

CREATING A CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

What is a constitution?

A constitution contains the fundamental principles that outline the purpose, structure, and limits of an organization. Essentially, the constitution provides a foundation upon which an organization operates.

Why are student organizations required to have a Constitution?

A student organization constitution:

- Clarifies the purpose of the organization and outlines the basic structure of the organization
- Provides the cornerstone for building an effective organization/group
- Allows members and potential members to have a better understanding of what the organization is all about and how it functions.

What are Bylaws?

Bylaws are secondary principles that govern the internal affairs of an organization. Bylaws are essentially an expansion of the articles or sections of the constitution. They describe in detail the procedures and steps the organization must follow in order to conduct business effectively and efficiently.

Why are student organizations required to have Bylaws?

Bylaws, can be helpful in the organization's operations. The constitution covers the fundamental principles but does not provide specific procedures for operating your organization. Bylaws should set forth in detail the procedures your group must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. They provide further definition to the provisions contained in the constitution and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change.

Creating a Constitution and Bylaws

A constitution and bylaws typically have the following items. Feel free to use the checklist below and the sample constitution and bylaws that follow to assist you in developing your own.

Constitution Checklist

- ___ Article 1 – Name of organization
- ___ Article 2 – Purpose of organization
- ___ Article 3 – Authority
- ___ Article 4 – Membership
- ___ Article 5 – Officers
- ___ Article 6 – Meetings
- ___ Article 7 – University Advisor
- ___ Article 8 – Finances
- ___ Article 9 – Discipline
- ___ Article 10 – Amendments and Ratification

Bylaws Checklist

- ___ Article 1 – Officers
- ___ Article 2 – Powers and duties of officers
- ___ Article 3 – Qualifications to hold office
- ___ Article 4 – Elections
- ___ Article 5 – Executive Board/Committee
- ___ Article 6 – University Advisor(s)
- ___ Article 7 – Meetings/Voting
- ___ Article 8 – Special Committees
- ___ Article 9 – Finances
- ___ Article 10 – Discipline of Members
- ___ Article 11 – Dissolution
- ___ Article 12 – Non Hazing Clause
- ___ Article 13 – Impeachment
- ___ Article 14 – Vacancy of Office
- ___ Article 15 – Amendments

CONSTITUTION
[Name of Organization] at
University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College

ARTICLE I **NAME**

Section 1 The name of this organization shall be the [Name of Organization] at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College. [Optional: Include chapter designation if part of a national organization and/or the organization's founding date]

ARTICLE II **PURPOSE**

Section 1 The purpose of this organization is to [insert organization's mission or purpose statement].

ARTICLE III **AUTHORITY**

Section 1 This organization is a recognized student organization at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College and adheres to all campus policies as set forth in the *University of Cincinnati Code of Student Conduct and the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College Student Organization Policies and Guidelines*.

Section 2 [If applicable]: This organization is affiliated with [Name of National or Affiliated Organization] and adheres to the [National or Affiliated Organization Bylaws or Governing Document(s)].

Section 3 This organization will establish bylaws to govern administrative and procedural matters (such as time and location of meetings, etc.). Bylaws shall not conflict with this constitution. Bylaws may be adopted, amended, or temporarily suspended by a majority vote present at an organization meeting where a quorum is present (advance notice is not required).

ARTICLE IV **MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1 Membership in the organization shall be open to those regularly-enrolled University of Cincinnati students who [State eligibility criteria or qualifications for membership].

Section 2 Eligibility for membership or appointed or elected student officer positions may not be limited on the basis of race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, color, age, gender, gender identity, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or disability. The organization shall have no rules or policies that discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, color, age, gender, gender identity, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or disability.

Section 2 [Optional]: This organization shall have associated members who are non-UC Blue Ash students or who do not meet the above criteria. Associated members shall have all membership privileges except for the right to vote or hold office. By University of Cincinnati Blue Ash policy, no more than 20 percent of the membership shall be individuals who are not CSU students (e.g., community members, students at other colleges, etc.).

Section 4 [Optional]: Some organizations have additional categories of membership, such as honorary membership. If this applies, include the categories of membership along with associated requirements and privileges.

Section 5 [Optional]: Membership in some organizations is by invitation. If this applies, indicate who is authorized to extend an invitation to join and, the selection process and vote required.

Section 6 [Optional]: Some organizations have a probationary period for new members before they become full members. If this applies, state the length of the probationary period, privileges and voting rights of probationary members, requirements and process to obtain full membership, the process and vote required to dismiss a probationary member, and the vote required to obtain full membership.

Article V **OFFICERS**

Section 1 The officers of the [insert name of student organization] shall be a PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT, SECRETARY AND TREASURER [Optional]: insert the name of additional officers if there are more or change the name to make them reflect what the organization will call them.

Section 2 In order to run for office in in the [insert name of student organization], members must have a minimum cumulative grade point average (g.p.a) of 2.3.

Section 3 While in office officers must maintain a 2.3 GPA and must not have below 2.3 for more than one semester.

Section 4 Officers must be a matriculated student and be in good standing with his or her college.

Section 5 All officers serve for a term of ONE (1) YEAR or until their successors shall be duly elected and qualified.

Section 6 Any officer who, during the term of his/her office, ceases to be a voting member, or fails to maintain his/ her status as a matriculating undergraduate/graduate (exception University organizations) student maintaining a 2.3 g.p.a., in good academic and disciplinary standing with their respective college, shall be removed from his/her office and a replacement shall be elected.

Article VI **MEETINGS**

Section 1 Regular meetings shall be held [insert when meeting times; i.e. weekly, bi-weekly, monthly] during the academic year.

Section 2 Special meetings may be called by the President or a majority of the Executive Committee. All members must be given a minimum of 24 hours' notice prior to the meeting time.

Section 3 [Optional]: Business cannot be conducted unless a quorum of the membership is present. A quorum for this organization is defined as a majority of the voting membership. *[Note: Organizations may choose have a lower quorum, such as one-third, or a specific number of members.]*

Section 4 Members must be present to vote.

Section 5 In order to vote a member must be in good standing. *[State what constitutes "good standing." This may include payment of dues, meeting attendance requirement, academic requirement, etc. If there is an attendance requirement, specify the number of excused and/or unexcused absences that results in loss of voting privileges, and define what constitutes an excused absence, if applicable.]*

ARTICLE VII UNIVERSITY ADVISOR(S)

Section 1 The [insert student organization name] shall have a University Advisor who will be a full- or part-time member of the University faculty, staff, or administration. The advisor will fulfill the responsibilities specified in the UC Blue Ash Student Organization Advisor Handbook. Advisors shall serve on an academic year basis or until their successor has been selected.

ARTICLE VIII FINANCES

Section 1 [Optional]: Membership dues shall be [insert amount, i.e. \$XX per semester or year].

Section 2 [Optional]: Dues shall be paid by [Specify due date, such as "second week of each semester."]

Section 3 [Optional]: Members who have not paid their dues or special assessments by the due date shall be considered as not being in good standing and shall lose all membership privileges, including voting, until the dues are paid.

Section 4 Organization funds shall not be used to purchase or reimburse members for alcoholic beverages.

ARTICLE IX DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

Section 1 All members of the [insert organization name] are expected to uphold the rules and regulations of the University of Cincinnati Student Code of Conduct and adhere to the policies and procedures set for in the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College Student Organization Policies.

Section 2 Members that violate the Student Code of Conduct and Student Organization policies may face disciplinary action.

ARTICLE V AMENDMENTS

Section 1 Proposed amendments to this constitution shall be presented to the membership, in writing, one meeting prior to the meeting where the amendment will be voted upon. [Optional] : The Executive Committee and/or Bylaws Committee shall review and make recommendations on all bylaw revisions prior to consideration by the membership.

Section 2 Constitution amendments require approval by two-thirds of the voting members present at a regular meeting. The amendment shall be effective immediately unless otherwise stipulated in the amendment.

Section 3 A copy of any amendments to this constitution must be submitted to the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College within two weeks after adoption.

Bylaws
[Name of Organization] at
University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College

Section I **The officers of the [insert student organization name] shall be the:**

- a. [insert titles of officer]
- b. [insert titles of officer]
- c. [insert titles of officer]
- d. [insert titles of officer]

Section II **Powers and Duties of Officers:**

- a. The President shall serve as the chief executive officer of the organization, shall preside at all meetings of the organization and shall prepare the agenda for meetings. The President shall appoint all committees and committee chairs. The President shall have other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the organization. The President shall participate in the yearly President's Training offered by the Student Life Office.
- b. The Vice President shall preside at organization meetings in the absence of the President. The Vice President shall perform all legal duties assigned by the President. The Vice President shall assume the office of President if the office becomes vacant.
- c. The Treasurer shall handle all financial affairs and budgeting of the organization, maintain all necessary accounting records, and prepare financial reports for the membership. The Treasurer shall collect all dues (if applicable) and revenue and submit it to the Director of Student Life for deposit. The Treasurer shall work with the Director of Student Life to maintain the finances of the organization. The President shall participate in the yearly Treasurer's Training offered by the Student Life Office.
- d. The Secretary shall take minutes at all meetings of the organization, keep these on file, and submit copies to organization members upon request. The Secretary shall be responsible for all organization correspondence and shall keep copies on file. The Secretary shall maintain membership records for the organization.

e. [Optional]: List duties of any additional elected or appointed officers

Section III **Qualifications necessary to hold office in the [insert name of the organization] are as follows:**

- a. University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College policies require that to be eligible for office, candidates must be in good academic and disciplinary standing and regularly enrolled students at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash. Additionally, students must have at least a 2.3 g.p.a to be eligible to hold an office.
- b. No member may hold more than one office. No member may serve more than two years in the same office.

Section IV Elections

- a. Elections are held near the end of spring semester and shall take place at a regularly scheduled meeting of the organization at which a quorum is present. At least one week's notice shall be provided for any meeting at which an election is to be held.
- b. Nominations for officers shall be made at the regular meeting immediately preceding the election. Nominations may also be made from the floor immediately prior to the election for each office. Members may nominate themselves for an office.
- c. Officers shall be elected by majority vote. If no candidate receives a majority vote, a runoff election shall be held between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes.
- d. Votes shall be cast by secret ballot; however, when there is only one candidate for an office, a motion may be made to elect the candidate.

Section V Executive Board/Committee

- a. The Executive Committee shall consist of the elected and appointed officers, with the advisor(s) serving as non-voting member(s).
- b. The Executive Committee shall have general supervision of the affairs of the organization between meetings and is authorized to take action when action must be taken prior to the next meeting.
- c. The Executive Committee shall report to the membership all actions taken between meetings. Except when it is too late to do so (such as when a contract has been executed), any actions taken by the Executive Committee may be rescinded or modified by the membership by a majority vote.

Section VI University Advisor(s)

- a. The advisor shall fulfill the responsibilities specified in the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College Student Organizations Handbook. Advisors shall serve on an academic year basis or until their successor has been selected.
- b. The advisor shall participate in the Student Life Advisor training/recertification process yearly.

Section VII Meetings and Voting

- a. Regular meetings shall be scheduled [insert day if you know it, otherwise just say during the academic year] during the academic year.
- b. Special meetings may be called by the President or a majority of the Executive Committee. All members must be given a minimum of 24 hours notice prior to the meeting time.

- c. Business cannot be conducted unless a quorum of the membership is present. A quorum for this organization is defined as a majority of the voting membership.
- d. Members must be present to vote. Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted.
- e. In order to vote a member must be in good standing. [State what constitutes "good standing." This may include payment of dues, meeting attendance requirement, academic requirement, etc. If there is an attendance requirement, specify the number of excused and/or unexcused absences that results in loss of voting privileges, and define what constitutes an excused absence, if applicable.]

Section VIII Special Committees

- a. [OPTIONAL]: IF YOU HAVE SPECIAL COMMITTEES, LIST THEIR NAMES AND DUTIES; OTHERWISE DELETE THE FIRST LINE AND LEAVE THE LAST TWO].
- b. Special Committees may be established by the Executive Board and shall perform such duties as defined in their establishment.
- c. The Executive Board shall appoint, and may remove, committee members and a Chairperson for each committee.

Section IX Finances

- a. [Optional/if applicable]: Membership dues shall be [\$XX per semester or year].
- b. [Optional/if applicable]: Dues shall be paid by [Specify due date, such as "second week of each semester."]
- c. [Optional/if applicable]: Members who have not paid their dues or special assessments by the due date shall be considered as not being in good standing and shall lose all membership privileges, including voting, until the dues are paid.
- d. Occasionally the [insert name of organization] may need to assess a fee or collect money from the membership for special events/purposes. The amount of money collected shall be determined by a majority of the membership at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- e. Organization funds shall not be used to purchase or reimburse members for alcoholic beverages.

Section X Discipline of members

- a. When a member believes that another member has engaged in conduct that is detrimental to the organization, a conversation should be held with either the University Adviser or the Director of Student Life.
- b. If warranted, a written charge may be filed with the Director of Student Life. The Director of Student Life shall review the charge(s) and may conduct a preliminary investigation if

deemed appropriate. If the preliminary investigation concludes that misconduct appears to have occurred, the Director of Student Life work with the Executive Committee to determine if any sanctions are warranted. Possible sanctions may include expulsion, suspension, or lesser sanction(s) including, but not limited to, a reprimand, removal from office, a fine or other corrective remedies.

Section XI Dissolution

- a. Upon the dissolution of the [insert student organization name] for any reason, all work, funds, and property controlled by the organization will be (action that will be taken).

Section XII Non-Hazing Clause

- a. The laws of the state of Ohio concerning hazing shall be observed.
- b. Hazing shall be defined as participating in or allowing any act or coercing another, including the victim, to do any act that creates a substantial risk of causing mental or physical harm to any person. A forced or coerced activity shall also be considered hazing when the initiation or administration into, or continued affiliation with, a university organization is directly or indirectly conditional upon performing the activity. In no event shall the willingness of an individual to participate in such an activity serve as defense in cases of hazing.
- c. Actions and activities, which are explicitly prohibited, include, but shall not be limited to the following:
 - i. Any activity that creates a substantial risk of physical or mental harm.
 - ii. Paddling, beating, or hitting individuals.
 - iii. Wearing anything designed to be degrading or to cause discomfort.
 - iv. Depriving individuals of the opportunity to obtain a minimum of six hours of sleep per day, proper and adequate means, or access to means, of maintaining body cleanliness.
 - v. Activities that interfere with an individual's academic efforts by causing exhaustion of loss of reasonable study time.

Section XIII Impeachment

ANY MEMBER MAY INITIATE OFFICERS REMOVAL BY THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE.

- a. Petition Executive Board with signatures of 1/3 of all voting members petition should state reason for removal.
- b. Executive Board shall then notify officers and call for removal vote within fourteen days of the filing of the petition.
- c. Memberships shall be notified at least one week prior to removal vote meeting.
- d. At the meeting for removal, the petition's stated grievances shall be made public and the officer charged shall be allowed to respond to the charges of the petition.

- e. Removal from office shall require a vote of 2/3 of all voting members.

Section XIII Vacancy of Office

- a. In case of resignation or removal of any officer, an interim acting officer shall be appointed by the Executive Board.
- b. The President shall call for an election within fourteen days after vacancy of any office.
- c. Elections shall be conducted as stated in the bylaws.
- d. Should the office of President become vacant, the Vice-President should complete the President's unexpired term and call for an election for Vice-President consistent with elections process set forth in the bylaws.

Section XV Amendments

- a. Proposed amendments to these bylaws shall be presented to the membership, in writing, one meeting prior to the meeting where the amendment will be voted upon. [Optional]: The Executive Committee and/or Bylaws Committee shall review and make recommendations on all bylaw revisions prior to consideration by the membership.
- b. Bylaw amendments require approval by two-thirds of the voting members present at a regular meeting. The amendment shall be effective immediately unless otherwise stipulated in the amendment.
- c. A copy of any amendments to these bylaws must be submitted to the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College Student Life Office within two weeks after adoption.

These bylaws were adopted on [insert date that you make edits] and most recently revised on [insert date of latest edits].