How to draft a constitution

**Article I:** Name of the Organization.
List the organization’s full, legal name.

**Article II:** Purpose of the Organization.
A concise statement which tells briefly what the organization proposes doing.

**Article III:** Membership.
Such information can include:
- Attendance requirements
- Qualifications for membership
- Classes of members, such as active and inactive
- Fees and dues

**Article IV:** Officers.
This section should outline:
- Number of officers in the organization
- Officer titles and duties
- How officers are elected

**Article V:** Order of Business.
State the typical agenda for meetings.

**Article VI:** Committees.
Describe the committees that the organization is likely to require.

**Article VII:** Amendment of Bylaws.
A provision to make the organization’s constitution a fluid document.

This is only to serve as a model, as certain articles may not apply to your organization. If you have any questions, please email the Student Government Association at sga@colgate.edu, call X 6848, or stop by the SGA office in the Coop.

Our mission is to support, challenge, and inspire Colgate students to become responsible, thoughtful, and engaged citizens.

This brochure is part of a series that is an integral component of our endeavor to fulfill our mission. We hope that these are helpful to you. If you have suggestions for additional subjects please let us know.

“Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome.” - Arthur Ashe

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Colgate University
Starting a New Organization

One of the things that make Colgate University unique is that there is literally something here for everyone. Anyone can start an organization with relative ease, and this is definitely reflected in the current list of student organizations. There are groups that reflect nearly every type of personal and political belief. There are also organizations that appeal to interests, from the relatively common to things you would only find here at Colgate. All you need is an interest in getting something started and a willingness to make it happen.

What should I do to start an organization?

Research the existing student organizations. These can change every semester, so request an updated list of groups from the Student Government Association Liaison or from the Center for Leadership & Student Involvement (CLSI). This list will contain all Student Government Association–recognized groups that are active. If you are curious about groups that were once active and are no longer so, the liaison or Center can get you that information as well.

Researching other groups can help prevent potential roadblocks to your own group. If there is a group that has a purpose similar to the one you want to create, you may want to rethink your plan. Ask yourself the following questions: Will the membership overlap, causing low membership in both groups? Will Senate want to fund two separate groups that have almost identical purposes? Will group projects overlap so much that you will be duplicating each others’ work?

Take some time, also, to ask around campus and see if anyone is interested in your idea. If there isn’t very much interest, you may want to rethink your plans.

Think about the following questions so you can answer them when prospective members or Student Senators ask you.

Purpose:
- How are you going to define your organization?
- What are your proposed goals?
- What are you hoping to accomplish?
- How does it fit in on campus?
- What role do you want to play?
- Is there a department you can or will be affiliated with?

Membership:
- How are you going to identify potential members?
- How are you going to convince them to join?
- What will this group have to offer? Can they find this elsewhere?
- What kind of commitment will they have to make?
- What makes this group unique?

Structure:
- Will this be a formal, on-going group, or are you forming to work on a particular, one-time issue and/or activity?
- Will there be positions? What will they be? How will they be selected and for how long will the person be in that role?
- How often will you meet? When and where?

Basis for the Approval of Student Organizations

Constitution
Each student organization must write a constitution in the manner set by SGA. The mission of the organization must be clear in the constitution. The constitution must be accompanied by a petition signed by 30 students who are interested in seeing this organization gain SGA recognition.

Purpose
The organization must be beneficial and necessary to the enrichment of the Colgate community, and it must fill a unique niche. The organization must be open to anyone who wishes to participate, and its activities and funding needs must be eligible for funding from the BAC.

Communication
There must be a liaison from the organization present at the Legislative Affairs Committee to answer questions. The mission of the organization must be clear in conversation with the organization’s liaison. The organization must be willing and able to participate in events that are mandatory for SGA-recognized groups.

Student Senate Approval
Each organization must be approved by a majority vote in the Student Senate. The Student Senate should consider the approval of new organizations in at least one Senate meeting per month, with specific dates established in the Senate and published in a calendar at the beginning of each academic semester.