

# Starting an RSO!!

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*For any questions or for additional information, contact Nick Barton at [sga.registry@stuaf.umass.edu](mailto:sga.registry@stuaf.umass.edu), or stop in the SGA Office (Student Union 420).*

Are you thinking of starting your own RSO here at UMass? Here are few things you should know about what an RSO is and the process by which you can create one!

## What is an RSO?

All Registered Student Organizations (RSO) shall be associations composed primarily of undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, which are democratically directed by their members, independent, and registered by the Student Government Association. Each RSO shall enhance the social, cultural, educational, and/or recreational experience of undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

A two-thirds (2/3) majority of the members of an RSO must be UMass undergraduates. Not less than ten UMass undergraduates must be active members of the RSO at all times.

Officers must be full-time students and UMass undergraduates. Part-time students, and non-SGA members of an RSO, may not hold full officer positions.

To become an RSO, members of the organization must complete an activation packet, which includes: an application, a charter, mission statement, and future goals.

# TIPS

- 1) Come and see me! My job as Registry Secretary is to help RSOs and students seeking to make RSOs. I hold regular office hours in the SGA Office (Student Union 420) and I can always be reached by email. I highly recommend contacting me at [sga.registry@stuaf.umass.edu](mailto:sga.registry@stuaf.umass.edu) to schedule a meeting to discuss your proposed RSO.
- 2) Make sure your group is unique. A lot of people apply for RSOs that are too similar to other groups on campus to be approved. We cannot approve infinite RSOs, so we try to have people work together when possible. Check out Campus Pulse to see if there are other groups that you can think you can work with or be a part of before applying.
- 3) Don't try to do it all on your own. Building an RSO from scratch can be an intensive process, and you need to have ten members to start anyway, so share the responsibility and the work.
- 4) Market market market. You never know who might be interested in joining a group, so talk to everyone you know.

# What you need to do: RSO Activation Packet Overview

*You will have an opportunity to fill all of this out on Campus Pulse. Only the Charter needs to be created in a separate document, and it will then be uploaded into the packet on Campus Pulse.*

## I. Application

- A. Officer's names, addresses, student ID numbers, and telephone numbers.
- B. Membership list of at least ten (10) undergraduate students, with members' names, addresses, student ID numbers, and telephone numbers.
- C. Name of an initial contact person for the SGA, including address and telephone number.
- D. Statement of Non-Discrimination signed by the organization's initial leadership. An organization seeking to incorporate its own Statement of Non Discrimination must consult with Secretary of the Registry
- E. Minutes of a meeting in which the Charter is approved by a majority of the membership.
- F. Statement of justification as an RSO. This is a chance to explain
  1. Why your group should be granted RSO status.

2. Why your group will have a lasting impact and presence on campus after the initial members.
3. Why your group is unique on campus.

## II. Charter (and, if necessary, by-laws)

### A. Contain a process for voting by the membership

1. The process for establishing voting membership must be reasonable; as to allow access to all undergraduate students. Those RSOs with policies of exclusivity, which are deemed to be within the bounds of Federal and/or State law, are exempt.
2. For purposes of this definition, "membership" shall refer to active members with full voting and participation rights. Membership must be voluntarily and actively entered into by each member, and may not be automatically established. This definition does not preclude an RSO from establishing additional classes of membership defined in alternative ways. In such situations, an RSO must maintain not less than ten (10) SGA members as active members of its organization at all times, in addition to alternative forms of member classification. Members may be empowered by an RSO to act on its behalf, within the parameters of its valid goals/objectives/activities, and with the approval of the RSO leadership.

### B. Outline a fair and democratic method for the election and removal of officers.

### C. Description of officer positions.

1. Must include:
  - a) Hierarchal structure.
  - b) Outline of responsibilities.

- c) Designate a maximum of two officers to have signature responsibility.
- d) Line of succession.
- D. Outline a reasonable procedure for resolving disputes among members within the organization.
- E. Contain a statement of Free Speech/Expression.
- F. Outline clear procedures for conducting its meetings and planning its activities.
- G. Outline record-keeping procedures.
- H. Outline for how to amend the charter.
  - 1. This must be based on a 50% +1 vote of the membership and must be submitted to the Sec. of Registry.

### III. Mission Statement

- A. The Mission Statement shall give a brief description of the purpose/function of the proposed organization. It shall include examples of the kind of activities the organization plans to undertake. It may state the organization's philosophy. The Mission Statement should be included on the first page of the charter document.

### IV. Statement of Future Goals

- A. The future goals and purposes should outline projects and events the group is looking to plan.

# Additional Information

Exerpted from Title VII of the SGA By-Laws

All UMass undergraduates are SGA Members.

## **Title VII Established Student Organizations**

### **Chapter 1**

#### Definitions of an Established Student Organization

**Section 1** The following classifications of Established Student Organizations (ESOs) shall be administered:

1. “Agency” shall be defined as a co-curricular organization operating under the guidance and supervision of a full time staff member, faculty member, or Graduate Student Assistant paid out of the Student Activities Trust Fund, serving students as either an advocacy or activities organization.
2. “Subsidiary Governance Body” shall be defined as an extension of the Student Government Association charged with specific student governance tasks.

3. "Registered Student Organization" (RSO) shall be defined as an ESO consisting of mostly undergraduate students with full ESO rights and responsibilities, as defined in the By-Laws of the SGA.
4. "Student Business" shall be defined as an ESO which is established and operated by undergraduate students of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Student Businesses shall provide goods/services to the entire University community, as well as, educational and employment opportunities to the undergraduate students of the University.

**Section 2** Membership of any kind cannot be denied on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, academic status, veteran status, unless such practices are deemed to be within the bounds of Federal and/or State law.

**Section 3** An ESO must be governed by democratically elected fee-paying undergraduate students.

## **Chapter 2**

### Freedom of Speech

**Section 1** All Established Student Organizations are recognized to have freedom of speech, which cannot be limited or restricted by any officer or body of the Student Government Association. An ESO's political affiliation or speech is not relevant to any proceeding conducted by the Student Government Association. No officer of the Student Government Association shall use an ESO's political speech or affiliation as reason to deny or limit space or funding.

## **Chapter 3**

### Rights and Privileges

**Section 1** All ESO's shall have the following rights and privileges:

1. Recognition by the University or Massachusetts as an officially recognized Established Student Organization.
2. Access to the use, of campus facilities, both indoor and outdoor.

3. The waiver or discount of designated fees for the use of various University facilities services.
4. Ability to reserve space and equipment on campus with special rates and privileges.
5. Ability to apply for a space allocation to whatever body is recognized by the SGA to allocate space.
6. The waiving of Massachusetts State sales tax on ESO purchases.
7. Free access to tables on the Campus Center Concourse for informational and fund raising purposes.
8. Assistance from the Student Activities Center in the way of mail and telephone service, scheduling space, program development, leadership training and organizational development, financial accounts and budgeting support.
9. Legal Assistance from the Student Legal Services Office.
10. Any ESO shall be recognized to have freedom of press and shall not be penalized or subject to penalty due to the subject matter expressed within their medium, with the exception of slander and intentional misrepresentation of SGA members or organizations.

## **Chapter 4**

### Nonprofit Status

**Section 1** All ESOs will be structured and operated "not for profit" according to University policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, the Policy for Management of University Funds, and the following:

1. No ESO will have as part of its official or unofficial purposes, functions enabling members of the ESO to profit financially from its activities, either directly or indirectly except as approved by the student employment office.
2. Funds outside SATF appropriations will be applied to the purpose of the ESO.



3. All equipment purchased with SATF funding is the property of the SGA and is subject to all SGA, University, State, and Federal inventory procedures and audits.
2. In the event of suspension or withdrawal, all property purchased by the ESO shall be placed under the direct control of Secretary of Finance.

## **Chapter 5**

### Grievance Procedures

**Section 1** If a grievance shall arise between ESOs, to include the SGA, parties shall have the right to file a petition with the Student Judiciary.

1. The decision of the Student Judiciary shall be final unless the Judiciary suspends action due to an upcoming appeal.
2. Failure to enact the Student Judiciary's decision shall result in automatic suspension of ESO status until such time as the remedy is enacted.
3. In the event that the Media ESO shall be petitioned or petition another ESO, the Student Judiciary shall show deference to precedence established by the Federal Courts and/or the Courts of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

## **Chapter 8**

### Registered Student Organizations

**Section 6** The Secretary of the Registry will be given (14) fourteen days to decide if the applicants will be recognized. The Secretary will submit a letter of approval to the applicants if approving or a letter of denial listing the reasons for denial to the applicants along with the activation packet.

1. RSO applications, which shall have been denied by the Secretary of the Registry may be appealed to The Student and Academic Affairs Committee, by re-submitting the application packet with the Letter of Denial, within (14) fourteen days of denial to the Chair of said Committee.
2. The Student and Academic Affairs Committee will at its next scheduled meeting allow the applicants to present their RSO application. Upon receiving positive recommendation from the committee, a motion to recognize the organization will be placed on the agenda of the next scheduled Senate meeting where upon a (2/3) two-thirds majority vote, the group will be approved to be an RSO.

3. If the Secretary of the Registry neither approves nor denied the RSO within the (14) days allotted, the Secretary waives his/her decision making power, and the applicants can submit their application (unchanged) to the Chair of The Student and Academic Affairs Committee to be approved through the process outlines in Title VII, Chapter 9, Section 6, Sub-Section 2.

**Section 7** RSOs shall be subject to suspension and/or withdrawal in the following manner:

1. The Secretary of the Registry shall suspend the registration of any RSO which is in violation of any defined University or SGA policy, or if the RSO fails to actively pursue the mission and goals established in the application for registration.

Upon suspension of an RSO, all of its accounts shall be frozen and all services provided through the Student Activities Center shall be foregone until such time when suspension is lifted

A. An RSO shall remain suspended until it has complied with all University regulations and those policies stated in the SGA Constitution and by-laws. The Secretary of the Registry shall determine compliance.

2. The Secretary of the Registry shall withdraw the registration of any organization which has been suspended for more than three (3) consecutive semesters, failed to reactivate their registration within one (1) year after the deadline, or that has a documented history of University or SGA policy violations.

A. The Secretary of the Registry shall maintain records of all withdrawn organizations for two (2) consecutive semesters following withdrawal date.

3. Any RSO may withdraw from recognition by a majority vote of its members at a meeting called for the purpose, which was adequately publicized to the members at least two weeks in advance. For a vote calling for the withdrawal of registration, quorum for the RSO shall consist of two-thirds (2/3) of the membership, and a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of those present shall constitute withdrawing from recognition.
4. Withdrawn RSOs may apply for re-registration by the same manner as a new prospective RSO, pending that any failures of compliance have been resolved.

A. A finding of compliance is determined by the Secretary of the Registry, at a scheduled hearing with a two-thirds (2/3) majority of its voting membership present.