



# How to Start a New Organization Handbook



*Get Involved!*

2018-2019

**RADFORD**  
UNIVERSITY

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## INTRODUCTION

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Getting involved in a student organization is a great way to enhance your college experience. Being involved can allow you to gain new skills, help you make new friends, build your resume, and give you memories to last a lifetime.

If you have an idea for an organization that is not already available on campus, this handbook will guide you through the steps you need to take to start a new student organization or reactivate an old one.

**Please note:** In order to be registered, all student organizations at Radford University must be *student-initiated* and *student-run*. Faculty/staff involvement in an advising capacity is encouraged and each organization is required to have a faculty/staff advisor, but Student Involvement supports the learning opportunities inherent in student-led initiatives.

## CRITERIA FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATION REGISTRATION

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Students seeking to establish a new organization should make sure the proposed student organization does not already exist on campus. New organizations must fulfill a need or niche not met by currently existing organizations.

To become registered, new and reactivating organizations must follow all the steps in this handbook.

An organization is not considered official until:

1. Registration has been approved by the Committee on Clubs and Organizations (COCO)
2. Student leaders have completed the new organization's profile on RUInvolved.

Registration does not imply Radford University's endorsement of the positions and views of any student organization. Rather, it implies that the organization has complied with institutional registration and continuing registration procedures.

Organizations must be student-initiated and student-run. Organizations created by faculty, staff, or community members do not fulfill the mission and learning objectives of Student Involvement and those organizations will not be registered.

# A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STEPS TO START A NEW ORGANIZATION

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1. **Submit an interest form.** Check on RUInvolved or with SOAR to be sure a similar organization does not already exist on campus, and then submit an interest form on RUInvolved.
2. **Recruit** at least four other currently-enrolled Radford University students to be members of the organization.
3. **Secure an advisor** for the organization. The advisor must be someone who works as full-time or adjunct faculty/staff at Radford University, not a sub-contracted entity (such as the bookstore or a food service vendor).
4. **Write a constitution** for the organization. There are helpful guidelines and an easy-to-follow sample constitution on the pages that follow.
5. **Submit a final application on RUInvolved and make a presentation to the Committee on Clubs and Organizations (COCO).** The final application must include a finalized constitution, contact information for the advisor, a list of names and email addresses of all founding members of the organization (there must be at least four), and all questions on the application must be answered. After your application materials have been reviewed, you will be invited to give a presentation about your organization at a COCO meeting.

## STEP ONE: DO SOME RESEARCH THEN SUBMIT INTEREST FORM ON RUINVOLVED

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The first step in starting a new organization is making sure a similar organization does not already exist on campus. Check RUInvolved or stop by SOAR (Student Organization Assistance & Resources, room 237 in the Bonnie) to find out if a similar group already exists. All new organizations must be unique and fill a need not currently met by another organization on campus.

**Important: In determining a name for your new organization, due to legal and trademark reasons, student organizations may only use the name “Radford University” after the name of the organization, not before.** For example, naming your new organization “The XYZ Club at Radford University” is acceptable; “Radford University XYZ Club,” “RU XYZ Club,” and “Radford U XYZ Club” are not.

After you have decided on a name for your new organization, complete the [2018-2019 New Student Organization Interest Form](#)- Form on RUInvolved. For the form, you will need basic information including the name of the organization, a brief description of it, and your name and contact information.

To reactivate a dormant but previously registered organization, you will follow a similar procedure, but before you start the process, contact SOAR, at [ruinvolved@radford.edu](mailto:ruinvolved@radford.edu).

## STEP TWO: HOLD INTEREST MEETINGS AND RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS

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After your *New Student Organizations Interest Form* has been reviewed, you will receive an email confirmation. This email will count as your authorization to schedule interest meetings and information tables in the student center lobby to promote your organization and recruit new members. The email will contain instructions on how to make reservations for meetings and table times. You will be allowed to host three interest meetings and have one interest table at three different times.

After you have reserved rooms, go to SOAR (Student Organization Assistance & Resources) in room 237 of the Bonnie to make flyers promoting your meetings to post on bulletin boards on campus. There is no charge to make flyers for organizations that have completed the New Student Organizations Interest Form.

Be sure to include this information on your flyers:

- The name of the organization
- The purpose of the organization
- Time and place of interest meetings
- A phone number and/or email address interested students may contact for more information about your organization

People who attend the meetings will want to hear why the new group is forming and learn about its mission and how they can become part of it. It may be helpful to have an information sheet you can distribute during the interest meetings and at information tables in the Bonnie.

Some suggestions for interest meetings:

- Hold the meetings at a variety of times to accommodate other students' class schedules.
- Keep the meetings short – no more than 30 minutes to an hour.
- Allow time for students attending to get to know each other.
- The meeting must be led by a student or students, not faculty/staff.
- Allow time for questions and suggestions from the audience.
- Provide information, in writing, to those attending on how to become involved, when the next interest meeting is to be held, and whom to contact for questions. You can go to SOAR to make these handouts free of charge.
- Be sure to collect the names and contact information of students who are interested in joining the organization.

**Important: You will be required to submit a list of the names and email addresses of at least four currently-enrolled Radford University students who are committed to being members of the organization in order to complete the organization registration process.**

## **STEP THREE: SECURE AN ADVISOR FOR THE ORGANIZATION**

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Every registered student organization is required to have an active on-campus advisor who is a full-time or adjunct faculty/staff member at Radford University, not a sub-contracted entity (such as the bookstore or a food service vendor). Advising a student organization can be challenging, rewarding, and provide lifelong lessons for both advisors and organization members. Keep in mind that at Radford, student organizations should be student-initiated and student-led; advisors should serve in

an advising capacity for the organization, but students should drive the operation and direction of the organization.

The following represent duties for which an organization advisor might be responsible:

- Attend as many organization meetings and events as schedules allow (please note: advisor attendance is required at organization events funded by CPC).
- Meet regularly with the organization's president and executive board
- Ensure the organization registers each year and follows all steps to remain registered.
- Encourage and motivate members of the organization.
- Review funding requests for accuracy.
- Keep the executive board informed on institutional matters.
- Audit finances with the organization's treasurer.
- Attend trips to conferences, business meetings, etc., and advise student delegations during these events.
- Provide developmental activities to the executive board to assist in developing group cohesiveness.
- Assist the organization with election concerns.
- Provide a background history and insight to the organization over time.
- Hold goal-setting meetings with the executive board.
- Mediate conflicts within the organization.
- Assist with risk management decisions.

For more information, SOAR (Student Organization Assistance and Resources) offers a Leadership Library featuring books, CDs, and other supplies to assist advisors and student leaders in learning about organizational behavior, leadership and management styles, and guides for maximizing the potential of student organizations and their members. These resources may be checked out from the Leadership Library in SOAR (Bonnie 237) at no charge to members of registered student organizations.

## **STEP FOUR: WRITE A CONSTITUTION FOR THE ORGANIZATION**

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A constitution gives a group purpose, direction, and guidance, as well as a strong foundation to help the organization survive the tests of time, so take the time and effort to craft the constitution for your organization carefully. The language should be clear and concise, leaving little room for

interpretation, both now and in the future. Depending on the complexity of the organization, a constitution can be a simple two-page document or it can expand to twenty pages or more. The goal is not to answer every possible issue, but to provide a framework so that members can address any issue that may arise.

Please use the sample constitution in the appendix of this guide to help you write the constitution for your proposed organization. Your constitution should address all the suggested areas identified but may do so in the manner that best serves your organization needs. The sample does not need to be followed verbatim but it provides basic language and format for you to work within. Proper format of the constitution is outline or bulleted, not narrative. Compose and submit your constitution in Microsoft Word, if possible, to make editing through the registration process easier.

**Important: The three statements below must be included in the constitutions of all student organizations at Radford University exactly as written.** See the sample constitution at the end of this guide for appropriate placement of these required statements.

- The advisor(s) should work closely with the organization in coordinating activities to ensure they are conducted in compliance with Radford University policies and the laws of the United States, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the City of Radford.
- The organization will adhere to Radford University policies and standards of conduct, the U.S. Constitution, and laws of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the City of Radford.
- Any revision of the constitution must be reviewed and approved by the Committee on Clubs and Organizations

**Important: After you have completed a draft of the constitution, email it to SOAR at [ruinvolved@radford.edu](mailto:ruinvolved@radford.edu). They will share it with the Committee on Clubs and Organizations (COCO) for initial review.**

The constitution you submit to SOAR and COCO should be as close to final form as possible. Prior to submission, you should ask a third party not associated with your group to proofread, review, and provide you with feedback about your constitution. Sometimes the students writing a constitution are too close to the subject matter to see it objectively and be able to discern if it makes the most sense.

## **STEP FIVE: SUBMIT FINAL APPLICATION ON RUINVOLVED AND MAKE A PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS (COCO)**

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You will need to submit the following information as part of the [2018-2019 Final Application for NEW Student Organizations](#) (open RUInvolved, go to organizations at the top and scroll down to register):

- The name of the organization and a description of its purpose or mission.
- A list or description of the types of activities the organization will offer or participate in.
- Your name and contact information.
- The name and contact information of a secondary student leader of the organization.
- The name, contact information, and department of the organization's advisor.
- The names and email addresses of *at least* four currently-enrolled RU students who are members of the club. You will need to have this list in a format (Word, PDF, Excel, etc.) that can be uploaded.
- The finalized constitution, also in a format that can be uploaded (preferably Word).
- An agreement to create a portal for the organization on RUInvolved and keep it updated.

After your application materials have been reviewed, you will be invited to give a presentation about your organization at a meeting of the Committee on Clubs and Organizations (COCO). Your presentation can take whatever format you like – from formal with multi-media components to informal and simply talking about the organization. Regardless of which presentation style you choose, you should be prepared to thoroughly describe the organization and answer any questions the committee members may have about the organization and the materials you have submitted. The checklist COCO members will use in reviewing your application materials is at the end of this guide; be sure to review it to prepare for your COCO appearance.

After you have answered questions from the committee, you will leave and the committee will vote to approve registration or not. Generally, the committee will make one of three decisions:

1. Approve registration of the organization.
2. Approve registration pending revisions to the constitution or the submission of more information.
3. Denial of the application for registration. If you have followed all of the steps suggested in this handbook, this outcome is unlikely.

Within 48 hours of the COCO meeting, you will receive an email with the committee's decision and instructions on what happens next. The most likely outcome is you will be instructed to attend the

next orientation for new organization leaders offered in SOAR so you can create the portal for your new organization on RUInvolved.

**Important: Your organization is not considered officially registered until a portal for it on RUInvolved has been created and updated with a current roster of members, a completed profile of the organization, including a picture or logo to represent the group.** In order to maintain registered status, it is crucial that the organization keep the organization's roster on RUInvolved current.

After your organization is officially registered, here are some of the privileges available to your new organization:

- Schedule regular organization meetings through The University Scheduling Office in Heth by emailing [scheduling@radford.edu](mailto:scheduling@radford.edu) or call 540-831-7000.
- Participate in Club Fair (only registered organizations are allowed this privilege).
- Bring a speaker related to your organization's mission to campus – as a registered organization, you may apply for funding assistance through the Club Programming Committee.
- Travel to conferences related to your organization's purpose with financial assistance from the Club Programming Committee (CPC).
- Host a CPC event.
- Co-sponsor events on campus with other organizations.

Remember, as a registered student organization, you have the responsibility to help your organization enhance the college experience of students within your organization as well as the larger RU community. Check out RUInvolved, visit SOAR, and review the [Club and Org. Handbook](#) to stay informed and learn more about resources available to you. The staff of SOAR is here to help you, so if you have any questions or need more information, please contact us.

# APPENDIX

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## CONSTITUTION REVIEW CHECKLIST

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This is the constitution review checklist members of the Committee on Clubs and Organizations (COCO) will use when reviewing your application materials. Use it to help ensure you have covered everything in the process of creating a new organization.

**Name of Club/Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of review:**    \_\_\_ New club or organization    \_\_\_ Reactivation of a former club or organization

**Was a list of at least 4 organization member names and e-mail addresses submitted?** \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

**Is the organization unique; does it offer something not already offered on campus?** \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

**Was the purpose/mission of the organization sufficiently explained in the application materials?**  
\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

**Are the following topics covered in the constitution?**

**Membership**

- \_\_\_ General requirements (including faculty/staff)
- \_\_\_ Categories of membership listed
  - \_\_\_ Qualifications
  - \_\_\_ Privileges
- \_\_\_ State the majority of voting members must be students
- \_\_\_ Statement of membership eligibility
- \_\_\_ Selection procedures
- \_\_\_ Removal procedures

**Dues, who determines (if applicable)**

**Number/frequency of meetings**

**Quorum defined**

**Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised or other parliamentary guides**

**Officers**

- \_\_\_ List of officers
- \_\_\_ State qualifications (must be a full time student
- \_\_\_ Explain duties (including who is responsible for finances)
- \_\_\_ Selection process
- \_\_\_ Removal procedures

**Advisor**

- \_\_\_ **Must** be a full-time or adjunct member of RU faculty/staff
- \_\_\_ State responsibilities
- \_\_\_ Selection procedures
- \_\_\_ Removal procedures
- \_\_\_ This required statement: “The advisor(s) should work closely with the organization in coordinating activities to ensure they are conducted in compliance with Radford University policies and the laws of the United States, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the City of Radford.”

**Responsibility Statement**

- \_\_\_ This required statement: “The organization will adhere to Radford University policies and standards of conduct, the U.S. Constitution, and laws of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the City of Radford.”

**Amendments**

- \_\_\_ Proposal and approval procedures
- \_\_\_ Percentage vote required for approval
- \_\_\_ This required statement: “Any revision of the constitution must be reviewed and approved by the Committee on Clubs and Organizations and/or the Assistant Director for Student Involvement.”

# Constitution Guidelines

Constitution of XYZ Club at Radford University

The following constitution is an example.

Please use this document as a template and edit it to fit your organization's needs.

## Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be XYZ Club at Radford University.

## Article II: Purpose

The XYZ Club at Radford University aims to promote a greater understanding of XYZ and provide interaction and learning opportunities for people interested about XYZ.

**The purpose should state why the organization exists and specifically state the objectives (without listing specific activities) of the organization.**

The activities of the organization must relate to this purpose.

## Article III: Membership

### Section 1. General Requirements

The organization not discriminate with regard to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, or political affiliation.

**Define who is eligible for membership.**

Membership is generally open to all Radford University students, faculty, and staff; however, in accordance with VA law, political and religious organizations are free to decide for themselves who may be a part of their organization.

### Section 2. Categories of membership

Active membership is obtained by attending at least three regular meetings and paying dues by the annual dues deadline which is set yearly at the first meeting held in the fall semester of each academic year.

**The types of membership (active, inactive, alumni, honorary, etc.) in use must be listed.**

Voting membership of recognized campus organizations shall consist only of enrolled students, faculty, and staff of this institution. A majority of the voting members must be students.

### Section 3. Qualifications and Privileges

**The qualifications and privileges (e.g., voting and non-voting) of each membership category must be included.**

A statement must be included that says the majority of voting members must be

Active membership carries voting privileges. Privileges include participation in activities and programs sponsored by the organization.

Voting qualifications are as follow:

1. Members must be currently full-time undergraduate or enrolled in a Master's program at Radford University.
2. Members must be in good standing as defined by the current Executive Board.

**The selection process must be listed for each type of membership.**

*Section 4. Joining the Organization*

New members can be selected each semester by attending a general body meeting and/or club sponsored events held throughout each semester and by signing up for the email list.

**Describe the reasons and process for removing someone from membership in the organization.**

*Section 5. Removal*

Members of XYZ may be removed for engaging in behavior unbecoming of a member by a vote of 2/3 of the entire active voting membership. A written request, signed by at least three active members, stating the reason for dismissal must be submitted at a regularly scheduled meeting. Any such removal must be approved by the organization advisor.

**The number of meetings (e.g., per month/semester/year) should be listed.**

**Article IV: Meetings**

*Section 1.* Meetings will be held twice a month during the academic year and special meetings may be called if necessary.

**The specific guide to parliamentary procedure must be listed.**

*Section 2.* Business will be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised. In case of a voting tie, the President will cast the deciding vote.

**Define the organization’s quorum.**  
A quorum is the minimum number of members who have to be present to legally

*Section 3.* A quorum is two-thirds (2/3) of the active members.

*Section 4.* A simple majority (50% plus one) rules.

**Define majority.**  
Most groups use a simple majority (50% + 1) to declare a decision valid.

**Article V: Dues**

**How will dues be decided and who will be involved in the decision?**  
It is best not to specify the exact amount of dues, but rather to explain how the dues will be calculated.

*Section 1.* Chapter dues and payment deadline shall be set yearly at the first meeting held in the fall semester of each academic year.

**When dues will be collected, who will collect the dues, and the checks and balances system?**

*Section 2.* Dues shall be collected by the VP of Finance by the determined payment deadline. The president and advisor will review dues collection on a monthly basis.

**List the officer positions of the organization**

**Article VI: Officers**

*Section 1.* The Executive Board shall be: President, Vice President of Engagement, Vice President for Public Relations, and Vice President of Finance.

**All qualifications for holding an office must be stated, including the statement “Only full-time students (12 semester hours) may serve as officers.”**

*Section 2.* Only full-time students may serve as officers. Officers must have and maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5 and no disciplinary probation from the University.

*Section 3. Officer duties:*

1. President: Provides leadership and overall direction for the campus chapter; prepares and maintains a calendar of scheduled chapter events; and oversees chapter meetings. Appoints member(s) to serve as committee chairs as needed.

**Duties of each officer explained.**  
This is not an exhaustive list, but does list the main responsibilities.

2. Vice President of Engagement: Fills in for the President in his/her absence; Will serve as the community service chair and will plan gatherings.

3. Vice President for Public Relations: Maintains membership records; conducts correspondence with the members and relevant others; issues announcements at all meetings; prepares and maintains the minutes of all meetings; maintains roster and other updates on RUInvolved; and, maintains historical records of the campus chapter.

4. Vice President of Finance: Receives and disburses funds; manages the financial affairs of the campus chapter; keeps a voucher system to account for all expenses; and, serves as chairperson of the fundraising committee.

**A specific method of election must be explained.**  
Include the term/year of election, length of service, and month of officer

*Section 4.* A majority vote of the membership will determine the election of officers. Elections will be held mid-spring semester for the following academic year. Officers will serve a term of one full academic year.

*Section 5.* Officers can be recommended for removal by the Executive Board if they fail to meet membership qualifications, engage in abuse of power, fail to fulfill the duties of the office, or fail to satisfactorily attend the general and executive board meetings, unless excused by the President or Advisor(s). A written request, signed by at least three active members, stating the reason for dismissal must be submitted at a regularly scheduled meeting. Approval of dismissal by two-thirds vote of the active membership is necessary.

**A statement explaining the reasons for removal of an officer and the specific procedure must be included.**

In case of resignation, the outgoing officer must notify the Executive Board, which consists of the officers. The unoccupied position will be filled by appointment by the Executive Board unless the unfinished term of the officer is longer than a month before the annual spring elections, in which case an election will be held to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term.

**A statement requiring the designation of a faculty or staff advisor(s) from Radford University must be included.**

**Article VII: Advisor(s)**

*Section 1.* A current full-time or adjunct faculty or staff member of Radford University will be eligible to be the campus chapter advisor(s).

**The advisor's duties must be stated.**  
**This exact statement must be included.**

*Section 2.* The advisor(s) should work closely with the organization in coordinating activities to ensure they are conducted in compliance with Radford University policies, and the laws of the United States, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the City of Radford.

*Section 3.* The advisor(s) will be recommended by the Executive Board and elected by a majority vote of the active membership. The purpose of the advisor(s) is to help give members guidance in policies and procedures concerning this organization.

A specific method of election must be explained.

*Section 4.* The advisor(s) will be removed at the recommendation of the Executive Board and removed by a majority vote of the active membership. written request, signed by at least three active members, stating the reason for dismissal must be submitted at a regularly scheduled meeting.

A statement explaining the reasons for removal of an advisor and the specific procedure must be explained.

**Article VIII: Responsibilities**

**The following statement must be included in all constitutions for organizations at Radford University.**

The organization will adhere to Radford University policies and standards of conduct, the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the City of Radford.

A statement listing the specified proposal requirements for amendments must be listed.

**Article IX: Amendments**

*Section 1.* Proposed amendments to the constitution must be brought forth during a regular business meeting. The amendment must then be presented to a quorum of the organization at the next regular business meeting. All active members must be notified in writing of the proposed amendments. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the active membership shall be required for adoption.

This exact statement must be included.

*Section 2.* Any revision of the constitution must be reviewed and approved by the Committee on Clubs and Organizations and/or the Assistant Director for Student Involvement.