

Office of Student Activities

Developing a Constitution

The following is a list of items to consider when drawing up a Constitution for a Stanford registered Voluntary Student Organization (VSO). Pick up a Constitution form from the Office of Student Activities (OSA). The questions included below are meant to stimulate your thought about the design of a constitution that best serves the needs of your organization.

To start an organization, you must file a constitution and register your organization. Each year every organization must be re-registered at OSA in order to be eligible for privileges such as use of the Stanford name and facilities. With these privileges come responsibilities, such as abiding by University policy and banking with the ASSU. For more information, consult the [Student Organizations Handbook](#) available at OSA.

After you have completed the Constitution form, return it to the Office of Student Activities. It will be dated and reviewed within the next week by a staff person who will confirm that all of the items are satisfactorily filled out. If approved, one copy will be filed in your permanent file at OSA and the other copy will be returned to you for your records.

Remember, your organization is responsible for governing itself. The more clearly you write your constitution/governing documents, the more smoothly your organization will run -- especially during times of leadership transition.

ARTICLE I - NAME OF ORGANIZATION

Student organizations recognized by the Office of Student Activities may use the University name in their title. Consider a name which is not too similar to one used by another organization. Avoid using the word "Stanford" as the first word in the name of your group. This will make it easier for others to find the name of your group.

ARTICLE II - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This section describes what unifying interests, purpose or projects bring your group together. A clear purpose is helpful in defining, monitoring, and evaluating projects, objectives, and goals. Your organization's purpose should be sufficiently unique to distinguish it from other VSOs. If not, perhaps it would be better to work with an existing group than to create another new one. Remember we already have over 1,000 groups.

ARTICLE III - ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP

Membership must be open to all registered Stanford students. There may be criteria for membership which determine how people indicate that they are members of the group. There may be restrictions on membership which relate to the purpose and goals of the group. Restrictions may not be arbitrary or discriminatory and must be based on objective criterion. Membership may include faculty and staff, but they cannot serve as leaders of the organization. Members of the community may be affiliated with the group but may not be considered members.

- What is the criteria for membership in the group? *Attendance at one meeting? Demonstrated commitment?*
- Are there any restrictions to membership? *A good singing voice?*
- Will the group require its members to pay fees or dues?
- What are the responsibilities of members? *Committee work? Attendance? A share in a leadership role?*
- What will be the criteria for exclusion or expulsion of a member?

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

A. Titles and Responsibilities

All group leaders must be registered students

- The minimum is to have a group leader (or president, representative, coordinator, etc.) and a treasurer (financial officer).
- What other officers will your group have, and what responsibilities will be included in each job description?
- Is there a system of checks and balances within leadership and its members?
- What consideration has been given to record keeping for your group?
- What budgetary arrangements have been made?
- What provisions will the group include to grant emergency decision-making authority?

B. Election and Removal Process

- What is the criteria for candidacy?
- What election procedure will your group use? *Majority or 2/3 vote? Voice or written ballot?*
- What run-off or recall provisions will the group choose?

C. Length of Term

- How long will the elected officers serve? *Quarter, semester, academic year?*

ARTICLE V - DISSOLUTION OF ORGANIZATION

If and when the group becomes defunct, this describes what happens to any funds or things that you own. Both money and property may be bequeathed to any registered organization or department at Stanford. They may not be given to any off-campus organization.

ARTICLE VI - PROCEDURE TO AMEND CONSTITUTION

Describe the process for changing the constitution

- Will the group use consensus, a vote or mandate to amend its constitution?
- If by vote, shall a quorum or simple majority be required for approval?

For further information, contact the Office of Student Activities, 723-2733

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