

Constitution Basics

An organization's constitution communicates the history and the future of a group. It shares the fundamental values, principles, and policies that the organization uses to function. Any organization that is seeking consistency, unity, and longevity should have their basic structure and operational methods in writing through a constitution.

A Basic Constitution Outline

Article I

Name of Organization—this section identifies the official name of the organization.

Article II

Purpose Statement—this section communicates the purpose or mission statement of the organization. This should answer what your group intends to contribute to members, the campus community, and even the greater community.

Article III

Membership—this section outlines requirements for membership and provides information related to membership fees, if appropriate.

Article IV

Officers and Elections—this section speaks to the organizational structure of an organization. It may include an organizational chart, officer roles, officer requirements, and the process for officer elections.

Article V

Due Process—this section provides a statement on the mechanics that your organization will use to ensure that all members are treated justly in disciplinary matters, etc. It may include information related to membership rights, duties, resignations, sabbaticals, etc.

Take some time
to keep in Mind ...

practices behind the protocol of a group.

...that by-laws are typically easier to change or amend than a constitution. By-laws are the agreed upon

Constitution Construction

- ▲ Be concise
- ▲ Be clear
- ▲ Use a consistent outline format
- ▲ Remember less is more
- ▲ Get input from current members
- ▲ Seek your advisor's feedback and suggestions
- ▲ Remember, if it is in writing—it is!

Article VI

Communication Structure—this section outlines the process in which communication will be shared within the organization. It may include specific policies and procedures related to meeting schedules, committee structures, meeting attendance expectations, Internet correspondence, etc.

Article VII

Financials—this section highlights the annual budget process, decision-making related to allocation of funds and membership dues, and any national or international financial responsibilities that organization may have (i.e. Greek organizations, national academic chapters, etc.). You may also want to include instructions for disbursement of any funds that should remain in the event that an organization dissolves.

Article VIII

By-Laws—this section details the specific procedures an organization has agreed to follow as it relates to conducting regular business. Often times the by-laws provide further clarification of the Articles of a Constitution. Things you may want to define in your by-laws:

- Officer Job Descriptions
- Meeting Quorum
- Meeting Rules (i.e. Roberts Rules of Order)
- Officer Election or Selection Process and Rules
- Due Process Details
- Provisions for Amending the Constitution and/or By-Laws