How to Start a Student Organization

What you need to know to get your organization passed through SGA
NEW ORGANIZATION TIMELINE

New clubs and organizations start every year at Fairleigh Dickinson University. The process is relatively simple and involves first gaining recognition from the Office of Student Life and then the Student Government Association:

1. Interested student(s) meet with the Director of Student Life or a representative of the Office of Student Life to discuss the organization.
2. These students will pick up a packet including all forms and information that needs to be completed for the new organization to be accepted within the Office of Student Life.
3. Interested students will submit, via email, to the Director of Student Life, a list of at least ten current FDU students interested in starting the club/organization and proposed constitution.
   3.1. This list must comprise of names, contact information, and ID numbers.
   3.2. Students will also submit via email a copy of their completed constitution, that follows the example constitution included in their introductory packet, including goals, mission statement, and purpose of the club, i.e. the need that is met by the creation of this club on the FDU campus.
   3.3. The Director of Student Life will review and request revisions as needed.
4. Director of Student Life verifies student eligibility and requests revisions as needed.
   4.1. Must be a currently enrolled FDU student.
   4.2. GPA requirement of 2.0 for all new members.
   4.3. GPA requirement of 2.5 for all students who wish to be officers in the new club/organization.
5. After the four preceding steps are completed, the Director of Student Life will forward the constitution to the SGA Parliamentarian who will review the constitution. Once any amendments have been made, the organization seeking SGA recognition will be placed on the SGA agenda.
   5.1. The SGA approval process requires two SGA meetings.
      5.1.1. The first meeting is a presentation of the clubs mission, purpose, and goals in New Business. It is an opportunity for the SGA to ask questions regarding the overall proposed new club.
      5.1.2. In the second meeting the proposed club is moved into Old Business and voted upon as a whole by the Student Government Association.
CONSTITUTION WRITING GUIDELINES

A constitution is a semi-permanent governing document that must explain the structure and operation of a student organization. It should contain enough detail to provide for the perpetuity of an organization whose membership will be in flux from year to year, yet maintain the ability to change if the need arises. Student organizations recognized by the University are fully subject to all policies imposed by the University of Missouri System and the University of Missouri – Kansas City. In light of several recent changes, this document has been created as a rough-and-ready guide to bring all new and existing student organizations into compliance. The guidelines below explicitly explain the elements that must be included in all constitutions. A sample constitution is provided at the end.

Mandatory Statements

All constitutions must have the exact wording for each of the statements below, unless otherwise stated:

1) “Membership shall be open to all duly enrolled FDU students. Membership and activities are open to all currently enrolled students regardless of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, or Vietnam era veteran’s status.”

An exception for restricted membership may be granted to Greek, professional, and honorary societies only if the following three conditions are met: (1) It is in the interest of the organization to restrict membership to individuals with higher GPAs, other academic or merit-based credentials, or area of study in a particular field; (2) All such restrictions are mandated by the national level of an organization, or appeal is made to the Constitution Committee; and (3) Membership is only restricted by criteria other than those listed above. If an organization has a restricted membership, the constitution must contain the following statement (to replace the one above): “Membership decisions shall not be made on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, or Vietnam era veteran’s status.” Greek organizations may omit “sex” from the preceding statement.

2) “Officers of this organization must be chosen in an election format open to all current members. Every effort will be made to notify all members of said election and, further, to reasonably accommodate the needs of all members desiring to participate.”

3) “Officers must meet minimum eligibility requirements, including a cumulative GPA of 2.5 and six credit hours of current enrollment, and must not be on student conduct disciplinary or honor code probation. The requirement to be enrolled in six credit hours will be waived for Doctoral students who have completed their formal degree course work, have passed their comprehensive or matriculation examination, and are continuously enrolled in at least one hour of research in the Fall and Winter semesters.”
4) In constitutions defining SGA Executive Officers, SGA Senators, Academic Council or Governing Council Executive Officers, the following statement must be included: “Potential candidates must have accumulated 12 hours of credit at FDU before filing for office.”

5) Constitutions must have one of the following statements: EITHER “A qualified FDU faculty or staff member must be selected by the membership as an advisor.” OR “The advisor for this organization shall be decided upon by the executive officers of the organization. The advisor must be a FDU faculty or staff member.”

6) “Paying dues is not a mandatory requirement to be considered a member of this organization.”

An organization that is required by a national, state, or other regional chapter (above the campus level) to collect dues does not need to include the above statement in its constitution. However, mandatory dues may not be assessed for the campus level. Organizations that do assess non-mandatory campus-level dues may have different levels of membership for students that do and do not pay dues.

7) “The books of account shall be kept up-to-date and open to the inspection of the University auditor.”

8) “Hazing is strictly prohibited”

9) “It is further understood that if this organization desires at any time in the future to change in any way the provisions of this constitution, that before such action is taken, the organization will submit for approval to the Student Government Association and the Student Life Office every detail of the desired changes to be made.”

The sample constitution that follows can be used as a template for organizational constitutions. Brackets, […], contain information that must be inserted by the author. Writing in parentheses, (...), that appears in this sample is used for explanation and clarification; it should not be inserted in organizational constitutions. All writing not in brackets or parentheses can be copied directly. Refer to the “Guidelines” above to determine the minimum elements that must be included. Inclusion of all articles in the sample below, and possibly additional articles, is recommended.
SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

Constitution of the [name of organization] Month and Year

Article I.

Name. The name of this organization shall be [name of organization] of Fairleigh Dickinson University, hereafter referred to as [shortened name or abbreviation, if desired].

Article II.

Purpose/Preamble. The purpose of the organization shall be .... [list purpose]

Article III.

Membership. Membership shall be open to all duly enrolled FDU students. Membership and activities are open to all currently enrolled students regardless of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, or Vietnam era veteran’s status.

(Note: Under Title IX, Greek letter organizations may remain single sex. Organizations falling under specific academic units may restrict membership to students enrolled in their unit, major, etc. Other exceptions may apply. For full details, see the text of the “Guidelines” above.)

Article IV.

Meetings. Meetings will be held .... [Describe frequency of the meetings] Article V.

Committees. [Describe functions of committees if applicable] Article VI.

Officers. The officers of this organization shall consist of [list office titles]

Officers of this organization must be chosen in an election format open to all current members. Every effort will be made to notify all members of said election and, further, to reasonably accommodate the needs of all members desiring to participate.

Elections shall occur [insert time of year]. All positions will be held for a term [specify length of term], by a [2/3, 1⁄2, majority, etc...] vote of the membership. [Duties should be listed in the By-Laws.]

Officers must meet minimum eligibility requirements, including a cumulative GPA of 2.5 and six credit hours of current enrollment, and must not be on student conduct disciplinary or honor code probation. The requirement to be enrolled in six credit hours will be waived for Doctoral students who have completed their formal degree course work, have passed their comprehensive or matriculation examination, and are continuously enrolled in at least one hour of research in the Fall and Winter semesters.
Article VII.
**Advisor.** A qualified FDU faculty or staff member must be selected by the membership as an advisor.
(Note: An alternative to the above statement is explained in the “Guidelines”.

Article VIII.
**Finances.** [Provisions for dues, fines, initiation fees, etc.] Paying dues is not a mandatory requirement to be considered a member of this organization.
(Note: Organizations are permitted to collect dues for a national chapter, in which case they are exempted from the above statement. For full details, see the text of the “Guidelines” above.)
The books of account shall be kept up-to-date and open to the inspection of the University auditor.

Article IX.
**Anti-Hazing.** Hazing is strictly prohibited

Article X.
**Amendments.** [Specify procedure for amending the constitution.] It is further understood that if this organization desires at any time in the future to change in any way the provisions of this constitution, that before such action is taken, the organization will submit for approval to the Student Government Association and the Student Life Office every detail of the desired changes to be made.

Article XI.
**By-laws.** [By-laws should specify more details, such as specific duties of the officers, actual meetings, actual fees, and how the bylaws are enacted.]
OFFICER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A student of the University may participate in any co-curricular activity offered by the University. For the purposes of co-curricular participation, "good standing" is defined below. Individual student organizations (e.g., Student Government Association) or any state, regional or national organization to which a student organization belongs (e.g., a national social fraternity) may impose special eligibility requirements which would be binding on student participants and/or organizations.*

(1) **Undergraduates:** For officers of social groups and special interest groups, the basic requirement is current enrollment for credit at FDU and maintenance of a 2.50 GPA minimum (cumulative) and that they not be on any academic disciplinary or honor code probation.

(2) For Student Government Association officers and representatives, the requirements are, in addition to the above, that they have accumulated 12 hours of credit at FDU before filing for office, be currently enrolled for credit at UMKC; and maintain a 2.50 GPA minimum (cumulative) both before filing and during their terms of office.

(3) **Graduate and Professional students:** For officers of social and special interest groups, the basic requirement is current enrollment for credit at FDU and good academic standing in their respective schools both before filing for and during their terms of office and that they not be on any academic disciplinary or honor code probation.

(4) For Student Government Association officers and representatives, the requirements are, in addition to the above, that they must have accumulated one full semester’s credit (as defined by their respective schools) before filing for office, be currently enrolled for credit at FDU and in good academic standing in their respective schools both before filing for and during their terms of office.

(5) * These requirements must be in accord with equal opportunity guidelines and nondiscriminatory with respect to race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability or Vietnam era veterans’ status (unless exempted by law).
ADVISOR SELECTION

In the interest of our student organizations we require all recognized student organizations to have an active advisor.

Once an advisor is chosen, their name, address and contact number should be turned into the Student Life Office with the organization’s officer listing form.

An advisor must be a full time employee or graduate assistant of Fairleigh Dickinson University at the Metropolitan Campus, exceptions at the discretion of the Director of Student Life.

The advisor must sign the Fairleigh Dickinson University Metropolitan Campus Advisor Information Form and attend one meeting per semester held for advisors by the Office of Student Life.

1. Advisors should be fully acquainted with the manual that follows and understand all policies and procedures used by the Office of Student Life.

2. Advisors are required to attend the various functions of their student organization held after normal business hours. The advisor’s signature on the room reservation form is a commitment to attend the event. Advisors should arrive at least one-half hour before the event and must remain until the dissipation of the crowd.

3. In the case of an emergency at such an event, the advisor should exercise his/her best judgment and work closely with the Department of Public Safety.

4. Advisors are required to sign off on all check requests and facility reservation requests.

Responsibilities of Student Organization Advisors

1. In assuming the role of student organization advisor, it is inherent that the advisor has accepted and agreed to fulfill these responsibilities in the manner listed below.

2. Take an active role in advising the student organization.

3. Know the general purpose of the organization and be familiar with all provisions outlined in the organization’s constitution and by-laws.

4. Meet with the organization president on a regular basis (at least twice each month is recommended as the minimum requirement).

5. Remain informed of all activities sponsored by and conducted by the student organization.

6. Establish with the student organization president the manner and frequency in which the advisor will participate in the organization’s activities; i.e., programs, social events, rush and pledging activities, and meetings.

7. Know the officers of the organizations.

8. Know the number of current members of the organization.

9. Know the organization’s process for obtaining new members.
10. Be knowledgeable of the extent of any insurance coverage that is carried by the student organization either locally or nationally.

11. Offer guidance to the organization on goal setting, organization management, program planning, problem solving, and group evaluation.

12. To be knowledgeable of and adhere to University policies and procedures which pertain to student organizations, and to inform the student organization president of his/her responsibility to do the same.

13. Be knowledgeable of policies and procedures listed in the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct (as listed in the Student Handbook).

14. Review with the student organization president the policies and procedures listed in the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (as listed in the Student Handbook).

15. Refer questions concerning the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct to the appropriate department and where the case is not clearly discernible, to the Director of Student Life or the Dean of Students.

16. Report immediately to the Director of Student Life any activities that may or will violate University policies.

17. Review and adhere to the policies in the Student Organization Handbook.
ORGANIZATION PRIVILEGES

The right to hold meetings and social events in available University facilities, particularly the rooms of the University Center.

(1) The use of University services, where applicable.

(2) The use of the University name or logo, pending approval from University Communications in connection with publicity, except where specifically prohibited.

(3) The right to request funds from the Student Government Association

(4) The right to participate in all SGA and campus sponsored events.

(5) The use of a mailbox (when available) in the Student Life Office

ORGANIZATION PRIORITIES

To conduct itself in such a way that the University can support the organization.

(1) To maintain an active, student-centered program.

(2) To file with the Student Life Office at the beginning of each academic year the names and up-to-date addresses and phone numbers of the officers for the coming year and a membership roster. The Student Life Office should be notified of any changes that may occur during the year.

(3) Each officer must be in good academic standing in order to hold office. (See officer eligibility requirements, page 9)

(4) To adhere to all rules, policies and standards of the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

(5) To check with the appropriate advisor in the Student Life Office to insure the eligibility of candidates for membership, of candidates for holding offices and of candidates for representing the group or the University in performances of any kind.

(6) To select its officers according to current University standards.

(7) To keep accurate financial records. Each organization shall anticipate, provide for and promptly meet their financial obligations in a manner that is fair and equitable to its past, present and future members. Recognition of an organization does not in any way imply that the University has any financial responsibility or liability for any of the organizations' acts or obligations.

(8) To attend workshops and training sessions offered by the Student Life Office that acquaint officers not only with University procedures, but also assist them in becoming good leaders of their organizations.

(9) Use of the University name and/or logo shall be limited to recognized student organizations. It shall be used only for identification and must not be used to imply a position of the University.
CONTINUED RECOGNITION

(1) Annually before November 1, the Student Government Association and the Student Life Office shall review the status of all organizations to determine whether they meet eligibility requirements specified in this document and are actively conducting their affairs in accordance with University regulations and administrative rules.

(2) If the Student Government Association and the Student Life Office determine that an organization is ineligible for recognition or is inactive, the organization and advisor (if available) shall be notified in writing of each deficiency and a copy of this correspondence shall be provided on file at the Student Life Office. The organization shall remain unrecognized or inactive until the proper steps are taken to reactivate the organization under the guidelines outlined in this publication.

CONSTITUTION UPDATE

All student organizations need to check and update their constitution for any changes made throughout the previous year. This includes, but is not limited to, student organization’s name, purpose statement, by-laws, etc. The SGA Senate will make the decision to accept the updated constitution.

REVIVING A STUDENT ORGANIZATION

If you are interested in reviving an inactive student organization, please visit the Student Life Office (G-6 University Center) to review the student organization’s constitution and complete an Officers Listing Form. If changes need to be made to the constitution, the Student Life Office staff will be able to assist you.

OFFICER LISTING FORM

All student organizations need to update the officer listing form each semester or whenever there is a change of officers.
STUDENT ORGANIZATION EXECUTIVE ROLES
The following information is supplied as a guideline for executive positions. Keep in mind that the goals of the club may dictate other responsibilities. Officers do not run the club; they coordinate and implement the goals and ideas of the club. It is the responsibility of the officers to:

• See that business is conducted in an orderly, efficient and proper manner;
• See that the club operates according to its constitution;
• Provide good role modeling and show appropriate leadership behavior to other members and to the college community;
• Be enthusiastic, to follow through, to promote a friendly and harmonious environment for the group to function within, and to work within the policies of Fairleigh Dickinson University in providing quality standards;
• Balance your time as a student scholar and as a student leader.

To Be an Effective President:
• Be prepared to take over the presidential responsibilities at any time;
• Be prepared to assist the president in any way;
• Be prepared to take on any specific duty that is requested of you, i.e. represent the club on committees;
• Model appropriate behavior and be aware of your limitations;
• Call issues to the attention of the President.

To Be an Effective Vice President:
• Be prepared to take over the presidential responsibilities at any time;
• Be prepared to assist the president in any way;
• Be prepared to take on any specific duty that is requested of you, i.e. represent the club on committees;
• Model appropriate behavior and be aware of your limitations;
• Call issues to the attention of the President.

To Be an Effective Treasurer:
• Maintain accurate records of monies received, paid or owed;
• Understand and accept responsibility related to student funds;
• Maintain a good relationship with the Student Comptroller and follow all procedures for requesting payment;
• Prepare a budget and make sure that the club or organization keeps within budgetary
guide-lines;
• Keep records that can be easily obtained and understood;
• Give a treasurer's report at each meeting or upon re-quest

To Be an Effective Secretary:
• Be knowledgeable of office procedures;
• Keep an updated membership roster;
• Be responsible for all correspondence;
• Maintain all files for future use.
• Maintain minutes at each meeting, and pro-vide copies of these to all members of the
  club. Minutes should reflect date, time, and place of the meetings, agenda top-ics, all
  motions and votes, new business, and adjournment time.
RECOGNITION OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The University recognizes that learning is also accomplished beyond the formality of the classroom in organized academic activities and that much of this learning takes place through the activities of student organizations. Hence, the University encourages students to organize and participate in group activities intended to broaden the scope of general learning, extend knowledge of specialized areas or to serve their professional, cultural, social or recreational interests, consistent with the educational goals and purposes of the University.

Student groups and/or organizations at FDU are subject to the rules and regulations of the University set forth by the Board of Trustees. The following guidelines have been established within which the Student Life Office, by direction of the Director, will approve for recognition and periodically review all student organizations:

Recognition for student organizations requires that:

1. Members must be currently enrolled students of the University or current University employees. Elected officers must be current students in good standing.

2. The organization demonstrates evidence of support within the University community by submitting a petition signed by ten (10) or more students.

3. The organization presents a statement of purpose that is consistent with the philosophy of the University (as stated in the official FDU catalog).

4. The organization must keep an updated officer listing with current students, addresses and phone numbers on file with the Student Life Office each semester (changes or no changes).

5. The organization must keep an updated constitution on file (hard & electronic copy) with the Student Life Office.

6. The organization must have an on campus advisor.

7. The membership requirements of the organization are not to be discriminatory on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability or Vietnam era veterans’ status (unless exempted by law.)

8. The organization and its members abide by Federal, State and local laws and ordinances, by all University policies and procedures, and by the organization’s constitution and by-laws.