

20 Constitution & Bylaws

Student organizations should consider adopting constitutions and bylaws that will help their group in orderly functioning. Constitutions and bylaws articulate the purpose of and spell out the procedures to be followed by student organizations. The documents should be referred to when questions arise, reviewed annually, and utilized in the training of new officers. The needs of a group will change over time and it is important that the constitution and bylaws are kept up to date to reflect the current state of affairs. Make sure that all members have copies of these important documents so that they are informed about the organization and its procedures.

20.1 Constitutions

A constitution will serve to clarify the organization's purpose, delineate basic structure and provide the cornerstone for building an effective organization. It will also allow members and potential members to have a better understanding of what the organization is all about and how it functions. Constitutions usually require a 2/3 vote of the membership for adoption (See Appendix).

20.2 Bylaws

Bylaws set forth in detail the procedures a group must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. They provide further definition to the articles of the constitution and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change. Bylaws usually only require a simple majority for passage.

20.3 Requirements to be Included in Constitution

Organization constitutions must be submitted to Student Activities every four years. The organization should review the document, suggest changes/additions to the membership and vote on the changes/additions. Following is a list of mandatory items every document must have:

1. Voted on and approved by the general membership.
2. Reviewed by the organization and submitted to Student Activities every four years.
3. All constitutions must be typed in a clear and precise form.
4. Each officer and the advisor will keep a copy.
5. Concise statement of purpose, which includes the general goals and direction of the organization.
6. Clear definition of membership requirements including statement that no student shall be excluded because of race, creed, national origin, disability or gender (except for exempt Title IX organizations).
7. List of officer titles, their duties, and a clear definition of requirements to be officers (remember, at least two officers are needed).
8. Time of year when officers are elected and the process for elections.
9. Requirements of a quorum to conduct official business and the definition of a quorum (50%+1, 2/3, etc)
10. Statement indicating that all money collected by that organization be deposited in a public banking facility within 2 business days of receipt and require two signatures to withdraw funds from the account - the advisor's and that of one officer.

11. Meeting requirements must be stated (i.e., how many times a week, month, etc.). Exact day and times are not necessary.
12. Attendance requirements of officers and members must be specifically stated. If there are no attendance requirements, such a statement should be included.
13. Requirements and procedures to remove an officer, member and advisor must be specifically stated.
14. The financial obligations of the members must be specifically stated. If there are no financial obligations, such a statement should be included. The financial requirements of the organization must not be an indirect means of exploitation of the members.
15. The process for amending the constitution must be stated. When amendments are initiated, the constitution must be resubmitted to Student Activities.
16. Procedures for replacing an officer and advisor.