

# Guide to Creating a Student Organization Constitution/By-Laws

## DEFINITIONS:

1. A Constitution is comprised of the fundamental laws and principles that prescribe the nature, functions, and limits of an organization. Essentially, the constitution provides a basic structure upon which an organization operates.
2. By-laws are secondary laws that rule or govern the internal affairs of an organization. Basically, by-laws are an expansion of the articles or sections of the constitution. They describe in detail the procedures and steps for an organization to follow in order to conduct business effectively and efficiently.

Please follow the below guidelines as closely as possible when creating your constitution.

**Articles/items with an \* are CSI policies and must be covered in the Constitution/By-laws in order to be considered for a charter or remain active as an organization.**

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## The Constitution of (insert Organization name) (Year) Revision

### \*Article I: Name of Organization

A. The name of the organization is/shall be (insert organization's name)

#### Notes:

- 1) "Truman State University" may not be placed at the beginning of the title/name of the organization. After the title/name, an organization may state "at Truman State University".
- 2) If the title/name of the organization is longer than five words, we recommend creating an acronym or abbreviation for the organization.
- 3) This name will be used in a variety of University and CSI publications, bank statements, etc., so it is recommended that the name be stated in the document exactly how the organization prefers to be addressed.

### \*Article II: Purpose of the Organization

A. Include a mission statement

1. What are the goals of the organization?
2. What is the intended impact of the organization on the University community?
3. What service will be provided and for whom?

B. Describe the general objectives to attain the goals.

### \*Article III: Membership of the Organization

**Note:** *University faculty and staff members, KCOM students, MACC students, or community members are eligible for membership in student organizations; however, they may only serve as associate members. Only those members who are students of Truman State University can vote and hold office in a CSI chartered student organization.*

A. Eligibility for membership

1. Who is eligible for membership?
- \*\*2. A faculty member cannot serve as the primary contact person for any CSI chartered organization. The primary contact person must be a student member of the organization.

B. Criteria or qualifications for membership

1. Are there any specific qualifications or criteria which need to be met for membership (i.e. minimal GPA requirements, attendance requirements, dues which need to be paid)?

C. Categories of Membership

1. Are there various categories of membership such as active, associate, inactive, alumni, honorary, auxiliary, etc?
2. What are the privileges, duties, and/ or responsibilities of each type of membership?
- \*\*3. Only members who are Truman students are allowed to hold office or have voting privileges.

D. Withdrawal or Removal of Members

1. What is the process for withdrawal from the organization?
2. What are the grounds for removal of a member (i.e., under what circumstances would this occur, are votes required)?
3. What is the process for removal of a member of the organization?
4. Who has a right to request removal or withdrawal of a member?
5. Does an appeal process exist, and what are the policies and procedures to follow for such a process?

**\*Article IV: Elections**

A. Times and Periods when Elections Occur

1. How often and what time of year are elections held for the organization?
2. Are there any special elections?

B. Nomination Procedures

1. How are nominations made?
2. Are there self-nominations?
3. Is an application process required for nominations?
4. Who monitors the nomination process?

C. Notifications and Posting of Elections

1. What is the process for notifying or posting information regarding organization elections?
2. Are letters, flyers, or posters used on campus?
3. Are verbal announcements made at meetings?
4. How long is the notification and posting period?

D. Elections procedures

1. What is the specific procedure followed for elections?
2. Is a secret ballot taken, or is it a show of hands or verbal vote?
3. What number or percentage of members or quorum is necessary for elections to be completed (i.e. 2/3 majority, 50%)?
4. Who is eligible to vote?

**\*Article V: Officers**

A. Description of Officers

1. How many officers are there in the organization?
2. List the officers' titles.
3. Will there be any type of executive committee made up of officers?

B. Duties and Responsibilities of Officers

1. List the duties and responsibilities of each officer

#### C. Qualifications for Becoming an Officer

1. Who is eligible for office (i.e. Truman students, GPA or credit limit requirement, specific skills or necessary experience, class level requirements)?
- \*\*2. Non-Truman students may not serve on the Executive Board of a CSI chartered organization except in the role of a Truman Faculty Advisor

#### D. Terms of Office

1. Specify time frame in which an officer may serve (i.e. semester, academic year, etc.).
2. When do officers assume their positions?

#### E. Procedures for Filling Vacated Offices

1. Are special elections held?
2. Is ascending order used?
3. Are appointments made, or are interviews coordinated?

#### F. Procedures for Removal of Officers

1. Who can initiate removal of an officer?
2. What is the specific procedure to be followed for removal?
3. What type of vote is required for removal?

#### G. Appeal Policy

1. Is there an appeal policy in your organization?
2. Is there a set time period to carry out an appeal?
3. What are the steps involved with an appeal?

### **Article VI: Committees (If needed)**

#### A. Standing Committees

1. State the names, purposes, and responsibilities of the various standing committees. These might include: executive boards, publicity committee, fund-raising, etc.
2. How are members selected for each committee (by choice, by appointment)?
3. What are the heads of the committees called, and how are they selected?

#### B. Temporary/ Special Committees

1. How and when are such committees formed?
2. What are the purposes and responsibilities of special committees?
3. What is the duration of a temporary or special committee?

### **\*Article VII: Meetings**

#### A. Types of Meetings

1. List the different types of meetings (i.e. Staff, Business, Executive).
2. Who is required to attend each type of meeting?

#### B. Time and Occurrence of Meetings

1. How often are meetings held (i.e. biweekly, monthly, etc)?
2. When are meetings held (Is there a set week day for each meeting or is this determined by semester)?

#### C. Special meetings

1. State the provisions for special meetings (How or by whom they are called).
2. How many members must be present to hold a special meeting?
3. What are the circumstances under which special meetings may be called?

#### D. Quorum

1. Clarify what type of members and what percentage of each type must be present to hold meetings
2. When is quorum used (to hold meetings, conduct business, for voting)?
3. What happens if a quorum does not exist in a meeting?

#### E. Method of Conducting Meetings

1. Is parliamentary procedure used, or are the meetings informal?

#### \*F. Event Space Issues

1. Every organization should address how they will handle event space issues (events other than meetings)

### \*Article VIII: Finances

#### A. Dues/ membership fees

1. Is there a set fee or dues amount?
2. When are the fees due?
3. Who is the officer responsible for collecting fees?
- \*\*4. Faculty members can give donations to any CSI organization, but **cannot be required to pay dues** as an Associate Member in the constitution.

#### B. Expenditures

1. Who is the officer(s) responsible for authorizing all expenditures and reimbursements?

#### C. Dissolution of Funds

1. If the organization dissolves/becomes inactive for 2 or more consecutive semesters, to what agency will the remaining funds be donated to or will the funds go to a Truman account (see University policy, i.e. Distribution of Funds Policy)?
2. Any remaining funds **cannot** be disbursed among remaining organization individual members.

### \*Article IX: Advisor

#### A. Selection of Advisor(s)

1. How is an advisor selected (by appointment, election, etc)?

#### B. Qualifications

1. All advisors must be Truman Faculty or Staff
2. Are there any other specific criteria for selecting an advisor for your particular organization?

**Note:** *We recommend that you not name a specific faculty/staff member here.*

#### C. Roles/ Duties of the Advisor

1. What are the responsibilities of the advisor?
- \*\*2. A Faculty Advisor cannot reserve rooms under a student organization's name for activities/events that are not related to the group he/she advises.

**Note:** *The CSI has resources available on this topic for your organization's use.*

#### D. Term

1. How long of a term may advisor(s) serve?

### \*Article X: Amendments

#### A. Proposing Amendments

1. What is the procedure for proposing amendments (i.e. in writing, verbally, etc)?

B. Provisions

1. When can an amendment be proposed?
2. Who can propose amendments?
3. Is there any notice required in advance for amending the constitution and/ or by-laws?
4. How many members must be present for adoption of the amendment?
5. Who can vote on the amendment?
6. How many votes are required for passage?
7. When do new amendments take effect?

C. Ratification

1. How and when will the constitution and/ or by-laws go into effect?

**\*\*\*The following articles are new editions to Constitution Requirements as of fall 2011. All active organizations will be required to submit updated Constitutions with the below additions\*\*\*\***

**\*Article XI: Risk Management**

**\*\*A. Risk Management Procedures**

- \*\*1. Who is in charge of risk management in your organization?
- \*\*2. What measures are you taking to lower risk in your organization?
- \*\*3. What steps will be taken if any risk occurs within your organization?

**\*\*B. Anti-Hazing: (Include *exactly* as shown)**

- \*\*1. (Insert Organization name) fully understands and will abide by the anti-hazing policy as set forth in the *Student Conduct Code* of Truman State University 8.050.2. Expectations for Student Organization Conduct Section 14: Abusive affiliation.