LAST UPDATED: March 7, 2025

Penn Law
Black Law Students Association

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:

(a) articulate and promote the academic, professional, and social needs and goals of Black law students at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.
(b) instill in Black law students a greater awareness of commitment to the needs of the Black community locally, regionally, nationally and abroad.
(c) provide a source of political, cultural, and social solidarity.
(d) be responsive to the needs, objectives, and agendas of the regional and national BLSA leadership.
(e) focus on the relationship of the Black law student and the Black attorney to the American legal structure.
(f) represent the views of Black students at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.
(g) 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 Black students at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School; 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

A. 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.

B. 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.
    a. ACTIVE MEMBERS receive priority access to BLSA-sponsored events with limited availability.

C. 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:

    (i) They have paid their Chapter dues.

D. FINANCIAL MEMBERS may vote upon all BLSA General Body decisions, except the election of Executive Board members.

E. 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 2C of this Article, will be considered GENERAL MEMBERS.

F. GENERAL MEMBERS may vote on all BLSA General Body decisions, except the election of chapter officers.

G. 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, 2C or 2E shall be considered the GENERAL BODY for the purposes of this Constitution.

H. HONORARY MEMBERSHIP:

    (i) 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.

LAST UPDATED: March 7, 2025

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

A. The Executive Board shall hold regular meetings to be called at the discretion of the Co-Presidents. The Executive Board should meet prior to each general body meeting.
B. 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 Co-Presidents put the issue on the Executive Board's agenda.
C. 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:

A. Co-Presidents

B. Vice-President

C. Secretary

D. Treasurer

E. Sadie Conference Co-Chairs

F. Academic & Professional Development Co-Chairs

G. Admissions Co-Chairs

H. Alumni Chair

I. Thurgood Marshall Moot Court Competition Chair

J. Community Service Chair

K. Advocacy Co-Chairs

L. Fundraising Chair

M. Pan-Africa Summit Co-Chairs

N. 1L Representatives

O. 3L Representative

P. ML/LLM Representative

Q. Communications Chair & Documentarian

R. Social Chair

Section 3: Duties of Members

A. 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; 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; 12) serve as a member of the Sadie Conference Committee; and 13) assist the Vice President with elections.

B. VICE-PRESIDENT

The Vice-President shall: 1) assist the Co-Presidents in the performance of such chapter duties as may be requested by the Co-Presidents; 2) in the event of the absence, death, resignation, or removal from office of the Co-Presidents, the Vice-President shall perform the duties of the Co-Presidents; 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 Co-Presidents may request; and 6) serve as a member of the Sadie Conference Committee.

C. SECRETARY

The Secretary shall: 1) be the chief recorder and correspondent of the chapter; 2) assist the Co-Presidents 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; 10) oversee the Marketing and Logistics subcommittee; and 11) assist the Vice President with elections.

D. 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 Co-Presidents all disbursements of chapter funds; 4) prepare a budget, under the direction of the CoPresidents, 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 Co-Presidents may request.

E. SADIE CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

The Sadie Conference Co-Chairs shall: 1) be responsible for planning the annual Sadie T. M. 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.

F. ACADEMIC & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CO-CHAIRS

The Academic & Professional Development 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 OCI Seminar; b) 1L Spring OCI 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. M. Alexander Conference.

G. ADMISSIONS CO-CHAIRS

The Admissions Co-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.

H. ALUMNI CHAIR

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

I. THURGOOD MARSHALL MOOT COURT COMPETITION CHAIR

The Thurgood Marshall Moot Court Competition 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.

J. 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.

K. ADVOCACY CO-CHAIRS

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 Co-Presidents in communicating political agenda with Penn administration and faculty.

L. 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.

M. 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.

N. 1L REPRESENTATIVES

There shall be four 1L Representatives elected solely by the first-year class. The term of office shall be assumed from the time of the representative's election until the end of the school year in which they are serving. The 1L Representatives shall: 1) coordinate the activities of the first-year class in conjunction with the Academic & Professional Development 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 Co-Presidents may request. At any given time, the Executive Board may approve an increase or decrease of one (±1) representative to ensure adequate support for the organization's activities.

O. 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 representative's election until the end of the school year

in which they are serving. 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; 4) assist the Vice President with elections; and 5) perform such other duties as the Co-Presidents may request.

P. 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 representative's election until the end of the school year in which they are serving. 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.

Q. COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR & DOCUMENTARIAN

The Communications Chair & 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.

R. 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 Co-Presidents may request.

S. AD-HOC COMMITTEES

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

ARTICLE VI: VOTING PROCEDURE

(a) 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.
(b) 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.
(c) The Rules of procedure shall be Robert's Rules, to be suspended at the discretion of the Co-Presidents, unless two-thirds of the full members present at the meeting vote otherwise.
(d) The Constitution shall be displayed on BLSA's internet site, so as to be made available to all.

ARTICLE VII: ELECTIONS

Section 1: Coordination

A. The Vice-President shall serve as the Chairperson of Elections and coordinate all aspects of the election process.

B. The Secretary, 3L Rep, and Co-Presidents shall assist the Vice-President in the performance of such duties as requested.

Section 2: Time of Election

A. The election of officers shall take place in-person via electronic ballot during the first week of April. If necessary, a run-off election shall be conducted on the day of elections after the electronic ballot votes are counted by the Vice President.

B. 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 two weeks before said elections.

Section 3: Nominations

A. Nomination of officers shall open two weeks prior to the election. The VicePresident, 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 one week preceding the election day.

B. Each BLSA member is entitled to nominate themself 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 Representatives shall proceed pursuant to Section 4 of this Article.

C. A BLSA member may be nominated for more than one office but may hold only one elected office at a time.

D. Nominations for officers shall remain open from the period following the opening of nominations until one week prior to the election date. Nominations submitted after the nomination deadline must be emailed to the Chairperson of Elections and include the signature of the BLSA member making the nomination and the reason for the missed deadline. At the discretion of the Chairperson of Elections, Secretary, 3L Rep, and CoPresidents, the nomination may be accepted.

Section 4: Nomination and Election of 1L Representatives and the ML/LLM Representative

A. The nominations for 1L Representatives and the ML/LLM Representative shall take place via e-mail to the respective classes no later than mid-September.

B. Only first-year law students may make nominations for the office of 1L Representatives and only ML and LLM students may make nominations for the office of ML/LLM Representative. ALL first-year students and ML or LLM students are eligible to hold office of the respective positions.

C. The election of 1L Representatives and the ML/LLM Representative shall be held via electronic ballot. The four first-year candidates with the most votes shall win the position of 1L Representative, and the ML or LLM candidate with the most votes shall win the position of ML/LLM Representative. 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.

D. The 1L Representatives and the ML/LLM Representative shall assume the duties of the office on the date of election.

Section 5: Voting Procedures

A. For the purposes of conducting elections, a quorum shall be one third (or 33%) of the Active Membership. Only ACTIVE MEMBERS, however, may vote.

B. The Chairperson of Elections shall close the nomination for officers one week before the election date and shall announce the candidates for each office via e-mail the same day.

C. All BLSA members will be able to submit questions for the contested positions beginning after the Chairperson of Elections has announced the candidates for office. The period to submit questions will last exactly two (2) calendar days from the time it opens. The questions shall be submitted via email to the Chairperson of Elections. Once the submission window has closed, the Chairperson of Elections, Secretary, 3L Rep, and Co-Presidents will review the questions before submitting to candidates. The questions shall be submitted to the candidates at least two (2) calendar days before the election to allow time to prepare.

D. Each candidate in a contested position will be allowed to prepare a speech, no longer than two minutes in support of their candidacy and will be allowed to answer each question submitted. The questions will be limited to three (3) questions per contested position and candidates will have 30 seconds to answer each question.

E. 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.

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

A. 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.
B. 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.
C. A vote removal shall be satisfied with a vote of 50% +1 of the full members voting.
D. 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.
E. 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, or by lack of interest in the position, the position shall be filled via electronic ballot by a vote of 50% + 1 of the full, active members voting. The person who fills the position must be at least a general BLSA member and be committed to active engagement in BLSA.

Should the position of Co-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.