

Bennington College  
SEPC By-laws

**Mission Statement:**

The purpose of SEPC is to provide a bridge of communication between students, faculty and administration by representing the student body in academic policy discussions.

**Article I: Infrastructure**

*Section 1) Class Representatives*

Class Representatives (CRs) facilitate communication between the students in a class and the professor. *faculty member*

A] Eligibility

Any student can be a CR for a class in which he/she is enrolled. Students can be a CR for more than one class.

B] Timeline

Within three weeks of the first day of classes, CR nominations will occur. Any student in the class can nominate a CR. Students can nominate themselves. In case of multiple nominations, an election by show of hands or written ballots will decide the CR by majority. The professor will give the results, in writing, to the appropriate Program Coordinator who will then update the database in the Dean's Office.

C] Course Evaluations

*What's the purpose of mid-term discussion?*

Mid-term discussion: The professor will allow 15 minutes for the SEPC mid-term discussion during the first class period after mid-term. The professor will leave the room and the CR will lead a discussion and take notes on student feedback. The discussion will cover, but is not limited to, course structure, workload, faculty feedback, mid-term evaluations, and ideas for the future of the course. The CR will read all notes aloud to the class to receive approval before discussing them with the professor. The CR will meet with the professor to relay a summary of the discussion.

End-of-term discussion and written evaluation: The professor will allow 20 minutes for the End-of-term discussion on or before the second-to-last class of the term. The professor will give the packet of evaluation forms to the CR and leave the room. The CR will distribute the evaluation forms to the class and allow 10 minutes for completion. The CR will not read these evaluations. The CR will then lead a discussion and take notes on student feedback. The discussion will cover positive and negative aspects of the class, problems students had, and ideas

that might improve the course in the future. The CR will write a summary of the discussion and present it to the class during the next class period. The class will either approve, or approve with modification. Any revisions suggested by the class are made at this time. The CR will turn in a packet complete with the summary and all student evaluations from the class to the Program Coordinator's office.

#### D] Additional Meetings

CRs can request in class meetings with or without the professor present to discuss pressing concerns. The CR will notify the appropriate Discipline Representative in the case of an additional in-class SEPC meeting.

### *Section 2) Discipline Representatives*

Discipline Representatives' (DRs) primary role is to facilitate communication between faculty and students within a particular discipline.

#### A] Eligibility

DRs are elected by the student body through Student Council-run elections during spring term. Students will have the opportunity to vote for all DRs, despite particular areas of concentration or ~~fields~~ <sup>areas</sup> of study.

Any student can run for DR of a discipline that includes his/her field of study as stated through the plan process.

Student Council will announce the results of the election before the end of the spring term.

The Freshman at Large position is not an elected position. The DRs will appoint a first-year student to fill this position during the first weeks of the fall term. Any first year student is eligible for Freshman at Large. The Freshman at Large will participate in SEPC body discussions and represent new student concerns.

#### B] Responsibilities

DRs will attend the SEPC body meetings which are held once a week for 1 hour.

DRs will meet with corresponding discipline faculty regularly to voice student concerns and opinions, <sup>and may</sup> as well as 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 communicate with CRs as necessary regarding specific concerns about courses or faculty. DRs will address issues raised in Additional Meetings as appropriate.

DRs will develop a strong presence in discipline gatherings and the academic community in general.

DRs will participate in campus-wide policy discussions as needed.

DRs will facilitate distribution of End-of-term evaluations.

DRs may be expected to fulfill other discipline-specific tasks,

C] Vote of No-confidence

as determined by  
conversations between D.R.'s  
& faculty  
& their.

At any point throughout the year, a DR can propose a Vote of No-confidence to the Head. The DR must specify which member of the SEPC body is being voted on. At the next SEPC body meeting, the Head will ask the DR in question to leave the room. At that time, any present DR can speak for or against the DR in question. The Secretary will then distribute anonymous, written ballots. The present DRs will vote and return the ballots to the Secretary, who will count them. Neither the Head nor the Secretary is <sup>eligible</sup> able to vote. The DR in question is then asked to return, and the Secretary will announce the results. If a majority voted No-confidence, the DR in question will be asked to step down and his/her position will be announced as open in the minutes. A new DR will be appointed by the body to fill the vacant position.

D] Appointment process

In the case of an open position, the opening will be published in the Coffee hour minutes and announced at the appropriate discipline meeting. Anyone interested is required to attend the next SEPC Body meeting. 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 opinion. A vote is then held. Neither the Head nor the Secretary is able to vote. The candidates are then <sup>asked to return to</sup> welcomed back into the room and the results announced. The candidates who were not selected will be asked to leave and the candidate who was elected will be announced as a SEPC Body member in the next minutes.

Section 3) Secretary

The Secretary of SEPC will communicate in writing between the SEPC body and the campus through weekly minutes.

A] Eligibility

Any student who has served as a DR for one full academic year can be the Secretary.

The Secretary will be appointed by the future Head before the end of the term. Any acting DR can request a Vote of No-confidence for the Secretary at any point after the appointment has happened. The appointment will be announced in the SEPC minutes.

B] Responsibilities

The Secretary will record the ~~content of the~~ weekly SEPC body meetings. <sup>minutes</sup> He/she will type each week's minutes and provide a copy for the Senior House Chairs to distribute with the Coffee Hour Minutes. The Senior House Chairs will determine the most convenient type of copy in conversation with the Secretary.

The Secretary will assist the Head in campus-wide discussions and communication needs. In the absence of the Head, the Secretary will run SEPC body meetings.

In the event that the Head steps down, or is removed from his/her position, the Secretary will step into the role and appoint a new Secretary from within the body.

Section 4) 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

Any student who has served as a DR for one full academic year can be the Head.

<sup>current</sup> The <sup>current</sup> acting Head will run elections for the future Head. In the event that the <sup>current</sup> acting Head would like to run for future Head, the Secretary will run elections. In the event that both the Head and the Secretary would like to run for Head, the senior-most member of the SEPC body who is not running for the position will run elections. Two weeks prior to the campus-wide elections, the Head will collect nominations during the SEPC body meeting. In the next SEPC body meeting, the body will have an open question and answer session directed at the nominees. The nominees will then leave the room. Voting will be done by anonymous written elimination. In each round of voting, the candidate with the least votes will be eliminated, the body will then vote on the remaining candidate. The Head and the Secretary will not vote; both will count the ballots.

B] Responsibilities

The Head of SEPC will prepare an agenda, organize and run weekly SEPC body meetings.

The Head will meet with the Dean and Provost of the College on a ~~weekly~~ <sup>regular</sup> 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.

The Head will serve as a member of the Talking Heads.

When academic policy discussions concerning all students arise, the Head will maintain communication between the faculty, administration and students

through meetings, galleys, phone messages, e-mail, and any other appropriate methods.

The Head will promote the involvement of the SEPC body in the discussion of academic issues at the College.

The Head will coordinate the collating and distributing of End-of-term evaluations.

C] Replacement

In the event that the Head steps down, takes a term off, or is removed through a vote-of-no-confidence, the internal election process will take place. The Secretary will act as interim Head until a new Head is elected, at which point, the new Head will appoint a new Secretary.

**Article I: Communication**

SEPC will communicate all information available about academic concerns, changes, policies, and interests to the faculty, staff and students.

*Section 1) Methods*

A] Galleys

The Head or Secretary will author the galley, a letter addressed to the college community. Photocopies will be made through the Office of Student Life. Mailboxes will be stuffed by members of the SEPC Body.

B] Campus-wide meetings

Meetings are called and led by the Head. The Secretary will record the minutes for the meeting. Meetings will be announced using posters, phone calls to House Chairs, publication in the Coffee hour minutes, or dinging in the dining halls.

C] SEPC house visits

A different member of the SEPC Body will attend each house's coffee hour. They will work in communication with the corresponding House Chairs to present information and gather feedback and other opinions.

~~D] APC house visits~~

~~Six houses on campus are designated in communication with the Senior House Chairs. Each designated house has two sister houses. In this way, every house is assigned a meeting point. A different member of APC will attend each of the six meetings. Each meeting will be led by a different pair of SEPC Body members.~~

If other campus meetings are organized, for instance, in cooperation with APC, disciplinary representatives are expected to

E] Table tents

The Head or Secretary will author a bulliten designed for the dining hall tables. Photocopies will be made through Student Life. Members of the SEPC body will distribute the table tents.