

Constitution of the Divinity School Association of the University of Chicago

Approved: 1978 Amended: May 1979, June 1987, February 1997, and February 2009

Article I

The name of this body shall be the Divinity School Association of the University of Chicago, or simply, the Divinity School Association (henceforth, DSA).

Article II

The purpose of the DSA shall be:

- 1) To foster a spirit of true community in the Divinity School, and
- 2) To recognize that the specific interests, concerns, and/or needs of the Divinity School may change over time, and
- 3) To promote such activities as will clarify and address the current interests, concerns, and/or needs of the community.

Article III

All students registered in the Divinity School are voting members of the DSA. The DSA shall seek to consider the interests, concerns, and/or needs of all duly registered students in the Divinity School through regularly scheduled public meetings. At least one meeting shall be held each quarter. Additional public meetings may be called as needed. The time, place, and agenda of all public meetings shall be prominently publicized in Swift Hall one week in advance. A quorum of five (5) registered students is required for a meeting. DSA officers count towards said quorum.

At the instigation of any student, any decision of the DSA may be subject to a *preemptive ballot vote*. A preemptive ballot vote may be called at any time prior to the meeting at which a particular proposal is to be decided, or at any time during the meeting prior to actual voting. If a preemptive ballot vote is called, the meeting and any discussion continue on the measure, amendments may be added, compromises may be reached, but the final voting procedure does not take place. Instead, a ballot vote will be administered by the President of the DSA. A box will be placed in the student lounge, the Divinity School Coffee Shop, and the ministry suite with a poster that explains the proposal being voted on. It may be accompanied by position statements made for and against the proposal as well as the minutes of the meeting at which the proposal was debated, if such a meeting took place. These boxes will be available to students for at least one week (five business days). Students must include their name, student ID number, and signature on their ballot. The ballot vote will be decided on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast. The quorum for a ballot shall be twenty-five (25).

In extreme circumstances, any decision of the DSA may be recalled. A decision is recalled by a petition supported by the signatures of the majority of the members of the

DSA. In the case such a petition is produced, the decision is automatically revoked and no further voting is needed on it. However, until such a petition is completed the DSA should consider its legally enacted decision as binding and should not feel compelled to halt any action on its decision before the completed recall petition is presented.

Article IV

A-1) The DSA shall have officers to convene and chair its meetings, and to administer the various ongoing responsibilities of the DSA. The DSA shall also have committees serving in the delegated areas to carry out specific functions of the DSA.

The officers of the DSA shall be a President, Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. At the discretion of the DSA, the positions of the Vice-President and the Secretary may be combined. The duties of the officers shall be those regularly appertaining to the performance of such offices, as regulated by normal convention and by this Constitution and its by-laws. The committees of the DSA shall be established as needed, according to the requirements of the Association as voiced in its public meetings or perceived by the officers. Each committee shall have a chair to coordinate and guide the committee in the task assigned by the DSA.

B-1) A judicial board of three members and an alternate shall be appointed at the beginning of each year by the DSA President. This board shall consist of DSA members not already serving on the executive committee. Their appointment is subject to review at the first DSA meeting of the academic year. The President will seek out judicial board candidates who are not likely to experience conflict between their activity in the DSA and their service on the judicial board.

B-2) The judicial board shall be called into session on the occasion of a constitutional appeal of DSA actions. Any member of the DSA may bring an appeal, but the appellant must make his or her challenge to the judiciary board on a constitutional basis; that is he or she must argue that the action taken has violated the constitutional guidelines of the DSA.

B-3) To place an appeal, the appellant must contact a member of the judicial board within one week after the decision in question was made and inform that member of the nature of his or her appeal. If a *prima facie* case is made that the issue is in fact constitutional, that judicial board member shall contact the remaining board members as well as the DSA President. The judgment of only one judicial board member that a *prima facie* case has been made is sufficient to call the board into session. At this point the DSA action in question shall be suspended until resolution of the appeal.

B-4) The judicial board shall meet to consider the challenge as soon as possible, but no later than one week after the appeal has been made. In the event that a member is unable to attend the meeting within the time limit, the alternate will be asked to serve. The alternate will also be asked to serve in the event that judicial board member should need to recuse himself or herself for reasons of conflict of interest.

B-5) The judicial board will meet to hear the case in a meeting open to all DSA members. The appeal will be presented by the appellant alone. The DSA President will represent the DSA in response to the challenge. Judicial board members may call upon anyone at the meeting, if necessary, for clarification. The judicial board decision will be made by majority vote of its members. After the hearing, it will issue its decision the same day along with a brief statement of the grounds of the decision.

B-6) In the event of a ruling in favor of the appellant, the challenged action of the DSA shall be considered null and void.

Article V

The election of the officers of the DSA shall be held in the Spring quarter, between the seventh and ninth week. Any member of the DSA may volunteer to be a candidate, and need only inform the DSA officers of their intent to get on the ballot. A candidate shall be deemed duly elected if unopposed by the day of the election; otherwise, election will be determined by a simple majority of the votes cast. In a race with three or more candidates, if no one receives a simple majority, a run-off election will be held within one week between the two candidates with the highest vote totals from the first election.

Vacancies in office shall be filled as they occur by appointment of the President of the DSA.

To encourage candidacies and to express thanks for the year of service, the DSA will give each officer an honorarium of an amount to be determined periodically. An incomplete year of service will be eligible for an honorarium prorated to the length of time spent in office.

All officers will be subject to a two-year term limit. In the event of a partial term, the officer shall be allowed to run for election through the succeeding two election cycles.

Article VI

The duties and powers of the DSA – to enumerate more specifically Article II of this Constitution – shall be:

- 1) To sponsor or to plan and execute activities, both within the Divinity School and in relation to other institutions and organizations outside the Divinity School, which will foster greater insight into issues of intellectual, spiritual, and/or ethical concern.
- 2) To sponsor or to plan and execute such social activities as will, in the opinion of the DSA and/or its officers, promote the well-being of the community and its individual members.
- 3) To provide for elections and referenda within the Divinity School. These may be initiated in the Association's officers, or any five members of the Association in consultation with the officers.

- 4) To oversee the operation of the Divinity School Coffee Shop and the task of its committee.
- 5) To serve as the official vocal agency in any legal and business matters, as well as in student to administration dialogue.
- 6) To dispense monies from its treasury as it deems necessary and in accordance with its by-laws. Budgets for the various Divinity School student organizations, groups, programs, and academic areas shall be set at an Association open meeting early in the Fall quarter. All proposed budgets, except those of the academic areas shall be submitted to the DSA Treasurer at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the open meeting. Budgets for the academic areas shall have a guaranteed base level of funding, with additional funding provided in proportion to the number of students in that area. A certain amount of money shall also be set aside as an officer's discretionary fund, to be available for budget requests unforeseen at the Fall meeting and for the smooth administration of the DSA between meetings. Precise amounts for these various budgets shall be determined at this Fall meeting by the Association's thoughtful consideration and projected availability of funds. In preparing their budget proposal groups should keep in mind the following guidelines:
 - a. Plans for each group's yearly activities should be carefully thought out before the budget is submitted, so that financial projections are as accurate as possible.
 - b. No group may petition for more than 10% of the DSA's operating budget for the academic year. Groups should know before the open meeting where they may make cuts in their budget proposals, should their requests exceed this limit.
 - c. Activities open to or of interest or benefit to a larger segment of the Divinity School community shall generally be given funding priority over those activities aimed at a smaller segment of the community.

Budget allocations shall be for one year only; no unspent money will carry over to the next academic year.

Requests for funds not explicitly budgeted during the regular budget meeting may be funded by the DSA discretionary fund through normal DSA voting procedures if they are for less than an amount stipulated in the by-laws. If the request is for a sum in excess of the stipulated amount, the request must be supported by a petition of at least twenty-five signatures. The request, in the form of a proposal, must be posted for at least one-week prior to the DSA voting on whether to pass the proposal. During that one week, the meeting time at which the proposal will be voted on must also be posted. If the student or students who brought the proposal wish to change their proposal or compromise during the open meeting they do not need to bring a new petition or post their new proposal before voting.

- 7) To formulate by-laws which define its present task, organization, operation, and budget process in light of the DSA's Constitution.

Article VII

An amendment to the Constitution may be proposed in the open meetings of the DSA, and must be accompanied by a petition signed by fifteen students, who by signatures affirm that they have read and approved of the proposed amendment. The amendment shall be ratified by a two-thirds majority vote of the students present at the open meeting. Public announcement of the acceptance of the amendment shall be made within one week.

Article VIII

This Constitution as a whole may be rescinded by majority vote of the duly registered student body of the Divinity School and the approval of the Dean of Students. Ratification of any new Constitution shall occur in the same manner as outlined above for the ratification of amendments to the Constitution. This Constitution shall remain in effect until rescinded by the DSA.

1st draft: The Constitution Committee of the Divinity School Association: Dale Richesin, chair; Joe Columbo, Ann Braude, and Sue Ross.

2nd draft: Scott Appleby, Secretary-Treasurer of the Divinity School Association, 10/8/79.

Amended by Robert Sherman, Kay Lynn Northcutt, Gillian Ahlgren, and Elena Procaro. 6/2/87

Additional amendments in 1997 accepted from Ben Leff, Kazi Joshua, Ken Bigger, Deb Derylak, and Birtany Barber.

Additional amendments in 2009 accepted from Tristan Orozco, Sarah Hanson, Amanda Gutthrie, Jacquelyn Clark, and Anne Tedore.