

*Revised August 27, 2025*



# **Staff Senate Bylaws**

**Georgia Southwestern State University**

*Revised August 27, 2025*

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## Article I – Name and Purpose

### Section 1 – Name

The name of the organization shall be Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) Staff Senate (hereinafter referred to as “Staff Senate”).

### Section 2 – Purpose

The Staff Senate serves as a representative and advisory body to the university President. Its purpose is to advocate for the needs, interests, and concerns of all staff members and to facilitate open communication between staff and university leadership.

The Staff Senate is committed to:

- Promoting the professional growth and development of staff;
- Recognizing and celebrating staff contributions and achievements;
- Encouraging staff involvement in university initiatives and governance; and
- Supporting the overall mission, vision, and values of Georgia Southwestern State University.

## Article II – Membership

### Section 1 – Eligibility for Membership

Membership in the Staff Senate is open to regular, full-time employees who have completed at least one year of continuous service.

Members shall be appointed by the division heads for each university unit (listing is maintained by the Staff Senate Secretary), with the number of members determined by the size of the unit’s full-time staff, according to the following structure:

- 10 employees or less = 1 voting member
- 11-20 employees = 2 voting members
- 21 or more employees = 3 voting members

### Section 2 – Length of Membership

Members of the Staff Senate are committed to serving a minimum of one 3-year term.

Members may serve up to two additional consecutive 3-year terms if reappointed by the division head. Exceptions may also be approved by the GSW President.

### Section 3 – Attendance

Regular attendance at Staff Senate meetings is essential to ensure active participation and effective governance.

- **Excused Absences:** Absences may be excused at the discretion of the Chair based on reasonable circumstances.

- **Proxy Attendance:** If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they may appoint a proxy from within their department to attend in their place. The member must notify the **Chair** of the proxy's name in advance of the meeting.
- **Absence Limits:** A Staff Senate member may not have more than three unexcused absences or proxies in a single fiscal year.
- **Consecutive Unexcused Absences:** After three consecutive unexcused absences within a twelve-month period, the member may be removed from the Staff Senate to allow another representative to take their place.

## Section 4 – Member Responsibilities

Each Staff Senate member is expected to actively contribute to the mission and effectiveness of the Senate by:

- **Participating in Meetings:** Attend and engage in Staff Senate meetings, offering thoughtful input and feedback.
- **Involvement in Activities:** Take an active role in organizing and attending Senate events, projects, and initiatives.
- **Promoting Staff Interests:** Represent the interests, concerns, and ideas of the staff body in Senate discussions and decisions.

## Section 5 – Resignation and Termination

- **Resignation:** If a Staff Senate member is unable to continue serving, they should notify the Staff Senate Chair prior to the next scheduled meeting, providing sufficient notice for the Senate to address the vacancy.
- **Termination:** A member may be removed from the Staff Senate by a two-thirds majority vote of the Senate. Grounds for removal may include, but are not limited to:
  - Failure to fulfill member responsibilities (ex: attendance, active participation)
  - Disruptive or unprofessional behavior that undermines the Senate's mission
  - Any actions that are deemed contrary to the best interests of the Staff Senate or Georgia Southwestern State University

# Article III – Meetings of Members

## Section 1 – Regular Meetings

Regular meetings of the Staff Senate shall be held monthly during the academic year, except for the months of May, June, July, November, and December.

Meetings will take place on the last Wednesday of each month, unless an alternative date is specified by the Chair in advance.

## Section 2 – Special Meetings

Special meetings may be convened at the discretion of the Chair, or upon request by the university President or a majority of the Senate members, to address urgent matters that require immediate attention outside of the regular meeting schedule.

### Section 3 – Quorum

A quorum for conducting official business shall consist of a simple majority in attendance at the meeting. Without a quorum, no formal votes or decisions may be made.

### Section 4 – Voting

Decisions shall be made by a simple majority vote of the members present at the meeting, unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws. If the vote is tied, the Chair may cast the deciding vote. Proxy votes are allowed unless explicitly stated in these Bylaws.

### Section 5 – Rules of Procedure

Meetings will be conducted using a simplified version of Robert’s Rules of Order, ensuring orderly, fair, and respectful discussion while maintaining a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere.

## Article IV – Officer Terms, Duties, & Elections

### Section 1 – Officers

The Staff Senate shall have six officers, consisting of a Chair, Immediate Past Chair, Chair-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer and Parliamentarian.

Each officer is responsible for fulfilling the duties as outlined in these Bylaws and may serve in additional roles or responsibilities as deemed necessary by the Senate.

### Chair

#### **Term:**

The Chair shall serve a one-year term, followed by an additional one-year term as Immediate Past Chair to provide continuity and support for the incoming leadership.

Candidates for the office of Chair must have served on the Staff Senate for at least one year prior to election.

The Chair does not have a vote except in the case of a tie, in which the Chair will cast the deciding vote.

#### **Duties:**

- Plans and leads all Staff Senate meetings, ensuring they are organized and productive.
- Notifies all Staff Senate members in a timely manner of meeting dates and agendas.
- Represents the GSW Staff Senate at the University System of Georgia (USG) Assembly and attends USG Staff Council meetings.
- Serves as the primary liaison to governance bodies, including the President’s Cabinet, advocating for staff concerns.
- Ensures that the needs and concerns of staff are effectively represented in university decisions.

## Chair-Elect

**Term:**

The Chair-Elect shall serve a one-year term, followed by an additional one-year term as Chair.

**Duties:**

- Serves in the Chair's absence by stepping into the role when the Chair is unavailable or absent.
- Assists the Chair in all aspects of Senate operations, ensuring smooth transitions between leadership roles.
- Manages documentation by overseeing and maintaining access to shared files for all officers, ensuring secure storage and access to important documents.
- Advocates for staff needs by assisting in ensuring that concerns, issues, and needs of staff members are communicated and addressed effectively.

## Immediate Past Chair

**Term:**

The Immediate Past Chair shall serve a one-year term, immediately following the role as Chair.

**Duties:**

- Acts as a trusted advisor to the Staff Senate, offering guidance and institutional memory without voting privileges.

## Secretary

**Term:**

The Secretary shall serve a one-year term.

**Duties:**

- Takes detailed meeting minutes, tracks attendance, and ensures timely distribution of meeting notes and important updates to all members.
- Maintains an accurate and up-to-date list of current members, including their contact details and roles within the Senate, and university units.
- Steps into the role of Staff Senate Chair when both the Chair and Chair-Elect are unavailable, ensuring seamless operation and leadership continuity.

## Treasurer

**Term:**

The Treasurer shall serve a one-year term and chair the Budget Committee.

**Duties:**

- Ensures responsible financial stewardship by reviewing the previous year's budget and developing a new budget to present to the Senate for approval.

- Leads the budget approval process, ensuring the budget is passed at the first meeting of the fiscal year or as determined by the Chair.
- In the absence of the Secretary, steps in to take meeting minutes and track attendance, ensuring accurate records are kept and shared with the Secretary for distribution.

## Parliamentarian

### **Term:**

The Parliamentarian shall serve a one-year term and chair the Bylaw Committee.

### **Duties:**

- Advises on parliamentary procedure, ensuring meetings are conducted according to a simplified version of Robert's Rules of Order for clarity and fairness.
- Oversees the elections process, ensuring that all procedures are followed correctly and elections are fair and transparent.
- Assists in drafting, interpreting, and revising bylaws and rules of order, ensuring the governance structure remains clear and effective.

## Section 2 – Nominations

Any member of the Staff Senate may nominate someone for any officer position, with the exception of Immediate Past Chair. Once a nomination is placed, an email will be sent by the Chair to the nominee to determine if they want to serve in that position. Nominations should be taken and announced at one meeting before elections.

## Section 3 – Elections

### Normal Elections

Elections shall be held on the last meeting of the fiscal year unless the Chair has made a motion to hold it at a different time.

Elections shall be held in person with a ballot. If a member is not able to attend, they may place a vote to the Parliamentarian by email.

Votes should be counted by the Chair and Parliamentarian. If one or both are nominated, they should appoint someone to count in their place.

### Special Elections

If during the fiscal year a position becomes vacant a special election should occur for that position at the next meeting unless specified by the Chair.

This election may bypass the one meeting waiting period for nominations and shall be held in person with a ballot. If a member is not able to attend, they may place a vote to the Parliamentarian by email. Any proxy attendees are not eligible to vote.

Votes should be counted by the Chair and Parliamentarian. Unless one or both are nominated then they should appoint someone to count in their place.

If the Chair or Parliamentarian position becomes vacant, a special election for the position must be held as soon as possible, either at the next meeting or at a time specified by the Chair-Elect. In the event of a vacancy in the Chair role, the Chair-Elect will assume the Chair's duties until the vacancy is filled. If the Parliamentarian role becomes vacant, the Chair may appoint a temporary Parliamentarian until the special election takes place.

## Article V – Committees

### Section 1 - Committee Formation

Committees shall be established to carry out the work of the Staff Senate in support of its mission to represent and advocate for staff interests, promote professional development, and enhance the campus community.

### Section 2 – Standing Committees

The following standing committees shall be maintained, each with defined purposes and responsibilities.

All members shall serve on at least one committee of the Staff Senate.

Each standing committee shall have a designated Chair and Co-chair appointed by committee members, in which they will serve a one-year term and may be reappointed.

Committees are expected to meet at least twice per year, with the schedule provided by the Committee Chair to the Senate Chair.

### Bylaw Committee

The Bylaw Committee is responsible for keeping the Senate's governing documents accurate, relevant, and aligned with its mission. Its purpose is to ensure clarity, consistency, and compliance in how the Staff Senate operates.

This committee should be chaired by the Parliamentarian.

- **Review and Maintain Bylaws:** Ensure bylaws reflect current practices and organizational needs.
- **Propose Revisions:** Recommend updates or amendments for clarity or improvement.
- **Interpret Governing Documents:** Help the Senate understand and apply the bylaws.
- **Ensure Compliance:** Verify that actions and procedures follow established rules.
- **Support Governance:** Align Senate operations with bylaws and university policies.

## Budget Committee

The Budget committee's purpose is to create, oversee, and update Staff Senate's spending and resource allocation plans, while maintaining fiscal responsibility and ensuring financial stability. This committee should be chaired by the Treasurer.

- **Review Financial Activity:** Monitor Senate income, expenses, and budget status throughout the year.
- **Develop Annual Budget:** Propose a yearly budget aligned with the Senate's goals and priorities.
- **Advise on Expenditures:** Provide guidance on appropriate and strategic use of funds.
- **Ensure Transparency:** Maintain accurate records and report financial activity to the full Senate.
- **Support Funded Initiatives:** Allocate funds to committees and programs in line with approved budgets.

## Community Service and Philanthropy Committee

The Community Service and Philanthropy Committee exists to connect staff members with opportunities to give back, both within the campus and the broader community. Its purpose is to foster a spirit of service and generosity among staff while enhancing the university's public image and community relationships.

- **Promote Engagement:** Encourage staff participation in volunteer and charitable activities.
- **Organize Service Projects:** Plan events like food drives, cleanups, and donation campaigns.
- **Support Local and Campus Causes:** Identify service opportunities that impact the campus and community.
- **Build Campus Morale:** Offer meaningful volunteer opportunities that foster pride and belonging.
- **Represent the University Positively:** Strengthen community ties and highlight the university's commitment to service.

## Fundraising and Sponsorships Committee

The Fundraising and Sponsorships Committee shall develop and implement strategies to secure financial support for Staff Senate initiatives. The committee will:

- **Develop and Implement:** Create strategies to generate financial support for Staff Senate initiatives and activities.
- **Identify and Pursue:** Secure sponsorships and partnerships with campus and community organizations.
- **Plan and Coordinate:** Organize fundraising events or campaigns that align with the mission of the Staff Senate.
- **Maintain and Report:** Keep accurate records of funds raised and provide regular updates to the Treasurer.
- **Collaborate and Allocate:** Work in collaboration with the Budget Subcommittee to ensure funds are allocated appropriately in support of Senate goals.

## Public Relations and Communications Committee

The Public Relations and Communications Committee is responsible for ensuring that staff are well-informed, engaged, and aware of Staff Senate initiatives, accomplishments, and opportunities. Its purpose is to enhance visibility, transparency, and connection—both within the staff community and across campus.

- **Inform and Update:** Share news, events, and announcements through various communication channels.
- **Promote Staff Senate Initiatives:** Publicize programs and accomplishments to boost engagement and awareness.
- **Enhance Internal Communication:** Maintain clear and consistent messaging between the Senate and staff.
- **Support Staff Recognition:** Highlight staff achievements and milestones to boost morale.
- **Strengthen the Senate’s Image:** Create materials that reflect the mission and professionalism of the Senate.
- **Maintain Staff Senate Webpage:** Keep webpage content current, accurate, and informative.

## Staff Development and Recognition Committee

The Staff Development and Recognition Committee focuses on helping staff grow professionally and feel valued for their contributions. Its purpose is to foster a positive work environment by supporting staff learning, morale, and acknowledgment.

- **Promote Professional Development:** Support opportunities for workshops, trainings, and skill-building activities.
- **Coordinate Recognition Programs:** Organize awards, appreciation events, and milestone celebrations.
- **Boost Morale and Engagement:** Foster a culture of appreciation and connection among staff.
- **Support a Learning Culture:** Recommend resources that promote staff growth and well-being.
- **Celebrate Achievements:** Highlight promotions, certifications, degrees, and service milestones.

## Section 3 – Special Committees

The Staff Senate Chair has the authority to establish temporary committees for specific, time-bound purposes as needs arise. These committees are formed to address particular issues, projects, or goals that require focused attention.

Should a committee’s role prove to be ongoing or essential, it may be transitioned into a standing committee through an amendment to the Bylaws.

## Article VI – Amendments to the Bylaws

Any Staff Senate member is eligible to propose amendments to the Bylaws, initiating a review process for updates or revisions. All proposed amendments must be discussed and then approved

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through a two-thirds majority vote of the Staff Senate. Following Senate approval, all revisions must be reviewed and approved by the university President before becoming official.

## Certification

These bylaws were formally approved by the members of the Staff Senate through a majority vote on August 27, 2025, validating their adoption and commitment to the guidelines established.

## Change Log

[Date]      [Items updated]