

Guidelines and Hints for Writing a Constitution

Developing a Constitution

A constitution provides a framework in which your club or organization shall operate including but certainly not limited to a mission/purpose statement, the obligations, responsibilities and privileges of the organization's membership, and structure.

A constitution should be tailored to fit each individual club or organization. The adoption of another constitution is a dangerous practice. Each club or organization is different, and those differences should manifest themselves in the organizations' constitutions.

Each clause of a constitution should be functional and have a clearly intended purpose. To respect the integrity of a club or organization, an amendment process should be clearly delineated and abided by whenever pursuing changes to a constitution.

The guidelines enclosed in this manual are designed to provide some advice as to what to consider when writing a constitution. It is the responsibility of each club and organization to design a constitution that appropriately addresses the organization's fundamental characteristics.

There are some clubs and organizations that are affiliated with a national or state parent organization. These organizations will be required to submit both the national or state constitution as well as local constitution or bylaws in order to complete the OSAGL Registration Process. The Office of Student Activities & Greek Life reserves the right to address questions and concerns regarding a constitution.

Sample Constitution Outline

Article I (Name)

- The name of this organization shall be _____.

Article II (Purpose/Mission)

- Describe the purpose and/or mission statement of the student organization.

Article III (Affiliation)

- If a student organization will be affiliated with a local, state or national organization, a statement delineating the nature of the affiliation should be included. If no affiliation exists, this section need not be included.

Article IV (Membership)

- List any qualification for membership in the organization
- List the procedures for selecting membership, if there are any.

- Include the following statement: “Voting Membership is restricted to matriculated, currently enrolled students, faculty and staff at Gettysburg College.”
- Include the following statement: “Membership in the organization will not be denied to anyone on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, veteran’s status or sexual orientation, except as sanctioned by law.”
- Include the following statement: “There shall be no hazing.”

Article V (Officers)

- List the titles of each officer of the organization. For example: “The officers of this organization shall be President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary.”
- State the term of office. For example: “Term of office shall be from time of election until new officers take office immediately following the next election.”
- Describe how the organization shall fill any vacancies that occur in any of the offices.
- Include the following statement: All officers of this organization are matriculated, currently enrolled students at Gettysburg College.”
- Describe the duties of each officer.
- If the organization has an Executive Committee, it should be described here.

Article VI (Nomination and Elections)

- Describe the process by which candidates for office will be nominated.
- Describe any additional election procedures such as how the voting membership will cast their votes or whether officers will be elected by a plurality or majority vote.
- Include the following statement: “Elections will be held during either the second or third week of April.”

Article VII (Officer Installation and Transition)

- Describe the organization’s officer transition period and the time and place of the installation of new officers.

Article VIII (Meetings)

- State the frequency of regular meetings. The time and place of the meetings may also be stated here.
- Special meetings. If the organization is able to hold special meetings, then who has the authority to call them? Are there any qualifications? How will members be notified of a special meeting and who will notify them?
- Specify quorum. A quorum is the minimum number of members which must be present at a meeting in order for business to be conducted. A quorum should be large enough to ensure fair representation of the organization but not so large that attaining quorum is difficult. The quorum should be stated in the form of a percentage of total membership.
- State any organizational attendance rules.

Article IX (Committees)

- State whom has the authority to create committees as well as name the Chairpersons for those committees belongs.
- State any regular or standing committees, including size and the responsibilities or duties.

Article X (Dues, Fees)

- State whether or not the organization has dues.

Article XI (Amendments)

- State whom has the authority to originate an amendment.
- State the manner in which an amendment should be presented to the organization.
- State the required percentage of the quorum that is necessary to approve an amendment. Typically, amendments lay over for one or two meetings.

Please return your completed constitution and/or bylaws to the Office of Student Activities & Greek Life in CUB 240 or Box 2999.

Note that your organization is not completely registered until all required forms are successfully completed and submitted to the Office of Student Activities & Greek Life.

Questions or concerns, please call (717)337-6304.