



**American Bar Association**  
**Law Student Division**

# SBA Handbook

**Learning** ♦ **Connecting** ♦ **Leading**



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# Role of Student Bar Associations and SBA Presidents

## I. Introduction

Student Bar Associations (SBAs) are an integral part of the Law Student Division (the Division). A SBA is to the Law Student Division what a State Bar Association is to the American Bar Association (ABA). The strong relationship between SBAs and the Division was born in the early 1980's, and SBAs have been an important constituency of the Division ever since.

SBA Presidents form a powerful link between the Division and its members. SBA Presidents keep the Division abreast of current student issues, concerns and needs. They act as the voice of law students on a local and national level, and help to shape national policies through their membership in the Law Student Division Assembly. SBA Presidents also help to improve the relationship between law school administrations and students, and to develop programs and events that benefit law students and the local community.

### A. Law Student Division Structure

The ABA's Law Student Division operates through two governing bodies: the Division Assembly and the Division Board of Governors (BOG). The Division Assembly, which meets once a year at the ABA Annual Meeting, is responsible for formulating the policies and the practices for the Division. The Assembly is composed of two representatives from each ABA-approved law school: the SBA President and the ABA Representative. The Division BOG meets three times a year and is in charge of administrative matters. The composition of the BOG consists of five Officers, three Division Delegates, fifteen Circuit Governors, and various non-voting positions, such as three Officers-Elect.

### B. Meetings

There are several occasions in which SBA Presidents meet. These meetings act as a great informational resource, and allow SBA Presidents to interact with each other and discuss common issues and possible solutions.

#### 1. Annual Meeting

At the Division Annual Meeting, SBA Presidents are given two distinct forums to represent their students and interact with each other: the Assembly and the SBA Conference.

SBA Presidents represent one of the two votes given to each ABA-approved law school in the Assembly. At the Assembly, students from around the country debate issues of importance, and through the resolution process, Division policy is formulated. As Delegates to the Division Assembly, SBA Presidents, along

with ABA Representatives from each law school, elect the three Division Delegates to the ABA House of Delegates.

At the SBA Conference held during the ABA Annual Meeting, the SBA Presidents elect the Division Vice Chair-SBA, receive training and information about the Division, consider resolutions to be presented before the Assembly, and most importantly, attend and participate in discussion groups to share and address common issues of concern.

## 2. Circuit Meetings

SBA Presidents also meet at their respective Circuit Meetings each fall and each spring (the Fall Leadership Summit and Spring Conference). Attendees of the circuit meetings discuss issues of importance to the circuit, meet with SBA Presidents, ABA Representatives and law student members from other schools, and receive current information about Division activities, programs, and opportunities. At the Spring Meeting, the SBA Presidents and the ABA Representatives from each school in the circuit elect a Circuit Governor.

## C. National Representation

### 1. Vice Chair-SBA

With the introduction of SBA Presidents into the Division, a national officer position - Vice Chair-SBA - was created to represent SBA Presidents. The Vice Chair-SBA (who is elected by SBA Presidents and the BOG) is the liaison between SBA Presidents and the Division. The Vice Chair-SBA is responsible for making sure SBA concerns are heard in the Division, and that resources are created, publicized, and made available to SBA Presidents. The duties of the Vice Chair-SBA also include representing the Division to SBA Presidents, informing SBAs of the various Division benefits and services, assisting SBAs in addressing issues and concerns, developing programs and activities for SBAs, and putting SBA Presidents in touch with each other.

### 2. SBA Committee

The BOG has a Committee devoted to addressing SBA concerns. The Committee is composed of the Vice Chair-SBA, and three Circuit Governors. It meets three times a year and holds conference calls in between these meetings. The SBA Committee discusses issues affecting SBAs, how to better serve SBAs, new funding possibilities, law school diversity, career services, and potential programs and events. The SBA Committee also makes recommendations to the BOG – conveying how issues relate to the SBAs.

### 3. Circuit Governor

The Law Student Division is comprised of 15 circuits. Each year the SBA President and the ABA Representative from each school in the circuit elect a governor to represent the students and schools in the circuit to the Division BOG. The Circuit Governor represents the concerns of his/her circuit, helps SBA Presidents and ABA Representatives address problems at their schools, and keeps all circuit members informed of activities within the Division. This is facilitated through mailings, email, and Circuit Meetings. At the Circuit Meetings, attendees receive updates, training, and attend discussion groups.

### 4. Lieutenant Governor for SBAs

Each Circuit Governor appoints a Lieutenant Governor for SBAs whose primary responsibility is to represent and to assist the SBA Presidents in his/her circuit. The Lieutenant Governor for SBAs is similar to the Vice Chair-SBA, but on a circuit level. The Lieutenant Governor for SBAs informs SBA Presidents of Division benefits and resources, investigates possible SBA issues, problems, or concerns, and facilitates discussion groups at each Circuit Meeting.

## D. ABA Representatives

The ABA Representative at each law school serves as the law students' contact and primary information source. ABA Representatives inform students of the benefits of membership in the ABA. The method of filling this position varies among law schools. At some schools the position is elected, while at others it is appointed. Regardless, the ABA Representative is a tremendous asset to any SBA.

## E. Resolutions

The Division effectuates change through resolutions. In order to change or create Division policy, a resolution must be presented in the Assembly at the Annual Meeting. If the resolution is to affect administrative rules of the Division, it must be presented to the BOG. If a resolution fails, regardless of where it was presented, the same issue may not be re-addressed for the next four BOG meetings. If a resolution is adopted by the Assembly, it becomes official Division policy, but does not represent ABA policy unless presented to and adopted by the ABA House of Delegates. If the BOG adopts a resolution it becomes Division procedure unless ABA approval is necessary. The Resolutions Process is how you convert your concerns into policy.

## II. Communication

Communication is key for SBAs. You cannot make informed decisions if you lack necessary information or are unfamiliar with current Division policies or activities. There are several ways to keep abreast of what is happening within the ABA and the Law Student Division, in general, and what is affecting SBAs, in particular.

### A. *Student Lawyer*

*Student Lawyer* is the official magazine of the Law Student Division. It publishes articles on the present views in any area dealing with the study or practice of law and advertises current events such as candidacy deadlines, liaison applications, competitions, awards, and meetings. It also headlines students who have overcome great obstacles in law school.

### B. SBA Presidents Discussion Group

This discussion group is an email list service (list serve) exclusively for SBA Presidents. It allows SBA Presidents to communicate with each other via email. Essentially, once you are subscribed to the list serve, you may post messages and get responses from other SBA Presidents around the country. It's the best and quickest method of receiving ideas and information helpful to serving your law school and students. SBA Presidents who complete the SBA Reportig Form at [www.abanet.org/lsd/sba/reporting.html](http://www.abanet.org/lsd/sba/reporting.html) are automatically subscribed to the SBA list serve using the email requested. Should you have questions about the SBA Presidents list serve, contact the Division staff at [abalsd@staff.abanet.org](mailto:abalsd@staff.abanet.org) or visit the Division website at [www.abanet.org/lstdsba/](http://www.abanet.org/lstdsba/).

To post a message on the list serve, send the message to [SBAPresidents@mail.abanet.org](mailto:SBAPresidents@mail.abanet.org). This will automatically send your message to everyone subscribed to the list serve.

### C. Email

Email provides an incredible opportunity to communicate effectively and quickly. The email addresses of all Division leadership are listed on the Division website at [www.abanet.org/lsd/leadership/home.html](http://www.abanet.org/lsd/leadership/home.html). Email can also increase your accessibility to students at your school, circuit members, and other SBA Presidents.

### D. Law Student Division Website

The Division's website is a tremendous source of information on member services and benefits, publications, and competitions. The site also features detailed information on all 15 circuits and a calendar of events listing upcoming meetings and activities. The website address is [www.abanet.org/lsd](http://www.abanet.org/lsd).

## E. Chicago Office

You may always contact the Division's main office in Chicago. The staff is available to answer questions, mail publications, or just put you in touch with the right person. The Chicago office's phone number is (312) 988-5624 and its email address is [abalsd@staff.abanet.org](mailto:abalsd@staff.abanet.org).

## III. Awards

Each year at the Annual Meeting, the Law Student Division presents two awards to recognize the outstanding efforts of SBAs and SBA Presidents. The application deadline for these awards is April 1. Applications may be obtained online at [www.abanet.org/lzd/awards/](http://www.abanet.org/lzd/awards/).

### A. SBA Award

This award recognizes achievements in overall programming. The SBA Award is given to one SBA each year in recognition of its efforts to create a better environment for law students and a more positive image of the legal profession. Four regional awards are presented as well. In selecting the award recipients, the Division's SBA Committee looks at several factors:

- ◆ Overall organization and structure and communication with student body
- ◆ Improvements made and innovative ideas implemented
- ◆ Events and Programming
- ◆ Interaction with faculty and administration
- ◆ Efficacy in voicing and addressing concerns of students
- ◆ Leadership within the local legal and non-legal community
- ◆ National/circuit/state-wide leadership

### B. SBA President Award

This award recognizes the achievements of law school leaders. The SBA President Award, and the four regional awards - given to the top SBA Presidents in each region, honor the commitment of SBA Presidents to their law schools and fellow law students. Factors used by the Division's SBA Committee to select the award recipients include the following:

- ◆ Overall leadership of the organization
- ◆ Interaction with and accessibility to the student body
- ◆ Innovative Ideas Implemented
- ◆ Ability to address needs, issues and concerns of the student body
- ◆ Interaction with faculty and administration in advocating student issues
- ◆ Relationship with local legal and non-legal community
- ◆ National/circuit-wide/state-wide leadership

#### **IV. Suggested Calendar**

There are many different programs a SBA may run at its law school depending on the interest and needs of the students. Below is just an outline to help guide you through the year.

##### Summer - May/June/July

1. Meet with the Dean to discuss plans for next year.
2. Meet with SBA Executive Board members (i.e., officers) to plan upcoming year's goals and events. Set a tentative calendar.
3. Make preparations to attend the ABA Annual Meeting in August (contact the Chicago office for more information).
4. Start planning First Year Orientation program or event. (See section on "SBA Programs and Events.")
5. Begin planning Work-A-Day Project. (See section on "SBA Programs and Events.")

##### August/September

1. Hold First Year Orientation program or event.
2. Host welcome back social event.
3. Organize a 1L Brunch for the First Year students, family, and friends. Invite a faculty member to speak (late September).
4. Hold an Activities Fair to introduce students to the various organizations at the school. This will also serve as a membership drive.
5. Hold first SBA meeting. It is recommended that SBAs subsequently meet at least twice a month.
6. Hold budget hearings/interviews to determine organization's funding.
7. Have a SBA Representative meet with leaders (i.e., Presidents) from student organizations to create a master calendar of events.
8. Elect First-Year Representatives.
9. Appoint student Representatives to faculty committees.

10. Send report to Circuit Governor for Fall Leadership Summit.
11. Make plans to attend Fall Leadership Summit.
12. Plan Work-A-Day event (See section on “SBA Programs and Events”).

#### October

1. Attend Law Student Division Fall Leadership Summit.
2. Sponsor a Golf Outing (early October).
3. Hold an informational session on outlining for 1Ls.
4. Sponsor or co-sponsor a Halloween party.
5. Work-A-Day event takes place.

#### November

1. Plan a program featuring a special speaker.
2. Co-sponsor a mixer with alumni.
3. Host a Thanksgiving canned food and/or clothing drive.
4. Hold a blood drive with the Red Cross.
5. Begin recruiting law students for ABA Law Student Division National Office (first postmark deadline: January 15).

#### December

1. Sponsor a holiday party.
2. Organize a holiday toy drive.
3. Recruit law student for Law Student Division National Office of Division Representative to the ABA Board of Governors position (nominations postmarked January 15).

#### January

1. Recruit students for Law Student Division National Officer positions (nominations postmarked February 1).

2. Recruit students for Circuit Governor positions (nominations postmarked Feb. 1).
3. Recruit student for Law Student Division Student Editor position (applications postmarked February 1).
4. Recruit students for ABA Liaison positions (applications postmarked February 15).
5. Submit report to Circuit Governor for Spring Conference meeting.
6. Hold SBA budget hearings/interviews for second semester funding.
7. Begin planning Diversity Day programming (March 2) (See section on "SBA Programs and Events.")
8. Begin planning Law Student Mental Health Day programming (March 27) (See section on "SBA Programs and Events.")

#### February/March

1. Attend Spring Conference meeting.
2. Work on SBA Award and SBA President Award applications (both due May 1).
3. Plan Law Week (held in May).
4. Host a Valentine's Day party.
5. Plan Barrister's Ball. (See section on "SBA Programs and Events.")
6. Plan Race Judicata – a 5K walk/run.
7. Plan and hold elections (including for 3L Class Speaker, if applicable).
8. Commence with Diversity Day activities (March 2). (See section on "SBA Programs and Events.")
9. Commence with Law Student Mental Health Day activities (March 27) (See section on "SBA Programs and Events.")

#### April/May

1. Submit SBA Award and SBA President Award applications (as well as applications for the Judy M. Weightman Public Interest Award, the Henry D. Ramsey, Jr. Diversity Award, the National VITA awards, the Membership/Activities Awards, and the various Newspaper Awards). Must be submitted postmarked by April 1.

2. Encourage students to run for Vice Chair-SBA and Division Delegate (applications must be postmarked by June 1).
3. Organize a golf outing.
4. Meet with your successor and explain his/her duties.
5. Submit a report for your Summer Caucus meeting.
6. Recruit ushers for commencement ceremony.
7. Plan and hold "3L Week" activities (held the week between finals and commencement and primarily for graduating third years to give each other a final farewell).

## **V. SBA Programs and Events**

Below are brief descriptions of programs and events that SBAs host every year. Many of these events may be inserted into your SBA's calendar as you see fit. All may be co-sponsored with the Division.

### **A. First Year Orientation**

First year orientation should be a joint effort between the SBA and the Administration. Orientation can span anywhere from a day to a week. Some schools hold the orientation before classes begin while others hold it during the first week of school. The SBA might sponsor a barbecue or reception where first year students can interact and address law school fears with older students. Some SBAs hold a question and answer session with only students present.

Some orientation events include a peer advisor system, pairing first year students with older advisors. The SBA can also hand out a "guide to the community" to help new students learn local places to shop, eat, workout, get a haircut, etc.

### **B. Work-A-Day**

The Law Student Division created the Work-A-Day program in an effort to encourage law students to supplement their legal education with community involvement and to promote the image of the legal profession. The annual program asks each law student organization at every law school to participate in a community service event on the first two weekends in October. The SBA generally co-sponsors this program with the Law Student Division. The date is encouraged to be the same throughout the nation, but can be changed per your school's needs.

### C. Diversity Day

The Law Student Division has selected March 2, as the official Diversity Day at law schools across the country. On this day, law schools are encouraged to sponsor educational programs and events that teach and foster respect for different races, genders, religions, classes, sexual orientations and individuals with disabilities.

### D. Law Student Mental Health Day

The Law Student Division has selected March 27, as the official Law Student Mental Health Day at law schools across the country. On this day, law schools are encouraged to sponsor educational programs and events aimed at increasing awareness of common law student mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression.

### E. Intramural Program

To counter the stressful experience of law school, some SBAs offer an intramural program. If your SBA does not have one, start by contacting the administrator in charge of your athletic facilities to determine what intramural activities may already be offered at the undergraduate level or for sibling graduate schools. Softball and basketball have proven to be successful intramural selections. Aside from developing a working relationship with the athletic administrator and soliciting team rosters, a successful program requires only motivated students. Set firm deadlines for submission of rosters and make sure you have referees!

### F. Faculty Wine & Cheese

Such a function, if held at the beginning of the year, serves to break the ice between students and faculty. Students will be able to interact with faculty members and fellow classmates in an informal, relaxed atmosphere. This event can be held on campus to ensure faculty involvement. This event can also serve to welcome any new faculty at the school.

### G. Family & Friends Weekend

The SBA and the administration might co-sponsor a weekend event for family and friends to experience what goes on at law school. Family and friends could attend real lectures and classes and take a tour of the law school. Oftentimes, such an event leads to an appreciation by others of the rigors of being a law student.

### H. "Bar Reviews"

These are weekly and monthly happy hours held at different bars to provide students with a chance to socialize and unwind. As an entry fee, have students bring a can of food that will be donated to a homeless shelter in your area. Try scheduling one at a popular coffeehouse or juice bar or be sure non-alcoholic beverages are available.

## I. Law Student Division Competitions

The Law Student Division sponsors school competitions in Arbitration, Negotiation, Client Counseling, and Appellate Advocacy. Teams initially compete regionally, with winners competing nationally. For more information on the regional and national competitions, or on how to start an intraschool competition, contact the Division's Chicago office at (312) 988-5621 or at [competitions@staff.abanet.org](mailto:competitions@staff.abanet.org).

## J. Liaison Network/Mentor Program

To affiliate a liaison from your school with a state or local bar association, call or write the bar association and communicate your interest. Many bar associations already have affiliate liaison programs in place. These associations would most likely help you get your program up and running.

## K. Public Interest Programming

In recent years, public service has become a central focus of many bar associations. There are dozens of categories of programs to choose from including canned food drives, clothing drives, blood drives, 5K runs for charity, toy drives, and "Safe Trick-or-Treating" events. Many how-to guides are available so you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

## L. Social Events

Most SBAs have yearly social events and are therefore experienced in organizing such functions. Three suggestions are, however, worth mentioning.

First, seek co-sponsoring with other law schools, graduate schools, and with your young alumni group. Not only will this save money, it will give your constituents an opportunity to see new faces, interact with people undergoing similar experiences, and perhaps an opportunity to network with alumni.

Second, negotiate with facility managers to get the best deal for your SBA. The management of an establishment may be willing to provide complementary food or other items if they are made aware of how many people you are bringing into their facility.

Third, have a theme for each event and plan a short program. Good examples include costume contests, limbo contests, raffles, karaoke contests, and talent shows. A themed event makes it easier for people to meet one another, and will thus draw a bigger crowd. The program will also, both by itself and by facilitating human interaction, shift the emphasis away from alcohol consumption.

## M. Barrister's Ball

This formal social event can be held at a country club or social hall. Some schools provide dinner and cocktails together with the dancing and fun.

#### N. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

In this successful Law Student Division program, law students help the elderly and underprivileged with their tax returns. If you implement this program at your school, you will give your constituents a chance to gain valuable tax experience while helping the community and enhancing the school's reputation. For more information on this program contact the VITA National Student Director.

#### O. Presidents' Roundtable

The Presidents' Roundtable is a unified body of Presidents from each student organization at a law school. This body should meet twice a semester to ensure that the student groups –together– address matters warranting the attention of the administration. Through the Roundtable, SBA Presidents can communicate SBA policies to the other leaders, prevent overlapping of scheduled events, and encourage co-sponsorship of events.

#### P. Course Evaluations

Organizing and conducting a candid course evaluation system, through which students can evaluate courses from a student's perspective, is a fantastic way to serve your constituents. Oftentimes, school catalogues omit factors that students might like to consider before taking classes. For instance, some students might prefer to fix their concentration on a lecture uninterrupted by cross-dialogue, while others might choose professors who encourage extensive debate. Evaluations offer a way to include such information on professors and classes.

### **VI. Fund-Raising**

There are many ways SBAs can raise funds. Following are a few suggestions/ideas:

#### A. Law Student Division Grant Program

By funding or partially funding public interest law activities, the Law Student Division Grant Program is designed to enhance the legal profession, enhance professionalism training, emphasize diversity at our nation's law schools, reach out to local communities, and provide law students opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others.

Further information about the Grant Program, eligibility requirements, and applications are available at [www.abanet.org/lzd/grant.html](http://www.abanet.org/lzd/grant.html).

## B. Advertisements

Advertising can prove to be a great way to raise funds. Here are some ideas:

1. Sell advertisements in any publications you create (e.g., phone book, newsletter).
2. Charge all businesses that want to place ads in your students' mailboxes, and/or on student notice boards, and/or elsewhere.
3. Create an "Advertising Board Calendar." Sell ad space around a student calendar of events. You can sell ad space per month, per quarter, etc.

When looking for organizations to approach, think about local business, restaurants, local and national bar review courses, research companies, textbook and study aid publishers, and local bar associations.

## C. Co-Sponsor with a Business

Set up a social or other event, and have another organization co-sponsor it with you. In return, allow the organization to set up a table or to set out flyers, posters, business cards, etc. You can also allow the organization to introduce itself at the event.

## D. T-Shirt/Bagel/Food Sales

Tried and true. Requires organization and lots of volunteers, but otherwise is usually a good bet - especially bake sales with homemade food.

## E. Lockers

Some SBAs are allowed to rent out built-in lockers at the law school and use the profits to improve program services. You may want to discuss this possibility with the law school administration if locker rentals are not already being offered.

Typically, SBAs charge a rental fee ranging from \$5 to \$15 per year.

## F. Used-Book Exchange

Although most schools have a bookstore, many do not deal in used books. Many SBAs have successfully raised money by running a used book exchange. Typically, the SBA receives used books on consignment from students and charges a small fee for each book sold. Some SBAs waive the fee and simply offer the exchange as a service. Purchasing books and reselling at a profit is not recommended because of the possibility the SBA may pay for and be stuck with worthless merchandise.

## G. Vending Machines

Vending machines are normally rented/leased from companies that return a percentage of sales. The SBA may have the choice of stocking the machine itself or having the machine stocked by its owner. If there are already vending machines at your school, you may try to convince your Dean to grant the SBA the concession for one or more machines.

#### H. Set Up a CLE Program

Use faculty, alumni, or ABA contacts to set up a CLE program at your school. Contact the state/local bar and find out the necessary requirements for setting up a CLE program. Price your program based on what other programs are charging and send out a letter to all of your alumni announcing the program.

#### I. Auctions

Auctions require a lot of work in getting donations, but are a sure way to raise money. The money could be used to provide summer public interest fellowships.

### **VII. ABA Sections, Divisions and Commissions Directly Affecting SBAs**

All ABA sections, divisions, and commissions have some affect on your law school lives. However, the following sections, divisions, and commissions continuously address student issues. These entities may also help you address issues arising at your school or even provide speakers for a lecture you are planning. Speak with the Division's liaisons to these entities for help.

#### A. Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar

This section makes policy recommendations to the ABA regarding law school accreditation and admissions standards for the practice of law in the U.S. Members of this section strive to improve legal education and lawyer licensing by fostering cooperation among legal educators, practitioners, and judges through workshops, conferences, and publications. Through the approval process, this section - specifically its Accreditation Committee and the Section Council - determines law schools' adherence with the American Bar Association's Standards for Approval of Law Schools and recommends the accreditation of law schools by the Association. The section also studies and makes recommendations for the improvement of the bar admission process.

## B. Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession

The goals of this commission are to: 1) assist minorities in their legal education and admission to the bar; 2) develop career and employment opportunities for minorities; 3) promote the appointment of minorities to the judiciary and to judicial clerkships; and 4) increase minority involvement in bar associations at the national, state, and local levels, and with minority specialty bars. The services the commission provides include a clearinghouse of information and data regarding minority lawyers; technical assistance to start programs to address the issues and concerns of minority lawyers; assistance in the appointment of minority lawyers to ABA committees and sections; research and writing on issues facing minority lawyers; a minority law firm résumé bank; and a bibliographical listing of over 200 articles on minority issues.

## C. Commission on Women in the Profession

This commission was created to assess the status of women in the legal profession and to identify barriers to advancement. Its mission is to secure the full and equal participation of women in the ABA, the legal profession, and the justice system. The Commission aims not only to report the challenges that women lawyers face, but also to bring about change in the legal workplace.

## D. Young Lawyers Division

This division is comprised of lawyers under the age of 36, who have been practicing law for five years or less. Through the Young Lawyers Division, you can develop networking skills while meeting young lawyers from around the country.

## VIII. Law Student Division's Role

Throughout the year, the Division can be a successful partner for you in serving your students. Take advantage of the resources and information available to you from the Division and remember: the Vice Chair-SBA and the Division's Chicago office are always available to assist you.

By contacting the Division's Chicago office at (312) 988-5624 or [abalsd@staff.abanet.org](mailto:abalsd@staff.abanet.org), you can be provided with:

- Sample SBA Structures and Responsibilities of Officers
- General Rules and Policies for SBAs
- SBA Administration Information
- Diversity Programming Ideas
- Law Student Mental Health Programming Ideas
- Organization Information Sheets
- Sample Orientation Agendas
- Copies of *Robert's Rules of Order* in A Nutshell

- Sample Agendas
- Sample Budget Request Forms and Budget Event Forms
- Sample Newsletters
- Sample Room Reservation Request Forms
- Sample School Resolutions
- Sample Constitutions and Bylaws
- And much more...

The Chicago office is also your source for additional information about the ABA and about ABA membership benefits.

Just as you can rely on the Division for information and assistance, the Division will need to rely on you. As SBA President, you are the Division's direct connection to law students nationwide. Throughout your term you will be continuously facing issues; issues that range from leave for students during pregnancy, to the efficacy of clinical and night programs. As the President of your student body, you have direct access to what is on the minds of law students. You know the immediate concerns of your constituents, and the remedies they are seeking. The Division will rely on you for this type of information, as it can only better serve law students if it knows what law students are going through.

## Rules and Procedures

Most SBAs have a formal constitution and/or bylaws that specify rules and procedures to follow. In practice, however, the actual day-to-day operations often bear little relationship to the formal rules. Custom or ad hoc processes are common and relatively informal procedures are followed. The reason for this situation can often be traced to formal rules that are impractical and easier to ignore than change.

However, such situations should be avoided. While informality is workable, or even advisable, for small groups addressing simple tasks; it is potentially disruptive for larger groups addressing complex and varied tasks. It is suggested that you locate a copy of your SBA's formal rules, dust it off and examine it to determine if it is compatible with actual practice. If it is, and you determine the practice to be workable and sufficiently covered, consider yourself fortunate and move on to other business. If, however, your situation is the more typical one alluded to above, expend the effort to develop realistic rules of procedure and implement them.

### What Form of Rules?

The latest edition of *Roberts Rules of Order*, the parliamentary bible, recommends combining the constitution and bylaws into a single set of rules. The reason for this position is a practical recognition that setting forth all procedural rules in one place is simpler and easier to follow. While this certainly has merit, most SBAs have a bifurcated system with a separate constitution and bylaws.

SBAs typically experience continuity problems due to the transitional nature of both membership and leadership. One mechanism to help alleviate continuity problems is a carefully thought out constitutional structure which is difficult to amend, thereby creating a stable foundation. It would be a mistake, however, to make all of the procedural rules inflexible. Any organization needs some flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances. This is accomplished by creating a separate set of bylaws that are more easily amended to adapt to new situations. The constitution should speak in general terms, establishing broad outlines of an organization. The bylaws should be more specific, filling in the details of the constitutional structure. Such a system is preferred for organizations that experience continued and extensive turnover of membership. It is the system recommended as appropriate for SBAs.

The material that follows explores the differences between a constitution and bylaws in more detail. Even if you already have established rules, it may be instructive to examine them in light of these ideas. If no current set of rules exists, the material provides an excellent starting point for developing a constitution and bylaws. Additional information is available from the National Association of Parliamentarians, which publishes a wealth of useful material on parliamentary procedure.

Whatever you do, remember that any rules must be workable for your unique organization. The suggestions and ideas presented here and elsewhere are necessarily general and should be viewed as merely suggestions. Feel free to develop unique means to suit the needs of your SBA. The most important criteria is workability. If a rule

is effective in practice, ensure its continuation. If it fails or is cumbersome in practice, change it to make it more effective. If you are successful in creating a functionally effective body of rules you, will significantly enhance the potential and stability of your organization.

## Writing a Constitution

**What It Is:** A Constitution is a set of general rules under which a club or society operates. Rules set forth in a constitution are intended to be permanent (or almost permanent) and provide the basic skeleton or essential framework that makes up the foundation of the organization.

**What It Does:** A constitution sets out the basic principles of an organization. It provides for the creation of officers and other structure within the organization, and outlines the relation between them. A constitution limits the power of elected representatives. It is also the source of their authority. The constitution establishes the regular procedures for the operation of the organization and describes the rights and obligations of its members. Overall, it spells out the ideas and intentions of those who created the organization and relates those intentions to all the above points.

**Points To Remember:** A constitution should be:

1. Limited to fundamentals or basics (matters reflecting the more or less fixed convictions of the vast majority of people as to what kind of organization they want). A constitution declares the ends and goals of the group as a whole.
2. Kept up to date. Outdated or useless provisions should be eliminated.
3. Consistent. No specific provisions should contradict another.
4. Simply and Clearly Written (Do not use ambiguous language).
4. Logically arranged. Use an easy to follow structure. Some articles should be divided into sections. Everything concerning one point should be in one article.

**Organization:** A Constitution should include only:

1. The name of the organization.
2. The object or purpose. (This is often called the preamble. The preamble tells what the club intends to do, such as promote charity.)
3. The qualifications for membership (Who can belong.)
4. Officers and elections. (What officers there will be, their general duties, and how they will be chosen.)
5. Meetings of the organization.
6. How to amend the constitution. (When fundamental changes must be made, how will the constitution be altered? Usually this should require advance notice to all members that a change is being proposed, and a 2/3 or 3/4 majority vote.)
7. How are vacancies addressed? Rest assured, you will have open positions. Detail the steps to fill your positions (majority vote, appointment, etc) – This can be placed under by-laws.
8. Define what your quorum is and who recognizes it (Parliamentarian? Secretary? President?)
9. Define what a majority is in ALL elections and/or decisions.

**Miscellaneous:** The main difference between a constitution and other rules of an organization (such as bylaws, rules of order, and standing rules) is that a constitution is

intended to function without major changes. It should try to see the larger picture and consider long range implications of the group's activities. The more complex the organization is, the more details you may need; the number of articles, for example, will be determined by the size and activities of the organization. Remember though, simplicity is the key. It is also a good idea to use the same phrases in your constitution. If you start by saying "board members", use that same phrase throughout the document. Once you differentiate, people can become confused and they will request clarification (we're in law school, this should surprise no one).

Avoid ambiguous or differentiating terms for the same duties or person (not all positions have the same duties or responsibilities).

When referring to voters on specific issues at board meetings, differentiate between student body voters and SBA voting members. This is very helpful when the minutes are published.

## Writing Bylaws

**What They Are:** Bylaws are specific rules by which a club or society operates on a day-to-day basis. They are intended to be flexible or changeable to meet the changing needs of the organization. If the constitution is the skeleton of an organization, then the bylaws are the flesh and blood.

**What They Do:** Bylaws set forth specific rules for how an organization should regularly operate. They elaborate and explain certain general provisions of the constitution and provide a practical approach to how to achieve the goals which the constitution sets out. If the constitution states the ends or goals of the organization, the bylaws state the means or methods. In some organizations, bylaws are combined with the constitution in a single charter. In those cases, the fundamental principles which would make up the constitution are distinguished from everyday provisions in the bylaws. This is important, since bylaws can be changed by a simple majority of the organization at a quorum meeting (a meeting with the minimum number of people present that the bylaws require in order for the meeting to be official). Remember that it is more difficult to make a constitutional change – normally requiring a 2/3 or 3/4-majority vote. Make sure you differentiate between who is a voting member and who is not. Additionally, your specific definition of your quorum and majority (in voting measures) can be placed in the bylaws.

**Points to Remember:** Bylaws should include at least:

1. The name of the organization
2. The object or purpose of the organization.
3. Rules of membership (including who can belong, different classes of membership if any, election of members, dues, initiation, and expulsion).
4. Officers (including their specific duties, method of selection and details of election procedure, appointed offices, eligibility, term of office, inauguration, what to do when resignations or vacancies occur, and methods of disciplining officers, when necessary).
5. Meetings (including different types of meetings – regular and special, number required for a quorum, how often the organization meets, where, what times, rules of order, and standing rules).
6. Executive Board (that is – the members or officers who can make daily decisions without getting approval from the whole organization).
7. Committees (what regular or standing committees will exist, and how to establish special or temporary committees).
8. Parliamentary authority (what will be the rules that govern meetings and who will interpret those rules. Most groups specify the rules set out in *Robert's Rules of Order* and appoint a parliamentarian).
9. Method of amending bylaws (usually this should require a majority vote at any meeting where a quorum is present).
10. What powers do the positions have?

11. What are the minimum standards for a board member (academic standing, hours required weekly, meetings, any other duties that candidates should be informed about)?
12. How does the board deal with proxy votes (trust us, this will come up)?
13. How does the board deal with vacant positions?
14. How does the board deal with discharging board members?
15. First year students and their abilities to be on the board?
16. Protocol for the SBA/Student Organization website
17. How does the board handle election disputes?
18. How do organizations get \$\$ from the SBA (What qualifies them and what is the procedure?)
19. What is the protocol for summer meetings and responsibilities?
20. How does the board deal with student and/or faculty grievances?

**Miscellaneous:** Bylaws concern running the organization as a whole. They include rules of order (which concern running meetings of the organization) and provide for standing rules (rules which apply only at one meeting, where they are adopted). Bylaws are supposed to make the method of running an organization clear and precise.

### **Suggestions for Consideration**

When reviewing or creating your constitution/bylaws you might consider adopting some procedures used by various bar associations around the country. Remember, however, that these are merely suggestions that merit adoption only if useful in your situation. A system that works in one situation may very well create havoc if applied to another.

### **President Ex Officio Member of All Committees**

The designation of ex officio status means that the party so designated enjoys all the privileges but none of the responsibilities of a given position. In order to enhance the President's ability to direct and coordinate organizational activity, many SBAs grant that officer ex officio membership on all committees. If the number of committees is sufficiently large, it may be practical to designate other executives as ex officio members of specified appropriate committees in order to moderate the load placed on the President (e.g., Treasurer as ex officio member of Budget Committee).

### **Creation of an "Elect" Period**

As a mechanism to enhance continuity, many SBAs have adopted an "elect" system for executive officers. Under such a system the election precedes the full assumption of office by one or two months. The newly elected officers can assist their outgoing counterparts, but their primary task should be organizing the new administration and planning. This allows the new officer to "ease into" the job rather than suddenly assuming responsibility at the adjournment of the last SBA meeting in the spring semester. If the "elect" method is adopted, it is advisable to address the issue of who assumes the office of an incumbent if the incumbent is unable to perform during the

elect period (e.g., Vice-President or President-Elect). It is also advisable to provide for recourse to the SBA in the event of conflict between the old and new officer.

### **Emergency Decision Making Authority**

Often situations develop which require a decision when it is impractical to convene a meeting. One method of addressing this is to grant some limited emergency decision-making powers to the executive board (officers) or the President, with a requirement that exercise of that power be reported to the SBA at the next regular meeting. Such power should be limited and required to be consistent with prior decisions of the SBA (e.g., emergency expenditures limited to \$100). It should supplement, not replace, the decision making power of the full SBA.

### **Specified Committee Responsibilities**

Most SBAs specify the duties of the primary officers, but few address committee responsibilities in their constitution/bylaws. It is advisable to address committee duties, at least in general, in the bylaws. This provides committees with notice of their responsibilities and avoids possible confusion in addition to furthering stability. You may wish to provide for “any additional duties as specified by SBA resolution” as a mechanism to allow for adjustment of committee duties as needed.

### **Summary Dismissal From Office**

Some SBAs provide for summary dismissal from office of representatives who demonstrate blatant failure to meet minimum responsibilities (e.g., unexcused absence from two consecutive meetings). Often this is accompanied by a provision for reinstatement upon petition to the SBA. Such summary procedures should be carefully drafted to prevent abuse. When properly used, they allow replacement of ineffective and irresponsible members without the cumbersome and time-consuming procedures of formal impeachment. They should only apply to extreme cases. Instances of improper performance should be handled through the impeachment process allowing for formal charges and response.

### **Regular Meetings**

Setting a regular time and frequency (e.g., 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month school is in session) in the bylaws allows members to make advance plans. SBAs should meet at least once a month but not more than once every two weeks.

### **Special (Emergency) Meetings**

The President or executive board may be empowered to call special meetings when the need arises. Time and manner of notice should be specified (e.g., posting on the SBA bulletin board at least 5 school days prior to the meeting). It is also advisable to specify

that SBA business can only be conducted at regular or duly announced special meetings.

### **Notice of Proposed Amendments**

As a mechanism to assure proper consideration of constitutional or bylaw changes, many SBAs provide that advance notice is required before such amendments may be considered. Notice may be by posting in a designated place or by delivery to all voting members. The time of notice should be at least 5 days prior to the meeting at which the change is to be voted on. The vote necessary for adoption is normally a 2/3 majority for the constitution and a simple majority for bylaws.

### **Reprimand Delinquent Members**

This issue is a constant problem for any organization. If a board does not deal with this quickly, it can destroy a board's credibility and alienate other board members. The best advice is to let the board know ASAP what the consequences for and CARRY THEM OUT!! If you do not have a guideline for this, you should make one ASAP.

Note, this is different from absentees as listed above. This issue deals with apathy, tardiness, time commitment issues and conduct detrimental to the board.

### **Organizational Funding**

Surprisingly, many schools do not list this. Not so surprisingly, the schools that do not list this have the same problems each year with student organization procedural ignorance. Save yourself and your board some time and list the steps in your by-laws and/or a specific addendum distributed to the various organizations. Additionally, put your by-laws and constitution online for easy student access.

It is also a good idea to put the channels in which your SBA receives/spends money. Every conspiracy theorist loves to think the SBA is in cahoots with the administration and somehow keeping extra money. Put this one to bed and show your financial statements from the beginning to the end, either online or in publication.

### **Who interprets ambiguity in the Constitution/Bylaws?**

It is best to decide early on who will be the ultimate interpreter of ambiguity. Either have a position dedicated to this each year (like a Parliamentarian), decide as a board or your group can try to get Scalia or Ginsburg to take time out of their busy schedules (depends on how much of a textualist you are in deciding between those two).

## **SBA Structure**

The tasks and responsibilities of SBAs, or analogous law student organizations, vary widely throughout the country. The organizations range from a committee which sits during budget time to decide on allocations and then disbands, to an organization which has charge of all law student activities including journals, moot court, and newspapers. The organizational structure described here is appropriate for a SBA that is a leading student organization and is responsible for many varied tasks. A much more simplified structure may be more appropriate for those organizations that do not fit in the category.

### **Executive Board**

Despite the many variations, most SBAs are similarly structured in that they consist of an executive board and a larger representative body. The executive board is normally responsible for the coordination of day-to-day operations, policy initiation, and emergency and minor decision-making. At minimum, the executive board consists of the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Some organizations combine the Secretary and Treasurer tasks into one position while others utilize more than one Vice-President (e.g., day and evening Vice-President) or Secretary (e.g., recording and corresponding). Some organizations expand their executive board beyond the primary officers to include other positions such as ABA Representative, Senior Class Representative, Attorney General (student court) or Ombudsman. The composition of the executive board depends upon the needs of the organization. Factors to be considered include the nature and range of executive responsibilities, the interests and points of view considered important in decision-making, and the history and traditions of the organization. Care should be taken not to make the board so large it becomes cumbersome and unwieldy or so small that insufficient personnel are available to fulfill executive responsibilities. The proper balance is different for each situation. Former officers may be a good source of insight into this subject and should be sought out if at all practical (law school alumni office may be helpful in locating these individuals). A solid understanding of past experience should be obtained before initiating any major changes. Often what looks good on paper fails in practice.

### **President**

The primary officer of an organization is normally called the President, although other titles, such as Chairperson, are sometimes used. Whatever the title, the role of the chief executive is generally twofold – presiding officer and administrator. The presiding duty entails assuring that the organization's meetings and business sessions proceed in an organized and orderly manner so as to enhance the conduct of necessary business. The administration duty entails seeing that the business of the organization is carried out in an efficient and coordinated manner. The specific details of a President's duties are normally determined by each individual organization according to its own unique needs and goals. A great deal of variation is possible but we can roughly categorize the presidential role as either strong or weak. Whatever the type of presidency, the office's duties and responsibilities should be clearly set out in the constitution and bylaws.

What we will, for convenience sake, term the strong President is the focal point of the organization. He or she normally enjoys extensive control over appointments and assignments, subject to the advice and consent of the larger body. Clearly this power gives the President a great deal of influence over the conduct of business. The strong President's role also involves acting as the principle spokesperson of the organization. It may also include the power to make the final decision in many matters. In addition, the strong President is normally granted extensive emergency decision-making powers and some limited ability to authorize the expenditure of funds. Under the strong presidency, the direction of the organization is set by the President, subject to the right of the membership to overrule. Because of the extensive powers invested in the strong President, it is advisable to clearly define "checks and balances" which serve to assure democratic policy making and avoid abuse of power.

At the other extreme, with a weak President the executive board rather than the President possesses most of the emergency decision-making authority. Appointments are commonly initiated by the board or from the legislative body. The weak President is the presiding officer but exercises little independent authority. The advantage of this form is that there is little opportunity for abuse of power. The drawback, however, is an increased possibility of confusion and inefficiency. The larger and more complex the organization, the greater the need for a strong chief executive. Tailor the office to fit the organization.

### **Vice-President**

The prefix vice in the title denotes substitute, deputy, or subordinate. These three terms describe the primary facts of the role of the Vice-President. The emphasis may vary from organization to organization but normally all three are present to some degree.

The substitute role entails presiding at meetings in the absence of the President or when the President surrenders the chair in order to participate in debate. It also includes acting for the President in other capacities where the officer is absent or otherwise unable to perform. This duty is normally exercised only in an emergency where action cannot be postponed until the President is available. In some SBAs, the President is granted the power to designate a substitute in the event of temporary absence. Where the constitution or bylaws grant that power, the Vice-President may not act unless designated. Normally in cases of permanent or prolonged absence (e.g., resignation or illness) of the President, the Vice-President assumes the office. The circumstances under which this takes place should be clearly specified in the constitution or bylaws in order to avoid confusion. In organizations with more than one Vice-President, the officer responsible for substitution should be specified. Ranking Vice-Presidents as first, second, etc., is another alternative.

The deputy role entails acting as an assistant to the President. Specific duties may be assigned in the bylaws or the issue may be addressed by simply requiring the officer to act "as directed by the President." Where the latter applies, it is common for the deputy

role to be ignored and the Vice-President to be underutilized. It is recommended that this be avoided. Proper use of the Vice-President can greatly enhance the organization's functional ability.

The subordinate role is one that must be emphasized. An organization should have only one chief executive, even under a weak presidency system. It is imperative that the Vice-President keeps this in mind in the performance of the duties of the office. Even where duties are specified in the bylaws, consultation and communication with the President is important in order that the parts of the organization do not operate in conflict. This is not to say the Vice-President should not exercise authority. Rather, the exercise of authority should conform to guidelines set out by the SBA and articulated by the President.

### **Secretary**

The role of the Secretary has been described as that of "keeper of the records and aide to the President." An effective Secretary is imperative for a smoothly functioning organization. Unfortunately, the lack of power and authority inherent in this position leads many SBAs to pay little attention to what is an important office.

The maintenance of records involves taking minutes of meetings, maintaining the organization's files, and keeping the membership rolls. The minutes of meetings should record the actions taken by the assembly including the maker and exact wording of motions and the result of any votes. They should also include the date, time, and purpose of the meeting, any reports presented, announcements made, and any other relevant information. Minutes should be signed by the Secretary and presented for approval at a subsequent meeting.

The maintenance of organizational files is an important yet often ignored part of the Secretary's duties. The files should be complete and organized so as to be accessible and useful. Where reports are required but not submitted, the Secretary should communicate this to the President. Complete records save time in the future and help prevent the "reinventing the wheel" syndrome that plagues many SBAs.

The keeping of membership rolls entails having at hand a current list of all eligible members of the organization. This becomes important in determining the number of members needed to achieve a quorum and which members should be counted in that quorum.

Acting as an aide to the President is a communication function. The Secretary should assure notification to members of meetings and the forwarding of correspondence and other material as directed by the President. The specific nature of this role is dependent upon the organization and the style and preference of the President. In many organizations the Secretary's role is divided into corresponding and recording Secretary positions with an appropriate division of responsibilities. In other organizations, some of the secretarial duties are assigned to other officers or to a paid secretary who works

under the direction of the elected Secretary.

The Secretary should also publish the meeting's minutes at the school. This can be accomplished by e-mail, actual hard copy posting in common areas, in the SBA newspaper and on an SBA website.

If it is possible, the Secretary should have access to a laptop or SBA computer to take notes during all meetings.

### **Treasurer**

The Treasurer is the authorized custodian of an organization's funds. The responsibility usually entails both receipt and disbursement of funds, presentations of regular financial reports, and maintaining a record of all financial activities. The specific nature of these duties depends upon the nature of the organization's finances and its fiscal structure. Care should be taken to specify the Treasurer's duties, responsibilities, and authority in the bylaws. Consideration should be given to bonding the Treasurer as an added protection for both the officer and the organization.

Additional criteria to take into consideration for the treasurer

1. The Treasurer has a fiduciary duty to the board and more importantly to the student constituency.
2. Due to the fiduciary duty and relationship to the constituency, a candidate for treasurer needs to realize the possible impact of his/her actions with regard to the moral character and background for a particular State Bar. Often, an SBA's budget deals with tens of thousands of dollars. For this reason alone, it is imperative to inform candidates of possible consequences of impropriety as Treasurer in law school.
3. The Treasurer, as well as other board members, may share in liability for activities sponsored by SBA's that result in injury to others. The Treasurer's name is usually on the checks written for the respective SBA for various social activities. This is not mentioned to scare anyone, but rather to inform of potential liability.
4. The Treasurer keeps accurate record for a number of accounts. These vary from a single disbursement account to separate organizational accounts and even a private SBA account.
5. The Treasurer should keep accurate records of all budget processes and transactions.

### **ABA Representative**

The American Bar Association Representative is the liaison between the SBA and the ABA – Law Student Division and the ABA itself. The responsibility usually entails keeping the board updated on upcoming ABA events, ABA Law Student Division semesterly meetings, ABA Law Student Division open positions, the annual ABA meeting and overseeing any ABA functions at the school.

The ABA Representative should also maintain close contact with their respective ABA Circuit Governor and assist the Circuit Governor in disseminating information to ABA Law Student Division members at the respective law schools. Also, the ABA Representative should contribute to the ABA Representative list serve as moderated by the ABA Law Student Division Vice Chair.

The ABA Representative can be an elected position or appointed. In addition, the ABA Representative could be granted voting powers within the SBA board.

## **20 Other Positions to Consider For Your SBA Board**

1. Community Service
2. Social
3. Intramurals
4. SBA Website Coordinator
5. Public Relations
6. Administration Liaison
7. Alumni Relations
8. Fundraising
9. Academics/Mentor Programming
10. Part-time/Night Student Representative
11. 1L Rep, 2L Rep, 3L rep, 4L rep
12. Risk Management
13. County/State Bar Rep
14. Parliamentarian
15. Barristers' Ball Coordinator
16. Pro Bono Coordinator
17. Newspaper Editor
18. Judicial Chairperson
19. Faculty Liaison
20. VITA Liaison

## Meetings

One of the most important responsibilities of the President of an SBA, or any organization, is that of acting as the presiding officer at organization meetings. Since most of any organization's decision-making and policy setting is done at its meetings, it is imperative that efficiency and order prevail. Often the style and tone exhibited at meetings carries over into the conduct of an organization's business. If meetings are poorly conducted it is likely that programs and events will suffer a similar fate. It is also unlikely that a President who is unable to exercise leadership at meetings will be able to effectively lead in other areas. In short, your success as an SBA President and the success of your SBA is directly related to your success in fulfilling the role of presiding officer.

### Presiding

According to the National Association of Parliamentarians:

As a presiding officer, through the manner in which he/she plans and conducts a meeting, the President sets an example for the assembly in fairness, courtesy, and operation under rules. He always keeps in mind that proper procedure is based on (1) courtesy to all; (2) one item at a time; (3) majority rule with respect for the right of the minority; (4) consideration for the rights of individual members, absentees, and the organization as a whole; and (5) partiality for none and justice for all.

### The Meeting Room

The obvious first step in preparing for a meeting is determining where to meet. If possible, select a room which will accommodate the maximum number of expected attendees comfortably. An overly small room results in crowding and discomfort which is conducive to chaos and confusion. An overly large room (e.g., a group of 30 in a room for 500) allows the group to spread out, making it difficult to keep everyone involved in the business of the meeting. If you must take a larger room, try to designate seating in one area to minimize the "spreading out" effect.

In setting up for the meeting, seat the executive board at a table facing members. The presiding officer should be placed so as to have an unimpeded view of the room. If you wish, you may use a podium, in which case the President may preside from the podium. If the group is sufficiently large, a sound system is advisable. It is imperative that speakers be heard by the entire assembly.

### Preparation for the Meeting

The presiding officer should begin preparation for the meeting at least one week to ten days prior to the meeting date. Begin by making notes on business to be covered at the meeting. The minutes of the last meeting should be examined to insure that any

unfinished business will be addressed at the new meeting. If resolutions must be pre-submitted, they should be compiled and listed. Make a list of each working committee or task force and determine if a report or decision will be needed. If emergency decision-making powers have been exercised, a report should be made at the meeting.

It is normally wise to consult with other officers and committee heads to determine topics they would like to see discussed at the meeting and any new business they anticipate being raised. The object is to list every potential item which you may wish to have addressed at the meeting. Once everything is listed you are ready to prepare the formal agenda for the meeting.

The Presiding officer should also differentiate the meeting topics in the beginning (SBA, Executive Council, Working Committees, Co-Sponsorship). This can be done with the assistance of the agenda and the use of public media at the respective school.

## **Agenda**

An agenda is a program and plan for a meeting. A carefully prepared and conscientiously followed agenda is an invaluable tool for directing an organized, businesslike, and democratic meeting. It is recommended that the agenda be made available to the members in advance of the meeting. This serves to provide them with notice of business to be conducted. Knowing what is planned for the meeting and the order in which it will be addressed gives a member a feeling of involvement. It may also serve to encourage participation and cooperation in “moving things along” during the meeting. If the party responsible for an item or report is listed, it also provides additional notice of that responsibility.

The agenda sets the “order of business” for a meeting. A typical and generally accepted order of business is as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Reading and approval of minutes
3. Reports of officers, including reading of correspondence and financial reports
4. Reports of standing committees
5. Reports of special committees
6. Special orders
7. Unfinished business (from prior meetings)
8. General orders and resolutions
9. New business
10. Adjournment

The order of business may vary from organization to organization in order to meet special needs. It is advisable that an organization follows the same order from meeting to meeting, unless the members decide upon an exception for a particular meeting. It is recommended that the general order of business for meetings be established as part of the bylaws.

In preparing your agenda, be mindful of the normal “running time” of your meetings. You want to complete necessary business but you do not want to overburden the agenda to such an extent that it cannot be completed. Techniques to “pare down” an agenda include written reports on minor matters and dispensing with reports when no decision or action is needed. Time spent in preparing the agenda carefully pays off with a well-run meeting.

## **The First Meeting**

Very often the first meeting sets the tone for the balance of a presiding officer’s term. It is important, therefore, to get off to a good start. The first thing to do is gather material for the meeting. Examine your agenda and make sure you have on hand any documents, files, or other material relevant to agenda items. Familiarize yourself with the agenda and supportive material. Make sure you have a copy of the constitution and the bylaws and a copy of *Robert’s Rules of Order*. It is also sometimes helpful to have on hand a file containing the minutes of prior meetings – in case during the meeting reference is made to past actions. It is also advisable to obtain a gavel and block (a good sharp rap of a gavel can be surprisingly effective in restoring order).

Arrive at the meeting place early. Set up your material so that you know where everything is and can retrieve it as needed. Once you are set up, feel free to socialize as people arrive. Before the scheduled starting time move to your seat and start trying to get your members seated. One useful technique is to ask your officers to circulate just before the starting time and ask members to take their places so the meeting can start. A few minutes before the starting time rap the gavel and announce that members should be seated because the meeting is about to start. All officers should be seated at this time as an example to the other members. Make every effort to start meetings at the scheduled time. Failure to start on time sets a tone of lack of control that may be difficult to overcome.

## **Call to Order**

Begin the meeting with a sharp rap of the gavel and an announcement that the meeting is called to order. Immediately move on to the first order of business by announcing what that item is (e.g., “Secretary will read the minutes”) and allowing the party responsible for that item report. With regard to the minutes, if copies have been provided to all members (advisable), you may wish to dispense with actual reading and seek approval or corrections. Complete one item of business and move on to the next without delay. Keeping the meeting moving is one of the responsibilities of the President. Try to convince individuals making reports to be succinct and to the point. Relevant material need not be sacrificed to brevity but long-winded speeches are clearly inappropriate. Members are more likely to attend meetings if they do not feel they are wasting their time. Orderly and efficient meetings are more interesting and more likely to be well attended.

## **Maintaining Order**

As the presiding officer – or chair of the meeting – the SBA President should maintain control of the meeting at all times. Questions, comments, or discussion are always directed through the President rather than directly to any member. One common mistake is to allow persons making reports to respond directly to questions. While this may seem innocuous, it should be promptly and firmly corrected (e.g., “please direct all comments to the chair”) the first time it occurs. All members must recognize that comment is permitted only upon recognition by the chair. Non-germane comments should be pointed out but not responded to (e.g., “I’m sorry but that is not under discussion now, you may raise it under new business”). If a report is being questioned from the floor, a response should be made only upon acknowledgment by the chair. This allows a screening for non-germane points and further underscores the vesting of control in the chair (a simple “can you respond to that” will usually suffice). Cross discussion on the floor is absolutely inappropriate and should be sharply curtailed (e.g., sharp rap of gavel and comment “one at a time, please”). The first meeting is especially crucial for establishing control by the President. It may seem petty, but order is difficult to maintain and minor deviations must be corrected before they escalate. The alternative to strict adherence is often erosion of order and out of control meetings.

## **Parliamentary Procedure**

The amount of power vested in the presiding officer – or meeting chair – for the purpose of maintaining orderly meetings is extreme. Exercised with care and consideration, the chair’s control is a positive and crucial element in any effective organization. Exercised without regard for democratic principles, it becomes tyrannical and counter-productive. Rules of parliamentary procedure developed out of recognition that a powerful chair is necessary and a realization that abuse of that power should be guarded against. They provide procedures designed to promote order while assuring protection of the rights of members to a voice in the conduct of an organization’s business.

Most organizations provide in their bylaws for adherence to *Robert’s Rules of Order*, except to the extent they are specifically modified within the bylaws. It is recommended that the SBA President become thoroughly familiar with the rules of parliamentary procedure and strictly adhere to them. The materials that follow provide an overview and may be used for quick reference. They should not be considered as a substitute for review of the rules themselves. Adherence to a body of rules of procedure results in fair and orderly conduct of business. It also protects the chair, in that reference to a body of rules “depersonalizes” decisions of the chair. Familiarity with the rules also provides a skill that is useful in any organization, a value beyond that accruing to your role as SBA President. It is well worth the effort.

## Procedural Protocol for SBA Meetings

There are many ways to handle the procedural aspect of an SBA meeting. Robert's Rules offer countless variations. To access the Robert's Rules Website, go to:

[www.robertsrules.org](http://www.robertsrules.org)



## Parliamentary Tips for Monthly Meetings

### Order of Business

#### CALL TO ORDER

Begin on time! One rap of the gavel, then say,  
“The meeting will come to order.”

#### OPENING CEREMONIES

The meeting will open with the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

#### READING OF THE MINUTES

“The Secretary will read the Minutes of the last meeting.”

(Secretary stands and reads the minutes)

“Are there any corrections to the minutes?”

“If not, the minutes are approved as read,” OR “approved as corrected.”

#### REPORTS OF OFFICERS

“The next order of business is the Reports of Officers as listed in the bylaws.”

(Call only on the officers who have told you they wish to report.)

#### REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

“Will the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee please report.”

(Call only on the committee chairs who have said that they have a report. If their committee wishes any action to be taken, the report should end with a well-worded motion: “Therefore, Mr./Madam President, on behalf of the committee, I move that . . .”)

#### REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

“Will the Special Committee on \_\_\_\_\_ please report.”

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

“The next business in order is Unfinished Business, and the first item is . . .”

(President should know of any items of Unfinished Business. Never say “Old” Business, because it is not, it is unfinished.)

#### NEW BUSINESS

“The next business in order is New Business, is there any new business?”

(The Secretary may read recommendations from the board at this point and move for their adoption.)

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Be sure that each person tells What, When, Where, Why and How Much.)

### PROGRAM

“The program chairman will not present the program....”

(This may be scheduled first so that the speaker can depart early. To retain control of the meeting, never say, “turn the meeting over to . . .”)

### ADJOURNMENT

“Is there any further business to come before this meeting? . . . If not, the meeting is adjourned.” OR if a motion to adjourn has been made and seconded, “It has been moved by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded that we adjourn, all those in favor say Aye; those opposed say No. The Ayes have it and the motion is carried. The meeting is adjourned.”

Note: Be sure a quorum is present before business is transacted. All of the previous items may not be needed in any one business meeting; however, the minutes should be read and the Treasurer’s report given at each meeting.

## Leadership

As an SBA President you are an officially designated student leader. You have charge of an organization responsible for serving the needs and interests of your fellow law students. You are responsible for managing that organization and ensuring that it fulfills its responsibilities. You are expected to lead that organization and, to a lesser degree, to lead the law student body. But what exactly is this quality of leadership you are thought to possess?

An examination of leaders provides some insight. One characteristic those we call leaders have in common seems to be an ability to communicate. This is most obvious with many politicians, but some communication skills are discernable in every leader. It seems likely that one aspiring to leadership should develop their communication skills.

Another characteristic common in leaders is that of assertive persistence. When they fail they try again. Some might call it stubbornness. In reality it is merely an exceptional tendency to persist. It is serious pursuit of their idea of how things are or should be. Their tenacity may literally drag those they lead in the direction the leader prefers. When everyone is still trying to decide which direction to take, the leader has the temerity to decide on the way to go. The undecided and unsure often follow, with the less persistent close behind.

This raises another common leadership characteristic – vision. Leaders often have an overriding idea, one which others often adopt simply for lack of their own. The unknown is intimidating and often leaders are followed because their vision is adopted by those who need assurance that there are answers. The leader provides a framework for action. The vision is articulated and communicated. The conviction is contagious and the courage to step forward decisive.

None of this guarantees a leader's success, of course. It merely assures company, for a time. The ineffective leader is often deserted, despite his or her skills. The effective leader normally enjoys success and resulting longevity. Effectiveness is often contingent upon the leader's insight into the strengths and weaknesses of both the organization and him or herself. The leader then effectively utilizes available tools in a manner that maximizes strengths and defends weaknesses. You already possess some leadership skills or you would not hold your present office. The trick is to translate those skills into effective leadership.

## SBA Tips

This is a collection of ideas and suggestions garnered from SBAs throughout the country. REMEMBER that these are only ideas and suggestions; you should utilize these tips based on your school's needs.

**Law Student Division** - If you have not already done so, learn about and participate in the American Bar Association Law Student Division. Contact the ABA Representative at your school and seek to create a mutually supportive working relationship. Each law school is entitled to two voting seats in the Law Student Division Assembly: the ABA Representative and the SBA President. Attendance at the Circuit Meetings (Fall and Spring) and the Annual Meeting enables you to exercise your vote on important law student issues and lets you meet with other SBA Presidents. The Division also offers information and services useful to the students you represent.

**Accounts** - Try and get accounts with a local supply store, copy center, and other businesses that you find your SBA uses often. This makes your Treasurer's job much easier. Be careful not to let everyone sign on the account. Allow only a few officers the ability to purchase for the SBA.

**Addresses** – Maintaining accurate and current addresses of your board members and the student body is essential. You should devise some sort of address update system, so that students will know exactly whom to notify if they move during the year. When quick mail is important, use home addresses rather than school addresses. Furthermore, you should make full use of email to disseminate information to board members – it reduces costs and adds to efficiency.

**Advertising** - An often ignored yet easily utilized source of revenue is the sale of advertising space. If your SBA produces material for distribution to significant numbers of students (e.g., orientation materials or student directories), plan on space for advertisements. Local restaurants, bookstores, and other vendors are common sources. Alumni and local bar associations may also purchase space.

**Agenda** - You should set a cut-off date for agenda items so that the agenda may be properly prepared and conspicuously posted several days in advance of a SBA meeting. A frequent complaint is that the agenda is posted only hours before the meeting, or even after the meeting. Be sure that all students know where to submit their agenda items. Remember, preparing an agenda in advance is sometimes difficult. It will, however, help make the meetings run smoother.

**Attendance** - Your representatives are more likely to attend regularly and willingly if you space meetings reasonably apart (every two weeks should be the maximum frequency under normal circumstances), and keep them brisk and short, without skipping any important issues. Do not get bogged down in unnecessary parliamentary procedure.

**Audit** - Have an audit performed by an accountant before you officially take office. This way you can determine exactly where your administration begins financially (as well as find out if there are any problems).

**Binders** - It is helpful to the representatives to provide them with a 2" or 3" 3-ring binder, subdivided either according to successive meetings or subject matter (i.e., agenda, minutes, correspondence, etc.), so that all material may be kept in one place and available to each representative at each meeting. It's good to include a student directory, picture books, faculty directories, a month-by-month calendar, and other materials to help provide general know-how, information, and administrative efficiency.

**Blackboards** - Blackboards can serve as a useful publicity device with messages entered before classes begin in the morning.

**Budgets** - Advance planning is very important for proper distribution of funds. Even if your school has little money to work with, it is important to estimate your potential income versus your expenses for the semester and academic year.

**Bulletin Board** - Establish a SBA Bulletin Board in some prominent place in the law school (e.g., library or lobby). Use it to post announcements of events, copies of correspondence, minutes of meetings, or other materials of general interest.

**Calendar** - Try to map out a SBA Calendar of Events during July or August before the school year begins. This will allow for better distribution of events and helps to avoid conflicts with events staged by other organizations in the law school. Try to get the other organizations to submit their events to the SBA so that you can coordinate around those events too. Include this calendar in the SBA binder.

**Checking Account** - Make sure your checking account requires two signatures. This provides for better internal control.

**Class Schedules** - Be sure to give each SBA representative a "grid chart" so that he or she may inform you of his or her precise class schedule (with room numbers) immediately. This helps with scheduling of SBA meetings.

**Committees** - It is very important to select your committee chairs early (April or May is not too soon for the following school year). If a committee chairperson does not do the job, REPLACE him or her. Really, in the long run, it is much easier on you.

**Correspondence** - Be prompt; try to handle each piece of correspondence only once, and keep a copy. Few things make an organization look and function better than prompt correspondence. Also, when other officers or SBA representatives correspond with someone, request a copy. You may be the one approached next, plus, you need to be informed about all goings on.

**Credit Cards** - It is recommended that if you use such a system, reserve one personal

credit card solely for SBA expenses. This prevents problems of commingling, and makes reimbursement far simpler.

**Delegation** - Try to distribute responsibility as much as possible. You will find that there are always things to do, no matter how much work you have other officers and representatives doing. The sharing of responsibility with other board members will keep them involved much longer and make things easier on you.

**Directory** - A good directory is critical to the effective functioning of both the SBA and the school in general. Addresses should be collected via the registration process. During the first few weeks of classes, provide update cards or other methods for students to submit new phone numbers and other directory information. Advertising can be very successful, and pay for the entire cost of your directory. Most schools will not give out student addresses without obtaining their permission. Make sure students give their permission before releasing that information.

**Faculty** - To establish good faculty relations, you should try to include faculty members in as many student activities as possible. This might include sending or offering complimentary tickets to events such as a banquet or dance.

**Files** - A logical and efficient system of filing and cross-filing can save you hours of searching or re-creating work already done. The following four categories of files are recommended:

1. Subject Matter,
2. Originals,
3. Current, and
4. Forms.

The "Subject Matter" files are self-explanatory, and should be kept within easy reach of your chair, preferably in one of your desk drawers.

The "Originals" file can be just one folder that contains the original copy of everything except letters. The originals should be filed chronologically. Having originals on file provides clear print for later photocopying; allows for easy cutting and pasting if an earlier piece of work must be slightly altered before being reproduced; and gives you and your successors a convenient chronological record of all the work you have accomplished during your tenure.

If, for example, you prepared a memo for various people, including the Dean, then the original should go to the "Originals" file, a copy to the Dean, and another copy to a file marked "Correspondence-Dean."

The third file category is "Current" files, which should be kept on top of your desk in an upright file holder.

The final file category, "Forms," is kept in a separate upright file holder on your desk and contains multiple copies of all the forms that you are constantly using.

**Financial Control** - Be sure to develop a careful system of accounting for the inflow of funds. You might even consider spending a couple of hours with your Treasurer and an accountant to formulate such a system before the year begins. Then follow it rigidly during the year.

**Forms** - Develop forms for everything. This will streamline your operation considerably and provide you with time for important SBA matters.

**Historian** - In order to encourage continuity, you might consider creation of a position of SBA historian. The historian should be responsible for recording everything the organization does or gets involved in during the year. The extent of the history and the degree of detail depend upon the particular needs of your SBA. Assignment of this task to one individual increases the likelihood that information will be passed down from year to year. A first year student may be a good idea, he or she can do it for a couple of years and then have some time to orient the next historian.

**Letterhead** - Letterhead should be on nothing but high-quality paper. Laid paper or a rough texture finish can be very impressive. Remember that you are a professional organization and you want to look like one. Again, for the sake of belonging, you might consider having the name of each SBA member typeset on the left-hand column of your letterhead. However, remember that letterhead with the member listings becomes obsolete after each year.

**Local Bar Association** - Contact the leadership of your local bar association, particularly if they have a Young Lawyers Division. A good relationship with such organizations provides useful contacts, a potential revenue source, and goodwill for the law school. You may also find that many leaders of the local bar filled a similar role as students and are willing to share their experience.

**Meetings** - Although not many students outside your SBA board will generally attend your SBA meetings, it is still important to publicize these meetings conspicuously, to let students know that they are welcome, and to assure them that the SBA is not a secret society. Make up extra copies of the agenda for the casual visitor. If possible, try to schedule your SBA meetings ahead for an entire semester. Keep meetings as short as possible and no more frequently than once every two weeks under normal circumstances.

**Newsletters:** For effective communication to all students, a number of SBAs produce their own newsletters on a bimonthly or monthly basis. In the same place where you receive agenda submissions, you might include a slot for newsletter submissions. Be sure to appoint someone who is relatively artistic to the job of creating the newsletter. You might vary the colors of your successive newsletters, just to let students know that a different one has come out. Or, you might keep the same color throughout for the sake of identity, and enter the date and/or newsletter number in bold and conspicuous print on the front cover.

**Newspaper** - If you don't utilize a newsletter, or if you want something in addition, you should consider a regular SBA column in the law school or university newspaper. In the column you can describe SBA programs and accomplishments, plans for the future, and frequent complaints which you have successfully addressed.

**Office Hours** - Publicize office hours conspicuously and be sure they are well kept. Few things are more annoying to a student, and worse for the SBA's professional image, than to make that rare trip to the SBA office during its posted office hours only to find that it is locked and lifeless.

**Operating Manual** - Because so much SBA work is repeated year after year, you would save your successors hours of work by keeping careful notes on everything you learn and do. Tucking these notes into a "tips for SBA Successor" file starting on Day 1 and at the end of the year converting these miscellaneous notes into an SBA Operating Manual will go a long way in preventing problems of "re-inventing the wheel."

**Parliamentary Procedure** - Few things can waste more time in SBA meetings than arguments over proper parliamentary procedure. It would be advisable to locate a parliamentary expert in your area and invite him or her to give your SBA a demonstration of parliamentary procedure at your very first meeting. This could save as much as thirty minutes per meeting. Also, you might consider appointing someone to act as parliamentarian.

**Planning** - As is often said, plan ahead. For any major SBA project, always leave two or three weeks more time than you would expect is needed so that inevitable problems and last minute loose ends may be smoothly resolved. Perhaps an entire SBA meeting during the spring before your term actually begins could be devoted to planning. Again, careful use of a calendar is important since one of your most difficult tasks all year will be avoiding scheduling conflicts.

**Posters** - Meetings, events, etc., can be effectively publicized on posters. Be sure to purchase 40-50 pieces of poster board in the beginning of the year since you will probably need at least that many during the course of your term. This will also keep you from having to run back and forth to the supply store each time you need to create another poster.

**President's Notebook** - The SBA President should carry a small notebook at all times. Use it to record ideas, suggestions, potential agenda items, and other day-to-day issues. No matter how good your memory, something will invariably be forgotten unless measures are taken to record it. This simple practice can substantially enhance your effectiveness.

**Publicity** - There are several good avenues of communication, and for important matters it is good to use as many of these avenues as possible:

1. Newspaper columns and advertisements,
2. Newsletters,
3. Bulletin boards,
4. Flyers in mailboxes
5. Large and conspicuous posters in heavily trafficked areas,
6. Classroom blackboards
7. Classroom announcements
8. Web sites, and
9. Electronic mail and bulletin boards

For any printed signs, be sure that the print is bold and heavy with stark contrast between print and background. Remember that students are bombarded with constant notices from one administrative office or another. The idea is to get students' attention and quickly and clearly convey your message.

**Reports** - Any committee chair, as well as your executive officers, should be prepared to present written reports of projects which they work on. If possible, it would be advantageous if they could also prepare a written plan prior to the start any project. These reports and plans could be consolidated into a year-end report from the SBA President to his or her predecessor, successor, Deans and others, and could help in preparation of an operating manual.

**Representatives** - Keep your representatives interested and involved. Give each representative responsibility for each project (short-term or long-term) and ask them for a rough outline of their plan in advance. Have each representative check in with you periodically, but otherwise leave the project in their hands. Also, host occasional get-togethers for all SBA members to show them that their work is appreciated.

**Secretary (Administrative Assistant)** - If your SBA is fortunate enough to have a paid secretary, establish a good working relationship with this person as soon as possible. Initially, if you have any trouble sharing work with this person, try explaining that he or she does not work for you and you don't work for him/her, but instead you are both working together to get the job done. This is one approach that has worked well for some people. Keep in mind that he or she has probably been involved with the SBA much longer than you have and he or she may be able to help you. Tell the secretary from the start how you want letters to look when they go out. An occasional meeting with the secretary will enable you to control the quality of the work that leaves your

office. The secretary should be experienced, accurate, detailed, and organized, and (if applicable) you should specifically look for these qualities during interviews. If the secretary is another elected official, remember that he or she got into office the same way you did and that constant demands with little appreciation shown may cause more turmoil and less production.

**Staff** - As with faculty, try to include staff in as many student activities as possible. This might be interesting/entertaining for them and will likely make them more willing to help you in the future (e.g., to help you cut through red tape).

### **Survival -**

#### DO:

1. Lighten your fall class load,
2. Delegate duties whenever possible,
3. Read and answer mail immediately,
4. Keep a schedule of upcoming events and deadlines, and
5. Stay in close contact with your SBA representatives.

#### DON'T:

1. Hesitate to remove people who do not perform,
2. Overextend yourself,
3. Procrastinate, or
4. Lose sight of your ultimate goal – graduation.

**Telephone** - Your office should have at least two phones and two phone extensions that bounce to one another when the other extension is busy. You also might consider an answering machine or voice mail for your SBA office.

**Time Management** - Keep yourself organized. You will not believe how much keeping your own affairs managed will help you run the SBA more efficiently. Use some type of calendar to keep your personal dates as well as SBA events and activities. If you are unable to manage yourself, you will not be successful in organizing and keeping the SBA out of rough waters.

**Transition Workshops** - Try to organize at least one workshop for the SBA Board that succeeds your Board to acquaint them with all the administrative ropes of the law school. Also, try to schedule at least one meeting solely with the person who succeeds you as SBA President. This is a valuable service that only you can provide.

**Writing** - Put everything in writing because you will discover that you cannot rely completely on your memory when you have dozens of students relying on you. A day-to-day desk calendar is very useful for short written notes, phone numbers, meetings schedules, etc. In addition, it is helpful to buy note pads. Keep one at your desk at all times, capture all thoughts as they occur, and file the notes in the appropriate file for future reference.

## People Managing – Part of the Whole

### A. President or Manager or Both

An SBA President is not solely a governing officer. The role includes management of both programs and people. This is true for other SBA officers and ABA Representatives alike.

### B. Management is a Way of Thinking

Management is not an isolated act but a process, an approach. It is planning thoroughly, interweaving ideas, thinking creatively, anticipating problems, marshalling resources, and balancing emphasis.

### C. The Scope of Programs: Impact on Personnel

Putting too big a burden on co-workers can discourage them from being involved. Forcing tasks upon someone disinterested will have a similar effect. The scope of programs should be diverse enough to create a motivating atmosphere that will foster involvement without being overburdening or ill-matched to the interests of staff members.

### D. Managing the Office: Procedure – Asset or Ailment?

Standard procedures and forms can be a drawback if needlessly formal or overly cumbersome. But they are a necessity as an organization grows. Forms and procedures are tools to aid in planning, recording, performing, and evaluating program efforts. As tools, they should be helpful and concise. Each staff member should be familiar enough with the standards to run the office alone in an emergency.

### E. Projects: The Test of Good Personnel (Delegation)

To achieve a good result, personnel must know what they are to do and why. They need a time frame and, usually, a starting point. The “why” provides motivation. Performance can be measured against deadlines, planning for contingencies, creativity, thoroughness, and follow-through. The bottom line is whether or not the report and evaluation get done and the “thank-yous” are said.

#### F. Image: Public Relations as a Bootstrap

A good public relations program gets the public saying good things about your program. The image is usually bigger than life; at least the image coming from a third person. Upon hearing positive feedback, personnel will begin thinking better thoughts about themselves and saying better things both about themselves and about the program. A reinforcing cycle is created. The effect is a motivational bootstrap.

#### G. People Managing

Clearly articulate responsibilities so that expectations of doer and supervisor match. Use contracts or job descriptions. Give positive feedback as often as possible; plan work assignments to facilitate this. Avoid giving orders. Transplant ideas to others and let them develop these notions. Morale is of two kinds: 1) maintenance morale – keeps attitudes in place, and 2) excellence morale – motivates the person to achieve. The manager is responsible for both. Eliminate deadweight immediately. Recruit entering students to become involved even before they arrive. Most of all pay attention to the interests, needs, and personalities of each person on your staff and use this information to maximize their performance.

#### H. Growth: Changing Roles and Needs

Management becomes more complicated with growth. The scope of programs will change. Ditto the need for procedures and public relations. Emphasis between elected official and managerial roles will change. What will not change is the fact that all human interaction involves managing the people with whom we work. This comes from knowing their personalities, needs, and desires.

#### I. Motivation and Success

All of the above elements play a role in how well you motivate co-workers. Key is how strong your motivation is, how well these elements are applied, and how much enthusiasm you generate. Your motivation to initiate and to follow through will determine how successful you are as a leader.

## Communication

Communication is an important part of successfully running any organization. With a SBA, it is imperative to communicate with the SBA's representatives and committee members. Most student leaders make a serious attempt to accomplish this, with varying degrees of success. It is also extremely important to maintain regular communications with the Dean of the law school and other significant faculty and administrators. Virtually every SBA has some form of continuing dialogue, although in some instances "less than amicable" is a valid characterization of the relationship. What some leaders fail to recognize, however, is that communication with the entire student body may be the most important aspect of their positions. Too many SBA Presidents work very hard and do an excellent job serving the student body; but neither communicate that fact to those students nor take appropriate credit for accomplishments.

A well-worn cliché in sales is that "it pays to advertise." Student leaders would do well to keep that thought in mind. It is not braggadocio to accurately inform those you represent of your actions on their behalf – in fact, it is foolish and a disservice to refrain. If students do not know how you are working for them, they will not provide you with the support you need to represent them. Your dealings with every facet of the law school community will be enhanced immeasurably if you are providing effective leadership to the student body. The key to such a role is effective and consistent communication.

One common and relatively painless mechanism for communication is the bulletin board. It should be located in a prominent place, glass enclosed and locked if possible, and attractively interesting. A calendar of events is a useful feature because it both provides a service and attracts an audience. Regularly post your meeting minutes, committee assignments, and any significant communiqués or announcements. Do not clutter the board with trivia, and keep information timely (e.g., tear down the last meeting's minutes before posting the latest). A few weeks should be the maximum running time of all but the most important items. You want to develop a regular audience, not simply occupy wall space.

Another recommended communicative tool is a regularly published newsletter. As SBA President, you should produce a regular feature that communicates your ideas, opinions, and suggestions as well as information.

If you are truly listening to the students you represent, you should be able to articulate their concerns and try to address them. This is the essence of leadership and should be pursued. If you are fortunate enough to have an existing student newspaper, which publishes frequently (monthly at minimum) and is timely (two weeks maximum between submission and publication), be grateful. Merely ascertaining the deadlines and submitting material should be sufficient. If you have no such resource, you must develop an alternative. It is possible to publish a presentable newsletter without a major expenditure of funds.

While you are concentrating on communicating with the student body, do not neglect

the other aspects of communication – both with your organization and with school authorities. Get into the habit of writing memos. It clarifies your ideas, minimizes misunderstandings, provides a record and projects an aura of professionalism. It also helps you to develop a useful skill that will be of great use in the future. The more you write, the easier it gets – like riding a bike. You will be surprised how much of a difference it can make in your dealings with committees under your charge and with your administration and faculty (Tip on meetings with school authorities – follow up with a memo beginning “at our meeting of . . . we discussed . . . and agreed that . . .” – it does wonders to avoid misunderstandings and broken commitments).

This may seem like an awful lot of work, leaving little time for fulfilling other responsibilities. However, ninety percent of a leader’s role involves an aspect of communication. If that is not the case, you are probably not delegating enough. Remember that the SBA President’s primary task is providing leadership, not performing all of the organization’s work. Lead, don’t try to do everything yourself. Delegate, communicate, coordinate, and facilitate. In short, lead.

## Planning Your Term

As a newly elected SBA President, you have accepted an important responsibility involving the leadership of an organization that performs many varied tasks. The complexity of SBAs and their roles varies greatly from school to school, but none would merit the adjective “simple.” Clearly, every SBA President faces a complex job to be performed over a relatively short term (the average term of office is one year). In order to make the job more manageable, it is recommended that you develop a plan that covers your entire term of office. Planning is often a key factor in organizational success and time devoted to that process can pay dividends throughout the year.

### Task Listing

Begin by listing each and every task facing you and your organization during your term of office. Divide a page into three columns; in the left-hand column list every event or activity the SBA must conduct (e.g., Orientation, Holiday Party, Law Day). Be sure to list every event, no matter how minor, and leave a few lines between each listing. Next, list every program or project in which the organization is involved (e.g., committee seats, faculty evaluation, book exchange), again leaving space between listings. Now list all ex officio duties of your office (e.g., chair monthly SBA meetings, sit on Faculty Senate, appoint ABA Representative) in the same manner. Finally recheck your lists, adding any task whether it fits in a category or not. The more complete the list, the more useful the plan on which it is based. Utilize all resources at your disposal – the SBA Constitution and bylaws, minutes of past meetings and other records, the school calendar, consultation with past officers and law school officials, and any other means available. Include in your list even the most minor event and the vaguest of responsibilities. Comprehensiveness is the goal and over listing is preferable to omission.

### Task Breakdown

Once you are certain the listing is complete, move to the middle column. In this space you will be noting briefly any data necessary to describe the task listed. One crucial component is the time frame for the task – for event or activities, a date (or approximate) is needed; for services over a continuing period you will want to include dates of peak demand and similar information; for ex officio duties, frequency and time commitment should be sketched out. Once timing data is entered, note any general information to provide an outline describing the scope and breadth of the task. Sub-tasks may emerge during the development of this component and these should be listed in the first column under the appropriate task heading. The information needed will vary according to the nature of the task and you should feel free to adapt the format to suit your needs. You may also wish to note those non-SBA individuals or groups with which a task must be developed or coordinated. Some sample entries are listed below for purposes of illustration.

## Sample A

<u>Task</u>	<u>Breakdown</u>
Orientation <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Staff workshops(3)</li><li>2. Run welcome party</li></ol>	Held during the week prior to start of Fall Semester – date set by Dean of Admissions; workshops on brief writing, student life, and study of law; music and food provided by SBA; work with Registrar
Faculty Evaluations	Last week of each semester; volunteers needed to distribute & collect during class time; results tabulated & published after grades are in; work with Academic Dean
Chair SBA meetings	Meet monthly on 1st Sunday; obtain room; publish agenda week prior; publicize meetings; refreshments

It is not necessary to precisely follow the form used here. Feel free to adapt it to suit your own needs.

## Resource Identification

Resources of an SBA can generally be divided into three categories – personnel, funds, and information. The personnel component consists of all committee members, SBA members, student volunteers, and paid staff available to carry out SBA tasks. It should be understood not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of the types of tasks performable by each element and the amount of time or effort available. Organizational charts and rosters are helpful tools in getting a useable picture of this component. The personnel component is the most unpredictable component and the most difficult to allocate.

The financial component consists of all funds available to the SBA. It includes funds directly available such as the treasury and fund-raising profits. It also includes funds indirectly or potentially available such as Dean's discretionary funds or Law Student Division grants. It also includes indirect services such as free copying. The SBA budget and financial records are the primary tools used to define this resource.

The final component, information, is often the most important and most neglected. Ordinarily, it consists of the SBA files and records. A comprehensive record of the completion of a repeated task makes every repetition much easier. Lack of records may require starting from scratch with attendant extra work. Examine your files and determine what data is available and what is not.

## Resource Allocation

Once resources are identifiable, you are ready to utilize the final column to begin allocating resources among the various tasks. This is the planning phase. Take into consideration how the task was conducted in the past and whether you wish to make any changes. When estimating resources needed to perform untried tasks, be conservative. Make a notation of the number of people assigned to or needed for a task and the approximate amount of time required. Note the amount of funds to be allocated and the source of those funds. Note the quality of any available information or records regarding a task. A sample entry is provided below.

### Sample B

<u>Task</u>	<u>Allocation</u>
Orientation	Committee of 6 begins planning in June; approximately 30 student volunteers needed on Orientation Day; copies provided by law school; \$1,200 from SBA, \$500 from law school; complete records of past two years

When you have completed this process for each task on your list, you will have allocated your resources and can now determine where to use any excess or how to make up any shortfall. You are also in a position to plan out individual tasks in more detail without continually reassessing the impact on the total budget. You should develop a master calendar in order to assure necessary actions are taken and as a useful record for the future. It should also allow a more systematic approach to change and improvement of operations. As a follow up, you may wish to develop a second listing with an identical first column, a second column noting actual resources used and a third column noting any suggestions you wish to make for your successors. It is also recommended that an individual file is created for each task in order to keep a detailed record. These actions will help to make your SBA a dynamic and vital organization.

# Systems Analysis

No individual or organization exists in a vacuum. They are invariably part of a system, that is they interact and interrelate with other like entities over a continuing period. The SBA President is a primary actor in the system consisting of the SBA he or she leads. The SBA itself is part of the larger system of the law school that consists of other subsystems such as the faculty. The law school itself often has subsystem status in a university system. A more sophisticated understanding of these systems can help the SBA President operate more efficiently. Unfortunately, such an understanding normally develops through experience and is at its peak at the end of a term of office. We recommend a rudimentary systems analysis as a means to provide the new SBA President with enhanced comprehension at a more useful time. The value of such an exercise, however, is directly contingent upon the amount of time and effort that can be devoted to it. What follows is a suggested method for analyzing the systems that are relevant to the role of the SBA President.

## Micro-Analysis

Your first task is to examine the SBA itself. Of what does it consist and how do its components interrelate? This inquiry should begin with an organizational chart. If one is not available you can readily produce your own. This in itself will be helpful and should show every member of the organization and all interactions. One method of charting the system would be to use different types of lines to show different types of interaction. A simple chart may use solid lines to signify primary authority (e.g., SBA Secretary has oversight responsibility over the publicity committee); and dotted lines to signify regular interaction (e.g., budget committee regularly communicates with social committee on activity expenditures). Elements can be differentiated by using different geometric figures to designate each type (e.g., triangles - officers; circles - standing committees; diamonds - task forces). Think out your chart and the relationship it shows. Feel free to do research and gather data. If you're not sure, use educated guesses and approximations, you can adjust it as experience provides more data. Be sure to be complete and include each actor. You want a comprehensive map of the system.

Once your organizational chart is complete, repeat the process for the faculty governing system and the law school and university administrative systems. Initially, these charts may be fuzzy and uncertain, but they can be refined as you learn more about the process and the entities. The information you gather in developing the charts will be a valuable tool as you manage your organization. As a law student, you are well aware of the value of having more information than your adversary has. The same holds true in the competition always found in dynamic systems.

## Macro-Analysis

Next, switch your perspective to an overview of the systems you have mapped out. Chart out the macro-system (SBA, Faculty, Administration, University, Trustees, etc.). Use varied line types to chart out relationships like funding flow, curriculum decisions,

disciplinary decisions, and like relationships.

Once this is completed, take each different relationship (e.g., funds) and track it through each of your micro-view charts. Start looking for decision points and possible input on those decisions. Be aware of the reverse flow normally attendant to many relationships (e.g., funding provision is coupled with fiscal needs and requests). They may not be mirror images but they normally approximate each other. As you become aware of feedback loops and direction (e.g., funds flow from University to law school to Dean to Placement Officer to SBA to Orientation Committee – fund request follows reverse path) you are beginning to develop a flow chart.

### **Flow Charting/Analysis**

As you start tracking various relationships through your micro-view charts feel free to use a different chart for each type of relationship (e.g., fiscal, curriculum, etc.). Overlays are ideal for this type of charting but a number of copies of each organization chart can be equally effective. Different colors can be used for each type – green for fiscal of course. At each decision point look for the feedback loop present where requests are present (e.g., SBA requests funds from placement for orientation, placement says no, SBA reacts - feedback, placement reconsiders, forwards request to Dean). If feedback is possible, chart it without regard to effectiveness or means. Then consider specific examples and types of feedback (e.g., angry letter or reasoned petition) and consider effectiveness. As you encounter situations refer to the chart and track decisions and performance. Think about strategy, particularly where charting has revealed alternative means (e.g., funds may be available through more than one committee or administrator). Consider the best avenue to increase the likelihood of success.

If you get to this point you have already conducted a systems analysis in order to develop your chart. You have gathered a great deal of information and vastly enhanced your understanding of the workings of your environment. This should enable you to be a superior actor within your environment.

If you are not inclined to carry an analysis as far as it is carried here, feel free to go as far as you are inclined. It is likely that every little bit will help to enhance your understanding and therefore be of value. Simply taking a broader view provides an edge over those taking a narrower view. A systems approach is by its very nature a broader view. Charting also provides a bonus in that it provides a record for your successor to build on and improve. It also helps to avoid error through inadvertent omission of an option from consideration. It may be worth a shot.

If you have an interest in this type of approach, further information can be found in many management and administration texts.