AeroAstro dREFS Constitution

This document is the constitution for AeroAstro dREFS. It contains an overview of the structure of the organization (Section 1), a guide for constitutional procedures (Section 2), and a collection of guiding principles that we use when deciding what dREFS as an organization should do (Section 3).

Section 1: dREFS Structure

We have 3 elected positions: 2 co-presidents and 1 vice president. There are lots of other roles people play within dREFS as well (e.g., holding office hours, meeting with students 1 on 1, managing the website, etc.). In this section, we specify responsibilities of the offices of president, vice president, and GA^3 liaison, but we note that the people holding each office need not actually perform the listed actions themselves. Delegation is welcome, but it is up to the person named to the role to manage delegation.

- **Co-presidents:** manage the dREFS organization. Responsibilities (or delegation) include:
  - Recruiting new dREFS
  - Presenting at annual AeroAstro orientation for new students
  - Semesterly meeting with faculty advisors
  - Annual presentation at faculty lunch
  - Annual budgeting
  - dREFS mailing list management and response
  - Conducting annual and special elections
  - Identifying ongoing training opportunities for dREFS
  - Continuing advertising and awareness programs within dept.

- **Vice president:** support the co-presidents. Responsibilities (or delegation) include:
  - Organizing and scheduling regular dREFS meetings
  - Managing dREFS website
  - Compilation of statistics gathered by dREFS

In addition to the elected roles specified above, below are various non-elected/voluntary responsibilities that any member of dREFS can hold.

- **GA^3 liaison:** serve as a liaison with GA^3 and other student groups
  
  The GA^3 liaison represents dREFS by attending the regular GA^3 meetings and by speaking on behalf of dREFS at those meetings. In addition, the liaison reports back to dREFS about the contents of those meetings and what GA^3 is thinking about/doing. Lastly, because the funds for dREFS are managed by GA^3, the liaison monitors the budget.

- **Webmaster:** manage the dREFS website.
We have a website (https://aarefs.wordpress.com). The website manager should update information on the website to keep it current/relevant. In addition, because this website is hosted by wordpress, the webmaster should make sure to renew payment for the website (typically annually) and get refunded. Further tracking of website metrics such as visits, etc., is also covered by this role.

- **Treasurer:** tracks how much money we’re spending
dREFS has an annual budget; the person responsible for this role works with the GA^3 liaison to keep track of our budget, assembles future budget requests, and coordinates reimbursements.

- **Statistics compiler:** track various metrics
We track a bunch of statistics in different ways (e.g., 1-on-1 meeting, attendance during office hours, website visits, etc.) that should be compiled into an overall report of dREFS involvement (at least once annually). This person would compile those stats and report results in the team meetings.

Lastly, many of the dREFS serve in two roles when interacting with the rest of the department: hosts of either 1-on-1 meetings or office-hours. As part of these roles, it is the responsibility of the hosting dREFS to record anonymized and confidential statistics about that meeting or office hour (only accessible by the dREFS leadership). This form, which only requests the general topic of the meeting and the day it was held, will be provided to dREFS by the dREFS leadership as necessary.

- **1-on-1 meetings**
One of the ways dREFS makes itself available to students is via 1-on-1 meetings. If students reach out to dREFS broadly or to a specific member of dREFS, we meet with them confidentially to talk. If a member doesn’t feel able to best serve the student (because of time constraints, views on the issue, etc.) they can refer to other members of dREFS.

- **Office-hours holders**
Another way dREFS tries to help the department is by holding regular office hours (typically every one or two weeks). We like having two dREFS hosts at every office hour, allowing for both casual conversation with many people and more individual conversation about issues. When conducted in person, bringing food and drinks (and booking a room) is the responsibility of these people.
Section 2: Procedures

Elections

Principles
Elections for dREFS leadership (co-President positions, Vice President Position) are formalized in this document primarily to ensure a mechanism for reflecting on the structure of the organization and to allow all members an opportunity to serve in a leadership position if desired. That said, as an organization, we are cognizant that by the nature of our work some efforts may be multiple years in the making; as such we are open to having leaders serve multiple election cycles, as long as the group is generally in agreement via this election procedure.

Voting
A designated member who is not running in the elections (but can vote) will be responsible for coordinating elections when they arise. Every election will require nominations to be sought for all relevant positions; self-nominations are allowed.

Voting will be conducted via a closed ballot through the process of excellence voting. Through this method, each voting member of the group may select any number of the nominees for each leadership position (as opposed to selecting only a single candidate). A winning candidate must receive a minimum of two-thirds of the possible votes, as well as receive the most number of votes cast for that position in total. In the event that no nominee receives the minimum possible votes or in the case of a tie, the top two nominees (based on vote count) will be put into a run-off simple-majority vote.

General Elections will be held annually each January for all leadership positions. The time for the elections is intentionally set to not align with the academic calendar in order for new members to have at least a semester in the organization, and to allow for continuity between academic years.

Special Elections will be held in the event that a leader in the group can no longer serve in their position for any reason. The leader stepping away from this position is responsible for informing the other dREFS of their plans. Within a reasonable period, a special election specifically for this role will be held. Nominations and voting will occur as normal. In the event that another leadership role may become vacant as a result of the special election, that role may also be included within the special election, and the votes for that position will be considered contingent on whether the vacancy occurs.
Recruiting

The AeroAstro dREFS leadership is free to perform recruitment the way they feel is the most appropriate. It is important to note, though, that the co-presidents have the responsibility of maintaining the AeroAstro dREFS lab, building, gender, racial, seniority, and other types of diversity.

Onboarding and Offboarding

When new students join dREFS, current but inactive members wish to re-activate, or members depart, we encourage them to perform the onboarding, re-activating, and offboarding processes, respectively.

- **On-boarding of new students:** when a student joins dREFS, they must undergo the institute-wide dREFS training. In addition, department-specific training for being a member of the AeroAstro dREFS will be provided through a list of resources/practices and in-person meetings with all members of the dREFS leadership team.

- **Re-activating students:** if a member of dREFS has stepped aside from dREFS responsibilities for more than one year but wishes to participate more actively once again, we encourage them to go through an abbreviated on-boarding process. This process could include some of the same training as those offered for new members, as well as a review of what procedures have changed during the student’s inactive period.

- **Off-boarding:** when students wish to leave dREFS or recuse themselves from dREFS responsibilities, the dREFS leadership team (and other members, as desired) should meet with the departing member for an off-boarding interview. The contents of this interview should include 1) why the member is leaving, 2) if the member anticipates returning, and 3) any additional thoughts or suggestions the departing member wishes to raise.

Amendments

Amendments to this document can be made at any time, introduced by members of dREFS. These amendments can be used to modify role descriptions or other processes. For example, if dREFS wish to change the voting procedures from “excellence voting” to simply majority, that could be done through an amendment. Amendments are approved by a two-thirds vote of all active AeroAstro dREFS members (i.e., not just those present at a meeting).

Violations of the Constitution

In the event that aspects of this constitution are violated purposefully (that is, the intent is to break with what is written here not due to reasonable extenuating circumstances), we encourage the group to discuss the reason for the violation. In the event that a violation is maliciously or carelessly made (e.g., abuse of power by leadership, gross negligence of
responsibility, etc.) dREFS members are encouraged and empowered to discuss their concerns with the dREFS faculty advisers.

**Annual Meetings with Faculty Advisors**

The dREFS leadership will meet at least once annually with faculty advisers (typically in January) to submit and discuss an annual report of dREFS activities and synthesis of the status of the department, and to discuss budgeting for the coming year (to be subsequently submitted to GA^3). If this meeting closely follows the dREFS elections, we encourage both the new and departing leadership teams to attend.

**Annual Presentation at Faculty Lunch**

The dREFS co-Presidents will prepare and deliver an annual presentation for AeroAstro faculty at a faculty lunch. The meeting will focus on sharing data and anecdotes about dREFS efforts and observations of student well-being.

**Budgeting**

The annual budget for this group is $2000/year. A request for funding is submitted to GA^3 in January, alongside the annual report. The budget request should include an approximate break-down for different funding allocations (e.g., media/advertising, one-on-ones, office hours, study breaks, etc.). All budgeting documentation and a track of spending should be kept in the dREFS Google Drive; at this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZDiZu4itQfw-FQ5k_LFOMY3J2_xFwm6j?usp=sharing.

**Section 3: Guiding Principles**

These are the things we think about when envisioning the role of dREFS in the department. Things like support, not advocacy, but support can include things like providing resources for advocacy.

Things like how many members do we want?

Things like encouraging people to not just run for one term.

1) Care for yourselves and other REFS. Embody the caring principles that you wish to spread in the department within the REFS org. Help others; be understanding.

2) We support rather than advocate. Individual REFS are welcome to sign petitions, but the organization rarely advocates for policy changes in the department. This is a tricky thing to balance. One policy we adopted during BLM protests, for example, was to say “Here are some resources to help you understand some of the concerns presented by people at these protests”
3) Having roughly 8 to 10 members seems right. Normally, that consists of about 6 or so more active members, with some slack built in for others to step back if needed. Note that adding members is a good time to check that the dREFS makeup aligns with our goals.

4) We encourage dREFS leadership to run for more than just one term. This enables continuity and shared knowledge.