Whether you are beginning a new club or reviewing the structures of your current organization, you need to focus on the constitution, its structure and content. In order to get you started, the Office of Student Activities has put together information that may be helpful to you as you construct or revise the constitution that will outline the basic purpose and the rules guiding this group of people.

The constitution is a document that should contain nothing but what is fundamental, thus making it very difficult to amend. By-laws, which may be a part of the constitution, contain all other standing rules of the organization. Since student organizations emerge and exist on campus for very specific purposes, it is necessary for the writers/reviewers to give thought to the history of the organization.

The document should contain the following essential information:

1. Define the primary characteristics of the organization
2. Prescribe how the organization functions
3. Include all rules that the group considers so important that they:
   a. Cannot be changed without previous notice to the members and the vote of a specified large majority (Such as a two-thirds vote)
   b. Cannot be suspended

All changes, additions, or deletions made to either the constitution or by-laws of an organization MUST be submitted to the Student Government Association.

The general nature of the document is covered in “Articles” and is usually set as follows:

**Article I** Name

**Article II** Purpose and Objectives
   Section 1. The purpose of this organization...
   Section 2. The objectives of this organization...

**Article III** Qualification of members/Membership

**Article IV** Officers, their election, and duties

**Article V** Meetings (Include only what is essential), leaving details to the by-laws

**Article VI** General Provisions (Standing committees, specifics applying only to your group)

**Article VII** Amendments (Procedure for making changes in the constitution or by-laws)

**Article VIII** By-Laws (Specific details which the group has decided will be standard procedure)

*(Article VI must only be included if it applies to your organization)*
-Important Issues-

Two areas that cause concern in the writing of the document are membership and voting. A few suggestions on these issues are as follows:

A. Membership
1. Define under separate article (Article III, Qualifications of members/membership)
2. State desired characteristics of members (GPA, Major, Interest)
3. Be specific if the Albright chapter is part of a national organization (Fraternities: Males only)
4. Outline criteria for active/non-active members and relationship to payment of dues.

B. Voting
1. Define under separate article or incorporate it into the by-laws.
2. State who can vote based on his/her contribution as a member of the group (Active or non-active members).
3. Outline procedures for bringing important issues for a vote (Week’s notice on certain topics; distribution of information on amendments thirty days before it is voted on)
4. Include procedure for presenting nomination, amendment, etc. before the group (Verbal or written; signatures of X number of members; recommendation of two or more members)

-Considerations: Punctuation and Style-

A. Comma Use
1. In a series of three or more items, use a comma before the coordinating conjunction.  
   E.g. The society pledges to uphold the standards of truth, honesty, compassion, beauty, dedication, and sincerity.
2. In joining independent clauses that are lengthy, use a comma before coordinating conjunction.  
   E.g. The secretary shall record the minutes at every meeting and make them available to all members, and he/she will be responsible for all correspondence and publicity

B. Colon Use
1. Use a colon between two independent clauses when the second explains or amplifies the first.  
   e.g.: The executive board has a very specific function: it creates programs for the larger organizational body.
2. Use a colon before formal appositives, including those introduced by such expressions as namely and that is.  
   e.g.: There are three ideals the organizations honors: truth, sincerity, and dedication.
C. Semi-Colon Use
1. Use a semi-colon to connect two independent clauses that are intimately related.
   e.g.: An amendment to this constitution may be proposed at any general membership meeting; the amendment shall be passed by a two-thirds majority vote of the members.

D. Parallelism
1. When you express two or more ideas that are equal in emphasis, use parallel grammatical structures: nouns with nouns, infinitives with infinitives, adverbs clauses with adverb clauses.
   e.g.: We, the members of the Eurasian Society of Albright College, organize for the purpose of consolidating our mutual interests and affirming our ethnic identity.

E. Consistency
1. Be consistent in comma use.
2. Be consistent in verb tense.
3. Be consistent in perspective (the narrative voice used in your constitution.)

Additional Suggestions
There are several “do’s” and “don’t’s” to keep in mind when writing a constitution. For instance:

**DO**
- Identify who will make the decision regarding dues
  - State how often a group will meet
- Identify what quorum is (50% of those registered, or those in attendance)
  - Describe how and when officers will be nominated and elected
- Submit revisions and amendments Office of Student Activities & SGA

**DON’T**
- Identify the amount of dues
- State when meetings will be held
- Allow significant decisions i.e. elections, constitution changes to be made by a small portion of the organization
- Forget to have the consistency and/or changes reviewed by Office of Student Activities & SGA
Sample Constitution

Article I  INSERT CLUB NAME HERE of Albright College

Article II  Purpose and Objectives

Sec. 1  The purpose of this organization is to form a club of Albright students who wish to participate in INSERT ACTIVITY HERE.

Sec. 2  The objective(s) of this organization is to INSERT LIST OF SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES YOU INTED TO IMPLEMENT HERE.

Article III  Qualifications of Members/Membership

Sec. 1  This club’s membership is open to any Albright Student who shows interest in INSERT ACTIVITY.

Sec. 2  This club is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, or disability.

Article IV  Officers, Their Elections, and Duties

Officers and Their Elections

Sec. 1  Elected officers shall be as follows: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Sec. 2  Appointed officers shall be appointed by the incoming President, subject to the approval of the members.

Sec. 3  Elections shall be conducted once each year, in INSERT MONTH AND WEEK OF THE MONTH (e.g.: Second week of November)

Sec. 4  Nominations shall be made one week prior to the elections. Additional nominations may be made prior to the election.

Sec. 5  Voting shall be by secretly ballot and in the same order as the officers named above.

Sec. 6  If no candidate obtains a majority in the first balloting, a run-off election shall be conducted between the two candidates who had received the most votes.

Sec. 7  A vacancy in any elected office shall be filled by a special elections within two weeks after the vacancy occurs.

Sec. 8  Any officer, whether elected or appointed, who proves negligent or ineffective in office may be recalled by two-thirds vote of those voting in a regular meeting.

Officers’ Duties

Sec. 1  The president’s chief responsibilities include: calling and facilitating the regularly scheduled business, conduct the regular business of the club, and representing the club at other campus functions when required.

Sec. 2  The VP’s duties will be to offer assistance to the President when needed, and to take the president’s place meetings when the president is in absentia.

Sec. 3  The secretary will take minutes of all meetings and keep the business documents and records of the club.
Sec. 4 The treasurer will keep the club’s finances in good order and shall prepare a budget each year. The treasurer is also responsible for the allocation of funds to the proper places.

Article V Meetings
Sec. 1 Meetings shall be held INSERT HOW OFTEN YOU PLAN TO MEET HERE
Sec. 2 The meeting structure shall be loosely structured after Robert’s Rules of Order (reading of the minutes of the previous meeting, reports of standing committees, reports of special committees, unfinished business, new business)
Sec. 3 Use of alcohol or tobacco during meetings is not permitted

Article VI Finances
Sec. 1 The Treasurer will prepare a comprehensive budget for the year at the beginning of fall and spring semesters.

Article VII Amendments
This constitution may be amended or added to at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote of those present, provided that there is a quorum (one member more than a majority of the entire membership) present.