

Student clubs and organizations: guidelines for drafting your constitution and by-laws

Constitution

The constitution of a club or an organization contains the fundamental principles which govern its operation. The by-laws establish the specific rules of guidance by which the group is to function. All but the most informal groups should have their basic structure and methods of operation in writing.

A written constitution will clarify your purpose and outline your basic structure and give members and potential members a better understanding of what the club or organization is all about and how it functions on campus.

The following is an outline of the standard information that should be included in a constitution:

- Article I** The name of the organization
- Article II** Affiliation with other groups (local, state, national, etc)
- Article III** Purpose of the organization
 - How do you define your organization?
 - What are your proposed goals?
 - How will your organization enhance the Mitchell Hamline campus?
 - Is there an academic department you can or will be affiliated with?
 - In which category below does your group belong?
 - Academic/Professional/Area of Law, Awareness/Political Activism, Health/Wellness/Sports and Recreation, Legal Fraternity/Honorary, Multicultural/Diversity, Religious/Spiritual
- Article IV** Membership
 - What makes your group unique?
 - What kind of commitment will members have to make?
- Article V** Officers
 - Designations
 - Terms
 - Elections (how and when)
- Article VI** Faculty or Staff Advisor (selection process)
- Article VII** Meetings
 - Frequency of scheduled meetings
 - Special meetings (who may call)

Article VIII Quorum (number of members required to transact business)

Article IX Amendments

Article X Ratification (requirements for adopting this constitution)

By-Laws

By-laws generally contain specific information on the following topics:

Membership Selection requirements, resignations, expulsion, rights and duties

Duties of Officers Responsibilities defined

Executive Board Structure, composition, powers

Committees Standing and/or special, how formed, meetings, duties

Order of Business Agenda for meetings

Parliamentary Authority Provisions for rules of order

Amendment Procedures Means of proposal, notice required, voting requirement

Other Policies and procedures unique to your organization

Note

Constitutions usually require a 2/3 vote of the membership for adoption. By-laws only require a simple majority for passage. Remember that the needs of your group may change over time and it's important that the Constitution and By-Laws are kept up to date to reflect the current state of affairs. In addition, make sure that all members have a copy of your constitution.

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