Quick Tips

CONSTITUTION VS. BYLAWS

What’s the Difference?

A CONSTITUTION

- Is concise
- Clarifies the group’s purpose
- Explains the fundamental purposes of the group
- Provides the basic framework for the group’s processes
- Provides historical perspective
- Is rarely revised

BYLAWS

- Outline specific procedures for the group’s functioning
- Help group conduct business in an orderly manner
- Provide further definition to the constitution
- Easily revised, and revised regularly as procedures change

Leader Hints

LEADER HINTS

Are available on the following topics:

- Conflict Resolution
- Constitution & Bylaws
- Delegation
- Difficult Member
- Event & Program Planning
- Fundraising
- Goal Setting
- Icebreakers
- Meetings & Minutes
- Motivation
- Officer Transition
- Recruiting New Members
- Retreats
- Stress Management
- Team Building
- Time Management

For further assistance with all aspects of student event planning, scheduling and organizing please seek an appointment with the Student Activities Staff or the appropriate ASUN Executive Officer.

For more information, call 784-6589

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University of New Mexico University of Nevada Reno
What Should be Covered in a Constitution?

Constitutions should be concise, yet contain the important framework of an organization. They should be between two and four pages in length, leaving the detailed procedures of a group’s daily functions to the bylaws. Below is an outline of the kinds of information that should be included in a constitution.

Article I – NAME
Include any affiliations with state or national groups.

Article II – PURPOSE
Define group’s objectives

Article III – MEMBERSHIP
Include any requirements such as GPA, or number of hours earned. Neither membership in, nor services provided by the organization will be denied to anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental handicap, age, sex, sexual preference, ancestry, or medical condition. This applies to all groups with the exception of those exempted in Title IX of the Educational Amendments 1972. Exempt groups may not discriminate on any basis other than gender. Examples of exempt organizations are national Fraternal Organizations. Organizations may establish additional membership and academic eligibility for their organization.

Article IV – OFFICERS
Include titles, duties of office, terms of office, how and when officers are elected, and voting procedures.

Article V – ADVISOR(S)
Include term, duties, and how and when advisor(s) are selected.

Article VI – MEETINGS
Frequency, special meetings, how the meetings are called, notification.

Article VII – QUORUM
The number of members required to conduct business. Usually stated as a fraction of the number of members, such as 3/4 or 2/3.

Article VIII – LEGISLATION
Procedures

Article IX – AMENDMENTS
Procedure: notice required, voting procedures

What Should be Covered in the Bylaws?

Bylaws are the daily working procedures of an organization. They contain the detailed processes of a group. They are usually easier to change, requiring only a simple majority, than the constitution which normally requires a 2/3 vote. Below is an outline of information that is normally covered in the bylaws.

A. MEMBERSHIP
Selection requirements, resignations, expulsion, rights and responsibilities.

B. DUES
Amount, how collected, special fees, when payable, and to whom.

C. EXECUTIVE BOARD
Structure, membership, powers, responsibilities.

D. RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICERS
Powers, responsibilities, specific job descriptions.

E. COMMITTEES
Standing, special, how formed, chairpersons, meetings, powers, responsibilities, how dissolved.

F. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADVISOR(S)

G. ELECTIONS
Include when, voter eligibility, winning vote margin, handling tie votes, procedures for filling unexpired or unfilled terms of offices, removal from office, and the appeal process.

H. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY
Authority used, such as Robert’s Rules of Order – Newly Revised.

I. AMENDMENTS
How to propose, notice required, voting procedures.

J. OTHER SPECIFIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES UNIQUE TO YOUR ORGANIZATION
Such as a national organization’s constitution, etc.