

# Constitution of *The Rensselaer Polytechnic*

Approved by the Editorial Board on 12/4/2016; ratified by the Rensselaer Union Executive Board on 12/7/2016.

## Section I: Name

The name of this organization shall be *The Rensselaer Polytechnic*, hereafter referred to as *The Polytechnic*. Colloquially, the organization and the newspaper it publishes is known as *The Poly*.

## Section II: Purpose

The purpose of *The Polytechnic* shall be to keep the members of the Rensselaer community informed of all pertinent events, to lead student opinion, and to provide other material for reader enjoyment.

## Section III: Staff

**A)** Membership in *The Polytechnic* is open to all members of the Rensselaer community. It is the policy of the Rensselaer Union and *The Polytechnic* to provide, to the maximum extent feasible, equal opportunity to all qualified individuals without regard to race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability for all aspects of club activities.

**B)** Hazing, reckless or intentional endangerment to health, or forced consumption of alcohol or other drugs for the purpose of initiation into or affiliation with any Rensselaer Union organization, including *The Polytechnic*, is prohibited.

**C)** Editors

**1)** All editors must be full-time activity-fee-paying students or their spouses. The Rensselaer Union Executive Board may verify the eligibility of any member through the Office of the Registrar or Bursar.

**2)** No editor may hold, at the same time as his or her term of office on the Editorial Board, any of the following positions:

**a)** President or vice-president of the following bodies: Rensselaer Union Student Senate, Executive Board, Judicial Board, Judicial Review Board, Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council, Independent Council, Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council, or any class councils. This includes, but is not limited to, the offices of Grand Marshal and President of the Union.

- b) Candidate, as defined by the Student Senate, for president or vice-president of any of the organizations listed above in paragraph (a).
  - c) Officer, as defined by the Student Senate, of any campus political party.
- 3) No senior editor may hold, at the same time as his or her term of office on the Senior Board of *The Polytechnic*, a voting position on the Rensselaer Union Student Senate, Executive Board, or Judicial Board.
- 4) If, during their term, an editor assumes any of the above offices that Editor has one week to resign from said office or they shall be ineligible for membership on the Editorial Board and automatically removed from office.
- 5) The rules listed above in parts (2), (3), and (4) may be waived on a per-editor basis by a two-thirds vote of a Voting Constituency quorum.
- D) The total number of staff members on *The Polytechnic* who are not members of the Rensselaer Union or RPI faculty, staff, or alumni shall not exceed 5% of the total number of staff.
- E) All staff must adhere to all Rensselaer Union guidelines and are subject to all Rensselaer Union and Institute standards and disciplinary procedures.
- F) *The Polytechnic* will obtain and maintain the following information about its members: preferred first and last name, Rensselaer Identification Number (if applicable), Rensselaer Computer System ID (if applicable), email address, record of payment of appropriate dues and fees, and any additional information requested by the Rensselaer Union Executive Board.
- 1) Other information may be collected by *The Polytechnic* as directed by the editor in chief. Members shall not be required to submit this information as a condition of membership.
  - 2) All information gathered by the *The Polytechnic* about its members other than the names and level of membership shall be confidential and only released to the Rensselaer Union Executive Board and Rensselaer Union administration staff as required.
- G) All members of the Editorial Board will have one vote, except the editor in chief. The editor in chief will only vote in the event of a tie.

## **Section IV: Committees**

- A) The editorial board shall be the governing body of *The Polytechnic*. Any decision made individually or otherwise by any officer(s) or other editor(s) during the discharge of their duties may be repealed or directed by a majority vote of an editorial board quorum. Its voting members shall be the senior editors, department editors, associate editors, and directors. Additionally, the Grand Marshal, the President of the Union, and all coordinators are granted the right to attend all business meetings and editorial content meetings. They shall not vote at said meetings nor count towards or against quorum.
- B) The Senior Board shall consist of the senior editors of the editorial board.
- C) The editor in chief has the power to create new committees whenever he or she deems necessary. He or she shall appoint a chair and designate the other members of the committee. Committee chairs must be chosen from the membership of the editorial board. The jurisdiction of the committee and its chair shall be determined by the editor in chief.
- D) Committee chairs are required to give reports during each business meeting as to the status of their committee's activities.
- E) All committee meetings are open to any member, and the places and times of said meetings shall be posted in the offices of *The Polytechnic*.

## **Section V: Meetings**

### **A) Endorsement Meetings**

- 1) The editorial board of *The Polytechnic* shall exercise the right to consider the qualifications for campus officers, to decide on the candidate they feel to be best qualified for the position, and to publish that decision in the form of an endorsement. Only editors, associate editors, and directors may participate in the endorsement meetings.
  - a) The editorial board shall provide the option of an interview to each candidate as recognized by the Student Senate running for an office up for endorsement and present to them prior to the interview a written questionnaire. The editorial board must consider each of those candidates who are interviewed for endorsement.
  - c) The editorial board may consider endorsing candidates for any number of positions, but in order to consider any candidates for endorsement of any position, the editorial board must at least consider the endorsement of a candidate for Grand Marshal and for President of the Union.

- d) Meetings during which candidates are interviewed shall be closed to all except members of the editorial board and the interviewee. Quorum shall consist of two-thirds of the editorial board membership.
- e) Candidate Endorsement Voting Procedure
  - i) Upon completion of the interviews of all candidates, the editorial board will discuss the merits of each candidate and then, for each position considered, vote by secret ballot for the candidate they wish to endorse or for no candidate. Discussion will be confidential and only members of the editorial board may be present.
  - ii) *The Polytechnic* will endorse a candidate based upon a five-sixths vote of quorum.
  - iii) If not one and only one candidate receives an endorsement in the first ballot then the editorial board will again have discussion and vote by secret ballot. If for a second time not one and only one candidate receive an endorsement, then the editorial board will have one last period of discussion and vote by secret ballot a final time. If not one and only one candidate is endorsed at this point, then *The Polytechnic* shall not endorse a candidate for that position.
  - iv) Abstentions may only be used for conflicts of interest and count as a vote for a null candidate. Votes for a null candidate are tallied as are those for a real candidate.
  - v) Neither absentee ballots nor voting by proxy are allowed for candidate endorsement meetings.
- 2) The editorial board of *The Polytechnic* shall exercise the right to consider the merits of referenda voted on by the student body during Rensselaer Union-sponsored elections, to decide whether to support or oppose the referendum, and to publish that decision.
  - a) Meetings during which referenda are considered shall be closed to all except members of the editorial board. Quorum shall consist of two-thirds of the editorial board membership.
  - b) The editor in chief shall call these meetings and decide their location and time.
  - c) Referenda Endorsement Voting Procedure
    - i) For each referendum considered, the editorial board will discuss the merits of the referendum and then vote by secret ballot whether to support, oppose, or take no stance on the referendum.

- ii) *The Polytechnic* will only support or oppose a referendum based upon a five-sixths vote of quorum in either the affirmative or the negative.
- iii) If no stance is endorsed in the first ballot, then the editorial board will again have discussion and vote by secret ballot. If for a second time no stance is endorsed, then the editorial board will have one last period of discussion and vote by secret ballot a final time. If no stance is endorsed at this point, then *The Polytechnic* shall not support or oppose to the referendum in question.
- iv) Abstentions may only be used for conflicts of interest.
- v) Neither absentee ballots nor voting by proxy are allowed for referenda endorsement meetings.

## **B) Editorial Board Elections**

- 1) Semesterly elections for the editorial board shall be held within the time period between the final two issues of each semester. The fall semester election shall be known as the Fall election. The spring semester election shall be known as the Spring election.
- 2) Notification of the elections will be made by an advertisement appearing in the two issues of *The Polytechnic* immediately prior to the election.
- 3) Election Procedures
  - a) Only current members of the voting constituency on the day of elections are eligible to vote. The voting constituency shall consist of staff who are members of the Rensselaer Union, have contributed to six issues of *The Polytechnic*, have attended at least two consecutive business meetings, and have informed the editor in chief of their intention to join the voting staff. Membership in the voting constituency is maintained as long as an individual is a member of the Rensselaer Union, does not wish to resign, is not removed, and—should the member not hold a named position on *The Polytechnic's* staff—informs the editor in chief of their desire to vote no less than one week before an election.
  - b) Members of the voting constituency may nominate anyone, including themselves, for any elected position. Nominations for each position will be accepted until the time when the election for that position is begun.
  - c) Elections for each position shall be one at a time, in the order of: editor in chief, senior managing editor, managing editor(s), contributing editor(s), news editor, business manager, features editor, sports editor, editorial/opinion editor, composing editor, copy

editor, photography editor, associate news editor(s), associate features editor(s), associate sports editor(s), associate editorial/opinion editor(s), associate composing editor(s), associate copy editor(s), and associate photography editor(s). An election for the position of editor in chief or senior managing editor shall not be held during the Spring election unless the position is vacant.

- d)** When the turn comes for a certain position's election to be held, all candidates shall be given equal time to speak on their own behalf, if they so choose. Then all candidates running for the position in question shall leave the room, and discussion shall be held amongst those present, with the editor in chief or highest ranking editor as defined below in section (VI), subsection (B), part (1) if the editor in chief is ineligible, presiding. Voting will then proceed as follows:
  - i)** If the number of people nominated is greater than the total number of openings plus one, then a series of primary votes shall be held, with the person garnering the least number of votes eliminated after each balloting until only the total number of vacancies remain plus one.
  - ii)** Once primaries, if necessary, are completed, each voting member will then vote for one person in the elections of editor in chief, senior managing editor, and all department editors; up to two people in the elections of managing editors, contributing editors, and all associate editors; or cast a no vote against all persons running. To win, a candidate must receive votes from a majority of a voting constituency quorum.
- e)** All elections shall be held by secret ballot. This may be waived by the unanimous vote of the voting constituency quorum.
- f)** Ballots for each election, both during primaries and final balloting, shall be counted by the editor in chief, or the next highest person in the order of succession as defined below in section (VI), subsection (B), part (1) if the editor in chief is ineligible due to a conflict of interest. Whoever is counting the ballots shall not vote in that election, but shall cast the deciding vote if a candidate receives exactly half of the votes of the voting constituency quorum.
- g)** Quorum for elections is defined as two-thirds of the total voting constituency.
- h)** Absentee ballots shall be allowed. They must be submitted to the editor in chief in a sealed envelope no more than five days before the election. The person casting the ballots shall not count towards quorum during elections.

- i) Abstentions may be used for any reason. A voter must recuse themselves in the event of a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. Recusations do not count towards quorum and those recusing themselves may not participate in discussions.
  - j) All winning candidates take office immediately upon completion of the election of their position, and the term of office of their predecessor, if there is one, ends at that time.
- E) For all meetings, positions not filled shall not count towards quorum.

## **Section VI: Terms of Office, Vacancies, Order of Succession, and Removal**

### **A) Terms of Office and Term Limits**

- 1) The term of office for the positions of editor in chief and senior managing editor shall be one two-semester election cycle, commencing at the time of election and ending with the election held the following Fall election. An exception shall be made if an election to fill a vacant position is held after the regularly scheduled elections. In this case, the term of office shall still end at the Fall December election and not last a full year.
- 1) The term of office for all other positions on the editorial board ends with the election held the following Spring election or Fall election, whichever is first.
- 2) No person may be elected to the position of editor in chief more than once.
- 3) The rule listed above in part (2) may be waived by a five-sixths vote of a Voting Constituency quorum.

### **B) Vacancies and Order of Succession**

- 1) The order of succession of *The Polytechnic* is hereby defined as, from highest to lowest: editor in chief, senior managing editor, managing editors (ranked by how long they have continually been members of the voting constituency), contributing editors (ranked by how long they have continually been members of the voting constituency), news editor, business manager, features editor, sports editor, editorial/opinion editor, composing editor, copy editor, photography editor.
- 2) In the event of a vacancy in the office of editor in chief, the next highest person in the order of succession as defined above shall become acting editor in chief and is responsible for all the duties thereof, in addition to the duties he or she already has. If, due to any circumstance, there is no other person left in the order of succession, the voting

constituency of *The Polytechnic* shall be called into a general meeting by the President of the Union for the purposes of electing an editor in chief. The election of other editors shall then proceed as stated in section (V), subsection (D). If, due to any circumstance, there are no voting members of *The Polytechnic*, the President of the Union shall appoint an acting editor in chief.

- 3) In the event of a vacancy in the office of senior managing editor, the editor next-highest in the order of succession after the person fulfilling the duties of editor in chief shall become acting senior managing editor, and is responsible for all the duties thereof, in addition to the duties he or she already has.
- 4) In the event of a vacancy in the office of business manager, the editor in chief is responsible for the discharge of the duties thereof, in addition to the duties he or she already has. The editor in chief may delegate the responsibilities to another person.
- 5) In the event of a vacancy of any department editor, the associate editor of that department who has continually been a member of the voting constituency the longest will assume the duties of that department editor. If there is also no associate editor in that department, then a director, appointed by the editor in chief and confirmed by a majority vote of the editorial board, may assume the duties of that department editor (see section (III), subsection (A), part (5)). If a suitable person to serve as director cannot be found, then the editor in chief shall select a managing editor to fulfill the duties of the vacant department editor position.
- 6) Elections to fill any vacant positions may be held during any business meeting during the semester. These special elections must be announced by an advertisement appearing in the two issues of *The Polytechnic* immediately prior to the election. These elections will be run in the same manner as defined in section (V), subsection (D), except that only vacant positions will be voted on.

#### C) Removal from Office

- 1) Any member of the editorial board who fails to meet his or her obligations and responsibilities to *The Polytechnic* can be immediately removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the voting constituency quorum at a meeting called for that purpose. Any member of the voting constituency who fails to meet his or her obligations and responsibilities to *The Polytechnic* can have their voting rights immediately revoked by a two-thirds vote of the voting constituency quorum at a meeting called for that purpose or at any election.
- 2) Meetings to remove shall be called by a majority vote of the editorial board. The editor in chief, or other highest-ranking staff member (if the editor in chief is the impeached individual), has the obligation to inform the impeached individual of that meeting's time

and place at least seven days in advance of said meeting. The impeached individual has the right to attend that meeting and speak on their own behalf.

- 3) The grounds for removal from the editorial board or revocation of voting rights include, but are not limited to: two unexcused absences from business meetings in one semester (excuses for absence may be granted only by the editor in chief), consistent failure to perform the duties of the position to which they were elected, violation of editorial confidence, failure to practice the ethics of responsible journalism, or violation of Institute, Rensselaer Union, or club policies.
- 4) The grounds resulting in the removal from office or the revocation of voting rights may be referred to the Rensselaer Union Judicial Board as an appeal case. The removal from office remains in effect unless or until overturned by the Rensselaer Union Judicial Board.

## **Section VIII: Finance**

- A) *The Polytechnic* follows all Rensselaer Union financial policies. The officer specifically responsible for finances is the business manager.
- B) Only the senior editors and the business manager of *The Polytechnic*, as defined in section (III), can approve expenditures.
- C) Monies are collected by both the business manager and advertising director via payments for display advertisements, subscriptions, personals, classified advertisements, *et cetera*. It is the responsibility of the business manager to deposit the monies collected by *The Polytechnic* on a regular basis.

## **Section IX: Parliamentary Authority**

- A) The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern *The Polytechnic* in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order *The Polytechnic* may adopt.

## **Section X: Policies, Rules, and Bylaws**

- A) *The Polytechnic* shall be published weekly, except during Institute holiday and examination periods, at the discretion of the voting members. Special issues may also be published at any time at the discretion of the editorial board or editor in chief.
- B) Bylaws shall be drafted as deemed necessary by the voting constituency. By-laws go into effect after they are passed by a two-thirds vote of a voting constituency quorum, so long as they are not in conflict with this constitution.
- C) A copy of this constitution shall be available for inspection in *The Polytechnic* offices.
- D) A code of ethics, available for inspection in *The Polytechnic* offices, shall be adopted by the editorial board each semester with a two-thirds vote of the voting constituency, for the purpose of guiding the content and demeanor of *The Polytechnic*.

## **Section XI: Student Bill of Rights and Media Statement**

- A) *The Polytechnic*, recognized as a media organization by the Rensselaer Union, claims the rights granted to student publications in the Student Bill of Rights as adopted by the Board of Trustees, as well as the rights granted to media organizations by the Rensselaer Union Media Statement.
- B) *The Polytechnic* shall at all times comply with the requirements set by the Student Bill of Rights and the RPI Media Statement for media organizations.

## **Section XII: Ratification and Amendments**

- A) This constitution shall be effective immediately upon ratification by a two-thirds majority of a voting constituency quorum and subsequent approval by the Rensselaer Union Executive Board. All prior constitutions are immediately repealed.
- B) If it becomes necessary that any part of this constitution be changed, or that additions to it be made, a two-thirds majority of voting constituency and subsequent approval by the Rensselaer Union Executive Board must be obtained.
- C) If any part of this Constitution or the bylaws violate or contradict the policies of the Rensselaer Union, or applicable federal, state, or local laws then the contradicting parts of the Constitution or bylaws are invalid.

- D)** If any part of the bylaws violate or contradict this Constitution then the contradicting parts of the bylaws are invalid.
- E)** This Constitution, upon its adoption, shall abrogate any previous governing documents relating to the *Polytechnic*. This shall not be construed as to deny any office or position to anyone serving out a term elected under a previous constitution.

### **Section XIII: Compliance with Union and Institute Standards**

In the event that this constitution comes in conflict with any Rensselaer Union or Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute rule or standard, then the constitution will be superseded by that rule or standard.