



Michigan State University College of Law  
**BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**

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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 at Michigan State University College of Law, located in the Midwest Region. The Black Law Students Association (hereinafter “BLSA”) shall recognize for historical purposes and as necessary its legacy as the Wolverine Student Bar Association/Black Law Students Association.

**ARTICLE II. PURPOSE**

BLSA shall be an advocate for the recruitment, retention, and educational development of students of African heritage, and other underrepresented students pursuing a legal education and training. BLSA shall unite these students in the common purpose of scholastic achievement through diverse educational, professional, and community service experiences.

**ARTICLE III. MISSION**

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

- a. BLSA shall promote unity within the Michigan State University College of Law (hereinafter “MSU-COL”) underrepresented law student community and the MSU-COL 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. BLSA 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. BLSA 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**

BLSA shall maintain a close relationship with the Wolverine Bar Association, Grand Rapids Bar Association, Floyd Skinner Bar Association, the National Bar Association, Davis Dunning Bar Association and other local and national bar associations. BLSA shall affiliate annually with, and be governed by the National Black Law Student Association (hereinafter “NBLSA”)/ 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 BLSA 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 BLSA.
- 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; 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 “BLSA”. 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 “BLSA” are subject to review by the general membership upon the member of interest’s request. The general membership may amend the board decision by a three- fourths (3/4) majority vote.

### ***Section 5.02 Dues and Registration***

- a) The Board shall determine annually the dues amount no later than the September general membership meeting. Individuals will have the option to pay in-full, yearly first general membership meeting in September or thereafter for an additional fee, or by semester by paying one half (1/2) of the full amount by the first general membership meeting of each semester, each subject to the additional fee, if submitted after the due date, as announced by the Board. Membership dues shall not be prorated.
- b) Individuals who pay dues yearly will be deemed Active Members of “BLSA” with Active member status. Individuals who pay dues by semester will be deemed Active Members of BLSA with Active 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 and at least two members must be Active NBLSA members.
- d) Individuals who elect not to pay dues will be deemed Affiliates of “BLSA” with no voting status.
- e) No member shall have voting status until his/her financial obligation has been satisfied.

### ***Section 5.03 Voting***

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) There shall be no proxy voting, unless authorized by majority vote of the general membership prior to the voting meeting.
- d) Electronic voting shall be the main method of voting for BLSA.

## **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 BLSA shall consist of a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, information officer, parliamentarian, and liaison officer. This body shall be known as the Executive Board. The term of office for each member of the Board shall be one academic year commencing May 1<sup>st</sup> and terminating April 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year with the option to run for one (1) additional term.
- b) The Board shall be empowered to make financial and operating decisions for BLSA provided that the expenditure is approved by a majority of the Board. In addition, any check issued on behalf of BLSA 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 BLSA 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 BLSA. The President shall have the power to appoint chairpersons and ad hoc committees as necessary with a majority vote by the Board. 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 at least twenty four (24) hours 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 BLSA and the National Black Law Students Association. The Vice President shall review and approve all Association publications, premiums, etcetera. 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 BLSA. The Secretary shall make available all meeting agenda at least twenty four (24) hours 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 BLSA 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, current membership forms, membership rosters, etcetera. 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 BLSA. 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 BLSA. 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 BLSA at each general membership meeting. The Treasurer shall deposit all monies in the name of BLSA 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 BLSA, 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 BLSA Point of Contact (APC) responsible for external communication and public relations. The Information Officer shall have the authority to represent BLSA, itself, and

on behalf of the President as necessary with the President's approval. The Information Officer shall be responsible for conveying BLSA's mission, purpose, position(s), etcetera. 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 BLSA, its officers, and the general membership. The Information Officer shall be responsible for coordinating the production of the bi-semester newsletter and maintaining the BLSA website. The Information Officer shall be responsible for coordinating the production of premiums (i.e. BLSA paraphernalia), maintaining the electronic and print reference library. The Information Officer shall be the keeper of all historic documentation and information including, but not limited to previously submitted membership forms, membership rosters, Board rosters, officer and committee reports, photo albums, newsletters, awards and achievements, distinguished alumni, etcetera. Additionally, the Information Officer shall also be responsible for maintaining all property of BLSA 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 be thoroughly knowledgeable of Robert's Rules of Order and the Bylaws of BLSA. 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) Liaison Officer

- (i) The Liaison Officer shall be responsible for liaising between BLSA and other on campus/off campus organizations to communicate and coordinate activities. The Liaison Officer shall attend designated meetings on behalf of BLSA and shall take and maintain minutes of all meetings attended. The Liaison Officer shall perform other duties as assigned by the President.

### *Section 6.03 Election of Officers*

- a) Election of Officers shall occur annually before the general membership of BLSA.
- b) Candidates for office must have a semester minimum of 2.5 GPA on a 4.3 scale and a cumulative minimum of 2.5 GPA on a 4.3 scale.
- c) Each candidate for a Board position must have been an Active Member in accordance with Article V—Membership, Section 5.02 during the year prior to taking office.
- d) Each candidate must be nominated by an Active Member of BLSA in accordance with Section 5.02(b) of Article V and seconded by another Active Member. An interested candidate cannot self-nominate or second his/her nomination. All Active members shall be limited to one nomination per candidate. A candidate can receive multiple nominations but can only accept three (3) nominations.
- e) The nomination period shall be publicized and begin annually at the March general body meeting, unless otherwise determined by the general membership.
- f) Each candidate's eligibility shall be verified by the Board pursuant to the Bylaws prior to election day. 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.
- g) Elections shall be held annually. To be elected into office, a nominee must receive the majority vote of the Active Members present. There shall be no proxy voting, unless authorized by majority vote of the general membership prior to the election meeting. If an Active Member is out of town during the election period, due to a study abroad program, externship program or other academic program, the member shall vote by absentee ballot via email, TWEN, or SKYPE.
- h) Elected officers shall take office one week prior to the first date of final examinations. There shall be a transition meeting of the current and newly elected Board at a reasonable time after the election meeting, but no later than one week after the final period ends. The former Executive Board members shall be responsible to assist the newly elected executive board during the transition period (March-May).
- i) The election procedure shall be as follows: (1) For each position, there shall be ten (10) minutes for nominated Active members to answer questions

from all members of the general board. (2) After the questioning period is complete, there will be a discussion period between the general body, absent those running for the particular position, of at most five (5) minutes to discuss the individual candidates and any pertinent facts that may affect a candidate's ability to uphold the office for which they are running. Following the discussion, there will be a vote on that position. (3) The vote will be casted via electronic ballot. (4) The Parliamentarian (or another Executive Board appointed person if the current Parliamentarian is unavailable or if he/she is a candidate for that position), will record the results in the meeting minutes and announce the winner immediately. During this process, the outgoing Parliamentarian must remain available to the President and the general membership to explain any election procedures and answer any questions as necessary, unless the outgoing Parliamentarian is elected for a new position. Prior to that point, the outgoing Parliamentarian will explain all election and voting procedures to the general membership. This process will be duplicated for each position in the order of:

1. President
2. Vice-President
3. Treasurer
4. Secretary
5. Information Officer
6. Parliamentarian
7. Liaison Officer

#### ***Section 6.04 Vacancies***

- a) Vacancies may exist in any position other than President and Treasurer. Vacancies existing after the election shall be filled by application. The President shall solicit resumes before recommending applicants for Executive Board positions.
- b) In the event of resignation or death of the President, the Vice President shall assume the role as President. The Vice President position shall be filled pursuant to subsection (a) of this Section. In the event of simultaneous resignation or death of the President and Vice President, the Parliamentarian shall serve as the President Pro Temp until the following general body meeting, at which time a special election will occur to fill the position of President. A majority vote of the general membership will suffice to win the special selection.



- c) Recommended applicants become appointees upon approval, by a majority vote, of the MSU-COL BLSA Executive Board elected officers.
- d) Recommended applicants shall be appointed to the Executive Board during the first Executive Board meeting where the majority vote takes place, or when the President deems necessary.

### ***Section 6.05 Resignation***

Resignation of any Board position shall be effected 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 effected 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.

### ***Section 6.06 Leave of Absence***

Protocols for participants of MSU-COL's Washington D.C. Spring Semester Program or a MSU-COL sponsored study abroad program

- a) Board members and committee chairs must withdraw from their duties and responsibilities while participating in and resign as defined by Section 6.05 in Article VI
- b) Further, the committee co-chair will assume all responsibilities of that committee and become the sole Committee Chair.

## **ARTICLE VII. COMMITTEES**

### ***Section 7.01 Standing Committees***

BLSA shall consist of seven (7) standing committees:

- Academic Committee
- Bylaws Committee
- Fundraising Committee
- Community Service Committee

- Student Programming/Social Committee
  - Undergraduate Committee
  - Alumni Affairs Committee
- a) Each committee will have a chair that will be appointed by a majority vote of the Executive Board immediately following the April general body meeting. If no one is available to fill the chair position at that time, then it can be filled as soon as possible, excluding the Bylaws committee, which is to be chaired by the Parliamentarian
  - b) Academic: responsible for coordinating opportunities to improve the skills of both members and the community at large in the realm of academia. There should be at least one event per semester.
  - c) Bylaws: responsible for updating the Bylaws as necessary and preparing one final revision prior to the March general body meeting.
  - d) Fundraising: responsible for holding at least two fundraising events, one per semester. All monies collected shall be given to the Treasurer.
  - e) Community Service: responsible for coordinating outreach in the Greater Lansing area. There shall be at least two events, one per semester.
  - f) Student Programming/Social: responsible for coordinating the mentor program within BLSA. This committee is also responsible for organizing and executing at least two events per semester. At least one event per semester shall be social and the other event shall be a programming event. This committee will be also responsible for coordinating a Black History Month Event.
  - g) Undergraduate: responsible for facilitating events with Michigan State University undergraduate organizations to establish and maintain a supportive relationship. This committee is also responsible for organizing and executing at least one event per semester.
  - h) Alumni Affairs: responsible for coordinating alumni activities with members and keeping alumni informed of current events on campus. There should be at least two events, one per semester.

## ARTICLE VIII. MEETINGS

### *Section 8.01 General Membership*

- a) All meetings shall be governed by the Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order.
- b) BLSA shall hold General Body Meetings once per month and special meetings as necessary when called by the Executive Board.
- c) The Board shall create a list of prospective meeting dates and times which the general membership will vote on.
- d) 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. Quorum shall be determined and reported by the Parliamentarian at the beginning of each meeting. The President shall abstain from voting unless there is a tie.
- e) Meeting minutes shall be made available to the general membership through the designated internal communication system(s) within two (2) days of the applicable meeting.
- f) The membership shall hold a final election meeting for the purpose of (1) submission of annual reports, which are to be reviewed and approved by the President and maintained by the information officer, and (2) to vote on any unfinished business as necessary for the continued functioning of BLSA.

### *Section 8.02 Executive Board*

- a) The Board shall meet twice a month on opposite weeks of 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) Meeting 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 8.03 Closing***

- a) This Association shall close its books each year, two weeks after the last general body meeting.

## **ARTICLE IX. IMPEACHMENT, REMOVAL, RECALL, AND SUCCESSION**

All disciplinary procedures enumerated within this Article shall be brought forth and conducted in good faith.

### ***Section 9.01 Impeachment and Removal of Executive Board***

- a) Any Executive Board Member or Committee Chair may have impeachment or removal proceedings initiated against them, respectively, by any Active Member on the grounds of misfeasance, malfeasance, nonfeasance, or any other just cause. This motion must be presented at a general membership meeting and properly seconded.
  - 1) The Active Member making the motion shall immediately present to the entire BLSA general body a list of allegations specifically enumerating the grounds for impeachment. No less than one week later and no later than the next general membership meeting after the motion to impeach/remove, BLSA will conduct a special impeachment/removal proceeding.
  - 2) The impeachment proceedings shall ensue, supervised by the Parliamentarian; if proceedings are initiated against the Parliamentarian, then the Vice-President shall fill this role. The Board member or Committee Chair in question shall be given an opportunity at this point to deny allegations and rebut the prior charges, or resign as defined in Section 6.05.
  - 3) Actual removal from office shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Active Members upon the conclusion of the proceedings enumerated under Article IX.
  - 4) Reinstatement requires approval of three-fourths (3/4) of the Active Members
  - 5) No such vote shall be taken until the Board member or Committee Chair in question has been informed of the charges made against him/her and given a full, fair and open hearing.

- 6) During the hearing, if charges are unfounded no vote will be taken and the proceedings will cease. The person in question shall then remain in their position and no further allegations may be brought for the semester.

### ***Section 9.02 Recall Challenge of Elections***

- a) All Elected Board Members will be subject to recall, which is a challenge of an election, under the following procedure:
  - 1) Filing of a petition with signatures equaling one-fourth (1/4) of Active Members within 24 hours following the election.
  - 2) The petition shall contain a list of allegations stating substantial grounds - to include facts and circumstances that give a rise to a high level of probability that the accusation is probable and that greater attention should be paid to the issue to give clarification - for recall. The petition shall be filed with the Parliamentarian and presented to all of BLSA.
  - 3) A special recall vote shall be held within two weeks of the filing of such petition (this special vote shall be governed by the same rules and policies of the procedures listed in Section 6.03 in Article VI).
  - 4) A two thirds (2/3) majority vote of BLSA's Active Members is required for removal of any Board Member by this process.
  - 5) If the challenge is successful, the Executive Board shall fill the vacancy not filled by the special election.

### ***Section 9.03 Succession***

This Section is subject to the Vacancy provisions outlined in Section 6.04.

- a) In the event that a vacancy is created in the Executive Board, for an office other than President or Treasurer, whether by impeachment, removal or resignation, the vacancy may be filled via a special election.
- b) Special elections shall follow the procedure outlined in Section 6.03, Article VI, except that the date of the election shall occur at the next general membership meeting.

## **ARTICLE X. INUREMENT**

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

## **ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of BLSA 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 BLSA 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 General Membership for a vote. Additionally, all proposed amendments by the Bylaws Committee shall be in writing and submitted to the Board for review, however, final decisions on amendments shall be subject to a vote by the Active Members.
- d) All proposed amendments found to be in accordance with the purpose and mission of BLSA 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 XII. RULES OF ORDER**

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

### **ARTICLE XIII. 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 Active members.