

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

SYSTEMS, SYNTHETIC, & PHYSICAL BIOLOGY

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

1. Name & Mission

- 1.1. The name of this organization shall be the “Systems, Synthetic, & Physical Biology Graduate Student Association”, abbreviated “SSPB GSA”.
- 1.2. The SSPB GSA shall primarily represent the interests of the students of the SSPB Graduate Program and secondarily of all Rice University students of the systems, synthetic, and physical biology disciplines.

2. Membership

- 2.1. All students of the Systems, Synthetic, & Physical Biology Graduate Program and its affiliated labs are General Members.
- 2.2. Nondiscrimination Policy — This organization shall not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, disability, or veteran status.
- 2.3. Anti-Hazing Policy — This organization shall not engage in any form of hazing, as defined by the Rice University Code of Student Conduct and any other applicable Rice University rules and regulations.

3. Officer Duties

- 3.1. President
 - 3.1.1. Duties of the President shall include directing and overseeing the execution of board goals while coordinating and collaborating with the Officer Board and scheduling Board meetings.
 - 3.1.2. The President shall publish Board goals to the Membership at the beginning of each semester.
 - 3.1.3. The President shall ensure the timely execution of procedures regarding elections, referenda, and petitions.
 - 3.1.4. The President shall act as the primary liaison between the SSPB GSA Officer Board and the SSPB Administration.
 - 3.1.5. The President may establish special committees comprising officers and/or other SSPB GSA Members, presided over by an Executive Board member.
- 3.2. Vice-President

- 3.2.1. Duties of the Vice-President shall include assisting in the President's roles, maintaining archives, and meeting agendas, and serving as Acting President in the President's absence.
- 3.2.2. The Vice-President shall oversee career development and outreach initiatives.
- 3.3. Treasurer & Rice GSA Representative
 - 3.3.1. The Treasurer shall also serve as the Rice GSA Representative.
 - 3.3.2. Duties of the Treasurer include managing and accounting for SSPB GSA budgets and working with other officers to plan all budgets.
 - 3.3.3. The Treasurer shall share the budget upon request by any Voting Member.
 - 3.3.4. The duties as the Rice GSA Representative shall be to serve as the primary representative and liaison of the SSPB GSA to the Rice University Graduate Student Association, attend Rice GSA meetings.
 - 3.3.5. The Rice GSA Representative shall manage grants, petitions, reservations dealing with the Rice GSA and be responsible for club registration.
- 3.4. Social Chairs— Duties of the Social Chairs shall be to organize and oversee budgeted social events, including publicity, booking venues, and logistics.
- 3.5. Recruitment Chairs — Duties of the two Recruitment Chairs primarily involve assisting the SSPB Administration with organizing, implementing, and ensuring participation in prospective student recruitment activities.
- 3.6. Parliamentarian
 - 3.6.1. Former Executive Board members who are eligible to be an Election Officer are eligible to be a Parliamentarian, who if willing, may be appointed by a two-thirds majority vote by the Officer Board.
 - 3.6.2. The duties of the Parliamentarian, if appointed, include (1) advising the Officer Board using past experience and (2) conducting officer elections as Election Officer along with managing all other voting procedures outlined in Article 5 with Executive Board oversight.
- 3.7. Faculty Advisor / Club Sponsor
 - 3.7.1. The Faculty Advisor shall be an eligible SSPB faculty member or the SSPB program administrator voted by a majority of the Officer Board to be nominated and who accepts this nomination. This Faculty Advisor is obligated to complete all necessary sponsor requirements by the time club registration forms are due.
 - 3.7.2. The duty of the Faculty Advisor, who shall also serve as the Club Sponsor, shall be to give advice and guidance to the organization, and in cases of unresolvable conflict can be asked to arbitrate a binding decision.
 - 3.7.3. The Faculty Advisor may be invited by a member of the Officer Board to vote on policies, but need not otherwise attend meetings or vote.

3.8. Executive Board

3.8.1. The Executive Board shall consist of the President, Vice-President, and Treasurer.

3.8.2. The Executive Board shall maintain regular correspondence with the SSPB Administration.

3.9. Any officer may be approved to spend funds and request reimbursement, provided that the officer is pre-approved by the Treasurer to spend said funds in a manner in accordance with an approved budget.

4. Officer Election

4.1. Officer elections are to be managed exclusively by an Election Officer, a position appointed to a willing existing officer by a two-thirds majority vote of the officer board, or if not possible a willing voting member, who is neutral.

4.2. A call for officer nominations, including self-nominations, shall be sent to all voting members 7–14 days prior to elections.

4.3. Only Voting Members are eligible for officer positions, except the Election Officer, who is rendered ineligible.

4.4. The Election Officer shall verify the eligibility and consent of nominees for each position for which they are nominated, and these nominees shall be informed of the body of nominees and encouraged to discuss and resolve unnecessary contests within at least five days.

4.5. Officers shall be limited to three consecutive terms for a particular position.

4.6. A full term shall be between eleven and thirteen months in normal circumstances, or otherwise until an eligible candidate can be elected.

4.7. End-of-term officer elections shall occur in the month of May every year.

4.8. Elected officers shall assume office within three weeks of election, a transition period if within which current officers shall prepare their elected successors for takeover.

4.9. A vacancy in an office prior to the end of a term shall be filled for the remainder of the term either by an existing officer with a majority vote by the executive board or by the electee of an election to be held within fourteen days of the vacancy.

4.10. An officer shall be removed upon resignation, losing good standing with the university or, with a majority vote of the officer board, upon being charged with misuse of powers or the persistent neglect of duties, charges which may also be brought by petition by voting members. Each motion for removal will be conducted following due process wherein the officer is notified in writing and the individual is given opportunity to respond. If the officer board determines the appointee is able to regain their previous standing, they should then communicate to the officer what steps need to be taken, and when a reevaluation of the case should happen. Should the officer board find no path for the appointee to regain their previous standing, the officer board may vote on the removal

of the individual from the appointed position, and a simple majority is needed to execute the motion. However, no vote on removing officers shall take place unless notice of the proposed removal was given to the officer board less than 20 but more than 10 days before the removal vote.

- 4.11. The top two winning candidates for Social Chair shall take the office jointly.
- 4.12. If a candidate runs unopposed for an office, the Election Officer has the power to bypass the election for that office and declare the candidate the winner of that race, with the permission of the candidate.

5. Voting and Petitions

- 5.1. Voting procedures herein shall be used for the determination of 1) officer elections, 2) referenda, and 3) constitutional ratification and amendments, as well as the signing of petitions.
- 5.2. Voting members are limited to currently matriculated students in the SSPB Graduate Program.
- 5.3. Except for officer election, the Executive Board shall oversee voting and ensure it is done in a verifiable manner.
- 5.4. A voting period shall be announced to all voting members 7–14 days prior to its beginning and shall persist for 7–14 days.
- 5.5. Absentee voting and proxy voting or petition-signing is to be arranged by the request of a member in the case of limited communications during the voting period.
- 5.6. Ranked choice voting shall be implemented whenever more than two candidates run for a position in an election, or more than two options are to be voted on.
- 5.7. Results of voting shall be accepted only with a minimum quorum of one-half of the voting body.
- 5.8. The Election Officer shall break a voting tie whenever this happens in an officer election.
- 5.9. Votes and petition signatures shall be registered and results reported to the voting members within seven days of the end of a voting or signing period.
- 5.10. A petition with at least five Voting Member signatories must, upon request by the petitioner, be disseminated to the voting body such as to facilitate collection of signatories.
- 5.11. A petition with at least five Voting Member signatories submitted to the Officer Board for review must be addressed by the President before the voting body within fourteen days of submission, including the intended plan of the officer board to address each grievance detailed in the petition.

6. Ratification of the Constitution

- 6.1. A constitutional convention shall precede the ratification of this Constitution, where all Voting Members are invited to discuss and debate revisions to a draft of this constitution, as well as concerns submitted by absent Voting Members.
- 6.2. The Constitution shall be ratified with a two-thirds majority vote by the Voting Body.

7. Amendments to the Constitution

- 7.1. Constitutional amendment proposals shall be considered and revised by the Executive Board if a petition supported by at least five Voting Members is submitted to the President.
- 7.2. Constitutional amendment proposals shall be put to a general vote with a two-thirds majority vote by the Officer Board, and the amendment shall be ratified by a two-thirds majority vote by Voting Members.
- 7.3. Constitutional amendments shall be proposed as clearly demarcated edits to the most recent version of the Constitution, with a final version reported after ratification.
- 7.4. Amended versions of the Constitution shall be distinguished with the date of ratification of the most recent amendment(s), while previous versions of the Constitution shall be archived and available to voting members upon request.
- 7.5. Proposed amendments to this constitution shall be submitted to the Graduate Student Association Parliamentarian. Before going into effect, the amendment must be approved by the Graduate Student Association Parliamentarian and ratified by the Graduate Student Association Council. The Date of Last Revision on the title page of this constitution shall be updated to reflect the date of the Senate's ratification.

8. Interpretation of the Constitution

- 8.1. Disagreements in the interpretation of this Constitution shall be resolved by a two-thirds majority vote by the Officer Board.
- 8.2. Permanent clarifications shall be made by amendments scheduled for ratification at the next voting opportunity.

9. Primacy of the Graduate Student Association

- 9.1. The SSPB GSA recognizes the primacy of the Rice University Graduate Student Association Council and ultimately the Graduate Student Association.
- 9.2. The SSPB GSA shall follow the Graduate Student Association constitution and bylaws and any associated rules and regulations.
- 9.3. This Constitution is subordinate to the Graduate Student Association constitution and bylaws.

Ratified v01: 31 May 2019

Ratified v02: 12 July 2021

SSPB GSA Constitutional Convention, 21–28 May 2019:

Shyam Bhakta, primary drafter · Felix Ekness · Kathryn Brink · Carlos Bueno · Kshitij Rai
Jihwan Lee · Lauren Gambill · David Zong · Ilenne Del Valle · Rosa S Guerra-Resendez
· Emm Fulk · Lucas Brown · Prashant Kalvapalle · Meidi Wang · Josh Atkinson · Maria Wang
BCB Delegates: Jordan Bluford · Matthew Ykema · Li Chieh Lu