Constitution and Bylaws (REVISION)

Lab Rats Comedy at

Mississippi State University

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11. **Mission Statement**

The name of this company shall be Lab Rats Comedy at Mississippi State University. (Hereafter referred to as Lab Rats). Its producing agent is Theatre MSU. Our mission is to educate and entertain the public with comedy arts using techniques such as improvisation, sketch, and other forms of comedy.

1. **Membership Eligibility** 
   1. **Academic Standards**

A member of Lab Rats must be an enrolled student with Mississippi State University. Members must also be in good academic standing with the university with at least a cumulative 2.0 (on a 4.0 scale) grade point average. At the beginning of each semester, members will have the option of signing a waiver, granting permission for the faculty advisor to view their grades, or scheduling a meeting with the faculty advisor to view their grades together. Failure to sign the waiver or schedule a meeting with the faculty advisor before the first show may result in that member not being cast in the first show. If a member does not meet academic standards, he or she will meet with the faculty advisor and begin academic probation immediately.

* 1. **Meetings and Attendance**

All members of Lab Rats must regularly attend all troupe meetings and required practices. Company meetings are held on a monthly basis and/or following a performance. Management meetings are held on a monthly basis. If a member misses, four or more mandatory meetings (unexcused) and/or practices they are subject to review (see Section IX, Policy ‘B’).

1. **Audition Process**

Following the first show of each semester, auditions are to take place over the course of two days. Callbacks may be initiated at the discretion of the members. The Short Form director will lead the audition process along with the help of current members. Open discussion with current members and an opinion poll is to take place before all current members vote in the best interest of the troupe to offer membership. A two-thirds majority vote is required for an offer to be put into effect. If a tie breaker is needed, Short Form, Long Form, and Sketch Director will vote.

1. **New Hat Process**

After being offered membership with the troupe, auditionees must either sign a waiver granting permission for the faculty advisor to view their grades or schedule a meeting with the faculty advisor to view their grades together. If the auditionee does not meet academic standards, the offer of membership is revoked. If academic standards are met and the auditionee accepts the offer of membership, he or she becomes a New Hat for a semester. During this semester, New Hats are required to attend a mandatory New Hat practice every week, one Old Hat practice every week, and all mandatory troupe meetings. If a New Hat has more than 3 unexcused absences, he or she will be subject to review. The Short Form Director (or another artistic director if necessary) will lead each practice to teach New Hats a basic knowledge of improvisational comedy. New Hats are required to attend all shows, where they are under the instruction of House Manager. New Hats will not be cast in any short form shows, except for the last show of the semester; however, New Hats may audition for and submit sketches. New Hats are NOT eligible for long form during New Hat semester. If at the end of the semester, a New Hat has not proven adequate knowledge of improvisation, fallen under attendance requirements, or has committed any misconduct at the discretion of the director body, he or she is subject to review. If brought to review, the artistic directors will determine if the New Hat needs to undergo another semester of New Hat training or if he or she needs to be dismissed from the troupe, (as seen in Section IX, Policy ‘B’.) If a member is in a repeat New Hat semester, he or she can retain their status as an Old Hat if they show improvement and directors deem it acceptable.

1. **Performance Eligibility**
   1. **Academic Standards**

Any member of Lab Rats Comedy that wishes to be a performing agent must uphold the academic standard, as stated by Section II, sub Section A of the Lab Rats Comedy Handbook. If a performing agent fails to meet the academic standards of the Lab Rats Comedy Handbook, he/she will be subject to review.

* 1. **Attendance**

Performing Agents must attend all company meetings. Attendance is mandatory at all rehearsals as set forth by the respective artistic director. If a performing agent must miss a mandatory meeting or rehearsal, a valid excuse must be given to the respective artistic director with at least 24-hours’ notice. An unexcused absence from a mandatory short form practice will result in the loss of a game during the member’s next short form performance. Practices the week leading up to a show are mandatory; any absences from said practices will result in being cut from the show. Valid excuses include university events, such as sporting events in which the person is directly involved, class trips, or exams; family and medical emergencies and other events may be excused at the discretion of the short form director. If a performer misses 3 mandatory meetings/practices leading up to a show, the performer will be cut from the show. Timeliness is expected; unexcused tardiness will be recorded. Tardiness is at the director’s discretion; however, practices are expected to start on time. Three tardies equals one absence. If a performer misses a show in which they have been cast, the performer will be immediately put on probation. Probation standards are set by the review board on a case-by-case basis.

* 1. **Casting**

If all attendance and academic requirements are met by the performing agent, he/she shall be cast in short form shows (see casting under Art. Dir/Short Form/ Casting)

* 1. **Troupe Alumni**

Any non-student alumni of Lab Rats Comedy or its previous namesakes may perform in live shows only as a special guest performer. Such performance must be announced at that performance. In addition, the special guest performer may not take the place of any performing agent that is ready for the show and active within Lab Rats Comedy.

1. **Administrative Positions and Duties**
   1. **Management**

All members of the management staff are required to attend all troupe and management meetings. Failure to attend said meetings or otherwise fulfill listed duties may result in review by the review board.

1. **Technical Director**

The Technical Director is responsible for assisting the artistic directors in preparation for performances as necessary. The Technical Director does not need to be a performing member of Lab Rats. The previous Technical Director selects a candidate as their successor to be approved by the review board and the faculty advisor and/or set designer of Theatre MSU. The Technical Director must attend all meetings, as well as all mandatory practices. He or she shall maintain a log of all active members with their contact information. The technical director can also assume the role as the Treasurer and House Manager.

1. **Treasurer**

A position which oversees all monetary account activities and all receipts and expenditures. All account activity must be recorded within the proper documents and maintained in an up-to-date manner. The treasurer must approve all monetary transaction requests by the administrative staff before the Head Director can approve such requests. The treasurer must attend all troupe and management meetings and must turn in a monetary report to the Head Director on a monthly basis. A new Treasurer is selected at least one semester before current Treasurer leaves in order to provide a full semester of training to their successor. The selected candidate must be approved by the review board before the training semester begins.

1. **Secretary**

A position which is responsible for recording all minutes at troupe and management meetings: The Secretary is also responsible for distributing minutes to the general members of Lab Rats Comedy and its faculty advisor. The Secretary must keep an attendance log of tardies and absences from troupe meetings and rehearsals, which is to be reported to an artistic director upon request.

1. **Public Relations Manager**

A position which oversees the creation and distribution of all posters, programs, and press releases for all events and performances: The Public Relations Manager may appoint any general member of Lab Rats Comedy to assist in the creation and distribution of said documents.

1. **House Manager**

A position appointed by the previous house manager, which is responsible for all ticket sales, reservations, and seating at all live shows for Lab Rats Comedy. A new House Manager is selected at least one semester before the current House Manager leaves in order to provide a full semester of training to their successor. The selected candidate must be approved by the review board before the training semester begins.

1. **Merchandising Coordinator**

A position which oversees the creation and distribution of all Lab Rats Comedy merchandise. The Merchandising Coordinator is responsible for all sales and reports for such merchandise.

1. **Webmaster**

The Webmaster is responsible for updating and maintaining the website in a timely manner. A new Web Master is selected at least one semester before the current Webmaster leaves in order to provide a full semester of training to their successor. The selected candidate must be approved by the review board before the training semester begins. The Web Master does not need to be a performing member of Lab Rats.

1. **Workshop Leader(s)**

A position which is responsible for scheduling and conducting workshops for the assigned semester. The Workshop Leader may appoint others to assist in his/her duties. He or she must be a performing member of Lab Rats.

* 1. **Artistic Directors**

All artistic directors are required to attend all troupe and management meetings. Failure to attend said meetings or otherwise fulfill listed duties may result in review by the review board

1. **Short Form Director**

A position elected by the general membership lasting one academic semester: Any active member may run for Short Form Director and may fill the position for 2 consecutive semesters or 3 nonconsecutive semesters. The Short Form Director is responsible for casting members for short form shows and teaching troupe members improvisational material through regular practices. In addition, the Short Form Director is responsible for leading rehearsals for regularly scheduled shows, selecting games for performances, and casting games. The Short Form Director has the sole right to cut games from performances, and performers from shows, if they do not meet academic, attendance, or conduct requirements. The Short Form Director is responsible for leading short form and New Hat practices. In the event that the Short Form Director cannot attend rehearsal, he or she must appoint another director or member of the troupe to lead rehearsal.

1. **Long Form Director**

A position elected by the general membership lasting one academic semester: Any active member may run for Long Form Director and may fill the position for 2 consecutive semesters or 3 nonconsecutive semesters. The Long Form Director is responsible for casting members for long form and teaching those cast members such improvisational material. The Long Form Director is responsible for rehearsals, selecting materials for performances, and casting for upcoming performances. The Long Form Director holds the sole right to cast long form groups in shows based on performance readiness. The Long Form Director holds the sole right to create and approve new groups based on interest and ability from the troupe.

1. **Sketch Director**

A position elected by the general membership lasting one academic semester: Any active member may run for Sketch Director and may fill the position for 2 consecutive or 3 nonconsecutive semesters. The Sketch Director is responsible for the organization of sketches and writing new sketches as needed. The Sketch Director can recruit a writing team to create sketches; however, he or she is expected to provide sketches for short form performances. The Sketch Director is also responsible for sketch selection, casting, and rehearsals for an upcoming performance. The Sketch Director holds the right to cut sketches from performances if deemed inappropriate or unready for performance.

1. **Meetings and Rehearsals** 
   1. **Meetings:** 
      1. **Troupe Meetings**

There will be at least one meeting a month. A troupe meeting will be held following every live performance, but other troupe meetings may be called at any time by discretion of the Artistic Directors and/or the general body if any concerns arise. All troupe meetings must be called at least three days in advance.

* + 1. **Management meetings**

Management meetings will be called if they are needed. If called, they must be within notice of three days. Management members have the authority to call meetings at their discretion. Any member of Lab Rats may attend a management meeting.

* + 1. **Artistic Director Meetings**

Artistic directors will meet at least once a month and must be called at least three days in advance. Any artistic director has the authority to call meetings at his/her discretion.

* 1. **Rehearsals**

Each director has complete discretion over time and place of respective rehearsals with regard to performers’ schedules. Each director is responsible for informing the general body of the time and place of each rehearsal. Directors must give at least a one-day notice for each rehearsal. Cancellation of rehearsal must have at least six hours’ notice and/or a replacement instructor must be found and reported to the general body.

1. **Elections and Voting** 
   1. **Nominations**

Any active member of Lab Rats Comedy who meets the academic and attendance standards may be nominated for any elected positions. Nominations are closed just before candidates give their platforms for each position. Nominations are to be read in entirety at the beginning of the voting meeting, but the nominees are not required to accept or decline until asked to give a platform. Furthermore, any nominated member of Lab Rats Comedy may choose to decline such nomination if he/she feels that they could not fulfill the set requirements. The faculty advisor is encouraged to attend nominations.

* 1. **Voting**

Once nominations are closed and have been accepted by the membership, a vote may be called and must be seconded by the general membership. In order to be elected, a nominee must have a majority vote of the general membership. During the voting process, nominees must leave the room until an elected member has been established. The voting process will take place by secret ballots. If a voting tie has occurred, the vote moves to the end of the voting meeting, where discussion may still take place on the candidates. If there is a continued deadlock, the vote will be given to the faculty advisor, who will select a member from the candidates to fill the position in question**.**

**IX. Review process**

**A. Review of an Elected Official**

Whereupon an elected official is unable to or does not perform his/her said duties, general membership may place him/her upon review. Once an official is under review, a company meeting shall be called, permitting the general membership to conduct an open discussion concerning the official under review. When discussions from the floor are completed, the official under review has the opportunity for rebuttal. Subsequent to all discussions, a vote for removal from office, followed by a vote for probation, must be called for and seconded among the attending membership. The reviewed official must remove him/herself from the room until all voting has completed. In order to remove an elected official from their position, a two-thirds vote among the present members must be reached. If the official under review is voted for removal, an immediate election shall commence to replace the open position. If the vote does not reach a two-thirds majority for removal, the official under review shall be restored to the elected position. If the vote reaches one-half approval for probation, then the review board will decide on probationary sanctions for said official. All votes in this process shall be cast by secret ballot.

**B. Review of a Member**

A member may be brought to review by the review board based on excessive number of absences, violation of contract, and/or any other misconduct at the discretion of the director body. Upon review, the member will face a review board that will decide if the member’s actions are punishable. If deemed punishable, the review board will decide any possible, immediate, or future consequences of the member’s actions. This may include, but is not limited to, member probation or dismissal. Possible probation terms are listed in part IX, section D.

**C. Review board**

A review board is created as needed for review, consisting of the **five** most prominent members of the management and artistic staff.

A. Due Order

i. Short Form Director

ii. Long Form Director

iii. Sketch Director

iv. Tech Director

v. Most Senior Member of Troupe

B. Votes Needed to Pass

If one position cannot be filled within the review board, the position will be replaced with the next in line. No person may serve two concurrent seats on the review board. Each review board member gets one vote. Probation and dismissal shall be voted on separately. Three-fifths vote is required for probation, and fourth-fifths vote is required for dismissal.

**D. Probation**

1. **Academic Probation**

Academic probation will be administered by the faculty advisor. If a member does not meet academic standards for membership or performance eligibility, the faculty advisor will inform the member of his/her probation terms and will monitor progress. The faculty advisor will inform a member of the review board at the beginning of the semester of any members on academic probation and the terms of that probation. If a probated member violates any term of academic probation, any witness must report the incident to the faculty advisor. The first two violations will warrant a warning from a director or the faculty advisor. Upon the third violation of probation, either a review board meeting will be held, or the member must meet with the faculty advisor

First semester academic probation shall include the member being:

1. Immediately removed from any management staff position, if applicable
2. Asked to regularly meet with the faculty advisors to discuss his/her academic progress

Second semester academic probation terms will be decided on a case by case basis by the faculty advisor. Second semester probation terms may include any elements of the first semester academic probation as well as alterations of those terms

Members on academic probation are not required to attend work calls or any other mandatory event. While on academic probation, members may attend up to six practices a month, which may be any combination of short form and long form practices. Members may continue practicing long form with an existing group if the group and the long form director agree.

Academic progress will be reevaluated at midterms by the faculty advisor, at which time the faculty advisor may make recommendations to the review board for any suggested alterations or eliminations to the terms of probation, based on the member’s academic progress and adherence to probation terms.

Additionally, any member with a GPA below 2.5 is encouraged to meet with the faculty advisor privately at the beginning of the semester to discuss ways of improving grades, enrolling in learning and study courses, and any external factors that may be negatively influencing the member’s grades. This is meant to be an intervention before the member’s grades require academic probation to be administered.

1. **Non-Academic Probation**

If the review board has voted to place a member on non-academic probation, the faculty advisor will be informed of the terms of probation. The review board will be informed of the terms of probation. The review board may set the terms on a case-by-case basis, with consideration of offense and severity

Terms of nonacademic probation may include the member being:

1. Immediately removed from any position of authority or responsibility within the troupe (If applicable)
2. Prohibited from participating in auditions or workshops
3. Prohibited from performing or working at any show or PR event
4. Prohibited from practicing in both short and long form and sketch
5. Asked to regularly meet with the faculty advisor or review board

Members on non-academic probation may still be required to attend work calls or any other mandatory event.

**X. By-Laws**

1. **Fair Casting Policy**

If for any reason an artistic director needs a performer, said director may cast himself/herself in the open spot. If the director has ample time and is capable of casting another active member into any acting function, said director should do so before filling the position him/herself.

1. **Laughingstock Policy**

All profits from the Fall and Spring main stage shows at the end of the respective semester are donated to St. Jude. All debts in the name of Lab Rats must be paid before making this donation

1. **Sabbatical and Personal Break Policy**

A personal break is any break lasting between three and six weeks away from the troupe. A member taking a personal break should inform a director or the faculty advisor at least two weeks before the next show to be missed, but a personal break may be effective immediately depending on the circumstances. During one semester, a member may take one personal break. If circumstances cause the personal break to extend beyond six weeks, it is considered a sabbatical and does not count as a personal break

A sabbatical is any break lasting at least six weeks away from the troupe. A member taking sabbatical must notify a director or faculty advisor at least three weeks before the next show to be missed. If returning during the semester, the member must inform a director or faculty advisor least three weeks before the next show (where the member intends to perform) and with enough time for at least six practices leading up to the show.

Acting performers are permitted to spend one semester away from the troupe and return the immediately following semester without re-auditioning. A sabbatical semester must begin with good terms between the member and the troupe, or the member loses the right to return without auditioning. Members are allowed two total sabbaticals during their career with the troupe. If the member decides to return to the troupe and the directors believe that there is no need to repeat a New Hat Semester, the troupe member may be restored to a full performing member of Lab Rats Comedy.

1. **IUI Policy**

Attending any company meeting, rehearsal, or performance under the influence of alcohol or any illicit substance is punishable by immediate dismissal from the event, to be followed by review by the review board as soon as possible. If a member is believed to have violated this policy, any Artistic Director has the right to immediately dismiss the offending member from that practice.

1. **Workshops**

Lab Rats is expected to hold public workshops each semester to teach the public about improv comedy. The troupe will decide at the beginning of each semester who will lead said workshops.

1. **Graduate School**

Graduate school students may still be involved in Lab Rats. All by-laws still apply to the graduate school student

1. **Work Call**

Lab Rats may be asked by their advisor or the theatre shop manager to participate in work calls. These are mandatory unless a performing member has a valid excuse, which needs to be reported to an Artistic Director at least one day before the work call is scheduled.