



## **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

### **ARTICLE I. IDENTIFIATION**

1. 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.
2. The Black Law Students Association (“**BLSA**”) shall recognize for historical purposes and as necessary its legacy as the Wolverine Bar Association/Black Law Students Association.

### **ARTICLE II. PURPOSE**

1. 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.
2. BLSA shall unite these students in the common purpose of scholastic achievement through diverse educational, professional, and community service experiences.

### **ARTICLE III. MISSION**

1. BLSA shall provide students of African heritage and other underrepresented last 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 College of Law (“**MSU-COL**”) underrepresented law student community through diverse and collaborative programing 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 perspectives. Candidates for admission to MSU-COL.
  - c. BLSA shall promote community efforts within and beyond the legal realm, which aid, effect, and uplift minorities in the local, national and international communities.

### **ARTICLE IV. AFFILIATIONS**

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

2. BLSA shall affiliate annually with, and be governed by the National Black Law Students Association (“NBLSA”) and National Bar Association.

## **ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP**

1. 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.
2. Eligibility
  - a. Available to all currently enrolled MSU-COL students in good standing pursuant to the applicable MSU-COL policies. Membership shall also 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. The organization will not discriminate on the basis of age, color, gender, gender identity, disability, status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or weight. Only MSU students may be officers and/or voting members.
  - 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.
    - i. 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 a majority vote of the board shall result in revocation of membership.
    - ii. 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 interests requests. The general membership may amend the board decision by a three fourth majority vote.
3. 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 or by semester will be deemed active members of BLSA with active member status.
  - 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.

4. Voting
  - a. Quorum shall be required for all voting of the general membership. Quorum shall be half plus one of the active memberships.
  - b. Each active member 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**

1. 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 for each Board member 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.
2. Duties
  - a. President
    - i. The executive powers shall be vested in the President.
    - ii. Represent BLSA before the Student Bar Association and as otherwise necessary and required.
    - iii. The power to call to order and preside over all meetings of BLSA.
    - iv. Appoint chairpersons and ad hoc committees as necessary with a majority vote by the Board.
    - v. 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.
  - b. Vice President
    - i. Have the power to perform the duties of the President in his/ her absence.
    - ii. Develop and finalize the Board agendas to be distributed by the Secretary at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the applicable Board meeting.
    - iii. Serve as a liaison between the President and all chairpersons and committees and oversee all intra-committee relations.
    - iv. Serve as a liaison between BLSA and the National Black Law Students Association.
    - v. Review and approve all Association publications, premiums, etcetera.
    - vi. Coordinate alumni cultivation and development.

- vii. 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. Responsible for all internal communication and official correspondence with the general membership of BLSA.
  - ii. Make available all meeting agenda at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to general membership and/or Board meetings.
  - iii. Take and maintain the minutes of all regular and special meetings.
  - iv. Minutes shall be posted to the designated internal communication system(s), no later than two (2) days after the date of the meeting. Maintain the internal communication system(s).
  - v. Keeper of all internal documents pertaining to BLSA during his/her term.
  - vi. Responsible for compiling and maintaining such documents including but not limited to the Bylaws, meeting minutes, current membership forms, membership rosters, etcetera.
  - vii. Perform other duties as assigned by the President.
- d. Treasurer
  - i. Responsible for all financial matters pertaining to BLSA.
  - ii. Power to accept all membership dues shall be vested in the Treasurer, unless otherwise directed by the President and supported by majority vote of the Board.
  - iii. Collect all membership forms and dues and shall be responsible for designating the membership status of each member.
  - iv. Appropriately document all financial transactions of BLSA.
  - v. Record and transfer all membership forms marked with the appropriate membership status to the Secretary in a timely manner.
  - vi. Maintain 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.
  - vii. Deposit all monies in the name of BLSA and shall disburse such funds as directed by the President and/or general membership.
  - viii. 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.
  - ix. Perform other duties as assigned by the President.
- e. Information Officer
  - i. BLSA's Point of Contact responsible for external communication and public relations.
  - ii. Have the authority to represent BLSA, itself, and on behalf of the President as necessary.
  - iii. With the president's approval, the Information Officer shall be responsible for conveying BLSA's mission, purpose, position(s), etc. to the public.
  - iv. Responsible for all external correspondence, both incoming and outgoing.

- v. Responsible for disseminating information as necessary for the proper functioning of BLSA, its officers, and the general membership.
- vi. Coordinate the production of the bi-semester newsletter and maintaining the BLSA website.
- vii. Officers shall be responsible for coordinating the production of premiums (shirts, jackets etc.), maintaining the electronic and print reference library.
- viii. 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, etc.
- ix. Maintain all property of BLSA and any other duties as assigned by the President.

f. Parliamentarian

- i. Responsible for maintaining order in all meetings and should be thoroughly knowledgeable of Robert's Rules of Order and the Bylaws of BLSA.
- ii. Responsible for rollcall and determining quorum at every meeting.
- iii. 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.
- iv. The Bylaws shall be reviewed annually.
- v. 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. Responsible for liaising between BLSA and other on campus/off campus organizations to communicate and coordinate activities.
- ii. Shall attend designated meetings on behalf of BLSA and shall take and maintain minutes of all meetings attended.
- iii. Perform other duties as assigned by the President.

3. Election of Officers

- a. Election of Officers shall occur annually before the general membership of BLSA.
- b. Each candidate for a Board position must have been an active member during the year prior to taking office.
- c. Each candidate must be nominated by an active member of BLSA 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.
- d. The nomination period shall be publicized and begin annually at the March general body meeting, unless otherwise determined by the general membership.

- e. 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.
  - f. 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.
  - g. Elected officers shall take office one week prior to the first date of final examinations. 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).
  - h. Election Procedure:
    - i. For each position, there shall be ten minutes for nominated candidates to answer questions from all members of the general board.
    - ii. After the questioning period is complete, the candidates will be excused for five minutes for a discussion period between the general body. Following the discussion, there will be a vote on that position.
    - iii. The vote will be casted via electronic ballot.
    - iv. The Parliamentarian (or another board appointed person if the Parliamentarian is a candidate running for that position) will record the results in the minutes and announce the results immediately.
    - v. 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
4. Vacancies
- a. Vacancies may exist in any position other than President and Treasurer.
  - b. Vacancies existing after the election shall be filled by application. The President shall solicit resumes before recommending applicants for Executive Board positions.
  - 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.
- 5. Resignation
  - a. Resignation of any Board position requires a written statement to the President, or in absence, the Vice President, and in the absence of both the Secretary.
  - b. Resignation of any committee position requires a written statement to the Vice President, or in absence the Secretary, and in the absence of both to the President.
- 6. Leave of Absence
  - a. Protocols for participants of MSU-COL's Washington D.C. Spring Semester Program or a MSU-COL sponsored study abroad program
    - i. Board members and committee chairs must withdraw from their duties and responsibilities while participating in and resign
    - ii. Further, the committee co-chair will assume all responsibilities of that committee and become the sole Committee Chair.

## **ARTICLE VII. COMMITTEES**

- 1. Each committee chair will be appointed by a majority vote of the Executive Board immediately following the April general body meeting or as soon as possible if no one is available excluding the Bylaws committee.
- 2. BLSA shall consist of seven standing committees:
  - a. 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.
  - b. Bylaws: responsible for updating the Bylaws as necessary and preparing one final revision prior to the March general body meeting.
  - c. Fundraising: responsible for holding at least two fundraising events, one per semester. All monies collected shall be given to the Treasurer.
  - d. Community Service: responsible for coordinating outreach in the Greater Lansing area. There shall be at least two events, one per semester.
  - e. Student Programing/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.
  - f. 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.
  - g. 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**

1. 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. Quorum shall be required for voting purposes at all general membership meetings, which shall half plus one of the general active membership. 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.
  - d. 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.
  - e. 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.
2. 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
3. Closing
  - a. This Association shall close its books each year, two weeks after the last general body meeting.

## **ARTICLE IX. IMPEACHMET, REMOCAL, RECALL, AND SUCCESSION**

1. All disciplinary procedures enumerated within this Article shall be brought forth and conducted in good faith.
2. 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.
    - i. 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.

- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.
- iv. Reinstatement requires approval of three-fourths (3/4) of the Active Members
- v. 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.
- vi. 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.

### 3. Challenge of Elections

- a. All Elected Board Members will be subject to recall, which is a challenge of an election, under the following procedure:
  - i. Filing of a petition with signatures equaling one-fourth (1/4) of Active Members within 24 hours following the election.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. 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).
  - iv. A two thirds (2/3) majority vote of BLSA's Active Members is required for removal of any Board Member by this process.
  - v. If the challenge is successful, the Executive Board shall fill the vacancy not filled by the special election.

### 4. Succession

- a. This Section is subject to the Vacancy provisions outlined in
- b. If 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.
- c. 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 XI. AMENDMENTS**

1. These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of BLSA by a majority vote of the general membership.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Amendments shall require majority vote of the general membership.

#### **ARTICLE X. INUREMENT**

1. 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 XII. RULES OF ORDER**

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

#### **ARTICLE XIII. DISSOLUTION**

1. 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.