

Writing a Student Organization Constitution (Includes a Sample Constitution)

The following outline and questions are designed to help you write a constitution for your organization as part of the University's student organization registration process. University policies that apply to recognition of your organization are included in the outline.

ARTICLE I. NAME

Section 1. What is the exact title to be used in addressing this organization?

**Note: Organizations cannot use "Southeast Missouri State University," "SEMO," or similar variations at the beginning of their name (i.e., SEMO Hockey Team) as this reflects ownership/sponsorship by the University. Organizations may, however, use the name of the school at the end of the group name to denote where the organization is located (i.e., Hockey Team at SEMO). The mascot, "Redhawks," may be used at any point in the organization name.*

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

Section 1. What is the purpose? Is it fostering a broad educational goal? Is it a social, cultural, or political organization? Why was the group founded?

Section 2. This section should include a statement of the group's willingness to abide by established University policies.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Who is eligible for membership? Are there any restrictions? How does one become a member? How are members identified?

Section 2. Voluntary withdrawal of membership may be provided for. Can a member remain in the organization if she/he fails to pay dues?

Section 3. A non-discrimination clause should be provided for and include the following: race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, genetic information, disability, or protected veteran status.

**Note: Southeast Missouri State University student organizations who wish to be recognized must use this statement: Southeast Missouri State University and this organization are committed to providing a safe, civil and positive learning and working environment for its faculty, staff, students, and visitors, free from discrimination in any form. This policy applies to all members and guests of the University community and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, genetic information, disability, or protected veteran status in any of its programs or activities.*

NPC, IFC, and NPHC sororities and fraternities may add the following sentence to the end of the nondiscrimination clause - Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1971, Section 106.14 makes an exception for social fraternities and sororities in regard to gender for membership criteria.

Adapted from:

Adele H. Stamp Student Union-Center for Campus Life Student Organization Resource Center. *SORC constitution and bylaw guidelines*. College Park, MD: University of Maryland. Retrieved June 21, 2017, from http://thestamp.umd.edu/student_org_resource_center_sorc/registration/sample_constitution

ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS

Section 1. How many officers are there? What are their titles and duties? Will the officers constitute an executive committee? What are the duties of the faculty advisor?

**Note: Officers must be in good standing with the University, both academically (2.0 cumulative GPA, unless a higher GPA is noted within this constitution) and judicially.*

ARTICLE V. OPERATIONS

Section 1. How are officers elected? What type of ballot? When are they elected (month), and for what period? Who is eligible for office? When do officers assume their positions? How may officers be removed? You may wish to clarify the role of your advisor.

**Note: The organization must identify a faculty, staff, or graduate assistant employed by Southeast Missouri State University to serve as the advisor.*

Section 2. In accordance with established registration procedures, this section should contain a statement that specifies a date for annual registration renewal/updates. This date should be within one month of your organization's elections.

Section 3. The University's anti-hazing statement must be included in all recognized student organizations' constitutions. The statement is as follows:

- A. Hazing for the purpose of pledging, initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for maintaining membership in a group, organization or team shall be defined as:
1. Any intentional, knowing or reckless act, whether on or off campus, which endangers the mental or physical health or safety of any person, regardless of consent, or which violates public law or University policy.
 2. Hazing includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Any physical brutality such as whipping, beating, striking, paddling, branding, placing of a harmful substance on the body, or similar activity;
 - b. Any physical activity such as sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement, calisthenics, or other activity that subjects a student to risk of harm, or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of a student;
 - c. Any activity involving consumption of food, liquid, alcoholic beverage, drug, or substance that subjects a student to risk of harm, or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of a student;
 - d. Any activity that intimidates or threatens a student with ostracism, subjects a student to extreme mental stress, shame or humiliation, or adversely affects the mental health or dignity of a student, or that may reasonably be expected to cause a student to leave the organization or institution rather than submit to acts described above; and,
 - e. Any activity, in which a person solicits, plans, encourages, directs, aids, or attempts to aid another in hazing or intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly permits hazing to occur and/or knowingly fails to report the incident.
- B. Hazing is inconsistent with Missouri laws/statutes, University policies, the Student Code of Conduct, and fraternal/organizational laws. *This organization* and its members agree to abide by the anti-hazing policy required of all student organizations at Southeast Missouri State University.

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ARTICLE VI. FINANCES

Section 1. How will the organization finance its activities? Will the organization use membership dues or perhaps receive funding from their department?

ARTICLE VII. AMENDMENTS

Section 1. How are amendments to be proposed and by whom? Do you want to provide for a delay before voting on amendments? How are your amendments to be voted upon?

BY-LAWS (Optional)

Constitutions may also include a "Provision for By-Laws"; Article or a clause pertaining to the establishment of by-laws. The By-Laws might include some of the following items:

- Standing committees of the organization.
- Ad Hoc Committees of the organization which are established for a single purpose, or 1-year commitment. Such committees will be eliminated from the By-Laws once abolished or defunct.
- Policies pertaining to the time, location of organizational meetings.
- Election procedures, dates, terms of offices.
- Structures/purposes of committees.

SEE SAMPLE CONSTITUTION ON NEXT PAGE

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SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

A constitution reflects the policies and procedures of organizations. Since every organization is different, constitutions will vary in their content. The following sample constitution contains areas typically addressed in constitutions and possible wording. When writing a constitution, however, student organizations should be sure that their constitution reflects the policies and procedures of their particular organization.

Constitution of "Name of Organization"

Article I - Name

The name of the organization will be "Name of Organization" also referred to as "Nickname/Abbreviation of Organization".

Article II - Purpose

Section 1. "Name of Organization" is established for the expressed purpose of developing leadership skills as well as an awareness of social responsibilities to encourage students to participate in public affairs.

Section 2. "Name of Organization" understands and is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities of abiding by Southeast Missouri State University policies, the Student Code of Conduct, and local, state, and federal laws.

Article III - Membership

Section 1. Active membership shall be limited to persons officially connected with Southeast Missouri State University as faculty, staff or registered students.

Section 2. In addition, the following requirements are necessary to constitute active membership:

- a. Payment in full of financial obligations as determined by organization.
- b. Attendance of at least 75% of all meetings during a given semester.
- c. Active participation in all activities sponsored by "Name of Organization" unless the activity interferes with either scholastic or financial constraints.

Section 3. Southeast Missouri State University and "Name of Organization" are committed to providing a safe, civil and positive learning and working environment for its faculty, staff, students, and visitors, free from discrimination in any form. "Name of Organization" openly admits students to its membership and does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, genetic information, disability, or protected veteran status in any of its programs or activities.

**Note: NPC, IFC, and NPHC sororities and fraternities may add the following sentence to the end of the nondiscrimination clause - Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1971, Section 106.14 makes an exception for social fraternities and sororities in regard to gender for membership criteria.*

Article IV - Officers

"Name of Organization" will be governed by the following means:

An elected President (or other designated officer) will preside at all meetings of "Name of Organization" the President will maintain the power to appoint all committee chairpersons, shall present all motions to the body present and shall be present at 90% of the meetings of "Name of Organization"

"Name of Organization" shall also maintain a Vice President. The Vice President's duties shall be to preside at all meetings and functions that the President cannot attend.

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Club members shall also elect a Secretary-Treasurer who will handle all dues, accounts, new members, rule observances at stated meetings, protocol, etc.

The role and duties of the faculty/staff advisor shall include attending meetings, providing counsel to the organization's officers, etc.

Article V - Operations

1. Voting Eligibility

Those members meeting all requirements of active membership as set forth in Article III will be granted voting privileges.

2. Election Process

All officers shall be elected by a majority vote of eligible voting members of "Name of Organization." All elections will be held on an annual basis during the month of _____.

The President will take nominations from the floor, the nomination process must be closed and the movement seconded. The nominated parties will be allowed to vote.

All voting shall be done by secret ballot to be collected and tabulated by the Secretary-Treasurer and one voting member of "Name of Organization" appointed by the outgoing President.

3. Removal

Any officer of "Name of Organization" in violation of the Organization's purpose or constitution may be removed from office by the following process:

- a. A written request by at least three members of the Organization.
- b. Written notification to the officer of the request, asking the officer to be present at the next meeting and prepared to speak.
- c. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote is necessary to remove the officer.

4. Meetings

All meetings will occur on a weekly basis or other regular basis at a time selected by "Name of Organization" and will follow the procedure set forth below:

- Attendance
- Report by the President
- Committee reports
- Vote on all committee motions and decisions
- Any other business put forward by the members of the club
- Dismissal by the President

5. Anti-Hazing Policy

Hazing for the purpose of pledging, initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for maintaining membership in a group, organization or team shall be defined as:

1. Any intentional, knowing or reckless act, whether on or off campus, which endangers the mental or physical health or safety of any person, regardless of consent, or which violates public law or University policy.
2. Hazing includes, but is not limited to:

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- a. Any physical brutality such as whipping, beating, striking, paddling, branding, placing of a harmful substance on the body, or similar activity;
- b. Any physical activity such as sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement, calisthenics, or other activity that subjects a student to risk of harm, or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of a student;
- c. Any activity involving consumption of food, liquid, alcoholic beverage, drug, or substance that subjects a student to risk of harm, or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of a student;
- d. Any activity that intimidates or threatens a student with ostracism, subjects a student to extreme mental stress, shame or humiliation, or adversely affects the mental health or dignity of a student, or that may reasonably be expected to cause a student to leave the organization or institution rather than submit to acts described above; and,
- e. Any activity, in which a person solicits, plans, encourages, directs, aids, or attempts to aid another in hazing or intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly permits hazing to occur and/or knowingly fails to report the incident.

Hazing is inconsistent with Missouri laws/statutes, University policies, the Student Code of Conduct, and fraternal/organizational laws. "Name of Organization" and its members agree to abide by the anti-hazing policy required of all student organizations at Southeast Missouri State University.

Article VI - Finances

"Name of Organization" will finance the activities it engages in by the following means:

Membership dues (appropriate amount set by "Name of Organization")

Article VII - Amendments

The constitution is binding to all members of the "Name of Organization". But the constitution is not binding unto itself.

Amendments to the constitution may be proposed in writing by any voting member of "Name of Organization" at any meeting at which 2/3 of the voting members is present.

These amendments will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting of the executive council or other officer grouping.

Proposed amendments will become effective following approval of two-thirds (2/3)-majority vote of active members.

Article VIII - Registration Renewal

"Name of Organization" will apply to Campus Life & Event Services for registration each Fall semester and will make any updates necessary to that registration within a month of making the change(s).

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