

Rensselaer Union Constitution

Effective as of April 10, 1987, including amendments passed by campus-wide referendum.

Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be the Rensselaer Union, hereinafter referred to as the Union.

Article II: Membership

All students, both graduate and undergraduate, presently enrolled at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, hereinafter referred to as Rensselaer, who have paid the Union activity fee, shall constitute the membership of the Union.

Article III: Purpose

The purpose of this Union shall be to unite all its members in a commitment to the ideals for which Rensselaer stands, to expand the extracurricular life at Rensselaer, to coordinate all student organizations, to act as a medium through which student opinion may be expressed, and to work with all other members of the Rensselaer community to encourage student initiative and to lead student action in all interests which will serve the welfare and the betterment of Rensselaer.

Article IV: Organization

Section 1

The Union shall be governed by a Student Senate, and Executive Board, a Judicial Board, a Graduate Council, and an Undergraduate Council. It shall be constituted under the authority of the Board of Trustees of Rensselaer.

Section 2

- a) The Student Senate is the chief legislative and policy-making branch of the Union presided over by the Grand Marshal. The Student Senate shall consist of 24 voting members: six Senators from the Graduate School, four Senators from each undergraduate class, one Senator from the Independent Council and one Senator from the Interfraternity/Panhellenic Councils.
- b) It shall be responsible for initiating all legislative action in those areas which affect the Union.
- c) It shall pass such by-laws as are necessary for its operation by a 2/3 vote of its total membership.
- d) It shall determine the amount of the Union activity fee by a 2/3 vote of its total membership.
- e) It shall establish procedures for selection and removal of the student members of the Governance Commissions, the committees of the Board of Trustees, and all other appointments.
- f) It shall be the responsibility of all senators to regularly report to their respective councils.
- g) The Independent Council and the Interfraternity Council and the Panhellenic Council shall govern themselves under their own constitutions subject to the approval of the Student Senate. Their actions may come up for review before the Student Senate and they

will be responsible for making periodic reports to the Senate.

Section 3

- a) The Executive Board shall act as a budgeting group of the Union presided over by the President of the Union. It shall consist of the President of the Union and his or her Cabinet. The Cabinet will consist of a representative of the Graduate Council, the Undergraduate Council, three members chosen from among the officers of the recognized and approved activities on campus and/or members of the intercollegiate athletic teams, and five members chosen from among the members of the Union - from each of the freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate classes. With the exception of the council representatives, the members of the Cabinet shall be appointed by the President of the Union and approved by a 2/3 vote of the entire membership of the Student Senate. Acting as advisors to this Board shall be the Director of the Union and his or her assistants.
- b) Such by-laws as are necessary for its operation shall be passed by a 2/3 vote of the Executive Board membership followed by a majority approval of the Student Senate.
- c) It shall investigate, prepare, and approve the budget for the following year. The budget and the records of all additional expenditures and appropriations shall be public documents.
- d) It shall administer the Union budget, appropriate Union monies and manage the business affairs of the Rensselaer Union building.
- e) It shall approve the hiring and continuance of all administrative personnel of the Union.
- f) It shall decide on the classification of new organizations and changes in the classification of old ones as specified in the by-laws.

Section 4

[Rescinded by Amendment III, Section 1]

Section 5

- a) The Graduate Council is the graduate legislative branch of the Union. It shall consist of the six Graduate Senators and five representatives elected at large. It shall be presided over by the President of the Graduate Council.
- b) It shall be responsible for initiating all legislative action within the Union pertaining to the graduate students not specifically dealt with by the Student Senate or the Executive Board.
- c) Such by-laws as are necessary for its operation shall be passed by a 2/3 vote of its total membership followed by majority approval of the Student Senate.

Section 6

- a) The Undergraduate Council shall consist of two representatives from each of the Undergraduate Class

Councils, and the President of the Undergraduate Council.

- b) The Freshman Class Council shall be responsible for choosing its representatives to the Undergraduate Council within two weeks after the fall elections.
- c) It shall be responsible for initiating all legislative action within the Union pertaining to undergraduate students in areas not specifically dealt with by the Student Senate or the Executive Board.
- d) Such by-laws as are necessary for its operation shall be passed by a 2/3 vote of the total Undergraduate Council membership followed by majority approval of the Student Senate.
- e) The four class councils shall govern themselves under their own constitutions subject to the approval of the Undergraduate Council. Their actions may come up for review before the entire Undergraduate Council and they will be responsible for making periodic reports to the Undergraduate Council.

Article V: Officers

Section 1

The officers of the Union shall be the Grand Marshal, the President of the Union, the President of the Graduate Council, and the President of the Undergraduate Council. It shall be the duty of the Union officers to meet regularly to discuss policy and facilitate a closer coordination of their activities.

Section 2

The Grand Marshal shall be the presiding officer of the Student Senate and an ex-officio member of all committees. The Grand Marshal shall be regarded as the leader and the chief spokesperson for the entire Union and shall be a non-voting member of the Student Senate. In the event of a tie, the Grand Marshal may cast one vote. Any appointments made by the Grand Marshal may be nullified by a majority vote of the entire Student Senate membership.

Section 3

The President of the Union is the presiding officer of the Executive Board, and an ex-officio member of all Union committees. The President shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Board but in the event of a tie, may cast one vote. Any appointments made by the President of the Union other than Cabinet appointments must be ratified by a 2/3 vote of the total Executive Board membership.

Section 4

The offices of Grand Marshal and President of the Union are open to any student who has been enrolled in Rensselaer for at least one full semester. A student who has once occupied the office of Grand Marshal or President of the Union shall remain eligible for election to both offices but may not hold either position for more than two consecutive terms.

Section 5

The President of the Graduate Council shall be the presiding officer of the Graduate Council and an ex-officio member of all graduate committees. The President shall be elected by the Graduate Council from among its members and his or her voting status will be determined via the by-laws of the Graduate Council

Section 6

- a) The President of the Undergraduate Council shall be the presiding officer of the Undergraduate Council and an ex-officio member of all undergraduate committees. His or her voting status will be determined via the by-laws of the Undergraduate Council.
- b) The Sophomore, Junior, and Senior Class Councils shall meet in joint session, presided over by the Grand Marshal, within two weeks after the spring elections, for the purpose of electing, from among their members, the President of the Undergraduate Council. These Councils shall be responsible for choosing their respective representatives to the Undergraduate Council within the same two weeks.

Article VI: Judicial Procedures

Section 1, 2 and 3

[Rescinded by Amendment III, Section 1]

Article VII: Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be the Treasurer of Rensselaer. The Treasurer shall be the custodian of the funds of the Union and shall receive copies of all financial transactions.

Article VIII: Director of the Union

The Director of the Union shall be employed by the Union for that purpose. Director duties shall include the administration of Union activities and monies in accordance with the policies of the Rensselaer Board of Trustees, the Union Constitution, its by-laws, and further legislation of the Executive Board. In maintaining advisory status, the Director may not veto any Executive Board action but may request the Student Senate to begin impeachment proceedings against any member of the Student Senate or the Executive Board whom he or she feels is fiscally irresponsible in the handling of Union funds. Should the Director overstep his or her constitutional authority or demonstrate serious financial irresponsibility, a majority of the Executive Board may bring charges against the Director in the name of the Board before the Judicial Board. The Vice President for Student Affairs shall act as advisor to the Director and shall inform him or her of Trustee policy.

Article IX: Elections

Section 1

The annual election of the Grand Marshal, the President of the Union, the elected members of the Sophomore, Junior, and Senior Class Councils, and all elected members of the Student Senate except Freshman and Graduate, shall be held during the spring semester. The annual election of the members of the Graduate Council, the members of the

Freshman Class Council and the Freshman and graduate members of the Student Senate shall be held during the fall semester.

Section 2

Only members of the Union at the time of the elections shall have the right to vote.

Section 3

Voting shall be by secret ballot.

Section 4

The Student Senate shall determine the means whereby a student may have his or her name placed on the ballot. It shall also be responsible for providing adequate notice of all upcoming elections to the members of the Union. The Student Senate will be responsible for maintaining proportionate representation of all members of the Union on the Student Senate, the Graduate Council, the Undergraduate Council, the Executive Board, and the Judicial Board.

Section 5

All elected offices are for terms of one year, except for the freshman class offices which shall be held until the following spring elections.

Section 6

The candidates for Senators and representatives to the Graduate Council and the Undergraduate Class Councils receiving the highest numbers of votes shall be elected.

Section 7

Vacancies in any elective office may be filled by appointment, subject to the provisions of the constitution or by-laws of the body to which the appointment is made. Such an appointment shall be valid for the remainder of the term of office.

Section 8

- a) Forty-percent of the popular vote shall be necessary for election in the case of Grand Marshal and the President of the Union.
- b) A plurality shall be necessary for election in the case of Undergraduate Class Council officers.
- c) The number of representatives to each class council will be specified by its constitution.

Section 9

In the case of a tie, another election will be held between the tied candidates at a time and place determined by the retiring Grand Marshal.

Section 10

- a) The installation of all newly elected persons shall be within one week following the elections.

- b) The Undergraduate Class Councils shall be responsible for choosing their representatives to the Undergraduate Council within two weeks after the spring elections.
- c) The Graduate Council shall appoint its at-large members at the first regular meeting following spring elections. They shall be selected by the full eleven-member Graduate Council from all applicants. Applications must be solicited for at least two weeks prior to all selection meetings.
- d) The President of the Union shall appoint all new members of the Executive Board, excluding the Graduate Council representative, the Undergraduate Council representative, and the freshman class member, within three weeks after the spring elections. The Undergraduate Council representative shall be appointed by the Undergraduate Council within three weeks after spring elections. The Graduate Council representative shall be appointed by the Graduate Council within three weeks after the fall elections. The President of the Union shall appoint the freshman class member within three weeks after the fall elections. Term of office shall normally be one year but a member will continue to serve until he/she has been replaced.
- e) The Independent Council and the Interfraternity Council/Panhellenic Council shall be responsible for choosing their Senators within two weeks after the spring elections.

Section 11

To be eligible for election and to hold office, a student must satisfy the eligibility rules established by the Institute and the additional regulations established by the Student Senate.

Section 12

A minimum of three Senate positions for each undergraduate class must be open for election during the spring. If a class opts, per its constitution, to have the remaining position filled by appointment, that appointment must be made within two weeks of spring elections.

Article X: Removals

Section 1

The Grand Marshal or the President of the Union may be removed from office by a petition requiring his or her resignation signed by at least 50 percent of his or her constituents or by a 2/3 vote of his or her constituents voting in a valid removal election. A valid removal election is one in which at least 60 percent of his or her constituents vote. A removal election may be called by a 2/3 vote of the Student Senate or by a petition signed by at least 20 percent of his or her constituents followed by a majority vote of the Student Senate.

Section 2

- a) The Student Senate may remove a member for good cause, as specified in the by-laws, with a 2/3 vote of the membership.

- b) Elected senators may be recalled by their constituencies. A 2/3 vote of his or her constituents in a valid removal election would constitute a recall. Such a removal election may be brought about by a petition signed by 20 percent of his or her constituents or by a majority vote of the Senate. Senators filling seats normally appointed by a council, may be removed by a 2/3 vote of the total membership of the council.
- c) Should a vacancy remain unfilled by the body which made the appointment, that body shall forfeit the vote of the unoccupied position.

Section 3

- a) Any member of the Graduate or Undergraduate Councils may be removed from office for good cause as specified in the by-laws, with a 2/3 vote of the total membership of the Council. The person whom the action concerns shall not have the right to vote in the decision. An impeachment vote may be called from the floor at any council meeting and should the majority of the membership vote for impeachment, the removal vote will be held at the following meeting.
- b) Removal from either the Graduate Council or the Undergraduate Council shall not constitute removal from any other council, subordinate or superior.

Section 4

[Rescinded by Amendment V, Section 1]

Section 5

- a) Any of the eight members of the Executive Board Cabinet installed by the Student Senate may be removed by a 2/3 vote of the total Senate membership or by the simple request of the President of the Union supported by a majority vote of the Student Senate.
- b) The members of the Executive Board Cabinet appointed by either the Graduate Council or the Undergraduate Council may be removed by a 2/3 vote of the total membership of the appointing council, or by the request of the President of the Union followed by a majority vote of the appointing council.

Article XI: Limitation of Office

Section 1

A candidate for Grand Marshal or President of the Union may simultaneously run for a Senator or Representative position in his or her Class Council or the Graduate Council. He or she may not run for an officer position on that Council, nor may he or she hold more than one office should he or she be elected to both.

Section 2

The Grand Marshal shall not be a member of the Executive Board, nor any committee thereof, nor shall the President of the Union be a member of the Student Senate, nor shall either be a member of a constituent council of the Senate, nor of any Union judiciary body.

Section 3

No person may simultaneously run for more than one position on the same council.

Section 4

No person may run simultaneously for the office of Grand Marshal and President of the Union.

Article XII: Succession

Section 1

[Rescinded by Amendment IV, Section 1]

Section 2

Within two weeks of the resignation or removal of the President of the Union, the Executive Board shall appoint from within its membership a new President. His or her appointment shall be confirmed by a 2/3 vote of the entire membership of the Student Senate. The Grand Marshal shall preside over the Executive Board until the new President of the Union is confirmed.

Section 3

If any elective position including by not limited to, Officers of the Union, is filled by appointment, a special election for that position shall be held if the Student Senate receives, within two weeks of the announcement of the appointment, a petition signed by 20 percent of the constituency involved. If the appointment is made at a time when the full student body is not normally on campus, the petition must be received within two weeks of the announcement to the full campus.

Article XIII: Referendum

Section 1

A referendum, on any matter except amendment of the Union Constitution, shall be held whenever the Student Senate:

- a) Receives a petition signed by at least 20 percent of any constituency and approves it by a majority vote; or
- b) Upon receiving any other form of proposal, approves it by a 2/3 vote of its total membership.

Section 2

The referendum election shall be held at a time determined by the Student Senate, not more than sixty days (exclusive of vacation periods) or at the next regular election whichever comes first, but in no case less than fourteen days following its approval. A referendum may be held at any time during the academic year except during exam periods.

Section 3

A referendum shall become effective if approved by a majority vote of students in a valid referendum election. A valid referendum election is one in which at least 20 percent of the affected constituency vote.

Section 4

Upon its passage, a referendum shall be binding upon the constituency. The Senate shall enact any legislation necessary for its implementation. Unless otherwise provided for in the text of the referendum, it may be rescinded only by a similar referendum.

Article XIV: Amendments

Any amendment of the Union Constitution must be passed by a 2/3 vote of the total Student Senate followed by a simple majority of the students voting in a valid constitutional election. A valid constitutional election shall be one in which 20 percent of those eligible vote. One month prior to a general student body vote on the amendment, it must be submitted to the President of the Institute or his/her chosen representative who may refer the amendment to the Board of Trustees for their consideration. At least two issues prior to the general student body vote on the amendment, it shall be printed in the *Rensselaer Polytechnic*. An amendment vote may be held at any time during the school year excluding exam periods. All amendments shall be appended to the end of this Constitution.

Article XV: Liability

No liability shall be incurred by this Union through its governing bodies, officers, or members unless provision has been made for it. No liability shall be incurred or money spent by any committee, officer, or member of the Union without a requisition from the Executive Board or its duly authorized agent.

Amendment I: Elections

The annual elections of the Grand Marshal, the President of the Union, and the members of the Sophomore, Junior and Senior Class Councils and the members of the Graduate Council shall be held during the spring semester at a time and place determined by the Student Senate. The annual elections of the members of the Freshman Class Council shall be held during the fall semester at a time and place determined by the Student Senate.

Amendment II: Executive Board

Section 1

The Executive Board shall consist of 12 voting members: three club or varsity athletics representatives, one member each from the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior and Graduate classes, a representative of the Graduate Council, a representative of the Undergraduate Council, a representative of the Student Senate, and a Member-at-Large representing any membership of the Union.

Section 2

The President of the Union shall appoint new members of the Executive Board, with the exception of the Graduate Council representative, the Undergraduate Council representative, and the Senate representative, within three weeks of spring elections. The Senate representative shall

be chosen by the Senate within three weeks of spring elections.

Section 3

- a) Any of the nine members of the Executive Board Cabinet, installed by the Student Senate, may be removed by a 2/3 vote of the total Senate membership or by the simple request of the President of the Union supported by a majority vote of the Student Senate.
- b) The members of the Executive Board Cabinet appointed by the Graduate Council, Undergraduate Council, or the Student Senate may be removed by a 2/3 vote of the total membership of the appointing body or by the simple request of the President of the Union supported by a majority vote of the appointing body.

Amendment III: Judicial Procedures

Section 1

[Article IV, Section 4; and Article VI are hereby rescinded]

Section 2

- a) The Judicial Board shall be the primary court of judgment for cases in which the concept of student rights, responsibilities or conduct is in question. No other board shall assume any portion of this jurisdiction, unless such a board be comprised solely of students, and the jurisdiction of the board clearly defined. No such board will be constituted nor its jurisdiction changed without the consent of the Student Senate and Institute President.
- b) The Judicial Board shall consist of a Chairperson (any member of the Union shall be eligible for this position) and four members of the undergraduate student body and two members of the graduate student body. These positions shall be filled by a selection committee as defined in the Judicial Board by-laws. If vacancies remain on the Board immediately after the selection procedure the Grand Marshal shall appoint people to these positions. All selections and appointments shall be approved by a 2/3 vote of the entire Student Senate. All appointments shall also be approved by a 2/3 vote of the current Judicial Board. The outgoing Judicial Board shall, by 2/3 vote, approve that the new Judicial Board was fairly selected.
- c) Any charge which specifies a violation of the Union Constitution, the Rensselaer Student Bill of Rights, or established regulations governing student conduct may be referred to the Judicial Board.
- d) In deciding a case, the Judicial Board may declare any legislation of the Student Senate, the Executive Board, the Graduate Council, the Undergraduate Council, the Independent Council, the Interfraternity Council, the Panhellenic Council or the Undergraduate Class Councils to be unconstitutional.
- e) Such by-laws as are necessary for its operation shall be passed by a 2/3 vote of the Judicial Board's total

membership followed by a majority approval of the Student Senate.

Section 3

If a case is brought in which a student or student group alleges a violation of Institute rules by an individual faculty member or administrator, or by Rensselaer itself, the Joint Board is to be convened by the Judicial Board Chairperson. The Joint Board will consist of one administrator appointed by the President of the Institute, and a number of faculty members appointed annually by the Chairperson of the Faculty Council equal to the number of students from the Judicial Board (including the chairperson). This number will be outlined in the Joint Board by-laws. The Chairperson of the Judicial Board shall serve as chairperson of the Joint Board.

Section 4

A Faculty Board will have jurisdiction over cases where a student appeals a grade issued by a faculty member. The membership of this board will be defined in its by-laws which shall be approved by the Faculty Council. The jurisdiction of this board may be expanded to include other student-faculty disputes of an academic nature subject to the approval of the Student Senate, Faculty Council, and Institute President.

Section 5

- a) The Greek Judicial Board shall have jurisdiction over any case involving a fraternity or sorority recognized by the Interfraternity Council or Panhellenic Council violating Institute, Interfraternity Council or Panhellenic Council rules, where the complainant is either a fraternity or sorority recognized by the Interfraternity Council or Panhellenic Council or the Dean of Students Office.
- b) The membership of the Greek Judicial Board shall consist of at least one representative from the Interfraternity Council and one representative from the Panhellenic Council, and shall be filled by a selection committee, as defined within the Greek Judicial Board by-laws.
- c) The Greek Judicial Board shall adopt such by-laws as are necessary for its operation by a 2/3 vote of its total membership, subject to approval by the Interfraternity and Panhellenic Councils.

Section 6

The Review Board shall be the highest court of appeal before the President of the Institute. A decision of any Institute Judicial body shall be subject to appeal through the Review Board. The Review Board will consist of five members and five alternates. The members will be one administrator appointed by the President of the Institute; two faculty members appointed by the Chairperson of the Faculty Council; and two students appointed by the Grand Marshal, subject to approval of the Student Senate. The

alternates shall be similarly constituted. The appointments shall be made annually. The Review Board will adopt such by-laws as are necessary for its operation by a 3/5 vote, subject to approval by a majority of the Student Senate and the Faculty Council.

Section 7

The set of rules governing the exact procedures for cases referred to any Institute Judicial body shall be known as the Hearing Procedures. The Hearing Procedures shall be approved by a 2/3 vote of the Judicial Board's total membership. Before any amendment shall become effective, it shall be approved by the President of the Institute not less than 30 days nor more than one year after it is proposed. The Judicial Board must notify the Student Senate and Faculty Council when any proposed amendment is sent to the President of the Institute. Extensions to the Hearing Procedures may be adopted by each board for their own unique circumstances, as defined by their by-laws.

Amendment IV: Succession

Section 1

[Article XII, Section 1 is hereby rescinded]

Section 2

Within two weeks of the resignation or removal of the Grand Marshal, the Student Senate shall appoint a new Grand Marshal from within its membership. His or her appointment shall require the approval of 2/3 the entire membership of the Senate. The Chairperson of the Judicial Board will preside over this appointment. Until the new Grand Marshal is appointed, the Student Senate by-laws shall dictate who will assume the remaining duties of the Grand Marshal.

Amendment V: Removals

Section 1

[Article X, Section 4 is hereby rescinded]

Section 2

A student member of the Judicial Board or Review Board may be recalled for good cause by 3/4 vote of the total membership of the Student Senate.

Amendment VI: Judicial Advisors

- a) A Chief Judicial Advisor and at least four Judicial Advisors shall be selected by a selection committee as defined in the Judicial Advisor by-laws. If vacancies remain immediately after the selection procedures the Grand Marshal shall appoint people to these positions. All selections and appointments shall be approved by the Student Senate.
- b) Judicial Advisors shall be responsible for advising students through all aspects of the judicial process.
- c) Judicial Advisors shall be available to any student prior to a Dean's inquiry.
- d) Judicial Advisors shall ensure that any student appearing before any Institute judicial body is fully aware of the procedures of that body, and shall be

available to students before, during, and after the hearing for consultation.