

# CREATING A STUDENT ORGANIZATION CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS



This document is intended to serve as a model you may follow when writing the constitution of your organization. An official student organization may structure and govern itself in any way deemed appropriate, so long as it does not violate any criteria stated in the Student Organization Handbook with regard to organization chartering and registration.

*Items that must be included in the Constitution and By-laws to complete University Recognition are marked throughout this document with this symbol ★*

## DEFINITIONS .....

A **constitution** is comprised of the fundamental laws and principles that prescribe the nature, function and limits of an organization. Essentially, the constitution provides a basic structure upon which an organization operates.

**By-laws** are secondary laws, which rule or govern the internal affairs of an organization. Basically by-laws are an expansion of the articles or sections of the constitution. They describe in detail the procedures and steps for an organization to follow in order to conduct business effectively and efficiently.

## AREAS TO BE COVERED WITHIN A CONSTITUTION:

★ The following statement must appear verbatim on all constitutions, bylaws, and printed publicity:  
**“The actions and opinions of this organization do not necessarily reflect those of the students, staff, faculty, or administration of California State University, Los Angeles.”**

## PREAMBLE .....

An introductory statement usually no longer than two or three sentences, stating the intent or mission of the constitution.

## ARTICLE I - NAME OF ORGANIZATION .....

The name of this organization shall be (full name of organization), hereinafter referred to as (shortened name of organization as will appear throughout the constitution [optional]).

### Comments:

One of the privileges granted with University recognition/chartering, is the option to use the name of the University in the title name of the organization. The name of the organization will be used in a variety of University and Center for Student Involvement publications. It is recommended that the name be stated in the document exactly how the organization prefers to be addressed. If an organization chooses to use the University name it must be written as follows, “{Name of Organization} at California State University, Los Angeles.”

## ARTICLE II - PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATION .....

★ State the purpose of the organization.

“The purpose(s) of this organization shall be:

- 1.
  - 2.
- (etc.)”

### B. Purpose of any national governing board or off-campus affiliate

Comments/Questions:

- What is the purpose for establishing the organization?
- What is the intended impact of the organization on the University community?
- What services will be provided and for whom?

## ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP OF THE ORGANIZATION

- ★ **“Regular voting membership in this student organization shall be open to all currently enrolled and continuing students of California State University, Los Angeles. An organization or its membership may not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, color, age, gender, gender identification, ancestry, marital status, citizenship, political affiliation, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, medical condition, pregnancy, genetic information, covered veteran status, or any other classification that precludes a person from consideration as an individual, except in cases of fraternity and sorority organizations which are exempt by federal law from Title IX Regulations concerning discrimination on the basis of sex.”**
- ★ **“All members of the organization are required to comply with University Procedures including but not limited to the Administrative Procedure 019-Alcoholic Beverages, Standards for Student Conduct: Prohibition on Hazing, Systemwide Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harrassment and retaliation against students (Executive Order 1097) and the University Rules Governing Student Organizations.”**

### A. Eligibility for Membership

- ★ State membership qualifications, such as: **“All students of California State University, Los Angeles shall be eligible for membership.”**

Comments/Questions

- Who is eligible for membership? (Cal State L.A. students, faculty and staff members, perhaps community members)

- ★ **“Faculty, staff, and alumni of Cal State L.A., as well as non-students may be considered for non-voting membership in this organization. Only currently enrolled or continuing students of Cal State L.A. may be voting members.”**

### B. Criteria or Qualification for Membership

Comments/Questions:

- Are there any specific qualifications needed or criteria, which need to be met for membership (i.e. minimal GPA requirements, dues that need to be paid)?

### C. Categories of Membership

Comments/Questions:

- Are there various categories of membership such as active, associate, inactive, alumni, honorary, auxiliary, etc.?
- What are the privileges, duties and/or responsibilities of each type of membership?

### D. Withdrawal or Removal of Members

Comments/Questions:

- What is the process for withdrawal from the organization?
- What are the grounds for removal of a member (i.e. under what circumstance would/could this occur, votes required)?
- What is the process for a removal of a member of the organization?
- Who has a right to request removal or withdrawal of a member?
- Does an appeal process exist, and what are the policies and procedures to follow for such a process?

## ARTICLE IV - ELECTIONS

### A. Times and Period when Elections Occur

Comments/Questions:

- How often and what time of year are elections held for the organization?
- Are there any special elections?

### B. Nomination Procedure

Comments/Questions:

- How are nominations made?
- Are there self-nominations?
- Is an application process required for nomination?
- Does a nomination committee exist which monitors the nominating process?

- ★ **“Only currently enrolled or continuing students in good standing at California State University, Los Angeles may serve as officers of this organization. The officers shall be:**

1. President
2. Vice-President
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Historian
6. (Other)”

**C. Notification and Posting of Elections**

Comments/Questions:

- What is the process for notifying others or posting information regarding organization elections?
- Are letters, flyers, or posters used on campus?
- Are verbal announcements made at meetings?
- How long is the notification and posting period?

**D. Election Procedures**

Comments/Questions:

- What is the specific procedure followed for elections?
- Is there a secret ballot taken, or is it a show of hands or verbal vote?
- What number or percentage of members or quorum is necessary for elections to be complete? (i.e. 2/3's, etc.)
- Who is eligible to vote?

★ Describe the election process. For example: "Officers of this organization shall be elected by a majority vote (51%) of the regular student membership of the organization. Elections shall take place once a year and they will be held at the next to the last meeting of the spring quarter of each year.

**ARTICLE V – OFFICERS**

**A. Description of Officers**

Comments/Questions:

- How many officers are there in the organization?
- List the officers' titles.
- Will there be any type of executive committee including officers?

**B. Duties and Responsibilities of Officers**

Comments/Questions:

- List the duties and responsibilities of each officer.

**C. Qualifications for becoming an Officer**

Comments/Questions:

- Who is eligible for office (i.e. only Cal State L.A. Students, GPA or credit limit requirements, specific skills, or necessary experience, class level requirements)?

★ **“Minimum Academic Qualifications**

**Students must be matriculated and enrolled at a CSU campus and maintain a minimum overall 2.0 grade point average each term. The student must be in good standing and must not be on probation of any kind.”**

★ **“Incumbent Unit Load**

**Undergraduate students must earn six semester units per term while holding office. Graduate and credential students must earn three semester units per term while holding office.”**

★ **“Incumbent Maximum Allowable Units**

**Undergraduate students are allowed to earn a maximum of 150 semester units or 125 percent of the units required for a specific baccalaureate degree objective, whichever is greater. Graduate and credential students are allowed to earn a maximum of 50 semester units or 167 percent of the units required for the graduate or credential objective, whichever is greater.”**

**D. Terms of Office**

Comments/Questions:

- Specify time frame (i.e. quarter, academic year, etc.)
- When do officers assume their positions?

**E. Procedure for Filling Vacated Offices**

Comments/Questions:

- Are special elections held?
- Is ascending order used?
- Are appointments made, or are interviews coordinated?

**F. Procedure for Removal of Officers**

Comments/Questions:

- Who can initiate the removal of an officer?
- What is the specific procedure to be followed for removal?
- What type of vote is required for removal?

**G. Appeal Policy** .....

Comments/Questions:

- Is there such a policy in your organization?
- Is there a set time period to carry out an appeal?
- What are the steps involved with an appeal?

**ARTICLE VI - COMMITTEES**

**A. Types of Meetings**

Comments/Questions:

- State the names, purposes, and responsibilities of the various standing committees. These might include: executive board, publicity committee, fund-raising committee, etc.
- How are members selected for each committee-by choice or by appointment?
- What are the heads of the committees called, and how are they chosen?

**B. Temporary/Special Committees**

Comments/Questions:

- How and when are such committees formed?
- What are the purposes and responsibilities of special committees?
- What is the duration of a temporary or special committee?

**ARTICLES VII - MEETINGS** .....

**A. Types of Meeting**

Comments/Questions:

- Are there different types of meetings (i.e. business, regular, special, executive)?
- Who is required to attend each type of meeting?

**B. Time and Occurrence of Meetings**

★ Describe your meeting schedule. For example: "Regular meetings shall be held at least once a week during the school year, excluding quarter breaks and final exam weeks. Meetings shall be held on campus unless a majority of the regular members vote to change the location. Emergency meetings may be called by the President as needed.

Comments/Questions:

- How often are meetings held (i.e. weekly, monthly, etc.)?
- Is there a set date for meeting (i.e. a set day of the week that does not change)?

**C. Special Meetings**

Comments/Questions:

- State the provisions for special meetings-how or by whom they are called, how many members must be present.
- What are the circumstances under which special meetings may be called?

**D. Quorum**

A quorum usually consists of the next whole number above one half of the total active membership. However, the number should be determined according to the organization's needs.

Comments/Questions:

- State the purpose for the quorum (i.e. when it is to be used).
- State the percentage or number of members needed for a quorum.
- What happens if quorum does not exist on a meeting?

**E. Method of Conducting Meetings**

Comments/Questions:

- State the rules which shall govern the conduct of business for the organization; for example, "all regular and special meetings of (name of organization) shall be conducted by Robert's Rules of Order, Revised."

**ARTICLE VIII - FINANCE/FISCAL RESPONSIBILITIES** .....

**A. Dues/Membership Fees**

Comments/Questions:

- Is there a set fee or dues amount?
- When are fees due?
- Who is the officer or member responsible for collecting and monitoring fees?

**B. Budget Expenditures**

Comments/Questions:

- Who is the officer(s)/member(s) responsible for authorizing all expenditures and reimbursements?
- What is the procedure for disbursement of all remaining funds upon dissolution of the organization?

**ARTICLE IX - ADVISORS** .....

**A. Selection of Advisors**

Comments/Questions:

- How is an advisor selected - by appointment, election, or selection?

**B. Qualifications**

Comments/Questions:

- Are there any specific criteria for selecting an advisor for your particular organization?

★ In this section, describe the process for selecting an advisor and explain the term of office for each advisor. Note: Advisors must be Cal State L.A. employees and may not be auxiliary (e.g. University Student Union, University Auxiliary Services or Associated Students, Inc.) employees. Student organizations may have an advisory board composed of community members or alumni however at least one advisor must be a faculty or staff member of Cal State L.A.. If your organization needs assistance in securing an advisor, please contact the Center for Student Involvement.

**C. Terms of Office**

Comments/Questions:

- How long of a term does/can the advisor serve?
- Are there limitations on the number of terms?

**D. Roles and Duties of an Advisor**

Comments/Questions:

- What are the responsibilities of the Advisor?
- What are the group's expectations for involvement?

The Center for Student Involvement can provide resources in this area.

**ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS** .....

**A. Proposing Amendments**

Comments/Questions:

- What is the procedure for proposing amendments (i.e. in writing, verbally, etc.)
- Who can propose amendments?

Usually, amendments are submitted in writing and are read at one or two meetings before a vote is taken.

**Provisions**

Comments/Questions:

- When can an amendment be proposed?
- Is there any notice required in advance for amending the constitution and/or by-laws?
- How many members must be present for adoption of the amendment?
- Who can vote on the amendment?
- How many votes are required for passage?
- When do new amendments take effect?

★ Describe the process for amending the constitution. For example: "This constitution and by-laws may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the entire voting student membership. A copy of the minutes of the meeting that documents the approval of the changes in the constitution or by-laws or organization name shall be placed on file with the Center for Student Involvement. An officer of the organization shall sign the minutes."

**ARTICLE XI - RATIFICATION** .....

**A. Ratification**

Comments/Questions:

- How and when will the constitution and/or by-laws go into effect?
- Indicate the margin of a vote that must be in favor of a proposed change in order to ratify an amendment.

Ratification is usually accomplished through either a two-thirds or three-fourths vote of the active membership.

After amendments have been made, an organization's constitution should be submitted to the Center for Student Involvement so updates can be indicated on your file.

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For more information or additional assistance, please contact:  
**Center for Student Involvement**, University-Student Union Room 204  
 P. (323) 343-5110 | [www.calstatela.edu/usu/csi](http://www.calstatela.edu/usu/csi).

This document was adapted from Creating a Student Organization Constitution or By-laws from the Student Union & Activities Office at Montana State University Billings.