

## **Disabled Student Union Constitution**

Originally created September 2022 by Jamie Canty, Whit Flores, and Pat Smith

**Revised April 2024: Amber Baldwin, Whit Flores, Lee Hall**

### **Article I: Name**

The name of this organization shall be the “Disabled Student Union” at Christopher Newport University. (abbreviated: DSU).

### **Article II: Membership**

This club is meant to be a support group for disabled students at CNU. “Disabled” includes anyone who identifies as such or does not but is physically, mentally, cognitively, or psychiatrically disabled. This includes people who are neurodivergent, people with learning disabilities, and people who have a mental illness, chronic pain, or a chronic illness, “visible” or not. No “proof” or “official” diagnosis required. We believe you.

There are no restrictions on who can join. Members can join at any point in the semester. The club does not wish to discriminate against anyone or block access to any students who would benefit from the club, but it is meant to support disabled students. Non-disabled students are welcome to attend meetings (unless stated otherwise for specific meetings), especially if accompanying and supporting a disabled friend.

Donations may be requested for events, but we will have no required “dues.”

### **Article III: Meetings**

The club will hold fairly unstructured monthly meetings with the purpose of building community and supporting each other. Additional meetings and events can be planned and executed by any member of the club and may include game nights, “PowerPoint nights,” discussions on specific topics, and “lectures” about disability issues or history. Educational content, such as panels or open discussions for or directed by non-disabled members of the community, may be executed as well.

The DSU aims to be as accessible as possible, and having flexible events and scheduling supports that objective.

### **Article IV: E-Board and Voting**

The e-board of the DSU is an organizing committee, not above the rest of the club. All E-Board roles will be nominated on and voted for by the full group at the end of the spring semester. Members may nominate a candidate for office, and the candidate must accept the nomination in order to be eligible for office so as to prevent offices from being held by unwilling candidates. Officers will be chosen from nominated candidates based on a majority vote. Others in the group

are welcome to help as much as they wish, and the E-Board may ask for volunteers for certain projects.

### **Section 1: Officer Roles**

1. **President:** The president of the Disabled Student Union provides leadership and direction to the club. The duties of this position are as follows:
  - Understands and adheres to club operating guidelines set forth by the OSI
  - Presides at meetings
  - Oversees the activities of the executive board
  - Coordinates activities through the executive board
  - Establishes short and long range objectives/goals for the club in conjunction with the executive board
  - Provide opportunities for new leaders to develop and be mentored
2. **Vice President:** The vice president of the Disabled Student Union is fully engaged in all aspects of the club's activities. The duties of this position are as follows:
  - Plans and coordinates programs with the president and the executive board
  - Provides reflection on previous club events to allow the Treasurer to benefit from past experiences and suggestions for improvement
  - Presides at meetings in the absence of of the president
  - Ensures strong leadership by identifying and recruiting new club members
  - Provides mentorship to new officers
3. **Historian:** The historian of the Disabled Student Union manages all club correspondence. The duties of this position are as follows:
  - Handles the correspondence of the club, keeps records of said correspondence.
  - Maintains official records of meetings
  - Informs officers of deadlines, notices, newsletters, and future commitments
  - Maintains DSU email
  - Maintains complete and up to date copies of the club's bylaws and other organizational documents.
4. **Secretary:** The secretary assists the historian of the club with their roles and responsibilities. The duties of this position are as follows:
  - In addition to assisting the historian with club correspondence, the secretary manages the club's instagram and social media accounts
  - Posts relevant information on social media platforms (i.e. club meeting dates, future events, and other upcoming club involvements)
  - Responds to comments and private messages that are received online

- Posts club promotional content online and around campus (i.e. submit promotional information to the OSI's "weekly roundup" of things happening on campus, prints fliers and places around campus)
5. **Treasurer:** The treasurer oversees club finances and related matters. The duties of this position are as follows:
- Manages club finances received, collects dues (if any are in place), receives other monies (i.e. from fundraising efforts)
  - Follows best financial practices as delegated by the president.
  - Completes financial reports and summaries on a semester basis
  - Assists the president and other officers in preparing program budgets and financial controls
  - Maintains and supervises club bank accounts (if applicable)
  - Prepares and submits financial statements to the president and the executive committee on a regular basis

## **Section 2: Elections, Resignations, and Removal**

In order to remove an officer from office, a 75% majority vote by members of the chapter must be in favor of removal. In the case that an officer is being removed, the chapter adviser must be notified immediately. A new officer must be selected in a timely manner. In the meantime, existing officers must fulfill the role. The chapter must be notified immediately of the open position. Nominations for the open position must be held during the following meeting, and the chapter may vote on nominated individuals at the next meeting. This selection process will also apply if an officer steps down.

**Section 3:** Decisions concerning the club, including meeting times, event types, and discussion topics, will be left up to the entire group whenever possible. The president will have the final say, but they should keep the best interests and the wishes of the rest of the club in mind.

## **Article IVa: Advisor Selection Process**

Ideally, the advisor to the DSU will be a disabled faculty or staff of CNU. If none are available or a non-disabled faculty or staff is requested they may sign up for the advisor role. All roles and responsibilities of the advisor will be communicated and agreed upon between the e-board and the advisor, as needed, at least yearly.

## **Article V: Conduct**

Do not ask anyone "what happened to you?" or any similar invasion question about another's disabilities, medical history, support needs, or abilities. Everyone is welcome to share that information if they so choose, and friends within the group are trusted to bring up any questions with their friend, but no one is entitled to the information.

Give content or trigger warnings when discussing topics that may be upsetting to other members when possible. No topic is strictly off limits, but discretion is requested. Being mindful with how we approach difficult topics is important to building trust in our group and creating a safe environment.

### **Article VI: Hazing and Other Harm**

**Section 1 :** The Disabled Student Union, in accordance with Christopher Newport University and Virginia state law, is unconditionally against hazing. No individual member or the organization as a whole may plan or engage in any activities that may be defined as hazing.

**Section 2:** The Disabled Student Union opposes any situation created to intentionally cause mental harm, physical harm, embarrassment, or harassment of its members or potential members. The members and organization as a whole may not by any means attempt to impair an individual's freedom of thought and choice.

**Section 3:** Hateful speech and explicit ableism is not tolerated; neither is making others feel unsafe.

### **Article VII: Sanction**

One warning will be given before banning. A meeting to discuss and potentially resolve the issue may be attempted if there is a member willing to conduct it. A second warning of hateful, mean-spirited, or harmful behavior, including hazing, will lead to the subject being banned from future meetings.

### **Article VIII: Tenets**

We will honor principles of intersectionality by recognizing we all have identities in addition to their disability that may privilege or oppress. All identities and intersections are important and valid. No discrimination or hate towards anyone because of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, religion, political affiliations, etc. will be tolerated and may lead to removal from the organization.

We recognize that everyone has different experiences and feelings about their disability and their mind and body, accessibility, accommodations, etc. Everyone's experiences and feelings are valid and will be respected as such. Intolerance of this may result in removal from the organization

### **Article IX: Responsibilities**

This organization will adhere to all university policies and all local, state, and federal laws.

### **Article X-Amendments**

Any member wishing to make an amendment must submit it in writing to the E-Board. The president will then hold a vote with the full organization. If the amendment receives majority approval (50%), then the amendment will be added to the constitution and immediately go into effect. The revised constitution will immediately be sent to the Office of Student Activities.