



## Identity Caucus Resolution

**Whereas;** Identity Caucuses are an institutional forum, separate from committees, which facilitate the cooperation and unification of individual assembly members who identify themselves with a common group. These closed spaces allow individuals from their respective identity group to come together in a safe environment to discuss matters pertinent to their specific demographic, craft unified positions that relate to their identity, and work together on resolutions, campaigns, and initiatives to further the interests of their group and the student body as a whole. These closed spaces give identity groups institutionalized leadership to better facilitate those objectives; and

**Whereas;** Although identity caucuses are closed spaces, spaces will be available that will run in tandem with the meeting of each identity caucus to allow ally engagement. Ally spaces serve students who may not personally identify with the caucus but are allotted the opportunity to take part in similar activities: hold discussions, exchanges ideas and experiences, come together as allies, and most importantly learn how to become a better ally while respecting the ally's anonymity and safety. Ally spaces are essential for all members to be included despite not being a part of an underrepresented group; and

**Whereas;** This idea of representation sits at the core of every identity caucus in America to date; at the Federal level within the United States Congress, at the state level within the New York State Assembly, and even within other student organizations like the National Student Congress in the United States Student Association. Conversations about the need for identity representation along with the traditional representation of political constituents entered the public sphere in the 1970's, thanks to new thinking within the social sciences that stressed a less hegemonic world view from the perspective of straight white males; and

**Whereas;** On the federal and state level there has been a precedent set for identity caucuses role as means of advocacy and support. Caucuses like the Hispanic Caucus, the Asian Pacific American Caucus, the Progressive Caucus, the Women's Caucus, and the Congressional Black Caucus serve to better represent the problems faced by

underrepresented groups within America. Along with that, these organizations have used their status and connections to further aid in the betterment of their peers; and

**Whereas;** Many caucuses on the national level, particularly the Congressional Black Caucus serve to empower people of color and address their legislative concerns through economic empowerment (CBC General Mills Health Scholarship and the CBC Spouses Visual Arts Scholarship), fellowships (Congressional Fellowship Program i.e.: the Louis Stokes Urban Health Policy and the Donald M. Payne Foreign Policy Fellowship), professional and career development (Leadership Institute for Public Service), global engagement (China Study Abroad Program) and formally facilitate the exchange of ideas to address critical issues (the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference); and

**Whereas,** SUNY System Administration's dedication to increased diversity within the SUNY system only makes the necessity for these caucuses even larger. Without representation for students of underrepresented groups the SUNY Student Assembly runs the risk of them falling through the gaps of the system, particularly problematic due to the preventability of it. While diversity officers, training, and other inclusion programs help, without representation we deny them a clear voice within the system. We as their representatives have a responsibility to ensure that does not happen by providing the infrastructure, and apparatuses there within, to allow for their voice to be heard; and

**Whereas,** With the current conversations on diversity, racial tuition, tuition freezes, advocacy, and sexual assault that are so central to SUNY system administration, we would be remiss if we did not implement a system wherein the groups most affected by these issues could come together within the assembly to unify their policy positions. A closed space that permits them to work together, build a community, and foster advocacy within their identity group can only serve to move the conversation forward.

Underrepresented groups like women, LGBT students, veterans, students of color, international students, non-traditional/first generation students, and survivors of sexual assault and abuse deserve to have a stronger voice within the system and identity caucuses can facilitate that stronger voice. This is an absolute necessity if we want the SUNY Student Assembly to be a truly modern forum for student representation and could serve as the foundation for later reform within the system.

Therefore be it resolved that the Student Assembly at the State University of New York Executive Committee create, design, and institutionalize identity caucuses within the organization in collaboration with the Student Association at SUNY Oswego and other interested campus governance student leaders:

- a) Identity caucuses will remain closed spaces that retain full control over their agenda and policy setting, elections, structure, and day-to-day decision making.
- b) Caucus leadership i.e. the chair and vice chair (title subject to change) are elected in caucus by their membership.
- c) Caucus membership shall be responsible for drafting the governing documents for their respective caucuses.

Therefore be it further resolved that identity caucuses shall serve as a vehicle for effective community building for underrepresented groups within the SUNY wide student body.

Submitted by: Christopher Collins-McNeil, President  
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Sponsored by:

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