

Issues to Consider When Writing a Constitution

ARTICLE I

Name of Organization:

The name of this organization shall be...

- Select a name appropriate for your organization
- The name you select cannot be in use by another recognized student organization

ARTICLE II

Purpose of Organization:

This article of the constitution is an important statement articulating the reason of the organization's formation and how you see the organization contributing to our campus community. Purpose statements should be...

- clear and concise
- may be used to describe the organization in the Student Organization Guide, published annually.

ARTICLE III

Membership:

Most recognized student organizations limit membership to currently enrolled Ai Minnesota students, while a few may extend membership privileges to non-students.

When defining membership in your organization, please consider the following:

- Who is eligible for membership? If non-students are eligible, under what conditions? Please understand that no recognized student organization may discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, creed, religion, age, ancestry, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, Vietnam-era veteran status, parental status and pregnancy.
- How does someone know if he or she is a member of your organization? Does your organization charge a membership fee (dues)? Do you plan to use a membership application form?
- What are the privileges of membership in your organization? Typically membership means eligibility for input in organizational business and to vote in elections and changes to the constitution.

ARTICLE IV

Organizational Leadership (Officers):

Most organizations need individuals to serve in leadership capacities to facilitate the business of the organization. Many organizations may choose the "traditional" leadership roles of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. Other organizations may wish to organize differently. No matter how you select to structure your leadership functions, please consider the following:

- Number of leadership roles and name/title of each role
- Functions of each role
- Term of office
- Time of year elections are held

- Who's eligible to run for office (Do students need to have been a member in the organization for a number of semesters in order to be eligible to hold office? If non-students are allowed membership, are they eligible to run for office?)
- What constitutes removal from office?
- What is the procedure for removal from office?

ARTICLE V

Election of Organizational Leadership (Election of Officers):

This procedure will be used to determine the leadership for your organization. Therefore, it is important that your process is fair to all parties involved. Consider carefully the procedure you want to establish regarding the selection of students for leadership roles.

Some questions to consider:

- What do you want the "term of office" to be for each of the leadership roles? Two things to consider – 1) what is the length of the leadership term of office? (usually one year), and 2) when does the term begin and when does it end?
- Who is eligible to run for a leadership role?
- How do those interested become candidates? Do they need to be nominated by others or can they nominate themselves?
- Is there a date prior to the elections that nominations are closed?
- When are the elections held? (typically held in a particular month)
- What is the voting procedure used by the membership?
- How will you handle a tie vote?
- Are there a minimum number of the total members of the organization who must participate in the election? (i.e. if your organization has a total of 100 members and only 10 members attend the meeting when the election is held, is this acceptable?).

ARTICLE VI

Meetings & Quorum:

Organizational meetings are where the official business of the organization will take place. Consider the following questions when writing your constitution:

- How often do you want your organization to meet?
- Who can call (schedule) an official meeting of the organization?
- What quorum do you wish to establish for your organization? Quorum is defined as the minimum number of members required to be present before an assembly may transact business. The quorum you set may depend upon the size and type of your organization. A quorum set too high may mean inhibit the organization's ability to transact its' business. A quorum set too low may allow a relatively small number of members to conduct business on behalf of the entire group.

ARTICLE VII

Advisor:

Recognized student organizations are required to have a Minnesota employee serve as an advisor to the organization. Generally the advisor serves in a voluntary capacity to provide advice and continuity to the members of the student organization. It is helpful to outline the role and selection/ratification procedure for the advisor in the constitution.

ARTICLE VIII

Amending the Constitution:

It is important to establish a process to amend the constitution. Some amendments will have the support of nearly all of the membership, while other amendments will generate divided opinion among the membership. Therefore, it is important to establish a process that is fair and easily understood. Some questions you may want to consider when writing this article:

- How are amendments placed on the agenda?
- How much advance notice do you want the membership to have about the proposed amendment? It is usually acceptable to give notice at a regularly scheduled meeting that an amendment to the constitution will be voted upon at the next regularly scheduled meeting.
- What is the minimum number of total members that must participate in the vote determining whether or not the amendment is approved? This is similar to the election of organizational leadership.
- Of those members present, how many must vote in favor of the amendment before it is approved? This can be a simple majority (51%), a two-thirds majority, or a three-fourths majority. Most organizations select a two-thirds majority.