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 William Mitchell 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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