

IV. Chapter Bylaws

A. CHAPTER BYLAWS TIPS

Bylaws are the crux of any organization. They provide a format for successfully organizing a group of people smoothly and amiably. To preserve diversity among programs and chapters, no two AIAS chapter bylaws should be the same. It is essential that your chapter's bylaws be in-depth and clear in meaning. Keep in mind when writing or amending bylaws that they must work well for your chapter. A poorly written set of bylaws can cripple a chapter by making it difficult to get anything accomplished. Yet, bylaws should not be the final word on how to run a chapter. You may find that things can get done just by using common sense, which is why you may see the phrase, "or at the discretion of," used in many instances.

Organization

Clear organizational topics are also a necessity. Since most AIAS chapter bylaws are probably not of any great length, it may not be necessary to have a numbering system, but it always helps to be able to refer to specific sections and paragraphs. Do not get caught up in extravagant numbering systems using Roman numerals or long sequences of numbers and periods referring to "article/section/subsection." Simply label each section clearly with section numbers.

Officer Descriptions

Bylaws are a great place to provide officer job descriptions. Again, don't say exactly what each position entails. An outline of things that an individual must do and a phrase saying "but not limited to" is acceptable. This means that the charge of the position can vary depending on the chapter's needs. Putting job descriptions in bylaws makes it easier for people to understand what is expected of them. Be sure to equitably divide responsibilities.

Chapter Mission

The chapter's mission or objectives should be contained in the bylaws. This sets a definite course of action for the chapter and alleviates questions about what AIAS does. Consult the National AIAS Bylaws for this. Do not be afraid to modify these objectives over time. The needs and goals of your chapter will change—the bylaws should change with them.

Voting

Being a membership driven organization, AIAS chapter bylaws must be specific about how to deal with voting and quorum requirements. *Robert's Rules of Order* is an excellent source for such things. You may conduct business at chapter meetings with a quorum of members present, not the total membership. It is ridiculous to expect all your members to attend chapter meetings, so this provision must be included in order to conduct business. *Robert's Rules* suggests that quorum at meetings for membership based organizations can be set at two-thirds of members present and voting. Quorum for executive committee and other AIAS committee meetings can be stricter since these are elected and appointed positions and very important to the operation of the chapter. You cannot mandate meeting attendance to chapter meetings since your members are dues paying individuals. The Executive Committee and Committees are elected or appointed to serve the membership so they can be mandated to attend meetings. No business should ever be conducted without a quorum of Executive Committee or Committee members present.

Elections

Chapter elections must be conducted with efficiency and guidelines. The worst thing for a chapter can be alienating a group of students because elections were run unfairly or with underhanded practices. Your bylaws can protect against this by ensuring secret balloting, fair campaigning and smooth operating procedures. You may want to include specific dates for elections.

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Amendments

Bylaws always have provisions for amendments, and they are quite strict. Take bylaws changes with all seriousness and follow notification processes to the letter or the members may accuse the Executive Committee or President of poor leadership.

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B. SAMPLE CHAPTER BYLAWS

Following is an example of a format from one of the many AIAS chapters and from the National Office that you may use as a guide for amending or writing your chapter's bylaws. Always feel free to consult the AIAS office or National Directors if you have questions.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS

UNIVERSITY OF ANYWHERE CHAPTER CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE ONE: NAME

The name of this student chapter shall be the American Institute of Architecture Students—University of Anywhere Chapter.

In these bylaws, the American Institute of Architecture Students shall be referred to as “The Institute.”

ARTICLE TWO: OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Chapter shall be:

- One. To foster an appreciation and understanding of the ideas and objectives of The Institute and to promote and forward the same within the territory of this Chapter.
- Two. To emphasize and promote professional, social, and fraternal aspects of student activities on campus.
- Three. To foster fellowship, cooperation, and unity between members of this Chapter, members and other Student Chapters.
- Four. To enlarge Chapter members' understanding of the current and future scope of architectural practice.

Methods to accomplish the above objectives may include but are not limited to the outlined items in *Article Nine: Activities* of these Bylaws.

ARTICLE THREE: ORGANIZATION

This Chapter is a non-profit incorporated membership association organized and existing under and by virtue of a charter granted by the American Institute of Architecture Students, on _____, 19__ in accordance with the respective bylaws of the American Institute of Architecture Students.

ARTICLE FOUR: MEMBERSHIP

Section One, Eligibility

Active Membership—Undergraduate and graduate students, who are currently enrolled in this College, and in good academic standing as candidates for degrees in Architecture (including Architecture/Construction, Structural Design, or Architectural Engineering) and who have paid the requisite membership dues as required by the Chapter.

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Supporting Membership—Any Faculty, Staff, Institute Member, or student enrolled at University of Houston. Supporting members are permitted to attend all meetings but shall not retain voting privileges.

Section Two, Dues and Assessments

Dues for Active and Supporting Members alike shall be Twenty Dollars and are payable immediately upon submission of application, dues shall be honored until September of the next academic year. After the Fall Membership Drive, names and required dues shall be submitted to the Institute. The Executive Committee may, by vote of three-fourths of its membership, remit the current Chapter annual dues of any member in whole or part, for exceptional reasons.

ARTICLE FIVE: GOVERNMENT

Section One, Executive Committee

The activities of this Chapter shall be administered by five officers; eight Directors (one per year, both undergraduate and graduate); one Faculty Advisor; and one AIA. Chapter liaison who together shall be for a term of one year. Officers and Directors who fail to maintain eligibility (Article Four: Section One) and perform the duties of their elected office (Article Five: Section Two) shall, by due process of the Executive Committee, be retired from office; vacancies are to be filled as hereinafter provided. The Executive Committee shall direct, control, and administer the affairs of the Chapter. It shall carry out the policies and instruction of the Chapter adopted by any duly called meeting and shall act for and in behalf of the Chapter in all matters within its jurisdiction. The Executive Committee shall meet bimonthly in addition to monthly general meetings or otherwise at the discretion of the President.

Section Two, Officers' Terms and Duties

The officers of this Chapter shall be the President, Vice President, President-elect, Treasurer, and Secretary. Succession of office shall be in the aforementioned order in case of vacancy before an appointment or an election has filled the position. The term of office shall be one year and no person may serve simultaneously in more than one position. Transitional assistance for new officers will be provided by outgoing officers during the period between the announcement of election results and the end of the academic year.

The President shall be the executive head of the Chapter and act as spokesperson and representative of the Chapter at all meetings, organizations, and committees unless another member is delegated such authority by the President. A pronouncement shall not obligate the Chapter unless the obligation or commitment has been specifically authorized by Chapter action. The President shall attend all board meetings of the local AIA. Chapter and all School Faculty meetings. A report on Faculty and AIA. activities will be made at each regular meeting of the Chapter. The President shall hold regular meetings with the dean of the college and the faculty advisor. These meetings shall occur monthly, either before or after the general meeting, or otherwise at the discretion of the President. The President shall attend all regular meetings of the Chapter.

The Vice President shall possess all the powers and duties of the President in the event of absence, disability, refusal, or failure of the President to act as outline above. An election will be held to fill the position of Vice President in the event that he/she must assume the office of President. Included in the duties of Vice President shall be the power to oversee all Chapter committees. A report will be made at each regular meeting on the activities of the Chapter committees. The Vice President shall coordinate all activities relating to membership services and drives. These activities may include but not be limited to: establishing dates and times for staffed membership drive tables; compiling membership packets; maintaining membership lists; submitting names and required dues to the Institute; and distributing membership materials throughout the academic year. The Vice President shall attend all regular meetings of the Chapter.

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The President-elect shall assume the office of President after serving a one-year term as President-elect. The President-elect shall act as but not assume the office of President in the event of absence, disability, refusal, or failure of the President and Vice President to act as outlined above. An election will be held to fill the positions of President and Vice President and the President-elect shall subsequently resume his/her duties. The President-elect shall act as liaison to the College of Architecture Alumni Association and attend all regular meetings of that organization. The President-elect shall act as liaison to any other organization to which members of the Chapter are affiliated. A report will be made at each regular meeting on the activities of the Alumni Association and other organizations. The President-elect shall attend all regular meetings of the Chapter.

The Treasurer shall have charge and exercise general supervision of financial affairs and keep the records and books or account thereof. The Treasurer shall prepare budgets, collect amounts due, and receipt for and have custody of Chapter funds and monies, and make disbursements thereof and shall have custody of its instruments and papers involving finance and financial commitments. He/she shall conduct the correspondence relating to this office and shall perform all duties usual and incidental to this office. The Treasurer shall provide statements of account for and attend all regular meetings of the Chapter.

The Treasurer shall not be personally liable for any loss of money or funds, nor any decrease in capital, surplus, income, or reserve of any fund or account resulting from any acts performed in good faith in conducting the usual business of the office. When a new treasurer takes office, the retiring Treasurer shall turn over all the records and books of accounts and all monies and papers belonging to the Chapter that are in his/her custody or possession. The incoming Treasurer shall check the same and, if found correct shall give the retiring Treasurer a receipt thereof as a complete release from any liability thereafter with respect to the aforementioned.

The Secretary shall act as recording and corresponding secretary of the Executive Committee. The Secretary shall take minutes of each meeting and prepare the previous meeting's minutes for distribution and review by the members attending each meeting. Upon a vote during a meeting, the Secretary shall record the votes cast in the minutes. The Secretary shall be responsible for the posting of materials and information of the Chapter and the Institute. The Secretary shall attend each regular meeting of the Chapter.

Directors shall be elected to represent each year (undergraduate and graduate) and act as liaison between the Executive Committee and the membership. These responsibilities may include but not be limited to voicing member concerns and distributing materials from the Vice President to the members. No person may serve simultaneously as an Officer and a Director. Each Director shall be a member of the class he/she represents. Directors shall attend all regular meetings of the Chapter.

The Faculty Advisor shall be a member of the faculty of this college and shall be elected by a majority vote of members, nominations having been approved by the Dean of the college. The Faculty Advisor shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

The AIA Liaison shall be a member of the local AIA Chapter and shall be elected by a majority vote of members, nominations having been approved by the Board of Directors of the sponsoring A.I.A. Chapter. The AIA Liaison shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

Section Three, Other Positions

Section Representatives shall be elected to represent each undergraduate section. No person may serve simultaneously as an Officer and a Section Representative. The Director shall perform the duties of Section Representative in the section of which he/she is a member. Each Section Representative shall be a member of the studio he/she represents. Section Representatives shall attend all general meetings of the Chapter.

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Committee Chairpersons shall be appointed to the various AIAS committees by the Executive Committee. The specific duties of each Chair shall be outlined by the Vice President. Chairpersons will be responsible for making reports to the Executive Committee upon request. The Executive Committee shall have the power to remove any Chairperson upon advice of the Vice President.

ARTICLE SIX: ELECTIONS

Section One, Regular Elections

Elections shall be held during the week prior to the spring social event for all officers who shall assume duties at the final general meeting of the Chapter (usually held in May). Officers shall serve a one-year term concluding at the end of the following academic year. One week prior to the April general meeting, nominations will be solicited from the membership. All nominees will be verified as actual candidates and upon verification will be placed upon a ballot for the office nominated. An election shall be held using the secret ballot method, where all active members may cast votes. Election results will be posted and announced at the spring social event. Winners will be decided by majority vote.

Section Two, Vacancies

Vacancies in elected offices shall be filled by election at the next general meeting after nominations from the floor. The vacancy shall be advertised as an open position at least one week prior to the meeting. Winners will be decided by majority vote.

Section Three, Procedures

Schedule: Nominations will be solicited one week prior to the April general meeting. Ballots will be struck three days before the elections, at which time, no further names can be placed on the ballot. Elections will be held one week prior to the Spring social event. Members will be allowed to vote during two consecutive days of voting. Polls will be open an adequate amount of time to accommodate class schedules. Write-in candidates will be permitted on the ballot. Votes will be tabulated by the Elections Committee Chair and overseen by (in presence of) the Faculty Advisor. Winners will be announced at the spring social event and results posted the following day. Winners will not be given prior notice of results. The number of votes received by each candidate will not be posted but will be available to any member upon request.

Run-off Elections: In the event of a tie vote for any position, a run-off election shall be held one week following the original election. In the event the run-off election is also a tie vote, the Executive Committee (comprised of both incoming and outgoing members) will break the tie by a majority vote at the next regular Executive Committee meeting or a special meeting called by the newly elected President.

Rules of Conduct: Candidates may not run for more than one position at a time. Candidates will observe all Dean's Office posting policies in regards to elevators, studios, doors and windows, and atrium railings. The Elections Committee Chair and all poll workers shall be members of the Chapter and shall not run for office during the elections they oversee. Poll workers will not campaign for (through display or speech) or otherwise endorse any candidate. Upon inquiries by voters, poll workers will direct voters to the location of campaign materials. Such materials will not be permitted within fifteen feet of the poll site. Voters must produce an I.D. to verify their eligibility to vote. Candidates and voters will at no time be closer than fifteen feet of the poll site except to cast a vote and while voting will not campaign for (through display or speech) or otherwise endorse any candidate. Complaints of any kind will be addressed to the Elections Committee Chair and referred to the Executive Committee for consideration.

ARTICLE SEVEN: CHAPTER MEETINGS

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Section One, Regular Meetings

A minimum of one regular meeting shall be held during each month of the academic year. At least four days notice shall be given for any general meeting of the Chapter.

Section Two, Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Executive Committee at any time, either at its own discretion or at the written request of twenty percent of the Chapter members. Business considered at a special meeting shall be limited to that prescribed in the notice for the meeting.

Section Three, Parliamentary Authority

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall govern the conduct of all meetings. A quorum shall be necessary for the transaction of any business. A quorum shall be defined as the majority of enrolled members of the Chapter present at any given meeting including at least two Officers. Decisions at meetings shall be made or approved by a majority vote unless otherwise required by this constitution.

ARTICLE EIGHT: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section One, Limitation of Chapter Actions

No action of this Chapter, the Executive Committee, any Chapter committee, or any Officer or Director shall directly or indirectly nullify or contravene any act or policy of the Institute, school, or of the local AIA Chapter.

Section Two, Endorsements

Neither the Chapter, nor anyone representing the Chapter, shall directly or indirectly make endorsements or recommendations of any enterprise operated for profit, or a political party or candidate, or of a commerce material, object, device, or process.

Section Three, Advertisements

Advertisement of any product, material, facility, or device used in or for the construction of buildings, any method of handling, using, distributing, or dealing with any of the aforementioned, and any person, firm, corporation, or association dealing with the aforementioned is prohibited in any publication of the Chapter.

Section Four, Personal Identification with the Institute

No member of a Student Chapter may use the seal or initial of the Institute on cards, stationary, signs, or in any other manner make representations tending to identify himself as a member of the Institute. A student member, wishing to identify his affiliation with the Institute may use the term Student Chapter Member of the AIAS but never as "Member of the AIAS." without the qualifying word 'student' included. Recorded evidence of violation of this requirement is sufficient to justify disciplinary action by the Student Chapter and to jeopardize the individual's future affiliation with the Institute.

ARTICLE NINE: ACTIVITIES

Methods to accomplish the objectives of the Chapter may include but are not limited to:

- Bringing guest lecturers to the school.

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- Promoting panel discussions concerning architectural issues by members of the sponsoring AIA Chapter.
- Inspection trips to building projects under direction of the architect.
- Providing real world experience opportunities for members through programs such as the Professional Mentor Program.
- Sponsoring design competitions and charrettes.
- Promoting competitions and opportunities for involvement with the Institute.
- Promoting social events such as the annual Halloween Party (originated in 1985) and the annual spring social event (originally called 'Spring Gala' in 1986).

ARTICLE TEN: AWARDS

This Chapter may, from time to time as funds or other means become available, make awards to members, faculty or staff. Each award shall be bestowed on behalf of the Chapter by concurring vote of all or all but one of the Executive Committee members after due consideration of the nominees and their work. The token of each award shall be in the form of a medal or engrossed certificate, or otherwise as the Executive Committee sees fit. So far as possible, the awards shall be presented at any monthly Chapter meeting, or at a joint meeting with the AIA chapter may decide other appropriate places or times as seen fit.

ARTICLE ELEVEN: AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this constitution may be made at any regularly scheduled meeting of the Chapter. Written proposals signed by ten Chapter members shall be publicly posted at least ten days before being voted on by the Chapter members. A majority vote of those members present and voting will be required for the passage of any amendments to this constitution.