



The Student Government Association (SGA)
Accountability and Ethics Handbook
Amended: September 20th, 2022

ARTICLE I ACCOUNTABILITY 1

DUTIES AND ADHERENCE TO THE BYLAWS 1
EXECUTIVE BRANCH 1
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH 3
PERFORMANCE REVIEWS 5
INVESTIGATIONS 6

ARTICLE II ETHICS GUIDELINES 6

CODE OF CONDUCT 6
REPORTING MISCONDUCT 7
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST 7
CIVIL RIGHTS AND HARASSMENT 8
GIFTS AND TRANSACTIONS 8
USE OF SGA FINANCES AND RESOURCES 9
PRESS AND MEDIA 9
REPRESENTATION AND CONDUCT 9

ARTICLE I- ACCOUNTABILITY

Section 1. Duties and Adherence to the Bylaw

Subsection A. Executive Branch

1. Attendance

a. General Body Meetings

- i. All Executive and Cabinet members are required to attend all General Body Meetings through the Cabinet Updates portion of the agenda, except for excused absences.

1. Excused Absences will be those that would count as excused as per University Policy, and for academic class events.

- ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:

1. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning.
2. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Ethics Committee for review.
3. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning.

4. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues five unexcused absences, they will be immediately dismissed from the SGA
 - a. If an Executive or Cabinet member is dismissed from the SGA, they may appeal to the Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Executive Vice President at least 24 hours in advance of their appeal, and $\frac{2}{3}$ of the legislature must vote in favor of the member remaining in order for them to do so.
 - iii. If there is legislation on the second week of the legislative reading calendar for which an Executive or Cabinet member either serves as an expert or in which the legislation was sent to their committee, they must remain in attendance until the bill in question has been debated and voted upon. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.
 - b. Executive Cabinet Meetings
 - i. Every Cabinet member must attend every Cabinet meeting, except for excused absences as outlined above.
 - ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 1. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning.
 2. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Ethics Committee for review.
 3. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrue four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning.
 4. If an Executive or Cabinet member accrues five unexcused absences, her or she will be immediately dismissed from the SGA
 - a. If an Executive or Cabinet member is dismissed from the SGA, they may appeal to the Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Executive Vice President at least 24 hours in advance of their appeal.
 - iii. Regardless of attendance, each Cabinet member is required to fill out a Cabinet Updates Document before the start of each meeting when provided with one by the Chair of the Cabinet, unless physically unable to do so.
 1. The Chair of the Cabinet has the discretion to issue a progress review to any member who fails to carry out this task on a consistent basis.
 2. If the member then fails to submit the progress review to the chair in a timely manner, the member will be brought before the Ethics Committee for review.
 - iv. In the case of Full Executive Cabinet Meetings, each Executive member is held to the same standards as written in i through iii of Section 1, Subsection A-1-b.
 - c. Executive Board Meetings
 - i. See the SGA Bylaws.
2. Decorum
 - a. General Body Meetings
 - i. All Executive, Cabinet, and Committee reports are to be as concise as possible, as per respect for the length of the meetings. If reports begin to continue for an unreasonable amount of time, it is at the discretion of the Presiding Officer to limit the executive board member who is speaking.

- ii. When not participating in the legislative agenda, all Executive and Cabinet members are regarded as gallery observers, and should keep conversation to a minimal frequency and volume. The Executive Vice President reserves the right to dismiss members of the gallery who serve as distractions.

Subsection B. Legislative Branch

1. Attendance

a. General Body Meetings

- i. All Legislative members are required to attend all General Body Meetings except for excused absences as outlined above.
- ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 - 1. If an Legislative member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning.
 - 2. If an Legislative member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Ethics Committee for review.
 - 3. If an Legislative member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning that their actions may result in dismissal.
 - 4. If an Legislative member accrues five unexcused absences, her or she will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.
 - a. If dismissed, the member will have until the next voting meeting to submit an appeal to the SGA Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Executive Vice President at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the legislature must vote in favor of the member remaining in order for them to do so.

b. Committee Meetings

- i. All Legislative members are required to sit on at least two committees, and are required to attend all meetings of the committees upon which they sit, except for excused absences as outlined above.
- ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 - 1. If a Legislative member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning.
 - 2. If a Legislative member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Ethics Committee for review.
 - 3. If a Legislative member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning that their actions may result in dismissal.
 - 4. If a Legislative member accrues five unexcused absences, they will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.
 - a. If dismissed, the member will have until the next voting meeting to submit an appeal to the SGA Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Executive Vice President at least 24 hours in advance of their appeal.

c. Training Sessions and Retreat

- i. All Legislative members are required to attend all legislative training sessions and retreats, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA Bylaws.
- ii. The consequences for unexcused absences are as follows:
 - 1. If a Legislative member accrues an unexcused absence, the member will receive a formal warning.
 - 2. If a Legislative member accrues a second unexcused absence, he or she

will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.

- a. If dismissed, the member will have until the next voting meeting to submit an appeal to the SGA Legislature at its next voting

meeting, and must inform the Executive Vice President at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal.

d. Finance Workshops

- i. If a Legislative member is absent from retreat, and therefore misses the finance workshop that is included, the member will have his or her right to vote suspended on legislation that requires funding until they attend an appropriate finance workshop substitute.

ii. Legislative Budget Workshops

1. All Legislative members are required to attend all Legislative Budget Workshops, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA Bylaws.
2. If a Legislative member is absent from a Legislative Budget Workshop, unexcused or excused, the member will forfeit his or her ability to debate, write, and vote on budget-related legislation.
3. Legislative members who are absent from a Legislative Budget Workshop for an excusable reason will be provided the opportunity to make up the Legislative Budget Workshop in advance of the meeting in which the budget will be voted on. Upon completion of a make up budget workshop, the Legislative member will regain the ability to debate, write, and vote on budget-related legislation.

iii. Legislative Appeals Workshops

1. All Legislative members are required to attend all Legislative Appeals Workshops, except for excused absences as outlined in the SGA Bylaws.
2. If a Legislative member is absent from a Legislative Appeals Workshop, unexcused or excused, the member will forfeit his or her ability to debate and vote on the appeals.
3. Legislative members who are absent from a Legislative Appeals Workshop for an excusable reason will be provided the opportunity to make up the Legislative Appeals Workshop in advance of the meeting in which appeals will be voted on. SGA Accountability and Ethics Handbook 4 Upon completion of a make-up appeals workshop, the Legislative member will regain the ability to debate and vote on the appeals.

2. Office Hours

- a. If office hours are not being completed as stated in the SGA Bylaws, the representative in question will be required to report to the Ethics Committee.
- b. If the representative in question does not report to the Ethics Committee, he or she shall provide an explanation to the Legislature at the next General Body Meeting.
 1. If a Legislative member accrues two unexcused absences, the member will receive a verbal warning.
 2. If a Legislative member accrues three unexcused absences, the member will be brought before the Ethics Committee for review.
 3. If a Legislative member accrues four unexcused absences, the member will receive a final warning that their actions may result in dismissal.
 4. If a Legislative member accrues five unexcused absences, they will be immediately dismissed from the SGA.

- a. If dismissed, the member will have until the next voting meeting to submit an appeal to the SGA Legislature at its next voting meeting, and must inform the Executive Vice President at least 24 hours in advance of his or her appeal.

3. Sponsored Legislation

- a. Legislative members who are appointed or who were already serving during the first three weeks of the semester are required to sponsor at least one piece of legislation each semester, or provide documentation of a long-term project.
Co-sponsorship in support of a piece of legislation does not fulfill this requirement, unless the initiative was substantively worked on equally, in which case both members would be listed as sponsors. Enforcement of this is at the discretion of Legislative Leadership.
- b. The Legislative Leadership will maintain records as to which representatives have sponsored legislation, and will address those who have not done so.

Section 2. Performance Reviews

Subsection A. Executive Branch

4

1. The Ethics Committee may request that any member of the Executive Branch submit a performance review.
2. Executive Members
 - a. Executive members shall submit a Mid-Year Report to the Chair of the Executive Cabinet, as well as the Ethics Committee.
 - b. Executive members shall submit an Annual Report to the Chair of the Executive Cabinet, as well as the Ethics Committee.
 - c. Executive members are to participate in one-on-one meetings with the Chief of Staff, at the discretion of either the President or Chief of Staff.

Subsection B. Legislative Branch

2. 3. Legislative Performance Reviews
 - a. Legislative members shall submit a Mid-Year Report to the Ethics Committee.
 - b. Legislative members shall submit an Annual Report to the Ethics Committee.
 - c. The Mid-year and Annual Reports shall outline the following:
 - i. Legislation written thus far
 - ii. Committee work
 - iii. Constituent outreach
 - d. One on one meetings with legislators shall be held at the discretion of Legislative Leadership, but must be held at least once per academic year.

Section 3. Investigations

Subsection A. Procedure

1. Investigations into the conduct of any member of the Student Government Association are to be administered by the Ethics Committee upon written request.
 - a. Reports to the Committee on Ethics and Accountability may be anonymous based on the

claimant's request when legally appropriate. In these instances, the SGA Advisor may file a written request on the claimants' behalf. The SGA Advisor may release the identity of the claimant if it is determined to be appropriate, prudent, or fair.

2. Upon receipt of a written request, the Ethics Committee shall discuss the merits of the request. If the request is deemed to have sufficient cause for an investigation, the Ethics Committee shall open an investigation.
3. Once an investigation is open, the Ethics Committee may notify the accused party of their referral via email.
4. Both parties, accused and claimant, shall be required to testify in a written or verbal format before the Ethics Committee.
5. The Ethics Committee may request any pertinent information. All information that is requested of the parties must be submitted. This includes:
 - a. Emails and other correspondence
 - b. Responding to questions while testifying
 - c. Relevant documents
6. If, during the course of the investigation, it is discovered that any party is concealing any pertinent information, they will be considered impeding the investigation. The penalty for impeding an investigation is a recommendation for impeachment.
7. If, during the course of the investigation, it is discovered that other members of the SGA have violated the ethics guidelines, the Ethics Committee may decide to conduct an investigation of those members..
8. After all information is submitted to the Ethics Committee, the committee shall deliberate on the referral and come to a decision. Upon arriving at a decision, the committee will produce a written report and take necessary action.
9. The Ethics Committee shall present the written report to the Legislature only in circumstances in which the decision of the committee is to recommend that the Legislature carry out impeachment proceedings.

ARTICLE II- ETHICS GUIDELINES

Section 1. Code of Conduct

Subsection A. Respect

1. Members should not single out other members of the organization in a public setting without first making every effort to do so privately.
2. SGA members should treat the work environment with the respect that members would treat their own personal environment or they would expect others to treat their own personal environment.

Subsection B. Honesty

1. During official meetings, and in official reports, if any SGA member purposefully states falsities to another member, it will be considered an act of perjury, punishable by recommendation for impeachment.
2. SGA members are expected to accurately and honestly report the completion of required activities.

Subsection C. General Body Meeting Decorum

1. When addressing other representatives, SGA members are to refer to them as their position title.
2. SGA members should not speak unless they have explicitly been given the floor.
3. Members of the gallery should remain quiet and respectful during the course of meetings.

4. SGA members should not leave their seats to talk with other individuals. The direction of conversation during debate should remain on task, and not deviate to tangents that are not essential to the topic at hand.
5. SGA members should remain conscious of the public nature of SGA General Body Meetings; what may be appropriate in other settings may not be appropriate at an open meeting.
 - a. When speaking at a meeting, refrain from using any profanity or derogatory slurs.
6. Dress Code
 - a. All Legislative members are required to dress in a clean and tidy manner for General Body Meeting.
 - b. All members are required to dress in business professional or business casual for General Body Meetings when specified in advance by the Executive Vice President.

Section 2. Reporting Misconduct

Subsection A. Knowledge of Misconduct

1. Any member of the SGA having reason to believe that a member of the SGA has demonstrated conduct in violation of the SGA Constitution, the SGA Bylaws, or the SGA Accountability and Ethics Handbook should report the matter, through either writing or email, to the Chair of the Ethics Committee. Allegations addressed to another member, committee, or committee chair shall be promptly forwarded to the Ethics Committee.

Section 3. Conflicts of Interest

Subsection A. Definition

1. Any SGA member who holds an executive membership to a student group is required to recuse himself or herself from voting on the topics regarding the student group they belong to.

Subsection B. Chain of Command

1. Executive Branch
 - a. All Executive Board members should report all issues to the Chief of Staff.
 - b. If the issue pertains to the Chief of Staff, the member should report directly to the President.
 - c. The Chief of Staff and the President should relay all reported issues to the Chair of the Ethics Committee.
2. Legislative Branch
 - a. Legislature
 - i. All Legislative members should report all issues to the Executive Vice President.
 - ii. If the issue pertains to the Executive Vice President, the member should report to the Speaker Pro Tempore.
 - iii. The Executive Vice President and the Speaker Pro Tempore should relay all reported issues to the Chair of the Ethics & Accountability Committee.

Subsection C. Representative Positions

1. During any situation in which an SGA member is required to lobby on behalf of the SGA, they are to accurately represent the views of the organization, while refraining from expressing personal opinions.

Section 4. Civil Rights and Harassment

Subsection A. Discrimination

1. SGA members shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, age, class standing, disability, country of origin, or any other basis prohibited by applicable law.

Subsection B. Comfort and Safety

1. SGA members shall strive, to their best ability, to make all members and non-members feel comfortable and welcome in the organization.
2. If an SGA member causes any individual to feel uncomfortable or unsafe, the target may address the issue personally or enlist a trusted member to tell the offender to cease the behavior in question.
3. If the offending party does not cease, or the action is more serious, the target can write a formal complaint to the Ethics Committee, and the committee shall review the incident(s) and the offender's membership of the SGA.

Section 5. Gifts and Transactions

Subsection A. Gifts

1. SGA members shall not accept gifts from an SGA recognized student group including, but not limited to:
 - a. Monetary gifts
 - b. Tangible Gifts
 - c. Food (while representing the SGA)
2. If there is an accusation of accepting gifts, the SGA member will be required to come before the Ethics Committee, and will face the possibility of dismissal from the SGA.

Subsection B. Transacting of Votes

1. SGA members may not sell, trade, or lend their voting rights.
2. Any attempt to participate in a transaction involving SGA votes is punishable by recommendation for impeachment.

Section 6. Use of SGA Finances and Resources

Subsection A. Responsible Behavior

1. SGA members are to refrain from using public resources - that have been allocated for use by the SGA - for the purpose of private gain or personal use; this includes SGA funds, equipment, supplies, facilities, as well as other resources.

Section 7. Press and Media

Subsection A. Interacting with the Press and Media

1. SGA members should only speak with the media when confident about the topic of discussion.
2. If contacted by a reporter, SGA members are to contact the Director of Communications after being interviewed.
3. If an SGA member is unsure about a certain topic of discussion, it is advised that they direct the

reporter to contact the Director of Communications.

4. SGA members shall review and follow, to the best of their ability, the “Talking Tips to the Media” that shall be distributed during the SGA Retreat.

Section 8. Representation and Conduct

Subsection A. Student Government Association

1. SGA members shall have a strong understanding that SGA exists for the students first and will show that by actively listening to our constituents and tailoring our work around their needs and concerns.
2. SGA members shall respect the University, their peers, and themselves.
3. SGA members shall respect and adhere to the provisions of the Student Honor Code.
4. SGA members shall strive to uphold ethics and accountability, as well as uphold honesty and reliability.
5. SGA members shall constantly seek to better the University through their actions and initiatives.
6. SGA members shall strive to provide the most opportunities for our peers, and strive to exceed the expectations of his or her specific roles.
7. SGA members shall strive, to the best of their ability, to meet official time commitments and manage their time and personal commitments.

Subsection B. Office Being Held

1. The purpose of the SGA is to act as a representative body for the undergraduate student population at the University of Maryland. When voting on an issue, it is pivotal that all SGA members consider the opinion of their constituency rather than voting based solely upon his or her personal opinion.