

Student Government End of the Year Report 2021-2022: Secretary

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General Tasks:

My main tasks in this position focused on tracking attendance, taking minutes, and disseminating resolutions and other important information. I maintained an attendance record for all general body meetings (Gen. body), executive communication (ExComm) meetings, retreat, and committee meetings. For gen. body, ExComm, and retreat, I took attendance verbally using a call-and-response system. For office hours, I made an office hour template sheet and printed a handful of them off at the beginning of the semester for people to sign their name whenever they serve their office hour. At the end of the week (sometimes, every two weeks) I went through the sign-in sheets and marked people down as I saw their name. For committee meetings, I relied on committee chairs to keep track of attendance at their meetings and report any absences to me. As aforementioned, I was in charge of taking minutes for each meeting. For gen. body, I made a copy of the agenda and typed word-for-word throughout the entire meeting. For ExComm, I used a generic minutes template and typed word-for-word throughout the entire meeting. After the meeting was adjourned, I went through the minutes to look for errors, shorthand phrases/words that I need to elaborate on, and gaps in the reports. Sometimes I asked committee chairs to send their reports to me to ensure I had all of their information in the minutes. After the editing process, I sent the minutes to all of the Student Government. To disseminate the passed resolutions, I simply downloaded the resolution as a PDF and attached it to an email that I sent to the dissemination contacts mentioned at the bottom of the resolution. Typically, the resolution sponsor will add a list of people/organizations they want their resolution to be sent to. I left the email generic and BCC'd all of the contacts. Other important tasks I was responsible for completing were updating the Student Government Shared Drive with passed resolutions and passed money motions. I did so by creating a copy of those documents and uploading them to the necessary folder. I was also tasked with submitting a student roster for the Union and Involvement Services. Secretaries are expected to create a contact form for members to fill out at the beginning of the semester and transfer the responses into a comprehensive contact sheet, but I was appointed to the position midway through the academic year, so the prior Secretary had it taken care of. These tasks, along with attending gen. body, ExComm, and my office hour took upwards of ten hours to complete each week.

Tools for Success:

- Necessary documents
 - In the shared drive, there are documents that I bookmarked because I often referred to them. These documents include the resolution dissemination contacts list, contact

sheet, office hour schedule, formal resolution template, image of the President's signature, and the standing rules.

- In my personal secretary folder, there are documents that were crucial for this position. These documents include the attendance sheet, voting sheet, absence form and responses spreadsheet, minutes templates, and a "guide" that the prior Secretary put together for me.
- I highly recommend creating copies of all of these documents and keeping them in a personal folder in the event I, or any other owner of a necessary document, deletes them from our drive and you aren't able to access them anymore.
- Minutes taking
 - Recording minutes can seem like a daunting task, but it is relatively simple when you get the hang of it.
 - You can take voice memos of each meeting and transcribe them later on, but I can't say I recommend doing so. Personally, I found that it takes too much time and it isn't that serious. Most StuGov members understand that you can't type minutes at the pace they speak. It isn't expected to type everything exactly word-for-word, but it is expected that you take accurate minutes and record every point that is being made in discussion.
 - Instead, I recommend typing only the necessary information as people are speaking during meetings. How do you know what is necessary information? Start by recording everything that is said (to the best of your abilities) and then vet through that information during the editing process. I often found myself recording something a member said because I thought it would be very important, and then I re-read the minutes later on and realize it wasn't necessary to include it.
 - Some members will start their sentence with "This is off the record..." and in that case, do not take minutes for what they say. It isn't very common for people to do that, and they only ever do it whenever they're about to say something silly/unprofessional, but it is something to be mindful of. Minutes are public to anyone and everyone who wants to view them, and sometimes, members don't want their comments open for the public to see.
 - Remember when it is a closed session! When it is a closed session, you do not need to take minutes of things that are said and you do not need to record the votes (if applicable).
- Attendance leniency
 - The standing rules outline a very specific attendance policy. A member is allowed unexcused absences based on the number of time commitments they have each week. Some members have two time commitments and some have four or five. Whatever

number that is, that is how many unexcused absences they are allowed in a semester. For excused absences, that number is infinite. As long as a member fills out the absence form 48-hours before a mandatory event (meeting/office hour/retreat), that member is generally excused. However, that is up to your discretion.

- I've heard some Secretaries will not excuse members for meetings if their excuse is that they need to do homework, or if they need to excuse themselves from a meeting because they are sick and we offer a virtual option. Personally, I think that's silly because we are students first and Student Government members second. Therefore...
- I recommend being lenient in your attendance policy execution. There is always a good reason why someone sends in an excuse. Perhaps they are stressed with homework or life in general; perhaps they are ill; perhaps they have a prior time commitment; perhaps they made a mistake and forgot about the meeting; perhaps they need to study for an upcoming test; perhaps their mental health doesn't allow them to attend the meeting. Whatever the reason is, it is valid to me.
 - Our members are rational and intelligent people and can notice when they are no longer able to fulfill their duties successfully. I noticed members would reach out to the Executive Board to reevaluate their ability to do their job without me forcing them to reevaluate. It just isn't necessary to be strict, in my personal opinion.
- All that said, the standing rules outline a specific process when someone exceeds the number of unexcused absences in a semester. Additionally, Secretaries cannot just turn a blind eye every time a member is absent because that invalidates the integrity of the position. There is a fine line between being lenient and assertive as a Secretary, but I'm confident that you will find it.

My experience:

My experience was unique from past experiences because I was appointed in late January 2022, rather than April 2021. Abigail Reynolds was the Secretary before me, and she did a phenomenal job! Unfortunately, she resigned because she needed to focus her attention on school more than Student Government. Her experience isn't unusual. Many people in the 2021-2022 academic year had to step down or resign due to personal and academic reasons. That is something to definitely consider before you embrace this role.

COVID-19 was still prominent during my term. Perhaps my perspective on attendance leniency is rooted in the fact that I had to be lenient because we were in a pandemic situation, but I still recommend being lenient even when the COVID-19 virus doesn't push us in a pandemic. We utilized

Zoom for gen. body and ExComm meetings, but an in-person format was the primary format. I know in the past, Zoom was the primary format. Some members couldn't serve office hours because they were quarantined or at high risk of contracting the virus. For those members, I excused them from serving their weekly office hour.

In the beginning of my time as Secretary, I noticed a member's unexcused absences were quickly increasing. I reached out to them after the first or second unexcused absence to see if there was an issue or something I could help with. They told me that their attendance shouldn't be an issue any longer, but I noticed them missing more and more meetings. I talked to the other members of the Executive Board to seek advice. The President reached out to the member and I reached out again, but neither of us had a response. At that point, their unexcused absences nearly tripled the amount they were allotted at the beginning of the semester. Unfortunately, I had to bring them to be removed and they weren't at the meeting to appeal the decision. This was something that I had to encounter rather early in my time as Secretary, so I was nervous that I was doing something unprecedented, but I was reassured that these things happen. If this happens to you, know that it isn't your fault that someone has to be removed.

Suggestions:

Consistency is key in this role. You are in the best position for success if you incorporate secretarial duties into your weekly routine. Did I work on my designated StuGov tasks every day? No. Were there days that I worked on StuGov more than others? Yes. As long as you find a way to make the tasks a part of your routine, you will do fine!

Don't be afraid to ask questions!! For me at least, I was only on the body for a few months before I was appointed to this role. I hadn't seen many of the things that I was supposed to do or be a leader for. The rest of the Executive Board is a wonderful resource for you throughout your time as Secretary. The Speaker was particularly helpful for me because they knew the standing rules more than any other member.

Have fun and remember that Student Government is only one aspect of your entire college experience. Is StuGov an important organization at Truman? Yes. Are you an important part of this organization? Yes. Both of these things don't mean that you need to overwork yourself and put this position over your schoolwork. You are a student first and Secretary of StuGov second. Allow yourself to create boundaries if it means that you are putting your academic self first.