

# The Constitution of Wiess College

**Preamble:** The members of Wiess College establish this Constitution as the framework through which Wiess College shall complement the education offered by the University.

In support of the mission of Rice University, it is the purpose of Wiess College and of the government thereof, empowered and created by this Constitution, to foster democratic student self-government and provide for the intellectual, cultural, social, and professional development of the Wiess community.

## ARTICLE I: NAME AND MEMBERSHIP

**Section 1.** This organization shall be named Wiess College for the late Harry Carothers Wiess, whose generosity, with time, mind, and resources, greatly shaped the expansion of the University.

**Section 2.** College membership shall be determined from the entering undergraduate students of Rice University, by the Dean of Undergraduates in consultation with the Masters of the Colleges acting together, and, once determined, shall not be changed except by the Masters acting in concert.

## ARTICLE II: ASSOCIATES

**Section 1.** There shall be resident or nonresident associates who shall be faculty members of Rice University. The Master of Wiess College shall be the highest-ranking faculty associate of Wiess College.

**Section 2.** There may be any number of Community Associates not chosen from the faculty of Rice University, but on the basis of service to the College or community. The Associates shall advise and assist the College.

**Section 3.** The Master shall be recommended by a committee led by two chairmen selected by the President, with the President serving as ex officio. The chairmen shall select no fewer than six Wiess members as members of the committee. The President shall have veto power over membership selections. The Master shall then be appointed by the administration of Rice University. All other Associates shall be appointed by the Master acting upon the recommendation of the Associates Committee.

**Section 4.** The Resident Associates shall be recommended by a committee lead by two undergraduate chairmen selected by the President, with the President serving as ex officio. The chairmen shall select no fewer than six Wiess members as members of the committee. The

President shall have veto power over any membership selections. The Resident Associates shall then be appointed by the administration of Rice University.

## **ARTICLE III: THE CABINET**

**Section 1.** The legislative and executive powers shall be united in the Cabinet, chosen from the entire membership of Wiess College.

**Section 2.** The Cabinet shall administer the Rules and Bylaws as well as the administrative regulations that it shall deem necessary to fulfill its legislative and executive functions. The Cabinet shall also be empowered to amend and revise the Rules and Bylaws.

**Section 3.** The elected members, except the First-Year Representatives, shall be elected in the previous spring semester. The First-Year Representatives shall be elected within six weeks of the beginning of the fall semester. Class eligibility shall be determined by matriculation year, with special exception for transfers. The appointed members shall be selected by the President with the approval of Cabinet in the previous spring semester.

**Section 4.** The Cabinet shall consist of nineteen members:

A. There shall be a President of Wiess College who shall:

1. Be at the time of election of junior or senior standing, and must be a resident during the academic year following his/her election;
2. Call meetings of Cabinet and preside over meetings of the College and the Cabinet;
3. Appoint and dismiss the coordinators and chairmen of all committees with the approval of Cabinet; and
4. Represent Wiess College at College, Student Association, and University affairs.

B. There shall be an Internal Vice President who shall:

1. Assume the duties of the President upon the absence, resignation or impeachment of the President, or upon the inability of the President to continue his/her duties, and shall continue in that position until the President is replaced or able to resume his/her duties; and
2. Shall coordinate all the various committees and see to their smooth operation.

C. There shall be an External Vice President who shall:

1. Be of sophomore, junior or senior standing at the time of election;
2. Coordinate and foster programs of communication and cooperation with Weiss College Alumni, other Residential Colleges, Associates, and the surrounding community;
3. Be a chair of the Associates Committee and be tasked with heading the committee; and
4. Be a chair of the Outreach Committee and be tasked with heading the committee.

D. There shall be two Social Vice Presidents who shall:

1. Plan and direct the social activities of the College; and
2. Run jointly in the election the previous spring.

E. There shall be a Secretary who shall:

1. Keep and post the minutes and voting record of all College and Cabinet meetings; and
2. Post notices of meetings and proposed agenda.

F. There shall be two Treasurers who shall:

1. Manage the finances of the College;
2. Prepare for approval, by the Cabinet, a budget before the beginning of the academic year;
3. Inform cabinet of the financial condition of the college no less than once a month;
4. Run for a 2 year term;
5. Be confirmed by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote of the incoming Cabinet after being nominated by the incoming President for his/her second year of service;
6. Be elected separately in alternating years;

7. Serve as the head treasurer during his/her second year, responsible for training and mentoring the apprentice treasurer who shall be in their first year;

8. Must be resident during the academic year following his/her appointment as head treasurer; and

9. Solicit opinions from Wiess college members on modifications to the budget.

G. There shall be two Off-Campus Representatives who shall:

1. Be nonresidents during the academic year following their election; and

2. Coordinate activities and execute duties relating to nonresident members.

H. There shall be two Cultural Representatives who shall:

1. Plan and organize events that broaden the cultural experience of Wiess members; and

2. Run jointly in the election.

I. There shall be two Sophomore Representatives who shall:

1. Be sophomores during the academic year following their election;

2. Represent the sophomore class;

3. Organize freshmen service points to be measured in hours as decided by Cabinet; and

4. Be elected by members of the current sophomore class.

J. There shall be two First-Year Representatives who shall:

1. Be new students during the academic year following their election;

2. Represent the new student class; and

3. Be elected by members of the new student class within six weeks of the start of classes.

K. There shall be an At-Large Representative who shall:

1. Be nominated by the President and approved by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority vote of Cabinet;

2. Be of junior or senior standing at the time of his/her appointment; and
3. Create a monthly state of Wiess summary to be disseminated to the college.

L. There shall be a Capital Improvements Representative who shall:

1. Be nominated by the President and approved by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority vote of Cabinet;
2. Solicit and present to Cabinet capital improvements projects to benefit Wiess College; and
3. Explore use of all University funds available to the College.

M. There shall be an Academics and Career Chair who shall:

1. Be nominated by the President and approved by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority vote of Cabinet; and
2. Chair the Wiess Academics and Career Committee responsible for coordinating the academic and professional programming of Wiess College.

N. There shall be a Student Association Senator who shall:

1. Be elected from the body of College membership in an annual spring election;
2. Serve the Cabinet in a non-voting capacity; and
3. Represent the college at the Student Association Senate.

**Section 5.** No person shall be a Cabinet member who is on Rice University probation of any sort. Should a member of cabinet be put on probation, they shall tender their resignation to the President.

**Section 6.** There shall be a College Parliamentarian and Historian who shall serve the Cabinet in a non-voting capacity. These positions shall be filled in the same manner as the selection of the appointed Cabinet members.

**Section 7.** A quorum shall be a simple majority of the voting members of the Cabinet.

**Section 8.** The Cabinet shall meet at a regular time and place set by the President at least once a month.

**Section 9.** The Master and Resident Associates shall serve the Cabinet in a non-voting capacity. The Master shall have veto power over any action of the Cabinet.

**Section 10.** Attendance at all Cabinet meetings shall be mandatory for all voting members. More than three unexcused absences without a replacement are grounds for impeachment at the discretion of the Cabinet.

**Section 11:** All members of Cabinet are expected to update and pass on all relevant documents to their successor, act as a mentor during the changeover process, and be available as a resource after their term ends.

**Section 12:** If a Wiess member is considering studying abroad, or graduating early, they are encouraged to not run for an office if their time abroad will overlap with their time in office. If a Cabinet member chooses to go abroad or graduates after entering office, then prior to their departure, they shall submit a resignation to the President.

**Section 13:** No person may hold two positions on the Cabinet concurrently.

## **ARTICLE IV: THE WIESS COLLEGE COURT**

**Section 1.** The Wiess College Court shall be conducted as stipulated in the Rice University Code of Student Conduct. The Court's purpose shall be to ensure that the College is responsible for the self-discipline of its own members in College affairs.

**Section 2.** Positions on the Court:

### **A. Chief Justice**

1. The Associate Justices shall select from among themselves a Chief Justice by a simple majority. The previous chief justice shall serve as a tie breaker.
2. Seniority and past Court experience should be taken into account in the selection process.
3. Selection of the Chief Justice shall be completed within two weeks of the election of all Associate Justices.
4. In the case of a vacancy in the office of Chief Justice, the remaining Associate Justices shall vote among themselves to select a justice to fill the position.
5. The Chief Justice shall be a resident of Wiess College during the academic year following his/her election.

#### B. Associate Justices

1. The College shall select by vote five Associate Justices from the ballot in the spring election.
2. Candidates shall be sophomores, juniors, or seniors at the time of the election.
3. In the case of a vacancy, the election shall occur within ten days after the filing deadline.

#### C. Deputy Justices

1. The College shall select by vote three Deputy Justices from the ballot in the spring election.
2. Candidates shall be freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors at the time of the election.
3. One Deputy Justice position shall be reserved for a member from the new student class
4. In the case of a vacancy, the election shall occur within ten days after the filing deadline.
5. The Deputy Justices shall aid the Court in the performance of all Court proceedings. They shall be present at all Court proceedings, and shall have a vote in the decisions of the Court.
6. Each Deputy shall serve on a rotating basis as a Court Ombudsman. The Ombudsman shall be responsible for:
  - a. Indicating procedural errors to the Court as indicated in the University Code of Judicial Procedure;
  - b. Indicating to the accused if the deliberative process is defective and presenting any grounds for appeal to the accused;
  - c. Presenting the accused his/her rights in each case.

#### D. Each Justice may be on no form of probation.

**Section 3.** The Wiess College Court shall have original jurisdiction of any complaint of an alleged Class II violation of University Rules brought against any members of Wiess College. The college masters and the assistant dean may choose to remove or refer a matter before the College

Courts to the University Court or the Judicial Affairs Committee as appropriate. The Wiess College Court shall have power to investigate, to hold hearings and trials, to reprimand, and to produce decisions and sentences, as according to the University Code of Student Conduct. The Wiess College Court may also choose to refer matters otherwise within their authority to another college court, the College Master, University Court, or the Associate Dean. In the event of alleged misbehavior by one or more members of the Court, they will be tried by the remainder of the Court.

**Section 4.** The Chief Justice shall notify the accused of the verdict and penalty.

**Section 5.** A defendant may appeal his/her case to the Master. Grounds of appeal are those found in the University Code of Student Conduct.

**Section 6.** The Court shall establish The Wiess College Court Procedures and Code of Conduct in harmony with the University Code of Student Conduct. These laws may be amended by four assenting votes of the Court. Policies of the Rice University Code of Student Conduct supersede the policies of the Wiess College Court.

**Section 7.** An Associate or Chief Justice of the Court shall be present at all College and Cabinet meetings.

**Section 8.** The Resident Associates shall serve as ex-officio members to the Wiess College Court.

## **ARTICLE V: THE FELLOWS**

**Section 1.** The Fellows' responsibility shall be to advise and assist the new students throughout the year. Within the framework established by Cabinet, the Fellows shall be responsible for the new students' orientation and assimilation within the College.

**Section 2.** There shall also be Co-Fellows (currently enrolled members of another residential college of Rice University) who shall work with the Fellows during new student orientation and throughout the year in new student advising.

**Section 3.** The Fellows shall be selected by a method determined by the current, non-returning Fellows. The Co-Fellows shall be selected by a method determined by the new Fellows. If an individual has a conflict of interest, he/she shall recuse themselves from the process.

**Section 4.** The Fellows shall be led by one or more Head Fellows, who shall be sophomores or juniors at the time of selection.

## **ARTICLE VI: THE COMMITTEES**



**Section 1.** There shall be a number of College committees charged with specific responsibilities to the Cabinet and the College membership.

**Section 2.** The Standing Committees shall be chaired by Cabinet members and shall consist of the following:

A. Associates committee

1. The associates committee shall consist of three chairmen, one of whom is the External Vice President, and no less than four other Wiess college members as members of the committee. These members shall be appointed by the chairs; and
2. The duties of the associates committee are to maintain relationships with the associates and to schedule events that encourage networking between Wiess college members and Wiess Associates.

B. Elections Committee

1. The Elections committee shall consist of two chairman, both of whom shall be appointed by the President in a manner consistent with the appointment of members of Cabinet. Should the committee need additional assistance, the chairs may appoint no more than three other members to assist in the administration of elections; and
2. The duties of the Elections committee are to publicize, conduct, and determine the outcome of all elections requiring a vote of the membership of Wiess College.

## **ARTICLE VII: ELECTIONS**

**Section 1.** Elections of members of the Wiess College Cabinet shall be by a simple majority according to the procedure set forth in the College Bylaws.

**Section 2.** In the event that an office of Cabinet, besides the President, becomes vacant, the President shall make a temporary appointment approved by a simple majority of Cabinet for the remainder of the term.

**Section 3.** A justice of the College Court may not be elected or appointed a Cabinet member during his/her tenure in office as a voting member of the Court.

## **ARTICLE VIII: THE TREASURY**

The Treasury of the College shall consist of an allotment from the university, fines imposed by the Court at the discretion of the Court, and any other funds derived by Cabinet-approved methods not constituting involuntary collection from the members of the College.

## **ARTICLE IX: IMPEACHMENT**

**Section 1.** Impeachment of any Cabinet or Court member may only be on the grounds of malfeasance, partiality, exceeding authority, or failure to meet vested responsibilities.

**Section 2.** Impeachment, except in the case of the President, shall be by a signed accusation from a member of the Cabinet or Court submitted to the President. In the case of the President, the signed accusation shall be submitted to the elected members of the Cabinet. Cabinet shall convict only by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority in a closed session.

**Section 3.** If an individual holds two or more positions within the College, his/her impeachment or conviction in one of those offices shall not affect his/her other positions.

**Section 4:** If an individual has a conflict of interest, he/she shall recuse themselves from the process.

## **ARTICLE X: RECALL AND REFERENDUM**

**Section 1.** A referendum on any non-disciplinary act of the Cabinet or the Court, or to recall any Cabinet or Court member, may be obtained on the written petition of at least one quarter of the total College membership.

**Section 2.** A positive vote of  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority of those voting in the recall shall require that the position be vacated and filled again by the usual procedure.

**Section 3.** If the Court or the Cabinet action is not sustained by the simple majority of the College membership voting in the referendum action, the decision supported by the referendum shall be binding on the Court or Cabinet.

**Section 4.** A referendum will be arranged and completed by the Elections Committee within seven days of receipt of the petition from one quarter of the College.

## **ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS**

**Section 1.** Amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, or Rules may be proposed by:

A. A Cabinet member; or

B. A College member through an initiative petition authored by any College member and having the signatures of at least ten percent of the College membership.

**Section 2.** An initiative petition must be presented to the College President, who will, along with the author of the petition, draft a ballot detailing the proposed change and present said ballot to the elections chairman within one week of the receipt of the petition.

**Section 3.** Amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, or Rules that change college operating policy must be posted for at least one week prior to the General College vote and must contain the Rule, Bylaw, or section of the Constitution to be amended, as well as the text of any proposed change.

**Section 4.** The elections chairman will verify the signatures and conduct a poll of College members in the usual fashion within one week of his/her receipt of the ballot from the President.

**Section 5.** A proposed change to the Constitution, Bylaws, or Rules must be approved by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote of the Cabinet. Any proposed changes to the Constitution must then be approved by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote of the College, in which at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the College participates. A simple majority of the College members voting is required in the case of a Rules or Bylaw change.

**Section 6.** Amendments shall be added to the end of the unchanged Constitution until such time as there are ten amendments attached, at which time the Cabinet shall supervise the rewriting of the Constitution. The Cabinet may supervise a rewriting of the Constitution before the accumulation of ten amendments if it deems such a rewriting necessary. The rewritten Constitution must be approved by at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority of the College members who vote in a general election.

*Last Amended January 26th, 2016*

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