

Sample Constitution and Bylaws (includes officer and member oaths)

One of the most challenging aspects of getting a National Residence Hall Honorary Chapter off the ground is coming up with a constitution. It can seem like a very formidable task; most of us have never written a constitution before.

Writing a Constitution

Preamble

Not all constitutions have a preamble, but those that do read in this manner:

We, the members of the _____ Chapter of the National Residence Hall Honorary, in order to honor and recognize outstanding members of the residence hall system, and to promote a higher quality and standard of involvement and interaction in the residence hall community do hereby establish and uphold this constitution.

Other preambles mention social enrichment and academics as well.

Article I - Name

Some chapters have taken Greek letters (YNX are the initials for University of Northern Colorado); others have taken their schools mascot: Bobcat or Greyhound chapters, some have named them after people from their university and other have gone for just the name of their school. The constitution should state:

"The name of this organization shall be the _____ Chapter of the National Residence Hall Honorary at _____ (name of school).

Article II - Purpose

"The purpose of this organization shall be _____." Across the board, other schools include statements such as to "provide recognition for students who have provided outstanding service or exceptional leadership in promoting the residence hall system."

Article III - Membership

This is where things start to vary. The NRHH National Constitution states that the minimum requirements for induction are:

- 1) Individuals shall have lived in the residence halls during the year prior to induction;
- 2) Individuals shall have exhibited outstanding leadership and service to the residence hall system; and
- 3) Individuals shall have a grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.

Chapters also break membership down into four categories:

- a) Active members live in the residence halls and have fulfilled the above requirements.
- b) Alumni members have either moved off-campus or no longer attend the institution where they were inducted.
- c) Early alumni members have filled out the appropriate paperwork and have been confirmed by the regional AD-NRHH
- d) Honorary members may be an administrator or off-campus person who has done something outstanding for the residence halls. Even within this framework, there are some variations among chapters.

Under this article, there may also be some sections pertaining to the total number of active members in a chapter (which may not be greater than 1% of the capacity of your school's residence halls or 20 members, whichever is greater). Some schools have combined membership and selection of members into one Article (see below).

Article IV - Selection of Members

Basically, the ways people can be nominated are by themselves, or by others. Some schools distribute nomination sheets where candidates describe their own accomplishments and reasons for wanting to get involved with NRHH. Some schools have a selection committee, which reviews nominations. Others have an objective point scale that they use to rank involvement.

In your Constitution, you will probably want one section dealing with the ways in which potential inductees can be nominated, and another section dealing with the manner in which the potential inductees will be screened (i.e. a selection committee, point system, or consensus of active members).

Article V - Executive Structure

Chapters typically have a President/Chairperson. In addition, some chapters have other officers including a Vice-President, and/or a Secretary/Historian. In this article, you may also want to include the method of selection and timeline for selection of officers, the qualifications for a chapter advisor (if you have one), and the responsibilities of the officers.

Article VI - Fees and Dues

This article may include a section regarding institutional chapter dues, if you are to have any.

Article VII - Amendments and Bylaws

In this section, you may want to define what percentage of the active members it takes to amend or add to the Constitution.

Article VIII - Enactment

Typically, you need a majority (occasionally a 2/3) vote of the current active members to ratify a constitution. You may also want to present your constitution to your Residence Hall Association or Residence Life Department for their approval.