#### How to Write a Constitution and By-laws

The constitution of an organization contains the fundamental principles that govern its operation. The by-laws establish the specific rules of guidance by which the group is to function, such as procedures for meetings, decision-making, officer selection, and financial transactions.

**Why have a constitution?**

By definition, an organization is a "body of persons organized for some specific purpose, such as a club, union or society.” The process of writing a constitution will serve to clarify your purpose, delineate your basic structure and provide the cornerstone for building an effective group. It will allow members and potential members to have a better understanding of what the organization is about and how it functions. If you keep in mind the value of having a written document that clearly describes the basic framework of your organization, the drafting of the constitution will be a much easier and more rewarding experience.

**How should go about writing a constitution?**

As mentioned previously, we encourage all new club and orgs to use our ***sample constitution*** when creating a constitution. This will ensure that the constitution includes all the requirements our office has for the constitution, while also adding in extra language that makes your club unique. You are more than welcome to create your own constitution from scratch, but it may require additional back and forth between the committee and you to include certain language. Remember, ***your club will not be formally approved until your constitution has all appropriate language.***

**Why have By-laws?**

The constitution covers the fundamental principles but does not prescribe specific procedures for operating your organization. Bylaws detail the procedures your group must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. They provide further definition to the articles of the constitution and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change.

**What could be included in the By-laws?**

Bylaws must not contradict provisions in the constitution. They generally contain information such as:

A. Dues (amount and collection procedures, any special fees, when payable)

B. Committees (standing, special, how formed, chairpersons, meetings, powers, duties)

C. Order of Business (standard agenda for conducting meetings)

D. Parliamentary Authority (provisions for rules of order, generally Roberts Rules of Order)

E. Other specific policies and procedures unique to your organization necessary for its operation

**Once we've got them - what do we do with them?**

Remember the reasons for having a constitution and bylaws: they articulate the purpose of your organization and spell out the procedures to be followed. Once you have developed your constitution and bylaws, review them **often**. The needs of your group will change over time and it's important that the constitution and bylaws are kept up to date to reflect the current state of affairs.

Make sure every new member of the organization has a copy. This will help to unify your members by informing them about the opportunities that exist for participation and the procedures they should follow to be an active, contributing member. A thorough study of the constitution and bylaws should be a part of officer training and transition. It is also a good idea to review the constitution and bylaws at the beginning of each year or semester. Constitutions usually require a 2/3 vote of the membership for adoption. Bylaws only require a simple majority for passage.