

Disabled Student Union Constitution

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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 E-Board may ask for volunteers for certain projects.

Section 1: Officer Roles

1. **President:** The President acts as the head of the organization's executive board. They are responsible for overseeing the meetings and acting as a general moderator in discussions and panels.
2. **Vice President:** The Vice President is in charge of membership. The Vice President aids with new membership and returning members. The vice president is also responsible for filling in for the President in any event that the President cannot fulfill their duties.
3. **Historian:** The Historian is responsible for club communications and social media, as well as any advertising done by the club.
4. **Secretary:** The Secretary is responsible for recording the meeting minutes as well as maintaining chapter documents.
5. **Treasurer:** The Treasurer will manage all funds for the club.

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 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.