



# **STARTING A STUDENT ORGANIZATION**

Student organizations are officially recognized by the FACULTY SENATE STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE.

❑ Students wishing to start a new organization should follow all steps outlined below.

❑ **DEADLINE FOR FALL SUBMISSION OF CONSTITUTIONS IS NOVEMBER 6, 2009.**

❑ **DEADLINE FOR SPRING SUBMISSION OF CONSTITUTIONS IS MARCH 12, 2010.**

1. Schedule a preliminary meeting w/Student Life staff to review process for starting a new group.
2. Develop an organizational mission/purpose that is distinct from groups already established on campus (see the Department of Student Life in you have any uncertainty regarding this).
3. Name your organization.
4. Secure an Advisor who is either full-time faculty or full-time professional contract staff at Cleveland State University.
5. Complete the "**Application for University Recognition**" form (see below).  
NOTE: Applications for new organizations require names/signatures/CSU ID Nos. for five (5) currently enrolled students who agree to be "charter members" of the group; the Department of Student Life will contact each student to verify charter member status.
6. Write a rough draft of your constitution. Use the "**Suggested Constitution Format**" (see below) provided by the Department of Student Life as a guide. NOTE: all "articles" covered within the sample constitution should be included in your draft. Please also note that all underlined material in the Suggested Constitution Format is required per University policy.
7. Submit a rough draft of your constitution and completed Application for University Recognition form to the Department of Student Life.
8. Schedule an appointment with the **Constitution Review Subcommittee (CRS)** via the Department of Student Life; at least two members of the organization and the Advisor must attend. The CRS has been established to review draft constitutions and provide advice/support regarding policy and the official University Recognition process. Bring copies of the draft constitution for all members of your party and be prepared to take notes.
9. NOTE: after meeting with the CRS your group can hold (3) non-fund raising events on campus.
10. After all changes to the constitution have been made and the document is deemed to be acceptable (by the organization, the Advisor, and the CRS), the CRS forwards the document to the **Faculty Senate Student Life Committee** for review at their next meeting. NOTE: the CRS must have the final constitution draft at least five (5) working days before the Faculty Senate Student Life Committee is scheduled to meet.
11. The CRS Chairperson presents the constitution at the Faculty Senate Student Life Committee meeting for the purpose of seeking formal approval.
12. After approval from the Faculty Senate Student Life Committee is granted, the student organization is officially "recognized" by the University.
13. Complete the following items to become "active" for the 2009-10 school year:
  - a. The Annual Registration Packet must be filed with the Department of Student Life (this Packet includes: 2009-10 Student Organization Registration Form, Advisor Obligation Form, Agency Account Form, and Hazing Form & Statement);
  - b. Officers must attend an Officer Orientation Session conducted by Student Life.

## **WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION?**

- A constitution is an official internal document used by organizations to govern.
- The constitution shapes the organization's purpose and vision.
- The constitution protects member rights and provides credibility on campus.
- The constitution provides structure for those involved with the group.
- The constitution includes details regarding the roles of officers and members.
- The constitution provides information about organizational operations (e.g. policies, procedures)
- The constitution establishes a relationship between the organization, the student body, and the rest of the campus community (e.g. faculty, administration).
- The constitution establishes that the organization is subject to the rules, regulations, and policies of Cleveland State University and the laws of the State of Ohio.
- The constitution may protect the organization's rights in situations where a decision of the group is questioned or challenged.
- NOTE: All CSU student organizations, with exception of the University Judicial Board (which is governed by the Student Conduct Code), must have an updated constitution on file with the Department of Student Life.

## **Constitutional Distribution & Review**

- All members of a student organization should be provided with an up-to-date constitution.
- An informal review of the constitution should be conducted on an annual basis.
- The Department of Student Life recommends that constitutions be thoroughly reviewed every 3-5 years.
- NOTE: Constitutional reviews may be mandated by the Faculty Senate Student Life Committee or the Department of Student Life.
- Constitutional revision may be implemented by following the procedure documented on the reverse of this page.

# Cleveland State University

## APPLICATION FOR UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

**PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NEATLY**

Proposed Name of Student Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Check One of the Following:       **New Organization**     **Revised Constitution**

*Name of Student Submitting Application:* \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

*Advisor's Name (print):* \_\_\_\_\_  
 Advisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 CSU Department \_\_\_\_\_  
 CSU Address (bldg/rm) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Campus Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

### \*\* New Organizations Only \*\*

#### LIST FIVE STUDENT ORGANIZATION CHARTER MEMBERS

	Name	CSU I.D. #	Phone # / Email	Signature / Date
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

*NOTE: Signature indicates student is actively participating in starting specified organization and is currently enrolled at Cleveland State University.*

### Submit application with draft constitution to the Department of Student Life (MC 106)

#### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Submitted to Department of Student Life \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agenda Date/Constitution Subcommittee \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date Approved by Faculty Senate Student Life Committee \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMENTS:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature, Chairperson  
 Faculty Senate Student Life Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

# NOTES ON SUGGESTED CONSTITUTION FORMAT

*- Please remove these notes before submitting draft constitution -*

The attached “Suggested Constitution Format” is provided in order to support the development or revision of a constitution for any CSU student organization; please see the following items before using this material:

- Please note that all underlined material is required per University policy.
- Please note that material in bold (excluding article and section headings) is offered as suggestion; please consult with the Department of Student Life if you have concerns about these items.
- All articles listed herein are required. However, (a) some articles may be merged given sound rationale and clear labeling, and (b) additional articles may be inserted as needed.
- It is recommended that articles appear in the order indicated herein.
- See excerpt from student organization regulations below for membership policy information:**

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*The following is taken from the  
“Student Organizations, Policies, Procedures & Guidelines” document (section III.A):*

## *Membership (Non-General Fee Student Organizations)*

1. Except for organizations covered by the definition of social fraternities and sororities in III.A.2, membership in student organizations must be open to all currently enrolled and registered Cleveland State University students, providing that they meet criteria based on individual merit and qualifications established by the organization’s constitution. These criteria may not be based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, handicap or disability, disabled veteran, Vietnam era veteran or other protected veteran status. Summer semester enrollment is not required to maintain membership status. **An organization’s constitution may provide for special status associates (e.g. CSU faculty, staff, alumni), but such individuals may not be voting members or officers of the organization.**
2. Title IX (Title 20 U.S.C. Section 1681.a.6.A) exempts social fraternities and sororities from the prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sex. Given this federal statute, Cleveland State University permits such organizations to limit membership to individuals of a single sex. However, such organizations may not establish membership criteria based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, handicap or disability, disabled veteran, Vietnam era veteran or other protected veteran status. NOTE: the Department of Education defines “social fraternity” as a group that can answer “no” to all of the following questions:
  - Is the organization’s membership limited to persons pursuing or having interest in a particular field of study, profession or academic discipline?
  - Is the membership limited to individuals who have a high level of achievement in scholarship or any other endeavor?
  - Are the members permitted to hold membership in other fraternities or sororities at the University?
3. Students must be enrolled for no less than six (6) term credits at Cleveland State University to be eligible for an officer position in any recognized non-General Fee student organization.
4. General Fee student officers must maintain a GPA of no less than 2.5; all other student organization officers must maintain a GPA of no less than 2.0.

# Cleveland State University

## - CONSTITUTION - [Organization Name]

### ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization at Cleveland State University shall be [name of organization] (hereinafter referred to as the “organization”).

### ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of the organization shall be [state purpose as succinctly as possible].

### ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

**Section 1:** Active membership shall be open to all currently enrolled and registered Cleveland State University students providing that they meet the following criteria [state specific criteria].

**Section 2:** It is the policy of this organization that there shall be no discrimination in any project, program, or activity because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, handicap or disability, disabled veteran, Vietnam-era veteran or other protected veteran status.

**Section 3:** Active membership carries full speaking and voting privileges on all items of organization business.

### ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS

**Section 1:** The officers shall consist of a **President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer**. The officers shall be responsible for all administrative duties of the organization, while maintaining all rights associated with membership. The elected officers shall form the **Executive Committee**.

**Section 2:** The **President** shall establish and maintain operation of the organization, call meetings, serve as official liaison to University Administration, and answer for all actions of other officers/members.

**Section 3:** The **Vice President** shall assist the **President** with all administrative duties and assume those duties in their absence.

**Section 4:** The **Secretary** shall keep accurate and detailed records of all meetings and affairs, transmit all official organization correspondence, and coordinate preparation and distribution of information/materials.

**Section 5:** The **Treasurer** shall receive and distribute organization funds in accordance with University and State of Ohio regulations, make financial reports at appropriate meetings, and coordinate fund-raising activities.

**Section 6:** The elected officers must meet all requirements for holding office as stated in the CSU “Student Organizations: Policies, Procedures and Guidelines” document.

### ARTICLE V – ELECTIONS

**Section 1:** Officers are elected by organization members to serve a term of one year. Annual elections are held **between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> weeks of spring semester**. The term of office begins on the first day of the **tenth week of the spring semester** and ends on the same day the next year.

**Section 2:** Voting occurs via secret ballot at an official meeting after the close of nominations for each office. Nominations must be made by an organization member. Officer nominees must be organization members for **one semester** prior to establishing candidacy. Officers are elected by a majority vote of organization members present provided quorum is met.

**Section 3:** Order of succession: (1) **President**, (2) **Vice President**, (3) **Secretary**, and (4) **Treasurer**.

**Section 4:** Vacancies occurring in an elected office shall be filled within **three weeks**. The order of succession is followed to fill a vacant position, acknowledging that an officer may decline the option to succeed. Subsequent to pursuing the order of succession, any vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by using the procedure indicated in Article V, Section 2.

**Section 5:** Notice of an official meeting at which the election of officers will take place must be provided to all members no less than one week prior to said meeting.

## **ARTICLE VI – APPOINTMENTS**

The President may appoint, with a majority vote from active members, such positions (e.g. Committee Chairpersons) as may contribute to the successful operation of the organization. The establishment of new officer positions shall require constitutional revision per Article X.

## **ARTICLE VII – REMOVAL FROM OFFICE AND/OR MEMBERSHIP**

Removal from office and/or membership may occur by a 2/3 vote of active membership. Removal can transpire for failure to carry out the prescribed duties of an office or for actions which violate the purposes or policies of the organization. Written charges must be submitted to the Executive Committee who will notify the member in question within **three days**. Members must be provided at least one week of notice prior to a pending removal vote. Prior to the removal vote, the member in question must be offered an opportunity to respond to charges at a specified membership meeting. Voting for removal is conducted by secret ballot at an official meeting held within **two weeks** from the date charges were received by the Executive Committee. The member in question must be notified of the outcome within **two days** of the vote.

## **ARTICLE VIII – MEETINGS**

**Section 1:** General membership meetings shall be held **once per month**, with additional meetings called by the President as needed. At least **one week** of notice regarding additional meetings must be given to all organization members. The official means of notifying members shall be agreed upon at the first meeting of each semester.

**Section 2:** The Executive Committee shall meet when called by the President.

**Section 3:** No formal/official business may be conducted at a meeting without a quorum of members. A quorum shall be defined as **50% plus one of active members**.

## **ARTICLE IX – FUNDING**

**Section 1:** Membership Dues shall be charged. The amount to be charged for each semester or year, as well as payment deadlines, will be determined at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Fall Semester. Membership will expire if dues have not been paid in accordance with the set deadline. Membership dues are collected by the Treasurer. **[Delete this section if dues are not collected]**

**Section 2:** The organization may undertake fund raisers for purposes that support the mission of the organization. All fund raising shall be conducted in accordance with University policies.

## **ARTICLE X – CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION**

**Section 1:** Any revision of this constitution – including change of organizational bylaws – shall be approved by a 2/3 vote of active members present at an official meeting.

**Section 2:** Once approved by the membership, any constitutional revision – including change of bylaws – shall be submitted to the CSU Faculty Senate Student Life Committee for final approval.

## **ARTICLE XI – JURISDICTION**

This organization is subject, as a recognized student organization, to the rules, regulations, and policies of Cleveland State University and the laws of the State of Ohio. The rules, regulations, and policies of Cleveland State University shall hold precedence over all rules, regulations, and policies applying to the organization, including those of national associations with which **[name of organization]** is affiliated.

**Date of Approval by Faculty Senate Student Life Committee:** \_\_\_\_\_