

Heller Students Association (HSA)

Constitution for the HSA

Spring 2024

Authored by

HSA Board & Senate

Board Members:

- Fatoumata Jaitoh – Co-chair
- Nizar Ahmed – Co-Chair
- Benedict Owusu – Events and Public Relations Coordinator
- Akanksha Majumder – Student and Accessibility Support Coordinator
- Andrew Luutu – Board Secretary and Finance Coordinator

Senate Representatives:

- Christian E. Gochez - PhD
- Divine Mebune Nkwelle - COEX
- Ismail Ndalami Salihu – MS GHPM
- Samuel Siaw – SID
- Debbie Stenoien – MPP
- Isabella Sollazzo – MBA

Preamble:

We, the students at the Heller School of Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, in recognition of the principles that guide our pursuit of knowledge, commitment to social justice, and dedication to fostering a vibrant and inclusive community, hereby establish this Constitution for the Heller Student Association (HSA).

In pursuit of our shared vision for a more just and equitable society, we affirm the importance of academic excellence, critical inquiry, and the application of knowledge to address the complex challenges of our time. As members of the Heller community, we recognize the unique responsibility we bear as future leaders and change-makers in the fields of social policy and management.

In solidarity, we commit ourselves to fostering an environment that values diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to upholding the principles of respect, empathy, and collaboration. We acknowledge the inherent dignity of every individual and strive to create a space where all voices are heard and respected, regardless of background, identity, or perspective.

With a shared dedication to service, innovation, and the pursuit of social justice, we establish the Heller Student Association as a vehicle for collective action, collaboration, and mutual support. We pledge to actively engage in the academic, professional, and social aspects of our community, fostering connections that transcend disciplines and perspectives.

Through this Constitution, we articulate our collective aspirations, establish a framework for shared governance, and set forth the principles that will guide our actions as members of the Heller Student Association. In doing so, we commit ourselves to the continual betterment of our community, the promotion of social justice, and the advancement of knowledge for the betterment of society.

In witness whereof, we, the members of the Heller Student Association, do hereby adopt and enact this Constitution on this 2nd of April 2024.

Article I. Objectives and Purposes

The objectives and purposes to which the Heller Students Association (HSA) are dedicated are as follows:

- To provide a forum for discussion of issues of concern to the overall student body at the Heller School including master's and PhD students.
- To advocate for the students' interests with the faculty and administration of Heller School of Social Policy and Management.
- To organize, promote, and conduct activities beneficial to students' life.
- To disseminate information of potential interest to students at Heller.
- To help establish, support, and assist working groups.
- To appoint, participate and represent the student body in meetings organized by Heller administration.
- To own and manage property and accounts that will assist in securing the above objectives.

Article II. Structure of the Heller Students Association

Section 2.1: Membership

The Heller Student Association consists of a board of directors (Executive Board) and a senate. The board of directors are elected by all active students of the Heller every fall semester for the following academic year. The senate is composed of the representatives of each program at the Heller School including PhD students. These members are elected by students of each program respectively.

All active current full-time Heller students including online and full-time students of potential newly introduced programs are eligible for election or appointment to the HSA, as well as to any committee, internal or external, to represent Heller students' body. All students at Heller can participate in all activities of the HSA. These appointments will last one academic year, depending on position (see descriptions below); participating members must remain active students for the duration of their time in service.

Section 2.1(a): HSA Executive Board

The elected members of the HSA Executive Board are as follows:

Co-Chairs (2):

The senior leadership of the Heller Student Association is represented by an Executive Board including the two Co-Chairs and Directors. Each position shall be voted in through a general body election and is open to all active students at Heller.

Co-Chairs:

- Convene and facilitate bi-weekly meetings of the HSA board of directors.
- Represent the Heller student body to the wider community through (monthly) meetings including — but not limited to — the Education Steering Committee, board of advisers, Dean of students, Heller Academic and Student Services (Associate Director, currently Marc Kiredjian), the Office of Equity, Inclusion & Diversity, the Career Development Center, Alumni board meetings, etc.
- Present HSA initiatives during Heller town hall meetings, updates to the leadership team, alumni board, and Advisory board on our achievements
- Initiate and organize event planning.
- Submit copies of project reports and proposals to be included in association records.
- Review, monitor, and re-evaluate strategic documents to advance the mandate of the association.
- Ensure that board resolutions are carried out.
- Lead the Senate meetings for all Heller programs.
- Ensure timely reporting of external meetings to the rest of the board members.
- Recommend procedures for effective recruitment, training, and retention of board members.

Events and Public Relations Coordinator:

- Form a working relationship with the Communications Department
- Collaborate with other student working groups within Heller to organize events for the Heller student body.
- Aid in the promotion of Heller-wide events.
- Collaborate with groups throughout Brandeis to organize and promote events for the student body.

Student Accessibility and Support Coordinator:

- Collaborate with the Co-chairs to determine the parameters and deadlines for individual projects.
- Prepare multiple drafts of project work to be reviewed and approved by the board.
- Conduct project-related research.

Board Secretary and Finance Coordinator:

- Keep the board informed of how much money has been spent and how much money remains in the budget. Meet with coordinator (Vicki Corpian) in Academic and Student Services for access to HSA budget information.

- Meet with the Events & Public Relations Coordinator regarding budget and planning for HSA facilitated or co-facilitated events.
- Keep records of all meetings and actions of directors
- Book a room from Welby Gonzalez for board meetings and give notice for all meetings of directors.
- Create calendar invites for bi-weekly meetings and HSA events.
- Ensure that key documents are up to date.
- Ensure meeting minutes are distributed to members in a timely fashion after each meeting.
- Purchase materials and food for HSA-sponsored events.
- Take notes during HSA meetings.
- Update HSA Google Drive as needed.
- Collaborate with Co-Chairs to set a Meeting Agenda for each meeting.
- Be responsible for all HSA internal communications.

Section 2.2: Requirements/ eligibility criteria: Duties of the Executive Board of HSA and Senate:

Section 2.2.1: The Duties of the Executive Board:

- The Executive Board serves as the officially elected governing body of the Heller Student Association.
- The Executive Board shall require all directors including co-chairs to comply with all provisions of this constitution. It is the role of the HSA board of directors and senate members to form committees as per the work requirements and ensure the effectiveness of individuals and committees within the HSA.
- The Executive Board shall have authority over matters pertaining to the activities of the HSA or any committee thereof, as determined by a majority vote.
- The Executive Board is responsible for filling positions requiring student representation on various committees at Heller.
- The Executive Board is responsible for reporting the disbursement of the budget money, each semester, to the HSA Senate or other student clubs based on an approved requisition. The Board, in collaboration with the Academic and Student Services Office, may identify and appoint individuals to fill additional positions as necessary.
- The Executive Board reserves the right to charter or recognize working groups and organizations at Heller School.
- The Executive Board members are expected to regularly attend all HSA meetings and the HSA retreat/orientation at the beginning of the fall semester. All the members are required to attend at least 60% of the meetings of all HSA meetings and events. Failure to attend

without a genuine reason may be the cause for the loss of their position. The Board Secretary and finance coordinator is responsible for recording the attendance and sharing it along with the meeting minutes with everyone.

- Executive Board members will be compensated twice a year (at the end of each semester), for their work and attendance. All other time spent related to the position duties will not be eligible for additional pay. Any changes to this payment structure must be voted for and approved by the standing Executive Board members or at the discretion of the Student Affairs Office.

Section 2.2.3: Compensation:

Following are the details of approved compensation for the Executive Board of HSA (twice a year). The compensation will be processed by responsible staff at Academic and Student Services office at the end of each semester:

- Co-chairs:
- Director Events and Public Relations:
- Director student Accessibility and Support:
- Board Secretary and Finance member:

Section 2.3: HSA Senate

Section 2.3.1: Duties of Senators

- The HSA Senate shall operate as a sub-committee to the HSA Executive Board. With powers vested by the Executive Board of HSA, the HSA senate serves as a representative body for each program at Heller including PhD students.
- Elected senate members shall serve for a one-year term during the academic year, with the option to continue during the summer, and shall represent the HSA at their respective programs, gather information, and report to the HSA Executive Board and Senate.
- Elected senators are encouraged to attend the HSA retreat, at the beginning of the fall semester.
- Senators are required to attend at least 60% of HSA meetings and events. Failure to attend without a genuine reason may be the cause for the loss of their position. The Board Secretary and finance coordinator is responsible for recording the attendance and sharing it along with the meeting minutes with everyone.
- Senators shall attend the HSA E-Board meeting monthly. If more meetings are required, they can convince them.

- Senators shall report all information/key issues regarding their respective programs to the HSA Executive Board.
- There is no compensation/allowance offered against senate positions.

Section 2.3.2: Senate Structure

The HSA Senate shall consist of students (Senators) from each of the five programs and PhD students at the Heller School. Senators representing each program are elected by the respective students of their programs through a general election. The duration of engagement is one academic year.

Membership includes:

- 1 HSAS representative from the PhD students.
- 1 HSAS representative from the SID program.
- 1 HSAS representative from the COEX program.
- 1 HSAS representative from the MBA program.
- 1 HSAS representative from the MS GHPM program.
- 1 HSAS representative from the MPP program.

Section 2.5: Meetings

Section 2.5.1: HSA Executive Board Meetings:

- Meetings of the HSA Executive Board shall be held virtually or in-person (as per the convenience) once a month, unless otherwise directed by the Executive Board. Additional meetings may be scheduled by vote of the Executive Board or at the discretion of the Co-Chairs.
- Decisions in the HSA and at HSA meetings shall be approved through a majority vote. In the case of a tie, the student affairs representative shall determine an outcome.
- A quorum for the Executive Board is defined as the presence of at least 3 voting Board members and must be satisfied to allow the Executive Board to take official action.
- Meetings may be canceled by prior vote of the Executive Board or at the discretion of the Co-Chairs.
- Agenda items are solicited from Executive Board members and set by the Secretary and Finance Member of the Executive Board.
- All the HSA Executive Board meetings' minutes will be saved by the Co-Chairs on the official HSA google drive folder. Reporting format will require the summary of the meeting, list of attendees, and future items to accomplish.

- All meeting minutes shall be made public to the Heller Student Body and the link to all official HSA Executive Board meetings' minutes must be sent to the student body via the monthly HSA Newsletter. The Board Secretary and Finance Coordinator is responsible to record all the meeting minutes and the team working on HSA Newsletter will incorporate these minutes into the monthly newsletter.

Section 2.5.2: Senate Meetings

- Meetings of the HSA Senate shall happen at least monthly, usually combined with the HSA Executive board meetings.
- If a Senator wants to add an item to the agenda, they need to notify the co-Chairs at least 48 hours in advance of the next meeting.
- A motion may be proposed (and seconded) by any Senator. Any duly seconded motion shall be passed upon receiving the affirmation of a majority (66% of the total number of members) of the members present or shall be otherwise defeated. Each Senator may cast one vote.

Section 2.6: Role of Academic and Student Services Office

- The Academic and Student Services Office shall act as a liaison between the Heller Student Association and the Heller administration and faculty. In addition, this office will serve in an advisory capacity to the HSA.
- The HSA advisor has a duty to remain unbiased on student issues and best serve the reasonable requests and motives of the members of the Heller Student Association as a school-wide advocate. Thus, this representative is not provided with any voting privileges, except while serving as a consultative advisor.
- In addition, the HSA advisor is required and committed to provide a "safe space" for the Heller students, in which students' opinions and/or feedback about the school or its members remain private and that core issues are advocated for on behalf of the students, to protect anonymity and the truest essence of freedom of expression. However, this role is not a confidential role, so if there is any violation of federally protected categories, the HSA advisor will report said violation to OEO.
- The Academic and Student Services Office will also help HSA in resource mobilization for HSA activities.

Article III. Election Procedures

Section 3.1: HSA Executive Board Elections

Section 3.1.1: Election Period and frequency

- Students must contest for positions, and be elected, to serve on the HSA Executive Board.
- Elections shall be held once every academic year, end of Spring semester each year to replace all relevant Executive Board Members.
- Newly appointed board members will hold elections for senate representative in the beginning of Fall semester (during the month of September).
- In the event of withdrawal/removal of a member, new elections for that particular position will be held within three weeks as per the electoral protocol mentioned under the section 3.1.3.

Section 3.1.2: Elections Guidelines

- A description of all positions up for election shall be distributed to the entire student body of Heller, at least one week before the beginning of nominations.
- There shall be a self-nomination period, for a duration of at least one week before the voting period. This can be extended to another weeks' time – considering the situation or number of nominations.
- The voting period must be for at least one (1) week.
- Each candidate may only apply or run for one position only.
- Those who have already served either the Executive Board or Senate are not eligible to participate again in the electoral process.

Section 3.1.3: Electoral Process

1. Two weeks before the elections, the Board will nominate one of the Board members as an “Election Commissioner”.
2. To maintain neutrality the election commissioner will have to resign from the membership of the Executive Board.
3. The Election Commissioner will be responsible for monitoring the whole electoral process, maintaining fairness and a level playing field for every candidate.
4. If any of the candidates or any student files a complaint against the electoral process, the Election Commissioner along with the Academic and Student Services office and DEI office will form a committee to investigate and address the complaint.
5. A call for expression of interest for HSA positions will be launched by the HSA, thereby beginning the nomination period -
 - a. Last week of March every year for the Executive Board.

- b. Second week of September for Senate Board.
6. Students would have at least one week to express their interest by completing self-nomination forms.
7. Those who have at least one full academic year left at Heller are eligible to participate in the elections. Those who have one semester left will be disqualified automatically.
8. All the candidates can share one announcement on the HSA Facebook and Instagram pages, 24 hours prior to the official election period.
9. Within four days after the voting deadline, and once candidates confirm positions, HSA shall announce results to the entire Heller Student Body.
10. There will be a combined meeting with both the newly elected Board members and current members within two weeks after the election.

Section 3.2: HSA Senate Appointments

Section 3.2.1: Appointment Period

- Nominations shall be held once every academic year, during the fall semester, to replace all relevant Senators.

Section 3.2.2: Elections Guidelines

- A description of all positions up for election shall be distributed to the entire student body of Heller, at least one week before the beginning of nominations.
- There shall be a self-nomination period, for a duration of at least one week before the voting period. This can be extended to another weeks' time – considering the situation or number of nominations.
- The voting period must be for at least one (1) week.
- Each candidate may only apply for the position against their respective programs.
 - These selections should ideally come from established programs (i.e. SID, COEX, MS GHPM, MPP, MBA, and PhD).
- A description of the position shall be distributed to the entire Heller Student Body by each schools' governing body at each respective school.
- Only active students of the respective programs are eligible to vote to elect a senator for their programs. For example, a student of COEX will not be eligible to vote for a candidate of SID senator's position.
- HSA Senators shall assist HSA in all its activities, including event planning and bridging their respective programs and wider student body.

- Those who have already served either the Executive Board or Senate are not eligible to participate again in the electoral process.

Article IV. HSA Code of Conduct

Section 4.1: Expected Behavior

All HSA executive Board members and Senators must address others with respect and dignity, and shall not discriminate (against fellow Board members, staff, faculty, or other student body members) based on any federally protected category. All HSA Board members and Senators are expected, as members of the Heller community, to abide by Brandeis guidelines outlined in Rights and Responsibilities. The HSA Code of Conduct is in addition to Rights and Responsibilities, particularly Section 2.10.

To maintain the proper functionality of the HSA and to advocate for the rights of student body at Heller, each HSA member is expected to:

1. Maintain cordial communication with other members of the Executive Board and Senate, as well as with any other student, staff, or professor within the university. Therefore, avoid using a slur, nickname, or offensive expression. Refrain from generating or spreading gossip about students' lives.
2. Attending at least 60% of the meetings established in their job description.
3. Comply with the requirements of each position.
4. Respect the working hours of the other members.
5. Represent, always, the values and qualities of a good leader, aspects of which will be discussed during the fall retreat/orientation.
6. Respect the functions and tasks of each member of the Executive Board, which implies high responsibility to share feedback and other areas of opportunity for improvement.

Section 4.2: Procedures for Unwelcome Behavior

1. If there is a moment of discomfort, each member has a personal responsibility to take the time necessary to be able to re-engage in a respectful conversation that leads to optimal solutions.
2. Communication, at this stage, must be in writing using only University-sanctioned platforms like Brandeis Email IDs.
3. If an agreement cannot be reached at a time of discomfort, the members of the Executive Board must go to the Academic and Student Services Office for an impartial opinion in this regard.

4. The failure to comply with the behavioral expectations may lead to a member's removal by following the procedure established in sections 5.1 and 5.2.

Section 4.2: Interim Restrictions

In the event of a violation of the HSA Code of Conduct or Brandeis' [Students' Rights and Community Standards](#), the Academic and Student Services Office plus another impartial staff member reserves the right to impose interim restrictions, including temporary removal from office. If necessary, the Academic and Student Services Office can call upon an impartial staff member to aid in the pursuit of an optimal solution, such as a representative from the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Ombuds, or any other member of the Heller administration.

Article V. Removal from Office

Section 5.1: Removing Office Members of the HSA Executive Board and Senate

Section 5.1.1: Motion of Removal

- It shall be the right of any Senator or Executive Board member to set forth a motion to remove an Executive Board or Senate member from Office, if:
 - The member's behavior is deemed grossly detrimental to the function of the HSA by violating the HSA Code of Conduct.
 - A motion for removal shall cite specific charges, in writing, against the Executive Board or Senate member. A committee that will be formed that will include a member of the Executive Board, Academic and Students Services Office, and a Staff from DEI office will further investigate the allegations and present their findings to the Executive Board before making a final decision on removal.
 - The Academic and Student Services Office shall be present as an unbiased mediator.
- An Executive Board member or Senator can be removed from Office by a three-fourths (75 percent) majority vote of the other members of the Executive Board and Senate Representatives.

Section 5.1.2: Right to Appeal Removal

- Upon successful vote for removal from office, the individual may appeal the decision within five business days of the vote. Appeals will be submitted and heard by the Academic and Student Services Office, as well as one other neutral staff member. The Academic and Student Services Office will review the appeal against the grounds of the removal for Office and make final determination within 10 academic days. Grounds for removal should be based upon issues of student conduct or breach of the HSA Constitution.
- If the removal is of an Executive Board member, the remaining executive board is then required to replace the officer by a majority vote.

- If the removal is of a Senator, the Leadership at the receptive program is then required to replace the senator by a majority vote (ideally from their pool of current members).

Article V. Issues of Concern

An item or issue of concern can be brought to the attention of the HSA Executive Board by any member of the HSA, or any student at Heller. HSA Co-chair 2 then adds this item to the next Executive Committee meeting's agenda. During this meeting, appropriate action and relevant participants will be decided. If any Executive Board member deems a certain action is appropriate on any issue, and seeks to act, the said member must first inform the rest of the Executive Board of this intent or action. This action must pass a majority vote of the Executive Board so that the action be taken in the name of the HSA. In the circumstance that an individual or entity requires a confidential space to express a concern, that concern should be brought to the Academic and Student Services Office.

Article VI. Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to the constitution must be approved by three-fifths (60 percent) of the Executive Board at the next scheduled Executive Committee meeting, and by three-fifths (60 percent) of Senators present. If any student at Heller wants to make amendments to the HSA Constitution, the said student must notify any member of the Executive Board and that request will appear on the next HSA agenda.

A thorough review and subsequent edits of the constitution may occur every summer, at which point the Academic and Student Services Office agrees upon any changes made.