

# Guide to Writing a Constitution

## ***What is a Constitution?***

A constitution provides direction and guidance for the operation of a student organization. This document establishes the principles and structure of the organization and acts as a foundation for the overall development of a group.

## ***Why have a Constitution?***

As the foundation of an organization, the constitution serves important purposes. A constitution acts to clarify the purpose and delineate the basic structure of an organization. It contributes to the stability and continuity of the group. The constitution can also help current and potential members to have a better understanding of the goals and functions of the organization.

## ***What to include in a Constitution:***

In order to optimize its effectiveness, the constitution should be written in a clear and concise manner. Keeping in mind the purposes of a constitution, it should be tailored to the needs of your organization. The minimum requirements are listed below, but the organization may choose to include additional information.

- I. Name:** (For example: “The name of this organization shall be...”)
- II. Purpose and Goals:** (“The purpose of this organization shall be...”). The statement of purpose can be one sentence or several sentences.
- III. Membership:** There should be a general statement about the eligibility and requirements for membership in the organization.  
**Please Note:** *Student organizations are prohibited from discriminating based on an individual’s actual or perceived race, color, disability, religion, national origin or ancestry, gender, or sexual orientation unless otherwise permitted by applicable federal law (for example Title IX). All sections of a constitution must abide by this policy.*
- IV. Officers:** The titles, qualifications for and terms of office should be listed in this section. An organization may choose to list the election process and responsibilities of such officers in this section or in bylaws. **Please Note:** *Schreiner University requires that all*

*officers of student organizations meet an academic requirement of 2.25 GPA. A statement to this effect must be included in all Recognized Student Organization constitutions.*

- V. Finances:** This section may be helpful if the group requires dues or to authorize specific individuals to authorize expenditures.  
**Please note:** *An advisor to the group must approve all expenditures before payment.*

- VI. Amendments and Ratification:** It is necessary to delineate the rules and procedures by which amendments can be proposed and adopted. Procedures for adopting the constitution should also be included.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

***In order to be valid, student organization constitutions must be signed by at least the chief student leader and primary advisor, and approved by the Director of Student Activities. If changes are made subsequent to the organization registration process, the new document should be submitted to the Director of Student Activities immediately.***

***What are Bylaws?***

As an extension of the constitution, bylaws provide further detail and structure for the internal affairs of the organization. Although they are not required, it may be helpful because they can help your organization run more smoothly and modified more easily.

***Suggestions for Bylaws***

Following the pattern of the constitution, the bylaws should elaborate on those items and possibly include other sections. Your organization may choose to include these or other provisions:

**Membership** – It may be helpful to further describe the process for selecting new members, types of membership, policies (i.e. attendance), and procedures for disciplining and/or removing members.

**Officers** – This section may elaborate on the duties and responsibilities of each officer, outline further expectations and discuss the removal and filling of vacancies.

**Committees** – Primarily for larger organizations, this section will provide guidance on the roles and responsibilities of standing and special committees and their members.

**Meetings** – Specifics to include here may be information on how

often and when meetings will occur, special meetings, requirements for notice, quorum, meeting format and parliamentary procedures.

**Affiliations** – It may be necessary to describe an affiliation with local, state or national organizations and the effects of this relationship.

# **Sample Constituion of A New Student Organization**

## PREAMBLE

We, the new members of the NEW STUDENT ORGANIZATION NAME, to fully realize our purpose do hereby and establish the constitution as the guiding instrument in our organization.

## ARTICLE I NAME

The name of this organization shall be the NEW STUDENT ORGANIZATION NAME, hereafter referred to as NSO.

## ARTICLE II PURPOSE

The purpose of NSO shall be to \_\_\_\_\_ and to continuously support and promote the values of Schreiner University.

## ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP & DUES

SECTION 1. Membership in NSO shall be open to all students who have a cumulative and previous semester GPA of at least a 2.00.

SECTION 2. Membership is open to students regardless of sex, handicap, religion, race, color, or national/ethnic origin.

SECTION 3. Active membership in NSO shall be conferred upon those members who, in addition to the above requirements, have paid the semester dues in full within on month of the first day of class.

## ARTICLE IV ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1. The officers of NSO shall be elected from active members. Any student seeking to hold or holding office must have a cumulative and previous semester GPA 2.25 or higher.

SECTION 2. The elected officers of NSO shall consist of a President and Executive Committees.

### SECTION 3. ELECTIONS

- A. All officers shall be elected on or before April 1 of each year and shall serve on year terms.
- B. All officers shall be elected by majority vote cast. Only active members are eligible to vote. If no candidate for an office receives a majority life of the votes cast, then only the top two candidates will be placed on a second ballot for that office until a majority is reached.
- C. A quorum of one-half of the active membership shall be required for all meetings where officer nominations or elections take place.
- D. All elections shall be conducted by a secret ballot. The ballots shall be tabulated by any two officers.
- E. The same guidelines apply should an officer position be vacated during the year (except in case of the office of President where the Vice-President would become President.)

### SECTION 4. OFFICER DUTIES

- A. The President shall preside at all NSO meetings and have the authority to appoint all committee chairperson, to create new committees, and to act as a spokesperson for the organization.
- B. The Vice President shall preside at all NSO meetings in the President's absence, and upon resignation, shall become the President of the organization for the duration of the term. The Vice President will support the President on special projects.
- C. The Secretary shall hand and keep record of all NSO business and correspondence, including, but not limited to: minutes of all NSO meetings, and up-to-date file on all members, and inform members of all NSO meetings and activities.
- D. The Treasurer shall handle all financial transportation of the organization, including, but not restricted to: the collection of dues, managing all bank accounts, and recording all transactions in the appropriate books.

### SECTION 5. ADVISOR

- A. The Faculty/Staff Advisor for NSO shall be nominated from the full time University faculty or administration by the NSO Executive Committee and approved by majority vote of quorum of active members. The Advisor

shall serve as a liaison with the University and help with the transitions between officers. The Advisor will be invited to and notified of all NSO meetings and activities. Confirmation of new advisors is subject to the approval of the Director of Student Activities or the Dean of Students.

## ARTICLE V DUES & FINANCES

SECTION 1. The dues for NSO will be established at the first meeting of the fall semester by the Executive Committee. Payment of dues must be received by the Treasurer within one month of the first day of class each semester to be an active member of NSO.

SECTION 2. NSO will finance its activities through membership dues, fundraising projects, and may apply to the Student Senate for additional support.

## ARTICLE VI MEETINGS

SECTION 1. The first meeting of the Fall semester shall be held within two weeks after classes start.

SECTION 2. Regular meetings shall be held at least once a month during the school year at times set by the organization.

SECTION 3. The meeting shall be conducted in accordance with the revised edition of **ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER.**

SECTION 4. The basic agenda at regular meetings shall follow:

- I. Call to order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Approval of the minutes
- IV. Executive Committee reports
- V. Officer reports
- VI. Committee reports
- VII. Old Business
- VIII. Announcements
- IX. Adjournment

SECTION 5. Action on any business, old or new, requires a quorum of one-half of the active membership of the organization.

ARTICLE VII  
REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

SECTION 1. An NSO officer whose dereliction of duty adversely affects the operations of the organization shall be subject to disciplinary action or removal from office.

SECTION 2. A written request stating the reason for dismissal and signed by at least three active members of the organization must be submitted at a regularly scheduled meeting.

SECTION 3. By the next regularly scheduled meeting, written notification of the request and the reasons for dismissal must have been given to the offending officers, who should come to that regular meeting prepared to speak.

SECTION 4. A two thirds affirmative vote of all active members is required to remove officers from office.

ARTICLE VII  
AMENDMENTS

SECTION 1. Amendments to the Constitution may be proposed in writing by any active member of NSO at any regular meeting at which two-thirds of the active members are present.

SECTION 2. Proposed amendments shall be voted upon only after two regular meetings following the introduction of the proposal.

SECTION 3. Proposed amendments will become active following a three-fourths (3/4) affirmative vote of the active members.

SECTION 4. All amendments are subject for final approval by the appropriate governing body.

ARTICLE VIII  
RATIFICATION

We, the undersigned of Schreiner University, after a three-fourths (3/4) affirmative vote of those members present, do hereby agree to follow the guidelines of this constitution.

\_\_\_\_\_  
NSO President Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor Signature