



STUDENT SENATE

STUDENT ORGANIZATION CHARTER GUIDE

A student organization's charter is its guiding document, so you should take some time to make sure that it is something that future members of your club or organization will be able to follow. What you include in your charter will depend on the type and purpose of organization you are founding. Some charters should be long and specific, while others can be short and to the point. At a minimum, all charters should establish the student organization's purpose and general practices for making decisions.

If you amend your organization's charter, please upload the new charter as a PDF along with your organization's meeting minutes, and make sure to list how many people voted in favor and against the change. Note that the amendment can be overturned by Student Senate at the following Senate meeting.

REQUIREMENTS

Mission statement: The organization's purpose and goals must be stated clearly in the charter, preferably near the beginning. Note that the mission statement must be compatible with the core values of Pitzer College, and must be sustainable over a period of multiple years.

Officer selection: While not every organization requires a rigid hierarchy, it is nevertheless important (and mandatory) that it select individuals to fill a few key roles. Every organization needs a president, who is responsible for guiding the direction of the organization and making sure the group meets. Every organization also requires a designated secretary, who is responsible for submitting meeting minutes, and a treasurer, who is responsible for tracking finances. Note that a single person can hold two or more of these positions at the same time. The charter should clearly establish a system for selecting these officers, which can be done through a vote or an appointment process, or any other system that is fair to all involved.

Decision-making process: Lastly, the charter needs a clear system for making important decisions about funding, meeting times, events, and the direction of the organization. A vote by a majority of active club members is the default system, but different processes could also work.

OPTIONAL CONTENT

Additional officer positions: While every organization needs at least a president, secretary, and treasurer, it may also designate additional positions in its charter. Some organizations might have a vice president, a communications secretary, or special liaisons, for instance. Make sure that the duties of these positions are clearly established.

Alternate names for officer positions: The name of any title for an officer position can be altered in the charter. For instance, many organizations call their president a point-person, chair, executive director, or something completely different. Titles can range from the unobtrusive to the fanciful, as long as all of the basic duties are still accomplished.

Amending the charter: Sometimes it may become necessary for your organization to amend its charter. This is particularly true for complex and detailed charters. Your charter can have rules for how this process can take place, and what of members must vote in favor to amend the charter. If no process is outlined in the charter, then the default rules for amending it is that a simple majority of all active members must vote in favor.

Dissolving the organization: This one is definitely optional, but some organizations might want to list a procedure for dissolving the organization in their charter. This typically requires a unanimous vote, or at least a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote.

Other specific information: If there are any other requirements or procedures that you want your organization to follow, such as term limits, membership requirements, or meeting guidelines, then you can establish those in your charter as well.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Don't list any specific students as members of your organization in the charter. For example, you shouldn't list Jane Doe as the President under the officers section of your charter. Individual students graduate and change interests, but your charter should theoretically work for your organization indefinitely.

Don't make an overcomplicated charter that nobody will ever look at again. If nobody bothers reading the charter, then there is no point in writing it. Clubs with a narrow focus or informal meeting style should stick to short, straightforward charters.

SAMPLE CHARTERS

Pages 4 through 7 of this document include two sample student organization charters that may be helpful as a template for how to construct either a simple or an elaborate charter. Both clubs are purely fictional and do not currently exist at Pitzer College.

For some good examples of well-written charters from current student organizations, see the following.

- ★ [Agora Charter](#)
- ★ [Chess Club Charter](#)
- ★ [LSU Constitution](#)
- ★ [M.A.G.E. Constitution](#)
- ★ [Order of the Sagehen Constitution](#)

More charters of current clubs and organizations can be found on the [student organizations page](#) of the Student Senate Website.

SAMPLE CHARTER 1

The student organization presented here is fictional and is not recognized in any manner by the Pitzer College Student Senate.

Pitzer College Book Club Charter

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Pitzer College Book Club will be to provide students with a space in which to discuss and learn about novels, short stories, and other literary works. Reading materials will include contemporary work as well as classics, and will cover a diverse range of authors and subject materials. Readings will be decided upon at meetings and sent to members electronically when possible. However, the club will also maintain a small library of physical books.

Point-Person

The club will elect a point-person through a majority vote by all active members. The point-person is responsible for organizing meetings, tracking club funds, submitting meeting minutes, and filling out all other paperwork.

Voting

Important decisions for the club are made through a majority vote by all active club members.

General Practices

Club funds will be used to establish and maintain a small library of physical books, in order to make paper copies of important works of literature available to all students. Remaining funds will be used for the purchase of snacks and drinks for club meetings.

Meetings are held weekly and are open to all members of the Pitzer community.

SAMPLE CHARTER 2

The student organization presented here is fictional and is not recognized in any manner by the Pitzer College Student Senate. Derived in part from the charters of *M.A.G.E. Club* and *The Order of the Sagehen* (2017).

OPERATING CHARTER AND BYLAWS
of the
PITZER COLLEGE HOME BOX OFFICE VIEWERS SOCIETY
(PZHBO)

Article One — NAME

- I. The name of this student organization shall be the Pitzer College Home Box Office Viewers Society, referred to hereinafter as the Society, and which may also be abbreviated as PZHBO or the HBO Society.

Article Two — DECLARATION OF ASSOCIATION

- I. The Society hereby seeks approval from the Pitzer College Student Senate to assemble at Pitzer College with all rights and responsibilities associated with a student organization recognized by the aforementioned Senate.
- II. The Society agrees to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Pitzer College Student Senate, the Pitzer College Student Code of Conduct, and all local, state, and federal laws.

Article Three — PURPOSE

- I. The purpose of the Society shall be to provide resources, space, and atmosphere in which members can view and discuss the television series and other content created by Home Box Office (HBO). As the costs of legally accessing an HBO subscription can be prohibitively expensive, the Society shall be a means for the Pitzer Community to enjoy HBO content.

Article Four — MEMBERSHIP

- I. Membership of the Society shall be open to all currently enrolled students at Pitzer College.
- II. No student shall be denied access to the Society or otherwise discriminated against on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, identity, or disability.
- III. Membership dues or fees shall not be charged.
- IV. A member shall be deemed “active” if they meet all of the following requirements:
 - A. They have attended at least two meetings of the Society.
 - B. They have attended at least one coordination meeting in the past six months.
 - C. They have attended at least one meeting of the Society in the past month.

Article Five — OFFICERS

- I. The Society shall be governed and directed by a Board of Officers, hereinafter referred to as the Board.

- II. The Board shall consist of six officers: the Executive Director, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Scheduling Officer, the Content Procurement Officer, and the Communications Officer.
- III. The Executive Director shall chair all coordination meetings, represent the Society to other stakeholders in the Pitzer community, and shall coordinate the activities of the other officers.
- IV. The Secretary shall record and submit meeting minutes and shall keep a record of all active members of the society and the attendance of all meetings.
- V. The Treasurer shall oversee and track the finances of the Society, complete reimbursement forms, and represent the Society to the Student Senate Budget Committee when necessary.
- VI. The Scheduling Officer shall coordinate the schedule of all viewing meetings of the Society to ensure maximum turnout from active members and other members of the Pitzer community who have expressed interest in attending, and shall reserve available spaces on campus for these meetings.
- VII. The Content Procurement Officer shall ensure that the Society has access to legal HBO content, and shall keep track of all login information necessary to access that content and shall provide that information to the other officers when necessary.
- VIII. The Communications Officer shall publicize all meetings of the Society and shall work to increase participation in the society in the Pitzer student body.

Article Six — SELECTION OF OFFICERS

- I. In order to ensure continuity of the Society between academic years, the Executive Director shall be selected through a majority vote by all active members at the final scheduled coordination meeting of the academic year, and shall serve throughout the summer and the following academic year.
- II. All other officers shall be selected through a majority vote by all active member at a coordination meeting near the beginning of the academic year.
- III. A single individual may hold up to three officer positions simultaneously, but only if there are no candidates for that position who do not already hold another officer position.
 - A. If a single individual holds multiple officer positions simultaneously, their vote shall still only be counted once during any vote at a coordination meeting.
- IV. Officers may be removed from their positions by a two-thirds vote by all active members at any coordination meeting.

Article Seven — MEETINGS

- I. There shall be two kinds of meetings of the Society: viewing meetings and coordination meetings.
- II. Viewing meetings shall be for viewing and discussing television series and other content. They shall be scheduled based on interest in various shows by members.
 - A. At least one officer shall be present at every viewing meeting.
- III. Coordination meetings shall be for planning viewing meetings, voting to allocate funds, and electing officers.
 - A. The entire Board shall be present for each coordination meeting. Any other active member of the Society may also participate and vote on any matter.
 - B. Decisions to allocate funding must be approved by a majority of those present at the coordination meeting.

- C. Robert's Rules of Order, or any other rules of order duly adopted by the Board, shall govern all coordination meetings.

Article Eight — CHARTER

- I. Any part of this charter may be amended through a vote by two-thirds of those present at a coordination meeting.
- II. This charter shall go into effect once recognized by the Pitzer College Student Senate.

Article Nine — DISSOLUTION

- I. The Society may be dissolved and disbanded through a unanimous vote at a coordination meeting.
- II. All active members must be notified via email prior to the meeting that the vote will take place.