



Student Government Development, Leadership, and Advocacy

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Student governments (SGA) are the organizations on college campuses that represent students, serve as their voice, and exists to enhance the educational experience for everyone that attends their college or university.

I. **Roles and Responsibilities** may vary from school to school and campus to campus, but they may include:

- A. Representation of student needs, desires and concerns to faculty, administration, the community, and elected officials.
- B. Approval/recognition of clubs and organizations to exist on campus, based on established criteria, allowing access to meeting facilities, posting of flyers, funding, etc.

1. Who establishes the criteria at your school/campus?

2. What benefits do Registered Student Organizations receive?

- C. Budgeting and distribution of student activity fees.
- D. Providing programming and educational options to engage students and enhance campus life.
- E. Participation on college/university committees to provide student perspectives and to protect the rights and interests of students.
- F. What else?

II. Governing Documents

A. Constitution

1. Defines the purpose and principles of the organization
2. Spells out the membership
 - a. Typically, all students enrolled at the college/university
 - b. Some schools have separate SGAs for undergraduate and graduate students
 - c. There are campuses define members as students taking a minimum number of credit hours
 - d. Residents vs. commuter students may be another distinction
 - e. Other? _____

3. Establishes the basic structure of the organization
 - a. Branches
 - b. Officers
 - i. Elections
 - ii. Term of office
 - iii. Powers
 - iv. Governing rules
 - v. Meetings
 - a. Who is the chair and line of succession?
 - b. Creation of the agenda and deadlines
 - vi. Quorum
4. Must provide for amendments and procedures for ratification

B. By-laws

1. Sets forth the procedures for operating the organization
2. Defines the criteria to be member
 - a. Requirements
 - b. Responsibilities
 - c. Guidelines for removal of a member
3. Dues and other fees

- 4. Duties of the officers
 - a. Powers
 - b. Responsibilities
 - c. Job descriptions
 - d. Procedures for filling vacant positions
 - e. Removal from office
 - 5. Membership and duties of the Executive Board
 - 6. Committees
 - a. Standing
 - b. Creation of special committees
 - c. Selection of members'
 - d. Chair appointment and/or selection
 - e. Meetings
 - f. Powers and duties
 - 7. Must provide for amendments and procedures for ratification
- C. Standing Rules and/or Policies
- 1. Defines procedures, traditions, and decorum
 - 2. Could include items such as:
 - a. Dress code
 - b. Office hours
 - c. Stipends and other compensation
 - d. Travel policies
 - e. Other? _____

- D. Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revision is typically defined as the resource for anything not covered in the governing documents

III. Legislation

- A. Proposals
 - 1. Motions
 - 2. Resolutions

- a. “Whereas” – is the “whys” and “whats” of the proposal. There is no limit to the number of these you may have.
- b. “Be It Resolved” – is the action to be taken. There is typically very few of these, but some proposals may require several actions.
- c. “Be It Further Resolved” – Further actions that the SGA requests be taken with the resolution such as distribution, posting on websites and social media, forums, etc.

B. What kind of proposals should SGA members make?

- 1. Items for change on campus
- 2. Support of causes and advocacies of students and clubs/organizations
- 3. Positions on legislation at local, state, and national levels of interest to students
- 4. Honoring significant achievements of those in the campus community
- 5. Other? _____

IV. Advocacy

A. Forms and methods

B. What to do:

- 1. Know what your position is and why, and support it with facts, anecdotal evidence, and data. Be concise and focused.
- 2. Arguing with members of the opposition is of little benefit: they have their constituencies to represent, just as you do. Learn their positions so you can counter them, but don’t hope to sway them to your side.
- 3. Work your side but be respectful of those on the other side. Your adversary on one issue may be your friend on another.

4. If someone on the opposition chooses to make a fool out of themselves, get out of the way and let them!
 5. Just because you did not prevail on an issue does not mean that your voice was not heard. Take defeat graciously to preserve relationships for future issues.
- C. What not to do:
1. Never lie! Integrity is all you have. Know your position and support it, even in the face of opposition from a decision maker. Sometimes they try to challenge you to see the level of conviction that you have.
 2. Don't embarrass, threaten, or lose your cool with decision makers! They have the power to give you what you want!
 3. Calling names is never productive.

For training and retreats, help with structuring your student government, governing documents, etc. Contact:

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