

Big changes made to KSA bylaws

Newly adopted bylaws weaken representation for Kwantlen campuses and centralize authority in the board

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Sweeping changes were made recently to the Kwantlen Student Association bylaws that will affect how every student's KSA-membership fees are managed.

Perhaps the most notable change, as learned by *The Chronicle* after comparing the old bylaws with the new, is the deletion of Article 16, which spelled out the powers of and restrictions on the ombudsperson, the KSA official in charge of investigating internal complaints.

The deletion means that the rules binding the ombudsperson to follow the mandate of the membership are no longer effective, and that the nature of the position is now open for definition by the board. Without a clear definition to adhere to, accountability will be a concern for some students, considering the

board itself is a body that the ombudsperson could be asked to investigate.

Another important change is that there's only a single voting body where there were previously two. The executive board and the council existed as separate authorities, now these have been combined to form what's known just as "the board."

As it was set up before, the council was the highest authority representing the membership, and the executive board managed the operations of the KSA. The council served as the overall guiding arm, while the executive was the detailing hand.

If council was concerned that a decision made by the executive board needed to be overruled, it could pass a resolution to block the executive's action.

The executive board was made up of five directors: operations, finance, external affairs, academic affairs, and

events and student life.

In addition to being on the executive board, KSA executives were a minority on the council. On the other hand, campus officers – directors, representatives and officials – made up a majority of at least 20 members.

In the new bylaws, the executive director positions have been changed to president, treasurer and vice-presidents of external affairs, internal affairs, and events and student life, all five of which now make up a majority on the board.

A more drastic change is that campus officials and representatives have been renamed members at large, while their voting privileges have not been re-established on the board.

As before, the four campus directors – one each from Langley, Surrey, Newton and Richmond – still have a vote on the board, though they now make up a minority.

Considering all of this, the campus councils have gone from having 20-something votes and being in a majority, to having only four votes and being in a minority. In effect, the balance of power in the KSA has

been largely concentrated into the five executive positions, which can now vote together to pass even the most controversial resolutions without the scrutiny of the council.

Also of interest to students will be how the new bylaws limit the powers of a general meeting of the members.

For example, under the old bylaws the students at a general meeting held the authority to remove a member from the KSA. Under the new bylaws, the board is now the only unit to have this right, which it previously didn't have. The executive members of the board could, if they wanted to, vote to remove any dissenting voice from the KSA, including other elected board members who could potentially be replaced by more agreeable appointees.

Another example of more powers being allocated to the board is found when looking at adjustments made to the requirements of notification and time limitations.

In particular, with regards to a referendum, the minimum number of notification posters required at each campus has gone down from 25 to eight. The minimum number

of days to have these posted before the referendum has gone down from 14 days to seven.

In theory, a board can offer prolonged and highly visible notice of an event that it wants the students to know about or the minimum for one that it does not. In this sense, the new bylaws make it easier for the board to influence the results of the democratic process.

As a final highlight, changes have been made to the definition of honorary member.

Formerly, an honorary member was neither permitted the right to vote nor the right to run for office. Under the new legislation, however, anyone from anywhere can be bestowed the full benefits of KSA membership without being a student at Kwantlen, and even without being a student at all.

Considering adjustments were also made to the minimum number of students needed to validate the proceedings of a general meeting of the membership, down to 50 from 250, the new definition could pose a concern for student members if they find themselves outnumbered by honorary members.