

## STARTING A GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION

### Definition of a Graduate Student Organization

A graduate student organization is a club or group comprised of graduate students across multiple SMU schools and colleges, organized and/or administered by graduate students, recognized by the University, and substantively involved in campus life/activities of the University.

### The Chartering Process

#### **Application—>Temporary Status—>Chartered Status**

1. Gather the documents required for Temporary Status, the first stage of the Chartering process:
  - a. List of officers with contact information
  - b. Membership roster with at least ten SMU student members
  - c. Name and contact information of your SMU faculty/staff advisor
  - d. Constitution – must contain a non-discrimination clause – and By-Laws
2. Submit a Registration for a New Graduate Student Organization
3. The Moody School Graduate Student Advisory Board will invite you to meet with the Board to discuss your application. Be prepared to talk about:
  - a. Your purpose – how is this organization different from existing organizations? How does your organization benefit the students and SMU?
  - b. Your membership – how many members do you have? How do you plan to recruit more?
  - c. Your structure – how often will you meet? How will you select officers?
4. The Board will vote on approval or denial of your application.
5. If approved, your organization now has Temporary status for one year. As a Temporary organization, you can request:
  - a. Meeting space in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center
  - b. Funding from the Graduate Student Organization Fund
  - c. A checking account from the Students' Association Comptroller
  - d. A page on Connect, which must be set up in order for you to access meeting spaces, funding, etc.

6. Your Temporary organization is responsible for following all policies and procedures for student organizations in the University Policy Manual.
7. At the end of your Temporary status, you will meet with the Graduate Student Advisory Board to ensure that your organization meets the requirements of Chartered status, which are:
  - a. Has held an event aimed at membership growth
  - b. Minimum of 12 SMU student members as listed on SMU Connect
  - c. Met any requirements mandated by the Moody School Graduate Student Advisory Board
  - d. Adherence to your Constitution and By-Laws
  - e. Remain a benefit to the University
8. Once again, the Board will vote on approval or denial of full Chartered status.
9. If approved, privileges of Chartered status include:
  - a. All privileges of Temporary status
  - b. May include “SMU” or “Southern Methodist University” as part of the name of the organization; you must follow the University policy on [Use of the University Name](#)
  - c. May request a semester budget from the Moody School

For help and support at any time during the Chartering process, contact Dr. Alan Itkin ([aitkin@smu.edu](mailto:aitkin@smu.edu)).

## Constitution and By-Laws

The Constitution of an organization contains its fundamental principles and purpose. It is a lasting document that should not be changed often. The By-Laws establish the specific rules about how the group functions, and can be updated more frequently to address changes in your organization.

### **Why have a Constitution?**

- Required for Chartered status
- Clarify your purpose
- Educate new and potential members about your organization

### **What should be covered in a Constitution?**

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|-------------|--|
| Article I   | The official name of the Organization                                      |
| Article II  | Affiliation with other groups (i.e. a national or regional governing body) |
| Article III | Purpose and main function  |
| Article IV  | Membership requirements and limitations                                    |

This is a good place to include the required nondiscrimination clause:

"[Organization name] does not discriminate during the membership/officer selection process based on: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Should the policies of our organization's parent affiliate deviate in any way, the aforementioned standards will take precedence."

Article V	Advisor selection and term of service
Article VI	Meetings
Article VII	Quorum (the number of members required to transact business)
Article VIII	Amendments (how to change or add to the Constitution)
Article IX	Ratification (requirements for approving the Constitution)

### **Why have By-Laws?**

To provide instruction on how to conduct business, like officer elections, filling vacancies, etc.

### **What should be covered in the By-Laws?**

- Membership: how are new members selected?
- Structure: who reports to whom? Do you have committees?
- Officers: what are their duties? How are they selected?
- Finances: what approval is needed to spend organization money?
- Amendments: how are the By-Laws changed?

Once chartered review your Constitution & By-Laws often, and upload the up-to-date version to Connect.