Student Organization Manual
2016-2017
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Introduction

Welcome Letter
The Student Leadership and Involvement Center offers a wide variety of resources and services to aid in the development of student organizations and student leaders. From leadership and training programs to printing and poster making supplies to financial services and volunteer opportunities, the Student Leadership and Involvement Center provides VCU students and registered student groups with a wealth of services to ensure their success on campus and in the community.

The Student Organization Manual was created to assist student leaders in the day-to-day operation of running a registered student organization at Virginia Commonwealth University. The manual contains information on many topics that student organizations may find useful. If your organization is new or established, this manual will be very beneficial.

All registered student organizations have a page on the RamsConnect website. Organizations use RamsConnect to manage events, communication, membership, finance and more! Organizations are encouraged to make the use of this resource. All VCU students have the ability to access the portal and use it to browse organizations, events, upcoming opportunities, and track service hours.

If you have any questions regarding this manual, student organizations, or involvement at VCU please do not hesitate to contact the Student Leadership and Involvement Center. We are located in the University Student Commons, Room 018 and can be reached at 804-828-3648 or studentorgs@vcu.edu.
Staff Directory

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Registration of Student Organizations

How to Start a New Student Organization
Below are the steps to starting a new student organization at Virginia Commonwealth University. Please keep in mind the purpose of the proposed organization should be consistent with the mission of the University. Registration does not imply University approval or disapproval of the organization or its goals. New student organizations may not duplicate or resemble an existing organization on campus.

During the Fall 2016 semester, new student organizations can register between July 1 and September 14. Registration will open up again January 5 through February 10, 2017. Students interested in creating a new organization outside of the registration periods will have to wait until the next semester.

- **Step 1: Fill out the New Student Organization Request Form**
  - Complete and submit the “New Student Organization Request Form”, which can be found on the “Campus Links” dropdown menu on RamsConnect.
  - Form must list President, Vice President, Treasurer and five (5) additional members.
    - President, Vice President, and Treasurer requirements: Undergraduate officers must be enrolled in at least six (6) credit hours with a 2.3 cumulative GPA. Graduate officers must be enrolled in at least three (3) credit hours with a 3.0 cumulative GPA*.

*The SLIC office will mirror GPA requirements of certain graduate and professional programs. This will be handled on a case by case basis between the SLIC office and the department of the student leader.

- **Step 2: Meet with SLIC staff member**
  - Once the form has been submitted, the President will receive an email from the Coordinator for Student Organization Development to setup a meeting with the officers. This meeting will help us get know more about the organization and for us to share the requirements and expectations of student organizations. During this meeting all officers will need to sign a GPA Authorization Form.

- **Step 3: Register the student organization on RamsConnect**
  - Once the organization is approved, the Student Leadership and Involvement Center will create an account for your organization on RamsConnect. The President will then receive an approval e-mail with instructions on how to register the organization’s account in RamsConnect.
  - When registering, you will be asked to include the following information:
    - Description
    - Profile picture
    - Contact information
      - Your mailbox address will be: (Student Organization Name)
        907 Floyd Avenue
        PO Box 842035
        Richmond, VA 23284
• Roster with at least 8 with VCU email addresses (RamsConnect can only recognize VCU accounts so be sure not to list personal email addresses)
  o List three (3) officers - President, Vice President, Treasurer

When you have submitted the registration through RamsConnect and it is approved, your members will receive an email invitation asking them to confirm their membership. Each member must confirm the invitation to be listed on the page.

Once you have registered and have at least eight (8) confirmed members on your RamsConnect roster, your organization will be considered a registered student organization at Virginia Commonwealth University!

**Annual Student Organization Registration**

Each year all organizations are required to renew their registration with the Student Leadership and Involvement Center if they wish to stay as an official organization. Registration will open on June 30, 2016 and stay open through September 14, 2016. If the organization does not meet the deadline, they will have to wait until registration reopens in January to become a registered organization.

Since the individual listed as President is the only person able to complete registration, please be sure that he/she is listed as such on RamsConnect.

**Organization Categories**

When a new organization registers, they are assigned a category based on the purpose of the organization. Below are the categories.

• Class
• Competitive Club
• Cultural
• Fraternity/Sorority
• Governing
• Honorary
• Political
• Professional/Academic
• Programming
• Recreational
• Service
• Social Justice
• Special Interest
• Spiritual
• Sports Clubs
• Student Media
**Student Organization Requirements**
Student organizations are required to complete the following in order to maintain an active registration status. Organizations that fail to complete the requirements will become inactive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All organization must have a minimum of 8 members</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain a President, Vice President, and Treasurer (included in 8-member minimum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Send an officer to one organization orientation meeting during the fall semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Submit Annual Registration Form through RamsConnect and a GPA Authorization Form to the SLIC Office by Wednesday, September 14, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain accurate roster including all officer positions on RamsConnect</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain an active and accurate RamsConnect account</td>
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<tr>
<th>Community Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Document applicable service hours on RamsConnect</td>
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<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Organization representation (one member or executive) at Fall and Spring Organization Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fall Conference will be held on Saturday, September 17, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Spring Conference date will be released in Fall 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Organization participation (one member) in at least 1 organization workshop per semester (org-specific or lunch ‘n lead)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Scholarship</th>
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<td>• Undergraduate President, Vice President, and Treasurer must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Graduate President, Vice President, and Treasurer must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0</td>
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<th>Accountability</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Must follow all VCU, USC&amp;A and Student Organization policies as stated in policy guidebooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Complete Finance Training (if using SGA funding)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Attend Event Management System Training (highly encouraged)</td>
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**Benefits of Being a Student Organization**
Student organizations must register with the Student Leadership and Involvement Center to take advantage of the benefits we provide. The following are resources available to you as a registered student organization:

- 150 black and white copies per month
- Computer stations with printers
- Banner paper and art supplies
- Helium tank, button maker, and other PR materials
- Registration and webpage on RamsConnect
- Opportunity to apply for SGA funding for conference travel, events, and programs
- Room reservations on campus
- Weekly Newsletter
- Invitation to the Leadership and Service Awards Ceremony
Advisors
Advisors play an important role in the success of student organizations here at VCU. They offer guidance, support, and knowledge to student leaders, while also helping to interpret University rules and policies. Their role can vary based on organizational activities and purpose. While your organization is not required to have an advisor, we encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity.

Some of the benefits of having an advisor are:

- They can help manifest the enthusiasm necessary to help the organization reach its potential.
- They can assist in formulating goals and direction for the organization.
- They can assist in the development of procedures and methods for maintaining an effective organization.
- They can assist in matters of University procedures and help interpret policy.
- They can assist members in improving leadership skills.
- They can serve as a liaison with the University when necessary.
- They can guide the organization in planning activities and programs.
- They can encourage and support the organization through challenges.
- They can serve, as needed, as an arbitrator or impartial observer.
- They can participate in the meetings and events of the organization.

While there are many different roles an advisor can take on, the advisor and organization should agree on a set of expectations of one another from the onset and should write this list down as a contract between the organization and the advisor.

Some of the roles they can take on are:

- **Mentor**: having a basic understanding of student needs, a desire to challenge students, providing support, and the ability to listen to students.
- **Team Builder**: taking initiative to help individual students come together and set goals, build a team, and create a positive environment.
- **Conflict Mediator**: helping students work through conflict by mediating discussions and reminding them of the purpose of the organization.
- **Educator**: modeling positive behaviors, guiding the students through reflection, and being a resource.
- **Motivator**: encouraging students through challenges as an organization and recognizing success.
- **Policy Interpreter**: reminding students of University policies, procedures, and rules for student organizations

Policies and Procedures

General Information
Student organizations are required to abide by the policies and procedures created by the University. Failure to abide will result in loss of registration status.
Membership
The majority of the membership of the organization must be currently enrolled students at VCU. A minimum of eight (8) currently enrolled VCU students are required to form and maintain an organization.

Non-students may hold membership in an organization as an associate member. However, they may not serve as an officer nor may they conduct official business on behalf of the organization.

Officer Positions and Grade Requirements
Each organization is required to have a President, Vice President, and Treasurer and they must maintain certain academic requirements in order to hold an office. Undergraduate students must be enrolled and registered for a minimum of six (6) credit hours and graduate students must be enrolled and registered for a minimum of three (3) credit hours. Officers must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.30 for undergraduates and 3.00 for graduate students*. Any officer who fails to meet any portion of these academic standards will be contacted by the Student Leadership and Involvement Center and will not be able to serve in an officer position until they meet the minimum requirements.

*The SLIC office will mirror GPA requirements of certain graduate and professional programs. This will be handled on a case by case basis between the SLIC office and the academic department of the student leader.

Part of being an organization officer is to stay up to date with information from the Student Leadership and Involvement Center such as annual registration and trainings. They are also expected to keep their RamsConnect page accurate with officer information and their membership roster.

Hazing
Hazing is prohibited by law in the Commonwealth of Virginia and by Virginia Commonwealth University. Hazing is activity which is physically or mentally abusive, potentially dangerous, humiliating or demeaning, or which interferes with academic achievement and the human rights of the individual.

Discrimination
Virginia Commonwealth University will maintain a strong commitment to outstanding achievement, educational excellence and high principle. Activities of the university are designed to promote the continuing policy of providing equal opportunity for employment and education and access to all programs and services without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, political affiliation, veterans’ status, sexual orientation or disability. Notwithstanding these provisions, a religious or political student organization may determine that ordering the organization’s internal affairs, selecting the organization’s leader and members, defining the organization’s doctrines, and resolving the organization’s disputes are in furtherance of the organization’s religious or political mission and that only persons committed to that mission should conduct such activities. If such a determination is reached, the organization may limit the selection of members or customary rights and privileges of membership in the organization. Such determination shall be certified in the registration form.

Logo and Name
A student organization may not use the University’s name or an abbreviation of the University's name, in the name of the student organization in such a manner to suggest the organization is
sponsored by the University. Student organizations may use "of VCU" or "at VCU" following the name of the student organization, so that the location of the organization is reflected in the name. For example:

VCU Cooking Club is NOT allowed
Cooking Club at VCU is CORRECT

**Trademarks and Licensing**
As a student organization, you are able to apply for funding towards publicizing your student organization. We also understand that you would like to display your organization with pride and at times, you may want to include a VCU logo or trademark.

To ensure you are properly following guidelines, anything bearing VCU’s key trademarks will need to be purchased from a licensed vendor.

Key VCU trademarks include:
- Virginia Commonwealth University®
- VCU®
- VCU Rams ™
- Rams ™
- Medical College of Virginia ™
- MCV ™
- VCU Health System ™
- Havoc ™

To confirm which vendors are licensed to produce any of VCU’s key trademarks, here is the link to view all current licensed vendors:

[http://www.identity.vcu.edu/](http://www.identity.vcu.edu/)

For additional questions or concerns, please email identity@vcu.edu or call 804-828-1463.

**Alcohol Policy**
Organizations and its activities may NOT contain references to "alcoholic beverages," "cocktails," "keg" or other terms or illustrations descriptive of alcoholic beverages or their consumption. Additionally, student organizations are reminded that promotions that could be interpreted as demeaning based upon gender differences, racial and ethnic groups, or individuals subscribing to nontraditional and/or alternative lifestyles have been found to be offensive and objectionable.

**Violation of Policies**
If an organization fails to abide by University policy, you will be contacted by the Student Leadership and Involvement Center to discuss the violation. The appropriate actions will be taken to remedy the situation.
Event Planning

Planning Your Event
The Event and Meeting Services office is available to help your organization reserve space in the Student Commons, Larrick Student Center, and Hunton Student Center for meetings and events. They are also available to assist with vendor recommendations, audio/visual support, parking needs, as well as tips and advice on how to successfully plan and execute events. They can be reached at 804-828-9502 or at mera@vcu.edu. They are located in Room 106 of the University Student Commons.

Reserving a Room
To reserve a room, go to www.mera.vcu.edu. Your organization can also reserve information tables, banner space, and the rolling display boards.

Reservation requests for publicity and information tables/standard* meeting spaces must be made through Virtual EMS at least 3 business days prior to the requested date.

Reservations for non-standard* meeting and event space must be made through Virtual EMS at least 10 days prior to the requested date. A “complex event” request must be submitted through Virtual EMS at least 90 calendar days in advance. See below for what constitutes as a complex event.

*Standard vs. non-standard meeting space:
  - Standard space: already equipped with furniture (i.e. Shockoe, Metro, Forum Room)
  - Non-standard meeting space: a clear room; furniture needs to be added (i.e. Commonwealth Ballroom, Richmond Salons, Virginia Rooms)

Complex Events
If your event includes any of the following, it is considered a complex event:
  - Attendance (expected or historical) of more than 100 people
  - Tickets (paid or free)
  - Contracted Services (catering, speakers, DJ’s, etc.)
  - Police and/or Security Required
  - Audio Visual Support (DJ, band, multiple mics, speakers, etc.)
  - Alcohol is Served
  - Event is a: Social, Festival, Carnival, Dance, Fashion Show, Pageant, Auction, Open Mic, Concert, or Culture Show

Event Planning Resources
Please reference the Meetings and Events Guidelines & Procedures Manual for more information: http://www.usca.vcu.edu/event-meeting-services/

If you have any questions regarding space reservations or set-up, contact the Event and Meeting Services office in Room 106 of the University Student Commons or send an email to mera@vcu.edu.
Publicity and Communication

Publicity Resources
There are many ways you can promote your event. Below are a few recommendations of how to publicize:

- RamsConnect Events: Create an event page and upload a flyer to the virtual bulletin board on home page of site.
  1. Log in to your campus site and go to your organization’s page.
  2. Go to Events on the left side.
  3. Click on “Create Event”.
  4. Enter in the information requested.
  5. Attach a flyer to associate with your event.
  6. Specify the type of event:
     - Public: Anyone who accesses the site will be able to view this event.
     - Campus Only: Any logged-in user can view this event.
     - Organization Only: Only members of your organization can view this event.
     - Invitation Only: Only those invited to this event can view it.

- TelegRAM: Email announcement to Faculty, Staff and Students. Submit email announcement to: www.vcu.edu/telegRAM/.

- University Calendar: Place your program on the online University Calendar by submitting a request at: http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/calendar/

- Axis-TV: Create a PowerPoint slide and email in JPG form to contactusca@vcu.edu

- Banners: You must make a reservation through MERA to have it hung
  - This can be done on Virtual EMS at www.mera.vcu.edu
  - All banners must be 8’ x 3’
  - Inside banners: may be paper or vinyl
  - Outside banners: MUST be vinyl with grommets in each corner

- Facebook: Create events and use announcements to post to newsgroups

RamsConnect Website

Roster Management
It is important to update your roster on a regular basis. Please keep in mind that the President is the only person able to manage the organization’s roster. To manage your roster:

From your organization’s page:
1. Go to Roster on the left side of the page.
2. Click “Manage Roster” at the top of the page.
3. Click on “Invite People” at the top of the page.
4. Up to 2 tabs may display to invite people from.
   - Users: This tab lists out all users within the campus community for you to invite to join your organization.
   - Email: This tab allows you to enter individual e-mail addresses for invitations to be sent to.
5. As you select people and add e-mail addresses, they will be moved below the tabbed module to the complete list of people to be sent invitations.
6. Select a position for specific users to join the organization as, including Member.
7. Click “Send Invitations” when all people have been added to this list.

New members can join by locating your organization on the RamsConnect page. You must approve these new members before they are added to the organization’s roster.

1. Go to Roster on the left side of your organization’s page.
2. Click “Manage Roster” at the top of the page.
3. Go to the Prospective tab.
   **Pending members are those you invited and must accept your invitation. Prospective members are those who found the organization and indicated they wanted to join.**
4. Review the users who are awaiting membership approval.
5. Click “Approve” or “Deny” next to each user.

Changing Leadership
Most organizations change leadership on a yearly basis and it is important to keep your RamsConnect page current. Due to how the system works, it is important to use the following steps to update your organization’s leadership. If this is not done when you transition, the new President will NOT have access to making changes on the website. The past President of the organization must take the following steps to update the roster.

1. Log in to: https://vcu.collegiatelink.net/
2. Go to your organization’s page.
3. Go to Roster on the left side of the page.
4. Click on "Manage Roster".
5. Locate each individual who will be assuming a leadership position.
6. Click “Edit Positions” to the far right of their name.
7. Select the position(s) the member should now have.
8. Click “Save”.

Once you have added the new leadership, you can go through the following steps to remove officers from their old position. The primary contact of the organization can remove individuals from the organization. You can remove them completely from the organization or just the one position they held, but maintain their membership.

1. Click on “Manage Roster”.
2. Locate each individual that needs to be removed from the organization with the appropriate position labeled. Each individual will be listed for their position and as a member.
3. Click “Edit Positions” to remove the user from a position in the organization.
4. Uncheck the appropriate positions.
5. Click “Save”.
   OR
6. Check the box to the far right of each individual.
7. Click “Delete”.
8. Confirm deletion.
   **Deleting a user will remove them completely from the organization.**
Finance

Introduction
USC&A Finance is the one stop shop for all of your student organization's financial needs. The Finance staff members are available to provide students assistance in the areas of funding requests, purchase requests, reimbursements, budget reallocations, travel, and more.

Bank Accounts
Student organizations may open an account with an off-campus bank or credit union. It is strongly recommended that all off-campus bank or credit union be established with two signatures for the withdrawal of funds from the account.

Any funding received from the Student Government Association (SGA) must stay in the on-campus account managed through RamsConnect. This account can only be accessed by the President and Treasurer of each organization once they have completed the finance training process.

Student Government Association Funding
Student organizations with the classifications of Class, Competitive, Cultural, Honorary, Political, Professional/Academic, Recreational, Service, Social Justice, Special Interest and Spiritual are able to apply for funding directly through the SGA Appropriations Committee.

To become eligible for SGA funding, an organization must be active for 30-days and must be in good standing with Virginia Commonwealth University and the Student Leadership and Involvement Center. Once the 30-day period has passed, a budget may be requested. Before any SGA funding can be spent, the President and Treasurer of the organization MUST complete finance training and pass the mandatory quiz.

Member Dues
Student organizations are allowed to collect membership dues. The money collected through dues should be held in an off-campus bank account created for the student organization.

Reimbursement
The following information should accompany every Reimbursement Request:
- Reimbursement form signed by authorized organization President or Treasurer.
- ORIGINAL receipts and/or invoice. (receipts should be taped to blank piece of paper)
- Copy of card used for payment—cross out ALL digits, except for last four or copy of bank statement showing charge.
- If food is involved include:
  - Flyer w/ approximate number of attendees, OR
  - List of attendee names

The following should accompany every Travel Reimbursement Request:
- SOF Travel Reimbursement form signed by authorized organization President or Treasurer (orange colored form).
- VCU Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher, signed by traveler only.
- ORIGINAL hotel check-out folio showing room rate and all applicable taxes.
- ORIGINAL receipts for incidental expenses—gas, parking, etc. (receipts should be taped to blank piece of paper).
• Copy of card used for payments—cross out ALL digits, except for last four or copy of bank statement showing charge.
• Food is NOT funded for travel.

Fundraising Ideas
Many student organizations host fundraisers throughout the year to help pay for travel or events or to raise money for charity. While the sky is the limit, below are some suggestions.

• Events and Activities
  o Car Wash
  o Spaghetti Dinner
  o Ice Cream Social
  o Sales (candy, cards, flower, etc.)
  o Talent Show
  o Tournament (sport, game, etc.)
  o Benefits (concerts, film showings, etc.)
  o A-thons (bicycle, swim, hula-hoop, etc.)
  o Give Back Night (restaurant donates percentage of money earned)

• Contests and Raffles
  o Guess the number or weight (jar of jelly beans, pennies, etc.)
  o Pageant/Competition

• Drives and Collections
  o Aluminum can/glass bottle collection
  o Cell phones
  o Inkjet printer cartridges
  o Clothes
  o Books
  o Toys

Please be sure to review the fundraising and money collection policies before planning your event.

Travel

Process
To ensure success of travel, student organizations that have received travel funding through the MPC SGA must to adhere to the following guidelines:

• All travel paperwork is due at least 30 days prior to travel to the Student Leadership and Involvement Center.
  o The minimum GPA requirement for travel with SGA funding is a 2.5.
• Airfare and rail must be arranged by the finance office (NO EXCEPTIONS).
• Registration can be arranged either by the finance office, or the student organization can pay out of pocket, and submit for reimbursement.
• Lodging, rental car, and gas will have to be purchased out of pocket by the student organization.
• Each student organization will need to plan to have these expenses paid out of pocket.
• Student organizations will need to submit reimbursement paperwork within five (5) business days after returning from the trip

Required travel paperwork to be turned in to the Student Leadership and Involvement Center:
• USC&A Travel Authorization – cover sheet for travel authorization packet
• Travelers Statement of Responsibility and Authorization – signed by each member traveling
• Travel Waiver – signed by each member traveling

Organizational Development and Leadership

Constitution and Bylaws
A group’s constitution and bylaws are important documents that govern its purpose and future actions. Be sure to anticipate the future to ensure that your constitution does not limit the organization’s options for growth and change.

The constitution of an organization contains the fundamental operating principles that govern its operation. The bylaws establish specific rules of guidance by which the group is to function. All registered student organizations should have their basic structure and methods of operation in writing. The constitution is the essence of the overall purpose of the organization and is not changed unless the purpose changes. Bylaws set forth in detail the procedures a group must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. They provide further definitions to the articles of the constitution and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change.

Elections
Student organizations are encouraged to hold elections on an annual basis. There are no formal requirements as to how elections should run so each organization should follow the procedures in their Constitution. All organizations have access to the Elections feature on RamsConnect. For more information on how this works, please review the steps below.

Create an Election for your Organization:
1. Log in to RamsConnect and go to your organization’s page.
2. Click on Elections on the left side of the page.
3. Click the “Create Election” button.
4. Identify the Name of the election, if it should include instructions, and any additional instructions that should be included.
5. Indicate if the election should be active and the date range you’d like the election to be available during.
   ** Once the election is set to Active and it falls within the date range, a prompt will display on the Home page of your organization’s site for eligible users to vote. **
6. Indicate if the election is for Members Only.
7. Click “Save”.

You can create as many ballots as needed. Each ballot can be accessible to the general user population or any number of the eligibility lists. A user will see each ballot they are designated to see.

8. Click “Create Ballot”. 
9. Enter the name of the ballot.
10. Indicate if this ballot should be available to all users by clicking on Enable or Disable.

IF you disable the General access, THEN:
11. Indicate for each Eligibility List who should access this ballot:
   - Allow: allows the users on the list can access the ballot
   - Deny: users cannot access the ballot and supersedes an allow list
   - Ignore: the list will not be used for the ballot
12. Click “Save” when all access has been identified.
13. Click “Back to List” when you have created all of the questions for this ballot. Confirm action.
14. Repeat steps 9-13 for each ballot needed.

You have now built your election. Be sure that it is set to Active so that the prompt will display on the main page of your organization’s site for members to vote.

View Ballot Results
1. Log in to your campus site.
2. Go to your organization.
3. Click on Elections on the left side of the page.
4. Click on the name of the election.
5. Go to the Results tab.
6. A snapshot of the current results will display, including the total number of eligible voters, the number of current entries, and the current percent of completed entries.
7. Click the “Export” button to download an Excel file of all the ballot entries.

Officer Transition
The officer transition process is a key step to a successful upcoming year. Taking time to have an officer transition meeting or retreat allows the outgoing officers to share information and knowledge with the incoming officers. Some of the important things to do during this time is to share job descriptions, organization constitution, policies, and other important documents. The new officers should also create a calendar with meetings and events for the upcoming year.

Developmental Opportunities
The Student Leadership and Involvement Center provides regular opportunities to enhance your leadership skills. Please read the weekly e-blast for upcoming sessions and conferences. The information will also be listed on the Student Leadership and Involvement Center RamsConnect page.