How to Start a New Student Organization

We’re excited that you are considering adding a student organization to our growing list! Use this document as a guide to get your proposed group chartered!

What you need to start:
• 10 or more full-time USM students (that’s you + 9 others)
• A full-time USM faculty or staff member to serve as the advisor
• A unique idea that doesn’t duplicate a current student organization (visit our website for descriptions of the current organizations)

STEPS AND PROCEDURES

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

Submit the following forms and their respective attachments:

A. New Student Organization Application. This includes the names, email addresses and USM ID numbers of founding officers and members, a description of the purpose of your group and the documents listed below.
   a. Constitution. Use the sample constitution on our website as a guide and the tips below to write your constitution. Upload the final copy as a Word document into the application.
   b. Letter of support from the founding advisor. This letter needs to be on an official letterhead.
   c. Letter of support from department chair. This is only required if your group is affiliated with a departed in one of the academic colleges (Arts & Letters, Business, Education & Psychology, Health, Nursing, and Science & Technology).

B. Organization Information Form. This includes contact information for current officers, advisor, and a roster with the names and USM ID numbers for all members.

WRITING YOUR CONSTITUTION

• The name of the University can be used in the name of your group but only at the end. For example, New Student Organization at Southern Miss/USM.
• Use the sample we provide. Read through the entire document when inserting your organization’s specific information and remove anything that doesn’t pertain to your organization.
• You MUST have a non-discrimination clause in your constitution to be chartered as an organization on campus. Use the one in the sample (Religious exemptions can apply, ask for clarification.)
• Keep specific names out of the constitution and other permanent listing; i.e. do not list the advisor or officers by name. Instead list their position title. Avoid using he/she in position descriptions as the gender of the person holding each position will change.
• When identifying the number of members needed to be present for voting, we recommend using a quorum. A quorum is the minimum number of members of an organization that must be present to make the proceedings of that meeting valid. We recommend making your quorum 50% of member attendance.
• We recommend holding elections for leadership positions during the end of the spring semester or start of the fall semester, and thus stating that specification in your constitution.
• Keep exact dollar amount for dues out of your constitution, instead state in the constitution that your organization will vote on the dues amount each year.
Once you have submitted your application, we will review it to ensure all the required documents are present. We will contact the president and advisor of your group to let them know:

a. All documents have been reviewed and approved by LSI OR
b. All requirements have not been met (documents are missing, constitution changes are needed, group duplicates an existing group, etc.)

Once LSI grants approval of the application and all documents, we will contact you regarding the next step.

NEW STUDENT ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE MEETING

The Secretary for the Committee for New Student Organizations will contact you to schedule a time to meet with the Committee. The Committee meets during the fall and spring semesters only, on the last Wednesday of each month from 3:30pm – 4:30pm. (That is the last Wednesday of August, September, October, November, January, February, March, and April). The Committee will meet with a maximum of four groups per meeting and schedules appointments based on the order in which proposed groups complete all requirements.

The Committee Secretary will provide you with a list of questions to answer at this meeting. Additionally, there are documents that need to be signed if the group gains approval from the Committee, so we ask that the President and Advisor of the organization attend the meeting. However, any officer can attend in place of and with the President.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION ORIENTATION

We require that every student organization attend one orientation session each year. During these sessions, we go over the policies for student organizations, including event policies and procedures, resources available to organizations, and safety and risk management. We require that the President and one other officer of each organization attend a session. We will not approve any event requests until you have attended an orientation session.

Orientation sessions occur during the fall and spring semesters on the dates listed on our website. If you are unable to attend any of the listed sessions, or you missed all the opportunities, stop by our office to schedule a one-on-one appointment.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Once you receive approval from LSI, the Committee for New Student Organizations, and attend an orientation, you’re all set! We will add your group to our website and you will have all the benefits of being a chartered student organization at Southern Miss!

If you need to reserve a meeting room or tabling spot on campus for recruitment purposes and/or to work on your constitution, you may fill out an Event Request form. Be sure to indicate the purpose of your request on the form.

If you have any questions or need assistance at any point during the process, please contact us!

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