Forming a New Student Organization at GW

The George Washington University has more than 400 registered student organizations. Student organizations are a vibrant part of the campus community. Assembled under a wide variety of causes and interests, student organizations exist to provide a diverse array of student activities that benefit and enrich the student experience.

What is a Student Organization at GW?

- An organization is defined as any number of persons who have complied with University requirements within the Center for Student Engagement as a student organization. As with individual students, student organizations are charged with the responsibility of upholding the Code of Student Conduct. This includes but is not limited to potential violations such as: drug/alcohol violations, destruction of property, hazing, etc. (Code of Student Conduct, Section 3, d).
- All members of a student organization must be currently registered and enrolled students of the University. For an organization to form and be considered active, there must be at least 10 currently enrolled GW students who are members. Friends who are not GW students, alumni, and family are considered guests of the organization. They can participate in organization events, but are guests of the organization, not members. Only currently enrolled GW students are allowed to hold officer positions within a student organization or process financial transactions on behalf of the organization.
- An officer is a member of an organization that accepts full responsibility for the organization, its actions conduct and activities. Full responsibility includes, but is not limited to, ensuring payment for services and supplies needed to compliment the organization's activities and events, as well as ensuring that your organization abides by all University policies.

Types of Student Organization Membership

- OPEN: The organization is open to all students currently enrolled in a degree granting program and in good academic and judicial standing with the University, with no other selection criteria for membership other than interest in the group.
- SELECTIVE: The organization is NOT open to all GW students, but has established membership criteria that relates to the mission of the organization and abides by all University Policies (including non-discrimination) and the Center for Student Engagement Policies. Criteria for membership in a selective organization must be outlined in the online student organization registration form through the studentorgs.gwu.edu website.

Types of Student Organizations

- Undergraduate - Organizations are comprised mostly of members who are currently enrolled undergraduate students.
- Graduate - Organizations are comprised mostly of members who are currently enrolled graduate students in GW graduate programs.
- Open - Membership in these organizations are open to both current undergraduate and graduate students.
- Umbrella - Umbrella organizations are groups affiliated with a University’s academic or administrative department that have at least five organizations for which the overarching organization is financially responsible.
New Org Registration Process
We are glad that you have expressed interest in forming a new student organization here at GW and are eager to aid you in this process! However before you get started we encourage you to do some research and follow the steps outlined below.

1. **Check the Directory of Student Organizations**
   o Determine if there is an existing organization at GW similar to the one you would like to start. To form a new organization, your organization must be different than those which already exist at GW (i.e. you’d like to form a singing group; how will this group differ from the one(s) that already exist?)

2. **Think about what your group brings to campus**
   o Are you wanting to create a community for a particular topic, are you perhaps trying to help yourself and your peers gain professional development in a certain field, or is there a cause that you are fighting for? You should sit down and think about why your group should exist, what it may bring to campus, and how it is significantly different than other groups on campus. You should then create a concise description of your proposed organization and a rationale for its creation.

3. **Schedule a meeting with a CSE Coordinator of Student Involvement to discuss your idea**
   o Before you get too far along in the process, it is important to discuss your ideas with someone from the CSE staff. This meeting will include discussion of goals, resources, and a four-year plan of action.

4. **Start recruiting members for your organization**
   o In order to become an official student organization at GW you need at least 10 currently enrolled students to sign up as members; at least three of those 10 members need to be signed up to be officers in your organization.
     - One officer must be listed as an administrative contact (President)
     - One officer must be listed as a financial contact (Treasurer)
     - The third officer listed may be whatever the group determines to be the most needed at the time of formation
   o Think about who would benefit from being a member of your group, who may be interested in being a member, and who may value programs your group presents. Now think about how you get these audiences engaged in what you are doing.
   o for insights and tips on how to attract members to your group
   o You may also wish to recruit a faculty advisor for the organization. While not required, faculty advisors can give meaningful insight in the work your group will do.

5. **Create a four year plan for your organization**
   o After you have a good idea of what your group will do, why it will do it, and who will be members, start thinking about how you are going to make this all happen.
     - How will you build your organization from year to year?
     - What impact will your organization have at GW in the long term?
     - How will you design a sustainable organization so your efforts result in an organization that exists beyond your years at GW?
     - Consider taking a “strategic planning” approach with your group, this will also help you develop a mission perfect for your constitution.
6. **Assess the resources your will need to operate at GW**
   - Part of planning for the future includes understanding how your group will sustain itself financially. You will want to consider how much money you may need to be successful and where that money will come from.
     - Does the University have the resources you need to exist?
     - Will you need to procure your own resources? How would you do this?

7. **Drafting a constitution**
   - As a new organization your membership will need to draft a constitution in order to complete registration, details on what is needed in your constitution can be found below.
     - An guide to writing a constitution and a sample constitution are available at [www.studentorgs.gwu.edu](http://www.studentorgs.gwu.edu)

8. **Register your new organization with the CSE (February 23rd – March 23rd)**
   - Once you have completed all the steps above it will be time to officially register your student organization with the CSE. See the registration section below for more details. Upon approval of your registration your organization will be official and recognized by GW.

9. **Attend Student Organization Leadership Training at the beginning of the Fall Semester**
   - As a new organization you will likely be given a heads up that at least two officers from your organization must attend Student Organization Leadership Training (SOLT) when you meet with a Program Coordinator from CSE to discuss your group. However, if for whatever reason you are not informed about SOLT, or are looking to register for SOLT please contact the CSE.

**Starting a New Greek Organization on Campus**
In addition to the student organization registration process, all social fraternal organizations must be affiliated with, colonized and chartered by an Inter/National fraternal organization. The student organization must also be approved by the appropriate fraternal governing body (IFC/ Panhellenic Association/ MGC) according to the process outlined in that body’s Constitution and By-Laws. The organization must also complete the annual student organization registration process through the Center for Student Engagement. For more information, go to the Greek Life [website](http://www.studentorgs.gwu.edu).

**Starting a New Club Sport on Campus**
In addition to the student organization registration process, all club sports need to connect with and be approved by the Office of Campus Recreation and the Club Sports Council. In order to begin this process, it is your responsibility to make outreach to Aubre Jones, 202-994-7546, [aubre@gwu.edu](mailto:aubre@gwu.edu) the Director of Recreational Sports.

**Student Organization Registration**
In order to be considered active and eligible for all student organization benefits, organizations must register annually through the Center for Student Engagement’s Student Organization Portal. In order to complete registration successfully follow the steps outlined below:

1. **Enter your student organization’s information into the NEW GW OrgSync Page**
   When Registration is officially open, the OrgSync link will be posted on the CSE website, as well as emailed to all current and potential orgs. For instructions on how to navigate the new registration portal, please find a step by step guide [online](http://www.studentorgs.gwu.edu).
You will be asked to complete an online form which collects all pertinent information on your org. This information is utilized to connect your org with the appropriate advisor and resources. As part of this upload, you will be responsible for entering all members of the organization (via a roster upload), officers, and a faculty advisor (if you choose to have one and a faculty member has agreed to serve in this role for your org).

2. **Upload a Constitution**
   During the online registration process, you will be asked to upload a copy of your organization’s constitution. The constitution must include the following items in order to be approved:
   - A non-discrimination clause
   - A statement that organizations will abide by all University policies
   - A statement explaining that only registered students are considered members of the organization. All others (friends, family, faculty, staff) are considered guests. Guests are welcome to attend events and vote, but they may not hold officer positions or handle money on behalf of the organization.

   A guide to writing a constitution as well as a sample constitution is available online at [www.studentorgs.gwu.edu](http://www.studentorgs.gwu.edu)

3. **Complete a Budget Form**
   Any student organization seeking operational funding from the GW Student Association in the coming year must fill out the online budget form as part of the registration process.

4. **Responsibility Statement**
   As part of the online registration process an office, on behalf of your organization, is required to read and electronically sign the Responsibility Statement which outlines that the group will follow all GW policies and procedures.

5. **Await Final SAT Advisor Review and Approval**
   Upon completion of the preceding steps, your SAT Advisor will review submitted documents. From the day your organization completed the registration process, please allow five business days to hear about approval. You will know your organization has been approved when you receive an email from your advisor stating that your organization’s registration is complete. Please note that the University reserves the right not to approve an organization.

6. **Attend the Student Organization Leadership Training**
   At least two officers of a student organization must attend the Student Organization Leadership Training (SOLT) annually at the beginning of the fall semester. At least one officer must be your organization’s treasurer (or their representative). It is highly recommended that the second officer who attends is your president, though another officer may fill in if absolutely necessary. This training is offered once a semester (for dates and times please see the student orgs website). In order to participate in the training, you will need to pre-register with the CSE.

   SOLT is your opportunity to learn important information and policies related to student organizations. This training is also your chance to engage with other student leaders while learning, adapting and honing your leadership skills. SOLT provides you with skills, tools and knowledge to bring back to your organization and prepare for a successful year.