

# THE BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

**CONSTITUTION**

# ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Black Law Students Association of the University of Pennsylvania, hereafter referred to as “BLSA,” or “the chapter.” The organization shall be affiliated with and conform to the constitutional provisions of the National BLSA.

# ARTICLE II: DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this organization shall be to:

1. articulate and promote the academic, professional, and social needs and goals of Black law students at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.
2. instill in Black law students a greater awareness of commitment to the needs of the Black community locally, regionally, nationally and abroad.
3. provide a source of political, cultural, and social solidarity.
4. be responsive to the needs, objectives, and agendas of the regional and national BLSA leadership.
5. focus on the relationship of the Black Law student and the Black attorney to the American legal structure.
6. represent the views of Black students at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.
7. provide a forum for the discussion of local and national issues affecting both the Black law student community and the University community as a whole.

# ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: General Eligibility Membership in the University of Pennsylvania Chapter of the Black Law Students Association shall be open to: 1) all minority graduate students; and 2) any other students with a proven interest in the goals and objectives of the Black Law Students Association. The Black Law Students Association at the University of Pennsylvania does not discriminate on the basis of age, citizenship, color, disability,

gender, race, religion, national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or status as a disabled veteran or veteran of any war.

Section 2: Membership Categories

* 1. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP: All students who have met the criteria established in Section 1 of this Article will be considered ACTIVE MEMBERS if the following conditions are met:

(i) They have attended at least one-third of either the Executive Board or General Body meetings during the fall semester; AND (ii) They have attended at least one-third of either the Executive Board or General Body meetings during the spring semester, prior to the election for chapter officers for the next academic year; AND (iii) They have paid their Chapter dues.

* 1. ACTIVE MEMBERS are entitled to all of the benefits enjoyed by FINANCIAL MEMBERS and GENERAL MEMBERS. Only ACTIVE MEMBERS may vote in

the BLSA Executive Board elections. B. FINANCIAL MEMBERSHIP: All students who have met the criteria established in Section 1 of this Article shall be considered FINANCIAL MEMBERS if the following condition is met:

* + 1. They have paid their Chapter dues.
  1. FINANCIAL MEMBERS may vote upon all BLSA General Body decisions, except the election of Executive Board members.
  2. GENERAL MEMBERSHIP: All students who have met the criteria established in Section 1 of this Article, and who have not met the criteria established in Section 2A and 2B of this Article, will be considered GENERAL MEMBERS. GENERAL MEMBERS may vote on all BLSA General Body decisions, except the election of chapter officers.
  3. GENERAL BODY All students who have met the criteria established in Section 1 of this Article, and who have met the criteria established in either Sections 2A, 2B or 2C shall be considered the GENERAL BODY for the purposes of this Constitution.

## HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

* + 1. All minority graduates of the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School shall be considered honorary members of the BLSA chapter. (ii) Any person who has attained unusual distinction in the legal profession or in the field of law shall be eligible for honorary membership. The term “field of law” shall embrace any person elected or appointed to a legislature or engaged in the execution, administration, or enforcement of the law, whether or not such a person is a member of the legal profession.

HONORARY MEMBERS shall not have the right to vote on matters affecting the operation of the BLSA chapter.

# ARTICLE IV: MEETINGS

Section 1: General Body Meetings

There shall be a General Body meeting at least once a month during the academic year. Ten percent (10%) of the General Body, excluding Executive Board members, present at a meeting shall constitute a quorum to do business. In the absence of a quorum, no voting business may be conducted. However, other business, of a non-voting nature, may proceed.

# ARTICLE V: EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 1: Meetings

1. The Executive Board shall hold regular meetings to be called at the discretion of the President. The Executive Board should meet prior to each general body meeting.
2. Except under special circumstances, meetings of the Executive Board shall be open to members of the General Body. Any member of the General Body wishing to bring an issue of concern before the Executive Board must request, before the meeting, that the President put the issue on the Executive Board’s agenda.
3. Members of the Executive Board shall be notified two (2) business days prior to each meeting, unless an emergency meeting is required. Any seven (7) Executive Board members present at an Executive Board meeting shall constitute quorum to conduct business. No proxy voting will be allowed at Executive Board meetings.

Section 2: Membership

The Executive Board shall consist of all the elected and appointed officers of the chapter:

1. Co-Presidents
2. Vice-President
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Sadie Conference Co-Chairs
6. Professional Development Co-Chairs
7. Co-Admissions Chairs
8. Alumni Chair
9. Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition Chair
10. Community Service Chair
11. Advocacy Chair
12. Fundraising Chair
13. Pan-Africa Summit Co-Coordinators
14. 1L Liaisons
15. 3L Representatives
16. ML/LLM Representative
17. Documentarian
18. Social Chair

Section 3: Duties of Members

## CO-PRESIDENTS

The Co-Presidents shall: 1) be the chief executives and administrative officers of the chapter; 2) call and preside at all Executive Board Meetings; 3) ensure that all other officers perform the duties for their respective offices; 4) serve as the official spokespersons for the chapter; 5) serve as ex-officio members of all BLSA Committees;

6) be responsible for the welfare and dignity of the chapter; 7) appoint members to fill vacant positions; 8) maintain relationships with Law School Administration & Faculty;

9) act as Liaisons to United Law Students of Color Council, other student of color groups, as well as the Mid Atlantic BLSA, National BLSA and Philadelphia BLSA sub-regions; 10) develop the calendar of events; and 11) be responsible for the logistics, planning, recruitment and coordination of BLSA’s Diversity Outreach Initiative program and may delegate such responsibilities where necessary to another member of the Executive Board.

## VICE-PRESIDENT

The Vice-president shall: 1) assist the President in the performance of such chapter duties as may be requested by the President; 2) in the event of the absence, death, resignation, or removal from office of the President, the Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President; 3) serve as Chairperson of Elections; 4) call and preside at all General Body Meetings; and 5) perform such other duties relating to the organizational structure of the chapter as the President may request.

## SECRETARY

The Secretary shall: 1) be the chief recorder and correspondent of the chapter; 2) assist the President in the calling and conducting of BLSA meetings; 3) keep a true and complete record of all minutes of BLSA meetings and other matters pertaining to the chapter for future reference; 4) dispatch notices of meetings to members as are appropriate; 5) maintain an attendance list for all meetings, and a list of those members who are eligible to vote; 6) check the BLSA e-mail and respond to those emails when necessary; 7) send out BLSA email newsletters, announcements and other communications; 8) be responsible for submitting official reports required of the chapter by the law school or university administration; 9) when necessary, make room reservations for General Body, Executive Board and committee meetings; and 10) oversee the Marketing and Logistics subcommittee.

## TREASURER

The treasurer shall: 1) be the chief financial officer of the chapter; 2) collect all dues; 3) control all chapter funds and bank accounts and co-sign with the President all disbursements of chapter funds; 4) prepare a budget, under the direction of the President, which shall be approved by the Executive Board and submitted to the Council of Student Representatives; 5) receive all funds which are available to BLSA from the law school, university and other donors; 6) prepare membership forms for Mid-Atlantic and National BLSA and pay national dues; 7) handle reimbursements from budget; 8) track donations for Sadie T.M. Alexander Conference; 8) maintain BLSA’s tax exempt status with the IRS; and 9) perform such other duties as the President may request.

## SADIE CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

The Sadie Conference Co-Chairs shall: 1) be responsible for planning the annual Sadie T. Alexander Conference hosted by BLSA. Planning shall include, but is not limited to, the following: a) soliciting corporate sponsorship of the conference; b) securing funding from the law school, alumni and other orgs; c) securing a keynote speaker and panelists; d) choosing a conference theme; e) securing an appropriate location for the conference; and

f) publicizing the conference.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CO-CHAIRS

The Professional Development Committee Co-Chairs shall: 1) be primarily responsible for communicating all minority career development opportunities to BLSA; 2) update the BLSA Employment spreadsheet and the BLSA Class Recommendations List; 3) coordinate all career planning events, which can be done in conjunction with other minority organizations, legal employers, or Career Planning & Placement. Such events should include: a) 2L OCR Seminar; b) 1L Spring OCR Seminar; c) 1L Resume Writing Workshop; d) Clerkship Seminar; e) Finance Seminar; f) DC Roadshow; g) Barrister's Speaker Presentations*;* h) assist the Vice President with the 1L Writing Competition, and

i) organize the Career Fair during the Sadie T. Alexander Conference.

## CO-ADMISSIONS CHAIRS

The Co-Admissions Chairs shall: 1) serve as liaisons between BLSA and Penn Carey Law’s admissions office; 2) assist in the increased recruitment and enrollment of African American law students in the law school; 3) coordinate and administer the Penn Carey Law Outreach Program alongside Admissions and Office of Equity & Inclusion representatives over 4 Saturdays in the spring semester; 4) meet with prospective students and admitted students when they visit the school; 5) contact black students who have been admitted via phone, email and regular mail; 6) pair BLSA members up with admitted students during admitted students weekend; 7) help plan the BLSA portion of Admitted Students Weekend; 8) collaborate with Admissions Representatives from other student of color groups; 9) check the admitted student web page periodically and offer responses; 10) attend law school and graduate school forums throughout the region, or delegate that responsibility to another BLSA member; and 11) coordinate activities with the undergraduate Black Student League.

## ALUMNI CHAIR

The Alumni Chair shall: 1) serve as a liaison between BLSA and the Penn Alumni Law African American Society; 2) maintain the alumni database; and 3) and keep alumni abreast of BLSA events.

## FREDERICK DOUGLAS MOOT COURT COMPETITION CHAIR

The Moot Court Chair shall: 1) serve as the coordinator and liaison for NBLSA's annual Moot Court Competition; and 2) organize the registration, travel, logistics, and preparation of the BLSA team(s) for both the regional and national competitions.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE CHAIR

The Community Service Chair shall: 1) work to build community relationships between Penn BLSA and the greater Philadelphia community; and 2) develop community service projects for the BLSA membership to participate in.

## ADVOCACY CO-CHAIR

The Advocacy Co-Chairs shall: 1) shall be responsible for developing the political agenda set forth by the BLSA Executive Board at the start of the school year; 2) orchestrating responses to issues/problems in the black community as they arise, with the approval of the BLSA Executive Board; 3) informing the BLSA Executive Board and General Body of any political issues on and off Penn’s campus; 4) developing and implementing month long programming to celebrate and highlight the achievements of African-American lawyers, preferably Penn Alumni, during Black History Month; 5) planning the Annual Spring Lecture addressing an issue that both enhances and broadens discussions that implicate minorities in a manner that other organizations may not have latitude to do; 6) identifying current litigation in which Penn BLSA may contribute as amicus curiae; 7) identifying and targeting coalitions/groups at Penn Carey Law to assist in carrying out the political agenda; 8) advising and assisting President in communicating political agenda with Penn administration and faculty.

## FUNDRAISING CHAIR

The Fundraising Chair shall: 1) develop and implement innovative fundraising programs throughout the year including candy-gram events, business card sales and BLSA t-shirt sales.

## PAN-AFRICA SUMMIT CO-COORDINATORS

The Pan-Africa Summit Co-Coordinators shall: 1) be responsible for the selecting a destination for the annual BLSA Pan-Africa Summit; 2) coordinate logistical arrangements for the Summit; 3) communicate with BLSA members in regards to pricing and payment for trip participation; and 4) develop and coordinate Summit fundraising activities.

## 1L LIAISONS

There shall be four 1L Liaisons elected solely by the first-year class. The term of office shall be assumed from the time of the liaisons election until such time that new liaisons for the succeeding first-year class are chosen. The 1L Liaisons shall: 1) coordinate the activities of the first-year class in conjunction with the 1L Co-Chairs; 2) be voting members of the Executive Board; 3) alert the Executive Board of the concerns and ideas of first-year students; and 4) perform such other duties as the President may request.

## 3L REPRESENTATIVE

There shall be one 3L Representative elected solely by 3L students. The term of office shall be assumed from the time of the liaison’s election until such time that new liaisons for the succeeding third-year class are chosen. The 3L Representative shall: 1) be a voting member of the Executive Board; 2) alert the Executive Board of the concerns and ideas of 3Ls; and 3) plan and execute Black graduation; and 4) perform such other duties as the Co-Presidents may request.

## ML/LLM REPRESENTATIVE

There shall be one ML/LLM Representative elected solely by ML and LLM students. The term of office shall be assumed from the time of the liaison’s election until such time that new liaisons for the succeeding ML/LLM class are chosen. The ML/LLM Representative shall: 1) be a voting member of the Executive Board; 2) alert the Executive Board of the concerns and ideas of ML and LLM students; and 3) perform such other duties as the Co-Presidents may request.

## DOCUMENTARIAN

The Documentarian shall: 1) maintain and update the BLSA and Sadie T.M. Alexander Conference websites, 2) keep a pictorial record of BLSA events; 3) compile pictures for use on the BLSA website; and 4) compile a BLSA scrapbook that will be submitted for the Mid-Atlantic BLSA conference.

## SOCIAL CHAIR

The Social Chair shall 1) be responsible for coordinating an annual BLSA Retreat; 2) plan and coordinate logistical arrangements for an annual Welcome Reception; 3) plan varied networking and social events separately and in conjunction with other Executive Board committees; 4) assist first year students in their transition to the general law school; 5) welcome 1Ls to the BLSA family by coordinating a number of programs throughout the school year including a 1L Orientation, and 6) plan such other social and

networking events as the President may request.

## AD-HOC COMMITTEES

Ad-hoc committees may be appointed at the discretion of the President and/or the Executive Board.

# ARTICLE VI: VOTING PROCEDURE

* 1. All resolutions shall be determined by a majority vote of all Active, Financial and General members present at the relevant meeting. The Co-Presidents shall cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie.
  2. A quorum shall consist of at least one-third of the general membership and at least two members of the Executive Board. No resolutions or elections can be ratified without a quorum of the general body and the Executive Board voting. It shall be left to the discretion of the Co-Presidents to allow absentee ballots to be cast.
  3. The Rules of procedure shall be Robert's Rules, to be suspended at the discretion of the President, unless two-thirds of the full members present at the meeting vote otherwise.
  4. The Constitution shall be displayed on BLSA’s internet site, so as to be made available to all.

# ARTICLE VII: ELECTIONS

Section 1: Coordination

* + 1. The Vice-President shall serve as the Chairperson of Elections and coordinate all aspects of the election process.
    2. The Secretary, 1L Liaisons, and two non-elected members shall assist the Vice-President in the performance of such duties as requested.

Section 2: Time of Election

1. The election of officers shall be conducted via electronic ballot conducted on e-mail during the first week of April. If necessary, a run-off election shall be conducted via e-mail within two days of the first election.
2. Notice of the election of officers shall be made via e-mail to the General Body and announcements at the preceding General Body and Executive Board meetings at least five (5) calendar days before said elections.

Section 3: Nominations

1. Nomination of officers shall be held at least five (5) calendar days prior to the election. The Vice-President, shall e-mail out to the general body for nominations and then receive and record submitted nominations. The names of the nominees shall be

e-mailed out on the ballot on the day preceding the elections.

1. Each BLSA member is entitled to nominate him or herself or any other BLSA member for any elective office. Only ACTIVE MEMBERS are eligible to run for an elective

office. The nominations and election procedures of the office of 1L Liaison shall proceed pursuant to section 4 of this Article.

1. A BLSA member may be nominated for more than one office but may hold only one elected office at a time.
2. Nominations for officers shall remain open from the period following the opening of nominations until the close of nominations on the election date. Nominations not coming prior to the election date must be submitted to the Chairperson of Elections and include the signature of the BLSA member making the nomination.

Section 4: Nomination and Election of 1L Liaisons

1. The nominations for 1L Liaisons shall take place at the request of the President and shall be made via e-mail to the 1L BLSA class no later than mid-September.
2. Only first-year law students may make nominations for the office of 1L Liaisons. ALL first-year students are eligible to hold office.
3. The election of 1L Liaisons shall be held via e-mail. The two candidates with the most votes shall win. Where there is a tie between two or more candidates, a run-off election shall be conducted between the top three candidates no later than two (2) days after the initial election.
4. The 1L Liaisons shall assume the duties of the office on the date of election.

Section 5: Voting Procedures

1. For the purposes of conducting elections, a quorum shall be one third (or 33%) of the Active Membership. Only ACTIVE MEMBERS, however, may vote.
2. The Chairperson of Elections shall announce the candidates for each office via e-mail before the election date.
3. The Chairperson shall close the nominations for officers on the day of elections.
4. Each candidate will be allowed to submit a short written statement in support of their candidacy which shall be distributed along with the e-mail ballot.
5. A simple majority of the eligible votes cast (50% + 1) is required for election to any office. Where no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a run-off election shall be held among the candidates with the two highest vote totals.
6. In the event that one member shall have been elected to two or more offices that member may select the office in which he or she will serve and the 2nd place finisher in the position not selected shall be appointed to the vacant position.

Section 6: Validation of Elections

Validation of elections shall be made by the Election Committees at the close of the election process.

Section 7: Installation of Officers

Newly elected officers shall be installed during the final Executive Board Meeting in April, which shall serve as an official transition meeting for incoming Executive Board members.

Section 8: Term of offices

The terms of the office shall last for one year.

# ARTICLE VIII: REMOVAL OF ELECTED OFFICERS

1. Any member holding an elective office in this organization shall be subject for removal from office, for good and sufficient cause. Violation of the oath of office, including malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance, shall constitute good and sufficient cause for removal from office of any such officer.
2. A person calling for a vote of removal shall do so by submitting a letter enumerating the causes for the vote of removal to a member of the Executive Board. The matter shall be brought before the general body for a vote of removal.
3. A vote removal shall be satisfied with a vote of 50% +1 of the full members voting.
4. The officer or committee chair who fails to obtain a vote of removal shall serve in a probationary status for a period of 30 days. At the end of 30 days there shall be another vote to determine whether the probationary period was satisfactory, or unsatisfactory.
5. Impeachment Proceedings: Impeachment proceedings shall only be employed after an unsatisfactory probationary period.

# ARTICLE IX: VACANCIES

Should any position become vacant by the removal or resignation of an officer, the position shall be filled by designation of the President. Should the position of President become vacant, the Vice-President shall fill that position for the remainder of the term and shall appoint a new Vice-President.

# ARTICLE X: BY-LAWS

The membership may adopt by-laws by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board at a prearranged meeting. Any by-laws adopted must be consistent with this Constitution.

# ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS

All Constitutional amendments must pass by a simple majority vote (50% +1) of the Executive Board before a full vote by the general body. If the amendment is approved by the board, the Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the general membership present at any meeting open to the general body. When approved, such amendment shall be effective as soon as adopted, unless otherwise provided by the amendment. Notice of the proposed amendment shall be electronically mailed to each member at least five (5) days before the amendment is submitted to the Board for approval.

# ARTICLE XII: RATIFICATION

Ratification of this Constitution shall be a two-thirds vote of those GENERAL MEMBERS voting at a special meeting called for the purpose of ratification. A quorum to ratify this Constitution must consist of 50% + 1 of the general membership.