

# THE CONSTITUTION OF THE VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE

*We, the students of Valparaiso University in order to provide a place to discuss issues and have a means to take action on these issues in a positive, effective fashion, do hereby adopt this, the constitution of the Valparaiso University Student Senate, as a means and tool for governance.*

## **ARTICLE I     The Executive Offices of the Student Body**

Section A     The President of the Student Body

Clause 1     Qualifications:

At the beginning of the term of office the President of the Student Body shall have at least the rank of junior in the college in which enrolled. The President shall also have completed at least forty-five (45) credit hours at Valparaiso University and have and maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above. The President will also be a full time student and may not hold any other salaried position funded by student activity fees.

Clause 2     Duties:

- a)     The President of the Student Body shall act in an executive and advisory capacity.
- b)     The President of the Student Body shall be a voting member of the University Council and shall inform the University Council on matters of student concern.
- c)     The President of the Student Body shall be the chairperson of the Student Senate Executive Committee.
- d)     The President of the Student Body shall have veto power over the Student Senate within one week of any action approved by the Student Senate.
- e)     The President of the Student Body shall retain the services of, but not limited to the following: Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Secretary, Public Relations Coordinator, and Parliamentarian.
- f)     The President of the Student Body shall have the power to appoint ad hoc committees.
- g)     The President of the Student Body shall have the power to appoint and remove executive aides.
- h)     The President of the Student Body shall have the power to call special meetings of the Student Senate, and must if requested by five senators.
- i)     The President of the Student Body shall have the power to call Open Forum Meetings and must if requested by a majority vote of the Student Senate.

- j) The President of the Student Body shall have the power to call a referendum and must if requested by a majority vote of the Student Senate. (Referendums asking for amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws shall not be valid under this subsection).
- k) The President of the Student Body shall fulfill the responsibilities granted by non-Student Senate organizations and appoint student officers to said organizations if requested.
- l) The President of the Student Body shall have the power to appoint University Council alternates.
- m) The President of the Student Body shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of all standing committees of Student Senate.
- n) The President of the Student Body shall submit a quarterly report to the President of the University to be placed with the agenda materials for the Quarterly Report to the Board of Directors.

Clause 3 Impeachment:  
If the President of the Student Body is charged with misconduct or negligence of duty, impeachment procedures shall be initiated as stated in Article VII.

Section B The Vice President of the Student Body

Clause 1 Qualifications:  
At the beginning of the term of office the Vice President of the Student Body shall have at least the rank of junior in the college in which enrolled. The Vice President shall also have completed at least forty-five (45) credit hours at Valparaiso University and have and maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above. The Vice President will also be a full time student and may not hold any other salaried position funded by student activity fees.

Clause 2 Duties:

- a) The Vice President of the Student Body shall act as the Chairperson of the Student Senate.
- b) The Vice President of the Student Body shall, subject to the authority of the President of the Student Body, be responsible for the internal operations of the Student Senate and will act in an Executive capacity to accomplish such tasks.
- c) The Vice President of the Student Body shall be responsible for the proper execution of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Student Senate by its membership, though culpability for improper execution of those documents shall be the sole responsibility of the errant individual.
- d) The Vice President of the Student Body shall call all regular meetings of the Student Senate.

- e) The Vice President of the Student Body shall set the agenda for all meetings of the Student Senate subject to the approval of Student Senate.
- f) The Vice President of the Student Body shall attend at least two (2) meetings of each the Administration and the Finance Committees and shall be required to attend a meeting of any other Standing Committee if notified by the chair of that committee that an issue has arisen that requires the Vice President's attention.
- g) The Vice President of the Student Body shall meet at least weekly with the President of the Student Body to discuss, in detail, occurrences within the Student Senate.
- h) The Vice President of the Student Body shall be responsible for management, repair, and control of all Student Senate property and shall keep a record of the location of all property at all times.

Clause 3 Impeachment:  
 If the Vice President of the Student Body is charged with misconduct or negligence of duty, impeachment procedures shall be initiated as stated in Article VII.

**ARTICLE II Valparaiso University Student Senate Membership**

Section A Composition:  
 The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall consist of no more than twenty-five (25)-voting members chosen by the electors of their respective districts. Elections shall be carried out as set forth in Article VI.

Section B Qualifications:

- a) All Student Senators must have maintained a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above and be full time students.
- b) All Student Senators, with the exception of freshmen and transfer students, must also have completed at least twenty-four (24) credit hours.

Section C All Student Senators must be representative of their specific constituencies for the duration of the term of office. All Student Senators must be a member of the district that they represent.

Section D Duties:

Clause 1 All Student Senators must attend and participate in all meetings of the Valparaiso University Student Senate and any Standing Committees of which they are members.

- Clause 2 All Senators shall prepare and submit a quarterly constituency report in a manner to be defined by the Vice President. This report will include, but not be limited to, the concerns of the Senator's constituency with response to the current VU issues involving Student Senate.
- Clause 3 All Student Senators shall hold and maintain a minimum number of office hours, a number that is set by the Vice President of the Student Body.
- Clause 4 Impeachment:  
If a Student Senator is charged with misconduct or negligence of duty, impeachment procedures shall be initiated as stated in Article VII.
- Clause 5 Resignation  
A Student Senator who wishes to resign his/her respective position at any time may on two conditions:
- a) The Student Senator submits a formal letter of resignation to the Student Body Vice President.
  - b) The Student Senator has informed the Screening Committee of the vacancy that his/her resignation will make.
- Section E No Senator shall simultaneously serve in any executive role set forth in Article I or any executive role set forth in the Bylaws. This shall not prevent Senators from properly serving on the Executive Committee. No Senator may simultaneously hold more than a single seat in the Student Senate. No Senator may ever serve in a capacity such that it would afford the Senator an ability to cast multiple votes in a single meeting or in a meeting of a Student Senate committee.

**ARTICLE III The Powers of the Valparaiso University Student Senate**

- Section A The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall have the power to regulate, coordinate, and discipline the functioning of any activity, organization or concern delegated to the Student Body in Article III of the Instrument for Internal Governance of Valparaiso University.
- Section B The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall have the power to establish and maintain committees and organizations in order to best serve the needs and interests of the Student Body of the University.
- Section C The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall have the power to draft proposals and make recommendations that are out of its specific jurisdiction. The President of the Student Body shall present such proposals to the University Council or appropriate body.

- Section D The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall have the power to propose or recommend the specific action or general principle to any member of the University community, with the exception of the Board of Directors. Such proposals shall be sent through the President of the University.
- Section E The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall have the power to override a veto of the President of the Student Body by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the entire Senate.
- Section F The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall have the power to make and amend its own Constitution and Bylaws.

**ARTICLE IV Meetings of the Valparaiso University Student Senate**

- Section A The Valparaiso University Student Senate shall hold regular meetings, at least biweekly, throughout the academic calendar year. Such meetings shall be open to all members of the Student Body. If it is deemed necessary to close a regular meeting of the Valparaiso University Student Senate, it may be closed to a proper motion and a two-thirds vote.
- Section B At least fifty-one (51) percent of all voting members and the chair must be present to constitute a quorum at a meeting during the academic year. Voting membership does not include the chairperson. Quorum must be maintained for the extent of any meeting.
- Section C At least two-thirds of all voting members must be present to constitute a quorum at a special meeting, which is called by the President of the Student Body. Voting membership does not include the chairperson. Quorum must be maintained for the extent of any meeting.
- Section D Voting
- Clause 1 Voting members are defined in Article II, Section A. The Chair shall serve as a nonvoting member of the committee, except in the case of a tie.
- Clause 2 Majority
- (a) Voting is defined among the voting members present as the explicit definition of “yea” or “nay,” and thereby excludes abstentions of those voting members present and the explicit input of those voting members not present.
  - (b) A simple majority is defined upon the explicit agreement of more than 50% of those voting, which does not include those abstaining from the vote.

- (c) A 2/3 majority is defined upon the explicit agreement of more than 2/3 of those voting, which does not include those abstaining from the vote.
- (d) In like form, therefore, all other majority definitions are defined accordingly.

Section E The Student Senate term for each academic year shall last from the Fall Organizational Meeting until the Student Senate adjourns *sine die* in the Spring Semester. The Student Senate will be divided into two sessions, one for the fall semester; beginning on or after the Fall Organizational Meeting and lasting until the final day of the fall semester, and one for the spring semester; beginning on or after the Spring Organizational Meeting and lasting until the Student Senate adjourns *sine die* in the Spring Semester.

**ARTICLE V Finances of the Valparaiso University Student Senate**

Section A The Student Senate is authorized by the University Board of Directors to collect a fee of one (1) percent from the base tuition of the College of Arts and Sciences per semester from every full-time student, and \$5 from each part time student.

Section B The accounts of the Student Senate shall be in the name of Valparaiso University Student Senate and monies shall be deposited only to the accounts of the Student Senate.

Section C The budget of Student Senate shall be formulated for each academic year the preceding spring semester based on projected student fees. The budget must also be ratified during the spring semester. Modifications to the budget due to the actual amount of student fees will be made in the fall semester of the budgeted academic year.

Section D The Student Senate financial policies with regards to the recognized organizations will be determined in the Bylaws pertaining to said policies enacted by the Student Senate.

Section E The Finance Committee of the Student Senate shall review the status and amount of the Student Activity Fee every four years. Changes in policy must receive final approval from the University Board of Directors.

**ARTICLE VI Elections of the Valparaiso University Student Senate**

Section A The elections of the Student Senate shall be run and regulated in the manner set forth in the Bylaw named "Student Senate Elections". Amendments to the Bylaw named "Student Senate Elections" shall follow the procedure outlined in Article IX of the Constitution.

- Section B The Student Senate shall appoint a committee every two years to review the existing districts and representation in the Student Senate, in the Fall of every even numbered year.
- Section C Any vacated office, with the exception of the Office of the President of the Student Body and the Office of the Vice President of the Student Body, shall be filled following the procedure outlined in the Duties of the Screening Committee.
- Section D In the case of a vacancy of an Executive Office of the Student Body, the office shall be filled in accordance to the procedures outlined in Article VIII of the Constitution of the Valparaiso University Student Senate.

**ARTICLE VII Impeachment**

- Section A Definition:
  - Clause 1 If a voting member of the Student Senate feels that one of the Executive Officers or Student Senators is guilty of misconduct or negligence of duty, that member shall initiate the impeachment procedures outlined in the following section of this Constitution.
  - Clause 2 For all senators and executive, negligence includes, but is not limited to, three (3) absences per semester from regular Student Senate meetings, excessive absences from Standing Committee meetings, subcommittee meetings, Senate Retreats, Senate Summits, or abuse of power of one’s office.
  - Clause 3 For the office of President of the Student Body, negligence shall include all offenses listed in clause 2 in addition to excessive absences from University Council meetings.
- Section B Procedure
  - Clause 1 Charges must be submitted in writing to the Vice President of the Student Body at least forty-eight (48) hours before the charges are formally presented to the Student Senate. If the charges are to be filed against the Vice President of the Student Body, then the charges must be submitted in writing to the Grievance Committee Chair at least forty-eight (48) hours before the charges are formally presented to the Student Senate.
  - Clause 2 If the Vice President of the Student Body is accused of misconduct or negligence of duty, the Student Senate shall elect a Senator or Executive Committee member to serve as chairperson at all subsequent meetings concerning the impeachment.

- Clause 3      Within forty-eight (48) hours of being informed in writing, the Vice President of the Student Body shall:
- a)      Call a meeting of the Grievance Committee, which is to be elected from Student Senators each year at the Fall Organizational Meeting.
  - b)      Personally inform the accused.
- Clause 4      If the Vice President of the Student Body is the recipient of the charges, then the Grievance Committee Chair shall perform the vice president’s duties as outlined in Article VII, Section B, Clause 3 in accordance with the procedure outlined in Article VII, Section B, Clause 1.
- Clause 5      All impeachment procedures shall be conducted in closed sessions.
- Clause 6      Within two (2) weeks or ten (10) academic days, the Grievance Committee shall gather the facts of the charges and submit a resolution in writing to the Student Senate regarding the membership status of the individual charged.
- Clause 7      A three-fourths affirmative vote of the entire voting membership of the Student Senate shall be necessary to find an individual guilty of misconduct or negligence of duty.
- Clause 8      If the accused is a voting member of Senate, that individual must abstain from voting on his or her pending case.
- Section C      If a member of Student Senate is found guilty of misconduct or negligence of duty, that member shall be immediately removed from office and shall be ineligible to run for any Student Senate position and student offices on University Council in the future. Executive officers removed from office shall forfeit all forthcoming salary at the time of removal from office.

**ARTICLE VIII Successions of Powers**

- Section A      In the event that the President of the Student Body is determined to be unfit for office per Article I, Section A, Clause 1, or Article VII of the Constitution of the Valparaiso University Student Senate or resigns from office, the duties shall be assumed by the Vice President of the Student Body.
- Section B      In the event of the absence of the Vice President of the Student Body due to assumption of the Presidential duties or if determined to be unfit for office per Article I, Section B, Clause 1 or Article VII of the Constitution of the Valparaiso University Student Senate, or resignation, a member of the voting body of the Student Senate Executive Committee shall be elected Student Senate chair *pro tempore* of the Student Senate.

Section C In the event of the absence of the Vice President of the Student Body due to illness or other excusable reason, the Parliamentarian of the Student Senate shall serve as Student Senate chair pro tempore. In the event of the absence of the Parliamentarian of the Student Senate for any reason, the Executive Secretary of the Student Senate shall have the power to call to order a regular meeting of the Student Senate and call for an election of a Student Senate chair pro tempore. Nominees must be a voting member of the Student Senate Executive Committee and cannot be the President of the Student Body.

Section D Any remaining duties of the Vice President shall be assumed by the Student Senate Executive Committee per Bylaw VI, Section B, Clause 5.

Section E In the event that both the Office of the President of the Student Body and Vice President of the Student Body are vacant because of the events described in Article VIII an emergency meeting of the Student Senate Executive Committee shall be called by the Executive Secretary of the Student Senate where members of the committee will do the following:

- a) Elect a temporary chair to conduct the emergency meeting. This person cannot be a nominee to fill the offices of the President or Vice President. The chair shall not have a vote.
- b) Nominate any Senator or Executive Officer of the Student Senate who meets the requirements to be President of the Student Body as outlined in Article I, Section A, Clause 1.
- c) Nominate any Senator or Executive Officer of the Student Senate who meets the requirements to be Vice President of the Student Body as outlined in Article I, Section B, Clause 1.
- d) Once all nominations have been made and have been deemed eligible to hold the office they are nominated for the floor shall be closed to nominations.
- e) A vote shall then be held to fill the Office of President of the Student Body. Voting shall be conducted in accordance with Bylaw VI, Section B, Clause 8 and with the procedures set in Robert's Rules of Order.
- f) The nominee who received a majority vote of the Student Senate Executive Committee shall hereby become President of the Student Body for the remainder of the un-expired term of that office. Should no nominee receive a majority vote of the committee the nominee with the least amount of votes shall be eliminated from consideration and another vote shall be held until one nominee receives a majority vote of the committee.
- g) A vote shall then be held to fill the Office of Vice President of the Student Body. Voting shall be conducted in accordance with Bylaw IV, Section B, Clause 8 and with the procedures set in Robert's Rules of Order.
- h) The nominee who receives a majority vote of the Student Senate Executive Committee shall hereby become Vice President of the Student Body for the remainder of the un-expired term of that office. Should no nominee receive a

majority vote of the committee the nominee with the least amount of votes shall be eliminated from consideration and another vote shall be held until one nominee receives a majority vote of the committee.

- i) The committee shall then adjourn and the President-designate and Vice President-designate shall be sworn in at the beginning of the next meeting of the Student Senate.

**ARTICLE IX      Amendments to the Constitution**

Section A      Seven-eighths affirmative vote in a single meeting is required to approve amendments to the Constitution. Student Senators must be given at least seven (7) days written notice prior to voting on proposed amendments to the Constitution and proposed amendments must be presented and read aloud to Student Senate at least seven (7) days prior to be voted on.

Section B      Amendments can also be made by a majority of affirmative votes cast by at least one-third of the Student Body in a referendum called by the President of the Student Body upon receipt of a petition bearing at least one-sixth of the Student Body.

Section C      All amendments shall be validated when ratified by the President of the University or when not formally vetoed within three (3) weeks of the date received in the President’s office.

**ARTICLE X      Non-Discrimination Policy**

Section A      The Valparaiso University Student Senate, consistent with its efforts to foster an environment of respect for the dignity and worth of all members of the University student community, prohibits unlawful discrimination and harassment by all students. The Valparaiso University Student Senate reaffirms its commitment to maintaining an academic and working environment, which is fair, respectful, and free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. To these ends the following policy has been adopted: It is the policy of the Valparaiso University Student Senate to prohibit unlawful discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, race, color, age, sexual orientation or national origin in administering its various programs and policies.

**ARTICLE XI      Adoption**

This Constitution shall become operative immediately upon ratification by the Valparaiso University Student Senate and the signatures of the following persons, each representing his/her appropriate source of power.

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The President of the University

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The Vice-President for Student Affairs

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The President of the Student Body

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The Vice President of the Student Body

Revised: 4/18/94  
4/10/95  
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9/20/97  
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11/11/98  
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