

Constitution and By-Laws of the Student Government Association of Columbia State Community College

Preamble

We, the students of Columbia State Community College, recognizing the dignity and honor in student government; realizing that an organization of the student body is necessary to preserve the rights of students in the governance of the college; desiring to protect our right to govern ourselves; and accepting responsibility for the quality of student life, do hereby set forth this Constitution of the Student Government Association of Columbia State Community College.

Article I: General

Section 1. Name

The name of the organization shall be the Student Government Association of Columbia State Community College. Hereinafter in this Constitution this organization shall be referred to as the SGA.

Section 2. Purpose

The purpose of the organization is :

- a. to promote the welfare of each Columbia State Student.
- b. to provide a training experience in the general principles of democratic government for elected SGA officials.
- c. to provide official channels through which student opinions may be expressed.
- d. to promote academic freedom and responsibility.
- e. to promote students' rights and responsibilities.
- f. to promote full cooperation between students, faculty, and administration.
- g. to foster awareness of the student's position of elected SGA officials.
- h. to support all student body activities and school spirit.
- i. to nurture leadership potential of elected SGA officials.
- j. to control the assessment and allocation of the SGA student funding.
- k. to support all clubs and organizations within the college serving as a resource of information.
- l. to assist in the coordination of activities for the benefit of the entire student body and the college.

Section 3. Privileges

Any person who is currently registered for one or more classes during any given semester shall be deemed a student and shall be entitled to all the rights and benefits allowed under this Constitution and shall be entitled to vote in SGA elections.

Section 4. Organization

The SGA shall be organized into two parts: The General Assembly and the Programming Branch. The General Assembly will be divided into two branches; the executive and the legislative branch. Those powers which are executive shall be given to the president, vice president and secretary/treasurer. These will be non-voting members of the General Assembly. Those powers which are legislative shall be given to the senate. The Charger Activity Boards will make up the programming branch of the SGA. The Charger Activity Boards will be comprised of students on each campus (including the two campus senators) responsible for planning and implementing student activities.

A detailed description of the SGA organization and officers is provided in other articles of the Constitution.

Section 5. Non Discrimination

The SGA shall not discriminate on any basis including but not limited to real or perceived age, race, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, sexual history, religious orientation, physical or mental disability, veteran status, alienage, citizenship, marital or parental status, legally recognized domestic partnership status, national origin, ancestry, creed, political belief, employment status, arrest and/or conviction record, or any other criterion prohibited by the Tennessee Board of Regents.

Article II: General Assembly Appointment and Elections

Section 1. Qualifying for Office/Title

- a. All registered full-time or part-time students of Columbia State Community College attending any campus as a first-term freshman or with a minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA are eligible to seek nomination for the SGA Senate. Positions subject to all rules and regulations as may be herein and hereafter enacted by the SGA, the college, or the Tennessee Board of Regents.
- b. All registered full-time continuing students of Columbia State Community College attending any campus with a minimum 2.5 GPA are eligible to seek nomination for the SGA executive board. Positions subject to all rules and regulations as may be herein and hereafter enacted by the SGA, the college, or the Tennessee Board of Regents.
- c. Write-in candidates are not permitted and any such votes shall not be counted.

- d. A person who has been impeached from an SGA office is ineligible to run for an SGA office on any campus at any point in their college career. Eligibility of impeached officers to serve on a Charger Activity Board will be determined on a case by case basis.

Section 2. Appointment and Election Schedules

- a. In the spring semester of each year, interviews will be held to fill the offices of:
 1. President
 2. Vice President
 3. Secretary/Treasurer
- b. The senate shall be comprised of a maximum of ten (10) senators elected by a plurality of the student body, five (5) at the end of the spring semester to serve as sophomore senators and five (5) to be elected at the beginning of the fall semester to serve as freshman senators and shall:
- c. Elections will be conducted electronically and verified with your Columbia State email address.
- d. Notice of election dates, hours and location must be publicized at least ten (10) school days prior to opening the polls for an official election.

Section 3. Interviews

- a. Interviews for Executive Board members held in the spring semester will be conducted by the Election Commission and any outgoing Executive Board members. Details of the Election Commission are outlined in Section 5.

Section 4. Voting

- a. Any person who is registered in one or more Columbia State classes will be deemed a student and will be eligible to vote in any SGA election.
- b. Voting is available to all currently enrolled students.
- c. "One currently enrolled student, one ballot" shall prevail during an SGA election.
- d. Students shall vote for individual candidates, not for a slate of candidates.

Section 5. Procedures

1. An election commission comprised of the currently presiding SGA vice-president, one (1) senator, and the SGA Advisor shall organize all **SGA**

- Executive Board interviews** and shall assume the following specific responsibilities:
- a. Attend, along with any outgoing Executive Board members, all Executive Board interviews.
 - b. Maintain strict confidentiality and impartiality during SGA Executive Board selection interviews.
 - c. In the case that the SGA Vice President is seeking a position on the Executive Board, another executive board member will be appointed to serve as a commissioner in his/her stead. In the event that all outgoing executive board members are running for office, a student shall be selected and appointed by the SGA advisor.
2. The election commission will also organize any specially-called or mid-year elections.
3. The currently presiding SGA Vice-President and the SGA Advisor shall organize all **SGA elections** and shall assume the following specific responsibilities:
- a. Ensure an objective election by lending no support to any individual who may be seeking an office or title; and by abstaining from taking a public stand for or against an issue that is scheduled to be decided by a student body vote.
 - b. Monitor campaign activities during SGA Senator elections to ensure compliance with campaign rules.
 - c. Supervise Election Day activities to ensure a democratic process.
 - d. Investigate all questions/protests related to the elections and recommend a response/follow-up action to the SGA.
 - e. Oversee the computer count of the ballots and certify the results of the computer count.
 - f. Certified election results shall be announced within seventy-two (72) hours after the final hour of the second day closing of the polls.
 - g. Disqualify any candidate who fails to adhere to campaign rules and/or violates Election Day rules.
4. Senate seats and referenda shall be determined by secret ballot of currently enrolled Columbia State students.
- a. The greatest number of votes for a candidate or referendum shall decide the winner or issue.
 - b. In the event of a tie, a run-off election may be held within two weeks to determine a winner.
 - c. In the event of a tie in the run-off election, the “voting membership” of the SGA may cast the deciding vote.
 - d. No active campaigning shall be permitted within fifty (50) feet of computer labs or voting locations on the days and hours of operation of the active voting locations of Senator elections.
 - e. Active campaigning shall be permitted at campus centers and sites.

- f. Unfilled or vacated senate seats shall be filled by the SGA Vice President, with appointments that have been recommended by the Senior Senator.

Article III: The Executive Branch

Section 1. General Authority and Obligations

1. All executive powers of the SGA shall be vested in a president who shall be assisted by the vice president and the secretary/treasurer in meeting the executive responsibilities of the SGA.
2. Having been chosen by the Election Commission and outgoing Executive Board members, the president, vice president and secretary/treasurer are to serve the elected term of office as long as the following conditions are met:
 - a. The officer remains enrolled in classes:
 - b. President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer each must maintain a minimum of twelve (12) hours each semester of the term of office or be enrolled up to the total hours required for their degree plan if they are in their final semester and maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.5.
 - c. The personal behavior of the officer remains above reproach and in compliance with the rules and regulations governing student conduct, which are published in the current student handbook.
 - d. The officer remains active in SGA by regular and prompt attendance at all meetings of the executive branch and attendance at the regularly scheduled meetings of the general assembly of the SGA. All absences should have a documented excuse and should not be in excess.
3. The Executive Board will assume the responsibilities of their offices on the day of their induction. They are not required to take classes in the summer semester.
4. The Executive Board will have the power to set the SGA semester calendar/meetings dates, to be approved by the SGA senate at the first General Assembly meeting.
5. Executive Board meetings will be held monthly or called as needed.
6. Executive board members may not serve in the same position for more than two (2) terms, which may or may not be consecutive terms.
7. Vacated positions in the executive branch shall be filled accordingly:
 - President- the Vice-President shall assume this position until the end of the Presidential term.
 - Vice President- the secretary/ treasurer shall assume this position until the end of the vice-presidential term.
 - Secretary/Treasurer- the senior senator shall assume this position until the end of the secretary/ treasurer term.

Section 2. President

As the chief executive officer of the SGA, the president shall:

- a. See that all provisions of this Constitution are faithfully executed.
- b. Preside over all meetings of the executive branch of the SGA.
- c. Preside over regularly scheduled meetings of the general assembly of the SGA. Further the president:
 1. May waive the right to preside and may appoint a proxy to preside for a maximum of three (3) regularly scheduled meetings per semester.
 2. Should attend all called meetings of the senate.
- d. Have the power to appoint committees to discharge official duties of the SGA.
- e. Have the power to appoint members to committees of the general assembly upon the recommendations by the senators, or to accept for appointment volunteers to serve on the committees.
- f. Be required to yield to questions from the senate.
- g. Have the power to veto legislation passed by the general assembly; however, the presidential veto may be overridden by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the general assembly.
- h. Have a time limit of seven (7) days to veto legislation passed by the general assembly. If the legislation is not approved or vetoed within the limit of seven (7) days, the legislation automatically becomes law without the president's signature. If the piece of legislation is on the president's desk and the semester ends before the seven (7) day limit is up, the piece of legislation must be tabled until the beginning of the next semester and must be presented, again, at the first regularly scheduled meeting of the general assembly for that semester.
- i. Serve as an ex-officio member of college standing committees and all committees of the general assembly of the SGA.
- j. Dedicate a *minimum* of five (5) hours per week to SGA working hours and business in exchange for a scholarship/grant. These hours can be completed at the student's main campus or at any campus and will be posted publicly.
- k. Maintain a presence at Columbia State's multiple campuses.
- l. Represent the college at Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) functions.
- m. Represent the college at various campus and community events, as needed.
- n. Recommend students to the president of the college for appointment to college standing committees in collaboration with the SGA Advisor.

Section 3. Vice-President

Sharing executive responsibility in faithfully executing the laws of the constitution, the vice-president shall:

- a. Assume primary responsibility for the orderly conduct of business during meetings of the general assembly of the SGA.
- b. Dedicate a minimum of five (5) hours per week to SGA working hours and business in exchange for a scholarship/grant.
- c. Serve on the election commission of the SGA, observing all constitutional procedures relative to such service. If running for office during election, this duty will be transferred to another eligible executive board member or representative appointed by the advisor.
- d. Have the power to fill vacated or vacant seats in the senate, with appointments that have been recommended by the Senior Senator.
- e. As needed, recommend students to the president of the college for appointment to college standing committees in collaboration with the SGA Advisor.
- f. Serve as the head of the Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature (TISL) delegation each year.
- g. Represent the college at Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) functions in the event that the President is unable to attend.
- h. Serve as a liaison between the SGA and other campus organizations.
- i. Represent the college at various campus and community events, as needed.
- j. Assume responsibilities for such duties as may be assigned by the president of SGA and for this constitution.
- k. Become the president of the SGA in the event the office of the president becomes vacant before the end of the president's term of office. The vice-president shall assume the authority and responsibilities of the presidency until the end of the presidential term. The interim president is eligible for the scholarship/grant if funds are available.

Section 4. Secretary/Treasurer

Sharing executive responsibility in faithfully executing the laws of this constitution, the secretary/treasurer shall:

- a. Dedicate a *minimum* of five (5) hours per week to SGA working hours and business in exchange for a scholarship/grant.
- b. Record minutes of all meetings of the executive branch and general assembly of the SGA in a journal, taking roll call vote of the yea's and nay's on all business or legislation before either the executive or general body of the SGA.
- c. Keep record of attendance at General Assembly meetings.

- d. Report recorded minutes directly to the SGA and record all corrections to and/or adoption of the recorded minutes.
- e. Maintain a permanent file in the SGA office of all minutes, reports from committees, and amendments for a history to be preserved of SGA business.
- f. Coordinate marketing efforts of the SGA, promoting the integrity of the organization and maintaining a positive image.
- g. Receive pieces of legislation, assigning each piece a number and formatting for distribution.
- h. Prepare the agenda for each senate meeting.
- i. Assume other duties as assigned by the president of the SGA or this constitution

Section 5. Scholarship

The SGA Executive Board will be awarded a scholarship/grant in exchange for their work and dedication to the Student Government Association.

- a. The President will receive a full tuition dollar scholarship (the equivalent of twelve [12] credit hours) or a partial tuition dollar scholarship/book stipend.
- b. The Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer will both receive partial tuition dollar scholarship/book stipend.
- c. In the event that an officer vacates his/her position voluntarily before the end of his/her term, he/she may be responsible for repaying scholarship/grant funds to the college after a review of his or her case by the SGA Advisor. The former officer may appeal the decision of the SGA Advisor to the Vice President of Student Affairs.
- d. In the event that an officer is impeached from his/her position involuntarily before the end of his/her term, he/she will be responsible for repaying scholarship/grant funds to the Student Government Association if impeachment occurs before the beginning of the eighth (8th) week of the semester.

Section 6. SGA Advisor(s)

The advisor(s) of the Student Government Association shall:

- a. Advise officeholders of the SGA in performing their duties and serving the needs of students.
- b. Have Power to review the Constitution, By-Laws, and all legislation of the SGA.
- c. Have the power to veto financial legislation by returning it to the Executive Committee unsigned. This veto can be overturned by the senate but must be signed by the Vice President of Student Affairs for final approval.

Article IV: The Legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch of the SGA shall consist of the senate.

Section 1. General Description, Authority and Responsibilities of the Senate.

- a. The members of the senate are elected by the student body or appointed by the vice president of the SGA to serve one term of office and are joined by the Executive Board to form the General Assembly.
- b. Senators serve as co-chairs of the Charger Activity Boards on their respective campuses.
- c. Members of the senate should meet regularly to draft and/or consider new bills and resolutions in the welfare of the student body, to discuss upcoming SGA initiatives, and/or to conduct other campus business. Specifically, the senate shall draft and present to the general assembly:
 1. Bills of law - amendments to the SGA constitution or by-laws which are subject to the methods defined in Article VI of this constitution.
 2. Resolutions – declarations, appointments, programs, and expressions of sentiments of the general assembly. A majority vote of the General Assembly is required to pass a law or reach a decision on any SGA business that is not otherwise assigned by the constitution.
- d. Elected and appointed members of the senate are to serve during the term of office as long as the following conditions are met:
 1. The member remains enrolled in a minimum of six (6) hours each semester of the term of office and maintains a cumulative GPA of 2.0.
 2. The personal behavior of the member remains above reproach and is in compliance with all rules and regulations governing student conduct published in the current student handbook.
 3. The member regularly attends meetings of the general assembly.
- e. A member of the senate may seek re-election or re-appointment for a maximum of three (3) terms which may or may not be consecutive terms.

Section 2. The Senate

- a. The senate shall be comprised of a maximum of ten (10) senators elected by a plurality of the student body, five (5) at the end of the spring semester to serve as sophomore senators and

five (5) to be elected at the beginning of the fall semester to serve as freshman senators and shall:

1. Elect from among its members, a Senior senator, who shall serve on the executive branch for one term of office.
 2. Attend all General Assembly and CAB meetings of the semester. Participation in General Assembly and CAB meetings or CAB-sponsored activities is mandatory for all Senators. Any Senator who is absent more than three (3) times from a meeting of the General Assembly or a CAB meeting during a semester, without documented excuse, may be automatically removed from their position by decision of the Executive Board
 3. Assume other duties as delegated by the Executive Board or president of the SGA.
 4. Recommend to the Senior Senator of the SGA the appointment of students to fill the vacant or vacated seats in the senate.
 5. Select from among themselves at least one delegate for TISL.
- b. The five (5) sophomore senators shall:
1. Attend a planning retreat over the summer.
 2. Will help to guide the freshman senators.
 3. Be responsible for planning programming for the fall semester.
 4. Help lead fall orientation for the incoming freshman senators.
 5. Send from among themselves one piece of legislation for consideration at TISL.
- c. The five (5) freshman senators shall:
1. Attend a planning retreat during the fall semester.
 2. Help execute the events planned by the sophomore senators.
 3. Be responsible for planning programming for the spring semester with the assistance of Sophomore senator.
 4. Send from among themselves one piece of legislation for consideration at TISL.
 5. Have the opportunity to become a senior senator for the next school year.

- d. The Senior senator shall:
1. Serve as a liaison from the senate to the executive committee.
 2. Assume other duties delegated by the president of the SGA or given by this constitution.
 3. Assume the role of the Secretary/ Treasurer in the event that the vice president becomes unable to fulfill the role and the secretary/ treasurer matriculated into the role.
 4. Represent all currently enrolled Columbia State students, on and off-campus with an earnest effort to seek input from and foster respect for all students irrespective of race, creed, color, age, gender, ability, or other characteristics of diversity.

Article V: Impeachment

Section 1. Impeachable Offenses

- a. As student leaders, elected and appointed members of the SGA are required to exemplify the highest standards of ethics and conduct.
- b. Impeachable offenses shall include, but are not limited to:
 1. Neglect of duties
 2. Public, verbal, or physical attacks on others
 3. Obstruction of the orderly process of the SGA meetings or hearings
 4. Misrepresentation of the SGA
 5. Misuse of the authority of the SGA office
 6. Willful violation of the SGA constitution and/or by-laws
 7. Any violation of institutional policies, which are published in the Student Handbook
- c. The Senate may expel a member by majority vote if that member neglects senatorial duties.

Section 2. Impeachment Procedures

- a. Before the beginning of impeachment proceedings, the SGA Executive board will communicate with the member in danger of impeachment and offer an improvement plan to be determined based on the members actions. If the improvement plan is not fulfilled, the impeachment efforts will go into effect.
- b. Any student, faculty, staff, or administrator of Columbia State Community College may present to the general assembly of the SGA a petition of impeachment against the SGA president, vice president, secretary/treasurer, or any elected or appointed member of the general assembly of the SGA. This petition must

- be accompanied by three (3) statements of support, which can include a statement from the petition sponsor.
- c. Within one week after the receipt of a petition, the Senate shall vote to either pursue the impeachment charges or dismiss the impeachment charges due to lack of sufficient cause to consider the complaint. In the case the Senate votes to pursue the charges, the Secretary/Treasurer of the SGA must notify in writing the officer/member against whom the complaint has been brought of the date, time, and place of a scheduled impeachment hearing. This date shall be no later than two weeks after the receipt of the petition.
 - d. The impeachment hearing must be chaired by a student who is not an officer or voting member of the SGA and is appointed by the advisor of the SGA.
 - e. An audio or video tape recording must be made of the impeachment hearing.
 - f. The complainant must present evidence of or witness(es) to the alleged impeachable offense during the impeachment hearing.
 - g. The SGA officer/member against whom the impeachable offense has been brought should be given reasonable opportunity to refute the allegation(s) of an impeachable offense.
 - h. Members of the general assembly may raise reasonable questions with the complainant or the officer/member against whom the complaint has been brought.
 - i. The chairperson of the impeachment hearing shall maintain order during the hearing and shall call for a vote on the article of impeachment.
 - j. A final impeachment decision required two thirds (2/3) vote of the General Assembly, excluding the vote of the officer/member against whom the complaint has been brought.

Article VI: General Assembly Meetings

Section 1: Time and Purpose

- a. Regularly scheduled General Assembly meetings will begin at 12:20pm and will end no later than 1pm.
- b. General Assembly meetings will be scheduled at the beginning of the semester and will be made accessible via video conferencing to accommodate student representatives at all campuses.
- c. The Executive Board will have the power to set/adjust the semester meeting calendar, to be approved by the Senate during the first meeting of the semester.
- d. General Assembly meetings will be used to discuss legislation, share announcements on upcoming initiatives, and conduct

other official business.

Section 2: Quorum

Quorum must be reached to conduct any official SGA business.

1. Official Business is defined as any budgetary request, by-laws, constitutional amendments, issuance of proclamations or resolutions.
2. Quorum will be defined as a majority of the voting members (Senators) of the General Assembly.
3. In the event of a time sensitive issue, the decision will be made by the Executive Board.

Section 3: Attendance

- a. Attendance at General Assembly meetings is mandatory.
- d. Failure to attend General Assembly meetings will count as one (1) absence. Any Senator who is absent more than three (3) times from a meeting of the General Assembly during a semester, without documented excuse, may be automatically removed from their position by decision of the Executive Board (as stated in Article IV).

Article VII: Writing Legislation

Section 1: Constitutional Amendments

- a. The president of Columbia State Community College and/or his/her designee are given authority by state legislation and the Tennessee Board of Regents to review and revise this constitution and by-laws to preserve the integrity of the institution and its educational environment.
- b. Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by a two thirds vote of the general assembly or by a referendum vote of the student body.
- c. Any amendment adopted to this constitution shall become effective thirty (30) days after being passed by the general assembly or endorsed by the majority vote of the student body in the referendum vote.
- d. The president may not veto a constitutional amendment that is passed by the general assembly or endorsed by the majority of the student body.
- e. The secretary/treasurer shall record the amendments in the body of the constitution rather than attaching a chronological listing of the amendments in the constitution. A copy of the proposed amendment with a record of action taken by the general assembly on each reading, action taken by the president or referendum vote and/or override action should be kept with the permanent records of the Student Government Association of Columbia State Community College.

Section 2: Procedures for Writing General Legislation

- a. Legislation (bills, resolutions) may originate in the senate.
- b. Legislation must be presented in writing to the SGA secretary/treasurer who will prepare copies for distribution to the general assembly at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the SGA.
- c. Reasonable time must be given for discussion of the proposed amendment. If there is no opposition to the proposed amendment, the vote can be called. If there is further discussion needed a vote will be taken after two (2) readings at two (2) meetings of the general assembly.
- d. Quorum must be reached in order to vote on SGA business, including legislation.
- e. A majority vote will pass the legislation through the Senate and will forward the piece to the SGA president for signing and adoption.
 - a. The president may veto the legislation and return it to the senate stating reasons for the presidential veto.
 - b. A three fourths vote of the general assembly will override the presidential veto giving adoption to the amendment.
- f. The general assembly may vote to place the proposed legislation as a referendum for a vote by the student body.
 - a. A majority vote of the voting student body on the referendum will adopt the legislation.
- g. The sponsor(s) of the legislation, with guidance from the Advisor and the SGA President, is responsible for seeing legislation through to implementation.

Article VIII: Activity Boards

Section 1. Formation

- a. The SGA will sponsor the formation of five (5) Charger Activity Boards, hereby referred to as CABs.
- b. CABs shall serve as the Programming Branch of the Student Government Association.
- c. Recruitment for CAB participation will be held concurrently with SGA Senate election promotion each fall.
- d. CAB membership is open to any Columbia State student enrolled in at least one (1) credit hour.
- e. Each CAB will be comprised of at least five (5) people, including the two senators from the host campus. There will be no limit on the number of people who may participate.

Section 2. Leadership

- a. The two SGA senators from each campus will serve as the co-chairs of the board on that campus.

- b. Each CAB will report to the SGA Advisor for primary advisement with support from any specified or designated professional on that specific campus.

Section 3. Procedures

- a. The CABs on each campus will meet at least once a month to plan and discuss potential SGA sponsored events on their campus. CAB meetings will be scheduled consistently on a day/time that is communicated in advance to the general campus population.
- b. Senators will bring CAB updates to each General Assembly meeting.
- c. All CAB activities may be funded through Student Government Fee funds pending approval from the advisor and ultimately the Vice President of Student Affairs.
- d. CAB members are responsible for the implementation of activities on their campus.

Article IX: Student Organizations

Section 1. General

- a. In accordance with Columbia State's Student Organization Policy, any group wishing to be recognized as an official registered organization must submit an application to the office of Student Services.
- b. The SGA President shall oversee a committee of three (3) SGA members and/or currently enrolled students to review the registration application and accompanying documents, recommending approval or disapproval. Final application approval rests with the Vice President of Student Affairs.