

Steps to Creating a New Student Organization

Student Affairs is very excited that you are interested in starting a new student organization at Woodbury University. Starting an organization here is a very easy process. The process will move at a pace that is conducive to all parties involved. This can range from one month to 6 months. This document should help you understand the process and navigate it more quickly so that you can begin affecting the campus community.

Step 1: Connect with others

This can sometimes prove to be the most difficult step. You may be particularly excited about a topic, and even have serious interest from a potential advisor; however they are called STUDENT organizations for a reason. If you are having a hard time finding other students who may be interested, please contact the Administrative Coordinator for helpful strategies. In order to become recognized an organization must have a minimum of 3 members.

Step 2: Discuss your group's vision

Get together with this initial group to discuss the following:

- What is your group's purpose?
- How will your group contribute to the campus community?
- What types of programs/events will your group organize?
- What sources of funding will your group need for basic operations and programs?
- How often might your group need to meet and what would happen during those meetings?
- What are your group's values?
- What connections might your group make with organizations outside of Woodbury?
- What connections might your group make with departments and other student organizations inside Woodbury?

Take notes of the various ideas. It will also be helpful in this step to review the rights and obligations of student organizations as indicated in the current Student Handbook.

Step 3: Write a constitution

Constitutions and Bylaws:

The Constitution of an organization contains the fundamental principles which govern its operation. The by-laws establish the specific rules of guidance by which the group is to function.

Why have a Constitution?

The process of writing a constitution will serve to clarify your purpose, create your basic structure and provide the cornerstone for building an effective group. It will also allow members and potential members to have a better understanding of what the organization is all about and how it functions. If you keep in mind the value of having a written document that clearly describes the basic framework of your organization, the drafting of the Constitution will be a much easier and more rewarding experience.

What should be covered by a Constitution?

At Woodbury University, every organization, which seeks University recognition, must submit a constitution to Student Affairs. It is recommended that certain information be present in an organization's Constitution in order for the organization to function efficiently and to protect the rights of all members. This is only a guide for your group to use to update or create a constitution. As each organization is unique, your constitution will also. The Constitution of an officially recognized organization should contain minimally the following information (the sections that are in bold-faced font are standard for most documents):

Article I - Name of Organization

The name of this organization shall be...

Article II - Purpose of Organization

Your organization's mission statement.

The purpose of this organization shall be...

Article III - Officers

Are officers elected or appointed? Do they need to meet certain requirements (GPA)? Should they have been members in the organization for a specific length of time prior to taking on an officer position? Etc. Student Affairs requires at least 4 officers, 2 of which must be a President and Treasurer.

Example: Election of officers will require a majority vote from the general membership. If a candidate fails to receive a majority of votes, a run-off election will be held within the top two candidates that received the most votes. Members interested in becoming an officer must meet the following academic requirement: 2.5 cumulative G.P.A. The term of office will be one full year. The Executive Board of the organization is comprised of all recognized officers. The Executive Board shall meet in addition to regular organization meetings. The Executive Board shall appoint committees if they are needed to carry out organization goals.

President

List the specific roles and responsibilities of the president.

Example:

- *Preside over all meetings*
- *Represent organization on campus*
- *Insure that the organization is operating in conformity with the standards set forth by Woodbury University, the Office of Student Development, and the Associated Student Government*
- *Maintain regular communication with organization advisor*

Vice-President

List the specific roles and responsibilities of the vice president. Be very careful that the VP doesn't just act as a substitute president. It's important that the VP position has sufficient substance. Consider the needs of your organization. Should this position oversee all committees? Do all marketing?

Example:

- *Preside over meetings in the absence of the President*
- *Schedule meetings/events with appropriate University offices*
- *Coordinate organization promotion and publicity of events*

Secretary

List the specific roles and responsibilities of the secretary.

Example:

- *Maintain an accurate record of all organization meetings including minutes and post for members*
- *Maintain membership directory and submit Student Organization Registration forms*
- *Complete Facility Reservation and Event Authorization Forms for all organization meetings and events*
- *Correspond when necessary with University administration and other recognized organizations*

Treasurer

List the specific roles and responsibilities of the secretary.

Example:

- *Maintain accurate records of organization transactions*
- *Collect dues if required*
- *Develop organization budget and present to membership*
- *Arrange fund-raising opportunities for the organization as necessary*
- *Solicits additional funding if needed from the Associated Student Government's OAC process in conjunction with the President*

Removal from Office

Indicate any stipulations for the removal of officers.

Example: Officers may be removed from office by ½ vote of the other officers and ¾ of the general membership if actions are deemed inappropriate by membership. The officer is permitted to speak before the Executive Board and the general membership about the charges made concerning his/her performance. The officer is not permitted to participate in the deliberation of the Executive Board regarding the charges.

Article IV - Elections

What is the election/appointment process? Provide a clear outline to the process but allow for a little flexibility in case something odd occurs. Who oversees the election/appointment process?

Example: Elections are held once a year, one month prior to the conclusion of the academic year. Nominations are to precede Elections by two weeks. Any member that has been active with the organization for one or more semesters can run for office. Through a majority vote, a person can be elected into office. Members must be notified at least six weeks prior to the nomination period to prepare.

Article V - Membership

Are there any restrictions on membership? Is there an attendance/participation expectation? Are there dues? Are voting privileges earned or given?

Example: Membership in this organization is open to all Woodbury University, graduate and undergraduate students and will not be restricted on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or political affiliation. Students in good standing with the University are eligible for membership after attending or participating in an organization event/meeting. As a member, one is required to attend organization meetings regularly, pay dues if required, and actively support organization projects. Membership will be revoked by ½ vote of officers plus ¾ vote from the general membership if actions are deemed inappropriate by the membership.

Article VI - Finances

The organization may establish reasonable dues that must be paid by all members. How will dues be determined? What does that money go toward? What other sources of funding will the organization utilize?

Example:

The amount of the dues will be determined in the beginning of the academic year by the Executive Committee and presented to the general membership for a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote. Dues must be paid by X (enter week in semester). The treasurer shall maintain all financial records and shall co-sign with the president for all organization transactions.

Article VII – Meetings

How often are meetings? How are meetings run? Are there attendance expectations? What constitutes a quorum at meetings (or elections)? A quorum is the absolute number of members or the percentage of members, (usually voting members) required to be in attendance in order to conduct business.

Example:

The organization shall hold regular meetings during the academic term except when holidays, examination periods or other events make meetings impractical. Organization meeting day / time will be determined in the beginning of each semester by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the general membership. Attendance at organization meetings is expected. If a member must miss a meeting, correspondence with the secretary is appreciated. A quorum shall consist of a simple majority of the membership plus one officer. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all meetings.

Article VIII- Amendments

How are alterations made to the constitution?

Example:

Amendments to this constitution must be submitted in writing at a regular meeting of the organization. Said amendments will be voted on at a subsequent meeting. In order to adopt the amendment, a vote of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the general membership is required.

Article IX - Advisor

You can count on the fact that the Administrative Coordinator will want you to add to this section. The Coordinator has a couple of handouts that will help you develop this article more substantively and clearly. You will receive these in step 4.

Example:

The advisor shall be a full time faculty or staff member at Woodbury University. The advisor will assume those responsibilities as outlined in this constitution. The advisor will be selected by a $\frac{1}{2}$ vote of the Executive Board and then presented to the general membership for a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote. Advisors not fulfilling responsibilities or not abiding by the organization's purpose may be removed from the position by a $\frac{1}{2}$ vote of the Executive Board.

Step 4: Set up a meeting

Schedule a meeting with the Administrative Coordinator You can do this by calling 818-252-5257 or stopping by the Whitten Student Center. Take any documents or notes you and your group have created in the beginning stages of planning. Who should attend the meeting? Please have 2-4 of your group members meet with the Coordinator for the initial meeting. The Coordinator will ask your group representatives many questions about your vision for the organization. It is expected that you haven't

thought through everything yet, that's what this conversation is for. Expect to leave this meeting with questions to discuss with your group, recommendations to your constitution draft, and information regarding resources once your organization received recognition. There will most likely be 1-2 meetings following this one to clear up any loose ends.

Step 5: Determine officers and advisor(s)

Following your meeting with the Coordinator your group will need to figure out who will initially fill the officer roles. Additionally, every organization is required to have a full-time faculty or staff advisor. Some faculty/staff may be uncomfortable with the time commitment and would feel more comfortable having a co-advisor. Having more than 2 advisors is not permitted.

Step 6: Student Affairs Recognition

Once the Coordinator is satisfied that a minimal standard of organization development has occurred a formal announcement of recognition will be sent to the campus community. This announcement will include information about pertinent organization accounts, addresses, codes, etc. to be established in your group's name.

Step 7: ASWU Recognition

Organizations that have received recognition through Student Affairs are encouraged to seek recognition through the Associated Students of Woodbury Government. This would allow the organization to seek funding through the Organization Allocations Committee (OAC) as well as one-time seed money to assist with start-up operational costs. ASWU usually invites the interested organization to formally present their request at an Assembly meeting. The planning and discussing that you have gone through in the previous steps should have prepared you very well for this presentation.