

LATIN AMERICAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION  
CONSTITUTION



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Provide a platform for discussion and collaboration regarding national, regional, and international public affairs issues of Latin America and the Caribbean and share the broad and diverse various cultural expressions that represent the region, taking advantage of the opportunities and resources provided by SIPA at Columbia University.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

To make LASA the premier organization at Columbia for student leaders interested in Latin America and the Caribbean who are committed to using public and international affairs as a strategy for improving social and economic development in the region and the world.

## **ARTICLE I: NAME AND PURPOSE**

### **I.I NAME**

The name of the student group shall be **LATIN AMERICAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION**, and it may also be referred to as **LASA**.

### **I.II COMPLIANCE**

LASA operates at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University, subject to Columbia University policies and procedures. This group also complies with all local, state, and federal laws and procedures.

### **I.III OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE**

- A. Guide the discussion surrounding the achievements, opportunities, and challenges regarding the management of public affairs in Latin America and the Caribbean using a critical academic approach.
- B. Generate participatory communication channels that enable LASA to represent the academic, cultural, and professional concerns of students interested in Latin America and the Caribbean at SIPA.
- C. Create a network between current students and the generations of professionals interested in Latin America who have studied in SIPA.
- D. Promote leadership skills and the empowerment of each participant in the organization.
- E. Promote the cultural diversity, traditions, and future vision of Latin America to the entire SIPA community.
- F. Generate institutional alliances and engage SIPA professors' participation in LASA activities and events to achieve long-term continuity and growth of the organization.
- G. Promote integration and joint activities with other student organizations, schools at Columbia, other schools in NYC and groups with similar interests and goals as LASA.

## **ARTICLE II: COMPOSITION AND DUTIES**

### **II.I GENERAL BOARD**

The LASA General Board shall be composed of the “Executive Board,” and the “Functional Chairs,” hereafter referred to together as the “General Board,” and individually as “LASA Officers”. Each LASA Officer shall have one vote equally distributed in decisions and resolutions of LASA. LASA can also count on the support of LASA Associates, who are ancillary to the General Board but do not hold any voting power.

### **II.II EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The Executive Board has the purpose of managing and administering the core functions and activities of LASA’s operations as enumerated in this Constitution. The Executive Board shall consist of four (4) members: the President, the Vice President, the General Secretary, and the Treasurer. The activities of the Executive Board shall include, but not be limited to

- a) Setting and executing the overall strategy for LASA;
- b) Receiving and evaluating proposals brought to LASA by members of the General Board;
- c) Appointing LASA Associates;
- d) Providing instruction and implementation guidelines on the direction of such aforesaid proposals; and
- e) Setting LASA’s agenda for the General Board and determining the scope of debate and discussion in relations thereto.

### **II.III FUNCTIONAL CHAIRS**

The objective and purpose of the Functional Chairs is to develop, oversee, and execute LASA’s programmatic functions within their respective scope of authority and implement such strategies as may be set by the Executive Board from time to time. The Functional Chairs shall consist of up to twelve (12) members, two (2) Academic Chairs, two (2) Alumni and External Relations Chairs, two (2) Social Events Chairs, two (2) Cultural Chairs, two (2) Communications Chairs, and two (2) Caribbean Chairs.

### **II.IV LASA ASSOCIATES**

The objective and purpose of the LASA Associates is to support or lead activities that are out of the scope of the General Board or that have been decided by the Executive Board to be delegated to associates. LASA associates are to be appointed by the Executive Board with consultation to any Functional Chair whose scope of work falls under the duties of the associate.

The duties and responsibilities given to the associate would be defined by the Executive Board and Functional Chair (if relevant). Any member of the General Board can request to the Executive Board the creation of a LASA Associate position.

If a LASA Associate is deemed as necessary for outgoing or current boards, the LASA Board can promote this position to a Functional Chair, following the rules of quorum defined later in this constitution or recommend to the next LASA Board retaining the position or making it a Functional Chair.

LASA associates can be dismissed as decided by the Executive Board.

## **II.V DUTIES OF GENERAL BOARD MEMBERS**

### **EXECUTIVE BOARD**

#### **a) The President shall:**

- i. Serve as the principal executive of LASA, shall supervise, manage, and coordinate all of its internal activities and external affairs while remaining accountable to the Executive Board and the General Board;
- ii. Serve as LASA's representative to the SIPA administration or other entities, except when designees are appointed in accordance with the terms of this Constitution;
- iii. Preside over meetings of the Executive Board and the General Board;
- iv. Serve as chief arbiter, in consultation with the General Secretary or any other appropriate representative of the Board, in the administration and negotiation of any deeds, formal agreements, contracts, or other instruments that the Board has authorized to be executed, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the General Board or by this Constitution to some other representative or agent of the organization, or shall be required by applicable law to be otherwise signed or executed;
- v. Convene and preside over all open student meetings;
- vi. Have the final authority in deciding matters that are not resolved by other means or mechanisms, with the exception of modifying the articles of this constitution; and
- vii. Be ultimately responsible, in general, for all functions and duties in relation to LASA.

#### **b) The Vice President shall:**

- i. Be responsible for assisting the President in discharging his/her aforementioned duties as well as collaborating with the President in order to implement their respective mandates in accordance with this Constitution;
- ii. Act as the President's deputy, including as the bona fide acting head of the Executive Board and the General Board in the absence of the President;
- iii. Organize, facilitate, and monitor all LASA's elections in collaboration with the General Secretary;
- iv. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of his/her work periodically and upon request;
- v. Be in charge of coordinating any collaboration among other schools and organizations in the United States or internationally; and
- vi. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

#### **c) The General Secretary shall:**

- i. Be the chief information officer for internal LASA business;
- ii. Be responsible for ensuring that LASA rules are enforced and ensure that due process is maintained in the transaction of all LASA business;
- iii. Uphold and maintain the integrity of this Constitution and be the manager and custodian of LASA's official record;
- iv. Take all reasonable steps to make LASA business more transparent and accountable;

- v. Be responsible for knowledge management and recording institutional memory, acting as notary for LASA, as well as keeping all LASA documents updated and electronically available to students, as defined necessary in coordination with the Communications Chairs and the Executive Board;
- vi. Be responsible for providing access to resolutions, debates, financial decisions, and any other information deemed reasonably important to the student body;
- vii. Collaborate with the Vice-President in organizing, facilitating, and monitoring all LASA's elections and lead the transition procedures;
- viii. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of his/her work periodically and upon request
- ix. Lead the annual LASA Case Competition and all related duties to this endeavor; and
- x. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

**d) The Treasurer shall:**

- i. Be the chief financial officer of and financial advisor to LASA;
- ii. Present the state of LASA's budget to the Executive Board and General Board periodically;
- iii. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of his/her work periodically and upon request;
- iv. Be responsible for fundraising funds for major LASA activities and the LASA account as a whole, with the exception of the welcoming parties;
- v. Coordinate with the SIPA Business Office and other related Columbia Offices, as necessary;
- vi. Keep a detailed record of all LASA's transactions and make it available to the General Board, as necessary or upon request;
- vii. Coordinate with each chair in preparing the necessary budgets to fulfill their functions and activities; and,
- viii. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

**FUNCTIONAL CHAIRS**

**e) The Alumni & External Relations Chairs shall:**

- i. Be responsible for developing and carrying out LASA's alumni affairs objectives;
- ii. Serve as the point Officers for alumni affairs matters on LASA;
- iii. Lead engagement with the SIPA Alumni Council and other similar organizations;
- iv. Be in charge of any duties related to existing databases, networks, email lists, or others as they relate to SIPA and Columbia Alumni;
- v. Assist the Vice-President with any collaboration among other schools and organizations in the United States or internationally;
- vi. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of their work periodically and upon request; and
- vii. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

**f) The Academic Chairs shall:**

- i. Be responsible for developing and carrying out LASA's academic objectives;
- ii. Serve as the point Officers for academic, curricular, and orientation matters on LASA;
- iii. Develop a list of courses and workshops related to Latin America and the Caribbean at Columbia University and other New York City institutions with the help of the Communications Chair for dissemination to the SIPA community;
- iv. Lead the General Board in the coordination and execution of the Annual LASA Conference;
- v. Coordinate with the Office of Academic Affairs, Office of Student Affairs, as necessary;
- vi. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of their work periodically and upon request; and
- vii. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

**g) The Communications Chairs shall:**

- i. Be responsible for developing and carrying out LASA's communications objectives;
- ii. Serve as the point Officers for communications, branding, and marketing matters on LASA;
- iii. Be responsible for all communications to the student body, including e-mail, social media networks, and other forms of electronic communication, as well as event publicity;
- iv. Be responsible for the maintenance of LASA's online presence;
- v. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of their work periodically and upon request; and
- vi. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary

**h) The Cultural Chairs shall:**

- i. Be responsible for developing and carrying out LASA's cultural objectives;
- ii. Serve as the point Officers for cultural activities and matters on LASA;
- iii. Oversee the planning and execution of all LASA's cultural activities in accordance with student needs, priorities, and preferences;
- iv. Collaborate with other Regional groups to jointly promote culture and diversity;
- v. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of their work periodically and upon request; and
- vi. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

**i) The Social Events Chairs shall:**

- i. Be responsible for developing and carrying out LASA's social objectives;
- ii. Be in charge of organizing LASA's welcome party every semester;
- iii. Serve as the logistic liaison for the events carried by the rest of the General Board;
- iv. Serve as the point Officers for social events programming matters on LASA;
- v. Oversee the planning and execution of all LASA's social events in accordance with student needs, priorities, and preferences;
- vi. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of their work periodically and upon request; and
- vii. Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

**j) The Caribbean Chairs shall:**

- i. Be responsible for developing and carrying out LASA's objectives by representing the interests of Caribbean students at SIPA.
- ii. Apprise the President, the Executive Board, and the General Board of their work periodically and upon request; and  
Participate and/or assist in the due discharge of all functions and duties of LASA, as necessary.

## **II.V REPLACEMENTS**

In the event that the President is unable to serve the duration of his/her term due to resignation or dismissal, the Vice President shall assume the position and serve as President for the remainder of the term. In the event that a LASA Officer is unable to serve the duration of his/her term due to resignation or dismissal, the General Board shall vote to decide whether to fill the position with a replacement or not.

In the event that the General Board decides to replace a vacant position, it shall determine and establish the procedure for filling such vacancy. The Vice President, in consultation with the Executive Board, shall determine and establish special eligibility, candidacy, and voting rules for such replacements

## **II.VI IMPEACHMENT/REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF GENERAL AND BOARD MEMBERS**

If a Board Member fails to fulfill the duties of their position, any Board Member may petition for their impeachment. The impeachment will pass with a 2/3 vote of the Board Members.

## **ARTICLE III: MEETINGS**

### **III.I GENERAL BOARD MEETINGS AND QUORUM**

General Board Meetings will be held weekly or biweekly and open to only General Board Members. Notice of meetings will be directly communicated to General Board Members by the General Secretary at least three days prior to the meeting date

All official LASA business on the General Board shall require a quorum. Quorum is defined as the participation of at least two-thirds of all LASA's Board Members.

A voting quorum is defined as two-thirds of the General Board voting in a similar direction. If a member is not in attendance while a motion is being voted on, he/she will be informed of the motion on a chat/forum with all the General Board present and ask for her/his vote.

### **III.II RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS.**

The approval of all LASA resolutions and decisions shall require a quorum of all LASA Board Members, as defined in the previous section.

## **ARTICLE IV: ELECTIONS AND TRANSITION**

### **IV.I ELIGIBILITY**

All students who expect to be enrolled at SIPA for the duration of their relevant LASA term are eligible to run for office in the LASA General Election. All students who meet this requirement are eligible to run for any Executive Board or Functional Chair position on the General Board.

### **IV.II SUFFRAGE**

All enrolled SIPA students, including those in special programs, are eligible to vote in the LASA General Election.



#### **IV.III ELECTION PROCEDURES**

The Vice President and General Secretary shall manage the LASA General Election. They shall determine candidacy and campaign rules and make them explicit and public in an Election Guideline, in accordance with the principles in this Constitution. They shall coordinate the support of the General Board for election day procedures and activities.

The LASA General Election shall have a single ballot that includes all Executive Board and Functional Chair positions, along with the names of the respective candidates. For single-Officer positions, those candidates who receive the highest number of votes for such position shall be deemed to have been elected. For dual-Officer positions, those candidates who receive the two highest number of votes for such positions shall be deemed to have been elected. If there are no candidates contesting specific positions, such positions may be filled by nomination in accordance with the rules determined by the Vice President and General Secretary. In the event of a tie for any of the positions, the outgoing Executive Board shall vote to resolve the tie.

In the event of any electoral dispute or issue not addressed in the election guidelines or this constitution, the Executive Board has the power to decide the appropriate action to solve those disputes and actions.

#### **IV.IV TIMING**

The LASA General Election shall be held each year by the end of the Fall Semester. The LASA General Election must be accessible to all eligible students and shall be tailored to ensure that no segment of the eligible student body is disenfranchised.

#### **IV.V TERM OF OFFICE**

The elected General Board will take office on January 1st of the corresponding year.

#### **IV.VI TRANSITION PROCEDURES**

The transition process shall be led by the Executive Board, with the General Secretary being the main executor.

- There should be one transition meeting with both elected and current board present;
- The newly elected board shall participate in at least one of the current General Board meetings as observers;
- Each LASA Officer shall dedicate at least one hour of one-on-one time with their counterpart, or one hour per functional chair pairings, and if possible involve them in the planning of any upcoming events or functional activities before they end their term;
- The outgoing General Board shall help the elected General Board in the planning of the upcoming semester welcome party, led by the Social Events Chairs of each board;
- The Elected LASA Executive Board and outgoing Executive Board shall convene at the beginning of the new Board term to advise on the Budget Presentation for SIPASA. The non-current Executive Board will serve in an advisory capacity only.

## **ARTICLE VI: FINANCES**

### **VI.I FISCAL TIMELINES**

LASA's fiscal year runs from January 1 to December 31, but budget allocations are made at the start of each semester.

### **VI.II BUDGETS**

The Treasurer, with the help of the Executive Board, is responsible for creating and presenting the upcoming budgets in February and September.

### **VI.III EXPENSES AND REIMBURSEMENT**

- a. The President and Treasurer must approve all expenses under LASA's name before any funds change hands.
- b. General Board Members may be reimbursed for approved expenses according to policies and procedures stipulated by the SIPA Business Office.

### **VI.IV FUNDS**

- i. LASA will carry out its activities using funds from the following sources:
  - a. SIPASA funds
  - b. External sponsor(s)
  - c. Academic departments or institutes Grants from the Office of Students Affairs (OSA)
  - d. Profits from LASA activities
- ii. Funds shall be used to fund and carry out LASA activities and events that fall under the responsibility of the General Board, including
  - a. LASA parties, social, cultural, and networking events
  - b. Conferences and academic events
  - c. Fund student participation in LASA-related academic events

## **ARTICLE VII: INTEGRATION CLAUSE**

This Constitution supersedes all prior constitutions, by-laws, regulations, guidelines, and other similar documents relating to the matters contained herein.

Any modifications made to the Constitution that affect LASA as an institution shall be agreed upon by quorum. If the required vote is not achieved, the Constitution shall remain as it is.

- Modifications can only be made within a month and a half of assuming office or a month and a half before leaving office and after a new LASA Board has been elected.
- The same modification, or a modification similar in spirit, can only be presented twice per modification period for deliverance and voting within at least a week of each other.

January 29, 2024,

**LASA 2024**