

Starting a New Graduate Student Organization at Hamline... FIRST STEPS.

So, you're thinking about starting a new graduate student organization on campus? Great! Student organizations help make the campus community a vibrant and much more interesting place. They're a great way for students with like interests to pursue their passions, extend their learning outside of the classroom, and make friends along the way!

There's at least one student organization affiliated with each of our graduate schools. Graduate students also have the option of becoming involved with many of our undergraduate organizations as well. If you are interested in getting a new graduate student organization started, here's what you should do:

First Questions to Ask:

- Are there existing graduate student organizations that might already encompass what I'm thinking about?
- Is an existing undergraduate group appropriate for graduate student involvement, or should I look at creating one that targets just graduate students?
- Are there other graduate students on campus that might be interested in becoming a part of this group?
- What's our purpose? What kind of activities would this organization do?

First Steps:

- Talk to a representative from the graduate school with which this organization would be affiliated. (Assistant/Associate Dean is the best place to start.)
- If you're thinking of starting a chapter of a nationally-affiliated graduate student organization, then you **MUST** meet with someone from the appropriate graduate school.
- Hold a meeting to see what kind of interest is out there.
- Decide on a date, time, and location for the meeting. (We recommend planning this at least 2-3 weeks out.) Your affiliated graduate school or the Graduate Student Life Office can help you reserve a room.

Publicizing Your First Meeting:

- Hang up some flyers about the meeting around campus and in classrooms where targeted students meet.
- Submit a meeting announcement to Inside Hamline.
- Staff from your affiliated graduate school will have a number of ways to target potential members. Talk with your graduate school about sending out targeted emails to students in relevant programs.

At the First Meeting:

- Have an agenda planned out and ready to go.
- Welcome everyone and introduce yourself. Tell them why you wanted to start this organization.

- Have everyone introduce themselves and tell why they're interested and if they have been involved in a group like this before (or done similar activities).
- Use another fun ice breaker to get to know each other. (Student Activities can help!)
- Ask if anyone knows of other people that might be interested but are not there.
- Collect contact info from everyone: Name, email, and phone.
- Let people know the process for becoming an official student organization. (Developing a constitution, etc.)
- Brainstorm for the kind of activities/programs the organization could do. What are people interested in, and what would they like from this organization?
- See how committed people are to this, but know it doesn't take a ton of work. A minimum of semi-regular meetings and activities is all you need. Some orgs do just 2 or 3 events all year and meet a couple of times a semester.
- See if anyone would be interested in taking on a leadership role. That group may want to try to find a time to meet to talk about starting the paperwork/process for recognition.
- Decide as a group if people want to move forward with this, then set a next meeting time, and a possible first activity.

Next Steps:

- Let your graduate school and GSLO know how the first meeting went and if you want to move forward with becoming a recognized group.
- Complete and submit the Registration Form. It lists all of the basics about the group and contact information.
- Sit down with the Coordinator of Graduate Student Life and talk about the rights and responsibilities that go along with being a student org.
- Pick up a copy of the Student Organization Handbook. This has everything a leader of a student org needs to know in it. (How to reserve a room, assistance with campus publicity, how to plan an event, etc.)
- Begin the process of developing a constitution. You will have preliminary status until that constitution is approved. Preliminary status provides you with the ability to reserve space on campus, hold meetings, etc.