

**Bennington College**  
**Student Educational Policies Committee By-Laws**

**Mission Statement:**

The Student Educational Policies Committee (SEPC) represents the student body on matters of academic policy, working to communicate and collaborate with students, faculty, and administration on academic matters at the classroom, discipline, and institutional levels.

**Article I: Infrastructure**

***Section 1. Class Representatives and Class Representative Alternatives***

Class Representatives (CRs) facilitate communication between the students in a specific course and its faculty member(s). CRs also facilitate communication between the students in a specific course and the Discipline Representatives when necessary.

- A. Eligibility
  - a. 1. Students in Good Academic Standing can be a CR or a CR Alternate for a class in which they are enrolled .
  - b. 2. First term students (and new transfer students) cannot be a CR except in cases in which the class only consists of first-term students.
  - c. 3. Students can be a CR for more than one class at a time.
- B. Election
  - a. CR and CR Alternate elections will occur during class the week after the Add deadline.
  - b. The faculty member will allow five minutes of class time for the election.
  - c. The faculty member is encouraged, but is not required, to leave the room for the election.
  - d. Any students in the class can nominate a CR and Alternate or nominate themselves.
  - e. In the case of multiple nominations , an election by show of hands or written ballots will decide the CR by simple majority .
  - f. An Alternate CR will be selected through the same process.
  - g. The faculty member will give the results, in writing , to the Administrative Assistant to the Dean of Studies. The Administrative Assistant to the Dean of Studies will send an updated spreadsheet of all CRs to the Head of SEPC on a weekly basis. As of midterm or at end-of-term, if the CR is on academic probation or concern, is unable to keep up with the course work , or is absent from the class for the Midterm Conversation or End-of-Term Evaluations, then the Alternate CR will serve in their place.
- C. Responsibilities
  - a. Facilitating the Midterm Conversation
  - b. Facilitating End-of-Term Evaluations
  - c. A first-time CR must attend a Class Representative Training Session provided by SEPC before midterm.

- d. Conducting Emergency SEPC meetings as needed.
- e. Communicating with Discipline Representatives as needed.
- f. Discipline Representatives will distribute information on the Midterm and End-of-Term Conversations to the Class Representatives.

### ***Section 2. Discipline Representatives***

Discipline Representatives (DRs) work to facilitate communication between faculty and students within a particular discipline. DRs also serve as members of the general body of SEPC to address academic policy concerns beyond the discipline structures.

#### **A. Eligibility**

- a. Any student in good academic standing can run for DR of a discipline that is included in their area(s) of study as approved through the Plan Process.
- b. In the case that a student has not yet had a Plan Meeting, they must have the intention of including the discipline in which they are running in their Plan. They must be proposing their Plan during the term they first begin serving (thus, first and second term students may not serve as DRs).
- c. Transfer Students must have an approved plan for one term in order to be eligible to serve as a discipline rep.

#### **B. Election**

- a. DRs are elected by the student body during spring term for the following year. All students will have the opportunity to vote for all DRs, regardless of particular areas of concentration or fields of study.
- b. The Dean's Office in coordination with the Head will administer elections and Secretary of SEPC assisted by members of the body not running in the elections.
- c. The Head and Secretary of SEPC will notify the Dean's Office of the results. The Head will announce the results to all candidates through written confirmation and then will announce the results to the student body through Coffee Hour minutes.
- d. At the discretion of the current SEPC body, a vote will determine whether or not an exception to the by-laws might be made regarding the number of positions for each discipline, the creation of a new discipline (e.g. Democracy Project or APA) or a decision to limit a discipline to having only one DR, this will be done by the body on an as-needed basis. There will be two DRs per discipline unless the body decides otherwise. A simple majority will determine all decisions about new discipline or changes in the number of DRs.

#### **C. Responsibilities**

- a. DRs will attend the SEPC body meetings, which are held once a week for 1 hour. DRs must attend all SEPC body meetings. After three absences (regardless of the reasons), the Head and Secretary will have a conversation with the DR regarding their absences. Depending on the results of the conversation, the Head or Secretary can bring a vote-of-no-confidence to the rest of the body (see procedure in Article 1, Section 2 D, point 1).
- b. DRs will meet with corresponding discipline faculty regularly to voice student concerns and opinions and may participate in policy and planning discussions as the

faculty deem appropriate. DRs will take notes about important events and discussion points within their disciplines and relay the information to the SEPC body during the body meeting. DRs will also communicate relevant information from these meetings to the student body as a whole, with a special emphasis on students focusing in the discipline.

- c. 3. DRs will be responsible for ensuring that all classes in their discipline elect CRs and Alternates.
- d. 4. DRs will participate in CR training and contact all CRs in their discipline before mid-term to distribute information on how to run the mid-term discussion. DRs will also communicate with CRs as necessary regarding specific concerns about courses or faculty. DRs will address issues raised in Emergency Meetings as appropriate.
- e. DRs will write and send SEPC announcements to the Secretary for inclusion in Coffee Hour minutes.
- f. DRs will be a strong presence in discipline gatherings and the academic community in general.
- g. DRs will participate in campus-wide policy discussions.
- h. DRs will assist in the distribution of end-of-term evaluations.
- i. DRs may be expected to fulfill other discipline-specific tasks as determined by conversation in the SEPC body and conversation between DRs and faculty (e.g. announcements at workshops or in the Dining Hall, holding open meetings about potential changes to their discipline).

#### D. Leaving the SEPC Body

- a. Vote-of-No-Confidence
  - i. At any point throughout the year, a member can propose a vote-of-no-confidence to the Head about another member of the SEPC body. Additionally, if a DR has three unexcused absences, the Head and Secretary will have a conversation with the DR, which may lead the Head or Secretary to propose a vote-of-no-confidence in that particular DR.
  - ii. At the next SEPC body meeting, the Head will announce that there will be a vote-of-no-confidence for a DR and will give the reasons why this vote is being brought to the body. If the DR chooses to do so, they may give a brief defense for why they should be allowed to stay on the body. The Head will then ask the DR in question to leave the room. At that time, any member of the SEPC body can speak for or against the DR in question. The Secretary will then conduct an election by anonymous written ballot. The present members (excepting the Head and Secretary) will vote and return the ballots to the Secretary, who will count them in front of the body. If a simple majority voted no-confidence, the DR in question will be asked to step down and their position will be considered open. The Head will then provide written confirmation to the DR in question notifying them of the results. A new DR will be appointed by the body to fill the vacant position.
- b. Resignation

- i. If a DR wishes to resign from the body they must provide a signed letter of resignation in writing to the Head.
  - ii. The Head will read the letter to the body at the following meeting before proceeding with the appointment process for open positions.
- E. Appointment Process
  - a. In the case of an open position, the opening will be published in the Coffee Hour minutes and announced at any appropriate discipline meetings. Interested candidates must meet the eligibility requirements of DRs (see Article I, Section 2 A).
  - b. Candidates are required to attend a specially designated SEPC body meeting. Candidates will make a brief statement expressing their interest in the position. A short question and answer session will occur with the interested candidates and the SEPC Body. The candidates will then leave the room. At this time, SEPC Body members have an opportunity to voice their opinions. The Secretary will then conduct the vote, determined by simple majority, in which all members (excepting the Head and Secretary) will vote by raising their hands.
  - c. The Secretary will announce the results to the body, and the Head will then provide written confirmation to each candidate notifying them of the results. The name of the new DR will be published in Coffee Hour minutes.

### ***Section 3. First Year Representatives***

First Year Representatives (FYRs) work to facilitate communication between faculty, First Year Advisors, academic services officials in the Office of the Dean of the College and first-year students at the college. FYRs also serve as members of the general body of SEPC to address general academic policy concerns giving voice to the unique perspective, concerns and questions of the first year class.

- A. Eligibility
  - a. Any first year student in good academic standing can run for FYR.
- B. Election
  - a. The SEPC body elects FYRs during the first weeks of the FYRI term
  - b. Two FYR will be elected each year unless the body elects to have only one FYR position at the beginning of the academic year.
  - c. Candidates are required to attend a specially designated SEPC body meeting. Candidates will make a brief statement expressing their interest in the position. A short question and answer session will occur with the interested candidates and the SEPC Body. The candidates will then leave the room. At this time, SEPC Body members have an opportunity to voice their opinions about the candidates. The Secretary will then conduct the vote, determined by simple majority, in which all members (excepting the Head and Secretary) will vote by raising their hands.
  - d. The Secretary will announce the results to the body, and the Head will then provide written confirmation to each candidate notifying them of the results. The name of the new FYRs will be published in Coffee Hour minutes.
- C. Responsibilities

- a. FYRs will attend the SEPC body meetings, which are held once a week for 1 hour. FYRs must attend all SEPC body meetings. After three absences (regardless of the reasons), the Head and Secretary will have a conversation with the FYR regarding their absences. Depending on the results of the conversation, the Head or Secretary can bring a vote-of-no-confidence to the rest of the body (see procedure in Article 1, Section 3 D, point 1).
  - b. FYRs will meet with corresponding First Year Advisors and Academic Services Officials regularly to voice student concerns and opinions and may participate in policy and planning discussions as the First Year Advisors and Academic services officials deem appropriate. FYRs will take notes about important events and discussion points for first year students and relay the information to the SEPC body during the body meeting. FYRs will also communicate relevant information from these meetings to the first year student body as a whole.
  - c. FYRs will be a strong presence in first-year gatherings and the academic community in general.
  - d. FYRs will write and send SEPC announcements to the Secretary for inclusion in Coffee Hour minutes.
  - e. FYRs will participate in campus-wide policy discussions.
  - f. FYRs will assist in the distribution of end-of-term evaluations.
  - g. FYRs may be expected to fulfill other first year-specific tasks as determined by conversation in the SEPC body and conversation between FYRs and first year advisors (e.g. announcements at workshops or in the dining hall, holding open meetings about potential changes to first year policies).
- D. Leaving the SEPC Body
- a. Vote-of-No-Confidence
    - i. At any point throughout the year, a member can propose a vote of-no-confidence to the Head about another member of the SEPC body. Additionally, if an FYR has three unexcused absences, the Head and Secretary will have a conversation with the FYR, which may lead the Head or Secretary to propose a vote-of-no confidence in that particular FYR.
    - ii. At the next SEPC body meeting, the Head will announce that there will be a vote-of-no-confidence for an FYR and will give the reasons why this vote is being brought to the body. If the FYR chooses to do so, they may give a brief defense for why they should be allowed to stay on the body. The Head will then ask the FYR in question to leave the room. At that time, any member of the SEPC body can speak for or against the FYR in question. The Secretary will then conduct an election by anonymous written ballot. The present members (excepting the Head and Secretary) will vote and return the ballots to the Secretary, who will count them in front of the body. If a simple majority voted no-confidence, the FYR in question will be asked to step down and their position will be considered open. The Head will then provide written confirmation to the FYR in question notifying them of the results. A new FYR will be appointed by the body to fill the vacant position.

- b. Resignation
  - i. If an FYR wishes to resign from the body they must provide a signed letter of resignation in writing to the Head.
  - ii. The Head will read the letter to the body at the following meeting before proceeding with the appointment process for open positions.
- E. Appointment Process
  - a. In the case of an open position, the opening will be published in the Coffee Hour minutes. Interested candidates must meet the eligibility requirements of FYRs (see Article I, Section 3 A).
  - b. Candidates are required to attend a specially designated SEPC body meeting. Candidates will make a brief statement expressing their interest in the position. A short question and answer session will occur with the interested candidates and the SEPC Body. The candidates will then leave the room. At this time, SEPC Body members have an opportunity to voice their opinions. The Secretary will then conduct the vote, determined by simple majority, in which all members (excepting the Head and Secretary) will vote by raising their hands.
  - c. The Secretary will announce the results to the body, and the Head will then provide written confirmation to each candidate notifying them of the results. The name of the new FYR will be published in Coffee Hour minutes.
  - d. The Secretary will attend and record the minutes of other meetings (e.g. meetings with the Deans, meetings with First Year Advisors, meetings with SEPC body members) as determined by the Head and Secretary.
  - e. The Secretary will compile the SEPC announcements from the DRs, FYRs, and Head each week along with minutes relevant to the student body from the SEPC body meeting. They will send a copy of this to The office of Student Life for publication in the Coffee Hour minutes. The Secretary should consult with the Senior House Chairs about the best way to submit minutes.
  - f. If any SEPC member is absent three or more times from the weekly body meetings (regardless of the reasons), the Head and Secretary will have a conversation with the member regarding their absences. Depending on the results of the conversation, the Head or Secretary can bring a vote-of no-confidence to the rest of the body).
  - g. The Secretary will run in-body elections as specified by the by-laws.
  - h. The Secretary will assist the Head in all communication needs.
  - i. The Secretary will assist in editing publications written by the body.
  - j. In the absence of the Head, the Secretary will run SEPC body meetings.
  - k. In the event that the Head steps down or is removed from their position, the Secretary will step into the role until new elections are held.
- F. Leaving the SEPC Body
  - a. Vote-of-No-Confidence
    - i. At any point in the year, any member can propose a vote-of-noconfidence to the Head about the Secretary. Additionally, if a Secretary has three

- unexcused absences, the Head will have a conversation with the Secretary, which may lead the Head to propose a vote-of-no-confidence.
- ii. At the next SEPC body meeting, the Head will announce that there will be a vote-of-no-confidence for the Secretary and will give the reasons why this vote is being brought to the body. If the Secretary chooses to do so, they may give a brief defense for why they should be allowed to stay on the body. The Head will then ask the Secretary in question to leave the room. At that time, any member of the SEPC body can speak for or against the Secretary in question. The Head will then conduct an election by anonymous written ballot. The present members (excepting the Head) will vote and return the ballots to the Head, who will count them in front of the body. If a simple majority voted no-confidence, the Secretary will be asked to step down and their position will be considered open. The Head will then provide written confirmation to the Secretary notifying them of the results. A new Secretary will be elected by the body to fill the vacant position following the procedure outlined in Article I, Section 4 B.
- b. Resignation
    - i. If the Secretary wishes to resign from the body they must provide a signed letter of resignation in writing to the Head.
    - ii. The Head will read the letter to the body at the following meeting before proceeding with the appointment process for open positions.

#### **Section 4. Secretary**

The Secretary of SEPC assists the Head in managing the SEPC body and communicating with the Deans of the College and the students.

##### **A. Eligibility**

- a. Any student who has served as a DR or FYR for at least one full academic year and remains in good academic standing can be the Secretary.
- b. A student who was serving as a DR or FYR for at least one full academic year and remains in good academic standing but has been away from the college for up to one term while doing study abroad is eligible to run for Secretary. Such candidates should be in regular communication with the current Head or Secretary so that they can be represented adequately in their candidacy.

##### **B. Election**

- a. The Secretary will be elected by the SEPC body before the end of the spring term.
- b. Candidates will make a brief statement expressing their interest in the position. A short question and answer session will occur with the interested candidates and the SEPC Body. The candidates will then leave the room. At this time, SEPC Body members have an opportunity to voice their opinions about the candidates. The Secretary will then conduct the vote; determined by simple majority, by paper ballot. The present members (excepting the Head and Secretary) will vote and return the ballots to the Secretary, who will count them in front of the body.

- c. If the current Secretary is running for re-election, the Head will take over the Secretary's election duties. If the Head is also running for re-election, one member of the SEPC body will be elected (by a simple majority show of hands) to lead the election.
  - d. The Secretary will announce the results to the body, and the Head will then provide written confirmation to each candidate notifying them of the results. The name of the new Secretary will be published in Coffee Hour minutes.
- C. Responsibilities
- a. The Secretary will attend the SEPC body meetings, which are held once a week for 1 hour. The Secretary must attend all SEPC body meetings. After three absences (regardless of the reasons), the Head will have a conversation with the Secretary regarding their absences. Depending on the results of the conversation, the Head can bring a vote-of-no-confidence to the rest of the body (see procedure in Article 1, Section 4 D, point 1).
  - b. The Secretary will take minutes at the weekly SEPC body meetings for the SEPC digital records. They will then share these minutes with the Head. any SEPC body members who request access.
  - c. The Secretary will record attendance at weekly SEPC body meetings. Bennington
- D. Leaving the SEPC Body
- a. If a Secretary wishes to resign from the body they must provide a signed letter of resignation in writing to the Head.
  - b. The Head will read the letter to the body at the following meeting before proceeding with an election to replace the Secretary following the procedure outlined in Article I, Section 4 8.

### ***Section 5. Head***

The Head of SEPC leads the SEPC body and serves as the primary means of communication between the Dean of the College and the students.

- A. Eligibility
- a. Any student who has served as a DR or Secretary for at least one full academic year and remains in good academic standing can be the Head.
  - b. A student who was serving as a DR for at least one full academic year and remains in good academic standing but has been away from the college for up to one term while doing study abroad is eligible to run for Head. Such candidates should be in regular communication with the current Head or Secretary so that they can be represented adequately in their candidacy.
- B. Election
- a. The SEPC body will elect the Head before the end of the spring term. The term of the head will begin at the end of the academic year of their election and will last for one year until the end of the next academic year.
  - b. Candidates will make a brief statement expressing their interest in the position. A short question and answer session will occur with the interested candidates and the SEPC Body. The candidates will then leave the room. At this time, SEPC Body



members have an opportunity to voice their opinions. The Secretary will then conduct the vote, determined by simple majority, by anonymous written ballot. The present members (excepting the Head and Secretary) will vote and return the ballots to the Secretary, who will count them in front of the body.

- c. If the Head and Secretary are both running for re-election, one member of the SEPC body will be elected (by a simple majority show of hands) to lead the election.
- d. The Secretary will announce the results to the body, and the Head will then provide written confirmation to each candidate notifying them of the results. The name of the new Head will be published in Coffee Hour minutes.

### C. Responsibilities

- a. The Head will attend the SEPC body meetings, which are held once a week for 1 hour. The Head must attend all SEPC body meetings. After three absences (regardless of the reasons), the Secretary will have a conversation with the Head regarding their absences. Depending on the results of the conversation, the Secretary can bring a vote-of-no-confidence to the rest of the body (see procedure in Article 1, Section 5 D, point 1).
- b. The Head of SEPC will prepare an agenda, organize and run weekly SEPC body meetings.
- c. The Head will meet with the Deans on a weekly basis to gather and disseminate information about academic issues. The Head will relay this information to the SEPC body, and in the case of a major academic issue or policy change, the student body at large.
- d. When academic policy discussions concerning all students arise, the Head will maintain communication between the faculty, administration and students through meetings, posters, emails, and any other appropriate methods.
- e. The Head will promote the involvement of the SEPC body in the discussion of academic issues at the College.
- f. The Head will arrange for meetings with other administrators and faculty committees as needed.
- g. The Head will write and send general SEPC announcements to the Secretary for inclusion in Coffee Hour minutes.
- h. If any SEPC member is absent three or more times from the weekly body meetings (regardless of the reasons), the Head and Secretary will have a conversation with the member regarding their absences. Depending on the results of the conversation, the Head or Secretary can bring a vote-of no-confidence to the rest of the body).
- i. The Head will be responsible for ensuring that all classes elect CRs and Alternates. The Head will coordinate with the Administrative Assistant to the Dean on this matter.
- j. The Head will organize CR, DR, and FYR trainings.
- k. The Head will coordinate the collating and distributing of End.-of-term evaluations.
- l. The Head will be responsible for all communication and publications unless otherwise specified in the by-laws or during a meeting.

- m. The Head will ask the Secretary, DRs, and FYRs to assist as needed in various tasks related to SEPC.
- D. Leaving the SEPC Body
- a. Vote-of-No-Confidence
    - i. At any point in the year, any member can propose a vote-of-no-confidence to the Secretary about the Head. Additionally, if a Head has three absences, the Secretary will have a conversation with the Head, which may lead the Secretary to propose a vote-of-no-confidence.
    - ii. At the next SEPC body meeting, the Secretary will announce that there will be a vote-of-no-confidence for the Head and will give the reasons why this vote is being brought to the body. If the Head chooses to do so, they may give a brief defense for why they should be allowed to stay on the body. The Secretary will then ask the Head to leave the room. At that time, any member of the SEPC body can speak for or against the Head. The Secretary will then conduct an election by anonymous written ballot. The present members (excepting the Secretary) will vote and return the ballots to the Secretary, who will count them in front of the body. If a simple majority voted no-confidence, the Head will be asked to step down and their position will be filled by the Secretary until an election can be held. The Secretary will then provide written confirmation to the Head notifying them of the results. A new Head will be elected by the body to fill the vacant position following the procedure outlined in Article I, Section 5 B.
- E. Resignation
- a. If a Head wishes to resign from the body they must provide a signed letter of resignation in writing to the Secretary.
  - b. The Secretary will read the letter to the body at the following meeting before proceeding with an election to replace the Head following the procedure outlined in Article I, Section 5 B.