



Charter for the Associated Students of Minerva

Minerva Schools at KGI

Fall 2017

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A TL;DR and a Call to Action

The ASM will consist of three elected representatives from each cohort. At a high-level, these representatives have three main, directional responsibilities: first, to their fellow students, in that they must understand, synthesize, and propose solutions for the issues that their peers face; second, to staff and administrators, in that they must meet regularly with staff/administrators to present student issues in a constructive way and

establish steps for moving forward; lastly, they must communicate information from the senior team back to the students, to minimize information asymmetry.

This charter contains the foundation for such an action-oriented ASM. With the major incidents of last semester, we need a student body that acts now to ensure that the proper follow-throughs take place. With almost half of our Minerva experience over, we need a student government that makes sure the lessons learned from the first iteration of the Inaugural Class are indeed learned by Minerva staff and future students. With more than half of our Minerva experience over, we need representatives who will draw students together, even in the face of differing opinions and experiences. This charter sets a framework for all of these things, but it is incomplete without dedicated and consistent representatives to execute it.

December 2016

1. Introduction: Important Considerations

Minerva is currently a small enough student body where excessive bureaucracy is not necessary. We have strength unique to our small numbers, and can create a highly efficient, functional government because of it.

The government is not solely a means of feedback but rather a way for students to represent other students while decisions are made and problems are solved. This includes action oriented positions that collaborate directly with administrators.

This model intends to be scalable and flexible to better fit the needs of the Minerva student body as it grows and changes. This charter is meant to be a scaffold to which additional infrastructure can be added.

The current number of representatives in the ASM is three (3) students per cohort, elected through the guidelines below.

2. Purpose

- 1) Create a problem-solving body that meaningfully collaborates with administrators, staff, and students to tackle important issues and design representative and implementable solutions.
- 2) Systematize communication and facilitate trust between administration and students
 - a) Students are currently unsure what concerns admin have already heard and are addressing. This is being greatly improved with UserVoice, but in person meetings can be used as an additional resource for both administrators and students to learn from each other.
 - b) The content of these conversations needs to be easily accessible, so information communicated in smaller, exclusive meetings is open for reading by the student body.
- 3) Create student points of contact for administrators; Staff would like for students' many viewpoints to be synthesized in a useful and productive manner.
- 4) Support and lead student projects and initiatives to facilitate improvements to Minerva.
- 5) Hold representatives accountable to the larger student body.

- a) By function of being elected, these students must deliver on whatever platforms they run on, or risk being removed.
- 6) Serve as a foundation for future improvements, while satisfying current needs.
- 7) Provide students with personal growth and leadership opportunities.

3. Rationale

Please see this document for a full explanation:

<https://docs.google.com/a/minerva.kgi.edu/document/d/1oxpWnmKvAe8dBqaTV-XHF DqrBRIZy6yUmLoM3grmhts/edit?usp=sharing>

4. Representative Duties

The duties of the common representatives include the following:

1. One meeting per month with **cohort-specific** representatives to discuss issues currently facing that cohort.
2. One meeting per month with **all** representatives to discuss issues facing the entire student body.
3. One meeting per month with the senior team to discuss general issues and culture within the student body; to be proactive about student concerns.
4. Two monthly opportunities for any student to raise issues/concerns (i.e. open office hours with cookies), including concerns about the ASM charter.
5. For significantly noteworthy or complex issues, spearhead efforts on data collection (e.g. to collect student housing preferences) and idea generation (e.g. how can we improve grading for academics). This shall be done in accordance with the relevant staff member(s).
6. Ordain and use student-led spearheaded groups on topics brought forth by the student body, promoting official communication when many students are involved.
7. For any time-sensitive issues, hold emergency meetings with all representatives, students, and the administration.
8. Hold any other necessary meetings or votes with the entire student body.
9. Act as a liaison between the administration and the student body to relay necessary information and updates.

- a. Document meetings, key issues, and subsequent outcomes for posterity and transparency.
10. Work as necessary with other staff and faculty to identify issues and solve problems.
11. Representatives are elected for one semester; spring representatives additionally serve throughout the summer.

5. Protocol for Representative Action

To be clear, all students can and should continue to engage with administrators, faculty, and staff to discuss their opinions and ideas. This government should not limit anyone's participation, merely systematize certain lines of communication. In line with this, all students will have the ability to submit complaints, issues, concerns, or questions to representatives with guaranteed responses.

1. Representatives should, through their preferred means of communication (e.g. email, Google Form) receive inquiries from any student.
2. Inquiries can be of any nature: feedback for the representative, feedback for Minerva, a personal issue with staff, concern about an upcoming event, etc.
3. Representatives must respond to the inquiry within 10 calendar days time. Responses will generally fall into the following categories:
 - a. The issue is already on representatives' agenda (through either the representative's own volition, or through a previous action request).
 - b. The issue is new to the representative, and requires further investigation. Upon further investigation (through surveys or informal means), the representative will report on the issue to the senior team.
 - c. The issue is new to the representative, but does not require further investigation, and will be reported to the senior team at the next meeting.
4. Unless otherwise requested, the representative must document the inquiry in a public document (without the name of the student inquirer) and their decided upon response.
5. Thus, all problems should eventually receive some sort of joint response from ASM representatives and administrators, which will be documented in the ASM's monthly meeting with administrators and be available to all students.

6. Representative Eligibility

To run for office, each candidate **must** submit a platform of issues and corresponding actions they plan to take, if elected, to the Election Board. In addition to this:

For Election

- Must be a current undergraduate student at the Minerva Schools at KGI
- Must be in good academic standing (not in Academic Probation)

To Remain in Office

- Must be a current undergraduate student at the Minerva Schools at KGI
- Must have been elected by student body (information on election in “Elections” section)

7. Recall

- Recall is the process of the student body asking to replace a representative with another candidate.
- To initiate a recall for the first time of a semester, at least 30% of the student body must petition to replace a representative with another candidate.
- A standard election (only for the recalled representative/s) is then initiated to determine the new elected representative. Any eligible candidate may run for election.
- For any secondary recall (repeated recall attempt for the same person), at least 50% of the student body must request to replace a representative with another candidate.

8. Resignation

- Elections are called for any vacancy due to resignation.
- The elections must be completed and a new member replaces the resigned member within 2 weeks of the resignation, following all election rules.

9. Election Rules

9.1 Rationale

The election process detailed herein is designed in consideration of the following principles:

- To ensure fairness, integrity and meritocracy in selecting our representatives
- To engage students from a variety of perspectives and backgrounds that truly represent the diverse student body of Minerva
- To increase the level of participation of the student body in all aspects of community building: during election of representatives and after

9.2 Elections Board

The existing ASM representatives for each cohort will nominate one member, per cohort, to the Elections Board to plan, coordinate, and lead the elections process.

Students are nominated to the Elections Board prior to Elections Week (during Week 14 of the previous semester). Elections Board members are automatically appointed if they are nominated and accept the nomination. However, Elections Board members will forfeit their right to vote or be elected again. The Elections Board must have at least two members (1 from each cohort). The Elections Board will run the election in order to maintain full transparency and integrity of the elections system.

Complaints to nominations may be fielded through the Protocol for Representative Action, subject to the same guaranteed and public response.

The Elections Board is an intensive two-week responsibility for the Elections Board members, and thus they shall meet as often as is necessary to ensure the smooth operation of the election process.

The only exception to the traditional elections board process shall be made during the Spring 2017 elections, when the ASM Commission will hold elections.

9.3 1st Year Elections

The first election for 1st year students will take place during the spring semester. During the fall semester, 1st years will be represented by the representatives of the next oldest class. Election Board members overseeing Freshman Elections are nominated by upperclassmen representatives.

9.4 Procedure

Announcements

If not explicitly stated, Election Board announcements will be made through the ASM email. However, the Elections Board may exercise their discretion in utilizing Minerva communication channels to disseminate information.

Election Days

Elections shall happen during Week 1 of each semester (fall and spring). The order of events is as follows:

9.4.1 Announcing Elections Week

- a) The Elections Board will announce a timeline for all relevant meetings.

9.4.2 Declaring candidacy

- b) The board is responsible to meet with students, especially those interested in declaring candidacy, regarding the ASM as a whole, detailing the different positions available and their responsibilities and requirements.
- c) The board is responsible to encourage students of many different backgrounds to declare candidacy.
- d) The board will allow at least 2 days (48 hours) for students to announce their candidacy.
- e) The board is responsible to receive candidacy announcements from students and determine their eligibility as outlined during the Representatives section.

9.4.3 Campaigning (further details below)

- f) The board is responsible to ensure that all election rules are upheld.
 - i) The spirit of the rules should take precedence over the technicalities, ensuring a fair and issues-oriented campaign. Best intent is always assumed for candidates.
- g) The board is responsible to ensure that students can make an informed choice of their representatives by:
 - i) Making sure candidates submit their platforms and/or their campaign videos detailing their position on the issues

- ii) Hosting at least one Meet The Candidates session
- iii) Ensuring that all information is open among the student body, and that all events are accessible to the most number of students.

9.4.5 Elections

- h) Each representative is elected using the Schulze method
- i) In the event of a tie amongst the top three candidates, those three will hold office. In the event of a voting tie between the second, third, and fourth, or third and below candidates, another vote will be held, solely for those two individuals, with the top vote holder automatically elected representative. In the event of a tie amongst the top three, four, five, etc. another vote will be held until there are two candidates who hold the most votes. In the event of equal or fewer candidates than the number of available seats, representatives shall be elected with confidence voting.
- j) The board is responsible for maximizing turnout equitably, administering the vote using an online form, protecting voter data, tallying the votes, and announcing the elected representatives.
- k) After the elected representatives meet for the first time, the Elections Board for that election season is dissolved.

9.5 Campaign Rules

- 1) Campaigning may only occur during the campaign period (Week 1 of the semester).
 - a) Candidate websites and platforms will be hosted by the Elections Board on the ASM website.
- 2) Candidates are responsible for running and producing their own campaigns.
 - a) Candidates must comply with the Minerva Public Relations Guidelines.
- 3) General Rules of Fair Play:
 - a) Run an issues-oriented campaign.
 - b) Refrain from Negative Campaigning.
 - c) Assume best intent.
 - d) Do not manipulate or unethically persuade voters.
- 4) If an Elections Board member believes a candidate has violated these rules, they may force a discussion of the candidate's campaign during an Elections Board meeting.

- a) If the Elections Board votes to sanction the candidate, the candidate must be warned in-person to cease their behavior.
- b) If the candidate does not cease their behavior, the Elections Board may disclose their behavior to the electorate to solicit comments.
 - i) Based on the above public commentary, the Elections Board may either:
 - (1) Disqualify a candidate's campaign
 - (2) Sanction a candidate for the second time
 - ii) For either case, the Elections Board must explain their decision.

10. Referenda

ASM representatives will act as representatives of student opinion to the administration, and hold the position of amending the Charter as is necessary. In order to pass an amendment all representatives must vote, and agree unanimously, to the referenda before it may be implemented.

To gauge and understand student ideas and issues with the current Charter they will provide an open online form, accessible by all students at any time. They will be required to review the submission form once a week and hold a vote among the ASM representatives about approving/rejecting the referenda proposals. This vote will take place in a public meeting that will occur in the last month of each semester. Representatives must make sure the event is promoted through official channels to encourage student engagement and attendance, in order to discuss the possible amendments and provide arguments for either implementation or refusal. Representatives may choose to hold one additional public vote mid-semester.

The form will also be available to all representatives to submit additional ideas, either personally, or from the broader community. To gauge broader community interest, they will be required to design and implement a means of tracking student satisfaction with the current charter – this may be done through a town hall or survey – as often as they want, but no less than once a semester.

Referenda, denied by the representatives, can allow for the student body as a whole to both direct the actions of representatives and change the structure of the ASM itself.

Simply, a referendum is a letter addressed to the ASM with a specific, formal request to review the previous amendments. It should be signed by one or multiple members of the community, the original referendum writers. A referendum can request a change in how it responds to a certain event or issue or in how the ASM conducts its affairs. Referenda of the latter kind are asking for a change to the ASM charter, and should be specific in which sections are to be added/changed and the exact wording of the change.

The ASM representatives must organize an up/down vote of any referenda it receives. If a referendum receives at least 10% of the student vote, the ASM must write a response detailing if and why or why not the petition changes the ASM's position or structure.

Referenda requesting a policy change on the part of the ASM will pass automatically with 50% of the vote (simple majority), and the ASM representatives must comply with the change. Referenda requesting a change to the structure of the ASM (i.e. an edit to the charter) must pass with a supermajority ($\frac{2}{3}$), and the ASM must immediately comply with the change.

Members of the ASM can also write referenda.

For any Charter amendments that require a change on the side of the administration, the Charter referenda must also be approved by the appropriate administrator.

11. Addendum

1. 2020 and 2019 guarantee:
 - a. A class-specific government will always contain communication mechanisms that do not inhibit communication between either class and the administration.
 - b. Either class can individually decide to "opt-out" or to remove themselves and their half of the "Student-Body Voice" from the Charter. This is only applicable if decided on by the specific class and is representative of the students wants and needs.

- i. If either class opts-out, the other class cannot speak on their behalf. Class-specific representatives may only attend to their issues, and school-wide decisions still need to be inclusive of students from both classes when presenting a unified voice to the administration.
 - ii. However, the ASM is not responsible for how administration decides to respond to such opt-outs, and is aware they may decide to communicate with one of the formal representative bodies, not both.
2. 2020 and 2019 do not guarantee:
 - a. The current structure of the Charter being voted on January 13th (2017), will remain the same over time. Either class can amend the Charter if it does not fit the specific needs of their class, so long as it is representative of the students wants and needs and satisfies the “guarantees” above.
3. A previous version of this charter included only two (2) elected representatives. This was changed to three (3), with expected workload and the additional work that is expected on charter amendments.