Student Senate By-Laws

— SECTION SIX —

Requirements for Student Organizations

A. Purpose. The Columbia Law School Student Senate ("the Student Senate") seeks to encourage the existence of a diverse offering of activities and associations that augment a student's law school experience. Student organizations provide important opportunities to students during their law school careers to participate in interesting events and projects and exercise positions of leadership that may both enrich and enlighten their Columbia legal education.

B. Guidelines. A recognized student organization shall be responsible at all times for following the guidelines set forth in this Subsection (B) (collectively, the "Guidelines"), the violation of which may subject the student organization to penalties determined at the reasonable discretion of the Student Senate, including, but not limited to, the revocation of recognition or Student Senate funding.

1. Beneficial Purpose. The purpose of the organization shall be sufficiently related to the law school community and sufficiently unrelated to the purpose of any other recognized organization so as to offer a distinct benefit to a substantial number of law school students. Activities of the organization shall benefit the law school community.

2. Constitution. All recognized organizations shall adopt an official constitution. The organization’s constitution and any amendments or by-laws thereto shall be ratified by its membership. At a minimum, the constitution shall explicitly state the following:

   a. The organization’s name,

   b. The organization’s purpose,

   c. The requirements for membership and leadership,

   d. The procedure for selecting and removing leadership,

   e. The duties of leadership,

   f. The procedure for arriving at decisions, and

   g. The Nondiscrimination Policy set forth in Subsection (B)(5) below.

3. Membership. Membership shall be open and limited to all Columbia Law School students, but may be conditioned upon certain reasonable criteria not in violation of the Nondiscrimination Policy set forth in Subsection (B)(5) below.

4. Leadership. Leadership shall consist of those members elected or otherwise selected according to the organization’s constitution to organize and direct the organization. The leadership shall be responsible to the Student Senate for adherence to the Guidelines and shall otherwise remain answerable for the activities of the organization.

5. Nondiscrimination Policy. Membership and leadership shall be open to all Columbia Law School students without regard to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, age, handicap or disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, political affiliation, or the general exer-
exercise of a student’s right of free speech or association. Any group which selects a team to participate in an organized competitive activity is deemed to have a membership and leadership which is open to the entire student body so long as all students are allowed to apply or tryout for membership on the team.

6. **Budget Guidelines.** The organization shall utilize any funds allocated to it by the Student Senate in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Student Senate Budget Guidelines.

7. **Political Fundraising.** The organization shall not give any funding from the Student Senate to political parties, PACS, or political campaigns, nor shall such funds be used in connection with fundraising activities to support political parties, PACS, or political campaigns.

8. **Commercial Activity.** An activity shall not be carried out for the pecuniary benefit of its members.

9. **Mandatory Meetings.** The leadership of the organization shall be responsible for sending at least one representative to all mandatory meetings pertaining to student organizations called by either the Student Senate or Office of Student Services.

10. **Compliance.** The organization shall not violate any relevant University or Law School regulations, or any applicable federal, state, or local law.

11. **Non-Senate Recognition.** Any recognized student organization becomes subject to the supervision and authority of the Student Senate and may not seek or retain recognition by any other division or office of the University.

**C. Recognition Process.** Any group of Columbia Law School students desiring recognition by the Student Senate as a student organization must petition according to the procedures set forth under this subsection. Any decisions made by the Recognition Committee (“the Committee”) or the Student Senate to confer or deny recognition shall be based solely on the Guidelines set forth in Subsection (B) above and the procedures set forth below.

1. **Recognition of New Organizations or Organizations Submitting Revised Constitution or By-laws.** Any organization not currently recognized by the Student Senate and all other organizations that have altered their constitution or by-laws since their last submission to the Student Senate must apply for recognition under this Subsection.

   a. **Submission of Documents.** Recognition of an organization under this subsection is contingent upon timely submission of the following to the Student Senate Parliamentarian:

      i. A constitution meeting the requirements under Subsection (B)(2) above.

      ii. The names and email addresses of at least twelve (12) current members, including at least two (2) leaders responsible for the organization’s finances and record keeping. The Committee may waive any part of this requirement upon a group’s showing that its beneficial purpose does not require a standing membership.

      iii. A completed application for recognition, as provided by the Student Senate.

   b. **Approval.** Except as provided under Subsection (C)(1)(c) for appeal, recognition shall be contingent upon the favorable recommendation of the Committee followed by majority approval of the Student Senate.
c. **Appeal.** An organization failing to receive a favorable recommendation from the Committee shall be notified of this decision and permitted at least one opportunity to submit a revised application. If the revised application also fails to receive a favorable recommendation from the Committee, the organization may appeal to the Student Senate, which may confer recognition by a majority vote.

2. **Automatic Renewal of Recognition for Currently Recognized Organizations.** Any organization currently recognized by the Student Senate that has not altered its constitution or by-laws since its last submission to the Student Senate shall have its recognition automatically renewed upon annual submission of the following to the Student Senate Parliamentarian:

a. A copy of the organization’s unchanged constitution and/or by-laws.

b. The names and email addresses of at least twelve (12) current members, including at least two (2) leaders responsible for the organization’s finances and record keeping. The Parliamentarian may waive any part of this requirement upon a group’s showing that its beneficial purpose does not require a standing membership.

c. An affirmation that the organization’s documents are unchanged since their last submission to the Student Senate and that the organization will continue to abide by them.

D. **Grievance and Revocation of Recognition**

1. **Accountability.** A recognized organization shall be held accountable by the Student Senate for its adherence to both its own constitution and by-laws and the Guidelines under Subsection (B) (collectively, the “Governing Documents”). This Subsection provides for a grievance procedure to enforce such accountability.

2. **Grounds for Penalty.** A recognized student organization may have its recognition denied or revoked, or be subject to penalty specified by the Committee, either for failure to meet the requirements for recognition under Subsections (C)(1) or (C)(2), or, in the alternative, through the process described in this Subsection (D).

3. **Other Authorities.** Notwithstanding any penalties assessed by the Student Senate, members of an organization, as well as students submitting perjured grievance, may remain subject to sanctions from other bodies, such as the University, the Law School, or the Attorney’s Bar.

4. **Grievance Procedure**

a. **Standing.** Any student currently enrolled at Columbia Law School may submit to the Student Senate a grievance against a recognized organization alleging a violation of the Governing Documents.

b. **Investigation.** Upon notice of grievance, the Committee shall investigate and determine the merit of such grievance.

c. **Dismissal.** If the Committee determines the grievance to be without merit, it may dismiss the complaint without approval by the Student Senate. However, the complaining student may appeal any such decision to the Student Senate, which may either dismiss the complaint or require the Committee to reconsider the grievance pursuant to the procedures outlined below. The decision upon appeal to the Student Senate shall be final and binding.
d. **Conformity.** If the Committee determines the grounds for such grievance are of merit, the Committee shall first meet with the accused organization in an effort to resolve any such noncompliance. The organization may remedy its noncompliance either by agreeing to conform its practices to the Governing Documents and make necessary reparations, if any, or, where such noncompliance does not otherwise violate the Guidelines, by revising the constitution or by-laws of the organization. Any such alteration of the organization’s constitution or by-laws, however, shall subject the organization to the recognition procedure described under Subsection (C)(1).

e. **Hearing.** If the organization denies the validity of the grievance, which, if accurate, would otherwise be of merit, the Committee shall hear from both the organization and the complaining student and shall reach a determination based upon the testimony of the parties and a preponderance of the evidence, if any. Following such determination of the merits of the grievance, the Committee shall make its own recommendation for resolution, which may include dismissal of the grievance, revocation of the organization’s recognition, or other reasonably appropriate penalty.

f. **Penalty.** If the Committee determines the complaint to be of merit, it may recommend a reasonably appropriate penalty to the Student Senate, which may invoke such penalty or fashion a more appropriate penalty by a majority vote, which decision shall be final and binding. The accused organization shall have the right to plead its case before the Student Senate before such a vote is taken.

g. **Bad Faith.** If at any time the Committee or the Student Senate believes an organization to be acting in bad faith during this procedure, such bad-faith action may submit the organization to additional penalty.

h. **Term of Penalty.** A determination by the Student Senate to revoke recognition of an organization shall remain in effect for the academic year in which such determination is made. The organization for which recognition is revoked shall be permitted to reapply for recognition in the following academic year(s). However, in making a determination on such an organization’s application for recognition, the Committee and the Student Senate may take into account any prior adverse decisions against the organization.

E. **Entering Defunct Status**

1. **Deadline For Recognition Requests.** In coordination with the Senate Budget Committee, the Chair of the Recognition Committee shall set a recognition deadline around the middle of the second week of the fall semester. Student groups may apply for belated recognition at any time during the semester.

2. **Suspension of Account.** Student Services shall suspend the account of any previously recognized student group that fails to be recognized at the recognition deadline in a given fall. These groups shall be considered defunct.

   a. **Groups That Fail To Meet Recognition Deadline.** If a student group fails to be recognized due to a failure to meet the fall deadline, its account shall remain in suspension for three semesters, at which point it is considered fully defunct. If the student group is recognized again at any time during these three semesters, it shall immediately regain access to its account.
b. **Groups That Are Affirmatively Denied Recognition.** If a student group fails to be recognized due to an affirmative denial by the Recognition Committee, its account shall remain in suspension for five semesters, at which point it is considered fully defunct. If the student group is recognized again at any time during these five semesters, it shall immediately regain access to its account.

3. **Repossession of Funds.** Once a previously recognized student group becomes fully defunct, Student Services shall repossess any funds contained in the student group’s account.

   a. **Student Activity Fee Funds.** Any funds remaining in the fully defunct organization’s account that are traceable to prior allocations from the Student Activity Fee shall first be used to satisfy the fully defunct organization’s debt, if any. Any such funds remaining thereafter shall be returned to the Student Senate.

   b. **Other Funds.** All other funds remaining in the fully defunct organization’s account shall be disposed of by Student Services, in consultation with the Student Senate. Where appropriate, such funds may be used to satisfy the fully defunct organization’s debt, if any, in lieu of or in conjunction with any funds identified by Subsection (E)(3)(a) above.

4. **Successor Groups.** If the Recognition Committee has reason to believe that a previously recognized student group has reconstituted under a new name in order to avoid an incurred debt, it may affirmatively deny recognition. The burden shall be on the group seeking recognition to show that its mission and target population are sufficiently different from the previously recognized group.

5. **Other Privileges.** As soon as a student group enters defunct status, Student Services shall ensure that the group no longer has access to its Student Organization News and Information (“SONI”) email account. Bulletin board space in the law school shall be reassigned.