

Constitution of the Perkins Student Association

Preamble

We, the students of the SMU Perkins School of Theology, do hereby establish a Perkins Student Association (PSA) to: be a voice for the student body to the school administration; administer the finances allocated to the association from SMU, Perkins, and private donations; administer and raise money for the Perkins Emergency Relief Fund (PERF); encourage and promote active individual involvement in the life of the community; act as a medium for the exchange of ideas and the involvement in relevant concerns within the Perkins, Dallas, and global communities.

Article I: Membership Section A: Requirements of Membership

The members of the Perkins Student Association shall consist of all students officially enrolled in Perkins School of Theology of Southern Methodist University. All Ph.D. students in the Graduate Program in Religious Studies are to be included as authorized members of the Student Association.

Section B: Leadership

The leadership of the Student Association shall be the Perkins Student Association Council, which includes the following:

1. Executive officers (refer to Article II, Sec. A);
2. Representatives of Organized Interest Groups or OIGs (refer to Art. VII, Sec. C);
3. First, Middle, and Graduating Year Representative officers elected from the respective members of each academic class as determined by academic hours (refer to Article IV, Sec. A.2);
4. Student Senators as allocated by the SMU Student Senate who shall represent the Student Association on the Senate and report the activities of the SMU Student Senate to the Student Association;
5. A maximum of six seats to be designated to other groups (i.e. ethnic, gender, MSM, MAM, ThM, HG, HDPS, MTS, and Ph.D.) as deemed appropriate by 2/3 vote of the PSA Council.

Section C: Term Length

All terms expire on the Spring term graduation date of the academic year for which the officers and representatives were elected. Newly elected or appointed positions take office that same day.

Article II: Executive Functions of the PSA Section A: Executive Officers

The Executive Officers of the PSA shall be: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Social Life Chair, Justice in Action Chair, Chaplain, and Hybrid Degree Program Representative.

Section B: Officers

i. President

- a. The President shall be the chief executive officer of the PSA and responsible for the day to-day operations of the organization;
- b. The President shall preside over the Council as Chair and shall have the power to call meetings of the Council outside of its regularly scheduled meetings.
- c. The President shall participate in committees of Perkins School of Theology as so designated by the Dean and the Associate Dean of the school, and the Director of Student Services

ii. Vice-President

- a. Shall fill the remaining term of President, should the Presidency become vacant for any reason;
- b. Shall be responsible for administering elections of the Association;
- c. Shall be responsible for issues relating to the sale of PSA merchandise;
- d. The Vice-President shall participate in committees of Perkins School of Theology as so designated by the Dean, the Associate Dean, and the Dean of Student Life

iii. Secretary

- a. The Secretary shall be the chief administrative officer of the PSA and responsible for the maintenance of the minutes and communication aspects of the organization

iv. Treasurer

- a. The Treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the PSA and responsible for the presentation and maintenance of the budget, oversee the financial accounts of the organization and its transactions;

v. Social Life Chair

- a. The Social Life Chair shall preside over meetings of the Social Life Committee;
- b. The Chair shall report to the PSA Council regarding the activities of the Social Life committee;

vi. Justice in Action Chair

- a. The Justice in Action Chair shall preside over meetings of the Justice in Action Committee;

- b. The Chair shall report to the PSA Council regarding the activities of the Justice in Action committee;

vii. Chaplain

- a. The Chaplain shall be the chief spiritual officer of the PSA and responsible for maintaining the organization's focus on the work of God in the Perkins community and the work of the PSA.
- b. The Chaplain shall pray at the start and end of all PSA meetings.

viii. Hybrid Degree Program Representative

- a. The Hybrid Degree Program Representative shall represent the concerns of the hybrid student population to the PSA Council.
- b. The Hybrid Degree Program Representative shall also serve as Social Chair for the hybrid student community.

Section C: Executive Council

- a. The Executive Council shall be composed of the officers listed in Article II, Section A. (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Justice in Action Chair, Social Life Chair, Chaplain, and Hybrid Degree Program Representative).
- b. The Executive Council shall meet at least once between General Council meetings in order to discuss the state of affairs and prepare for the upcoming General Council meeting.
- c. The President will chair meetings of the Executive Council and may call meetings of the Executive Council as needed.
- d. A majority of the Executive Council is needed to be present for a quorum.
- e. The outgoing Executive Council must conduct an orientation for the newly elected Executive Council, which shall include a briefing as to all responsibilities of the office as well as turning over the files of the PSA.
- f. During the summer, the Executive Council as well as any members of the PSA Council present during the summer shall function and have the authority of the full council during the summer terms. For these meetings, a majority of the Executive Council shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE III: Representative Functions of the PSA

Section A – Elected Representatives to the General Council

The elected Representatives of the PSA to PSA Council (in addition to the Executive Officers) shall be: two First Year Representatives, two Middle Year Representatives, one Graduating Year Representative, and two Student Senators.

Section B – Duties of Elected Representatives

a. First Year Representative

In addition to attending meetings of the PSA Council, each First Year Representative shall serve either on the Social Life Committee or the Justice-In-Action Committee. The First Year Representatives may decide among themselves who will serve on which committee.

b. Middle Year Representatives

In addition to attending meetings of the PSA Council, the Middle Year Representatives shall work with the Vice President in performing their duties concerning merchandise sales and promotions

c. Graduating Year Representative

In addition to attending meetings of the PSA Council, the Graduating Year Representative shall be responsible for the management of the senior class budget for the planning and executing of events for students in their final year.

d. Student Senators

In addition to attending meetings of the PSA Council, the Student Senators shall perform the duties required of them by the Student Senate.

Section C – Failure to Perform Assigned Duties

Elected Representatives who fail to perform the duties described in this article shall be subject to impeachment, pursuant to Article VII of this Constitution.

ARTICLE IV: Legislative and Judicial Functions of the PSA Council Section A: Legislative Function of the PSA Council

The primary responsibility of the PSA Council shall be to serve as the representative voice of the Student Body of the SMU Perkins School of Theology on all areas of concern to the Perkins Community. To achieve this function, the Council may approve by majority vote resolutions submitted in writing to the PSA President by any member of the Association addressing any area of student concern and calling for action from the appropriately responsible persons or entities. The PSA Council acting in its legislative capacity may also adopt By-laws to provide for additional structure and functionality of the PSA.

Section B: Judiciary Function of the PSA Council

- a. The PSA Council shall also serve as the judicial branch of the PSA. The PSA Council shall be responsible by majority vote of those present to finally resolve matters of constitutional interpretation as presented in writing to the PSA President by any member of the PSA. It shall also be responsible to resolve by majority vote of those present any disagreements presented in writing to the PSA President by Organized Interest Groups organized by the PSA. The PSA Council may

also be called into emergency session to resolve election disputes as provided by the PSA By-laws. The PSA Council shall also decide all issues of impeachment as detailed in Article VI of this Constitution. The PSA President shall preside over the Council while in judicial session unless there is a conflict of interest, in which case the Vice-President shall preside. In the case both President and Vice-President possess a conflict the Council shall appoint a temporary chair by majority vote.

- b. All judicial decisions shall be considered final and binding in so far as they do not conflict with the Constitution of the University student government or University policies in general.

Section C: Procedures of PSA Council in Exercising its Legislative and Judicial Functions

A quorum of the PSA Council shall be constituted by a majority of its members as listed in Article I, Section B. Unless otherwise provided by this Constitution, all legislative actions and judicial decisions of the PSA Council shall be decided by a majority of the PSA Council members listed in Article I, Section B present and voting. The Council shall determine at its first meeting each semester the dates and times of its meetings during months for which there are classes. The President when presiding or any other member presiding shall only vote in case of a tie. The agenda for any PSA Council meeting shall be set by the President and shall consist of at least any item submitted in writing to the President as well as any other item deemed appropriate by the President in consultation with the Executive Council. The agenda of a PSA Council meeting must be distributed by the Secretary no later than 24 hours prior to a PSA Council meeting.

Article V: Elections

Section A: Qualifications

- a. Any person may be a candidate for office under this Constitution if that person:
 - 1. Is a master's level student within Perkins School of Theology;
 - 2. Has attained a cumulative average not lower than that required for graduation; OR: be an entering student who has satisfied in full the entrance requirements of the University and the School without restriction; and
 - 3. Is enrolled for at least a minimum of three credit hours in the Fall and Spring semesters
- b. Middle and Graduating Year representatives must possess the appropriate number of hours according to their degree program upon successful completion of the Spring semester during which they seek election. A First year representative must be a student enrolling at Perkins for the first time in the Fall semester. Only students who are members of the respective year of their degree program shall vote for the respective. First, Middle, and Graduating Year representatives as appropriate based upon their enrollment status for the upcoming Fall semester.

Section B: Time for General Elections

Elections for President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Justice in Action Chair, Social Life Chair, Middle and Graduating Year Representatives, Hybrid Degree Program Student Representative, and Student Senators shall be held in the Spring semester prior to the last meeting of the then-sitting PSA Council's term of office. Elections

for First Year Representatives and the Hybrid Degree Program Student Representative will occur no later than 3 weeks after the first day of classes in the Fall.

Section C: Election Procedure

- a. This Constitution and any election regulations adopted by the Council as part of its by-laws shall govern all aspects of elections under the auspices of the PSA.
- b. All Elections shall be administered by the Election Commission. The Election Commission must be chaired by the Vice President and shall include two other persons from the Perkins Community appointed by the President with the confirmation of a majority vote of the PSA Council. Should a Commissioner decide to run for office in an election, that Commissioner, including the Vice President, shall relinquish their position as Election Commissioner. The Vice President is not required to resign from office. The vacant Commissioner or the chairperson position shall be filled as soon as possible by the President with the confirmation of the PSA Council at its next meeting. If no meeting is scheduled before an election or called by the President, the President's interim appointment may serve as Commissioner and assist fully in the administration of an election. If the Vice President is required to relinquish their position as chair of the Commission, the President is required to call a meeting of the PSA Council to confirm the appointment of a new Chair of the Election Commission. The Election Commission no later than a week before nominations begin shall develop and distribute to the Perkins student body a list of the offices available for election, the requirements and job responsibilities of each position, and provide all rules and regulations governing candidates' and supporters' conduct during elections administered by the PSA. All members of the Commission shall serve as election judges and have responsibility for enforcing the Constitution's provisions regarding elections and any election regulations adopted by the PSA Council. The Chair of the Election Commission shall have primary responsibility working with the Commission to develop a ballot for elections administered by the PSA.
- c. The Election Commission shall accept nominations from members of the PSA as defined in Article I, Section A for at least a week prior to the election. The election commission may take up to a week from the close of nominations to collect Declarations of Candidacy from nominees in a form approved by the Commission that includes at least the biographical and platform information from the candidates. This biographical and platform information should be distributed to all students eligible to vote at least 3 days before the election begins. Candidates are free to campaign personally with students so long as such campaigning complies with any election regulations adopted by the PSA Council. Candidates for any Student Senator positions to which Perkins is entitled shall be governed by these regulations and any additional, non-conflicting requirements adopted by the Student Senate.
- d. All elections shall be by secret ballot with each member of the Association entitled to only one vote. The Election Commission possesses the sole discretion to conduct elections entirely by electronic and/or other means. Valid SMU Student Identification Number should be required to vote. Students should only cast votes for the representative officers assigned to their academic status for the next academic year.
- e. Violations of the Constitution or Election Regulations should be referred in writing to the Election Commission. The Election Commission must hold a hearing and issue a ruling on every reported alleged violation no later than 48 hours after the allegations receipt in writing. Appeals of any decision of the Election Commission shall be heard by the PSA Council no later than 48 hours after the Election Commission's decision.

- f. In elections for a single position, a majority of the votes cast is required for the election. In the case that no one receives a majority, the two candidates with the most votes shall participate in a run-off election. The run-off election shall be conducted over a 3-day period no sooner than 4 days after the conclusion of the primary election and no later than 1 week after the conclusion of the primary election.
- g. In elections for positions held by multiple persons (Class representatives, Student Senators, etc.), the candidates who receive the most votes are elected. No run-off elections shall be held without an order of the PSA Council for positions held by multiple persons.
- h. The Election Commission shall count the ballots and announce the election results within 24 hours after the election concludes. The Election Commission shall contact all candidates and personally notify them of the results prior to publishing the results to the entire Perkins community.

Section D: Filling Vacancies

If any elected member of the Council is unable to fill their term of office for any reason including excessive absences, the Council shall order a special election for their position if the vacancy occurs before the Fall election.

If the vacancy occurs following the Fall election, the Executive Council, after considering applications for the vacancy, shall create a list of three nominees for a replacement to the PSA Council to fill the vacancy. A nominee shall be confirmed upon 2/3 vote of the PSA Council.

Article VI: PSA Committees Section A: Standing Committees

The PSA shall have at least TWO (2) standing committees, the Social Life Committee and Justice in Action Committee. All members of the Association, as defined in Article I, Section A committees to address specific issues of concern to the Perkins community.

- a. The Social Life Committee shall be chaired by the Social Life Chairperson. The Social Life Committee shall be comprised of at least one representative officer from the first and middle years well as any other members of the Association desiring to serve on the committee. The Social Life Committee shall coordinate and fund, both individually as well as through co-programming with other student groups, activities that:
 - 1. Nurture the community and encourage fellowship amongst members of the Perkins community;
 - 2. Provide for the holistic well-being of the Perkins Community; and
 - 3. Assist with the welcoming of International Students into the Perkins Community.
- b. The Justice in Action Committee shall be chaired by the Justice in Action Chairperson. The Justice in Action Committee shall be comprised of at least 1 representative officer from the first and middle years as well as any other members of the Association desiring to serve on the committee. The Justice in Action Committee shall coordinate and fund, both individually as well as through co-programming with other student groups, activities that:

1. Raise awareness and educate the Perkins community about social issues including, but not limited to, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and environmental responsibility;
2. Participate in established community programs or events that seek to bring about a more just society;
3. Seek to change unjust social and systemic structures locally, nationally, and globally;
4. Enable theological reflection on an experience such that students may make connections between personal piety and social holiness in such a way that challenges them to integrate this into their academic work; and;
5. Advertise events, programs, educational sessions, or opportunities to the Perkins community.

Section B: Ad Hoc Committees

The creation of ad hoc committees shall be approved by a majority of the PSA Council. The Chairperson and members of an ad hoc committee shall be appointed by the President and confirmed by majority vote of the PSA Council. Members of ad hoc committees who are not members of the PSA Council as defined by Article I, Section B shall not be entitled to vote at PSA Council meetings. Ad Hoc committees should give committee reports at each regularly scheduled council meeting during the committee's course of existence. Ad Hoc committees shall be disbanded upon acceptance of any final report or final recommendation to the PSA Council or upon disbandment by the PSA Council at any time by majority vote.

Article VII: Impeachment Section A: Reasons for Impeachment: Failure to Perform Assigned Duties

A member of the PSA Council, a PSA executive officer, a chair or member of any ad hoc committee shall only be impeached for failure to perform their duties. To initiate an impeachment proceeding, any member of the Association may file articles of impeachment specifically stating the failures of the person to perform their duties. The articles of impeachment must be signed by 20% of the Association. If the charges contained in the articles fail to allege specific failures to perform duties, the PSA Executive Council may upon majority vote require the articles of impeachment be re-submitted with additional specific facts detailing how the alleged person failed to perform their office. The Executive Council shall appoint a member of the Association who is not a PSA Council member to investigate the charges and report their findings to the Council at either the next regularly scheduled PSA meeting or at a specially called meeting for such purpose. Following the articles presentation and the presentation of a defense by the office holder, the PSA may impeach the office holder upon a 3/4 vote of the PSA Council.

Section B: Reasons for Impeachment: Failure to Attend Meetings

A member of the PSA Council is automatically removed from office upon their second absence not approved by the Executive Council. No articles of impeachment are necessary. The Secretary of the PSA shall announce the vacancy before the next PSA Council meeting. The vacancy will be filled during the President's report at the following PSA Council meeting according to Article V, Section D.

Article VIII: Organized Interest Groups (OIG) Section A: Definition

OIGs are groups of Association members with similar interests who have requested to be formally organized within the Perkins community to deepen the quality of academic, spiritual and social life outside the classroom.

Section B: Approval Process

A interest group shall be approved as an OIG when the PSA Council approves their formal organization and initial constitution by a 2/3 majority vote. To qualify for organization, an OIG must:

- a. Fulfill a function which the PSA Council in its discretion considers vital to the Association's common life;
- b. Possesses a constitution providing for accountability to its members and to the PSA Council and Perkins community that is also on file with the Secretary and approved by the Council. The Constitution shall provide at least the following:
 1. A name and set of general purposes;
 2. Guarantees for acceptable democratic procedures in all of the OIG's operations;
 3. Reasonable requirements for interest group membership; and,
 4. A description of the organizations structure, including a chairperson, however titled, a treasurer, a representative to the PSA Council that may be the President or Treasurer, and any additional officers deemed necessary for the proper functioning of the OIG.

Section C: Responsibilities of OIG Representative to PSA Council

A voting representative of the OIG shall be required to attend all meetings of the PSA Council. In the event of non-attendance by an OIG representative, the Executive Council can take appropriate punitive action including, but not limited to, withholding of budgeted funds.

Section D: Relationship Between OIGs and the PSA Council

Each OIG shall have the right to amend its Constitution at any time, provided any amendments are approved both by the majority of the OIG's membership and a majority of the PSA Council. Amendments do not become active or official before approval from PSA Council.

Section E: Limitations on Endorsement Regarding OIGs

An OIG has the right to investigate any issue, formulate a policy statement, and take action on any issue which falls under its jurisdiction as stated in its Constitution. However, actions taken by the OIG cannot purport to be taken on behalf of or representative of the PSA, Perkins, or SMU. OIGs may report their findings to the PSA Council and move for the adoption of specific policy statements or actions to be taken by the PSA Council as representative of Perkins students pursuant to the PSA Council's legislative function.

Section F: Rights and Remedies Concerning OIGs

Every Association member has the right to apply for and be considered for membership on any OIG. Any member of the Association refused membership in an OIG may appeal such decision to the PSA Council acting in its judicial function. The Council shall determine whether such refusal of membership was not in accordance with stated membership qualifications found in the OIG's approved constitution. All members of the Association may remain members of the OIG for as long as they continue to meet the membership requirements of the OIG's approved constitution.

Section G: Rights of Association Members

All members of the Association have the right to attend all meetings of all OIGs.

Article IX: Budget & Finances Section A: Sources of Income

The sources of income for the Association shall be:

1. Other funds secured through the budget of the Perkins School of Theology;
2. Other funds secured from outside sources to support the PSA and its OIGs; and

Section B: OIG Budgets

All OIGs shall submit to the Treasurer their budget request for the upcoming academic year no later than the last regularly scheduled PSA Council meeting. The outgoing Executive Council shall prepare a spreadsheet detailing the total of each OIG's request to date and the amount budgeted and actually spent during the academic year to date at the time the outgoing executive officers' terms of office expire.

Section C: Tentative Fall Budget

The incoming Executive Council shall propose a Tentative budget for the PSA that may be accepted by the Summer PSA Council pursuant to Article II, Section C.6. The tentative budget must be approved prior to new student orientation to allow OIGs and PSA to provide programming at the start of the Fall semester. Funds may be limited until final budget is approved at the first PSA Council meeting in the Fall Term.

Section D: Responsibilities of Incoming PSA Executive Council

The incoming Executive Council may amend the PSA's spending guidelines and restrictions on the Tentative budget by majority vote.

Section E: The Perkins Emergency Relief Fund

There shall be a fund administered by the Council called the Perkins Emergency Relief Fund (PERF).

1. The fund will serve as a relief assistance for students and other members of the Perkins community.
2. Sources for the fund come from donations and PSA Council's Budget and any fundraising activities.
3. The contact people for the fund are the President and Vice President. They confer with each other and confidentially handle all requests.
4. The President and Vice-President may authorize up to \$200 without Executive Council or PSA Council approval, except they may not authorize funds for themselves in any amount without PSA Council approval.
5. The Executive Council may approve amounts not exceeding \$500.
6. Any person requesting more than \$500 in a calendar year from the fund must have the approval of the PSA Council.
7. Funds are allotted to students in good faith. Each individual must decide whether or not they will be able to give all or some of the funds back to the PERF.

Article X: Ratification and Amendment

Section A: Ratification Procedures

This Constitution shall be ratified upon receiving a 2/3 majority of the vote cast by the Student Association in a referendum for that purpose in continuity with the pre-standing Constitution.

- a. The proposed Constitution shall be posted in a public place; and
- b. All Council members shall be given copies of the proposed Constitution.

Section B: Amendments to the Constitution

Short of repealing the constitution, amendments may be proposed at any time during the regular school term by any Association member in writing to the President or by a motion in writing submitted by a member of the PSA Council. The proposed amendments must be submitted to the President no later than 7 days prior to the next regularly scheduled PSA Council meeting. The PSA President may in their discretion call a special meeting of the PSA Council to only consider the proposed constitutional amendments. Any called special meeting must take place no sooner than 7 days following the distribution of the proposed amendments to the PSA Council. The proposed amendments will be adopted upon a 2/3 vote of PSA Council members present and voting.

Article XI: Repeal

The pre-standing Constitution and any laws of the Association in conflict with this Constitution are hereby repealed and declared null and void with ratification according to Article IX, Section A. Subsequent constitutional substitutions shall be valid so far as they conform to and include Article IX, Section A and Article X of this

Constitution. Persons elected under prior the constitution shall be grandfathered into office for the first year under this Constitution.

Last Amended: Spring 2025