

VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

Approved by the University Faculty:
Approved by the Board of Visitors:
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UNIVERSITY COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

Preamble

The University Council is based on the core values of shared governance at Virginia State University. Shared governance is at the heart of any great university in that it reflects a general commitment on the part of faculty, staff, students, and the administration to work together to strengthen and enhance the university. Shared governance also both reflects and enhances mutual respect and trust in the university community for the contributions that all of its members bring to the educational enterprise. Indeed, the variety and complexity of tasks involved in shared governance produce an inescapable interdependence among the Board of Visitors, the administration, faculty, staff, and students. Moreover, their relationship necessitates ongoing communication, as well as full opportunity for appropriate joint planning, evaluation, and decision-making.

The core values of shared governance, as supported by every item of the University Council Constitution, are:

- Informed and inclusive decision-making
- Transparency and clarity of operations and decision-making
- Open lines of communication between and among all components and members of the VSU community
- Accountability
- Mutual respect and trust

Guided by these core values of shared governance, Virginia State University's central integrated shared governing and policy-generating body concerning issues that affect the university as a whole shall be the University Council (UC). The University Council is a necessary component of shared governance: in order to promote educational success, assure informed policy development- and decision-making, assist VSU's administrative and academic leadership, share responsibility and accountability, support and represent diversity among members of the VSU community, and facilitate mutual respect, all components of the University need to have a close and open collaborative relationship with each other. When it comes to issues that affect the well-being of the entire university, every component and constituency needs to have a secure "seat at the table" in advising on policy development and decision-making.

Decision-making authority should be, wherever possible, delegated to those areas/persons most affected and with the most specialized expertise—within the governing bodies representing various components (Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, SGA) as well as within

various administrative units, schools, or departments. However, where there are issues that affect the entire university, or issues that clearly affect more than one organizational area of the university, or more than one school, or more than one constituent group, the UC shall have the power to review, revise, initiate, and recommend for approval.

Article I. Purpose and Mission of the VSU University Council

The **primary mission** of the University Council is

1. to assure ongoing communication, transparency, and cooperation between different components of Virginia State University, and to facilitate dialogue, consistent flow of information, and mutual respect between and among all members of the VSU community
2. to assist and monitor University-wide planning, budgeting, and evaluation that is consistent with VSU's mission and shared governance principles, and to assure that all elements of VSU are an integral part of its shared governance system
3. to monitor and assist with accountability and responsiveness on the part of all University components
4. to assure that shared governance protocol is followed, which includes mediation and resolution of conflicts between different components, where appropriate
5. to assure, in close collaboration with the President and the Board of Visitors, that resources necessary for academic/educational success are made available
6. to assist in assuring that VSU has a continuously improved mission/strategic vision that is grounded in its history (including its land grant responsibilities), based on a commitment for diversity, educational excellence, and research, and built upon the fundamental principles of shared governance
7. to assist in assuring ongoing University-wide policy making and policy implementation consistent with VSU 's mission and shared governance principles

Article II. Functions of the VSU University Council

Based on the Mission of the University Council, the core responsibilities and functions of the University Council include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. to review (and possibly initiate), and periodically evaluate continued development of the mission and vision of the university

2. to review (and possibly initiate), and periodically evaluate all planning and evaluation documents that concern more than one unit or component of the university (which explicitly includes the development of a budgeting and planning model)
3. to guarantee and/or establish effective and ongoing communication between and among all university components (which includes UC representation on the Board of Visitors)
4. to review (and possibly initiate), and periodically evaluate all policies (including budget), programs, and initiatives that concern more than one unit or component of the university
5. to assist in the initiation, planning, and evaluation of university-wide programs and centers that support or advance the mission of the university or more than one unit or component of the university
6. (a) to develop—in collaboration with the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, the Provost, and Human Resources—search and hiring procedures that are in line with standard academic procedures and the principles of shared governance and other universities, and

(b) recommend efficient and timely procedures that are responsive to the needs of the University, faculty, staff, administration, departments, and schools, and to assure compliance with said procedures
7. (a) to develop—after broad input from all components—a job performance policy that would allow for the periodic evaluation of all university officers (i.e. administrators and elected and/or appointed officers), and

(b) to assure accountability, either through sanctions / removal, or, where appropriate, through rectifying support mechanisms, and

(c) to assist in assuring compliance with said procedures
8. to assist in initiating improved and intensified university-community relations, including, but not limited to, the creation of
 - (a) an Alumni Advisory Board,
 - (b) a Community Advisory Board, and
 - (c) a Community Outreach Center
9. to allow for, and support, Special Topics Meetings—these meetings can be initiated by any members of the university community with ideas that potentially affect the well-being of the university; supported by the University Council, the

- Special Topic agenda may result in the creation of a Task Force for this particular purpose
10. to advise on policies affecting the quality of student life at VSU
 11. to establish standing and temporary committees as may be necessary to fulfill the University Council mission
 12. (a) to channel requests for actions, policy changes, proposals, and initiatives—according to shared governance principles—in an expedient fashion to the appropriate governing bodies and/or administrative offices, and
 - (b) to direct timelines for responses
 13. to provide review and recommendations on major policy changes involving academic programs, on academic freedom and responsibility, pay equity, research guidelines and support, and related matters
 14. to share with the Board of Visitors the responsibility for the selection of the President through a committee composed equally of members of the University Council and members appointed by the Board of Visitors and instructed to attempt to recommend to the Board a unanimous choice
 15. to share with the President the responsibility for the selection of the Provost and University Vice Presidents through a search committee composed equally of members of the University Council and members appointed by the President and instructed to attempt to select a candidate (or a ranked list of candidates) by a unanimous choice.
 16. to establish such Standing and Special Task Committees as may be necessary for the discharge of its responsibilities; to define the membership, jurisdiction, and authority of such committees within the guidelines of the University Council mission; to resolve disputes among committees thus established; and to act on the reports submitted by such committees

Between regularly scheduled University Council meetings, all the above outlined functions may be fulfilled by the University Council Executive Committee when issues cannot await a meeting of the University Council as a body.

Note: Areas of concern of the UC are issues that affect the entire university, or issues that clearly affect more than one organizational area of the university, or more than one school, or more than one constituent group. In cases where areas of authority or responsibility are not clear, the UC shall have the power of review, i.e. review where decisions are made and, if a 2/3 majority of the UC so decides after due deliberation of the issues at hand, provide written and public justification why the matter properly is a university-wide UC issue for review, recommendation, and approval.

Article III. Composition of University Council

The University Council shall consist of 22 voting and 3 non-voting members:

- A. the President as chair
- B. a vice-chair who is a member of the UC and who shall be elected by the UC at large
- C. the Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, the Vice President for Administration and Finance, and the Vice President for Development
- D. two staff representatives (one elected by the staff at large, one a Staff Senate representative)
- E. the Faculty Senate Chair and Vice Chair, and four faculty elected by the faculty at large (faculty shall be defined as tenure-track, tenured, or continuing appointment who have been at VSU for at least one year)
- F. two student representatives (one undergraduate, one graduate)
- G. two at large representatives, one designated by the President and one designated by the Faculty Senate
- H. one program director/dean (elected by the program directors/deans), and one department chair (elected by the chairs)
- I. one representative elected by full-time researchers and extension specialists in the School of Agriculture
- J. three members that are elected by the university community at large (eligible candidates can be anyone who is employed at VSU full-time for at least one year; all full-time employees/faculty can vote)
- K. one representative from technology—non-voting (needs to be full-time VSU)
- L. Chair (or designated representative) of the Alumni Advisory Board—non-voting
- M. Chair (or designated representative) of the Community Advisory Board—non-voting

Article IV. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee supports the University Council in its mission, and directly reports to the UC body at large. The Executive Committee assists the University Council chair and vice-chair in organizing UC meetings and setting the UC meeting agenda. The Executive Committee also provides leadership and ongoing communication and cooperation between all university components during the times between regularly scheduled UC meetings.

Article V. Joint Committee on Student Academic Life

The education of students represents the core of any university's mission. Without students, there is no university. In addition to quality instruction by faculty who care about students and who are continuously engaged in academic exchanges and research, a good education for students also requires appropriate facilities, an intellectually and socially stimulating campus life, academic and administrative support, counseling, and many other things that support and enhance the students' educational experience. In this effort, students need the support of faculty and any other members who directly deal with the student academic and social life experience on campus.

In order to facilitate this core mission of the university to the greatest extent possible, the University Council and the Faculty Senate shall maintain and support a Joint Committee on Student Academic Life that, in its joint efforts, continuously assists in improving the student academic and social life experiences at Virginia State University.

The Joint Committee on Student Academic Life will operate as a shared standing committee both of the University Council and the Faculty Senate. The function of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life (JCSAL) shall be to monitor the quality of education at VSU, to cooperate closely with the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and to formulate and recommend policies and procedures in matters pertaining to:

- The academic affairs of undergraduate and graduate students
- Those institutional services which affect students' academic success

In carrying out these functions, the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life divides its task into two parts reflecting the above dual purpose and mission:

- Academic Affairs, and
- Services Supporting Academic Affairs

The academic affairs of undergraduate and graduate students will be handled by the Committee as a whole. It will monitor, formulate and recommend policies and procedures concerning, but not limited to:

- Teaching (quality, cultural diversity, communication in classroom, faculty-student relations, faculty accountability, faculty professional growth and development, academic standards)
- Educational Support Services (counseling, library, computer labs, tutorial services, writing lab, math lab, availability of child care services)
- Orientation (introduction to university life, introduction to VSU, study skills, time management, student conduct, substance abuse, sexual harassment and violence, course requirements)
- Advisement (substance of operation of Advisement Centers, advising within departments)
- Communication (between students and faculty, students and administration, between departments, between schools, between administrative offices)
- Extra-curricular academic/intellectual programs
- Academic vision/mission of the university as it concerns student academic affairs

A subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life, the **Student Life Subcommittee (SLC)**, will monitor and recommend policies and procedures concerning, but not limited to:

- Student Activities (intercollegiate athletics: attendance, perception of school spirit; intramural athletics: number of activities for men and women; social activities: number and cost of activities, activities which support scholarship and intellectual growth)
- Residence Life (physical environment: cleanliness, attractiveness, support of scholarship and study); social activities; social interactions: stress and anger management, perceived friendliness of dorm life)
- Physical and Mental Well-Being of Students (health services: assessment of services; psychological services: assessment of services; substance abuse: assessment of services; disability services: assessment of services)
- Safety Issues (relationship between campus police and students; safety issues as they relate to the residence halls; safety issues concerning being on campus at night; safety issues concerning Halloween; cost of police protection for student activities)
- Judicial Concerns (legal issues concerning students; patterns of disciplinary concerns; sexual harassment: policies, procedures, availability of services; sexual assault and date rape: policies, procedures, availability of services)

- Auxiliary Services (cafeteria: environment, cost, flexibility of cafeteria plans, hours of operation; bookstore: cost of books, hours of operation)
- Student Union (facilities, activities, hours of operation)
- Financial Services (Offices of Financial Aid and Student Accounts: courtesy, timeliness, accuracy, helpfulness)
- Registration (efficiency, validation, impact on educational environment)

Article VI. Standing Committees

In addition to the Executive Committee and the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life, the University Council maintains (but is not limited to) the following Standing Committees:

- Communications and Program/Event Calendar
- Mediation
- Strategic Planning, Budget Allocation, and Finance
- Personnel, Compensation, Facilities, and Services
- University Outreach and Community Relations

VI.1. Purpose / Mission

The Mission of the Standing Committees is to support the operations of the University Council, and, more specifically to

- Assure continuous monitoring and informed deliberations on the issues within the respective Standing Committee's purview
- Provide reports and recommendations to the University Council at large on the issues within the respective Standing Committee's purview

VI.2. Committee Charges

VI.2.1. Communications and Program/Event Calendar

- Recommends and monitors establishment and maintenance of a university-wide communications system that guarantees transparency and open flow of information to all components of the university community

- Provides at upcoming UC meeting the agenda plus supporting documentation to all UC members, and puts an executive version of the agenda on the UC website at least two days prior to meeting
- Keeps accurate records of the UC proceedings, minutes, reports, and attendance of meetings
- Assists in generating and maintaining a comprehensive university event calendar in collaboration with the Vice-Provost for Administration and, if necessary, a calendar committee under the leadership of said Vice-Provost
- Establishes and monitors an office/position that will guarantee coherence to university calendar and serve as central and regularly publicized clearinghouse for all university events, programs, etc.
- Assists in establishing a regular weekly time slot that will allow all members of the VSU community to attend committee meetings

VI.2.2. Mediation

- Helps direct conflicts to appropriate channels
- Assists in conflict resolution in case of major conflicts between components of the university
- Establishes and directs formal grievance procedures for conflicts/disputes that cannot be resolved by existing grievance procedures (such as the Faculty Senate Committee on Reconciliation)
- Mediates and supports conflict resolution in major policy disputes

VI.2.3. Strategic Planning, Budget Allocation, and Finance

- Assists in, and helps evaluate, all budget requirements and priorities concerning the university as a whole
- Assists in developing an ever evolving strategic planning process for the university at large in order to assure strategic planning and budgeting that is consistent with the mission of the university
- Reviews and recommends concerning implementation, evaluation, revision

VI.2.4. Personnel, Compensation, Facilities and Services

- Assists in formulating job descriptions for positions of university-wide jurisdiction
- Monitors all search and hiring procedures in order to assure compliance with the VSU mission and generally accepted standards of excellence and accountability in academia
- Examines equitable compensation questions and recommends guidelines
- Assists in all university-wide, long-term and major facilities and services questions

VI.2.5. University Outreach and Community Relations

- Assists in coordinating, evaluating, and supporting Cooperative Extension, continuing education, economic development (including community resources and leadership development)
- Assists and supports liaison with the larger community, including, but not limited to, corporations, schools, institutes, etc.
- Supports and evaluates international programs, educational outreach and service learning programs, community events, etc.

Article VII. Temporary Special Task Committees

The University Council reserves the right to establish Temporary Special Task Committees as agreed upon by the majority of the University Council as a whole whenever there is an urgent need for such a committee, i.e. when particular tasks cannot be fulfilled by the existing Standing Committees.

Article VIII. University Support for University Council

All appropriate efforts shall be made to allow the UC to fulfill its duties in a timely and efficient manner—this includes, but is not restricted to:

- the hiring of permanent clerical staff
- providing a permanent office (including secure filing system, office space for clerical support staff, necessary technology [computers, printer, copier], and meeting space

- providing an operating budget for the UC
- allowing at least one course release per semester for faculty officers of the UC and for faculty members of the University Council Executive Committee

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL BYLAWS

Article I. Articulation With University Community

In order for Shared Governance to be successful, it is essential that all university bodies work closely with one another. Whenever the University Council is considering an item, it shall seriously deliberate on whether input from what other administrative or academic units or governing bodies would be necessary in order to fulfill shared governance principles, and/or beneficial to the full review and resolution of the item at hand. In all cases such input is deemed necessary or beneficial, the UC Communication Committee will make an immediate formal request to the units / bodies in question for formal review and recommendations.

Generally, areas of concern of the University Council are issues that affect the entire university, or issues that clearly affect more than one organizational area of the university, or more than one school, or more than one constituent group. In cases where areas of authority or responsibility are not clear, the UC shall have the power of review, i.e. review where decisions are made and, if a 2/3 majority of the UC so decides after due deliberation of the issues at hand, provide written and public justification why the matter properly is a university-wide UC issue for review, recommendation, and approval.

Article II. Terms of Membership (Duties / Elections / Appointments)

The chair of the University Council shall be the university president.

All other members of the University Council, with the exception of the student representatives, are elected/appointed for two-year terms, with the option of being re-elected/re-appointed once. After two possible consecutive terms, members need to sit out for at least one term before being eligible for membership again. Students shall serve one-year terms, and can also be re-elected/re-appointed once.

All positions should be filled by the end of the Spring semester, which means that both election and nomination procedures need to be concluded by that time. Members of the University Council who need to be elected will be elected at the same time and on the same ballot as the officers of the Faculty Senate.

All elected and appointed positions on the University Council shall be staggered, so that half of the UC appointed and elected members will be replaced and/or renewed in their two-year terms each year (In order to initially establish the staggered system, half of the appointed and elected members on the University Council will only serve one year terms, and the other half will serve out their full two year term--this selection will be based on a

random drawing of names during the first regularly scheduled University Council meeting).

II.1. Representatives from the University Administration

In addition to the university president, the university administration has at least three representatives on the University Council:

- Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
- Vice President for Administration and Finance
- Vice President for Development

II.2. Faculty Representatives

Faculty shall be represented by the Faculty Senate Chair, the Faculty Senate Vice-Chair, and four faculty elected by the faculty at large.

II.3. Staff Representatives

Staff shall be represented by a Staff Senate representative and a staff member elected by the VSU staff at large.

II.4. Student Representatives

Students shall be represented by one undergraduate and one graduate student. Determination as to the election/nomination procedures for said representatives shall be up to the SGA.

II.5. Designated at-large representatives

The president of the university and the Faculty Senate shall make one nomination each for an at-large representative on the University Council. Determination as to the election/appointment procedures for said Faculty Senate representative shall be up to the Faculty Senate. Neither one of the two at-large representatives has to be a faculty or administrator, nor do they have to be members of the VSU community. In case designated at-large representatives are not members of the VSU community, they may require compensation for travel and time spent in UC meetings.

II.6. Program Directors / Deans representative

Program Directors / Deans shall have one representative on the University Council, to be appointed/elected by no later than the end of the Spring semester. The nomination/election procedures for the representative shall be determined by

a joint meeting of the Directors and Deans, to be held no later than four weeks prior to the end of the Spring semester.

II.7. Departmental Chairs representative

Departmental chairs shall have one representative on the University Council, to be appointed/elected by no later than the end of the Spring semester. The nomination/election procedures for the representative shall be determined by a joint meeting of the chairs, to be held no later than four weeks prior to the end of the Spring semester.

II.8. Research and Extension Specialist representative

The Research and Extension Program of the university shall have one representative on the University Council, to be appointed/elected by no later than the end of the Spring semester. The nomination/election procedures for the representative shall be determined by a joint meeting of all Research and Extension specialists, to be held no later than four weeks prior to the end of the Spring semester.

II.9. VSU community at large representatives, elected at large

At large members of the University Council (candidates can be anyone with a full-time contract and at least one year of service at VSU), need nomination signatures (on standard forms provided by the University Council) from at least ten members of the University Community (anyone who is part of the VSU community, including students, have the right to nominate candidates). For the three at-large slots, there have to be at least four nominated candidates. At least one week prior to the elections, candidates for the at large UC slots shall submit a written statement providing background pertinent to their candidacy and outlining their goals for UC membership to the UC Communications Committee, which shall make available said statements via e-mail to all members of the VSU community with voting rights.

Even in cases in which there are not enough candidates, there always needs to be one more candidate than slots to be filled by elections (i.e. in the case of three candidates, only two will be elected into the UC). In case there are not, in the end, enough nominated and/or elected candidates, the University Council has the right to determine appropriate procedures to appoint the requisite number of candidates missing.

II.10. Technology representative

The technology area of the university shall have one non-voting representative on the University Council. Nominations can be made to the University Council Executive Committee by the respective School Deans, the VP for Academic

Affairs, the Faculty Senate, and SGA. The appointment will be made by the University Council Executive Committee no later than four weeks prior to the end of the Spring semester.

II.11. Alumni Advisory Board representative

The Alumni Advisory Board representative of the university shall have one non-voting representative on the University Council, to be appointed/elected by no later than the end of the Spring semester. The nomination/election procedures for the representative shall be determined by a joint meeting of the Alumni Advisory Board, to be held no later than four weeks prior to the end of the Spring semester.

II.12. Community Advisory Board representative

The Community Board representative of the university shall have one non-voting representative on the University Council, to be appointed/elected by no later than the end of the Spring semester. The nomination/election procedures for the representative shall be determined by a joint meeting of the Community Advisory Board, to be held no later than four weeks prior to the end of the Spring semester. Within the guidelines described above, election and/or nomination procedures of administrators, faculty, staff, and student members of the UC shall be set by each of the respective representative bodies.

Article III. University Council Information Sharing Procedures

The University Council is the central integrating body of the VSU governance structure that shall assure that no major decisions or plans of university-wide significance are put forward without the proper input of all components, administrative units, governing bodies and schools that are concerned with the issues at hand.

In order to promote shared governance, and in particular transparency and informed decision-making, the following procedural requirements shall be implemented:

- (1) The President, the Provost, each Vice President, the Faculty Senate Chair, the Staff Senate Chair, and the SGA President each provide the University Council with a one to two-page executive summary report prior to each regularly scheduled UC meeting, containing the following specific information:
 - Internal or external requests for information and/or action they have received since the last UC meeting
 - Accomplishments / progress-report since the last UC meeting

- Present and future plans (as not yet discussed in previous reports)

These reports will become part of the official University Council records

(2) The University Council determines to which governing bodies and/or administrative units and/or schools and/or UC Standing Committees requests for action or recommendation or communication shall be channeled.

(3) Once the determination in point (2) is made, the University Council Executive Committee forwards requests to appropriate governing bodies and/or administrative units and/or schools and/or UC Standing Committees with:

- All available relevant information and documentation
- Request for recommendations
- Timeline to be followed
- Information about which other governing bodies and/or administrative units and/or schools and/or UC Standing Committees are involved in deliberations
- Whom or what to report to after recommendations have been arrived at according to the shared governance principles applicable in the case of each governing bodies and/or administrative units and/or schools and/or UC Standing Committees

(4) Recommendations from each of the governing bodies and/or administrative units and/or schools and/or UC Standing Committees shall be returned to the University Council if, and only if, issues

- involve more than one governing body and/or administrative unit and/or school
- irreconcilable conflict has arisen within a governing body and/or administrative unit and/or school

In said cases, the University Council reserves the right to study all relevant recommendations and to arrive at its own recommendations

(5) In those cases in which governing bodies and/or administrative units and/or schools and/or UC Standing Committees have forwarded their recommendations to the University Council, the University Council will study, review, and arrive at its own recommendations, which the UC will in turn forward to the President in an expedient fashion. In cases where a governing body or administrative unit or school does not need to forward its recommendations to the

University Council, the recommendations will directly go to the appropriate administrative officers.

Article IV. University Council Voting Privileges

All members of University Council, with the exception of the representatives from technology, the Alumni Advisory Board, and the Community Advisory Board, shall have voting privileges. The chair of the UC shall vote only in cases when a tie-breaking vote is needed.

All members of the University Council Standing Committees have voting privileges in their respective Standing Committees.

A quorum for the UC shall consist of the simple majority of the voting members (or 12 members). Decisions shall generally be made by simple majority (exceptions that would require a 2/3 majority:

- (1) changes to the governance structure of VSU
- (2) censure or impeachment of any of the members of the UC
- (3) closure of university programs/departments
- (4) cases where areas of authority or responsibility are not clear, and where the UC has the power of review.

A quorum for all UC Standing Committees shall consist of the simple majority of its respective members.

Article V. UC Officers

V.1. Chairperson

The chair of the University Council shall be the President of the university. In his/her role as chair of the UC, the president shall make use of his/her voting privileges only in the case of a tie in the UC.

V.2. Vice-Chairperson

The vice-chair of the University Council shall be elected from among the UC voting members who are full-time employees of VSU. The vice-chair is elected for a two-year term, with the option of being renewed, by simple majority vote, for one additional term of two years (or a possible total of four years). The vice-

chair (1) fulfills all of the chair's duties and responsibilities for the chair when the chair is absent, and (2) chairs the Executive Committee of the UC, and thus has primary responsibility for preparing the agenda in consultation with the President (and chair of the UC) and the Executive Committee of the UC, convening meetings, and maintaining an ongoing collaborative relationship between the UC and top administrators as well as other governing committees.

V.3. Chairs of Standing Committees

All University Council Standing Committees shall be chaired by Co-Chairs, who cannot belong to the same components (i.e. administration, faculty, staff, students). The Committee on Strategic Planning, Budget Allocation, and Finance will have as one of its Co-Chairs the Vice President for Administration and Finance. The Communications and Programs/Events Committee will have as one of its Co-Chairs the Vice President for Development. The Joint Committee on Student Academic Affairs shall have as its University Council appointed Co-Chair one of the two student representatives. The Co-Chairs of all University Council Standing Committees must be members of the University Council (with the exception of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Affairs). Co-Chairs of UC Standing Committees shall be appointed by the UC Steering Committee, and need approval of the simple majority of the UC at large. Chairs shall serve for two-year terms, renewable once.

V.4. Elections / Appointments of Officers

Appointments, elections, and approval of officers shall be concluded at the first meeting after the elections and appointments of all UC members, but no later than the last meeting of the Spring semester. New members and officers shall be in place for the first summer meeting of the UC. Any officer of the UC—with the exception of the chair--may be removed by a vote of two-thirds of the voting members of the UC. Action on a motion for removal shall take place no sooner or later than the next regular meeting.

Article VI. University Council Meetings

VI.1. Rules

Meetings shall follow Robert's Rules of Order, and in the case of important policy decisions, any member of the UC can request votes by secret ballot. In the case of a tie, the Chair of the UC has the privilege to cast the tie-breaking vote.

VI.2. Frequency

The University Council shall meet at least once each month during the school year (from September to May), and no less than once during the summer.

VI.3. Attendance

All UC members shall be expected to attend general UC meetings as well as UC Standing Committee meetings of which they may be members. The Vice Chair of the UC is responsible for keeping attendance records of UC general meetings, as are the chairs of the Standing Committees for their respective committees.

Attendance shall also be part of the minutes regularly made available to the VSU community. With a simple majority vote, the UC shall have the right to dismiss members who miss more than three meetings of the general Council and/or any of its Standing Committees in any given school year (September to August), and to initiate the appropriate procedures to replace said members in a timely fashion.

VI.4. Minutes

The UC communications committee shall make an executive summary of all minutes available on the UC website within five academic working days after a UC meeting. Detailed minutes, including supporting documentation/reports, shall be made available to all UC members as soon as the full minutes are approved by simple majority at the next UC meeting.

VI.5. Extraordinary Meetings

Extraordinary meetings may be called at any time by the Chair—or acting Chair—of the University Council after consulting with the Executive Committee, or within five working days of receipt of a written petition to the Executive Committee signed either (1) by at least eight UC members, or (2) by at least 25 members of the faculty and/or staff, provided that the issues for which the meeting is requested falls under the purview of the University Council as outlined in the University Council Constitution.

VI.6. Alternates / Substitutes

The University Council may permit elected alternates with voting privileges and substitute members with voting privileges, where such privileges are not limited by the constitution and bylaws of the participating assembly, senate, or group. In general, if a University Council member absolutely cannot attend a meeting, s/he can nominate a substitute who, if approved by simple UC majority, will have all the rights and privileges of said UC member, though only for one meeting. In case the UC member is a representative of the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate, or SGA, the substitute also needs approval of the representative governing body.

VI.7. Presentation rules

All meetings of the University Council are open to members of the VSU community. The chair or vice-chair of the UC can grant speaking privileges to non-UC members of the VSU community if said persons have either made an official request to the chair or vice-chair to be put on the agenda, or if the chair/vice-chair recognize a non-UC member for the purpose of advancing the UC agenda.

The University Council may, at any time, establish rules limiting the amount of time available for individual presentations at University Council meetings, either by members of the University Council or by others permitted to speak before the University Council.

VI.8. Requests for Review / Response

All reports and requests for action/response by any of the University Council Standing Committees or the President must be addressed in the agenda of the next regularly scheduled UC meeting (for additional agenda procedures, see Article VIII, Section 3 [Executive Committee—Agenda]).

Article VII. Amendments to the University Council Constitution / Bylaws

An amendment to the Constitution and/or bylaws of the University Council may be initiated by any member of the UC or any of the Standing Committees of the UC. The proposed amendment will be filed with the Chair and the Communications Committee of the UC, which will publish the proposed amendment and the date of its presentation in the minutes of the UC meeting. The proposed amendment will be acted upon no sooner than the next regular meeting of the UC. Approval of an amendment requires a two-thirds majority of the voting members of the UC, provided that a quorum is present.

Article VIII. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee supports the University Council in its mission. Through its Chair—who simultaneously functions as Vice-Chair of the University Council—the Executive Committee directly reports to the UC body at large. The Executive Committee assists the University Council chair and vice-chair organize UC meetings and set the UC meeting agenda. The Executive Committee also provides leadership and ongoing communication and cooperation between all university components during the times between regularly scheduled UC meetings.

VIII.1. Membership

The Executive Committee shall consist of eight members:

- the chair of the UC
- the vice-chair of the UC
- one administrator (other than the President)
- one staff representative
- two faculty representatives
- one student representative
- one representative elected at large (may be from any constituency)

The primary goal of the Executive Council of the UC is to provide for seamless communication, timely and efficient procedures, and support for the mission of the UC. Executive Council members shall be elected by simple majority of the members of the UC, and shall serve for one-year terms (and no more than two consecutive terms). The vice-chair of the University Council is also chair of the Executive Committee.

VIII.2. Meetings

The Executive Committee shall meet at least every other week during the semester, once a month during the summer. The Executive Committee shall also meet within no more than three working days after the Chair or Vice-Chair of the University Council (or, in the absence of the University President, the Provost) request a meeting.

VIII.3. Decision-Making Procedures

A quorum for the Executive Committee shall consist of five out of eight members. Any decisions that go beyond the responsibilities of the Executive Committee as outlined in the UC Constitution shall be made only if they cannot await a meeting of the University Council as a body. In such cases, decisions can be reached by simple majority, and a full report on such decisions need to be made at the next meeting to the University Council at large. The decision-making authority of the Executive Committee explicitly does **not** include:

- (1) changes to the governance structure of VSU
- (2) censure or impeachment of any of the members of the UC
- (3) closure of university programs/departments
- (4) cases where areas of authority or responsibility are not clear, and where the UC has the power of review.

All such decisions must be reached by the University Council at large.

VIII.4. Agenda

VIII.4.1. The Executive Committee advises the Chair and Vice-Chair on setting the agenda.

VIII.4.2. Any members of the University Council, or any 10 members of the university community, or any Vice President or Dean, or—by majority vote—any of the representative governing bodies, may submit to the Chair of the Executive Committee in writing an agenda item no less than five working days prior to a University Council meeting.

VIII.4.3. The Executive Committee, by majority vote, shall decide what proposals—in addition to what the Chair and Vice-Chair have put on the agenda--shall be included on the agenda, and in what order, based on the Executive Committee’s judgment as to whether a given proposal lies within the jurisdiction of the University Council and is appropriate for University Council action.

VIII.4.4. As an emergency measure, the president may, under priority announcement, add to the agenda items of new and/or urgent business.

Article IX. Joint Committee on Student Academic Life

The Joint Committee on Student Academic Life is a standing committee both of the University Council and the Faculty Senate. The function of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life (JCSAL) shall be to formulate and recommend policies and procedures in the matters pertaining to:

- The academic affairs of undergraduate and graduate students
- Those institutional services which affect students’ academic success.

In carrying out these functions, the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life divides its task into two parts reflecting the above dual purpose and mission:

- Academic Affairs
- Services Supporting Academic Affairs

IX.1. Membership

The Joint Committee on Student Academic Life will have four members appointed by the University Council (at least two of whom shall be UC members), and four Faculty Senate members. At least one of the UC representatives and one of the Faculty Senate representatives shall be members of the Student Life Subcommittee. At least two of the UC/FS members/representatives must be graduate faculty. Because of the broad purview of the Committee’s mission, broad participation by students, administrators, and staff will be required. Also, in order for the Committee to be able

to fulfill its various functions, several permanent voting and ex-officio members of the University community will have to assist the Committee.

The minimum number of representatives in the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life (JCSAL) as a whole, and the Student Life Subcommittee (SLC), each shall consist of the UC/FS members/representatives, the permanent and ex-officio members listed below, as well as at least (but not limited to) four additional members who have expressed interest in working in JCSAL or SLC (eligible candidates for membership are all faculty and all personnel directly involved in student support services). All members who are neither UC/FS members/representatives nor permanent or ex-officio members are appointed according to the procedures as outlined in the bylaws of the University Council and Faculty Senate respectively—all attempts shall be made to have an equal number of additional members appointed by the University Council and the Faculty Senate respectively. Membership otherwise follows the guidelines as outlined in Article X, Section 2 (Membership in Standing Committees).

There will be two Co-Chairs of the Coalition, one who will be a member of the University Council, and one who will be a member of the Faculty Senate. Both Co-Chairs will jointly chair the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life (JCSAL) as a whole, and jointly recommend a chair for the Student Life Subcommittee (SLC) that deals with institutional support of student academics (this chair has to be approved by the University Council and the Faculty Senate). The Co-Chairs will be recommended each year by a joint session of the University Council Executive Committee and the Faculty Senate, and approved by the University Council and Faculty Senate. Any member of the faculty or student support staff can be a member of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life and its subcommittee. In all cases, the University Council Executive Committee in joint session with the Nominations and Elections Committee will make every effort to include at least one faculty member from each school on campus in its slate for membership in the Committee. In addition, the Committee shall have both permanent and *ex officio* members, based on position:

Permanent Members:

1. President of the Student Government Association (JCSAL)
2. One graduate student each for JCSAL and SLC
3. Representative, Academic Support Services (JCSAL)
4. Representative, Student Support Services (SLC)
5. Director of Honors Program/ Institute for Leadership Development (JCSAL)
6. Director of the Freshman Experience (SLC)
7. Director of the General Education program (JCSAL)
8. Director, Psychological Services (SLC)
9. SGA Vice President for Student Affairs (SLC)

Ex-Officio Members:

1. Library representative (SLC)
2. Representative of the Registrar's Office (JCSAL)
3. Technology Representatives (both OIT and student computer labs) (SLC)
4. Representative, Residence Life (SLC)
5. Director, Campus Safety (SLC)
6. Director, Substance Abuse (SLC)
7. Director, Disability Services (SLC)
8. Director, Intramural Athletics (SLC)
9. Director, Student Activities (JCSAL)
10. Director, Financial Aid (SLC)
11. Director, Student Accounts (SLC)
12. Representative, Intercollegiate Athletics (SLC)

IX.2. Operational Procedures

IX.2.1 Meetings

In order to fulfill the functions stated above, the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life and the Student Life Subcommittee shall each meet *no less than* once a month between September and April of an academic year. Meeting times and places as well as the agendas for the next meetings shall be posted on the Faculty Senate and University Council websites at least three days prior to the meetings.

1. All proposals – whether for issues of discussion, appeals, changes of agenda, changes in by-laws, etc. – need to be submitted to the Chairs of the JCSAL and the SLC no later than five days prior to the next meeting. The agendas will be set by the Chairs based upon items brought to their attention by the Faculty Senate, the University Council, members of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life, members of the Student Life Subcommittee, or members of the campus constituency. Issues unresolved from previous year as well as issues agreed upon by the Faculty Senate and University Council must be dealt with in a timely fashion.
2. The meetings of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life and the Student Life Subcommittee are open to all members of the faculty as observers, not as voters. Non-committee members who wish to speak at a meeting should contact the Committee Co-Chairs at least one day before the meeting in order to be added to the agenda.
3. A quorum consists of more than half of the regular members of the committee.

4. Decisions are made by democratic procedural rules generally applicable at VSU (a simple majority of members present--if they constitute a quorum--carries the vote).
5. All requests and submissions by the Student Life Subcommittee must be addressed on the agenda of the next JCSAL meeting.

IX.2.2. Minutes

During the first meeting in each academic year, the JCSAL and the SLC shall elect secretaries who will be responsible for keeping minutes of the meetings. The minutes of each meeting will be distributed to each committee member, to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (for Joint Committee on Student Academic Life minutes), and to the secretary of the Faculty Senate who posts them on the Faculty Senate website, and to the Communication Committee of the University Council, which posts them on the University Council website.

IX.2.3. Processing Recommendations

Recommendations from the Student Life Subcommittee go to the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life for approval. Action recommendations from the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life may go to the Faculty Senate or the University Council. The Chairs of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life and the Student Life Subcommittee will decide together the proper routing of Student Life Subcommittee (after JCSAL approval) and Joint Committee on Student Academic Life recommendations. Whatever body (University Council or Faculty Senate) does not receive JCSAL recommendations for action, receives them for information. If recommendations are appropriate for the Faculty Senate for action, they go to the Faculty Senate for approval (to the University Council for information), then to the Faculty Assembly either for action or information, depending on the item. From the Faculty Assembly, depending on input, the recommendation may go back to the Faculty Senate, or on to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. If necessary, the recommendation then goes to the President, and if necessary, on to the Board of Visitors. If the recommendations are appropriate for the University Council for action, they would go there for approval (to the Faculty Senate for information), then to the appropriate Vice President or to SGA for implementation or approval. If necessary, the recommendation then goes to the President, and, also if necessary, to the Board of Visitors.

IX.2.4. Articulation with other Bodies

The Student Life Subcommittee is required to submit copies of its minutes to the JCSAL. Recommendations from the Student Life Subcommittee go to the JCSAL.

The Joint Committee on Student Academic Life works closely with the Student Government Association through sharing members on its committees, working together on projects, and acting as advocate for SGA issues.

IX.2.5. Right and Line of Appeal

Appeals of recommendations made by the Student Life Subcommittee may be made to JCSAL. Appeals of recommendations of JCSAL, depending on whether they would be action items for the Faculty Senate or the University Council, would be made to the deciding body. Items whose jurisdiction would be unclear would be appealed to the University Council.

Article X. Standing Committees

In addition to the Executive Committee and the Joint Committee on Student Academic Life, the University Council maintains (but is not limited to) the following Standing Committees:

- Communications and Program/Event Calendar
- Mediation
- Strategic Planning, Budget Allocation, and Finance
- Personnel, Compensation, Facilities and Services
- University Outreach and Community Relations

Unless otherwise stated, the following procedural guidelines apply to all University Council Standing Committees:

The Standing Committees, in their specifically outlined areas, support the University Council in its mission, and directly report--through their chairs--to the UC body at large. A large part of University Council business is referred by the UC to one of the various Standing Committees or, occasionally, to a Temporary Special Tasks Committee. Each committee is also encouraged to initiate study and to formulate recommendations on any policy issue within its purview as defined in the general charges of the respective committee and the UC Constitution. UC committees are advisory to the University Council body at large.

The Standing Committees issue reports on specific issues to the UC and can recommend, in their areas of concern, specific actions to the University Council.

The Executive Committee of the UC will transmit specific matters to each committee for study and actions with the fullest possible background information. The Executive Committee will also advise committees with respect to procedures, timetables, and resource persons. If committee chairs have questions about matters specific to their committees, they may schedule individual conferences with the University Council Executive Committee.

X.1. Chairs

The chairs of the committees are nominated by the UC Executive Committee and approved by a simple majority of the UC at large. They call meetings (no less than once a month during the semester) and are responsible for setting the agenda. With the help of the secretaries of the Standing Committees, the chairs are responsible to post on the UC website the agenda no less than two days prior to scheduled meetings. The chairs are also responsible for promptly placing on the agenda any items/requests put forth by the President, the University Council at large, any of the other representative governing bodies, any of the Vice Presidents, or any of the School Deans.

X.2. Membership

The Co-Chairs and at least one additional member of each Standing Committee have to be members of the University Council (except in the case of the Joint Committee on Student Academic Affairs). UC members will be asked to designate the UC Standing Committee(s) on which they prefer to serve. Preferences will be honored to the extent they are compatible with other requirements for balance, continuity, etc.

At the inception of each of the Standing Committees outlined herein, members will be assigned one or two-year terms by random selection in order eventually to be able to stack the membership so that half of the membership would be replaced or re-appointed each year. After the first year of operations, at least one quarter of each Standing Committee shall be drawn from the previous year's members to preserve continuity of membership. Generally, the chairs and members of the Standing Committees will serve for two years, with the possibility of one renewal (or a total of four years of membership/chairpersonship)

Each Standing Committee shall consist of at least six members, but there is no predetermined maximum number of members to any of the Standing Committees. Rather, the number shall be determined by the UC according to the tasks, responsibilities, and issues covered by each respective Standing Committee. All efforts shall be made to include members from the larger university community who either bring expertise to the tasks at hand, and/or who are most affected by, or interested in, the issues covered by a respective Standing Committee.

X.3. Meetings

All UC Standing Committees shall meet at least once a month, or, if necessary and/or requested by the University Council, more often. The Chair of the Standing Committee convenes and presides over each meeting. In the absence of the Chair, the other UC member in the Standing Committee shall preside (if neither are available, the Committee can, assuming there is a quorum, select an

interim chair by simple majority for the duration of the meeting). The meetings of all UC Standing Committees are open to all members of the University community as observers, but not as speaking or voting members. Speaking privileges can be requested prior to the meeting through the Committee chair, but need to be approved by simple majority of the committee.

X.4. Minutes

The first order of business for each Standing Committee after the Spring elections and appointments are completed is to select a Secretary. Based on the minutes provided by the Secretaries, the Chairs of the respective Standing Committees will provide a brief report to the UC at large at each subsequent UC meeting at large. In case a Chair of a Standing Committee cannot attend the next UC meeting, the Secretary of the respective Standing Committee will provide the report. The secretaries' reports/minutes will also be put on the University Council website no less than five working days after a meeting.

X.5. Bylaws Specific to Particular Standing Committees

With the exception of the Executive Committee, the Joint Committee for Student Academic Life, and the Mediation Committee, each Standing Committee of the University Council shall generate its own operating handbook within the guidelines of this Constitution and consistent with shared governance principles. All such operating handbooks shall be submitted to the University Council for approval. The Executive Committee of the University Council shall assure that operating handbooks of the respective Standing Committees do not violate any of the guidelines of the Constitution and bylaws of the University Council, or any of the principles of shared governance, and advise Standing Committees on the merits of compatible Standing Committee operating handbooks.

Ratification of, and subsequent changes to, any of the UC Standing Committee Handbooks require (1) approval of the majority of **all** members of the respective Standing Committee, and (2) approval of the simple majority of the University Council.

X.6. Mediation Committee

A system based on shared governance is meant to foster a spirit of collegiality and cooperation among the members of the VSU community. However, even in the most collegial and cooperative community, circumstances will sometimes arise in which one party believes that his/her professional or personal well-being has been detrimentally affected by the actions of another. When these circumstances occur, it is in the best interest of both parties and of the institution as a whole to resolve the matter promptly and equitably. The purpose of the University Council

Mediation Committee is to facilitate the attempt to reach a just and timely resolution.

A member of the VSU community with a complaint against another member of the VSU community shall initially seek to resolve the conflict informally, or, where applicable, formally, through the grievance procedure managed by the Faculty Senate Committee on Reconciliation or other existing grievance procedures. All members of the VSU community are encouraged to attempt to resolve conflicts informally, although some conflicts may require the initiation of the grievance procedure under the direction of the University Council Mediation Committee. Regardless of the nature of the conflict, though, an attempt to resolve conflict informally shall not preclude the right to seek resolution formally through the University Council Mediation Committee.

The University Council Mediation Committee shall offer advice and counsel to members of the VSU community who seek it and shall attempt to reconcile conflicts related to all matters that are (1) not covered by other official grievance and reconciliation procedures, and (2) that were not satisfactorily resolved informally.

X.6.1. Membership

The University Council Mediation Committee shall consist of two University Council members (one of whom is chair), and at least two additional tenured or tenure-track faculty, one administrator, one staff member, and one student government representative.

At the time University Council Standing Committee assignments are made, the University Council Mediation Committee shall work with the University Council at large to select five (5) names from *all* full-time employed members of the VSU community, of which at least one has to be a tenured faculty, one a faculty administrator, one administrator, and one staff, to form, in cases needed, additional members for a *Hearing Committee*.

X.6.2. Grievance Procedure

1. Any member of the VSU community seeking redress shall request a hearing via a written request that includes all the particulars of the matter to be contested, from the grievant's perspective. This written request should be addressed to the chair of the UC Mediation Committee. The grieving member of the VSU community may present the letter to the committee chair in person or by mail. The request for redress must be presented within **30 calendar days** of the grievable event. A case initiated too late in the spring semester to be completed

in the school year may be continued to no later than the second week in September of the coming academic year.

2. The chair of the Mediation Committee must respond to the request for a hearing within **five working days** of receipt. In this response the chair will work with the concerned parties and the members of the committee to schedule convenient meeting times to conduct separate preliminary interviews with both parties to clarify the situation. Within **five working days** of the completion of the preliminary interviews with both parties to the issue, the committee shall determine if there is indeed a case.
3. If the Mediation Committee determines that there has been a probable violation of conduct or procedures, the committee then will select a hearing committee as described below.

The Hearing Committee

4. The Hearing Committee consists of the members of the Mediation Committee plus the additional Hearing Committee members outlined above. Members of the committee may excuse themselves from a given hearing for cause, and shall then be replaced according to appropriate guidelines by appointment from the committee chair. The Hearing Committee must be established within **fifteen working days**.
5. The Hearing Committee will elect its own chair and secretary and will keep full minutes of all its transactions. The meetings of the Hearing Committee will be closed to the public except where requested to be open by the faculty member involved. It will be guided by the general spirit of the policies established in the Policy Document and Reports, 9th edition, published by the American Association of University Professors.
6. The Hearing Committee will meet, hear the case, and make its decision within **twenty working days**. Its decision will be reported to the University Council, the VSU community members involved, and the president of the university.
7. Within **twenty working days**, the president of the university must either uphold or reject the decision. If the decision is rejected by the president, a rationale for the rejection must be supplied. The president sends his/her decision to the involved members of the university community, the chair of the Mediation Committee, and the University Council.

The Appeal Process

8. Members of the VSU community have a right to appeal. They may request an appeal of the president's decision or the decision of the president and the Hearing Committee on the grounds of:
 - i. irregularities in the proceedings, including but not limited to any abuse of discretion or misconduct by the Hearing Committee which has deprived the employee of a fair and impartial process
 - ii. newly discovered material evidence, which could not have been available for the original hearing
 - iii. the decision not being justified by the evidence or being contrary to the law
 - iv. the severity of the sanction

9. Members of the VSU community wishing to appeal may write the chair of the Mediation Committee, who will then notify the president and initiate the process for selecting an Appeals Panel. The grievant must contact the chair of the committee via written request stating grounds for the appeal within **five working days** of receipt of the president's decision (plaintiff's receipt of decision must be certified) to state that s/he wishes to file for an appeal.

10. **Within fifteen working days**, the chair of the Mediation Committee must have established the Appeals Panel. Both parties to the appeal may pick a person from members of the VSU community to act as member of the Appeals Panel. The two persons so chosen then choose a third person to make up the three person Appeals Panel. Evidence is provided by the transcripts and findings of the Hearing Committee, the president's written response upholding or overturning the Hearing Committee's finding, and any additional evidence provided by the grieving parties.

11. The Appeals Panel will render its decision **within ten working days**. It will report its decision to the chair of the Mediation Committee, the University Council, the members of the VSU community involved, and the president of the university.

13. The president reports the decision of the Appeals Panel to the Board of Visitors.

X.6.3. Minutes

Minutes shall be kept by the Hearing Committee's Secretary, with copies given to the Chair of the UC Communications Committee, but shall not be posted on the University Council website. Transcripts from Hearing Committees and Appeal Panels must be maintained in the VSU vault for a minimum of five years, but an outline of the arguments and decisions rendered should be kept as a case profile by the Mediation Committee for the purpose of recognizing judicial patterns and having records of precedents set. Copies of the decision should become a part of permanent personnel records. The Mediation Committee has the responsibility for proper handling and maintenance of the complete files of all judicial actions. Discretion, confidentiality, and fairness must always be important requirements of decisions and actions by members of the Committee, the Hearing Committees, and the Appeals Panels.

X.6.4. Articulation with other Bodies

The Mediation Committee establishes Hearing Committees and Appeals Panels as necessary. It may refer persons and/or a matter to the Faculty Senate Committee on Reconciliation, or accept a referral from that committee.

X.6.5. Right and Line of Appeal

Judicial decisions from a UC Mediation Committee go to the president of the university. Appeals of recommendations from the president and the Hearing Committee will go to an Appeals Panel established by the UC Mediation Committee. Findings of the Appeals Panel go to the president of the university, who takes them to the Board of Visitors. The determination of the Board of Visitors is final.