Constitution of the Philosophy Students’ Association

Approved by SSC Oct 13, 2010; Ratified on Nov 10, 2010

I. Name and Purpose

The name of this organization shall be the Philosophy Students’ Association. The name of the highest elected body that represents students in the PhD/MA Program in Philosophy shall be the Student Steering Committee (hereafter, “SSC”). The purposes of the SSC shall include but not be limited to:

1. acting as the student representatives to the program’s Executive Committee;

2. promoting an atmosphere of community and sociability for the welfare of students in the philosophy program;

3. representing the interests of and establishing and enacting policy for students in the philosophy program;

4. hearing the reports of student representatives to all program standing committees, Graduate Council, and the Doctoral Students’ Council (hereafter, “DSC”);

5. soliciting nominations for and appointing students to vacant seats on program standing committees and Graduate Council;

6. organizing and funding, in coordination with program standing committees, activities and events of general, professional, and social interest to students in the philosophy program;

7. acting as a formal channel of communication between the DSC and students in the philosophy program.
II. Membership

A. Voting Membership

The voting membership of the SSC shall be composed of five representatives, with four elected by and from the students in the program and the fifth, ex-officio representative being the DSC Program Representative receiving the highest number of votes. In the case that no DSC Program Representative is elected, a fifth student shall be elected by and from the students in the program.

B. Alternates

There shall be two alternate representatives who are ex-officio members of the SSC, with voice but without vote. If one voting member of the SSC is absent, the first alternate shall have a vote, unless he/she is absent, in which case the second alternate shall have a vote. If two or more voting members of the SSC are absent, then the first and second alternate, if present, shall have one vote each.

C. Non-Voting Membership

The non-voting membership of the SSC shall include, ex-officio, all student representatives to program standing committees, all student representatives to Graduate Council, and all other DSC Program Representatives. Non-voting members shall have voice at all meetings.

D. Elections

The election of the DSC Program Representative(s) shall take place each spring under the supervision of the DSC. The election of the other four representatives and student representatives to program standing committees and Graduate Council shall take place each spring under the supervision of the student representatives to the Elections Committee.

Nominations for representatives shall open by midnight on March 15, and notice shall be sent to all students in the program at least three days in advance. Any student in the program may nominate any other student in the program, including him or herself. All nominations shall be submitted in writing. The nomination period shall be closed as of midnight on April 1. Students shall be notified of their nomination within three days and shall be presumed to accept nomination unless they decline nomination in writing by midnight on April 10. Elections shall be conducted through any verifiable and time-stamped medium accepted by a simple majority vote of the SSC. Separate ballots shall be
prepared for each committee, and write-in votes shall be allowed on any ballot. All ballots must be sent by midnight on April 15, and the election period shall be closed at midnight on April 30. Ballots submitted after this time shall be considered invalid.

The student representatives to each committee shall be those nominees who received the most votes for in that election, with the total number of representatives not to exceed the total number of seats for that committee. If a student is nominated on several ballots, the votes received on one ballot shall not count towards the other(s). Tied votes shall be decided by the Elections Committee, which shall first ask the tied candidates to decide among themselves who shall serve and, lacking consensus among or response from all candidates, shall draw names in a chance lottery. Students shall be notified of their election within three days and shall be presumed to accept election unless they decline in writing by midnight on May 5. In the election for SSC, the runners-up with the highest and next-highest numbers of votes shall be the first and second alternates, respectively.

E. Tenure

The tenure of representatives shall be July 1 to June 30 of the following year. The tenures of all committee members and officers shall be co-terminous with their positions as representatives.

F. Replacement Due to Vacancy

Whenever a seat is vacated due to reasons other than the natural end of a term, the student who received the next highest number of votes in the preceding elections for the vacant seat shall be asked to serve out the remainder of the term. This method shall be carried out until a candidate accepts the position or until the list is exhausted, in which case the SSC shall appoint a representative by a simple majority vote.

G. Recall

The DSC Program Representative(s) shall be subject to recall according to the procedures enumerated in the DSC Constitution. The other four voting representatives and two alternates of the SSC are subject to recall from the SSC, either by a signed petition of two-thirds of the students in the program or a three-quarters majority vote of the SSC. A representative cannot be recalled unless he or she has been notified in writing at least five business days before the presentation of the petition to the SSC or before the meeting at which the motion may be entertained. All student representatives to program standing committees and Graduate Council are subject to recall from their respective committees by the same procedure.
III. Officers

The representatives-elect shall constitute the Student Steering Committee-Elect (hereafter, “SSCE”) and convene by May 31 of each year to elect a chairperson by and from the voting membership of the SSCE. The duties of the chairperson shall include but not be limited to:

1. convening and presiding over all meetings of the SSC or, in the case of absence, appointing a designee from among the voting membership;
2. implementing policies and decisions of the SSC and acting as principal spokesperson for students in the program;
3. reporting to the SSC all affirmative actions he/she has taken to implement the policies and decisions of the SSC; and
4. maintaining accurate lists of all student representatives to program standing committees, Graduate Council, and the DSC.

IV. Meetings

The SSC shall hold one meeting each month except in January, June, July, and August. At the beginning of each meeting, an SSC member who is not the chair shall be designated as the secretary of that meeting with the consent of the majority of the voting members. All meetings shall be governed by the most recent edition of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised and comply with New York State Open Meetings Law and Freedom of Information Law. All members of the public may attend any meeting of the association without vote and also without voice unless so recognized to speak by the chair. Members of the public may not attend portions of meetings conducted in a legitimate executive session unless so authorized by the chair.

V. Amendments

A proposed amendment to this constitution may be considered by the SSC upon written presentation to it by any voting member thereof. Written notice of the proposed amendment shall be sent to every voting member at least ten business days before the meeting at which it is to be considered. An amendment may be passed by a two-thirds majority vote. Any amendment adopted by the SSC shall be distributed to students in the program for ratification. The amendment shall be considered ratified unless rejected by a simple majority vote, with at least 10% of the students in the program responding within 20 business days of distribution.