

The Bylaws of the YSE Student Affairs Committee
Revised August 2020

Article I. Mission Statement, Purpose, and Initiatives

A. Mission Statement and Operating Principles

1. Mission: The Student Affairs Committee (SAC) is an elected body of active students at the Yale School of the Environment (YSE). SAC is dedicated to facilitating communication and understanding among the YSE student body, administration, and staff; advocating on behalf of the student body on pressing issues; supporting student interest groups and executing a limited number of official duties.
2. Principles: SAC is designed to be a cooperative, non-hierarchical, transparent, and nimble body. SAC will not discriminate based on age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, political orientation, or physical abilities, and will actively strive to combat discrimination in all its forms. SAC strives to include the interest of the YSE community including current students, administration, staff, alumni, and the broader Yale and New Haven communities.

B. Purpose

1. SAC has two official duties which take priority above all other activities:
 - a. To facilitate and support the operations of YSE Student Interest Groups (SIGs).
 - b. To act as a communication conduit among students, faculty, and administration.
2. These duties include facilitating at least one open, school-wide meeting per semester among the YSE administration (including the Dean), students, staff, and as appropriate, alumni. This meeting should be an open forum where any member of the YSE community is free to raise issues, express opinions, and seek redress on pressing issues. In recent years, this meeting has taken the form of a "Community Meeting" (formerly known as the "Town Hall") though SAC members may change the format of this meeting at their discretion.

C. Elective Initiatives

1. SAC may, and should, also pursue its own elective initiatives to enhance the YSE community. These initiatives can be proposed in SAC's annual budget request, submitted by the Treasurer in late fall of each year. SAC representatives are encouraged to choose and pursue at least one major elective initiative each semester, upon vote of a simple majority of SAC representatives.
2. SAC may adopt ad hoc initiatives as they arise to enhance the YSE community (for instance, forming student/faculty committees to address pressing issues, or encouraging administration to upgrade YSE facilities).
3. SAC's priority is to fund SIG activities but may elect upon majority vote to fund other YSE initiatives.
4. SAC may support other student, administration, and faculty initiatives as long as these initiatives do not compromise SAC's ability to fulfill its official duties.

Article II. Structure and Meeting Procedures

A. Structure of SAC

1. SAC shall, whenever possible, have ten YSE Master's representatives and one ex-officio member elected from YSE to serve on the GPSS.

- a. The Ex-officio member is welcome to either Academic Affairs & Student Life meetings, and strongly encouraged to come to All-SAC meetings.
 - i. Membership shall be offered to the GPSS senator from YSE with the most votes in the GPSS election. In the event that they decline membership, this offer will be presented to the GPSS senator from YSE with the second most votes.
2. Representatives from the masters programs shall serve three semesters, unless they are enrolled in a one-year master's program, in which case members shall serve two semester terms.
3. If a SAC Officer is unable to complete their term, their responsibilities must be covered, either by electing another SAC member to fill the role, or redistributing their responsibilities among the remaining SAC members.
4. In the event SAC is not able to fill at least ten seats, SAC shall operate by all other terms according to these bylaws with as few as nine representatives. If SAC has fewer than nine members, it must prioritize electing new members through a general election.
5. SAC works closely with a Student Affairs/Services staff member.
6. SAC shall be composed of two divisions: Academic Affairs ("AcAf") & Student Life ("StudLi"), hereafter referred to as 'divisions.'
 - a. Student Life is responsible for:
 - i. overseeing activities of the SIGs including organizing the SIG fair and SIG leadership training;
 - ii. overseeing budgetary decisions and issues for SAC;
 - iii. organizing events to support and contribute to the YSE community as a whole, including, but not limited to events for students, staff, and faculty; and
 - iv. organize one Staff Appreciation event each year or one other event that meets similar purpose.
 - b. Academic Affairs is responsible for:
 - i. choosing two SAC representatives to join the Master's Program Committee (MPC) for two-semester terms.
 - The delegates must have served on SAC for at least one semester prior to serving on the MPC, must be in good academic standing, with their membership subject to approval by the Dean;
 - ii. facilitating student input in the academic affairs of the school including, but not limited to faculty searches, visiting professors, course offerings and student feedback to faculty and School structures.
 - iii. stewarding and sharing information regarding the academic affairs of the school with the student body; and
 - iv. hosting events and activities to engage and solicit input from students, including Community Meetings with the Dean and at least one Student Forum per semester.
 - c. The Joint Body of SAC, composed of its full membership, shall be responsible for:
 - i. organizing and holding election for membership of SAC;

- ii. reviewing the organization bylaws at the first meeting of the Joint Body each semester to reflect current practices;
- iii. facilitating the execution of the separable responsibilities of each division;
- iv. ensuring that SAC representatives are actively soliciting input from the student body through SAC chats, office hours, or similar events; and
- v. providing regular updates across divisions.

B. Officers of SAC

1. The officers of SAC include a Chair of Academic Affairs, a Chair of Student Life, an Administrator of Academic Affairs, an Election Officer of Academic Affairs, an Administrator of Student Life, a Treasurer of Student Life, a Treasurer-elect of Student Life, and an Information Officer of Student Life.
2. The officers of SAC shall be nominated and approved by a majority vote of the relevant division.
3. Chair of Academic Affairs and Chair of Student Life:
 - a. Chairs must be SAC representatives in the third semester of their term. In the absence of a third semester SAC representative in a division, the Chair shall be chosen from the longest serving members of the division.
 - b. Chairs are responsible for:
 - i. arranging and presiding over regular meetings of their respective division;
 - ii. circulating the agenda for any regular meeting prior to the meeting; and
 - iii. reviewing the meeting minutes and assuring the execution of the respective tasks of their division.
 - c. The Chair of Academic Affairs and Chair of Student Life shall serve as . Co-Chairs of the Joint Body of SAC.
 - d. Selection of co-chairs is at the discretion of the division.
4. The Administrator of Academic Affairs and the Administrator of Student Life
 - a. The Administrator for each division shall attend all meetings of their division (or otherwise appoint a member of the division to perform their duties).
 - b. The Administrator for each division shall be responsible for recording and filing minutes of the proceedings of each meeting and coordinating the maintenance of records with the Information Officer of SAC.
 - c. One of the Administrators, or their designee, shall take minutes at the joint meetings of SAC.
5. Treasurer and Treasurer-elect
 - a. The Treasurer shall spend at least one semester as Treasurer-elect and at least one semester in office as Treasurer, unless circumstances require a Treasurer be appointed who has not served as Treasurer-elect. The Treasurer, with support from the Treasurer-elect, manages all aspects of SAC finances, keeps records of all SAC account transactions, circulates summaries of SAC financial activities to SAC representatives, prepares a summary of the year's activities for the Dean's office, and prepares a request for the upcoming year's funding. Management of SAC finances includes overseeing the SIG event funding requests and allocating funding to supporting organizations, such as the Dean's Office or EQUID (as of 2019). To administer this aspect of the budget, the Treasurer shall, within reason, support SIG leaders and SIG treasurers in any financial issues; track SIG

- non-speaker event spending; organize a SIG leadership training at the beginning of each semester to inform SIG leaders of funding protocols; disburse funding to SIGs; and help resolve SIG account discrepancies with the Business Office.
- b. The Treasurer-elect supports the Treasurer in aforementioned activities.
 - c. The Treasurer is responsible for all communications with the YSE Business Office.
6. Information Officer
 - a. The Information Officer shall maintain all website information and updated SIG leader email addresses.
 - b. The Information Officer shall be from StudLi.
 - c. The Information Officer shall maintain the structure and order of internal SAC files in an accessible manner.
 7. Election Officer
 - a. The Election Officer is responsible for organizing SAC elections.
 - b. The Election Officer shall be from AcAf.
- C. Voting
1. Each SAC representative is accorded one equal vote, with the exception of the ex-officio member of SAC from GPSS.
 2. Except where noted, all issues are to be decided upon simple majority vote of SAC or the relevant division. Where supermajority votes are indicated for the Joint Body, half of active SAC member votes plus two additional votes constitutes a supermajority.
 3. On pre-discussed issues, representatives may vote in absentia through email or written statement presented to a quorum.
 4. In the event of a tie on a vote within a division, the issue must be brought to the Joint Body of SAC for a vote. A tie in the Joint Body must be deliberated until there is a majority vote.
- D. SAC Meeting Procedures
1. Meeting protocol
 - a. SAC meetings shall be closed meetings, with only sitting SAC members participating.
 - b. SAC representatives may elect to open division meetings or Joint Body meetings to any or all other individuals, via a majority vote of the relevant group prior to the meeting.
 - c. Conversations that occur during all SAC meetings may be designated confidential and if so, shall not be discussed with individuals outside of SAC. SAC members are expected to uphold and respect this confidentiality in perpetuity.
 - d. Minutes of SAC meetings shall be circulated only to sitting SAC members and shall remain confidential, unless decided otherwise via a supermajority vote.
 - e. StudLi and AcAf may decide to include a member of the YSE administration in their division and Joint Body meetings. This may be for the entire meeting or a portion of the meeting, and may be for every meeting or only select meetings where a staff member's presence is helpful.
 2. Quorum

- a. The presence of five SAC representatives shall constitute a quorum, including at least two from each division. All SAC representatives shall be informed of the meeting in a timely fashion and efforts shall be made to include all SAC representatives.

Article III. Elections

A. General Elections

1. General elections shall be held within the first three weeks of the fall semester and prior to the beginning of spring semester.
2. Vacant seats in any division shall be filled by a popular vote of the student body.
 - a. Candidates must declare which division of SAC they are running for.
 - b. Members of each division are automatically granted membership to the Joint Body of SAC.
3. SAC shall not have the power to appoint new SAC members without a general election by the student body.
4. Election results, with the exception of the winner, do not need to be shared with the student body.
5. Results shall be tabulated by the Election Officer
 - a. Results shall be verified by a second member of SAC in either AcAf or StudLi.
 - b. After candidates accept their elected positions, election results shall be deleted.

B. Special Elections

1. In exceptional cases (e.g. resignation or departure of a SAC representative), a special election may be called by a vote of a simple majority of SAC representatives.
 - a. If called, special elections shall be held immediately.
2. Vacant seats shall be filled through a popular election by the student body.

Article IV. Recognition of SIGs

A. Recognition Requirements

1. SAC shall not approve, recognize, or fund SIGs that discriminate based on age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, political orientation, or physical abilities.
2. Membership in any SIG shall be open to the entire YSE community.
3. SIGs are encouraged to seek out funding from sources in addition to SAC.
4. Every SIG shall have at least two leaders, one of whom will assume the role of Treasurer.
5. To be recognized as a SIG, the organization shall submit a formal application which shall include:
 - a. Name of the SIG.
 - b. Names of two leaders.
 - c. Mission statement.
 - d. Demonstrated interest by the student body for the SIG.
 - e. List of planned activities.

6. SIGs shall address a student interest (academic or YSE related) that is not adequately covered by regularly funded school activities or existing SIGs. SIGs shall include an educational component within their mission and activities.
 7. SIGs may self-select into being identified as an “affinity group”, in addition to being a SIG. Affinity group status is intended for SIGs that support students with a shared identity or lived-experience that has been historically discriminated against and/or underrepresented.
 - a. Affinity groups may provide SAC-StudLi with a written reflection speaking to their group’s identity/lived-experience and history of discrimination and/or underrepresentation. SAC-StudLi shall retain affinity group’s written reflections for the reference and learning of future SAC representatives.
 - b. Affinity groups may consult with the EQUID student board when reflecting on their written reflection and are highly encouraged to do so by SAC to ensure that affinity groups are connected to all resources available to them during their time at YSE.
 - c. If SAC-StudLi believes a SIG for which affinity group status is not intended is trying to abuse the ability to self-select into affinity group status, SAC-StudLi may require the SIG to provide the reflection described in Article IV.7.a. SAC-StudLi may then call for a consultation with the EQUID student board, or other reasonable parties, to mediate a discussion with SAC-StudLi and the SIG in question on whether affinity group status is meant for said SIG.
- B. Failure to Abide by Purpose
8. Should a SIG misuse funds, SAC shall report the suspected misuse to YSE Administration, and funds may be suspended pending the outcome of an investigation.

Article V. SAC Financial Policies and Procedures

- A. SAC Budget
 1. At the beginning of each fall term, SAC Treasurer(s) shall request documentation of SAC’s funding for the academic year.
 2. SAC Budget Requests
 - a. The Director of Strategic Initiatives generally calls for a budget request from SAC in December or January. SAC, through the Assistant Dean of Student Services, then submits a budget request to the Dean’s office. SAC shall decide, through supermajority vote, on the budget request for the upcoming year.
 - b. SAC’s account balance carries over from the prior academic year.
 3. SAC Budget Expenditures
 - a. SAC shall fund its operations through its own annual budget.
 - b. SAC shall demonstrate integrity and fiscal responsibility in the use of student funds.
 - c. SAC may use additional funds for special projects that benefit the entire YSE community. Funding of these projects shall be made in accordance with the needs of all other Student Interest Groups. Should SAC need additional funding, it shall be solicited through the administration.
 4. Record Keeping
 - a. The Business Office sends monthly reports of SAC spending and account balances.

- b. All expenses shall be logged in the expense log spreadsheet, which is kept by the SAC Treasurer(s).
 - c. All expenses shall be reported to the Treasurer(s).
 - 5. Expense Procedures
 - a. All SAC and SIG expenses shall be processed according to current Business Office procedures. The SAC Treasurer(s) shall stay abreast of these procedures.
 - b. Only the SAC Treasurer(s) can authorize SIG reimbursement expenses through the use of individual SIG COA (Charge On Accounts).
- B. SIG Funding
 - 1. SIG funding is to support intellectual and professional activities that benefit the entire YSE community. SAC shall be committed to initiatives dedicated to supporting diversity, equity and inclusion within student groups at YSE (eg., anti-racism trainings).
 - 2. Restrictions/Limitations
 - a. SAC prioritizes funding events that are not otherwise covered through the Dean's office or other official YSE funding sources. SAC may co-finance these activities as the committee sees fit.
 - b. SAC does not fund sports teams or their equipment (e.g. jerseys).
 - 3. Funding Procedures
 - a. SIGs shall request funding on an Ad Hoc basis for events, supplies, and all other requirements. Funding requests are to draw upon proper funding avenues, based upon current funding structures. As of 2019, this funding structure distinguishes based upon events with and without speakers.
 - 4. Discretionary Funding
 - a. All SIGs shall receive \$150.00 in discretionary funds at the beginning of each semester.
 - b. New SIGs shall receive discretionary funding upon approval.
 - 5. Affinity Group Funding
 - a. Affinity groups are eligible to receive funding for two retreats a year (one per semester).
 - b. Affinity group funding for a retreat may be awarded to individuals whose identity/lived-experience would fall under the definition of SAC supported affinity groups support, but identity/lived-experience is so underrepresented at YSE that the individual is unable to form a SIG. Individuals are still encouraged to meet with EQUID to ensure that they are connected to all resources available to them during their time at YSE, and are highly encouraged to do so by SAC.
 - 6. Each academic year, SAC shall review SIG funding guidelines with special attention to funding restrictions, and adjust as necessary.

Article VI. Bylaws and Mission Statement Amendment

- A. SAC representatives may amend these bylaws and mission statement for any purpose with a supermajority vote.
 - 1. All SAC representatives shall have the opportunity to vote either in person or via email.