Referenda Information

Short Title: Do you believe that it is necessary to initiate a redrafting of the Student Government Association's Constitution to reflect the interests of the student body?

Question Type: Resolution of Governance

Introductory Clauses:

WHEREAS: Article II of the Student Government Association’s Constitution defines the Mission Statement of the Association, which states that it "serves as the voice of the undergraduate student body,” and that it “strives to promote student interests within the University and its surrounding communities in order to enrich education, student life, and the overall Northeastern experience.”; and,

WHEREAS: Article II of the Association’s Constitution defines the object of the Association “to be the official liaison between the students and the University Faculty and Administration,” and “to be the means by which the student body of the University communicates with the faculty, administration, and Trustees of the University,”; and,

WHEREAS: Article III of the Association’s Constitution states that the “Student Senate is the representative body of Northeastern University students that governs the Association”; and,

WHEREAS: Article IV of the Association’s Constitution outlines the process to join Senate, wherein “Senators will receive membership status through the petition process whereby they are responsible for completing the nomination form,” and to do so they must obtain thirty signatures from an “identifiable constituency”; and,

WHEREAS: The Senate does not accurately represent the proportional breakdown of the Undergraduate Student Body along lines of its participation in undergraduate academic programs; and,

WHEREAS: The current structure of the Association, which lacks an electoral mechanism to determine the membership of Senate, does not facilitate active consultation of constituents in the pursuit of deriving student interests, particularly for students of marginalized backgrounds; and,

WHEREAS: The Association’s Direct Elections currently exhibit low voter turnout, such that there have been only two elections in the past ten years that reached the requisite participation threshold to be validated without triggering voting extensions; and,

WHEREAS: The two aforementioned Direct Elections were distinguished by the presence of referenda which facilitated active participation from the Undergraduate
Student Body toward expressing the student interest while offering input on the direction of the University; and,

WHEREAS: Article XI of the Association’s Constitution states that the document may be amended via the ratification of “a Resolution of Governance, as defined by the Bylaws,”; and,

WHEREAS: Article V of the Association’s Bylaws states that a “Resolution of Governance shall be used to amend the Constitution and Bylaws,” and that “Referenda will be classified according to the same distinctions as Senate legislation,”; and,

WHEREAS: This legislation’s “Question Type” is designated as a “Resolution of Governance”;

Operative Clauses:

That it is the Undergraduate Student Body’s Resolution of Governance that the Student Government Association, in view of its goal of promoting student interests democratically, should take the following steps toward redrafting the Association’s Constitution to more directly represent and engage the Undergraduate Student Body:

1. To establish a Coordinating Committee, co-chaired by the Vice President of Student Affairs and a Representative of the sponsors of this referendum question, to oversee the implementation of the following Operative Clauses.
   1a. The aforementioned Vice President of Student Affairs refers to the individual who is elected by their peers at the Association’s final Full Body Session of the Spring 2016 Semester.
   1b. The aforementioned Representative of the sponsors of this referendum question will be nominated internally and announced by the date of the Association’s final Full Body Session of the Spring 2016 Semester.
   1c. These two individuals will convene before the end of the Spring 2016 Semester to commit to a timeline for fulfilling the responsibilities specified in Operative Clause 1.

2. To establish a number of Town Halls, in which the Association’s Constitution is reviewed and compared to alternative models with the Undergraduate Student Body discussing and amending elements accordingly.
   2a. Town Hall meetings will be open to all members of the Undergraduate Student Body, with the President, Executive Vice President, Vice President of Student Affairs, Elections Chair, and the Parliamentarian representing the Association.
   2b. Association members listed in Operative Clause 2a must be physically present for at least four (4) Town Hall meetings.
2c. A sufficient number of Town Halls will be mandated to achieve the intent of this legislation without disadvantaging students who will not be present for the full duration of the redrafting process; this will include two (2) Town Halls for the Summer 1 2016 Semester, two (2) Town Halls for the Summer 2 2016 Semester, and four (4) Town Halls for the Fall 2016 Semester.

2d. The Coordinating Committee will meet on a medial basis respective to the Town Hall process to guarantee that the requisite logistics toward the communication of the redrafting process are met.

2e. The Coordinating Committee will be responsible for resolving questions of process for Town Halls not delineated in the Operative Clauses of this legislation.

3. To ratify a proposal for a new Constitution by the conclusion of the Fall 2016 Semester via direct referendum vote from the Undergraduate Student Body.
   
   3a. Ten percent (10%) of the Undergraduate Student Body must participate in the direct referendum vote to validate the result.
   
   3b. In the event that this referendum vote succeeds in capturing the support of a majority of participating students, the new constitutional structure will be implemented for the Spring 2017 Semester.
   
   3c. In the event that this referendum vote fails to capture the support of a majority of participating students, the current Association Constitution will remain in place.

4. The Resolution of Governance contained within this legislation will be considered by the Undergraduate Student Body to have taken effect upon the occurrence of circumstances described in Operative Clause 3b, and will thereafter be presented to the President of the University for them or their designee to approve.

Be it further resolved that it will be the responsibility of the President and Executive Vice President directly elected by the Undergraduate Student Body in the Spring 2016 Semester to collaborate with the sponsors of this question to implement the operative clauses.