

Guide to Creating a Student Organization Constitution

DEFINITIONS:

1. A Constitution consists of the fundamental principles that prescribe the nature, functions, and limits of an organization. The constitution provides a basic structure upon which an organization operates. These principles are foundational and may rarely change.
2. By-laws are secondary principles that rule or govern the internal affairs of an organization. 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. They may also be referred to as **Operational Plan**. These documents are likely to be changed more frequently to be in line with the current times of the organization.

Some sections are required in your Constitution. These items are essential to the basis of your organization and/or are U&I/University policies, and must appear in order to be considered for a charter or remain an active organization. There are guiding questions in most sections for you to consider. In some cases, there is specific language required and it will be clearly identified. All required information will be clearly labeled (REQUIRED).

We have included some sections that many organizations find helpful in establishing their foundation. We have included these for you to consider when writing your constitution. Including those sections may allow for a better understanding of organization management and policies for future members. All of these items are clearly labeled (OPTIONAL).

Items that are **REQUIRED**:

- Name and Purpose of the Organization
- Membership Definitions (as determined by group members)
- Officers and How they are selected (as determined by group members)
- Advisor Role and Functions
- Meeting Structure (group defines when/how business will be conducted)
- Non-discrimination and Anti-hazing statements

Additional Sections that may be required due to organization activities:

- Financial Processes - Organizations that anticipate handling money (i.e. collect membership dues, open a bank account, make payments related to group, plan fundraisers, buy apparel, etc.)
- Risk Mitigation strategies - Organizations whose activities are focused on high risk physical activities; risk management plan should be specific to group activity.)

General Tips for Creating your Constitution:

1. Make the constitution specific to the organization but avoid specific information (i.e. specific meeting rooms, days, times, etc.).
2. Use consistent formatting throughout the Constitution: constitutions should have clear headings for each article and section; end complete sentences with a period; small phrases and bullet points should not end in a period.
3. Use neutral language and avoid subjective language such as “nice,” “worse,” “best,” “pressure,” “falling apart,” etc.
 - a. A constitution is a formal document and should use formal language
4. Write the constitution as the organization currently is. Do not try to envision where it will be in the future - This is a part of the Bylaws/Operational Plan. Consider how amendments can be made so all documents can evolve over time.
5. Avoid ambiguity so that future members will not need to interpret intent.

**The Constitution of (insert Organization name)
(Year) Revision**

(REQUIRED) Article I: Name of Organization

A. The name of the organization is/shall be (insert organization's name).

Note: "Truman" or "Truman State University" may not be placed at the beginning of the name of the organization per Trademark regulations within the Student Code of Conduct. If you desire including "Truman State University" in some capacity, you may do so after the organization name - Example: "Organization at Truman State University".

This name will be used in a variety of University and U&I publications, bank statements, etc., so it is recommended that the name be stated in the document exactly how the organization prefers to be addressed.

If the title/name of the organization is longer than five words, we recommend creating an acronym or abbreviation for the organization. [You can visit here to see other organizations to avoid duplicating.](#) Your Organizational Development Liaison will also let you know if there is another group using a desired acronym or abbreviation.

(REQUIRED) Article II: Purpose of the Organization - What are the values and purpose of the organization?

(OPTIONAL) A. Mission Statement - Sometimes these differ from Purpose.

(OPTIONAL) B. Goals - What are the goals of the organization as they define how your organization supports its purpose?

(OPTIONAL) C. Objectives - Objectives are specific and address the steps/processes to achieve the goals of the organization.

(REQUIRED) Article III: Membership

Note: Only students currently enrolled in Truman State University may be active members that vote. Only full-time, degree seeking students can hold office within a U&I recognized student organization (RSO). University faculty and staff members, ATSU/KCOM students, and community members are eligible for membership in student organizations BUT they may only serve as associate members. Keep Truman's [Non-Discrimination Policy](#) in mind when considering limitations of membership.

A. **(REQUIRED)** Definitions/Categories of Membership

- Who are the different types of members that will make up your organization?
 - Ex. New member, active, associate, officer, inactive, alumni, honorary, etc.
- Who is able to join your organization?
- It is suggested that you state the privileges, duties, and or responsibilities each membership type has.
 - *(REQUIRED LANGUAGE) Only currently enrolled Truman students may have voting privileges.*

B. **(OPTIONAL)** Eligibility/Criteria or qualifications of membership

- What are the specific qualifications, criteria, or standards which need to be met to maintain membership? These can include:
 - GPA Requirements, enrollment status, attendance requirements, dues, etc.
- Note: This can, but does not necessarily need to be, different than Section III – A.

Note: If your organization decides to have a GPA requirement or enrollment status for members of the organization, the organization must follow all guidelines for obtaining grades and keep the information confidential. Grades and Enrollment Status can be requested through the Registrar's Office. If the University has

reason to believe the organization is not following the Code of Conduct or FERPA guidelines, an investigation may occur and the organization could face conduct charges. Your Organizational Development Liaison can assist you in finding appropriate forms if needed.

C. **(OPTIONAL)** Member Withdrawal

- What is the process for members who wish to voluntarily leave the organization?

D. **(OPTIONAL)** Member Removal / Expulsion

- On what grounds can a member may be removed?
- Who has the right to request the removal of a member?
- What does the process for the removal of a member look like?
 - Who is involved in the process? How is your advisor informed/involved?
 - Will quorum must be established to a vote to occur for membership removal?
 - What type of vote will be needed to pass a membership removal?
- Will an appeal process exist for a member who has been formally removed from the organization?
 - If an appeal is allowed, what does that process look like?

(REQUIRED) Article IV: Officers

A. **(REQUIRED)** Description of Officers

- List officer titles:
 - List the duties and responsibilities of each officer.
 - Specifically state the officer who:
 - Will be the President/Primary Contact for the organization and be listed with the U&I
 - Officer/Designee responsible for Risk
 - Officer/Designee responsible for Financial Matters

Note: One Officer/Designee should not be responsible for all three areas. At a minimum you should have two primary officers covering these three critical areas.

B. **(REQUIRED)** Qualifications to Hold Office

- List the criteria that individuals must meet in order to be selected as an Officer/Designee.
- **(REQUIRED LANGUAGE)** Only full-time, degree seeking students can hold office within a U&I recognized student organization (RSO).

C. **(OPTIONAL)** Officer Term

- How long officers/designees will serve in their position?
- When officers will be installed/take office?
- If there are positions that have different terms or installations, define them separately.

D. **(OPTIONAL)** Removal from Office

- Who can initiate the removal of an officer/designee, if this differs than general member removal?
- What is the process and procedures that will be followed for the removal of an officer/designee?
- What is the quorum and the vote required for the removal of an officer/designee?
- Is there an appeal process for an officer to be removed? If yes, define that process.
 - Who oversees the appeal process? Be sure to consider what will be done in the event that officer/designee appealing is the individual who oversees the process.
 - What is the time period for an appeal to be filed and decided upon?
 - What additional steps must occur in the event of an appeal?
- Does removal from a position jeopardize their ability to participate in the organization totally?

(REQUIRED) Article V: Elections

A. **(REQUIRED)** Occurrence

- How and when elections will occur and what is their frequency?

- What is the process for notifying the organization of an upcoming election?
- How long does the notification period have to last before elections can occur?

B. **(REQUIRED)** Election Procedures

- What are the procedures and processes for elections?
- Which members are eligible to vote?
- What is the necessary quorum for elections to occur?
- What is the vote needed to be obtained to be affirmed into an office?
- How will members vote?
- Determine the order in which officers will be filled.

C. **(REQUIRED)** Nominations

- What is the process for nominations?
 - How, when and where will nominations be made?
 - Will self-nominations be accepted?
 - Is there an application process for nominations? If yes, define the process for how they are submitted.
- How long will nominations be permitted to be made?
- Who monitors the nominations and the process?

D. **(OPTIONAL)** Filling Vacated Positions

- What is the process for the organization to take if an officer position becomes vacant prior to an election period? – use one or a blended approach from the list below.
 - Are special elections held?
 - Will an officer ascend into that position?
 - Can a special appointment be made?
 - Will the executive board offer interviews and select the position?
 - Other: Detail the process.

E. **(OPTIONAL)** Special Elections

- Determine whether special elections will be allowed – if yes:
 - Determine which positions will have longer or shorter terms than others.
 - Determine if there are alternating terms for some positions versus others.
 - In what instances will special elections be used?

(ENTIRE SECTION IS REQUIRED) Article VI: Advisor

A. Selection and Qualifications

- What is the process for advisor selection?
- Is there specific criteria or qualifications to serve?
- How long does the advisor term last?

Note: Each RSO is required to have a campus based Faculty or Staff advisor. RSO's may choose to have an off campus advisor as well. U&I will have primary communication with your campus based advisor. GTRA's and some select Faculty or Staff may not be eligible to serve in this role.

B. Roles, Responsibilities, and Duties

- What will the role of the advisor be?
- What responsibilities, functions and/or duties will the advisor have?
- **(REQUIRED LANGUAGE)** *The faculty/staff advisor cannot reserve rooms under a student organization's name for activities/events that are not related or associated with the group they advise.*

(ENTIRE SECTION IS OPTIONAL) Article VII: Committees

A. Standing Committees

- What is the name, purpose, and responsibilities for each standing committee?
 - Ex: Executive Board, publicity, fund-raising, etc.
- How will members be selected for each committee?
- Who will serve as point individual for each committee?
 - **Note:** If applicable, consider defining within Officer/Designee responsibilities above.

B. Special Committees

- How and when special committees will be formed?
- What is the purpose and responsibilities of special committees?
- What is the duration of a special committee?

(REQUIRED) Article VIII: Meetings

A. **(REQUIRED)** Meeting Structure

- List the different types of meetings the organization will have.
- Who is required to attend each type?
- What quorum must be obtained to conduct official business?
- Which individual runs each meeting?
- What type of members and what percentage of membership must be present to conduct official business at meetings?
- Will quorum be used?
- What will occur if quorum is not met at a meeting?
- Will parliamentary procedure be used or will meetings be informal?

B. **(OPTIONAL)** Times and Occurrence

- How often will each meeting be held?

C. **(OPTIONAL)** Special Meetings

- Under what circumstances may a special meeting be called?
- How and by whom can special meetings be called?
- What quorum must be obtained to conduct official business?

(ENTIRE SECTION OPTIONAL) Article IX: Amendments

A. Proposal

- What is the process and/or procedures for proposing amendments?
 - When can an amendment be proposed?
 - Who can propose an amendment?

B. Provisions

- Is there any notice required in advance for voting on an amendment to the constitution or by-laws?
- What is the quorum for a vote to occur on an amendment?
- Who, or what type, of members can vote on a proposed amendment?
- What is the passage rate?

C. Ratification

- How and when will amendments to the constitution/by-laws go into effect?

(REQUIRED) Article X: Anti-Hazing Agreement

A. **REQUIRED LANGUAGE** *(Organization Name) fully understands and will abide by the anti-hazing policy (abusive affiliation) as set forth in the Student Conduct Code of Truman State University 8.050.2 – Expectations for Student Organization Conduct Section 14: Abusive Affiliation*

B. **REQUIRED:** *If a violation of the Student Code of Conduct or Non Discrimination/Title IX occurs, (Organization Name) is responsible for reporting the information to the appropriate offices.*

(Section **REQUIRED** if your group will be handling money - i.e. collect membership dues, open a bank account, make payments related to group, plan fundraisers, buy apparel; otherwise it is **OPTIONAL**.)

Article XI: Finances

A. Dues

- Will your organization have dues?
 - If yes; how much will they be?
- When will dues be collected?
- Which officer will be responsible for the collection of dues?
- How will they be collected?
- (**REQUIRED LANGUAGE**) *“A faculty or staff member can give donations to any U&I organization, but cannot be required to pay dues.”*

B. Expenditures

- Who will be listed on your organization’s bank account?
- Which officer(s) is/are responsible for authorizing expenditures and reimbursements?

C. Fundraising

- Will the group host fundraisers? If yes, are there standards that should be adhered to each time?

D. Dissolution of Funds

- What agency, group, department, or Truman account will receive organization funds upon dissolution of the organization?
- (**REQUIRED LANGUAGE**) *“Any remaining funds cannot be distributed among remaining organization individual members.”*

(**OPTIONAL**) Article XII: Not-for-Profit Statement

A. All RSOs are not-for-profit organizations.

- a. While this statement is not required, we suggest listed so further members can keep this in mind when/if changes are made to the foundational documents.

(**REQUIRED** if your Organizations whose activities are focused on high risk physical activities).

Article XIII: Risk Management

A. (**REQUIRED**) Procedures

- Which officer will serve as the individual responsible for risk management/mitigation?
- How will your organization reduce risk in **Physical Risk**?
- What steps will your organization take if risk occurs in those areas?

Note: The organization may consider all five categories of risk management (i.e. Physical, Emotional, Reputational, Financial, Facilities) in its planning; however, the Physical Risk component is all that is required to be addressed in this document.

