

Constitution of the School of Public Health Student Council
Preamble

We, the students of the School of Public Health Program at the State University of New York Downstate Health Sciences University (SUNY Downstate), do hereby establish the School of Public Health Student Council (the SPH Council) as set forth under this Constitution. The Constitution of the SPH Student Council shall take effect upon ratification by a majority of voting members present, and its certification by the campus (FSA President). All authority and power granted under this Constitution, and all responsibilities delegated to the organization by the administration of SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, shall be vested in the SPH Student Council.

Article I. Name

The name of the organization shall be the School of Public Health Student Council henceforth referred to as the SPH Council.

Article II. Purpose

The SPH Council is a forum for enhancing the education of SPH students as well as the community at large. Its goals are to create a supportive learning environment in which SPH students can benefit from one another's expertise, continue learning through ongoing educational lectures and functions, and give back to the community surrounding SUNY Downstate.

1. The mission is to improve the cohesiveness of the SPH student body and to serve as a voice for the student body;
2. To represent and advocate for the interests of SPH students to the Director of the SPH Program, the faculty of the SPH Program and any others within SUNY Downstate whose actions or positions may affect the interests of SPH students;
3. To promote the visibility of the SPH Program at SUNY Downstate and within the community;
4. To promote the sharing of current public health information, to encourage professional development, and to promote academic endeavors related to public health; and
5. To encourage and facilitate social activities of the membership, including the requirements of budgeting and managing the SPH Student Activity Fee.

Article III. Student Body Membership, Voting Privileges

Section 1: All students currently enrolled in the SUNY Downstate School of Public Health Program, referred to as SPH, are members. The SPH Membership and its Council does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, personal appearance, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, or on the basis of rights secured by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Section 2: Voting Representatives: A minimum seven (7) member representative voting student council shall be established and annually elected by the Membership. The number of voting representatives may be increased or decreased through the applicable amendment process, provided that the number of voting representatives shall always

be an odd number to prevent ties on voting matters. Those members, hereafter referred to as “voting members”, meeting all requirements of membership as set forth in Article II shall be granted voting privileges to elect the representatives on the SPH Student Council. Members shall have the right to vote, hold office and be elected to or appointed to committees. The Membership shall elect voting members to serve on the SPH Student Council for 1-year terms of office. All other members of the SPH Council are encouraged to attend SPH Council meetings, but shall be participants in a non-voting capacity.

- A. Nominations: Nominees must be eligible members of the student body. The incumbent SPH Council Officers shall announce and disseminate to the SPH student body a call for nominations in March of each year. The Student Body shall be advised of the procedure for nominating candidates. Methods of communication are to include, but not limited to, class announcements, notices on bulletin boards, and electronic mail system. Nominations shall be accepted from any eligible SPH student and can be self-nominated or nominated by any fellow student(s). Each individual nominee shall retain the right to decline their nomination before their name is placed on the election ballot. All resulting nominees shall have their names placed on the election ballot.
- B. Election Process. All elections shall be conducted on the SUNY Downstate campus or using an electronic interface sanctioned by the Election Committee. Each student of the Membership shall be permitted to cast one vote each for up to the total number of representatives to be elected. Results of elections of the Representatives shall be posted to the Student Body no later than one (1) week after the date of elections. Voting shall take place during the first 3 weeks of April of each year.
- C. Election Committee: The incumbent SPH Council Officers shall serve as the Election Committee supervising the nomination process, ballot process, as well as establishing any additional procedures or clarifications as needed during each Spring semester. The Student Council retains the right to establish a separate Election Committee comprised of Membership if and when desired.
- D. Term of Office: The SPH Student Council representatives shall have a term of one year, beginning on June 1st of each year and continuing through May 31st of the following year. There is no limitation on the number of terms of Office to which a representative can be elected.
- E. Vacancies: Vacancies occur when an officer or representative resigns, or are no longer able or eligible to serve (student status), or are removed.
 - a. If the President resigns, is recalled, or is no longer eligible or able to serve, the Vice President shall immediately fill the office.
 - b. If the office of the Vice President becomes vacant, a special election shall be held at the next regular Council meeting to replace that officer. A special meeting may be called for this purpose, if desired.
 - c. If the office of the Secretary becomes vacant, a special election shall be held at the next regular Council meeting to replace that officer. A special meeting may be called for this purpose, if desired.
 - d. If the office of the Treasurer becomes vacant, a special election shall be held at the next regular Council meeting to replace that officer. A special meeting may be called for this purpose, if desired.
 - e. If there is a vacancy in any of the remaining elected representatives at large on the Council, the remaining Council members shall conduct an election at the next regular Council meeting to replace that representative. At the Council’s option, a special Council meeting may be called, or a special election may be conducted by the Student Body for this purpose, if desired.

F. Proxies: Voting members unable to attend a specific meeting may designate another voting member as their proxy for attendance and voting purposes. Said proxy must be issued to the Secretary in writing or via email prior to the meeting, and must specify the meeting date and name of the voting member being designated.

G. Attendance and Removal of Voting Members:

Each voting member of SPH Council is expected to attend in person or by proxy each SPH Council meeting. Any SPH Student Council officer or representative in violation of the organization's purpose or Constitution, or has missed 2 consecutive meetings without proxy, may be removed from office by the following process:

- a. A written request detailing a justification/ basis must be signed by at least three members of the Student Body and delivered to all Council representatives.
- b. Written notification of the request must be provided to the Council officer or representative, requesting his/her presence at the next meeting prepared to speak on his/her own behalf. The matters in question shall be fully discussed, appropriately investigated to the extent possible and practical by the Student Council prior to a vote being conducted.
- c. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Council is necessary to remove the officer.

H. Staff/Faculty Advisor: A staff/faculty advisor shall be elected by a majority vote of eligible voting members of the SPH Council who are present at the election meeting either in person or by absentee ballot. The advisor shall serve for a minimum of 2 years until the advisor resigns, or the Council elects a new advisor, whichever comes first. The roles and duties of the advisor include attending meetings, provide general guidance to the Council, assist in the annual transition of Officers, and maintain the archives of the organization. Candidates for Advisor must be willing to serve in this capacity. The staff/ faculty advisor shall be an ex officio member without voting power.

I. Meetings: Regular meetings of the Council shall be held at least quarterly at a date and time selected by the SPH Council, and shall be open to the Membership. The date, time and location shall be scheduled in advance and announced to the Membership. The SPH Student Lounge is available as a location for meetings. Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of the President as needed.

- a. Each meeting of the SPH Student Council shall be announced by email to all membership (all SPH students) no less than seven (7) calendar days in advance of the meeting date. All agenda items must be submitted to the President no less than 5 calendar days prior to each meeting. The President shall disseminate the agenda to all SPH students no less than 3 calendar days prior to the meeting. Additionally, meeting agendas shall be posted to the SPH Student Council web-based communication tool (i.e., the Prime site).
- b. A meeting shall proceed when a quorum of Fifty percent (50%) of the SPH Student Council members are present.
- c. At the beginning of each meeting, the Secretary shall distribute the minutes of the previous meeting. Any issues with the minutes shall be added to that meeting's agenda. Sign in sheets shall be available at every meeting and function in order to secure active participation. The Secretary shall keep these records.
- d. Any decision duly approved at a meeting cannot be overturned at a subsequent meeting unless the intent to overturn is submitted to the President as an agenda item for that meeting in accordance with procedures for submitting agenda items. Notwithstanding the amendment requirements of Article VIII,

the quorum to overturn a decision must be two thirds greater than the quorum that was present for its initial passing.

Article IV. Officers and Voting Members Duties

Section 1: Annual Organizational Meeting: An organizational meeting of the student council representatives shall be held as soon as practical but no later than one week following each annual Spring Council election.

- A. **Officer Elections:** Immediately following the election of all voting members of the SPH Council, an Annual Organizational meeting shall be held with the standing voting members of the current school year and the newly elected voting members shall be scheduled during the last week of April in order to nominate and elect from amongst themselves, the Officers of the SPH Council. The former incumbent President shall serve as Chairperson at this organizational meeting. As members newly elected by the general SPH student body do not have voting power until June 1st, newly elected members shall have the right to be nominated for officer positions, but shall not have voting rights.
- B. **Officer Nominations:** The Chairperson shall take nominations from the floor for each office listed and in the sequential order listed in Article III section B. The nomination process must be closed and the movement seconded. The nominated parties must be present. Unless unanimously waived by the 7 (seven) representatives present, all voting shall be done by secret ballot to be collected and tabulated by the Faculty/Staff Advisor.
- C. The remaining student representatives that are not elected to a specific office serve as members-at-large on the Student Council.

Section 2: There shall be four elected SPH Council Officers as President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The three remaining representatives serve as Members-at-large.

A. **Officer Responsibilities**

a. The **President** shall:

- i. Preside at all meetings of the SPH Council and set the Agenda.
- ii. Maintain the power to appoint, initiate, terminate and accept as otherwise provided, all committee chairpersons.
- iii. Vote only in the event of a tie.
- iv. Act as the official external representative of the SPH Council and shall communicate the interests, concerns, and activities of the membership to the SPH Administration and the campus community.

b. The **Vice President** shall:

- i. Assume all of the duties of the President in his/her absence.
- ii. Serve as an ex officio member of all committees of the SPH Council.
- iii. Assist the President, as required.

- c. The **Secretary** shall:
 - i. Take minutes at all meetings and keep records of all proceedings of the SPH Council, consistent with the Downstate Guidelines on SAF Meeting Minutes.
 - ii. Maintain current membership, mailing, email and telephone lists and distribute announcements, notes, meeting notices and minutes to the members.
 - iii. Submit minutes, monthly activity reports, as required by SUNY Downstate Student Organization Guidelines.
 - iv. Develop an annual summary of the SPH Council's activities and accomplishments for inclusion in the SPH Council's history and archives.
- d. The **Treasurer** shall:
 - i. Maintain all financial records of the SPH Council.
 - ii. Timely prepare all budgets, budget requests and sign all payment requests for SPH Council funds, as described further in Article VI.B.4.
 - iii. Prepare financial reports for the SPH Council Meetings, and coordinate any deposits in the name of SPH Council.
 - iv. Prepare and present an annual financial report to the officers and members of SPH Council.

Article V. Committees

Section 1: SPH Council Committees

- A. Committee membership is open to the Membership (all SPH students).
- B. The Council may establish any committee it deems necessary by a majority vote of the Council, specifying the scope, mission, size, and chair of the desired committee.
- C. Standing Committees intended to permanently continue for a mission or purpose may be established by the Council.
- D. If not specified in the Council's formation of a committee, the Committee chair may be appointed by the President of SPH Council.

Section 2: Faculty led Committees: There are 6 Faculty led Committees and Subcommittees within the School of Public Health and the larger SUNY Downstate campus that require student representation on their roster. Below are the current committees and their requirements for student representation:

- A. Educational Policy & Curriculum Subcommittee: one (1) MPH or MD/MPH student and one (1) DrPH student
- B. Student Admissions, Academic Standards and Faculty-Student Relations Subcommittee: one (1) MPH, MD/MPH, or DrPH student
- C. Technology Fee Fund Committee: one (1) MPH, MD/MPH, or DrPH student
- D. Committee on Admissions: one (1) MPH, MD/MPH, or DrPH student
- E. Committee on Outcomes, Evaluation, and Assessment: one (1) MPH, MD/MPH, or DrPH student
- F. Marketing Task Force: one (1) MPH, MD/MPH, or DrPH

New committees may be established as faculty see fit. Student representatives who meet the requirements of the respective committees shall be selected from voting members of the student council on a volunteer basis. Members of student council are allowed to serve on up to two (2) faculty led committees. If all current voting

members of SPH Council are represented on two (2) committees, or there are no voting members available to stand on remaining committees, then, non-voting members of the council who attend meeting on a regular basis may be appointed to up to two (2) committees each. If then all current regularly attending non-voting members of SPH council are represented on two (2) committees, or there are no regularly attending non-voting members available to stand on remaining committees, then students of the general SPH student body may be appointed to those positions. Student representatives of faculty led committees are required to submit a written or verbal report on a monthly basis to the SPH Council secretary. These reports shall be reviewed during each SPH Council meeting. The student representative shall also be required to share feedback from SPH Council to the faculty led committee.

Article VI. Finances

Section 1: The SPH Council is responsible to budget and oversee the Student Activity Fee (SAF) paid by its membership.

A. **Governing Guidelines:** All income and expenses shall be governed by the requirements of the SUNY Board of Trustee Guidelines on Student Activity Fees (SAF) and the policies of the Faculty Student Association of Downstate Medical Center, Inc. (FSA).

B. **Annual SAF Budget:** An annual budget for all anticipated income and expenses shall be prepared by the Treasurer and presented for approval by the SPH Council in April of each year. This approved budget shall then be submitted to FSA for certification. All expenditures of funds shall be consistent with the certified budget and disbursement procedures of the FSA.

- a. Upon the campus certification of the Budget, all fees shall be collected by the SUNY Downstate Bursar.
- b. All funds shall be deposited into a designated account(s) in the FSA.
- c. All disbursements shall follow the established FSA policies and procedures.
- d. All payments forms shall be signed by the Treasurer. However, in the absence or unavailability of the Treasurer, any other Council officer may sign a payment form but must provide a copy of the payment form they signed to the Treasurer within five days.

C. **SAF Rate:** The initial SAF rate to be paid by all enrolled students in the SPH program upon the ratification of this Constitution shall be \$10 per semester for each of the fall, spring, and summer semesters, regardless of number of course credits in which a member is enrolled. Any subsequent increase in rate shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the council present at an SPH Council meeting. Any subsequent decrease in rate shall be approved by a majority vote of the council present at an SPH Council meeting.

D. **Fundraising:** The SPH Council may conduct fundraising activities only if and when any fundraising activities have been reviewed with the SUNY Downstate Philanthropy department to avoid conflict with equivalent fundraising efforts, be pre-approved by the FSA, and deposited in accordance with Article VI.B.2

E. **Dissolution:** In the event of the dissolution of the SPH Council, the Board of Directors of the FSA shall be responsible for allocating funds to a succeeding organization, or amongst SUNY DMC student activity organizations, or to programs or projects that benefit SUNY DMC students at large.

Article VII. Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the SPH Council in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and any special rules of order the SPH Council shall adopt.

Article VIII. Ratification

The Constitution of the SPH Council shall take effect upon ratification by a majority of voting members present. Upon ratification, this Constitution shall supersede and replace all previous Constitutions of the SPH Council including the original Constitution that brought this organization into being on November 21, 2003.

Article IX. Amendments

This Constitution is binding upon all members of the SPH Council, but the Constitution is not binding unto itself. An Amendment to the Constitution may be proposed in writing by any voting member of the SPH Council at any meeting. Such amendments shall then be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the SPH Council. The proposed amendments shall become effective following approval by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of members present, in person or by proxy. The provisions of Article III.H.4 shall not be applicable to Amendments.

Article X. Registration Renewal

The SPH Council shall apply to the Department of Student Life for registration on an annual basis one week after SPH Council's new officer elections or one week after any change in the officers of SPH Council.

Document History:

11/21/2003: Original Constitution ratified by the Membership and certified by campus.

7/6/2009: Amended to change all references of Masters of Public Health (MPH) to School of Public Health (SPH) approved by Membership on 7/16/09 and certified by campus.

May 2015: As amended by SPH Student Body vote and certified on behalf of campus 5/14/15.

December 2019: Modified to make clearer to read. Amended to change requirements for terms of office, clarify voting procedures, add requirements for student representatives on staff led committees, and reflect change all references to SUNY Downstate Medical Center to SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University.

2/19/21: Modified for clarity: Article III Section 2-Voting Representatives, and Article VI. Finances Section D- **Fundraising**.

Certified on behalf of the SUNY Downstate campus by Richard Bentley, President Faculty Student Association 2/22/21