

# Rochester Institute of Technology Young Democratic Socialists of America

## CONSTITUTION

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## **ARTICLE I. NAME AND AFFILIATION**

1. The name of the organization shall be Rochester Institute of Technology Young Democratic Socialists of America, hereafter referred to as “the Chapter ”
2. The Chapter shall be the Rochester Institute of Technology chapter of Young Democratic Socialists of America, the youth wing of Democratic Socialists of America

## **ARTICLE II. PURPOSE AND MISSION STATEMENT**

RIT YDSA, the Chapter, aims to articulate, espouse, and defend ideas relating to the liberation of all people from capitalism via the pursuit of economic democracy through democratic socialism. Furthermore, the Chapter recognizes that true emancipation for all people cannot occur solely through economic liberation; all forms of domination — whether of boss over worker, man over woman and the gender non-conforming, whites over people of color, states over subjects, abled over disabled, developed over developing, etc — must be challenged and replaced with institutions reflecting equality, cooperation, love, and mutual respect.

In short, the Chapter views freedom, solidarity, and democracy as necessities for human liberation. Freedom meaning the positive capacity for self-determination by individuals and communities. Solidarity meaning the recognition that all oppressed people, whether economically exploited or politically marginalized, share a common struggle toward attaining a free and just society. Democracy meaning collective decision-making, taking the form of social relations amongst equal individuals and NOT institutions or elections, free from domination and coercion. Further, freedom, solidarity, and democracy must extend into all aspects of life in order to achieve a society where all people may truly stake a claim of living a free and just life.

The Chapter also holds it to be true that socialist organizations now must do their best to reflect and prefigure the societies in which we wish to live. As such, socialist organizations must be in flux, experimenting with just and equitable alternatives to existing institutions.

In pursuit of these ends, the Chapter shall hold the following to be its mission:

1. Organize and educate students and other youth around our vision of democratic socialism primarily, but not entirely, through meetings, events, advocacy, and mutual aid initiatives;
2. Advocate and remain attentive to issues that face RIT students in particular as well as college students in general;
3. Defend and articulate the viewpoint that freedom and human liberation is impossible under capitalism and without a strong movement for social justice for all people;
4. Pursue the extension of freedom, solidarity, and democracy into all aspects of life, both on-campus and off-campus.

## **ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION 1. Eligibility**

Membership in the organization shall be open to any member of the campus community, including students, alumni, faculty, and staff, at Rochester Institute of Technology, dues-paying or non dues-paying.

Furthermore, eligibility for membership or appointed or elected student officer positions in this organization may not be limited on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, physical or mental handicap, ancestry, or medical condition.

### **SECTION 2. Required Voting Restrictions**

Any and all decisions made by the Chapter shall take into account only the votes of student members of the Chapter, per RIT Club guidelines.

### **SECTION 3. Voting Membership**

Since members may become inactive, meeting quorum for votes may become difficult over time as the number of members on paper increases. As such, those members who wish to ensure their participation in votes shall be referred to as the “voting membership.” The size of the voting membership shall be determined every semester via a membership survey which records, at a minimum, the following:

1. Member name;
2. Whether or not the member plans to be an active participant in meetings;
3. Whether or not the member wants to be part of the voting membership.

All members may participate in votes, whether or not they are part of the voting membership. However, only voting membership will be taken into account when determining voting thresholds and quorum as detailed in Article VIII.

The Chapter membership shall determine the medium, format, and administration of the survey. The resulting document shall be considered an addendum to the constitution, hereby the Membership Survey Addendum, subject to the same amendment process as the constitution. The Membership Survey Addendum must also be renewed whenever the constitution is renewed.

## **ARTICLE IV. LEADERSHIP & OFFICERS**

To reflect the values of the Chapter espoused in Article II, the Chapter would prefer not to establish any officerships or leadership hierarchies in this document. However two positions must be formalized in order to meet the requirements of both parent organizations (RIT and national YDSA).

1. There shall be exactly 1 “Institutional Relations Delegate” whose duties are:
  - (a) To maintain communications and relations with national YDSA representatives;
  - (b) To maintain communications and relations with university representatives, including RIT employees/representatives and RIT Student Government representatives;
  - (c) To ensure and and all correspondence with national YDSA, RIT, or RIT Student Government is auditable by the entire Chapter membership;
  - (d) To distribute any and all correspondence with national YDSA, RIT, or RIT Student Government that is relevant to the entire organization;
  - (e) To act as “President” for the sake of completing any club-related forms.
2. There shall be exactly 1 “Finance Coordinator” whose duties are:
  - (a) To manage the funds of the Chapter;
  - (b) To sign off on any forms related to finances on behalf of the organization;
  - (c) To advise the membership body on the financial status of the organization on a monthly basis at minimum;
  - (d) To facilitate all financial transactions that have membership approval;
  - (e) To ensure financial certification of the Institutional Relations Delegate and self;
  - (f) To act as “Treasurer” for the sake of completing any forms for RIT.

Both these positions will be treated as the “Executive Board” and “Officers” of the organization for the sake of compatibility with institutional requirements. However, these positions are meant to be fully subordinated to, and serve at the pleasure of, the membership and are recallable at any time as defined in Article VIII.

For all other responsibilities necessary to the functioning of the Chapter, any member of the Chapter shall take on a task-oriented role to complete specific goals. Such roles may arise spontaneously, are temporary in nature, and are taken on with the mutual consent and for the mutual benefit of the membership of the Chapter.

## **ARTICLE V. FUNDING**

1. The organization shall be funded through the following means: fundraisers, chapter dues, contributions and scholarships from Democratic Socialists of America, fundraisers, and any approved financial assistance granted by the university.
2. All money transactions must be approved by the Finance Coordinator.
3. The Finance Coordinator shall maintain a record of all financial transactions and accounts. These records shall be made available at any time by the request of any YDSA national officer and will be reported regularly to the membership of the Chapter.

## **ARTICLE VI. MEETINGS**

1. Regular meetings of the organization shall be held at least weekly. The day of the week and time will be determined at the beginning of every semester.
2. Agendas for meetings shall be prepared by a designated member of the Chapter, the “Facilitator”, and will be made public before the meeting they are facilitating.
3. A quorum for any meeting shall be determined as described in Article VIII Section (1).

## **ARTICLE VII. POWERS**

1. The Chapter may create committees and working groups if deemed necessary by the membership. The formation of such committees shall be approved per processes described in Article VIII.
2. The Chapter shall operate as a non-profit association and no profits may accrue to any individual within the organization.
3. All information regarding quorum and voting membership must be made publicly available to the membership.
4. Any contradictions between this Article and some other Article shall be resolved in favor of the other Article.

## **ARTICLE VIII. DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES**

The Chapter may use any of the following decision-making procedures for decisions. The reasons for choosing one over another may depend on impact, affected members, non-triviality, and communication medium, i.e. in-person meeting decisions vs. online (“asynchronous”) decisions.

Since the Chapter engages in participatory democracy it may not always be possible to get the opinions of all members. In a case where a decision is passed, anyone uninvolved in decision-making may be taken as not willing to be involved in implementation. If a member does not think a decision should have passed and was not involved in decision-making then they may re-open discussion as described in Section (4).

### **SECTION 1. Quorum**

Quorum is the minimum number of people necessary to make legitimate decisions.

All decisions will require a quorum of 3/5 total voting membership, rounding up. Any time the membership moves to a voting procedure, a higher quorum may be agreed upon but no quorum requirement may be less than 3/5 total voting membership. Any decision made without meeting quorum shall be considered invalid and illegitimate.

## **SECTION 2. Voting Thresholds**

The following thresholds will apply to all votes:

1. Simple majority thresholds (50% + 1 assenting) shall apply to:
  - (a) Motions to reopen debate on a previous decision
2. Asynchronous votes and motions require 3/4 assenting, except where otherwise stated
3. In meetings, when consensus is abandoned:
  - (a) 3/5 assenting applies to procedural motions (motion to end discussion, table, etc)
  - (b) 2/3 assenting applies to votes after a discussion period
  - (c) 4/5 assenting applies to votes without discussion

## **SECTION 3. Voting Procedure**

1. For asynchronous (outside of meeting) voting:
  - (a) A proposal to hold a vote must be made and seconded in an official RIT YDSA communications channel with a second
  - (b) A 48-hour discussion period begins in which the proposal may be debated
    - i. The proposal may be amended at the discretion of the proposing member
    - ii. Alternative proposals can be made via a motion with a second
    - iii. Sponsors may amend or withdraw their proposals at their discretion
  - (c) At the conclusion of the discussion period, a 48-hour voting period begins
    - i. If there are multiple proposals a ranked choice vote is taken amongst all proposals and a “no action” option
    - ii. Otherwise, an “Accept”, “Reject”, and “Abstain” vote is taken
  - (d) Any member may motion, with a seconding member to reduce a discussion and/or voting period
    - i. If any member objects to the reduced voting period, a procedural motion with a reduced voting period of 12-hours begins to determine whether or not the original motion may proceed.
  - (e) Any member may motion, with a seconding member, to extend a discussion and/or voting period
    - i. Members who object to extending time may motion to reduce time
2. Decisions can be made at meetings as well under the following conditions:
  - (a) Quorum is met
  - (b) A procedural motion to enter discussion of a proposal or to vote on a proposal without discussion is seconded and passes
  - (c) In-person decisions are made via consensus per the Consensus Addendum
  - (d) Any decisions made at meetings are communicated to the whole membership
  - (e) Members who do not agree with the decision have reasonable ability and notice to oppose any decisions per Section (4)

## **SECTION 4. Opposing a Decision**

*Any* member may motion to reopen debate on a previous decision with a seconding member. A vote will then be held with the standard voting period, if asynchronous, and threshold. If the vote passes, the decision is not invalidated but the accepted proposal may be further amended, dropped entirely and undone, or remain unchanged.

The intent of this option is just to make sure all concerns are heard, not to prevent implementation of an accepted decision.

## **SECTION 5. Consensus**

The membership of the Chapter shall collectively determine an appropriate consensus process to use when using consensus to make caucus-wide decisions. This process shall be detailed in an addendum to the constitution, hereby the Consensus Addendum, which will detail:

1. Consensus procedure for in-person decision-making;
2. Consensus procedure for decision-making using online media;
3. Other details deemed important by members of the Chapter.

The Consensus Addendum shall be renewed whenever the Chapter constitution is renewed and is subject to the same amendment process as the constitution.

## **SECTION 6. Recall**

Any member of the Chapter can begin the process of recalling someone in a position recognized by the Chapter via a petition including:

1. Charges against the member to be recalled;
2. Signatories tallying up to at least 2/5 voting membership.

Once the petition is presented to the membership, voting then begins per asynchronous procedures defined under Section (3).

# **ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS**

## **SECTION 1. Amendment Process**

*Any* member may propose an amendment to the bylaws from the floor during meetings or asynchronously. The proposal must be seconded by another member.

Once seconded, a consensus process will begin to discuss, make edits, and make alternative proposals. During this period multiple competing amendments may arise that may lead to a preference vote if consensus is not achieved which must include an option to make no changes and must use Single Transferable Vote.

If consensus cannot be reached and there are no alternative proposals then the motion to amend will be put to a vote per Article VIII.

The discussion period for an amendment must be no shorter than a week.

## **SECTION 2. Proposal Requirements**

For proposals to be considered, they should include the proposed modifications, a reference to the original text being modified, and a short description describing rationale and intent behind the amendment.

## **ARTICLE X. SAFE SPACE**

1. This organization shall aim to be a safe space for a person of any oppressed group.
2. Members who repeatedly engage in micro-aggressions or outright hostility towards other members due to their association with an oppressed group are subject to temporary ban or expulsion from in-person meetings at the discretion of the Facilitator and a simple majority of present members excluding those involved in said offence, after which the process will move through official RIT channels if necessary. Meeting minutes must include those in favor, those against.
3. Members should keep an open mind and be sensitive towards other members when confronted on behaviors which, either consciously or unconsciously, make others uncomfortable for any reason.

## **ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION CLAUSE**

1. Should the organization be dissolved due to lack of interest or other reasons, it is the responsibility of the current Institutional Relations Delegate to notify the appropriate RIT representative or office that the Chapter disbanded and the rationale for dissolution. The Finance Coordinator is responsible for ensuring all fundraising dollars go to Democratic Socialists of America and for notifying the Rochester Institute of Technology Center for Campus Life that any allocated funding left will not be used.



## **Revisions**

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