

Information Packet for Student Organizations

New Organizations
Re-Activations
Constitution Revisions
Name Changes

Student Activities

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(814) 867-0211 (fax)
studentorg@sa.psu.edu
www.sa.psu.edu/usa/studentactivities

Introduction

Welcome! This packet will guide you through the process of forming a new student organization at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park Campus. Forming a group can be a challenging, but very rewarding process. To ensure success, the Office of Student Activities has designed a process that will help your group form a solid foundation so that your organization can succeed and provide valuable experiences for your fellow students.

There are many positive benefits associated with being a recognized group on campus, including use of the Penn State name, ability to reserve space, and take advantage of the services offered through the Office of Student Activities. There are also several responsibilities associated with being a recognized group, including abiding by Policies & Rules for Student Organizations (complete document available at <http://www.sa.psu.edu/usa/studentactivities>), updating officer information whenever there is a change, and renewing your recognition status at the beginning of every Fall semester.

When starting a new student organization there are several questions to consider:

1. First, is there another group on campus that exists that meets the interests you're looking for in a student organization?
2. Would you be able to recruit a minimum of ten members for the group?
3. Do you have the time to work on all of the requirements and/or are others helping you?

The staff in the Office of Student Activities are available to help you answer these questions and provide you with assistance in forming your group.

There are necessary requirements to become a recognized student organization at Penn State University. They are as follows:

- Complete "Intent to Organize"
 - Once this form is completed, the group will be issued provisional recognition that will last 60 academic days from the date the form is returned. During this time, the group *must* complete the following to receive recognition status:
 - Create a constitution (see sample constitution in this packet)
 - Recruit a minimum of ten members (50%+1 of the membership must be registered Penn State University-University Park Students)
 - Secure a University faculty or staff advisor
 - Complete an Officer Report Form (included in the packet)
 - Complete an Advisor Approval Form (included in the packet)
 - If the group is required to meet with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety, their signature and all recommendations that they make are required in order to become recognized

Once the group returns these materials, they will be reviewed by the Office of Student Activities and the group will be notified within 2 weeks of the decision. A student organization wishing to form can be denied recognition status for the following reasons:

- The purpose, mission, and/or activities violate federal, state, and/or local laws
- The purpose, mission, and/or activities violate the *Penn State Code of Conduct, University Policies and Rules, Policies and Procedures for Student Organizations*, or other University policies and procedures
- The criteria to establish a group are not completed and sustained as above
- The group duplicates the purpose of an existing recognized group, except in the case of a religious or political organization

Should you have any questions or need any assistance throughout this process, please contact our office.

Best wishes,

Jennifer Grossman Leopard

Jennifer Grossman Leopard
Student Activities

Student Organization Action Form

Student Activities

(814) 863-4624 (phone)
(814) 867-0211 (fax)
studentorg@sa.psu.edu
www.sa.psu.edu/usa/studentactivities

Organization Name: _____
(Current)

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

[] ***New Organization requesting Recognition***

Requirements:

- Intent to Organize Form
This form is only available in 209 HUB and is **not** available electronically. We recommend submitting the Intent Form prior to all other paperwork. You may, however, submit all required items at once.
- Hard Copy of a Constitution
There is a Sample Constitution provided at the end of this packet which you may use as a guide. The sample contains the minimum required elements for all student organization constitutions.
- Officer Report Form (provided in this packet and at www.sa.psu.edu/usa/studentactivities)
A completed Officer Report Form includes the names, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and signatures of both a **President and an Advisor**. The President must be a full-time student at University Park and the Advisor must be a full-time faculty or staff member at University Park. If your group does not currently have an office, phone number, or web-address, those fields may be left blank. **By signing this form the President affirms that the organization will abide by the Pennsylvania State University's non-discrimination policy AD-42 found in Policies and Rules for Recognized Student Organizations.**
- Advisor Approval Form (provided in this packet and at www.sa.psu.edu/usa/studentactivities)
A completed Advisor Approval Form includes the name, department, campus address, telephone number, email address, and the signature of both the advisor and the advisor's supervisor.
- Membership List
There is no form or sample provided. If a member has a Penn State UserID (ex. abc1234), please include it on the list. This action will help to speed the recognition process. All registered **undergraduate** student organizations must have at least 10 members, and must be composed of at least 50%+1 full time undergraduate registered PSU-UP students. All registered **graduate** student organizations must have at least 10 members, and must be composed of at least 50%+1 full-time graduate registered PSU-UP students.

[] ***Re-activation (for previously recognized groups that have been placed on Inactive status.***

Requirements:

- Hard Copy of a current constitution
A current constitution will have the minimum required elements outlined in the sample constitution available at the end of this packet.
- Current Officer Report Form

[] ***Constitution Revision***

Requirements:

- Hard Copy of the proposed constitution
- Current Officer Report Form

[] ***Name Change***

Requirements:

- Copy of a current constitution bearing the proposed organization name (hard copy)
- Current Officer Report Form

For Office Use (please date and initial):

Materials Submitted: _____

Materials Reviewed: _____

Action Approved: _____



Fall 2009-Spring2010
Student Organization
Advisor Approval Form

Date: _____

Advisor Information

Name: _____

Department: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Please list more than one (if applicable)

Student Organization (to advise): _____

Required Signatures (for approval):

Advisor

Date

Advisor's Supervisor

Date

Co-Advisor (if applicable)

Date

Office of Student Activities

Date

*Retain a copy for your records
Please return to Student Activities
209 HUB-Robeson Center*

Constitution

The constitution is the heart of your organization. It provides the structure by which your group will function, and it secures a professional operating environment that Penn State prides itself upon. All student organizations recognized by the Office of Student Activities must include at least eleven (11) specific articles in their constitutions. Within these articles are certain statements that must be included with that article. You are not limited, however, to just these stipulations. You are free to personalize your organization's constitution to suit your specific needs.

The required articles and statements, and what they mean are delineated below. A sample constitution including the required articles, and the most common way of organizing them, is attached to this packet in order to aid you in the application process.

Required Constitutional Elements

Heading

1. All information must be centered.
2. State the full name of the organization, and its acronym, if applicable.
3. Under the name, state the original date that the organization first met on the confines of the University Park Campus at the Pennsylvania State University.

Body

Any statements that must be included in the constitution in some fashion will be prefaced by the word “**state**” in boldface or text will be in **boldface**.

Article I: Purpose

- Clearly **state** the purpose of the organization. This is the singular most significant part of the document, as it is the mission statement of the organization. No organizations with duplicate or highly similar purposes of those existing organizations will be considered for registration.
- **State** the purpose in sentences, or by using numbers or bullets.

Article II: Membership

- If your organization is an undergraduate student organization, **state** that the majority (50% + 1 of the active membership) must be undergraduate students. Similarly, if your organization is a graduate organization, **state** that the majority of your active members must be graduate students.
- There are only two categories of membership: Active and Associate. **State** that only currently registered students are eligible for active membership. **State** that all other persons, including but not limited to, faculty, staff, and community members, are eligible for associate membership. **State** that there must be at least 10 active student members all times for both undergraduate and graduate organizations. **State** that only active members may vote, preside, officiate, or solicit funding on the organization's behalf.
- **New Membership and Recruitment**
 - A. Any and all new members will be given full disclosure during recruitment, including but not limited to the disclosure of:
 - a. New Membership Manual
 - b. Schedule of New Member Events and Activities
 - c. A list of responsibilities
 - d. A copy of the University Hazing policy, prescribed by Policies and Rules for Student Organizations (These document will be available upon request by the Office of Student Activities).
 - B. All members, including but not limited to new members and recruits, reserve the right to refrain from participating in any activities without consequence, based upon personal/religious beliefs, personal values, or moral reserve as defined by the member.

C. Any and all interaction/activity between members and/or new members will be limited to guidelines stated by university policy, as well as local, state, and federal laws.

- **Membership Removal**

Please draft a "Membership Removal Policy" subsection within the Membership Section that you feel is appropriate for expelling members from your organization. Please be sure to include reasonable guidelines for what is a condition for expulsion.

Example: The club reserves the right to expel a member who is not following the policies of the organization with a super majority vote of attending members---quorum is 75% of active members.

This statement does not need to be included, but the meaning should be understood.

- **Mediation Procedures**

Please draft a "Mediation Procedures Article" that you feel is appropriate for addressing any possible violations of constitutional policies.

- A. In the case of violations of constitutional policies and/or a conflict between members within the organization the highest ranking officer that is not involved in the conflict, with the assistance from the advisor (if applicable), will facilitate an informal mediation procedure
- B. The mediator shall:
 - a. Arrange for a mediation meeting outside of the regular organization business meeting
 - b. Explain their role as the impartial party and the objectives of the mediation
 - c. Set ground rules
 - d. Allow each party to express their views by allowing the conversation to go where the parties wish it to go
 - e. Collect any available resources that might assist in the resolution (financial documents, emails, photos, etc.)
 - f. As a third party, do not suggestion resolutions but rather leave the responsibility for the resolution with the parties involved
 - g. Facilitate goal setting to reach a win-win resolution

This statement does not need to be included in your constitution, but it is highly recommended and should be understood.

Article III: Officers

- **State** that only full-time, officially registered active student members shall be eligible to serve as appointed or elected officers in your organization. Student organizations may establish and apply additional eligibility criteria for appointed or elected leaders/officers.
- **State** all officers, elected or appointed, and their appropriate duties and powers. If officers form the executive committees, an odd number of officers is recommended. Avoid shared offices.
- **State** the procedures that will be followed to fill unexpired vacancies. These include the meeting at which nominations and elections will take place (if applicable), the process by which a candidate will be nominated, etc. *(this statement can be included in the Officers section or the Elections section)*
- You must have an officer responsible for your organizations funds. This officer will be the only active member with access to your ASA account, and will most likely be your treasurer.

Article IV: Meetings

- **State** the frequency of meetings. At least two meetings per semester are required in order to maintain active status with the University.
- **State** how, and by what body, the frequency of meetings may be decided or changed.
- **State** under what circumstances, and by whom, a special meeting may be called.

- **State** how, when, and by whom members would be notified of regular and special meetings.
- **State** that adequate advanced notice must be given to all members.

Article V: Voting

- **State** what will constitute quorum. Different quorums may be used for voting, elections, amendments, and other items. If you wish to require different quorums for different voting events, they must be specified.
- **State** what shall constitute a majority; likewise if different types of majorities will be required for different voting events, they must be specified.

Article VI: Finances

- **State** that all organizational funds are to be handled exclusively through the Associated Student Activities (ASA) office.
- **State** that the organization will not have an off-campus account.
- **State** whether or not the payment of dues is a necessary condition for membership. If it is **state** how they will be determined. Do not specify a specific amount, and it is recommended that the amount is kept reasonable. **State** how often dues are to be collected.
- A dollar amount that officers can spend without approval of the membership must be specified. It is recommended that this amount is kept small.

Article VII: Elections

- **State** the meeting at which nominations and elections will take place. **State** how and when these meetings will be publicized.
- **State** that no one involved in conducting the elections may be an official candidate.
- **State** the procedure for nominations and elections, along with how ties will be handled.
- **State** when new officers begin their terms of office. A transition period is recommended so that the new officers may learn their responsibilities, along with the organization's business and University regulations.

Article VIII: Amendments to the Constitution

- **State** the procedure for the introduction and passage of amendments.
- **State** who may propose amendments.
- **State** that all amendments are subject to approval by the Office of Student Activities.
- **State** when the approved amendments are to take effect.

Article IX: Parliamentary Authority

- **State** the parliamentary authority used to cover cases not specifically covered by the constitution. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* by Sarah Corbin Roberts is highly recommended.

Article X: Accessibility of this Constitution

- **State** that a copy of the constitution will be available to anyone upon request.

Article XI: Advisor

- **State** that the advisor must be a full-time faculty or staff member at The Pennsylvania State University, and that he/she should be chosen by the organization. Do not mention a specific name.
- **State** the method by which your organization will select an advisor.

Article XII: Safety Considerations (Do NOT include this section unless directed by the Office of Student Activities).

- **State** that no member will use any undue force in any contact activity.
- **State** that no member will use weapons in conjunction with your organization's activities.
- **State** that all members will wear safety equipment as outlined in the Participation Waiver during all activities.
- **State** what specific safety guidelines your organization will follow, outlining how the group will protect its members and participants (for example, the type of safety equipment will be used, what national guidelines will be followed if the group is part of a national chapter).
- **State** in detail the type of activities the group will be engaging in.
- **State** that all members are required to acknowledge and abide by all of the above safety considerations, and to sign a participation waiver as a condition of membership.
- **State** that any violation of stated guidelines is grounds for immediate dismissal from your organization.
- **State** that these safety considerations, outlined in article XII, will be submitted to the Penn State Department of Health and Safety for approval.

Article XIII: Publications and Other Communication Media (if your group's primary recognized function involves a communication medium)

- **State** that your organization will maintain a board of directors.
- **State** that board will be comprised of faculty or staff members.
- **State** the method your organization will use to select board members.
- **State** the terms of office for board members.

Sample Constitution

THE PENN STATE SAMPLE ORGANIZATION

Date of origin: February, 2008

I. Purpose

- A. The purpose of the Penn State Sample Organization is to provide a guide to what student organization constitutions should look like.

II. Membership

- A. At all times, the majority (50%+1) of all active members shall be full-time, officially registered students at University Park.
- B. The membership shall be divided into active and associate members.
 - 1. Only currently registered students are eligible for active membership.
 - 2. All others interested in furthering the purpose of the Penn State Sample Organization, including but not limited to, faculty, staff, and community members, shall be associate members. Only active members may hold office, vote, preside, officiate, or solicit funds on behalf of the organization.
- C. At all times there shall be at least 10 active student members for undergraduate or graduate organizations.
- D. The club reserves the right to expel a member who is not following the policies of the organization with a super majority vote of attending members - quorum is 75% of active members.
- E. In the case of violations of constitutional policies and/or a conflict between members within the organization the highest ranking officer that is not involved in the conflict, with the assistance from the advisor (if applicable), will facilitate an informal mediation procedure
 - 1. The mediator shall:
 - i. Arrange for a mediation meeting outside of the regular organization business meeting
 - ii. Explain their role as the impartial party and the objectives of the mediation
 - iii. Set ground rules
 - iv. Allow each party to express their views by allowing the conversation to go where the parties wish it to go
 - v. Collect any available resources that might assist in the resolution (financial documents, emails, photos, etc.)
 - vi. As a third party, do not suggestion resolutions but rather leave the responsibility for the resolution with the parties involved
 - vii. Facilitate goal setting to reach a win-win resolution
- F. New Membership and Recruitment
 - a. Any and all new members will be given full disclosure during recruitment, including but not limited to the disclosure of:
 - i. New Membership Manual
 - ii. Schedule of New Member Events and Activities
 - iii. A list of responsibilities
 - iv. A copy of the University Hazing policy, prescribed by Policies and Rules for Student Organizations (This documents will be available upon request by the Office of Student Activities).
 - b. All members, including but not limited to new members and recruits, reserve the right to refrain from participating in any activities without consequence, based upon personal/religious beliefs, personal values, or moral reserve as defined by the member.
 - c. Any and all interaction/activity between members and/or new members will be limited to guidelines stated by university policy, as well as local, state, and federal laws.

III. Officers

- A. Only full-time, officially registered active student members shall be eligible to serve as appointed or elected officers. Student organizations may establish and apply additional eligibility criteria for appointed or elected leaders/officers.
- B. Offices

1. The President is the spokesperson for the organization. The President presides at all meetings.
2. The Vice-President shall serve as President when the President is unable to do so.
3. The Treasurer shall be charged with handling all organizational finances.

C. Filling unexpired vacancies:

1. Nominations are taken at the meeting following the vacancy. Elections also occur at this meeting.
2. If a majority (50%+1) is not obtained by any of the candidates, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated, and the active members shall vote again.
3. When nominations are being taken to fill unexpired terms, any member of the organization may nominate another member of the organization by simply raising his/her hand and indicating such when recognized.

IV. **Meeting**

- A. The Penn State Sample Organization will meet at least two times per semester.
- B. Adequate advance notice must be given to all active members.
- C. The President with the consent of the Vice President may change meeting frequency.
- D. Members shall be notified of all meetings by e-mail.
- E. The President may call special meetings should he/she see fit.

V. **Voting**

- A. Only active members may vote.
- B. Quorum for all voting shall be thirty-three percent (33%) of the active membership.
- C. A simple majority (50% +1) shall be necessary for all voting. This majority shall be derived from the active members present.

VI. **Finances**

- A. All organizational funds are to be deposited and handled exclusively through the Associated Student Activities (ASA) in 240 HUB.
- B. This organization will not have an off-campus account(s)
- C. This organization shall collect dues that will not be excessive.
- D. The Treasurer, with the consent of the President will determine dues.
- E. Dues shall be collected semi-annually
- F. The Officers of the Sample Organization may spend up to \$50 of the organization's funds without the approval of the general membership.

VII. **Elections**

- A. Nominations and elections shall take place during the third meeting of the spring semester.
- B. This meeting shall be publicized in the meetings preceding it.
- C. Elections codes:
 1. Any member may nominate an active member for any office by raising his/her hand at the appropriate time and being recognized by the presiding official. Next, the active members shall cast secret, written ballots for the candidate of their choice. Each active member shall have one vote per office.
 2. If 50%+1 cannot be obtained, the candidate with the lowest number of votes shall be dropped from consideration, and the active members shall vote again.
 3. In the event of a tie, the ballot will be recast.

- D. All officers serve for a term of one year, beginning in the month following elections and ending the month of elections.
- E. No one involved in conducting the elections may be an official candidate

VIII. **Amendments to the Constitution**

- A. Amendments to this constitution may be introduced at the conclusion of any meeting. Voting shall occur at the meeting following its introduction, with the amendment taking effect following Office of Student Activities approval.
- B. Any member may introduce a constitutional amendment at the conclusion of any meeting. At the following meeting, the active members shall vote on the amendment, as outlined in the article on voting. If the amendment passes, it shall be sent to the Office of Student Activities for approval.
- C. All amendments are subject to the approval of the Office of Student Activities.

IX. **Parliamentary Authority**

- A. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, by Sarah Corbin Roberts shall be used in all cases not covered by this constitution.

X. **Accessibility of this Constitution**

- A. Copies of this constitution shall be made available to anyone upon request.

XI. **Advisor**

- A. This organization must retain an advisor at all times. The advisor will be a full-time Faculty or Staff member of The Pennsylvania State University, University Park campus and will be chosen by the organization.
- B. This organization will choose an advisor through a majority vote.

XII. **Safety Considerations (Only for high-risk groups. Do NOT include this section unless your group is determined to be high risk by the Office of Student Activities.)**

- A. This organization will also abide by the following safety guidelines.
 - 1. No member will use any undue force in any contact activity.
 - 2. Members will not use any weapons in conjunction with The Penn State Sample Organization's activities.
 - 3. All members will wear safety equipment as outlined in our Participation Waiver during all Sample Organization activity.
- B. Members are required to acknowledge and abide by all of the above safety considerations, and to sign a participation waiver as a condition of membership. Any violation of stated guidelines is grounds for immediate dismissal from the Sample Organization.

XIII. **Article XIII: Publications and Other Communication Media (Include only if your group's primary recognized function involves a communication medium. Otherwise, omit this section.)**

- 1. This organization will maintain a board of directors.
- 2. Board members will consist of full-time Penn State faculty or staff members.
- 3. There will be 7 board members at all times.
- 4. The President of this organization will select board members.
- 5. Board member will serve terms of 12 months and may serve multiple terms.