Information for Registration of Student Organizations

Introduction

Welcome! This packet will guide you through the process of forming a new student organization at the Pennsylvania State Lehigh Valley. Forming a group can be a challenging, but very rewarding process. To ensure success, the Student Activities Office has designed a process that will help your group form a solid foundation so that your organization can succeed and provide valuable experiences for your fellow students. There are many positive benefits associated with being a recognized group on campus, including use of the Penn State name, ability to reserve space, and take advantage of the services offered through the Students Activities Office.

There are also several responsibilities associated with being a recognized group, including abiding by Policies & Rules for Student Organizations (complete document available at www.sa.psu.edu/engage), updating officer information whenever there is a change, and renewing your recognition status at the beginning of every Fall semester.

When starting a new student organization there are several questions to consider:

1. First, is there another group on campus that exists that meets the interests you’re looking for in a student organization?

2. Would you be able to recruit a minimum of ten members for the group?

3. Do you have the time to work on all of the requirements and/or are others helping you?

The Office of Student Activities is available to help you answer these questions and provide you with assistance in forming your group.

There are necessary requirements to become a recognized student organization at Penn State University. They are as follows:

- Create a constitution (see sample constitution in this packet).
- Recruit a minimum of ten members and complete a membership list.
- Secure a University faculty or staff advisor and complete the advisor form (available in ANGEL).
- Complete an Organization Registration Form in ANGEL.

Once the group returns these materials, they will be reviewed by the Student Activities Office. The Director of Student Affairs and the SGA senate also must approve. A student organization wishing to form can be denied recognition status for the following reasons:

- The purpose, mission, and/or activities violate federal, state, and/or local laws
• The purpose, mission, and/or activities violate the *Penn State Code of Conduct, University Policies and Rules, Policies and Rules for Student Organizations*, or other University policies and procedures.
• The criteria to establish a group are not completed and sustained as above
• The group duplicates the purpose of an existing recognized group, except in the case of a religious or political organization

If you have any questions or need any assistance throughout this process, please contact the Student Activities Office.

The constitution is the heart of your organization. It provides the structure by which your group will function, and it secures a professional operating environment that Penn State prides itself upon. There are eleven (11) articles that must be included in your constitution by mandate of the Office of Student Activities. Within these articles are statements that must be included with that article. You are not limited, however, to just these stipulations.

You are free to personalize your organization’s constitution to suit your specific needs. The required articles and statements, and what they mean is delineated below. A sample constitution including the required articles, and the most common way of organizing them, is attached to this packet in order to aid you in the application process.

**Required Constitutional Elements**

**Heading**
1. All information must be centered.
2. State the full name of the organization, and its acronym, if applicable.
3. Under the name, state the original date that the organization first met on the confines of the Lehigh Valley Campus, at the Pennsylvania State University.

**Body**
- Any statements that must be included in the constitution in some fashion will be prefaced by the word “state” or in **boldface**.

**Article I: Purpose**
- Clearly **state** the purpose of the organization. This is the singular most significant part of the document, as it is the mission statement of the organization. No organizations with duplicate or highly similar purposes of those existing organizations will be considered for registration.
- **State** the purpose in sentences, or by using numbers or bullets.

**Article II: Membership**
- **State** that only currently employed faculty, staff, and currently registered students are eligible for active membership. **State** that there must be at least 8 active student members at all times. **State** that only active members may vote, preside, officiate, or solicit funding on the organization’s behalf.
- **University regulations state that:**
  - No organization with restrictive membership clauses discriminating on the basis of race, religion, sex, physical handicap, or creed shall obtain or maintain University registration.
Special consideration will be given to the merits of groups founded for the purpose of religious practice.

- **New Membership and Recruitment**
  - All members, including but not limited to new members and recruits, reserve the right to refrain from participating in any activities without consequence, based upon personal/religious beliefs, personal values, or moral reserve as defined by the member.
  - Any and all interaction/activity between members and/or new members will be limited to guidelines stated by university policy, as well as local, state, and federal laws.

- **Membership Removal**
  - Please draft a "Membership Removal Policy" subsection within the Membership Section that you feel is appropriate for expelling members from your organization. Please be sure to include reasonable guidelines for what is a condition for expulsion.

  - **Supreme Court regulations state that:**
    No organization may restrict membership based on characteristics of a student, which are intrinsic to the identity of that student, and are not essential to the potential value of that student as a member of that organization and the Penn State University Community at large.

**Article III: Officers**

- **State** that only full-time, officially registered active student members shall be eligible to serve as appointed or elected officers in your organization.
- **State** all officers, elected or appointed, and their appropriate duties and powers. If officers form the executive committees, an odd number of officers is recommended. Avoid shared offices.
- **State** the procedures that will be followed to fill unexpired vacancies. These include the meeting at which nominations and elections will take place (if applicable), the process by which a candidate will be nominated, etc. You must have an officer responsible for your organizations funds. This officer will be the only active member with access to your SGA account, and will most likely be your treasurer.

**Article IV: Meetings**

- **State** that adequate advanced notice must be given to all members.

**Article V: Voting**

- **State** what will constitute quorum. Different quorums may be used for voting, elections, amendments, and other items. If you wish to require different quorums for different voting events, they must be specified.
- **State** what shall constitute a majority; likewise if different types of majorities will be required for different voting events, they must be specified.

**Article VI: Finances**

- **State** that all organizational funds are to be handled exclusively through the SGA and the Student Activities office.
- **State** whether or not the payment of dues is a necessary condition for membership. If it is **state** how they will be determined. Do not specify a specific amount, and it is recommended that the amount is kept reasonable. **State** how often dues are to be collected.

**Article VII: Elections**
- State the meeting at which nominations and elections will take place.
- State how and when these meetings will be publicized.
- State that no one involved in conducting the elections may be an official candidate.
- State the procedure for nominations and elections, along with how ties will be handled.
- State when new officers begin their terms of office. A transition period is recommended so that the new officers may learn their responsibilities, along with the organization’s business and University regulations.

Article VIII: Amendments to the Constitution
- State the procedure for the introduction and passage of amendments.
- State who may propose amendments.
- State that all amendments are subject to approval by the USG Supreme Court/GSA Judiciary Committee.
- State when the approved amendments are to take effect.

Article IX: Accessibility of this Constitution
- State that copies of the constitution will be available to anyone upon request.

Article X: Advisor
- State that the advisor must be a Penn State University-Lehigh Valley Campus full-time faculty or staff member, and he/she should be chosen by the organization. Do not mention a specific name.

Article XI: Safety Considerations (if your organization is high-risk)
- State that no member will use any undue force in any contact activity.
- State that no member will use weapons in conjunction with your organization’s activities.
- State that all members will wear safety equipment as outlined in the Participation Waiver during all activities.
- State that your organization will abide by the Penn State Department of Health and Safety’s current version of Safety Considerations for Registered Organizations.
- State that all members are required to acknowledge and abide by all of the above safety considerations.
- State that any violation of stated guidelines is grounds for immediate dismissal from your organization.

Sample Constitution
THE PENN STATE SAMPLE ORGANIZATION (PSSO)
Date of origin: July, 2006

I. Purpose
A. The purpose of the Penn State Sample Organization is to provide a guide to what student organization constitutions should look like.

II. Membership
A. At all times, all active members shall be full-time, officially registered, undergraduate students at Penn State Lehigh Valley Campus.
B. All members of the organization shall be active members.
C. At all times there shall be at least 8 active student members.
D. This organization may restrict membership but will uphold the Penn State non-discriminatory clause and will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, physical handicap, or creed.
E. New Membership and Recruitment
1. Any and all interaction/activity between members and/or new members will be limited to guidelines stated by university policy, as well as local, state, and federal laws.
F. The club reserves the right to expel a member who is not following the policies of the organization with a super majority vote of attending members - quorum is 75% of active members.
G. This organization will not restrict membership based on characteristics of a student, which are intrinsic to the identity of that student, and are not essential to the potential value of that student as a member of that organization and the Penn State University Community at large.

III. Officers
A. Only full-time, officially registered active student members shall be eligible to serve as appointed or elected officers. Further limitations are subject to the Student Activities Office approval.
B. Offices
1. The President is the spokesperson for the organization. The President presides at all meetings.
2. The Vice-President shall serve as President when the President is unable to do so.
3. The Treasurer shall be charged with handling all organizational finances, including the organization’s SGA account.
C. Filling unexpired vacancies:
1. Nominations are taken at the meeting following the vacancy. Elections also occur at this meeting.
2. If a majority (50%+1) is not obtained by any of the candidates, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated, and the active members shall vote again.
3. When nominations are being taken to fill unexpired terms, any member of the organization may nominate another member of the organization by simply raising his/her hand and indicating such when recognized.

IV. Meeting
A. The President may call special meetings should he/she see fit.
B. Members shall be notified by the President of all meetings by e-mail.
C. Adequate advance notice must be given to all active members.

V. Voting
A. Only active members may vote.
B. Quorum for all voting shall be fifty percent plus one (50% +1) of the active membership.
C. A simple majority (50% +1) shall be necessary for all voting. This majority shall be derived from the active members present.

VI. Finances
A. All organizational funds are to be deposited and handled through the Student Activities Office in 202 B-Building.
B. This organization shall collect dues that will not be excessive.
C. The Treasurer, with the consent of the President will determine dues.
D. Dues shall be collected semi-annually

VII. Elections
A. No one involved in conducting the elections may be an official candidate.
B. Elections codes:
1. Any member may nominate an active member for any office by raising his/her hand at the appropriate time and being recognized by the presiding official. Next, the active members shall cast secret, written ballots for the candidate of their choice. Each active member shall have one vote per office.
2. If 50%+1 cannot be obtained, the candidate with the lowest number of votes shall be dropped from consideration, and the active members shall vote again.
3. In the event of a tie, the ballot will be recast.
E. All officers serve for a term of one year, beginning in the month following elections and ending the month of elections.

VIII. Amendments to the Constitution
A. Amendments to this constitution may be introduced at the conclusion of any meeting. Voting shall occur at the meeting following its introduction, with the amendment taking effect following Student Activities Office approval.
B. Any member may introduce a constitutional amendment at the conclusion of any meeting. At the following meeting, active members shall vote on the amendment, as outlined in the article on voting. If the amendment passes, it shall be sent to the SGA Senate for approval.
C. All amendments are subject to the approval of the SGA Senate.

IX. Accessibility of this Constitution
A. Copies of this constitution shall be made available to anyone upon request.

X. Advisor
A. This organization must retain an advisor at all times. The advisor will be a Faculty or Staff member of the University and will be chosen by the organization.

XI. Safety Considerations
A. This organization will also abide by the following safety guidelines.
1. No member will use any undue force in any contact activity.
2. Members will not use any weapons in conjunction with The Penn State Sample Organization’s activities.
3. The Sample Organization will abide by the Penn State Department of Health and Safety’s current version of Safety Considerations for Registered organizations.
B. Any violation of stated guidelines is grounds for immediate dismissal from the Sample Organization.

Advisers

Student Organizations are designed to enhance the out of class experience for students. An advisor is very important to the success of a student organization. Advisors serve to guide student organization members through the process of effectively operating an organization. In addition, advisors act as confidantes in both individual and organizational-related matters. Advisors can render knowledge about the organizations’ history and tradition and can be a valuable source of information. Finally, whether assigned or volunteered, it is important to remember that an advisor devotes a significant portion of their time to making the students’ experience at Penn State a rewarding one.
To become an advisor, the faculty or staff member must attend student leader and advisor training and complete the necessary forms in the office of student activities and student government association.

Requirements and Expectations

These requirements and expectations were developed to guide the advisor through process and enhance the effectiveness, quality of rapport and satisfaction of students and advisor.

Requirements

Advisor should attend regularly scheduled special meetings of their organizations.

Advisors should meet on regularly basis with the executive officers for the following purposes:

- To assist with the development of organizational programs.
- To discuss organizational goals and direction.
- To discuss the financial status, including the identification of problems and their potential solutions, and the identification of financial strengths and means of perpetuating them.
- To discuss internal organization difficulties—communication, delegation, etc and their resolutions.
- To be available to meet with officers and or members when they request help.
- To strongly encourage their organization to adhere to the policy and rules of the university and obeying laws of the Commonwealth and nation.
- To provide constructive criticism when deemed necessary and appropriately acknowledge organizational successes.
- To engage in general discussion of organizational matters but not to dominate conversation or be the focus of attention.

Expectations

- To attend official function of the organization.
- To know names of organization members.
- Be familiar with Penn State policies and rules for student organizations to assist with problem solving more effectively.
- Be aware of additional services offered on campus for students.
- Be aware of the commitment of time and effort to be a successful advisor and not accept the appointment unless prepared to fulfill the expectations.
- Show enthusiasm and interest in the student organization.
- Be receptive to feedback from the group.