Writing a Constitution

Three Elements All Constitutions MUST Contain:

1) A non-discrimination clause: [Insert student organization name] does not unlawfully discriminate against any person on any basis prohibited by federal law, the District of Columbia Human Rights Act, or other applicable law, including without limitation, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

2) A statement that the organization will abide by University policies. [Insert student organization name] will abide by all University policies.

3) Membership statement: Only currently registered GW students are considered members of the organization; all others (alumni, friends, family, faculty, staff) are considered guests. Guests are welcome to attend events, but they cannot hold officer positions or handle money on behalf of the organization.

If a constitution is submitted without the above listed elements, the SAT Advisor for that organization will not be able to register the organization until their constitution is amended to include this information.

Writing Each Section of a Constitution

The main body of the constitution should contain statements concerning enduring aspects of the organization. Items that are subject to frequent revision should be included in the by-laws. University policies that apply to organizations are included in the outline below.

Preamble: State the name of the organization and the purpose of its establishment.

Article I: Name
- Section 1 - What is the exact title to be used in addressing the organization?

Article II: Purpose
- Section 1 - What is the Purpose? Is it fostering a broad educational goal? Is there a social, cultural, or political aim? Why was the group founded?
- Section 2 - This section should be a statement of the group's willingness to abide by and support established University policies.

Article III: Membership
- Section 1 - Who is eligible for membership (membership must be limited to registered GW students)? Are there any restrictions? How does one become a member? How are members identified?
- Section 2 - Voluntary withdrawal of membership may be provided for. Can a member remain in the organization without paying dues?
- **Section 3** - Non-discrimination clause must be provided, and must include the following: ability, race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, national origin and citizenship.

**Article IV: Officers/ Executive Committee**
- **Section 1** - How many officers are there? What are their titles and duties? Will the officers constitute an executive committee? Description of any standing committees should be included, probably in the by-laws. Process for removal of officers.

**Article V: Operations**
- **Section 1** - How are officers elected? What type of ballot? When are they elected and for what period? Who is eligible for office? What are the procedures for an election tie? How may officers be removed? You may wish to clarify the role of your advisor.

**Article VI: Finances/ Allocations of Funds**
- **Section 1** - How will the organization finance its activities? Will the organization submit an annual Student Association budget request? How will financial records be kept? What is the process for approving expenditures?

**Article VII: Amendments**
- **Section 1** - How are amendments to be proposed and by whom? Do you want to provide for delay before voting on amendments? How are amendments to be voted upon?

*Note: You must include an effective date and contact person’s name on your organization’s constitution.*