

# 2008-2009 STUDENT ORGANIZATION CONSTITUTION GUIDE & OUTLINE

San José State University • Division of Student Affairs • Student Involvement

Creating a constitution for a new organization may at first seem overwhelming, but if done well, it will be the best thing you can do to ensure the future success of your organization. The Student Involvement staff will assist you with questions or challenges you may face as you develop this very important document. Here are answers to some questions you may have. Please note that existing student organizations must also turn in an updated constitution to be recognized. **All bolded pieces of this sample constitution must be included verbatim in your organization's constitution.**

## ARTICLE I (Name)

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Note: Your organization may not list its name as "San José State University Name of Club" or "Name of Club of San José State University". If you want to include SJSU, it must be "Name of Club at San José State University".)

## ARTICLE II (Purpose)

Section 1. List the purpose(s) for which your organization was formed. Be sure this information is clear and specific. This could be considered the most important article in this document.

## ARTICLE III (Affiliation)

Section 1. If your organization is to be affiliated with a local, state or national organization, a statement declaring the nature of the affiliation must be included. The relationship between the campus group and the organization it is to be affiliated with must be described and a copy of the constitution belonging to the affiliated organization must be included with your paperwork. If no affiliation exists, a statement reflecting that fact must be included.

## ARTICLE IV (Membership)

Section 1. List the qualifications for membership in the organization (e.g. class level, major, special interest).

Section 2. Include the following statement: **Voting membership is restricted to matriculated, currently enrolled students at San José State University.** (Note: You may be more restrictive in determining voting membership.)

Section 3. Include the following statement: **At least eighty percent (80%) of all members of the organization must be matriculated, currently enrolled students at San José State University.** (Note: You may specify a higher percentage.)

Section 4. Include the following statement: **Membership in the organization will not be denied to anyone on the basis of race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, color, age, gender, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or disability. The prohibition on discrimination on the basis of gender does not apply to social fraternities or sororities or to other university living groups. (Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section 41500).**

Section 5. Include the following statement: **No member of this organization shall engage in hazing, participate in hazing, or commit any act that causes or is likely to cause bodily danger, physical harm, or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to any fellow student or person attending this institution (California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Article 2, *Standards for Student Conduct*, Section 41301(b)(8). Individual students may be disciplined for hazing under Section 41301(b)(8).**

## ARTICLE V (Officers)

Section 1. List the titles of the officers of the organization. For example: "The officers of this organization will be a President, a Vice-President, and a Treasurer."

- Section 2. State the term of office. For example: “The term of office shall be from the time of election until new officers take office immediately following the next election” or “Term of office shall be one semester”.
- Section 3. Describe how the organization will fill the vacancies that occur in any of the offices. By appointment? By election?
- Section 4. Include the following statement: **All officers of this organization must be matriculated, currently enrolled students at San José State University. The President and Treasurer of this organization must maintain a minimum overall 2.0 grade point average, must be enrolled in at least 6 units, and must be in good standing with San José State University during their term of office.**
- Section 5. Include the following statement: **All officers and advisors of this organization are required to complete an Alcohol Education Training offered by Student Involvement.**

## **ARTICLE VI (Duties of Officers)**

In separate sections, describe the duties of each officer. This is a very important article and should be written with great care. For example:

- Section 1. The President shall preside at all meetings, name all special committees, appoint all committee chairs, and ..., etc.
- Section 2. The Vice-President shall assume the duties of the President in his/her absence. The Vice-President shall also..., etc.
- Section 3. The Secretary shall record minutes of each meeting, maintain accurate records of all business pertaining to the organization, receive and respond to all official correspondence, and..., etc.
- Section 4. The Treasurer shall collect and disburse funds as directed by the organization, make monthly financial reports to the general memberships, and..., etc.

## **ARTICLE VII (Nominations and Elections)**

- Section 1. Describe how people are nominated for office. If a Nominating Committee is used, describe when it will meet and when it must report to the full membership. If nominations are made from the floor, specify when this is to take place in relation to the elections and who can nominate individuals for office.
- Section 2. State when during the year or semester elections will take place.
- Section 3. State whether officers will be elected by plurality or majority vote. A plurality vote means that one candidate must get more votes than anyone else. A majority vote means that a candidate must receive one more than half (50% + 1) of all votes cast.

## **ARTICLE VIII (Advisors)**

- Section 1. Include the statement: **The organization must have a University advisor. This person must hold at least a bachelors degree and be employed as a faculty or staff member by San José State University. A Graduate Assistant/Intern may assume the advisor role if approved by the Student Involvement staff.**
- Section 2. Include the statement: **The advisor shall be a non-voting member of the organization.**

- Section 3. List the duties and responsibilities of the advisor. For example: “The duties of the advisor shall be to:
- a. Assist the organization in fulfilling their mission and purpose
  - b. Be knowledgeable of the organization’s constitution and bylaws and assist the organization’s members in interpreting them
  - c. Be knowledgeable of University policies and procedures regarding student organizations and ensure organization compliance to the best of their ability
  - d. Be aware of the organization’s activities
  - e. Be aware of the organization’s financial standing and all financial transactions using the organization’s funds
  - f. Attend organization meetings.”

## **ARTICLE IX (Meetings)**

- Section 1. State the frequency of regular meetings. Time and place of meetings may also be specified here. If your organization has different types of meetings (e.g. business meetings and practice sessions), be sure they are each accounted for in this article.
- Section 2. State who has the authority to call special meetings. The President? A proportion of the membership?
- Section 3. Specify your quorum. A quorum is the minimum number of members who must be present at a meeting in order for business to be conducted. State a number that is large enough to insure that the meeting will be representative of your whole organization, but not so large that establishing a quorum is difficult. The quorum may be stated a percentage of total membership or as an absolute number of members.
- Section 4. Establish a parliamentary authority for your organization. For example: “The parliamentary authority of this organization shall be Robert’s Rules of Order, Revised.”

## **ARTICLE X (Committees)**

- Section 1. State who has the authority to name committees and committee chairpersons. You can also list regular or standing committees for your organization, if any (i.e. committee size and duties).

## **ARTICLE XI (Dues, fees)**

- Section 1. Make a statement about the dues or other fees that are collected by your organization. If there are none, make a statement to that effect.

## **ARTICLE XII (Amendments)**

- Section 1. State who can originate an amendment. An individual? A committee? A percentage of the membership?
- Section 2. State the manner of presenting the amendment to the group. Usually the amendment must be read in one or two meetings preceding the vote or posted for one or two weeks for all to read.
- Section 3. Describe the number of votes needed to adopt the amendment. This is usually two-thirds of the total membership of the organization.
- Section 4. State the time when the amendment becomes effective. In a week? Immediately?

\* **Adopted on** \_\_\_\_\_

(Record the date the constitution/ bylaws were adopted by the membership)