

*Making an Impact at UMBC*

**Starting A New Student Organization**  
**Updated February 2008**



SGA Offices are located in The Commons 2B20.



TRY SOMETHING NEW  
UMBC Office of Student Life

The Office of Student Life is located in The Commons Suite 336.

# Congratulations!

You've taken the first step toward making your college experience even more rewarding by taking the initiative to start something new on campus. Forming a student organization is one of many exciting ways to co-create a vibrant UMBC.

Undoubtedly, you're excited about the prospects of your new group, but possibly feeling a little unsure about how to make it all happen and be successful. The Office of Student Life and the Student Government Association are here to help you today and in the future so you can make your organization flourish. We encourage you to talk with Involvement Peers as your organization begins to coalesce for some helpful insights. Involvement Peers can be found in the Student Involvement Center located in The Commons, 2B24 each weekday from 10 a.m. until 5:00 pm. (x5-2867).

Are you ready to turn your interest into an officially recognized student organization? The information below outlines the steps for an organization to be recognized by the Office of Student Life and Student Government Association.



There are several things to consider before embarking on the recognition process:

- ◆ Is the need that will be addressed by your proposed organization already being filled by another student organization? If so, please consider joining the existing organization rather than starting a new one.
- ◆ Does the proposed organization have durability, i.e. is there a reasonable potential that the organization can attract new members on a yearly basis so that it can remain viable after the initial members graduate from UMBC? If not, you may want to find ways to pursue your interests that do not involve creating a new organization. Please stop by the Student Involvement Center to discuss your options.
- ◆ Is the membership willing to actively participate in the UMBC student organization community and develop programs and events that foster relationships with the entire UMBC campus and the surrounding community? If you really want to start a new organization and its members can make this commitment, then it is time to get started with the recognition process!

Organizations seeking to be recognized as part of the UMBC Greek community should contact Corin Gioia, Coordinator for Greek Life and Leadership at x5-3319. Organizations wishing to become a part of the Graduate Student Association should contact the GSA office, x5-2773.

The Process:

1. Prepare a preliminary constitution following the guidelines provided in the next section. You also may want to prepare bylaws (see below), but they are not required.
2. Submit to Office of Student Life, Attn: Sheryl Gibbs, Commons 336, the following application components:
  - A draft of the organization's constitution;
  - A *Student Organization Registration* form (copy attached);
  - A signed statement by a faculty/staff member on university letterhead agreeing to serve as an advisor that includes that individual's email address and telephone number.

3. Once the information is confirmed to be complete, the application for recognition will be forwarded to the Student Organizations Committee. If the information submitted is found to be incomplete, OSL staff will work with you to finish the application before forwarding.

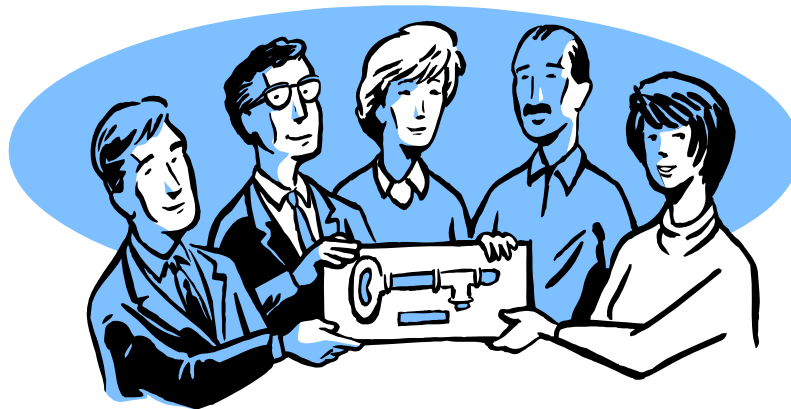
Organizations shall receive written notification acknowledging the receipt of all application materials and verifying the materials are complete.

4. The Student Organizations Committee will review the constitution and the application. It will then forward its recommendation regarding recognition to the Director of Student Life.

An organization seeking recognition may be requested to send a delegate to an informational hearing in order to provide the Student Organizations Committee with additional information about the organization.

5. Once the Director of Student Life makes the final determination, the student group shall be notified in writing and provided with a list of privileges and responsibilities. The group is required to complete student organization training with the SGA Treasurer. The SGA Treasurer will contact the new organization following recognition. Note that recognition may be revoked for failure to submit a registration form when required to do so, failure to maintain five undergraduate members and other violations.

\*\* Student groups whose applications for recognition are not approved by the Director of Student Life have the opportunity to appeal to the Vice President of Student Affairs.



# Creating a Constitution and Bylaws

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UMBC organizations are all governed by constitutions and bylaws that the members of the organization create and vote into effect. When a new organization is created at UMBC, its members will need to develop a constitution and then submit it as part of the recognition process.

## What is a Constitution? What are Bylaws?

The Constitution of an organization contains the fundamental principles that govern its operation. Bylaws set forth in detail the procedures the group must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. They provide further definitions to the Articles of the Constitution and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change.

## Why have these documents?

Besides being required for an organization to receive official recognition, the process of writing a constitution and bylaws serves to clarify an organization's purpose, delineate basic structures and prove the cornerstone for building an effective group. They also provide members and potential members a better understanding of what the organization is about and how it functions. Finally, the constitution allows future members to reflect back on the history of the organization and its founding principles.



## What elements should be in our Constitution?

Below is an outline of the minimum information to be included in your Constitution. The object is to draft a document that covers at least these topics in a simple, clear and concise manner and reflects your organization's unique character. You have tremendous flexibility with the content and layout of the constitution for your organization, except for the mandatory language concerning the jurisdiction of SGA and nondiscrimination.

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| Article I.   | The name and purpose (aims, functions of the organization)   |
| Article II.  | Scope - Mandatory  |
| Article III. | Nondiscrimination - Mandatory  |
| Article IV.  | Officers (title, terms of office, duties of office) and Elections (when, how, who votes, who oversees) |
| Article V.   | Amendments (means of proposal, notice required, voting requirements)                                   |

## What should be included in the Bylaws?

Bylaws should complement provisions stated in the Constitution. They generally contain specific information on the following topics:

- A. Membership (requirements, resignations, expulsion, rights and duties)
- B. Dues (amount and collection procedures, any special fees, when payable)  
SGA only allows organizations to pay national dues, unless the organization is recognized as a member of the UMBC Greek community.
- C. Duties of Officers (powers, responsibilities, specific job descriptions, procedures for filling unexpired terms of office, removal from office)

- D. Executive Board (structure, composition, powers)
- E. Committees (standing, special, how formed, chairpersons, meetings, powers, duties)
- F. Order of Business (standard agenda for conducting meetings)
- G. Parliamentary Authority (provisions for rules of order)
- H. Amendment Procedures (means of proposals, notice, required, voting requirements)
- I. Other specific policies and procedures unique to your organization necessary for its operation

The reasons for having a Constitution and Bylaws extend beyond just a university requirement. They articulate the purpose of the organization and spell out the procedures to be followed for its orderly function. Ample consideration should be given to the development of an organization's constitution and bylaws before beginning the recognition process.

Constitutions usually require a two-thirds vote of the membership for adoption. Bylaws only require a simple majority for passage. Remember, the needs of the group will change over time and it is important that the Constitution and Bylaws are updated to reflect the current state of affairs.

Make sure every new member of the organization has a copy of the organization's governing documents. This will help unify the membership 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.



# Sample Constitution for UMBC Student Organizations

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The following example of an organization Constitution is provided to help begin the process of developing the governing documents for your organization. This is only one possible approach you can use in creating your own Constitution. For examples from other UMBC organizations, please contact the Involvement Peers in the Student Involvement Center, Commons 2B24, x52867 or review the SGA Constitution online anytime.

## *Constitution of Sample Organization*

### **Article I- Name and Purpose**

*Sample Organization* has been established for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Article II- Scope (Mandatory Language)**

This organization is subject to the jurisdiction of the Student Government Association of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, as well as to the President of the University and his/her designee.

### **Article III- Membership and Nondiscrimination**

A UMBC student can become a member of this organization by \_\_\_\_\_ [Use this space to define how a student becomes a member of your organization. Maybe it's as simple as "attending any one of its meetings," or "completing the organization's membership form." Or maybe you require auditions? Or payment of dues? Or a peer selection process?].

Membership in this organization may not be denied because of race, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, disabled veteran or veteran status, national origin, or religion. [Note: SGA restricts funding to organizations that place any limitations on membership. In order to be eligible for SGA funding without restrictions, your organization must include this clause in its Constitution, be open to any UMBC student and not charge dues as a requirement for membership].

### **Article IV- Officers and Elections**

The officers of *Sample Organization* shall be the \_\_\_\_\_ [Officer Titles].

[Note: In order to receive UMBC recognition, an organization must have a chief executive officer who guides the organization's work and speaks for the organization in response to requests from SGA and UMBC staff. The title for the chief executive position could be President, Chair or some variation on those words. An organization may give more than one person the same title as the chief executive—for example, an organization may have "Co-Presidents"—but one of them must be designated as the official representative for the purpose of maintaining contact with SGA and UMBC's staff. In addition, every organization must have a Treasurer to manage its funds and ensure compliance with all financial policies and guidelines. The chief executive and the Treasurer may not be the same individual. Other than the required chief executive and Treasurer positions, your organization is free to decide what other officers, if any, you wish to designate].

The duties of the \_\_\_\_\_ [Chief executive officer's title] shall include \_\_\_\_\_ [must include serving as the organization's official representative for all purposes relating to communication with SGA and UMBC staff].  
The duties of the Treasurer shall include \_\_\_\_\_ [must include managing the organization's funds and ensuring compliance with all financial rules and guidelines].  
The duties of the \_\_\_\_\_ [Officer Title] shall include \_\_\_\_\_.  
The duties of the \_\_\_\_\_ [Officer Title] shall include \_\_\_\_\_.  
[Add explanations of the duties for any other officer positions . . .]

All officers shall be elected to a term of one year starting and ending on \_\_\_\_\_ [specific date].

Election of officers shall be between \_\_\_\_\_ [specific date] and \_\_\_\_\_ [specific date], or whenever vacancies occur. At least \_\_\_\_\_ [period of time, such as "one week"] notice shall be given before the election meeting. Nomination shall be initiated from the floor and elections done by a ballot. The person receiving \_\_\_\_\_ [votes required for election, such as "the largest number of votes," or "the majority of votes, after a runoff between the two top vote recipients if nobody has received a majority of votes on the initial ballot,"] from members present at the election meeting shall be elected.

Officers may be removed throughout the year by \_\_\_\_\_ [process by which officers can be removed].

#### **Article V- Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a \_\_\_\_ [proportion of votes required for adoption, such as "majority" or "2/3"] vote of members present during an organization meeting provided \_\_\_\_\_ [period of time, such as "one week"] notice is given. [must include the following sentence] All amendments must be approved in accordance with Student Government Association policy before becoming legally binding.

# *Constitution of Make UMBC Better*

## **Article I- Name and Purpose**

Make UMBC Better has been established for the purpose of making the UMBC experience more enjoyable for all UMBC undergraduates.

## **Article II- Scope (Mandatory Language)**

This organization is subject to the jurisdiction of the Student Government Association of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, as well as to the President of the University and his/her designee.

## **Article III- Membership and Nondiscrimination**

A UMBC student can become a member of this organization by attending any Make UMBC Better meeting.

Membership in this organization may not be denied because of race, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, disabled veteran or veteran status, national origin, or religion.

## **Article IV- Officers and Elections**

The officers of Make UMBC Better shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Chief Judge.

The duties of the President shall include presiding at all meetings, coordinating the work of the other officers, and serving as the official Make UMBC Better representative for all purposes relating to communication with SGA and UMBC staff.

The duties of the Treasurer shall include managing Make UMBC Better's funds, ensuring compliance with all financial rules and guidelines, and organizing fundraisers.

The duties of the Vice President shall include assisting the President and presiding at meetings in the President's absence.

The duties of the Secretary shall include maintaining a list of all Make UMBC Better members and taking minutes at all meetings.

The duties of the Chief Judge shall be to issue opinions about whether UMBC is getting better as a result of the organization's efforts.

All officers shall be elected to a term of one year starting and ending on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Election of officers shall be between April 1st and April 15th, or whenever vacancies occur. At least one week's notice shall be given before the election meeting. Nomination shall be initiated from the floor and elections done by a ballot. The person receiving the most votes from members present at the election meeting shall be elected.

Officers may be removed throughout the year by unanimous consent of the other officers or a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote of members present at a Make UMBC Better meeting.

## **Article V- Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members present during an organization meeting provided one week's notice is given. All amendments must be approved in accordance with Student Government Association policy before becoming legally binding.