

# **Residence Hall Association Constitution (2003)**

## **Preamble**

The Residence Hall Association (RHA) of American University (AU) shall be the government of all buildings deemed to be residence halls.

The RHA must continually strive to make this role tantamount to continual and flourishing programming for all AU residents to enjoy.

## **Mission Statement**

The central purpose of RHA revolves around three main goals: (1) programming, (2) fund dispersal, and (3) advocacy. These primary goals, together with other objectives, serve as general guidelines in establishing and implementing policy.

RHA shall henceforth use all of its powers to make life better for all its members and for American University as a whole.

## **Membership**

The members of AU RHA shall consist of all residence hall students in good standing with the university who pay the RHA fee and any additional students who choose to pay the RHA fee.

## **Executive Board**

### President

The executive power of the Residence Hall Association shall be vested in a President, who shall be the chief executive officer of the Residence Hall Association.

Duties of the President: The President shall

- Operate the Residence Hall Association in accordance with this Constitution and its Bylaws.
- Execute all duly enacted Acts of the General Council (GC).
- Sit on University committees.
- Meet with University Administrators.
- Be responsible for the fulfillment and negotiation of all contracts the Residence Hall Association enters.

Powers of the President: The President shall have the power to

- Appoint, with the advice and consent of a General Council majority, the Chairs of all Residence Hall Association committees and boards.
- Represent the Residence Hall Association to the University and wider community.

### Vice President

The Vice President shall possess chief authority on RHA programming and committee policy.

Duties of the Vice President: The Vice President shall

- Sponsor programs and activities to meet the needs and interests of the Residence Hall Association members.
- Assist Hall and Floor Councils in the execution of their programmatic duties.
- Supervise all committee Chairs.

Powers of the Vice President: The RHA Vice President shall serve as the presiding officer in the absence of the RHA President.

### Comptroller

The Comptroller shall be chief financial officer of the Residence Hall Association.

Duties of the Comptroller: The Comptroller shall

- Keep records of all Residence Hall Association financial transactions.
- Maintain the budget of the Residence Hall Association.
- Have signature authority over all Residence Hall Association accounts.

- Submit a complete financial audit to the General Council not less than once a month or upon request of the Council.
- Abide by the RHA Savings Plan, as contained in the Bylaws, as well as the Financial Regulations of the RHA.

**Powers of the Comptroller:** The RHA Comptroller shall serve as the presiding officer in the absence of the RHA President and Vice President.

### Secretary

The Secretary shall be responsible for ensuring proper publicity and documentation for the Residence Hall Association and all its events and activities.

**Duties of the Secretary:** The Secretary shall

- Produce and distribute minutes of all Residence Hall Association, General Council, and Executive Board meetings.
- Keep and maintain the Residence Hall Association Archives.
- Carry on all official correspondence.
- Be responsible for sending out all official notices.

**Powers of the Secretary:** The RHA Secretary shall serve as the presiding officer in the absence of the RHA President, Vice President, and Comptroller.

### Executive Officer Qualifications

**Qualifications:**

- RHA executive officers must, upon election, be completing at least his/her thirtieth (30<sup>th</sup>) credit hour of collegiate study
- Each executive officer must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.50, be in good disciplinary standing, be a full RHA member, and reside in university housing, at the time of his/her nomination and for the remainder of his/her term of office.
- A candidate for executive office may appeal to the General Council for a waiver of the foregoing requirements, which may be granted by the vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the General Council members present.

**Other Requirements:**

- Office Hours – RHA Executive Officers shall be required to hold at least five (5) office hours per week.
- Resigning Office – If an officer should leave office for any reason during his/her term, he/she shall submit a letter of resignation to the Advisor at least two (2) weeks in advance.

### Financial Policy

**Rights:**

- The President shall be provided with university-managed housing during the summer. Funds for housing shall be taken from the proceeding spring budget and allocated to the summer budget.
- All attempts will be made to provide summer housing for the Vice President, Comptroller, and Secretary.
- If such housing is provided by means other than RHA, the funds will be allocated to the fall semester budget.
- All RHA executive officers shall receive a stipend equal to the cost of three credit hours per semester during their tenure in office.

**Limitations:**

- Financial gains may only be revoked by the RHA Advisor if and executive is impeached or otherwise leaves office.
- No RHA member may receive any direct financial gains from the use of RHA supplies, facilities, funds, or endorsements, without approval from the President, Comptroller, Advisor, General Council, and the Director of Resident Life and Housing Services.
- The Executive Board may not allocate any funds up to five hundred dollars (\$500) per semester without the pre-approval of a majority of the General Council. The assigned amount must be accounted for before the GC by the next RHA General meeting.

**Auxiliary Executive Board****Parliamentarian**

The President shall appoint a Parliamentarian with the advice and consent of a majority of the GC. The Parliamentarian must be a full RHA member and may not serve on any other RHA council or committee.

The Parliamentarian shall decide on matters of interpretation of this Constitution, other RHA governing documents, and Acts of the GC, provided a direct question has been posed by a full or associate member of RHA, including the Executive Board.

The Parliamentarian shall advise the President on matters of parliamentary procedure.

The Parliamentarian shall administer the following Oath of Office to all new Executive and Hall Officers:

“I [Name] do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of [Office] of the Residence Hall Association, that I will uphold the Constitution of the Residence Hall Association, and

that I will work to my fullest abilities on the behalf of the resident students of American University.”

The latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern all GC proceedings when applicable.

#### National Communications Chair (NCC)

The NCC will serve for the RHA as an appointed position.

The NCC will serve in several capacities:

- To prepare and organize all conferences for the American University RHA.
- To serve as a liaison between the American University RHA and its region, as well as with the National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH).
- Since this is an appointed position, the NCC will have the discretion of choosing a Vice-NCC. The filler of this position serves not only in aiding the NCC but also in gaining experience with the NCC duties and responsibilities.

#### Student Advocacy Chair (SAC)

The Student Advocacy Chair shall be an independent voice for the students. He/She shall assist the executive board as independent counsel on all matters of student grievances, suggestions, and proposals to the RHA and the administration. With permission of the President, the Student Advocacy Chair may also represent RHA in some meetings with school officials.

#### Advisor

The RHA Advisor shall provide the link between the school administration and RHA on a day-to-day basis. The Advisor shall assist in all major financial transactions, attend all RHA meetings, and serve as a mentor to the RHA Executive Board.

### **Hall Councils**

Residence halls and university-managed housing must include a hall council, which is the deliberative and voting body of the hall’s combined floor councils. Each hall council should meet weekly and is presided over by the hall president assisted by the hall executive board.

## **Floor Councils**

Each university-managed residence hall with a Hall Board must include floor councils to assist with programming and to represent the floors to the hall councils. Floor Council elections must take place each fall during each floor's first floor meeting. While the exact duties of floor councils are left at the discretion of the hall constitutions, they must assist with hall programming, attend hall council meetings, and assist their RAs on floor matters.

## **Budget Allocation**

The following funds are required. Others can be created or disbanded at the discretion of the Comptroller.

### General Fund

The RHA General fund is for RHA use in campus wide events.

For a program to be eligible, it must

- Be open to all of campus
- Be advertised for in every hall
- Have RHA mentioned as a sponsor on the advertising
- If admission is charged, it must go to pay for costs not covered by RHA's contribution or be donated to a charity specified beforehand by those organizing the event.

### Funding Request Procedure

To access money from the General Fund, those planning must present a proposal to the RHA General Council. The proposal should specify

- A description of the event
- The purpose of the event
- Who is sponsoring the event
- Where the event will be held
- When the event will be held
- A proposed budget
- sample advertising

The event is passed by a majority vote of the GC. If an event is approved, but the planning person or persons do not follow the above stipulations, RHA reserves the right to revoke the allotted funding.

### Hall Fund

The Hall Fund is the money allotted for the hall boards to use for hall wide events.

It is divided up per capita by each hall. For an event to be eligible to use the Hall Fund, it must be advertised for and be open to any resident of that hall. The RD and Hall Comptroller or President approval is required.

### Floor Fund

The Floor Fund is the money allotted for Floor Boards to use for floor wide events.

It is divided up per capita by each floor. For an event to be eligible to use the Floor Fund, it must be advertised for and be open to any resident of that floor. The Resident Director (RD) and Hall Comptroller or President approval is required.

### Resident Assistant/Resident Director (RA/RD) Fund

The RA/RD Fund is the money allotted for Resident Assistants (RAs) and Resident Directors (RDs) to use to fund programming.

It is divided up per capita by each hall. For an event to be eligible to use the RA/RD Fund, it must be open to every one of the RA's or RD's residents. RD and RHA Advisor approval is required.

### Executive Fund

The Executive Fund is used only to pay the stipends of the President, Vice President, Comptroller, and Secretary. It is not accessible by the GC.

### Other Funds

There may be other funds at the discretion of the Comptroller.

## **General Council Proceedings**

## RHA General Meetings

The legislative power of the Residence Hall Association shall be vested in a General Council, which shall convene in a regular session at least once every academic week.

A Special Session of the GC may be called by the President or, upon the petition of a majority of GC members, to the President. Twenty-four-hour (24-hour) notice shall be required prior to the call to order of a Special Session.

## Conduct

Parliamentary procedure shall be used as a guide when organization is necessary. The actual procedures used in meetings not stipulated by this Constitution and other documents will be left to the President (with the aid of the Parliamentarian) to decide.

## Powers

The GC shall have the power, by a two-thirds vote, to adopt acts that adopt, amend, and repeal bylaws and other subsidiary governing documents of the RHA.

## Attendance

The GC shall consist of the Hall Councils of each Residence Hall, any Hall Councils representing the off-campus apartments, and the RHA Executive Board. All other RHA members and guests are also welcome to attend GC meetings.

In order to fully represent the RHA, quorum will consist of at least one-third (1/3) of all Hall Council members. Without quorum, the Council cannot pass any motions without suspending quorum. Quorum can be suspended by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the present members at a meeting.

## Penalties

Any RHA officer who does not attend at a least a majority of the meetings for his/her RHA position in a given semester will not be allowed to hold RHA office during the next semester. Whereas all RHA terms are for a full calendar year, every officer is subject to the attendance requirement.

Also, violators of the attendance requirement during a given academic year are ineligible to run for any RHA office in the spring election for the next term, regardless of whether the infraction occurred in the fall or spring semester.

If a residence hall does not have any representatives at a meeting, there will be a penalty of fifty dollars (\$50) taken from that hall's Hall Fund for every missed

meeting. This money will be transferred into the RHA General Fund. The penalty for Tenley campus will be twenty-five dollars (\$25).

### Voting

Each of the Hall Councils shall possess one (1) vote for each Hall Officer in attendance, not to exceed four (4) votes for on-campus housing and two (2) for off-campus housing.

### Proxy Voting

All GC members shall hold the right of proxy, provided that a statement of written consent is presented by the proxy to the Residence Hall Association President. The proxy must be a member of the hall or off-campus housing that the member represents and must be a full member of RHA. The proxy shall hold all the rights and privileges of the member, including the right to vote.

## **Committees**

The RHA shall contain a committee system.

### Chairman Selection

The Chairman of a committee shall be appointed by the relevant Executive Board officer to that committee. The Chairman-designate must be approved by a majority of the General Council.

### Committee Formation

- The Chairman and the relevant Executive Board officer reserve the right to jointly limit the number of members sitting on the committee.
- Both the Chairman and the relevant Executive Board officer reserve the right to appoint new members to their committee.
- Both the relevant Executive Board officer and the Chairman must approve of the appointment. In the event of a conflict, the appointment shall be brought before the General Council and voted upon. A majority is required to either pass or reject the appointed member.

### Committee Member Removal

A committee member may be only be removed if he/she is found, through due process before his/her committee, to be in dereliction of his/her duties. A supermajority of sixty-six percent (66%) of voting members of the committee is required to remove any member.

### Standing Committees

The RHA Committee system shall consist of three (3) standing committees at all times:

- Programming Committee:

The Programming Committee must assess the feasibility of the programs presented to it. It also negotiates the allocation of funds from the General Account. No proposal may go before the General Council without having consulted with the Programming Committee.

- Budget Committee:

The Budget Committee shall review programs after their completion if they received financial assistance from the RHA. The committee is responsible for reviewing budgets for each semester and the summer. The committee reserves the right to audit any RHA expenses and subpoena any Executive Board financial documents.

- Student Relations Committee:

The Student Relations Committee is responsible for the distribution of RHA-sponsored goods and services to the student body, including (but not limited to) movie tickets, welcome packages, RHA T-shirts, and giveaways. The committee is also responsible for communication with other student organizations to advocate for the student position.

### Select Committees

Any full member of the RHA may propose the formation of a select (temporary) committee before the General Council.

The proposal must include specific details:

- Name of the committee
- Purpose of the committee
- Timeline of the committee

Any select committee must follow the same formation procedure as the standing committees, with the President of RHA as the relevant Executive Board officer, unless otherwise decided by the General Council.

In order for a select committee to be formed, a majority of the General Council present must vote in favor of the formation.

## **Elections**

Elections for hall boards and the Executive Board must be held annually at a time nominated by the Executive Board and voted on by the General Council. Elections must be held between March 10 and April 1. Transition between terms, which must also be nominated by the executive board and approved by the majority of the general council, must occur at least two (2) weeks after the election and no more than four. This date must also occur on or before April 30.

On the election date, all four campus-wide executive board positions must be up for election. Additionally, each hall must have all of its elected and voting members available on the RHA election day. The terms for all offices will be one year. All elections are subject to the rules of the Board of Elections Constitution, which must be debated on and approved by a majority vote every year, one month before election day.

## **Impeachment**

Any RHA member who uses his/her position or office improperly may be subject to impeachment.

Formal impeachment proceedings may only be initiated by a member of the Executive Board, the RHA Advisor, or by the Parliamentarian. In the case of an impeachment approval by a majority of the GC, a special trial committee will be formed, headed by the Parliamentarian to determine the legitimacy of the impeachment charge(s).

Special elections may be held to replace RHA officials if deemed necessary by the General Council. Otherwise the appointment process may take precedence.

### **Cooperation with Other Student Governing Bodies**

The RHA shall make all attempts to cooperate with other undergraduate and graduate student governing bodies when such cooperation would benefit the membership of the RHA.

### **Supremacy**

This Constitution and its subsequent amendments, when enacted, shall take precedence over all other RHA legislation or governing documents.

### **Ratification**

For a new Constitution to pass, it must have approval from two-thirds (2/3) of the GC and a majority of full, voting RHA members.

### **Amendments**

All amendments to this constitution must be approved by the General Council by a two-thirds (2/3) vote and by majority of all RHA members through a general election at least a month after General Council approval. All amendments approved in February and March must occur during the scheduled spring election.