members.* The general membership of Senate shall consist of the College Presidents and a Senator elected from each college.
  - iii. *Parliamentarian.* The Parliamentarian shall serve as a nonvoting member of Senate and shall counsel Senate on parliamentary procedure and shall respond to points of order and parliamentary inquiries.
  - iv. *New Students Representatives.* New students will be integrated into the Student Association to foster leadership development and encourage representation from of all residential colleges to engage diversity of student voice across campus. New Student Representatives will serve as nonvoting members of Senate.
- b. Powers and Responsibilities of Senate**
- i. Represent and advocate for the Student Association in all relations with the faculty, administration, trustees, alumni, and other bodies.
  - ii. Review the reports, decisions, and actions of all Student Association committees and overrule any such reports, actions, or decisions it deems unjustified.
  - iii. Regulate the conditions under which registered student organizations are founded, operated, dissolved, in compliance with this constitution, and regulations of the Student Association and Rice University.
  - iv. Take any suitable action necessary to fulfill the duties and powers expressed or implied in this constitution.
- c. Terms**
- i. *Legislative Session.* A legislative session of Senate shall be the period from one changeover to the next.
  - ii. *Changeover.* Changeover shall be a specific date in which incoming elected officers of the Student Association, incoming College Presidents, and incoming College Senators begin representing their constituency at Senate, thus commencing a new session of Senate.
- d. Senate Meetings**
- i. *Regular Meetings.* All weekly meetings, set by the Executive Committee, shall be publically announced. The schedule may be changed at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
  - ii. *Quorum.* A quorum of Senate shall consist of at least two-thirds of the total voting membership of Senate. A vacant position shall be counted as an absence in determining whether a quorum is present.
  - iii. *Closed Meetings.* By a two-thirds vote, Senate may hold a closed meeting to discuss matters requiring unusual privacy. No legislation or Articles of

Impeachment may be passed during a closed meeting. Minutes must be recorded for closed meetings and will remain sealed for a term of five years.

- iv. *Special Meetings.* The President, at his or her discretion, may call a special meeting of Senate, which must be announced at least twenty-four hours in advance. Special Meetings may also be called by a written request of twenty percent of senators, a Vice-President, or five percent of the Student Association.

**e. Voting**

- i. All votes on legislation shall be conducted by roll call, to be published on the Student Association website by the Secretary.
- ii. At the discretion of the President (or other presiding member), votes on any other motion may be conducted by roll call.
- iii. The President (or other presiding member) shall abstain from all votes except when the President's (or other presiding member's) vote will affect the outcome, such as in the case of a tie or when the President's vote will block or pass legislation under majority or two-thirds.

**f. Legislation**

- i. *Amendments to the Constitution.* Amendments to the Constitution seek to add to, remove from, or amend this constitution.
  - 1. Process
    - a. *Senate Vote.* Amendments to the Constitution introduced in Senate may only be approved by Senate by a two-thirds vote with at least two weeks' prior notice.
    - b. *Campus-wide Ballot.* Amendments to the Constitution approved by Senate shall be placed on the ballot in the next Student Association election for approval by a referendum vote of the Student Association.
  - 2. *Initiative.* Amendments to the Constitution may also be proposed as an initiative (see Initiatives and Referenda, Section 8). Approval of Senate shall not be required.
  - 3. *Implementation of Amendments.* Unless otherwise stated in the initiative, referendum, or legislation, constitutional amendments shall take effect at the conclusion of the election approving the initiative. The Parliamentarian shall update and publish the constitution upon its approval.
- ii. *Amendments to the Bylaws.* Amendments to the Bylaws seek to add, remove, or amend Bylaws.
  - 1. Amendments to the Bylaws may only be approved by Senate by a two-thirds vote with at least two weeks' prior notice.
  - 2. *Initiative.* Amendments to the Bylaws may also be proposed as initiatives and approval of Senate shall not be required.
  - 3. *Implementation of Amendments by Initiative.* Unless otherwise stated, bylaw amendments shall take effect at the conclusion of the election

- approving the initiative. The Parliamentarian shall update and publish the bylaws upon its approval.
- iii. *Senate Bills.* Senate Bills provide for an action to be taken by Senate, a committee of the Student Association, an officer of the Student Association, or any other group or individual over which Senate has authority under this constitution. Senate Bills may only provide for actions that are demonstrably within the authority of Senate.
    - 1. Senate Bills may be approved only by a majority vote of Senate, with one week prior notice.
  - iv. *Senate Resolution.* Senate Resolutions formally express an opinion or policy of the Student Association or seek to exert the influence of Senate or the Student Association with regard to an issue.
    - 1. Senate Resolutions may be approved only by a two-thirds vote of Senate, with one week prior notice.
  - v. *Articles of Impeachment.* Senate may exercise its power of impeachment by approving, by a two-thirds vote, Articles of Impeachment detailing the reason(s) for impeachment in Section 8 of the Bylaws (Judicial).
  - vi. *Review by Parliamentarian.* All proposed amendments to this constitution shall be reviewed and approved by the Parliamentarian, so that the proposed amendments do not contradict the constitution.
  - vii. *Sponsorship.* All legislation must be sponsored and introduced by at least one voting member of Senate. Legislation may be co-sponsored by non-Senate members of the Student Association but who have contributed substantially to the legislation.
  - viii. *Prior notice.* To be considered valid, prior notice must contain the full text of the proposed legislation or Articles of Impeachment and must be given at an open meeting of Senate.
    - 1. Prior Notice must be given for constitutional and bylaw amendments at all times. This requirement may not be waived under any circumstances.
    - 2. *Exceptions.* The requirement for prior notice for Senate Bills, Resolutions, and Articles of Impeachment may only be waived by four-fifths vote of Senate and the president's approval in exceptionally time-sensitive cases. Members of Senate must be provided with the full text of the proposed legislation at least twenty-four hours prior to the vote.
  - ix. *Repeal of Legislation.* Senate may repeal legislation that is currently in effect with the same type of further legislation and a two-thirds vote of approval by Senate.

## 5. Blanket Tax

### a. Purpose

- i. The Blanket Tax Committee shall conduct an annual review of organizations receiving Blanket Tax funds and a biannual review of initiative fund applications



to ensure that Blanket Tax funds are utilized for organizational purposes and in furtherance of student interests and the interests of the Rice community.

- ii. The committee shall review proposals by qualified student organizations requesting priority access to Blanket Tax funds on a biennial basis.

**b. Blanket Tax Funds Collection**

- i. A blanket tax of \$85.00 per undergraduate student per year shall be collected and allocated to Blanket Tax Funds.
- ii. *Intramural Sports*. An additional blanket tax of \$20.00 shall be collected and allocated to support the Intramural Sports program. This program shall not be a subsidiary organization and shall not be subject to oversight by the Blanket Tax Committee or to the processes provided for in this article.

**c. Blanket Tax Committee**

- i. Members
  1. The Treasurer;
  2. Three Student Association members who are not affiliated in a leadership role with Blanket Tax organizations;
  3. Two officers of Blanket Tax organizations who do not hold positions in the Student Association;
  4. Blanket Tax Committee Advisor who shall hold a five-year term;
  5. The Parliamentarian, as a non-voting member;
  6. The Student Association Advisor, as a non-voting member; and
  7. The Deputy Treasurer, as a non-voting member.
  8. *Vacancy*. In the event of any positional vacancy, the President shall recommend and appoint a new member with majority Senate approval.
- ii. Meetings
  1. All Blanket Tax Meetings shall be open. Meetings may go into closed session at the discretion of the Chair, but no votes may be held.
  2. All formal committee decisions shall be made by a simple majority with quorum of committee members.
- iii. *Quorum*. A quorum of the Blanket Tax Committee shall consist of at least two-thirds of the total voting membership.

**d. Blanket Tax Fund Annual Appropriation and Review**

- i. *Purpose*. The Annual Review shall be conducted every Spring Semester by the committee to ensure proper adherence of Blanket Tax funds to organization's purpose and the greater interests of the student body.
  1. In addition to the annual review, the Student Association Treasurer and Blanket Tax Committee may conduct an audit of the financial records of any Blanket Tax organization at any time to ensure compliance with the constitution.
- ii. All organizations shall submit a detailed, itemized operating budget for expenses during the current fiscal year. The organization shall also submit their proposed budget for the following fiscal year.
- iii. The Student Association Treasurer shall announce the due date for all recognized

Blanket Tax organization budget submissions.

- iv. The Committee shall review submissions and submit a detailed report highlighting their findings and proposed allocations to Senate with their recommendations for approval by the end of the Spring Semester.

**e. Initiative Fund**

- i. *Purpose.* The Initiative fund shall be appropriated to new and innovative projects that serve the interests of the Rice community, and the priorities established by the Student Association and Blanket Tax Committee.
- ii. *Framework.* The framework under which initiative fund applications shall be reviewed will be established at the beginning of each academic year. The framework shall be announced on the Student Association website and become public record.
- iii. *Eligibility.* All student organizations who are registered for the review year and are in good standing are encouraged to apply.
- iv. *Funding.* The Initiative funds available shall be made public prior to the fiscal year's first review on the Student Association website. A minimum balance of \$1,000 at the end of the fiscal year turnover shall be maintained.

**f. Application for Blanket Tax Funds Access**

- i. *Purpose.* The purpose of the application process shall be to review and approve registered student organizations that further the interests of the student body and the Rice University community in general by providing sustainable funding for organizations that will exist long-term.
- ii. The Committee shall review applications for qualifying organizations based on the criteria below on a biennial basis in the fall semester.
- iii. Eligibility
  - 1. Must be a registered student organization for at least three years consecutively and be in good standing.
  - 2. Organizations must present sufficient documentation to indicate good financial record keeping and a strong financial need.
  - 3. If an organization knowingly or unknowingly presents false information to the Blanket Tax Committee, Senate or any member of the Student Association during their application for Blanket Tax status, the case shall be referred to the University Court to determine if there was wrongdoing and the appropriate course of action moving forward.
- iv. Criteria for Review
  - 1. The organization's mission and purpose serves the interests of the student body and the Rice University community in general;
  - 2. The requested funds would contribute to the organization's mission, purpose, and goals;
  - 3. The organization has a strong financial need; and
  - 4. The organization's financial need is long-term and annual.
- v. *Senate Approval.* The Committee shall present its findings at Senate for all eligible organizations who applied with its recommendations. Senate shall vote

by majority to approve or reject the Blanket Tax Committees recommendations for inclusion on the general election ballot.

- g. Fiscal Year.** All Blanket Tax organizations shall operate according to Rice's financial policies and fiscal year.
- h. Public Record.** Minutes shall be kept at all formal committee meetings and all documents associated with initiative fund, annual review, and Blanket Tax application process shall be made public record.

## 6. Organizations

- a. Purpose.** All student organizations shall have a mission and purpose that serves the interests of the student body and the Rice University community in general and, where applicable, a broader community.
- b. Types of Organizations**
  - i. Dependent Organization**
    - 1. Dependent organizations are student organizations that are registered through the Student Activities office.
    - 2. Dependent organizations that fail to renew at the beginning of each academic year with the Student Activities office shall be dissolved as detailed in the bylaws.
    - 3. Applications for new dependent organizations shall be submitted to the Committee for Club Approvals.
    - 4. All dependent organizations shall abide by Rice University and Student Activities policies and procedures.
  - ii. Blanket Tax Organization**
    - 1. Blanket Tax organizations are the following organizations that have been recognized by the student body to be given access to Blanket Tax annual funding.
      - a. Campanile
      - b. Honor Council
      - c. KTRU
      - d. Rally Club
      - e. Rice Program Council
      - f. Rice Student Volunteer Program
      - g. Rice Thresher
      - h. Student Association
      - i. University Court
    - 2. Application for Blanket Tax status shall follow the procedures detailed in this constitution and the bylaws.
    - 3. All Blanket Tax organizations shall abide by the policies and procedures laid out by the Student Association, Student Activities Office and Rice University.

- c. **Primacy of the Student Association.** The Constitution of the Student Association shall be binding upon all dependent organizations. The constitutions and bylaws of dependent organizations shall be subordinate to this constitution.
  - i. The Honor Council shall abide by and adhere to the policies of the Honor Council Constitution, since its creation supersedes the creation of the Student Association Constitution.
- d. **Elected Leadership of Blanket Tax Organizations**
  - i. The highest-ranking officer of each Blanket Tax organization shall be elected by the student body under the regulations provided in this constitution and bylaws, with the exception of Honor Council representatives.
  - ii. Vacancy
    - 1. In the event of a vacancy, the affected Blanket Tax organization shall fill the vacancy with a temporary leader in accordance to its own bylaws and constitution.
    - 2. The Blanket Tax organization shall, within five class days of the vacancy, submit to the Student Senate a written explanation of the reason for the vacancy, the method by which the vacancy was filled, and the person filling the vacancy for approval by 2/3s majority of Senate.
    - 3. Removal of Leadership
      - a. Blanket Tax Organizations or Senate has the power to remove elected leadership in accordance with the policies detailed in the Judicial Section in the Constitution and Bylaws (Section 8 and 9, respectively).
      - b. Impeachment by Senate of a Blanket Tax organization leader shall not be in retaliation against or in anticipation of any decision by a Blanket Tax organization that the Student Association finds unfavorable.
- e. **Removal of Blanket Tax Status.** A Blanket Tax organization may cease to be such and instead become a dependent organization only by an initiative or referendum vote of the Student Association to remove its access to Blanket Tax funding or by an amendment of this constitution to remove the organization from the list Blanket Tax of organizations.
  - i. Blanket Tax organizations that become dependent organizations shall retain their assets unless they are required to return some or all of their assets to the Blanket Tax Funds or all of the following occur:
    - 1. The University Court finds the organization in violation of this constitution;
    - 2. The violation is related to the organization's use of Blanket Tax funds;
    - 3. The University Court recommends, in addition to any binding sanctions or remedies, revoking the organization's access to Blanket Tax funding;
    - 4. Senate approves, by a two-thirds vote, the recommendation of the University Court;
    - 5. Senate calls for a referendum to revoke the organization's access to Blanket Tax funding and to seize some or all of its remaining assets; and

6. The Student Association approves the revocation and seizure by the passage of the referendum in accordance.

**f. Dissolution**

i. Dependent Organization

1. A dependent organization may dissolve itself by notifying Senate and the Student Activities Office, provided it has no financial debts outstanding.
2. Senate may, by a two-thirds vote, may dissolve a dependent organization either for failure to comply with this constitution or Rice University policies or upon the recommendation of the Office of Student Activities. Such a decision is subject to appeal to the University Court.

ii. Blanket Tax Organization

1. A Blanket Tax organization may be dissolved by an initiative or referendum vote of the Student Association. If the organization requests dissolution, the organization may be dissolved with the approval of a majority vote of Senate. Upon request and return of all liquid and illiquid assets, a Blanket Tax organization may continue as a dependent organization at the discretion of the Parliamentarian.

iii. Reallocation of Assets

1. Any assets remaining in the name of a Blanket Tax organization after its dissolution and the payment of its outstanding debts and any assets returned by or seized from a Blanket Tax organization in accordance with this constitution shall be reallocated to the Blanket Tax Funds.
2. The Blanket Tax Committee shall assume control over any illiquid assets and shall have the authority to either transfer the assets to other organizations, giving priority to Blanket Tax organizations, or sell the assets and allocate the proceeds to the Blanket Tax Funds.

## 7. Elections

- a. Purpose.** The Student Association shall conduct elections in accordance with this constitution in order to:

- i. Elect Student Association officers, officers or representatives of Blanket Tax organizations required to be elected by the Student Association, and members of the Honor Council required by the constitution of the Honor System or this constitution to be elected by the Student Association; and
- ii. Decide initiatives and referenda.

- b. Conduct of Elections.** All Student Association elections provided for in this constitution shall be conducted by secret ballot according to the rules set forth in this constitution and bylaws.

**c. Eligibility**

- i. *Voter eligibility.* All currently-enrolled members of the Rice Student Association are eligible to vote in all Student Association elections. If in question, a person's membership shall be verified by the Office of the Registrar.

- ii. *Candidate eligibility.* All members of the Student Association, except those on disciplinary or academic probation, are eligible to hold and/or seek any office filled by a Student Association election. Specific offices may have their own requirements for candidacy.
- d. **Election Regulations.** At no time may a student, candidate or officer promise, suggest, or in any way indicate that a person or organization will receive preferential access to Blanket Tax or initiative funding for assisting or supporting a candidate's campaign. Additionally, no entity unaffiliated with Rice University may engage in the electoral process in anyway, unless said organization is compensated at market value for the services rendered. Such restrictions include in-kind donations of intellectual or creative work product as well.
  - i. If the Election Committee finds that a candidate has violated these regulations, the candidate will be removed from the ballot and will become ineligible to hold any campus-wide elected office during that academic year. If the candidate has already assumed office, the officer shall be removed. Decisions of the Election Committee may be appealed to U-Court in a timely manner.
- e. **Election of Student Association Officers.** The elected officers of the Student Association shall be selected for each legislative session in an election of the Student Association according to the timing and procedures set forth in the Student Association Bylaws.
- f. **Election of Senate Members.** College Presidents and Senators shall be elected by their respective colleges according to their procedures. Only one person from each College shall fulfill the responsibilities of Senator and College President under this constitution.

## 8. Initiatives/Referenda

- a. **Definitions**
  - i. *Referendum.* A referendum allows members of Senate or of the Student Association to propose a campus-wide vote on a new piece of legislation or vote on a contested action of Senate.
  - ii. *Initiative.* An Initiative allows general Student Association members to propose new legislation or constitutional amendments through a campus-wide ballot.
    - 1. Through an initiative, Student Association members can propose to remove officers that are elected through this constitution.
- b. **Process for Initiative or Referendum of the Student Association.** Members of the Student Association may demand an initiative vote on any action by a signed petition, electronically or physically, of at least five percent of the Student Association.
  - i. *Approval of Petition.* A representative of an initiative/referendum must submit the petition to the Parliamentarian for approval prior to collecting signatures. The Parliamentarian shall approve all petitions that meet the requirements of this constitution. The Parliamentarian's denial of a petition may be overturned by a majority vote of Senate. Senate's denial of a petition may be appealed to the University Court.

- ii. *Requirements for Passage.* An initiative or referendum of the members of the Student Association shall pass if at least twenty percent of the members of the Student Association vote on the proposition and at least two-thirds of the total votes cast on the proposition are in favor of the proposition.
- c. **Process for Referendum by Senate.** Senate may demand a referendum on any action upon a two-thirds vote of Senate with at least one week's prior notice.
- d. **Stay of Senate Action under a Referendum.** A representative of a referendum may, after properly submitting the petition and pending the results of the election, request that the University Court freeze the contested actions of Senate.
- e. **Special Election.** If the filing deadline for the next general election or second-round election is more than three weeks after the date of submission of a valid petition with sufficient signatures or the date of Senate's demand for a referendum, a special election shall be announced and conducted if the initiative calls for the removal of an officer or Senate determines the initiative or referendum is time-sensitive by a majority vote. If the referendum is deemed time-sensitive, Senate shall vote on the question at its next meeting. A representative of the initiative or referendum may appeal the decision of Senate to the University Court.

## 9. Judicial

- a. **University Court.** The University Court is a separate entity from the Student Association but shall be subject to the requirements of this constitution. In addition to fulfilling its mission under the Rice University Code of Student Conduct, the University Court shall perform the judicial functions of the Student Association. The judicial authority of the Student Association shall be vested in the University Court, and the University Court shall have original jurisdiction over all Student Association matters. Hearings before the University Court shall be conducted without violating the rights of the parties involved or the integrity of the University Court and the Student Association. Hearings before the Court shall not be adversarial. The Court shall make determinations of fact based on a standard of a preponderance of the evidence, i.e., whether something is more likely than not to have occurred.
- b. **Membership and Expectations of Members.** The University Court shall have a Chair elected by the Student Association, and shall have additional officers and members as provided for by its constitution. Members of the Court are expected to make decisions in a fair and unbiased manner. Members shall recuse themselves from judicial proceedings arising under this constitution if they feel unable to make a fair and unbiased decision in a matter. Members are expected to use their discretion to determine whether they should recuse themselves. The Chair (or other presiding member) may compel a member to recuse him- or herself. Reasons for recusal include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Having a close personal relationship with any of the parties involved; and/or
  - ii. Having detailed prior knowledge of the matter in question not available to other members of the Court.

- c. Independence of Code of Student Conduct.** All proceedings arising under this constitution shall be independent of and separate from any proceedings in the same or related matter arising under the Code of Student Conduct.

  - i. Alleged violations of this constitution shall be adjudicated by the University Court. Violations of this constitution and of the constitutions and bylaws of registered organizations shall not themselves constitute violations of the Code of Student Conduct. If, in the fulfillment of its duties under this constitution, the Court finds evidence that a violation of the Code of Student Conduct may have occurred, it shall separately and additionally respond to that evidence in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct.
- d. Public Record.** All University Court matters arising under this constitution shall be matters of public record unless and until they become matters under the Code of Student Conduct.

  - i. All proceedings and hearings held by the Court in matters arising under this constitution shall be open meetings. All formal deliberations of the Court shall be closed proceedings. The Court shall prepare an abstract of any proceeding arising under this constitution. The abstract shall include a summary of the Court's deliberations and the reasoning behind its finding. All records associated with matters arising under this constitution, including but not limited to items of evidence, letters, abstracts of proceedings shall be public record. All relevant records shall be easily accessible to members of the Student Association.

## 10. Ratification

- a. Ratification by Student Association.** This constitution may be ratified only by a two-thirds vote of those members of the Student Association voting in a referendum.
- b. Timeline for Implementation.** Upon ratification by the Student Association, this constitution shall take effect at a time determined by Senate. This time shall not be later than the beginning of the next legislative session after the referendum. The previous constitution and bylaws of the Student Association shall become null and void upon the implementation of this constitution.
- c. Dependent Organizations.** Dependent organizations shall have until the registration deadline set by the Office of Student Activities in the fall semester following ratification to amend their constitutions to meet the requirements of this constitution and resolve contradictions with this constitution.
- d. Blanket Tax Organizations.** Blanket Tax organizations shall have until the last day of classes of the fall semester following ratification to propose amendments to Senate to meet the requirements of this constitution and resolve contradictions with this constitution and shall have until the end of the academic year following ratification to adopt such amendments.