
STARTING AN ORGANIZATION 101

Definition of a Student Organization

A student organization is a club or group comprised primarily of students, organized and/or administered by students, recognized by the University, and substantively involved in campus life/activities of the University.

The Chartering Process

Are you ready to start a new organization? First, take a look at the [list of existing student organizations](#). You may find that there is a group doing just the sort of thing you want to do. If you're unsure about whether your proposed club is similar to an existing group, the Student Senate Organizations Committee Chair and Advisor can help you – contact them via involvement@smu.edu.

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 Organization](#)
3. The Organizations Committee Chair will invite you to meet with the Committee 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 Committee will make a recommendation to the Student Senate for approval or denial of your application. Student Senate will vote to uphold or overturn the Committee's recommendation.
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. Advertising in Hughes-Trigg Student Center and elsewhere on campus
 - c. Funding from the Senate Fund

- d. A checking account from the Students' Association Comptroller
 - e. You will also receive a page on [Connect](#)
- Your Temporary organization is responsible for following all policies and procedures for student organizations: [Student Senate By-Laws](#), [University Policy Manual](#), & [Student Involvement Procedures](#).
6. Halfway through your Temporary status, you will respond to a mid-year check-in with the Organizations Committee. This serves to offer support and ensure that your organization is on track to fulfill the final Chartered status requirements.
 7. At the end of your Temporary status, you will meet with the Organizations Committee 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. Has had one leadership transition
 - d. Met any requirements mandated by the Organizations Committee
 - e. Adherence to your Constitution and By-Laws
 - f. Remain a benefit to the University
 8. Once again, the Committee will make a recommendation to the Student Senate for approval or denial of full Chartered status. Student Senate will vote to uphold or overturn the Committee's recommendation.
 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
 - c. May request a semester budget from Student Senate
 - d. Will be assigned an affiliate Senator

For help and support at any time during the Chartering process, contact involvement@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 'X' 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? Do they need a minimum GPA? Will members pay dues?
- 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](#).