



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

### **Preamble**

We the students of Columbia State Community College, recognize 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 and House of Representatives.

### **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 and House of Representatives. 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.

## **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 five (5) senators elected by a plurality of the student body.
- c. The House of Representatives shall be comprised of maximum of ten (10) Representatives, five (5) Campus Representatives, and five (5) At-Large Representatives, elected by a plurality of the student body.
- d. Elections will be conducted electronically and verified with your Columbia State email address.
- e. Notice of election dates, hours, and location must be publicized at least seven (7) school days prior to opening the polls for an official election.
- f. In the event an emergency election must be held, the election commission may hold said election, or elect officials without the required seven (7) day notice per Article II Section 2 (d) of this constitution. A properly documented statement from the election commission and a signature from the SGA Advisor is required to authenticate this emergency election process.

## **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 class 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 but not limited to; the currently presiding SGA Vice President, one (1) Senator, one (1) Representative, and the SGA Advisor. If necessary, the presiding SGA Vice President shall appoint any other members to this commission. This commission shall organize all SGA Executive Board Interviews and shall assume the following specific responsibilities:
  1. Attend, along with any outgoing Executive Board members, all Executive Board interviews.
  2. The election commission will also organize and run specially-called or mid-year elections.
  2. Maintain strict confidentiality and impartiality during SGA Executive Board selection interviews.
  3. In the case that the presiding 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.
  4. Senate and House of Representative seats and referenda shall be determined by secret ballot of currently enrolled Columbia State students.
    - a. A simple majority 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 and Representative 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 Chairman/ Madam Chair.

## **Article III: The Executive Branch**

### **Section 1. General Authority and Obligations**

- a. 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.
- b. 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:

1. The officer remains enrolled in classes:
  2. 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.
  3. 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.
  4. The officer remains active in SGA by regular and prompt attendance at all meetings of the executive branch and attendance at regularly scheduled meetings of the general assembly of the SGA. All absences should have a documented excuse and should not be in excess.
- c. The Executive Board will assume the responsibilities of their offices on the day of their induction. They are not required to take summer classes in the summer semester.
- d. The Executive Board will have the power to set the SGA semester calendar/meeting dates, to be approved at the first General Assembly meeting.
- e. Executive Board meetings will be held weekly or called as needed.
- f. Executive Board members may not serve in the same position for more than two (2) terms, which may or may not be consecutive terms.
- g. 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 Chairman/ Madam Chair 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 general assembly.*
- 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 and

representatives or to accept for appointment volunteers to serve on committees.

- f. Be required to yield to questions from the General Assembly.
- 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 chairman/madam chair.
- 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. Select the Chairman/ Madam Chair

#### **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 college-approved electronic file in the SGA office of all minutes, reports from committees, and amendments for the history of SGA business to be preserved.
- 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 general assembly 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.
- e. In the event the Vice President becomes the interim president, they

shall be eligible for the president's scholarship/grant if funds are available. This action shall trigger a secession for all positions to receive the scholarship of their interim role.

### **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 and House of Representatives.**

- a. The members of the senate and house of representatives 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. Members of the senate and house of representatives 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.
- c. 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 had completed a minimum of one semester.
  2. 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.
  3. 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
  4. The member regularly attends meetings of the general



assembly.

- d. A member of the senate or house of representatives 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 five (5) senators elected by a plurality of the student body, at the end of the spring semester and shall:
  1. Assume other duties as delegated by the Executive Board or president of the SGA.
  2. Recommend to the Chairman/ Madam Chair of the SGA the appointment of students to fill the vacant or vacated seats in the senate and house of representatives.
  3. Select from among themselves at least one delegate for TISL.
- b. The five (5) senators shall:
  1. Attend a planning retreat over the summer.
  2. Will help to guide the Representatives.
  3. Be responsible for planning programming for the fall and spring semester.
  4. Help lead fall orientation for the incoming representatives.
  5. Send from among themselves one piece of legislation for consideration at TISL.

## **Section 3. The House of Representatives**

- a. The House of Representatives shall be comprised of (5) campus representatives and (5) at-large representatives and shall:
  1. Assume other duties as delegated by the Executive Board or president of the SGA.
  2. Recommend to the Chairman/ Madam Chair of the SGA the appointment of students to fill the vacant or vacated seats in the senate and house of representatives.
  3. Select from among themselves at least one delegate for TISL.
- b. The ten (10) representatives shall:
  1. Attend a planning retreat during the fall semester and spring semesters.
  2. Help execute the events planned by the general assembly
  3. Be responsible for planning programming for the spring semester with the assistance of a senator sponsor.
  4. Send from among themselves one piece of legislation for consideration at TISL.

#### **Section 4. Chairman/ Madam Chair**

- a. The chairman/ madam chair shall:
  1. Serve as a liaison from the senate and house of representatives to the executive board.
  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. Impeachment 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 and/ or House of Representatives 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 and House of Representatives 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 General Assembly

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 must be chosen for a time that caters to the schedules of the members of the General Assembly.
- 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 and House of Representatives 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**

- a. 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 and Representatives) 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.
- b. Failure to attend General Assembly meetings will count as one (1) absence. Any Senator or Representative 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. 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 unless an effective date is written in the amendment.
- c. The president may not veto a constitutional amendment that is passed by the general assembly or endorsed by the majority of the student body.
- d. 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 or House of Representatives.
- 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 House of Representatives and will forward the piece to the SGA president for signing and adoption.
  - i. The president may veto the legislation and return it to the senate/ house of representatives stating reasons for the presidential veto.

- ii. 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 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: 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 Executive Board is to review the registration application and accompanying documents, recommending approval or disapproval to be presented at to the General Assembly. Final application approval rests with the Vice President of Student Affairs.



## By-Laws of The Student Government Association of Columbia State Community College

### **Article I: Graduation Regalia**

**Section 1.** The SGA President and SGA Advisor will have the authority to create custom stoles for SGA members to be worn at their graduation.

**Section 2.** The design of these stoles (wording, logos, etc.) shall be chosen at the discretion of the SGA President and Advisor.

### **Article II: Students' Choice Award**

**Section 1.** The SGA President will award the recipient of the Students' Choice Award yearly at the employee honors convocation.

**Section 2.** In the event the SGA President is not able to attend the employee honor's convocation, the SGA Vice President will take place of the SGA President at this event.