



# **Report on the Proposed Changes to the Standing Rules**

**Prepared by the Internal Affairs Committee**

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# Executive Summary

The Standing Rules have not had a comprehensive update in a significant amount of time. As the Internal Affairs Committee is charged with amending the Standing Rules, the committee undertook the effort to modernize, update, and reform the Standing Rules.

In the following pages you will find detailed explanations on various proposed changes to the Standing Rules. Included in this summary are bullet points of important changes one should review.

These changes include:

- An addition of the Rutgers Army ROTC program as a Special Population Representative
- Stronger Requirements on the certification of external representatives to the Assembly
- A division between the Executive Board and the Executive Committee
  - The Committee will consist of all the Core and Standing Committee chairs as voting members. Additionally, the Vice-President will serve as a tiebreaker. This Committee will propose agenda items, which the Executive Board may vote to approve or disapprove. The Executive Board may not amend these agenda items, but may in an emergency situation add items.
  - The Executive Board will consist of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Senate leader as full voting members. The Parliamentarian may serve as the tie-breaking. The board will focus on executing RUSA initiatives and more external affairs.
- Quorum of the Assembly has been reduced from majority to one-third
- Committees must vote to sponsor legislation. Legislation cannot be single-handedly sponsored by the chair of the committee.
- Changes to Vacancy Appointments
  - Any appointments by caucus chairs must be confirmed by the caucus
  - Any appointments by the Senate leader must be confirmed by the Executive Board (this was a previous requirement as well)
  - The Senate Leader appoints to all Senate vacancies including vacancies on caucuses

## **General Notes**

The Internal Affairs Committee worked on a project to modernize and improve the standing rules. The number of Articles was reduced from 31 to 25. The rules were updated with the goals of preserving the rights of the minority while allowing the majority to govern, modernization with current practice, and removal of arcane and unnecessary language.

In the future the Internal Affairs Committee should look to reduce the number of Articles and work to condense the rules by removing redundancies and unnecessary bylaws. By doing so the rules will become more manageable and easy to understand by the average member and undergraduate student at large.

## **Article I**

The goal of Article I is to build upon the foundations found in the RUSA Constitution. In that regard this Article and the Standing Rules in general serve to build upon that foundation. In a similar sense, these rules should not rebuild nor relay the same foundation as found in the RUSA Constitution.

The primary motivation for the edits found in this Article are to clarify various external positions within the Assembly. Some highlights of these changes include clarifying that RUSA Senators must be students enrolled in the School of Arts and Sciences. Additionally, the procedure to calculate and notify Professional Schools of the appropriate RUSA representative entitlement for the School has been clarified. This entitlement depends on the population of the school and thus must be recalculated each year. In addition, the changes in this Article clarify that external representatives must be certified to the Assembly. This allows the Assembly to easily keep track and reach out to all RUSA representatives. To enforce these requirements and ensure all members are qualified to vote in RUSA, the Elections and Internal Affairs Committee have been formally given the authority to rule and answer on questions of qualifications of members. These requirements can be see in section 4.e), 5.b), and 6.c). These requirements are enforced through Section 9 of this article.

Many of the terms and rules found in Article I are redundant as they are already defined in the RUSA Constitution. Such a pattern may lead to outdated language in one section of the

rules and thus there should only be one copy of the language throughout the RUSA governing documents. The deletions in Section 1, a.) and c.) remove terms specified in the constitution. The modifications in b.) specify that a Senator who is in the Douglass Residential College (DRC) may run for the position of Douglass Governing Council (DGC) senator; however, if no SAS Senator is in DRC, there is no requirement to elect a DGC senator.

Another point of interest is an addition to the Special Population Representatives. The Rutgers ROTC is an important part of the Rutgers community. The organization has reached out and asked to get even more involved through RUSA. The Internal Affairs Committee recommends this change.

## **Article II**

The changes in this article slightly modify the debate structure and change quorum requirements for the Assembly. Other changes are grammatical or simply modify the language to reflect current practice.

The current practice of the Assembly is to call for debate on a case by case basis by adopting motions for debate. Such specific procedures must be adopted by two-thirds according to Robert's Rules. The rule changes specifically allow debate procedures to be specified by majority vote. However, it is important that dissenting voices get a chance to voice their concerns. Thus debate procedures that are determined in this way will automatically include at least four speakers -- two speakers for the issue and two against. Debate procedures specified by two-thirds do not have this requirement because there is an overwhelming support for (or against) the topic at issue.

Another important issue that has been changed in this Article is the quorum requirements for the Assembly. Many important university wide bodies, such as the University Senate, only require a quorum of one-third for business to be conducted. Similarly, with an expanding size of the Assembly it is important to allow for business to be conducted in the absence of a number of members, while preventing a sizeable minority for seizing control of the agenda. This balance is achieved by requiring only one-third of members for quorum while maintaining majority as quorum for executive board and committee meetings.

Lastly, several clarifying edits were proposed. A tiebreaking mechanism was proposed in internal elections; this method allows the President to break ties, whereas, previously, the rules did not account for ties. In addition the public notice requirement for RUSA meetings was clarified to provide for better transparency.

### **Article III**

Most debate in the Assembly is governed by Robert's Rules; however, Robert's Rules are subordinate to the RUSA Standing Rules. The purpose of good parliamentary rules is to allow the majority to govern, while preserving the minority's right to voice concern and protest. It is in the best interests of the Assembly to allow the Assembly to deviate from the most stringent of rules with unanimous consent or two-thirds of members. As a substantial amount of business before the Assembly (or most parliamentary bodies) is uncontroversial following each rule to the letter can be burdensome and unnecessary. With the proper protections for due process and preservation of the core rules of the Assembly, this article allows suspension of most rules by the Assembly and with two-thirds vote. While Robert's Rules allow for the suspension of the rules in some regard, these procedures specifically disallow the suspension of rules found in the organization's bylaws. This rule permits suspension under very limited circumstances.

In order to preserve the right of the minority to voice their concerns before the body, this article prohibits the suspension of several important rules, pertaining to membership in the Assembly, quorum, and the RUSA oath of office. Additionally, this Article only allows suspension of the rules in a regular meeting of the Assembly in order to preserve the rights of members who may not be able to attend a special meeting of the Assembly. A special meeting is a meeting held at a different time or place without the Assembly previously designating such a time and place as a general meeting. Lastly, the Parliamentarian, Presiding Officer, or Internal Affairs Chair is allowed to rule a particular motion to suspend out of order if it conflicts with the rules prescribed within this article.

In sum total, this article allows the efficient operation of the Assembly on non-controversial issue.

## **Article IV**

The majority of the changes in this section consist of clarifications and modernization of the Standing Rules. The President has been formally made an ex-officio member of each committee; since many committees meet at the same time, the President's attendance is not taken unless the President is present in committee. It would be unfair to mark the President as absent from a multitude of committees when it is impossible for the President to attend all committees.

This article also outlaws the practice of a chair singlehandedly sponsoring legislation. Before a committee formally sponsors a bill, a vote must be taken by the committee to do so. There is no requirement for a particular medium this vote must be taken; a vote can be taken during a committee meeting, through groupme or in another forum.

Another important change is that the creation of a standing committee requires an amendment to the standing rules. Amendments to the Standing Rule must be duly considered by the and thus must be done according to the same procedure as any other amendment to the standing rules.

## **Executive Board and Executive Committee**

A major drawback of the current RUSA executive structure is the ability of the a few people to control the agenda of the entire Assembly. A proposal splitting the Executive Board into an Executive Board and an Executive Committee alleviates this drawback. The Executive Committee will be empowered to draft an agenda, which the Executive Board can approve or disapprove and thus set the agenda for the Assembly. Afterwards if the Executive Board disapproves the Agenda in whole or in part the Executive Committee may override this disapproval by two-thirds vote. Any disapproval by the Executive Board must be by two-thirds votes. In addition, in an emergency situation the Executive Board may add an item by two-thirds vote. This procedure creates a separation between the Executive and Legislative functions of RUSA and allows stronger control of the agenda by legislative aspects of the Assembly.

The Executive Board will consist of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Senate leader as voting members. The Parliamentarian will serve as the casting vote, or tie breaker. Additionally, the Chief of Staff and the Big 10 Liason will be non-voting members of

the board. Together these officers will work primarily on the external policy of RUSA and work to implement RUSA initiatives.

The Executive Committee will consist of all the Core and Standing Committee chairs as well as the Vice-President and Parliamentarian. Each chair will have one vote, with the Vice-President as the tiebreaking vote. The role of the Parliamentarian will be to advise the committee on the RUSA rules and procedures. This committee's role will be to guide the legislative role of the Assembly.

### **Articles on Core and Standing Committees**

Major changes in the next few articles, concerning committees, consist of adding language concerning the Athletic Affairs committee (no rules or charges were issued when this committee became a standing committee), formalizing the investigatory powers of the Internal Affairs Committee, updates to comply with current practice, and grammatical changes.

The Athletic Affairs Committee was issued with distinct standing charges inspired by the enabling legislation of this committee. This language is found in Article XIV.

As the investigatory branch of the Assembly, the Internal Affairs Committee is charged with investigation of RUSA members. For such investigations the Committee is empowered to require members to testify in front of the committee. Additionally, the committee has been given the responsibility to ensure the Assembly operates within the parameters laid out in the Constitution and the Standing Rules.

The University Affairs Committee was formally charged with being responsible for Meal Swipes for Charity, while the Student Affairs Committee was formally charged with planning the "What's On Your Mind Survey". Other language was changed to reflect appropriate grammar.

### **Article XV: Officers of the Assembly**

Aside from grammatical changes, there are three major changes in Article XV. The first is the removal of the Organizing Director Position. This removal was done for several reasons. The second is the change to allow the Senate Leader to appoint students to all Senate Vacancies

subject to confirmation by the Executive Board. Lastly, the secretary was given the duty and responsibility to record meetings in order to increase transparency of the Assembly.

Historically the Organizing Direction has not had significant impact on the Assembly. In the past two years, the organizing director has either not organized any significant event or organized events by with little to no RUSA attendance or involvement. The duty of the Organizing Director has been inherited by several positions within RUSA including the President, Vice-President, Public Relations Committee, Student Affairs Committee, and others. As this position has very little to no effect on RUSA, the Internal Affairs Committee recommends it be removed.

The Senate Leader was given the ability to appoint students to all University Senate vacancies, instead of appointment to only at-large seats. This was done for a few key reasons. One, the Senate Leader is typically an experienced RUSA member who has intricate knowledge of RUSA and the Senate and thus has the experience to choose the best member for appointment. In addition, caucus chairs are typically first year members in RUSA and thus do not have the necessary experience to appoint a member to the Senate. The Senate Leader's power is additionally checked by the Executive Board. This allows the Executive Board to prevent arbitrary and potentially malicious nominations. To further insure compliance with the RUSA Constitution and University Policy, the Internal Affairs Committee shall work to verify the eligibility of this Senator. As all RUSA Senators must be in the School of Arts and Sciences according to University Policy, the Internal Affairs Committee will be responsible for verifying this eligibility.

Lastly, the Secretary has been given the responsibility of recording RUSA meetings. It is paramount that our meetings be accessible to all Rutgers University Undergraduates. A recording posted online is easily accessible and also creates accountability before the students. In addition, by recording all meetings we can allow absent members to quickly catch up on what happened at the previous meeting.

## **Remaining Articles**

The major changes to caucus chairs is that any caucus chair appointments must be confirmed by the members of the caucus.

The major changes to the Allocations Board Rules is a clarification that the Allocations Board may create its own subordinate rules, but must file such rules and any amendments with the Secretary of the Assembly. These subordinate rules shall only take effect upon alerting the Secretary, who will also alert the Internal Affairs Chair such changes have been done.

Another major change is that Allocations is required to publish their proposed budget at least a week before it is approved by the Assembly. It is also useful to note that special events funding guidelines are included in the Standing Rules and have not been changed from previous versions of these rules.

Changes to the Standing Rules must be formally introduced a week before they are adopted by the body.

The attendance system has been reworked. For more details see the previously published document on the new proposed attendance system. You may email the Internal Affairs Chair at [rusa.iacommittee@gmail.com](mailto:rusa.iacommittee@gmail.com) for a copy of this document.

The medical leave procedure has been amended to require documentation in a confidential manner to the Internal Affairs Chair. Additionally, procedures compliant with University Policy 50.2.1 have been codified, which allow for the appointment of an interim senator.

Lastly, the oath of office has been clarified as a mandatory action each RUSA member must take prior to assuming the duties and responsibilities of their office.