

Constitution of the University Democrats at the University of Texas at Austin

Article I

NAME

- 1.1 The name of this organization shall be the University Democrats at the University of Texas at Austin.
- 1.2 The official abbreviation of this organization will be UDems.

Article II

PURPOSE

- 2.1 The primary purpose of this organization shall be to influence elections and promote the ideals of the Democratic Party.
- 2.2 This organization shall accept political contributions and make political expenditures; educate the campus and community; and increase political participation.
- 2.3 While the Texas Legislature is in session, the organization will work with the state government to address issues concerning students, the Austin community and the Democratic Party.

Article III

MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Membership in the University Democrats is open to all students, staff and faculty at the University of Texas at Austin. The organization welcomes everyone to attend our meetings and events, but only students, staff and faculty that pay dues shall be considered official members of the organization. Those attending will be expected to abide by the University Democrats Code of Conduct, as outlined in Article XII, as well as Chapter 11 of the Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities of the University of Texas at Austin.

3.2 Membership information requested shall include: name, mailing address, and a pledge to support the Democratic Party. Other information may be collected at the discretion of the Officer Board.

3.3 Only official dues-paying members are eligible to seek officer positions within the organization and vote in Officer and endorsement elections.

3.4 Membership dues are to be established by the Officer Board at the beginning of each semester.

3.5 For the purpose of electing officers, issuing endorsements, or amending this constitution as outlined in Articles V, VII, and XI, the right to vote shall be granted to official members recorded as a member one week prior to the date of the election or individuals who were members the previous semester and have paid dues by the time of voting.

3.6 Upon paying dues, members agree to abide by the University Democrats Code of Conduct as outlined in Article XII.

Article IV

OFFICERS AND DUTIES

4.1 There will be a ***President*** of this organization who shall:

4.11 Be the official representative of this organization.

4.12 Determine the time and the place of club meetings, preside at all meetings of this organization, and invite guest speakers to meetings.

4.13 Work with Treasurer to coordinate fundraising activity.

4.14 Work with Webmaster and Communications Director to communicate with members through emails and the website.

Be responsible for the organization's bank account, along with the Treasurer, and put their name on the account along with the Treasurer.

4.16 Perform other duties and responsibilities as necessary for the efficient functioning of the organization.

4.2 There will be a **Vice President** of this organization who shall:

4.21 Serve in the absence of the President.

4.22 Preside over all elections, endorsements and amendments, except for officer elections.

4.23 Serve as the organization's liaison to other organizations such as Texas Young Democrats, University of Texas Student Government, etc.

4.24 Serve as Director and advisor to all committees.

4.25 Perform duties not delegated to any specific Officer as they arise and other tasks and projects as assigned by the President.

4.3 There will be a **Communications Director** of this organization who shall:

4.31 Publicize all meetings and events.

4.32 Create, in consultation with the Officer Board, Committee Chairs and General Members, an overarching message in accordance with the overarching message of the event and Democratic purpose of the organization.

4.33 Write and distribute all media advisories and press releases.

4.34 Maintain a media contact list.

4.35 Design and/or oversee distribution of posters, fliers and emails to publicize organization sponsored events when needed.

4.36 Submit to the Webmaster, in a timely fashion, all important media coverage regarding our organization or other points of interest for the membership;

4.37 Work with the Historian to apply to the University of Texas Leadership Board's Swing Out Award, if the Officer Board elects for the organization to apply.

4.38 Represent University Democrats to media personnel.

4.39 Maintain a social media presence and efforts for the organization.

4.4 There will be a **Secretary** of this organization who shall:

4.41 Maintain agendas and minutes at Officer meetings and distribute them to all officers via email or any other preferred method.

4.42 Make ballots when needed for elections or endorsements and tabulate votes cast during organizational elections.

4.43 Briefly announce any votes of the Officer Board at general meetings and provide agendas, minutes, and vote results of the organization to any general member upon request within a timely manner.

4.44 Be responsible for the maintenance of the Constitution.

4.45 Maintain the Internship Program and facilitate all related activities with the assistance of the Officer Board.

4.46 Maintain the official registration of this organization with the University of Texas and keep records to ensure proper membership credentials with the Texas Young Democrats.

4.47 Serve as logistical coordinator for the organization.

4.5 There will be a **Treasurer** of this organization who shall:

- 4.51 Keep financial records for the organization.
- 4.52 Reimburse individuals, with proper receipts, who incur expense on behalf of the organization.
- 4.53 Perform fundraising duties.
- 4.54 Collect dues and maintain a record of dues-paying members and the contact information of members necessary to complete PAC reports
- a. This information will be available to all Members in the organization.
- b. This information cannot be shared with anyone outside of the organization without the approval of a majority of the Officers.
- 4.55 Be responsible for the organization's bank account along with the President, and put their name on the account along with the President.
- 4.56 Order t-shirts for the organization, and be responsible for ordering any other materials when necessary.
- 4.6 There will be a **Community Director** of this organization who shall:
- 4.61 Facilitate coordination between the University Democrats and off-campus organizations and groups, including political campaigns.
- 4.62 In coordination with the President, oversee and recruit members for University Democrats political volunteer efforts and all community service projects.
- 4.63 Ensure that at least one volunteer event per semester is non-political.
- 4.7 There will be a **Campus Director** of this organization who shall:
- 4.71 Ensure that the table is properly staffed and maintained when necessary.
- 4.72 Serve as the official liaison between University Democrats and other on-campus organizations and facilitate coordinated efforts with other student groups.
- 4.73 Oversee implementation of campus outreach efforts.

- 4.8 There will be a **Membership Director** of this organization who shall:
- 4.81 Create a new-member recruitment and retention plan each semester.
- 4.82 Organize University Democrats social events.
- 4.9 There will be a **Historian** of this organization who shall:
- 4.91 Attend all University Democrats events and take pictures and/or video recordings.
- 4.92 Work with the Communications Director to apply to the University of Texas Leadership Board's Swing Out Award, if the Officer Board elects for the organization to apply.
- 4.93 Assist the Membership Director with event planning and be responsible for the creation of all necessary supplies.
- 4.94 Keep a collection of media coverage and document University Democrats events.
- 4.95 Serve as the official archivist of the organization.
- 4.100 There will be a **Webmaster** of this organization who shall:
- 4.101 Be appointed by a majority of the officers at the beginning of each semester. The position will be posted publicly for members to apply. Their term will last until the next appointment.
- 4.102 Be a non-voting member of the Officer Board.
- 4.103 Maintain and update the organization's website.
- 4.104 Help the Communications Director and Membership Director develop effective strategies for publicizing the organization and attracting new members.
- 4.110 There will be a **President Emeritus** of this organization who shall:
- 4.111 Work with new Officers to ensure a smooth transition of leadership.
- 4.112 Be the most recent President before the incumbent President who is willing and able to serve. Upon selection of a newly elected President, the previously elected President shall become President Emeritus;

4.113 Preside over officer elections.

4.114 Be a non-voting member of the Officer Board.

4.115 If an ad-hoc Constitutional Committee is created, the President Emeritus shall be present during aforementioned meetings.

Article V

OFFICER NOMINATIONS, TERMS AND ELECTIONS

5.1 Officers shall be elected each semester.

5.2 The President Emeritus shall serve as the presiding official over Officer elections and shall have final authority over election procedures including time limits for speeches and the order in which candidates speak. In the absence of a President Emeritus, the President, or another Officer selected by the Officer Board, shall serve all roles delegated to the President Emeritus as detailed in Article V.

5.3 Nominations for officer positions shall be opened at the second-to-last general meeting of the semester and at the final meeting of the semester. Nominations will be taken in the order that the officer positions appear in the Constitution.

5.4 To be nominated for an Officer position, an individual must have paid dues before the final general meeting of the semester when the election is held.

5.5 Individuals may be nominated by anyone present during open nominations, including themselves. Another person present at the meeting must then second the nomination. The Secretary shall officially record the nomination.

5.6 There shall be an early voting period for general members who cannot attend election meetings. This period shall be held at a date and time determined by the Officer Board.

5.7 Dues paying members shall not be allowed to vote absentee unless a legitimate excuse is given to the President Emeritus. Absentee ballots must be presented to the President Emeritus, and if the excuse is deemed legitimate by a majority of the Officer Board, the ballots will be included in the vote count. The Officer Board shall vote on the legitimacy without knowing the identity of the prospective absentee voter. Absentee votes must be presented before the start of the election meeting. Absentee votes will carry over to a runoff if the candidate or issue voted for is still in the race.

- 5.8 Elections shall be held at the final general meeting of the semester.
- 5.9 Elections shall be held by secret ballot. The Secretary shall tabulate and record the votes with the aid of the Webmaster and another Officer. If the Secretary and/or Webmaster are candidates for the position being voted upon, they must recuse themselves from counting the votes for that particular election. A record of the votes shall be made available upon the conclusion of elections.
- 5.10 Positions will be voted on and ballots will be tabulated in the order that they appear in the Constitution.
- 5.11 The candidate who receives over 50% of the votes cast shall be declared the winner. If no candidate receives over 50% of the vote, a run-off election between the two candidates with the highest vote totals shall occur. The candidate with the most votes in the run-off is elected to that Officer position.
- 5.12 Candidates who are not elected may “down-ballot” or run for one other position further down the ballot.
- 5.13 Officers elected at the end of the spring semester shall serve from July 16 through January 15 and Officers elected at the end of the fall semester shall serve from January 16 through July 15.
- 5.14 In the event of a vacancy in an Officer position, a special election shall be held. Nominations shall be taken over the course of two consecutive general meetings, with dues-paying members voting at the second meeting in accordance with the guidelines listed above.

Article VI

REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

- 6.1 Impeachment process:
- 6.11 A majority of voting officers shall be required to sign off on a resolution of impeachment.

6.12 The impeachment resolution shall be presented to the general membership at the general meeting followed by a vote the following week.

6.13 A 2/3 vote of the general membership is required for an Officer impeachment.

6.2 Replacing Officers:

6.21 Nominations by the general membership will be taken at the earliest possible general meeting after an Officer is unable to continue service.

6.22 Voting shall take place the following week.

Article VII

ENDORSEMENTS

7.1 The University Democrats are able to give their endorsement to the following:

7.11 Candidates in Democratic Primary Elections.

7.12 Candidates for Austin City Council

a. University Democrats and Central Austin Democrats shall consider all candidates and propositions for the above two points (§ 7.11, §7.12). The two organizations shall vote separately. When the two organizations agree on any endorsement, they shall unite to form the Austin Progressive Coalition. For positions in which the two organizations disagree, APC shall make no joint endorsement.

b. The President, Treasurer and a Member-at-large who shall be selected by 2/3 of the membership shall determine the extent of publicizing the organization's endorsement.

7.13 Candidates/tickets running in any student election on The University of Texas at Austin campus.

7.14 Amendments to the Texas Constitution or the Constitution of the United States.

7.15 Any other ballot item, organization, bill, resolution, or etcetera not prohibited by this constitution and deemed necessary by a majority vote of the Officer Board.

7.2 The University Democrats are prohibited from endorsing the following:

7.21 Candidates in the Democratic Primary for President of the United States.

a. The University Democrats shall fully engage in the discussion and debate concerning candidates for the Democratic nomination, but shall refrain from officially endorsing any candidates

7.22 More than one candidate in a given race.

7.3 The Vice President shall preside over endorsement meetings, and shall have final authority over election procedures, including time limits for speeches and the order in which candidates speak.

7.4 Endorsements must be approved by the *majority* of votes cast.

7.5 If there are more than two candidates in a given race and no candidate receives a majority of the votes, there shall be a runoff with the two candidates with the highest vote totals participating. If neither candidate receives a *majority* in the run-off, a "No Endorsement" shall be given.

7.6 Only dues-paying members are allowed to vote in endorsement elections.

7.7 Members shall be given the option of voting for "No Endorsement" in all endorsement votes, including run-off votes. If the majority of votes are for "No Endorsement", the organization shall issue a "No Endorsement".

7.8 Elections shall be by secret ballot. The Secretary shall tabulate and record the votes with the aid of the Webmaster and another Officer. A record of the votes shall be made available upon the conclusion of elections.

7.9 Dues paying members shall not be allowed to vote absentee unless a legitimate excuse is given to the President Emeritus. Absentee ballots must be presented to the President Emeritus, and if the excuse is deemed legitimate by a majority of the Officer Board, the ballots will be included in the vote count. The Officer Board shall vote on the legitimacy without knowing the identity of the prospective absentee voter. Absentee votes must be presented before the start of

the election meeting. Absentee votes will carry over to a runoff if the candidate or issue voted for is still in the race.

7.100 The President shall report the results of Democratic Primary endorsements, Austin City Council endorsements, and any other important endorsement that he or she deems appropriate to the Daily Texan in the form of a Firing Line/Letter to the Editor, Guest Editorial, press release, or some other suitable format.

7.110 The Webmaster shall post endorsement results on the organization's web site, and the Communications Director shall make endorsement results available for distribution via the table.

Article VIII

VERIFIED VOTING

8.1 It shall be the policy of the organization that an online voting system not be used as a replacement or complement to officer or endorsement elections of any kind excepting the use of the Internet to communicate absentee ballots. All votes shall be verifiable by means of a physical recorded ballot, should results be challenged.

Article IX

MEETINGS

9.1 General meetings shall be held at least every two weeks during the fall and spring semesters.

9.2 Officer meetings shall be held at least every two weeks and are open to all members of the organization.

9.3 At the discretion of the President, and by agreement of the majority of the officers, additional group meetings may be scheduled on the weeks in between general meetings.

Article X

COMMITTEES AND CHAIRS

10.1 Creation:

10.11 If deemed necessary by the President, and approved by a majority of the officers, an *ad hoc* committee may be created for a certain amount of time.

10.12 The Vice President shall send applications for Committee Chair positions to the general membership and shall be received by the Vice President and Secretary. Upon receiving all applications, the Vice President shall make a nomination for the Committee Chair position, which shall be approved by a 2/3 majority of the Officer Board.

10.2 Duties

10.21 Duties for a Chair and their committee will be outlined by the Officer Board and handed down to the committee at its creation.

10.22 The Vice President shall serve as Director of all committees and committee chairs.

10.3 Duration

10.31 The Officer Board shall determine how long a committee may stay in existence and will hand down this time frame to the committee at its creation. Duration may be extended with a majority vote of the officers, and committees may be reinstated if needed. However, without a specific extension a committee is dissolved at the end of their defined timeframe.

10.32 Committee Chairs may be dismissed by a simple majority vote of officers.

Article XI

AMENDMENTS

11.1 Proposal

11.11 Any dues-paying member can propose an amendment to the Constitution by submitting their proposed change to the President who will announce the proposed amendment at a general meeting.

11.2 Ratification

11.21 At the general meeting following the meeting in which the announcement was made, an election will be held. The Secretary will create the ballots and any dues paying member may participate in the election. Amendments will be approved and added to the Constitution if they receive 2/3 of the votes cast by dues-paying members.

Article XII

CODE OF CONDUCT

12.1 Members of University Democrats will maintain an environment of inclusiveness, mutual respect, and friendliness for members, as well as non members present at any official UDems events. No member shall knowingly make uncomfortable, intimidate, harass, threaten, or act violently towards any other member or non-member present at any official UDems event.

12.2 Should a case present itself to UDLC that a violation of this code of conduct has occurred, UDLC may take action by a unanimous vote to revoke the membership from the offending member indefinitely with no reimbursement. UDLC must provide an explanation as to why membership was revoked.

12.3 Membership of Officers cannot be barred while they are in office. Instead, an Officer in violation must first be impeached, as outlined in Article VI. Once the offending officer is replaced as outlined in Article VI, UDLC may continue with barring the membership of the offending officer.

12.4 Barred members may appeal every semester to reinstate their membership eligibility. UDLC will vote by majority to reinstate the eligibility of a previously barred member for membership.

12.5 UDLC may take action to ask non-members in violation of this code of conduct at any official UDems event to leave.

12.6 UDLC may take action to ask a member to leave if they are in direct violation of this code of conduct at any official UDems event.