

# **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE RHODES STUDENT GOVERNMENT**

*Last amended: April 4, 2002*

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## **PREAMBLE**

We the students of Rhodes College, affirm the right of Students to establish self-governance; to advance Student representation within the College Community; to provide for the Student welfare; and to ensure an environment that nurtures physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual development; do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution of the Rhodes Student Government.

## **ARTICLE I—RHODES STUDENT GOVERNMENT PURPOSE**

**SECTION 1.** The Students of Rhodes College do hereby establish the Rhodes Student Government (RSG) as the representative voice of the Students of Rhodes College. As the representative voice, the Rhodes Student Government shall strive for the highest quality of Student life, both inside and outside of the classroom at Rhodes, and the active exchange of ideas, perspectives, experiences, opinions, values, beliefs, needs, and goals between the Students and the Faculty, Staff, Administrators, Trustees, Alumni and Alumnae, and Friends of Rhodes College.

**SECTION 2.** As the representative voice of the undergraduate and graduate Students, the Rhodes Student Government shall recognize and protect the rights of students; regardless of age, color, disability, ethnic and national origin, gender, marital and parental status, military/veteran status, race, religion and creed, or sexual orientation; shall insist upon academic freedom, responsibility, and excellence; and shall foster an environment which stimulates students to take active roles in the college community.

**SECTION 3.** The Rhodes Student Government is a deliberative and consultative body vested with, but not limited to, the power to make studies, reports, and recommendations advocating student rights, needs, and interests to the college community, administration, Board of Trustees, and the public in accordance with the Rhodes College By-laws.

**SECTION 4.** The powers and authority vested in the Rhodes Student Government are derived directly from the Students of Rhodes College. All members of the Rhodes Student Government, elected and appointed, shall be full-time, enrolled students of Rhodes College. All second-semester seniors are exempt from this requirement.

**SECTION 5.** The RSG Constitution shall be deemed the supreme working body of procedures and policies over the RSG and all associated bodies.

**SECTION 6.** The RSG shall conduct business in accordance with the by-laws of the College.

## **ARTICLE II—EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**SECTION 1.** The executive branch of the Rhodes Student Government shall consist of the President of the Student Body, the Vice President, the Treasurer, and the following semi-autonomous bodies: the Allocations Board and the Publications Board. The

President and Treasurer shall be considered *ex officio* members of the Student Senate and have no vote in the Senate.

**SECTION 2.** The President of the Student Body shall be vested with the executive authority of the Students and shall serve as the chief spokesperson of the Student Body. He or she shall have the responsibility to propose actions and resolutions to the Senate, have the authority to ensure the enactment of the resolutions of the Senate, and be vested with the power to veto all actions of the Senate. The Senate may override any veto by the President by a two-thirds (2/3) vote. Any resolutions passed by the Senate shall become official acts unless vetoed by the President within three (3) days of passage by the Senate. The President shall be responsible for the executive branch and use such as the means of executive actions. The President shall be elected from among the full-time students by the Student Body.

**SECTION 3.** The Vice President of the Student Body shall be the presiding officer of the Student Senate. He or she shall be responsible for upholding the Constitution and Standing Rules and shall be the final authority on the interpretation of these documents. Any such decision may be overruled by a majority vote of the Senate. The Vice President shall have authority over the committees of the Senate and shall have the power to create and disband *ad hoc* committees and appoint a chair to oversee the established *ad hoc* committees, both of which are subject to the approval of the Senate. *Ad hoc* committees shall continue their activities until they are disbanded by the Vice President. The Vice President shall vote only to break a tie vote of the Senate. The Vice President shall be elected from among the full-time students by the Student Body. The Vice President shall convene and chair a Senate Steering Committee at his or her discretion to serve as a consultative steering body for the Senate.

**SECTION 4.** The Treasurer of the Rhodes Student Government shall be vested with the responsibility to supervise and control all financial matters of the RSG, including, but not limited to, the preparation and presentation to the President and Senate of a budget for RSG as an organization for the coming fiscal year in conjunction with the incoming President and Vice President after Officer Elections and before the Spring Allocations hearings. The Treasurer shall present the general activities budget for the coming year to the President and the Senate for approval by no later than two (2) weeks before the final regular Senate meeting of the spring semester. He or she, in conjunction with the President, shall also have the responsibility of examining the sufficiency of the Student Activity Fee at least every other year, with the first review beginning in 2002. The Treasurer shall also present a monthly financial report to the Senate reflecting the activity of the Student Activity Fund. The Treasurer, as chair of the Allocations Board, shall oversee the allocation of student activity funds. The Chair of Internal Affairs shall solicit applications for the office from the Student Body for one week and the President shall select a nominee from among the applicants, who then is subject to the approval of the Senate.

### **ARTICLE III— SEMI-AUTONOMOUS BODIES OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**SECTION 1.** The Allocations Board shall be responsible for the allocation of student activity funds to student organizations in accordance with the Allocations By-laws. It shall be chaired by the Treasurer and consist of ten (10) members elected from among the

full-time students by the Student Body. The Treasurer, within two weeks of taking office, shall nominate a person to serve as the secretary of the Board, subject to the approval of the Board. Each of the ten elected members shall have a single vote on the Board. All actions of the Board are subject to the approval of the Student Senate. The Allocations Board shall not override the will of the Senate.

**SECTION 2.** The Publications Board shall supervise all official student publications, select their editors, approve budgets to be submitted to the Allocations Board, and ensure high standards of journalism. The Board shall be composed of a Chair elected from among the full-time students, one Representative from each of the Senior, Junior, Sophomore, and First-Year classes, two At-Large Representatives, and the Editors of each official student publication. The Publications Board shall select a secretary from among its membership. The Publications Board shall also select a treasurer by soliciting applications from the student body.

#### **ARTICLE IV—RHODES STUDENT GOVERNMENT SENATE**

**SECTION 1.** The legislative branch of the Rhodes Student Government shall be called the Student Senate and shall be composed of the Vice President, the Class Senators, the Secretary, the Student Organizations and Representation Liaisons, the Elections Commissioners, and the Parliamentarian. The President and Treasurer shall also attend Senate meetings as *ex officio* members. The Senate shall meet weekly when school is in session, except when the Chair cancels the meeting, and shall meet on special occasions when called together by the Vice President. The Vice President shall be responsible for establishing and distributing an official meeting schedule for each semester before the first meeting of each semester. Any formal session of the Senate shall be conducted in accordance with the Standing Rules of Rhodes Student Government and the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* in all cases in which such is consistent with the Standing Rules. All informal meetings shall be facilitated by the Vice President or a designated member of RSG.

**SECTION 2.** The Senior, Junior, Sophomore, and First-Year classes shall each be represented by five (5) Senators. The Class Senators shall be elected by their respective classes and shall be full-time students, excluding second-semester Seniors, classified by the Registrar as a member of the class they represent. The Senators, vested with the legislative authority of the Students, shall have the power to propose and enact resolutions and call the Student Government to action. Each Senator shall have a single vote in the Senate. First-Year Senators shall be elected by the fifth week of the fall semester and shall serve until turnover in the spring semester. Sophomore and Junior Senators shall be elected in the general elections in the spring semester and shall serve for one year until turnover in the spring semester. The Senior Senators shall be elected in the general election in the spring and serve until commencement of the following year.

**SECTION 3.** The Secretary/Historian shall be responsible for the minutes of the Senate meetings, keeping an accurate record of attendance, handling all RSG correspondence, and ensuring the maintenance and consistent update of the RSG Archives. The Internal Affairs Committee shall solicit applications from the Student Body for one week immediately following the swearing in of the new Senate. The Secretary shall be nominated by the Internal Affairs Committee from all applicants and

be subject to the approval of the Senate. The Secretary may be hired as a paid member of RSG, the terms of which shall be subject to the approval of the Senate.

**SECTION 4.** The Parliamentarian shall actively enforce and promote *Robert's Rules of Order*. He or she shall interpret the constitution and standing rules of the Senate. The Internal Affairs Committee shall solicit applications from the Student Body for one week immediately following the swearing in of the new Senate. The Parliamentarian shall be nominated by the Internal Affairs Committee from all applicants and be subject to the approval of the Senate.

**SECTION 5.** The Senate shall have four standing Chairs: Student Life, Academic Affairs, Administrative & External Services, and Internal Affairs.

**Paragraph 1:** The Chair of Student Life shall be charged to address and consider matters involving, but not limited to, the Office of the Dean of Students and issues directly related to student life. The Chair shall be chosen by the Vice President from among the members of the Senate.

**Paragraph 2:** The Chair of Academic Affairs shall be charged to address and consider matters involving, but not limited to, the faculty, the Office of the Dean of the College, the Office of the Registrar, or any other academic issue. The Chair shall be chosen by the Vice President from among the members of the Senate.

**Paragraph 3:** The Chair of Administrative & External Services shall be charged to address and consider matters involving, but not limited to, the Office of the Dean of Administrative Services, the Office of the Dean of Information Services, the Office of the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, and the Office of the Dean of Institutional Advancement. The Chair shall be chosen by the Vice President from among the members of the Senate.

**Paragraph 4:** The Chair of Internal Affairs shall be charged to handle internal Senate issues. Such internal issues include, but are not limited to, facilitating the flow of information between members of Rhodes Student Government and other student representatives and organizations. The Chair of Internal Affairs shall be responsible for the supervision of the Secretary, Elections Commission, Publicity Chair(s), Student Organizations Liaison, and the Student Representation Liaison. The Chair of Internal Affairs shall convene and chair the Internal Affairs Committee which shall review and nominate individuals/applicants for vacant positions or awards under the management and/or jurisdiction of Rhodes Student Government. The Internal Affairs Committee is composed of the Student Organization Liaison, the Student Representation Liaison, the Publicity Chair(s), and two additional Senators selected by the Vice President to serve as voting members. All nominations made by the committee are subject to the approval of the Senate. The Chair shall be chosen by the Vice President from among the members of the Senate.

**SECTION 6.** The Student Organizations Liaison shall serve as the communication liaison between RSG and all student organizations. The Student Organization Liaison shall maintain accurate, current, and documented records of all student organizations. The Student Organizations Liaison shall be appointed by Internal Affairs, subject to approval by the Senate.

**SECTION 7.** The Student Representation Liaison shall serve as the communication liaison between RSG and all student representatives to faculty and administrative committees and the Board of Trustees. The Student Representation Liaison shall

maintain accurate, current, and documented records of all student representatives and the committees/bodies on which they serve. The Student Representation Liaison shall be appointed by Internal Affairs, subject to approval by the Senate.

**SECTION 8.** The Publicity Chair(s) shall be responsible to assure the effective, accurate, and timely publicity of, among other information, the minutes of all meetings of RSG and all actions of Rhodes Student Government. The Publicity Chair(s) shall be appointed by Internal Affairs from among the members of the Senate, subject to approval by the Senate.

## **ARTICLE V— ELECTIONS COMMISSION**

The Elections Commission shall consist of two (2) Commissioners and one Senator from each class. The Internal Affairs Committee shall solicit applications for the office of Elections Commissioner from members of the Student Body for one week and select two (2) nominees from among the applicants, who then are subject to the approval of the Senate. The Vice President shall appoint one Senator from each class to serve on the Commission. The Elections Commission shall hear all complaints and grievances filed with the Elections Commissioners and shall be responsible for duties outlined in the RSG Election By-laws.

## **ARTICLE VI—BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Three (3) students shall serve as student members of the Board of Trustees. One of these student trustees shall be the President of the Student Body. Two (2) of the student trustees shall be elected by the Student Body. The student trustees shall be encouraged to attend the regular meetings of the Senate. At meetings of the Senate immediately preceding and following a meeting of the Board of Trustees, student trustees shall be expected to solicit input from the Senate and report on the agenda and actions of the Board.

## **ARTICLE VII—MEMBERSHIP**

**SECTION 1.** All members of the Rhodes Student Government (with the exception of the First-Year Senators and Elections Commissioners) shall take office during the last meeting of the spring semester. Excluding the Publications Board, the Senate may, by a majority vote, allow a person to hold more than one position within the RSG and/or to serve on more than one Administrative, Faculty, or Joint Committee.

**SECTION 2.** No member of the RSG, including the President and appointed members of the legislative branch, excluding the Elections Commissioners, shall miss more than two (2) regular meetings of the Senate per semester, according to the Standing Rules. One absence shall be considered excused and will not be recorded if the Chair of the Senate receives the excuse 48 hours before the meeting and if the Chair determines that the excuse for the absence is sufficient. The Chair may also grant emergency excuses without such notice. A member may appeal the Chair's decision within two (2) weeks and the Chair's decision shall be overturned by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Senate. The Senate's decision is final. Once a member has exceeded two (2) absences, he or she is automatically removed from office. He or she has the right to seek office again either

through the process of a special election, Internal Affairs nomination, or presidential nomination, as appropriate. The Senate shall develop and implement a policy regarding arriving late to meetings and leaving meetings before they are adjourned. Each committee shall develop an absentee policy for that committee, subject to the approval of the Vice President.

**SECTION 3.** The students may call for the removal of the President, the Vice President, or any appointed member of the executive or legislative Branch with a petition containing twenty-five percent (25%) of the Student Body's signatures, at which time a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Senate shall remove the officer from office. The students may also call for the removal of Class Senators with a petition containing twenty-five percent (25%) of the signatures of the senator's respective class and a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Senate shall remove the Senator from office.

**SECTION 4.** A vacancy in the office of the President shall be filled by the Vice President of the Student Body.

**SECTION 5.** A vacancy in the office of the Vice President of the Student Body or of any Class Representative position shall be filled according to the following method:

**Paragraph 1:** If a vacancy occurs as the result of an election in which there are not enough candidates to fill the available positions, it shall be filled by Internal Affairs nomination, subject to the approval of the Senate, within two (2) weeks of the election.

**Paragraph 2:** If a vacancy as the result of resignation or removal occurs more than forty-five (45) calendar days before a scheduled election, and no special election has taken place during the year, a special election shall be called within ten (10) days of the vacancy in order that the vacant position shall be filled.

**Paragraph 3:** All vacancies following the successful completion of a special election shall be filled by Internal Affairs nomination, subject to approval of the Senate.

**Paragraph 4:** In the event of a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the Chair of Internal Affairs shall serve as the interim Vice President thereby acquiring the duties of both offices until a new Vice President has taken office.

**SECTION 6.** The Senate shall be able to remove any member of RSG, excluding the President and Vice President, by four-fifths (4/5) vote of the Senate. If this action is vetoed by the President, the decision on removal will then be taken before the relevant section of the student body for a vote. A 2/3 majority will be required to sustain the removal.

**SECTION 7.** The Senate shall remove any student member of a faculty or administrative committee by a majority vote if he or she is not fulfilling his or her obligations as member of the committee, either to the committee itself or to the Student Senate. The vacancy shall be filled by a nominee from the Internal Affairs Committee, subject to the approval of the Senate.

**SECTION 8.** The President shall have the authority to remove any member of the RSG from an office that is filled by Presidential appointment. This removal can be reversed by a four-fifths (4/5) vote of the Senate if the person having been removed from office petitions the Senate for reinstatement to his or her former position.

## **ARTICLE VIII—AMENDMENTS**

This Working Constitution of the Rhodes Student Government shall be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Senate, a majority vote of the Student Body, and the

approval of the President of the College. Amendments, when appropriate, shall become effective immediately upon approval.

#### **ARTICLE IX—IMPLEMENTATION**

This Constitution of the Rhodes Student Government shall have full force and effect following passage by a two-thirds ( $2/3$ ) vote of seated members and majority vote of the Student Body.