

Black Law Students Association
Michigan State University College of Law

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Article I. IDENTIFICATION

The Black Law Students Association shall be the official name of this organization. Additionally, the Black Law Students Association shall recognize for historical purposes and as necessary its legacy as the Wolverine Student Bar Association/Black Law Students Association.

Article II. PURPOSE

The Black Law Students Association shall be an advocate for the recruitment, retention, and educational development of students of African heritage, and other underrepresented students seeking legal education and training. The Black Law Student Association shall unite these students in the common purpose of scholastic achievement through diverse educational, professional, and community service experiences.

Article III. MISSION

The Black Law Students Association (Association) shall provide students of African heritage and other underrepresented law students with the resources and tools necessary to successfully obtain the Juris Doctor degree and pass state bar examinations. The Association shall bolster the minority presence in the legal profession by establishing and maintaining the following:

- (a) The Association shall promote unity within the Michigan State University College of Law (MSU-COL) underrepresented law student community and the Law College community as a whole through diverse and collaborative programming designed to raise cultural awareness and involvement through mentorship, strategic and informational programming, electronic and print resources, and community service.
- (b) The Association shall endeavor to encourage and support diverse individuals at all levels in their pursuit of legal education and training while actively recruiting such prospective candidates for admission to MSU-COL.
- (c) The Association shall promote community efforts within and beyond the legal realm, which aid, affect, and uplift minorities in the local, national, and international communities.

Article IV. AFFILIATIONS

The Association shall maintain a close relationship with the Wolverine Bar Association, Grand Rapids Bar Association, Floyd Skinner Bar Association, the National Bar Association, and other local and national bar associations.

The Association shall affiliate annually with the National Black Law Student Association/ National Bar Association.

Article V. MEMBERSHIP

Each member shall enjoy all rights, privileges, and responsibilities afforded by membership as provided by these Bylaws and the parliamentary authority cited therein and shall have one vote on all procedural and policy matters.

Section 5.01 Eligibility

- (a) Membership in the Association shall be available to all currently enrolled MSU-COL students in good standing pursuant to the applicable MSU-COL policies. Membership shall also be available to any MSU-COL student on leave of absence, alumnus/a, member of the faculty/staff, or other supporter of the Law School and/or mission statement of the Association.
- (b) Membership shall not be denied on the basis of a member's race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, military/veteran status, weight, or any other status protected by Federal or State law and/or local or MSU-COL policy.
- (c) Membership shall be revocable for misconduct, such as, but not limited to, conduct in direct conflict with Federal or State law; local or MSU-COL policy; or the purpose and/or mission of the Association. However, prior to revocation, the President and Faculty Advisor must notify the member of interest in writing regarding the allegations and pending investigation. The member shall have a personal hearing before the Board. A finding of misconduct by majority vote of the Board shall result in revocation of membership. Board decisions regarding misconduct in direct conflict with the purposes and/or mission of the Association are subject to review by the general membership upon the member of interest's request. The general membership may amend the board decision.

Section 5.02 Dues and Pledge

The membership shall determine annually the dues amount at the April general membership meeting preceding the fall effective date.

- (a) Members will have the option to pay in-full, yearly by the first meeting in September or thereafter for an additional fee, or semesterly by paying ½ of

the full amount by the first September meeting and again in February, each subject to the additional fee, if submitted after the due date. Membership dues shall not be prorated.

- (b) Individuals who pay dues yearly will be deemed Active Members of the Association with voting member status. Individuals who pay dues semesterly will be deemed Active Members of the Association with voting member status for the paid semester and renewable in accordance with Section 5.02(a) of this Article.
- (c) Board members must pay dues in full annually.
- (d) Individuals who elect not to pay dues will be deemed Affiliates of the Association with no voting status.
- (e) No member shall have voting status until his/her financial obligation has been satisfied.

Section 5.03 *Voting*

Quorum shall be required for all voting of the general membership. Quorum shall be one more than half of the Active Membership with voting status as specified in Section 5.02 of Article V.

- (a) Each Active Member with designated voting status, in accordance with Section 5.02 of Article V, shall have one vote on all procedural and policy matters.
- (b) There shall be no proxy voting, unless authorized by majority vote of the general membership prior to voting meeting.
- (c) There shall be no electronic voting, unless authorized by majority vote of the general membership prior to the voting meeting.

Article VI. Officers and Duties

Officers shall be elected annually by the general membership in accordance with Section 6.03 of this Article.

Section 6.01 *Officers*

- (a) The Officers of the Association shall consist of a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, information officer, parliamentarian and historian. This body shall be known as the Executive Board (Board). The term of

office for each member of the Board shall be one academic year, concluding May 31st with the option to run for one (1) additional term.

- (b) The Board shall be empowered to make financial and operating decision for the Association provided that the expenditure is approved by a majority of the Board. In addition, any check issued on behalf of the Association must be signed by two (2) members of the Board, one of which shall be the Treasurer.

Section 6.02 *Duties*

(a) President

- (i) The executive powers shall be vested in the President. The President shall represent the Association before the student bar association and as otherwise necessary and required. The President shall have the power to call to order and preside over all meetings of the Association. The President shall have the power to appoint chairpersons and ad hoc committees as necessary with a majority vote by the Board. The President shall serve on all committees as a member, ex officio. The President at the end of his/her term may sit on the Board as President Emeritus in an advisory position for the following year while retaining his/her rights as a member of the general membership and must be in compliance with Section 5.02(c) of Article V.

(b) Vice President:

- (i) The Vice President shall have the power to perform the duties of the President in his/her absence. The Vice President shall develop and finalize the Board agendas to be distributed by the Secretary prior to the applicable Board meeting. The Vice President shall serve as a liaison between the President and all chairpersons and committees and oversee all intra-committee relations. Additionally, the Vice President shall serve as a liaison between the Association and the National Black Law Students Association. The Vice President shall serve as an ex-officio member of all such committees. The Vice President shall review and approve all Association publications, premiums, and the like. The Vice President shall also coordinate alumni cultivation and development. The Vice President shall perform other duties as assigned by the President. The Vice President shall assume the role of President in the event of resignation or death of the President.

(c) Secretary:

- (i) The Secretary shall be responsible for all internal communication and official correspondence with the general membership of the Association. The Secretary shall make available all meeting agenda at least one (1) day prior to general membership and/or Board meetings. The Secretary shall take and maintain the minutes of any and all regular and special meetings. All minutes shall be posted to the designated internal communication system(s), i.e. TWEN,

no later than two (2) days after the date of the meeting. The Secretary shall also be responsible for maintaining the internal communication system(s). The Secretary shall be the keeper of all internal documents pertaining to the Association during his/her term as Secretary and shall be responsible for compiling and maintaining such documents including but not limited to the bylaws, meeting minutes, officer and committee reports, current membership forms, membership rosters, etc. The Secretary shall perform other duties as assigned by the President.

(d) Treasurer

- (i) The Treasurer shall be responsible for all financial matters pertaining to the Association. The power to accept any and all membership dues shall be vested in the Treasurer, unless otherwise directed by the President and supported by majority vote of the Board. The Treasurer shall collect all membership forms and dues and shall be responsible for designating the membership status of each member. The Treasurer shall appropriately document all financial transactions of the Association. The Treasurer shall record and transfer all membership forms marked with the appropriate membership status to the Secretary in a timely manner. The Treasurer shall be responsible for maintaining the financial records, including but not limited to, bank statements and reconciliation thereof, and reporting on the financial standing of the Association at each general membership meeting. The Treasurer shall deposit all monies in the name of the Association and shall disburse such funds as directed by the President and/or general membership. The Treasurer shall accept all gifts and donations in the name of the Association, and such gifts and donations shall be documented by the Treasurer and accompanied by an appropriate acknowledgment to the donor. The Treasurer shall perform other duties as assigned by the President.

(e) Information Officer

- (i) The Information Officer shall be the Association Point of Contact (APC) responsible for external communication and public relations. The Information Officer shall have the authority to represent the Association, itself, and on behalf of the President as necessary with the President's approval. The Information Officer shall be responsible for conveying the Association's mission, purpose, position(s), etc. to the public. The Information Officer shall be responsible for all external correspondence both incoming and outgoing and shall be responsible for disseminating such information as necessary for the proper functioning of the Association, its officers, and the general membership. The Information Officer shall be responsible for coordinating the production of the semesterly newsletter and maintaining the Association Web site. The Information Officer shall be responsible for coordinating the production of premiums (i.e. Association paraphernalia), maintaining the electronic and print reference library, and any other duties as assigned by the President.

(f) Parliamentarian

- (i) The Parliamentarian shall be responsible for maintaining order in all meetings and should therefore be thoroughly knowledgeable of Robert's Rules of Order and the Bylaws of the Association. The Parliamentarian shall be responsible for roll-call and determining quorum at every meeting. The Parliamentarian shall serve as the Chair of the Bylaws Committee, which shall be responsible for maintaining and amending the Bylaws as necessary and appropriate in accordance with Article IX of these Bylaws. The Bylaws shall be reviewed annually. The Parliamentarian's duties shall also include the rendering of fair and equitable rulings when called upon by the President to do so. The Parliamentarian shall also perform other duties as assigned by the President.

(g) Historian

- (i) The Historian shall be the keeper of all historic documentation and information including but not limited to previously submitted membership forms, membership rosters, Board rosters, photo albums, newsletters, awards and achievements, distinguished alumni, etc. The Historian shall also be responsible for capturing the current year's events and happenings. Additionally, the Historian shall also be responsible for maintaining all property of the Association and any other duties as assigned by the President.

Section 6.03 *Election of Officers*

Election of Officers shall occur annually before the general membership of the Association.

- (a) Candidates for office must be in good standing pursuant to the applicable MSU-COL policies and must have completed at least one semester at the time they take office.
- (b) Each candidate for a Board position shall have been an Active Member in accordance with Article V—Membership, Section 5.02 during the year prior to taking office.
- (c) Each candidate must be nominated by an Active Member of the Association in accordance with Section 5.02(b) of Article IV and seconded by another Active Member. An interested candidate shall not be able to self-nominate or second his/her nomination. All Active members shall be limited to one nomination per candidate
- (d) The nomination period shall be publicized and begin annually in March, unless otherwise determined by the general membership.
- (e) Each candidate's eligibility shall be verified by the Board pursuant to these Bylaws. All nominations shall be submitted at least two (2) weeks prior to

the election meeting or as otherwise determined by the general membership. Should a nominee be ineligible, the President shall notify the member of his/her ineligibility and his/her name shall not appear on the ballot.

- (f) Elections shall be held annually at the April general membership meeting. To be elected into office, a nominee must receive the majority vote of the general membership present. There shall be no proxy voting, unless authorized by majority vote of the general membership prior to the election meeting.
- (g) Each elected officer shall remain in office and in effective duty until May 31st of each year. There shall be a transition meeting of the current and newly elected Board at some reasonable time after the election meeting, but before May 31st. There may be a vote by the Board to waive the transition meeting; however, there shall be a meeting held between the President and President-elect and the Treasurer and Treasurer-elect at some reasonable time after the election meeting, but before May 31st.

Section 6.04 *Vacancies*

- (a) Vacancies may exist in any position other than President and Treasurer. Vacancies existing after the election meeting may be filled by an election at the next regularly scheduled general membership meeting.
- (b) In the event of resignation or death of the President, the Vice President shall assume the role as President. The Vice President position may be filled by new election.
- (c) Any office, other than President that is vacated more than once during one term shall be appointed at the will of the Board; however, if the presidency is vacated more than once during a term without a vice president to fulfill the position, the President shall be appointed by the Faculty Advisor(s) based on the recommendation(s) of the Board.

Section 6.05 *Resignation*

Resignation of any Board position may be effectuated by a written statement to the President, or in the absence of the President to the Vice President, and in the absence of both the President and the Vice President to the Secretary.

Resignation of any committee position shall be effectuated by written statement to the Vice President, or in the absence of the Vice President to the Secretary, and in the absence of both the Secretary and the Vice President to the President.

Article VII. MEETINGS

All meetings shall be governed by the Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order.

Section 7.01 *General Membership*

- (a) Quorum shall be required for voting purposes at all general membership meetings, which shall be one more than half the general membership with voting status. If there is no quorum, the matter to be voted on shall be tabled until the next meeting. An issue to be voted shall only be tabled once, after which the board may decide the matter. Quorum shall be determined and reported by the Parliamentarian at the beginning of each meeting.
- (b) The day and time of general membership meeting shall be determined annually by majority vote of the general membership at the first meeting of the Association.
- (c) The Association shall hold monthly meetings of the general membership and special meetings as necessary and called by the President.
- (d) The membership shall hold an annual election meeting for the purpose of (1) electing officers, (2) submission of annual reports, which are to be reviewed and approved by the President and maintained by the Historian, and, (3) to vote on any unfinished business as necessary for the continued functioning of the Association.
- (e) Minutes of the meetings shall be made available to the general membership through the designated internal communication system(s) within two (2) days of the applicable meeting or in hard-copy upon request.

Section 7.02 *Executive Board*

- (a) The Board shall meet once a month prior to the general membership meeting as necessary and determined by the President and/or Board.
- (b) Quorum shall be required at all Board meetings. Quorum shall be one more than half of the Board, which shall be determined and reported by the Parliamentarian at the beginning of each meeting.
- (c) Minutes shall be posted to the internal communication system for Board review and made available, upon request, to any member of the general membership.

Section 7.03 *Closing*

- (a) This Association shall close its books on May 31st of each year.

Article VIII. INUREMENT

No member shall receive personal or financial benefits from the Association, nor receive any of the assets. All gifts and donations shall be accepted in the name of the Association, and such gifts and donations shall be documented by the Treasurer and accompanied by an appropriate acknowledgment signed by the President and Treasurer to the donor.

Article IX. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Association by a majority vote of the general membership.

- (a) Any Active Member, as set forth in Article V, section 5.02(b), shall have the vested right to propose an amendment to these Bylaws. Additionally, the Bylaws Committee shall have the power to review and propose amendments as necessary and required.
- (b) All amendments proposed by the general membership shall be consistent with the purpose and mission of the Association as determined by the Bylaws Committee in order to move forward to vote.
- (c) Any proposed amendment by a member of the general membership shall be in writing and submitted to the Parliamentarian, as the Chair of the Bylaws Committee, and once reviewed pursuant to part (b) of this Article, submitted to the President. Additionally, all proposed amendments by the Bylaws Committee shall be in writing and submitted directly to the President for review.
- (d) All proposed amendments found to be in accordance with the purpose and mission of the Association shall be presented to the general membership and documented on the record of a meeting preceding the scheduled vote. The proposed amendment shall move forward to vote at the next general membership meeting.
- (e) Amendments shall require majority vote of the general membership.

Article X. RULES OF ORDER

This Association shall be governed by the Bylaws of the Association and Robert's Rules of Order (latest edition).

Article XI. DISSOLUTION

Dissolution shall require majority vote of the Active Members for such dissolution, and all assets shall be donated to an organization of similar exemption status as designated by the voting members.

Black Law Students Association Officers

Officers

Jillian E. Martin, President, blsapres@msu.edu
Brian R. Banks, Vice President, blsavp@msu.edu
Aliyah S. Sabree, Treasurer, blsatrea@msu.edu