



# Voter's Guide to Proposed ASWU Constitutional Revisions and Amendments

Spring 2021

*By Hannah Higgins*

Dear Student,

As an organization, the Associated Students of Whitworth University (ASWU), spent a large portion of the last three months working towards updating our Constitution so that it better serves the current and future Whitworth community. Over recent years, we have noticed that there were current issues within our infrastructure that negatively impacted the students we are called to advocate well for and serve.

According to ASWU's Bylaws, as well as our consciences, any proposed Constitutional revisions and amendments must pass through the student body by a two-thirds vote. This is a huge, but necessary, responsibility to place upon the students. The purpose of this document is to adequately educate you, the students, on the proposed changes so that you may be prepared to take advantage of this responsibility.

Please bear in mind that each student will be voting to approve or disapprove the revisions and amendments in a blanket vote, or as a whole package of changes.

If, after reviewing this document, you have any questions or concerns, please email [hhiggins22@my.whitworth.edu](mailto:hhiggins22@my.whitworth.edu) for clarification and/or guidance.

Additionally; the document that we are proposing changes on directly can be found via this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cpi8Yt6NGzosex7mqL1JpUAvZlzt-2xY/view?usp=sharing>

Thank you for your continued pursuit of just knowledge and practice of holistic love for the current and future Whitworth community. Hopefully I have added in enough of my own personal sense of humor in order to keep your attention through this guide.

Blessings,

*Hannah Higgins*

Executive Vice President

*Associated Students of Whitworth University*

Class of 2022

she/her/hers

[hhiggins22@my.whitworth.edu](mailto:hhiggins22@my.whitworth.edu)



*Broad investigation of changes as a whole, with defenses for and against:*

Overview:

As stated above, proposed changes to the constitution primarily serve to better represent the current and future Whitworth communities. This is important, and changes to representation, names, and student elections, make up the bulk of these changes.

Background:

Our intention is to make campus a better place. Our mission statement reports that we are "committed to promoting holistic growth, safety, well-being, and a united fellowship". This includes: "[serving] and [advocating] for the diverse voices of our student body justly and with compassion, establishing an equitable community through grace, respect, and intentional engagement". These changes were discussed over a period of multiple months, and were the cumulative work of many intelligent people with backgrounds that matter to the discussion. After the original committee settled on exact changes to propose, the proposition went to the full assembly, and was voted on at the meeting of February 24, 2021.

Minutes from the meeting can be accessed through our website here:

<https://www.whitworthaswu.com/minutes-2019-20>, where an individual can see the full thought and discussion that a team of 30 individuals had over a nearly two hour long meeting. We are not, by any means, suggesting these changes lightly. Every member of ASWU this year lives to serve our campus and community; hopefully this will translate over the explanations of the individual changes.

Argument for:

These changes truly are what we believe will best serve our campus. Even if you disagree with one of the changes, please consider the greater good that the amendments will serve as a full package. If you would like to discuss this more in depth, I would strongly encourage you to email [hhiggins22@my.whitworth.edu](mailto:hhiggins22@my.whitworth.edu) once again, or anyone else on ASWU this year. Let's get coffee and discuss this!

Argument against:

Change is scary. We all fear it on some level, and taking a leap this large as an organization could have extreme consequences. The current constitution is serving campus just fine, nothing is completely broken, so why is there a need or push to fix things?

Proposed Revisions and Amendments (in order of appearance) with defenses for and against:

**Article I: Name, Eligibility, and Privileges:**

Overview:

The proposed change in Article 1 is to remove the wording “undergraduate” from section two of the article.

Background:

Administration is currently working toward expansion of our graduate programs at Whitworth, and are discussing the immersion of various graduate students in the Whitworth community. Currently, they are debating whether certain programs could have the option of joining ASWU as members, meaning that they would pay a fee. If/when they have this option, the wording as stands would prevent such individuals from being involved at an internal level within ASWU.

Argument for:

The current mindset of the ASWU is that any student who pays the fee should have full access to all benefits we offer, including running for office, voting, and representing ASWU in various intercollegiate opportunities. That is all that this revision is providing for. Voting for this now will only provide people who pay the fee with these privileges, and is avoiding having to make this change last minute, potentially causing graduate students who end up paying the fee to not have privileges because of the word “undergraduate” in this article.

Argument against:

No one but undergraduate students currently pay the ASWU fee anyway, this is a problem for the future when more information is available, and one that we should not be discussing now.

**Blanket revision regarding “By-Law” vs “Bylaw”:**

Overview:

Proposed change to an universal spelling of this word in the organization’s official documents. Namely, all spellings would officially be: “Bylaw”.

Background:

When overviewing our Constitution and Bylaws, it was noted that there was no agreement between the two documents as to which spelling was correct. It is problematic because the Constitution would refer to “By-Laws”, but we have no such things to refer to. We only have “Bylaws”.

Argument for:

Hyphens suck. We are much better off working with one cohesive word.

Seriously though, we do need cohesion across documents in order to function well.

Argument against:

Chaos rules, and is what every organization should thrive within. Hyphens breed chaos.

#### **Article IV (and subsequent blanket revision): Organizational Structure: Executive Body:**

Overview:

Proposed name changes from Executive Vice President to Vice President, Financial Vice President to Financial Director, and Administrative Assistant to Communications Director.

Background:

Current names such as Executive Vice President (EVP), Financial Vice President (FVP), and Administrative Assistant within the Executive body breed confusion about what the jobs are and entail. For example, most student governments do not have two vice presidents, and the EVP and FVP have very different jobs. Additionally, all Executive members are Executive, not just the EVP. "Administrative Assistant" was also seen as something that lowered that particular title below the level of regard compared to what the other Executive members held in. The proposed changes are what the assembly agreed are the most accurate to the jobs the seats are doing and least confusing to students at large.

Argument for:

These changes will make the Executive Committee and its members' roles more accessible to students. They eliminate the confusion of having two vice presidents with separate duties and roles in the organization. This also allows the fourth executive member (proposed Communications Director) to be held in the same regard as the other members, and not exist as an after-thought as a job. Our ideal is also to expand the duties of this role as we look towards a future where we communicate better with other departments and organizations on campus.

Argument against:

The names are fine as they are and changing them in this way leads to the potential degrading of the people holding the positions in the future, as the titles do not look as prestigious on a resume. Additionally, change is bad and should not be supported.

## **Article V: Organizational Structure: Legislative Body**

### Overview:

Proposed changes to organizational structure and assembly membership.

### Background:

These changes were the original reason that we decided to reevaluate our constitution and bylaws. What the organization has been operating under in regards to representation for students. Changes proposed in this article, in order of appearance, include:

- Getting rid of on campus Zone Representative. In the past, their jobs were not clearly defined, and seemed to be positions that could be reallocated in order to be more efficient.
- Excluding the Village from receiving a Senator. Currently, the Village is represented under a pairing with Boppel, but as it is a specific community, we recognized a need for a specific representative. However, with such a small population, we also did not see a need to have a Senator position for the community. Later, we propose adding a representative specifically for this group of students.
- Changing “theme houses” to “Neighborhood”, as that is what Residence Life is now calling this housing option.
- Adding an International Student Senator. This was seen as a need, as their current representation, through the Global Engagement Representative does not seem to be enough for the community. A Senator would be able to be paid enough in order to hold weekly office hours, send a weekly newsletter, and host events.
- Deleting the sentence holding ASWU zones to a certain threshold number of students. This was cumbersome in the past, and caused representation on campus to not be 100% equitable 100% of the time. This gives us more freedom to move outside of purely numbers-based representation, and give representation to communities in need.
- Adding a clause with the representation we would like to try to implement in coming years, specifically in place of the on campus zone-representative system. We outline positions including Incoming Students, the Village, and the Off-Campus Representatives.
- Deleting the Global Engagement Representative position. With the changes we made, we are providing for the international community through the International Student Senator (discussed further above).

Argument for:

These changes are ones that the Constitution Committee, and the ASWU Assembly both believe would be the best way to amend representation at Whitworth. We do not believe that equality is the same as equity. These changes reflect that belief, and serve students in need of representation. In no way is any undergraduate student group excluded from representation in this model, and we are proud of that achievement.

Argument against:

These are substantial changes to be made in one fell swoop; that is a lot of internal structure that will be different in the coming years. Perhaps ASWU should consider making these changes more gradually in order to make them well.

**Article VII: Elections:**

Overview:

Proposed removal of primary elections and subsequent amendments to election procedures.

Background:

This article has substantial changes. Changes proposed in this article, in order of appearance, include:

- Deleting the primary elections from the current process of student elections. In our experience, students at large do not understand that there are two separate elections, and that they must vote two times for each season of student elections (one in the fall and one in the spring).
- Moving the threshold at which a winner can be decided from 45% of the vote down to 40% of the vote. This was a decision we made so as to avoid run-off elections if they seemed unnecessary. The candidate with the majority of the vote would be declared the winner, but this amendment would allow us to declare a winner if one person has over 40% of the vote, meaning that much of their potential constituency is in agreement.
- Mandating that a reelection (or run-off election) must be held within four days of the closing of the polls. This means that results of the election would be available more quickly than the previous standard of 10 days after the closing of the polls.
- Allowing for write-in candidates to still be official candidates, and providing them with a fair shot at election through run-off elections if that is the situation that is necessary.

Argument for:

These are changes that we truly think will benefit the student body to the highest capacity. If a run-off election were necessary in a situation where Primary Elections previously may have been beneficial, there will still be two elections, and the second one, a run-off, will have more crowd appeal. It will also be able to be catered to the community in need of the run-off election, and not put the entire campus through an unnecessary and overcomplicated elections process.

Argument against:

Too many changes again. We have always done Primary Elections in the past, and traditions are what this campus lives and breathes. New traditions are not to be explored. Stick to your guns and don't let this change occur.

### **Article VIII: Vacancy of Office**

Overview:

Proposed amendments for vacancy of office to Vice President and Financial Director Positions to be approved by majority vote of assembly. Additionally, revisions to existing guidelines for senators and representatives' elections in case of vacancies.

Background:

These changes were made because of inconsistencies between the Constitution and the Bylaws. The changes proposed make more sense for the way that we currently function internally.

Argument for:

Not much would change should these revisions pass. These changes make sense and are of sound judgement. No power is given without being checked, just as our federal government is intended to function, so would our student government.

Argument against:

We should be different from our federal government. Dictatorship and communism at the same time is the way to go at Whitworth!

### **Blanket revision regarding Pronouns:**

Overview:

Blanket amendment to the constitution in order to have "his/her/their" in place of "his/her" pronouns wherever "his/her" pronouns are currently used.

Background:

The current constitution only includes "his/her" pronouns whenever pronouns are being used. This does not accurately reflect our diverse

community that we are attempting to advocate for and represent well. We are choosing to add “their” to “his/her” because all are valid gender identities, and simply changing all pronouns to “their” is not inclusive or representative of our diverse student body.

Argument for:

It is 2021. We can be an inclusive and loving community, no matter what your personal opinions of other people's lives are.

Argument against:

I actually cannot think of a valid argument against this.

### **Article IX: Accountability:**

Overview:

Proposal to add “remain in good standing with the University” to the code of conduct under section two, item c, and correct capitalization errors.

Background:

The change that adds “good standing” to the code of conduct for ASWU employees means that anyone on any sort of probation from the University would not be an employee of this organization. Additionally, good grammar is always something we can get behind.

Argument for:

This is the standard that Leadership across campus holds themselves to, ASWU should be no different. Good grammar for the win!

Argument against:

ASWU should be different from the rest of Leadership, and employ students that break the Big 3, are Title IX offenders, and/or are currently having trouble in classes. That is an accurate representation at its finest. Grammar sucks.

### **Article XIII: Interpretation of the Constitution and its “By-Laws”**

Overview:

Proposed revision, adding Appellate Process clause for Interpretation of Constitution

Background:

When interpreting the constitution, as it stands, there are no checks or balances against the president and the interpretation he/she/they provide. This revision would provide for that check and balance.

Argument for:

These changes make sense and are of sound judgement. No power is given without being checked, just as our federal government is intended to function, so would our student government.



Argument against:

Again, I ask you, what would this campus and community be without communism and dictatorship. These changes take away too much power from one person.

**Code word: Banana :)**