Starting A Club
A quick guide for where to begin

➢ **Talk to the Union Administration Office**
  - Before you start, find out if a similar club already exists that you might be able to work with.
  - Get a packet of information from Melissa Termine-Goetz, Assistant Coordinator of Student Activities, in the Union Admin Office (Rm. 3702)

➢ **Hold an organizational meeting**
  To reserve a room:
  - **Union rooms, Community Center, West Hall** contact Jean Purtel purtej@rpi.edu or x6505
  - **Classrooms and West Hall Auditorium** contact Michael Conroy at conrom@rpi.edu
  - **All fields and athletic facilities** contact Steve Allard at allars@rpi.edu
  - **Alumni House** contact Geoff Seber at seberg@rpi.edu
  - **Chapel and Cultural Center rooms** contact Jill Wishon at wishoj@rpi.edu
  - **Commons Area, DCC, CII and JEC** call for reservation at x2350

➢ **Advertise your meeting**
  - Put a notice in *What’s Happening in The Polytechnic*
  - Email The Poly at ads@poly.rpi.edu

➢ **Write your purpose statement**
  - Your purpose statement is a statement of goals and activities the club intends to follow, including how this will benefit the RPI Community.
  - Submit a copy of your purpose to the Union Constitution Committee through Melissa Termine-Goetz
  - Answer questions from Constitution Committee.
- **Read and Understand Starter Constitution**
  - Submit the Union Starter Constitution, which will be approved as your operating constitution the same time your purpose is approved.
  - Submit an updated Starter Constitution to the Union Admin. Office along with club officers names and contact information.

- **Attend E-Board Meeting**
  - When all your information is together, your purpose and starter constitution will be sent to the E-Board for approval. You will be informed when this is happening and a representative from the club should be present to answer any questions.

- **Approval of Club**
  - If the E-Board approves your purpose, you are then considered a Union recognized club. *(union recognition does not immediately approve you for funding)*
  - You are eligible for a starter budget of up to $125, if you meet the criteria for being a funded club *(see attached)*

- **Prepare Your Permanent Constitution**
  - Your Starter Constitution will expire 36 months (3 years) from its start so a permanent constitution needs to be filed with the Union Admin. Office
  - A member of the constitution committee can help you, if you have any questions.
  - The committee will review your constitution and may send it back to you with recommendations for changes.
  - After the committee is happy with your constitution it will be sent to the E-Board for final approval.
Starting a Union Club

“You know, I always thought there should be a club to…” This is the way many great ideas start. If you happen to have had one of these ideas, you may want to do something about it and form your own club. To do this, you may want to apply for Union recognition, which will give the club access to the Union services and meeting space, and the opportunity to apply for funding. Becoming a recognized activity does not automatically entitle or guarantee that a club will be approved for funding, or that requested funds will be approved once the club has been approved for funding, but you have the right to ask. Below is an outline of the steps you will need to go through to form your club. The staff of the Union Administration Office (Admin Office) and the Constitution Committee of the Executive Board is there to help you through this process.

1. Contact the Union Administration Office
   - Before you start, find out if a similar club exists that you might be able to work with. Call the Union Administration Office at x6505, or stop by the top floor of the Union and talk to Melissa Termine-Goetz.
   - If you decide that a new club is appropriate, you will be given information to help start the club successfully.

Now you’re on your way...

2. Hold an organizational meeting
   - Put a free notice in the Campus Notices section of The Polytechnic (located diagonally across from the Admin Office), in the hallway to the right of the elevator.
   - Ask the Admin Office staff to help you photocopy 40 posters to advertise your meeting.

If you feel there is sufficient interest to get a club together, you are ready to start the formation process. Get everybody together and:

3. Prepare a purpose
   - The purpose of the club is a statement of goals the club intends to follow in the course of its activities. Beth Carlile will help you in the preparation process.
   - Some things that you need to consider, which you may want to include in your actual purpose statement is what kinds of general activities the club may be engaging in, and how this club will be a benefit to the RPI Community.
   - During this process, you will be assigned an Executive Board rep and a Student Activities Resource Person (SARP) to work with you. You should meet with these people to review appropriate policies and discuss the possibilities for you club.
- The Constitution Committee will review your purpose, and may ask you a number of questions about your new club, before submitting it to the Executive Board for approval.

4. Get your Starter Constitution
- A copy of the starter constitution will be provided to you before you come before the Executive Board for approval. You should insert the club purpose and name in the appropriate sections.
- That document will be approved as your operating constitution at the same time that your purpose is approved.
- See the Admin Office to get a copy of the policies for budgeting and the club operation. Remember that winning club approval does not imply that you will be approved for funding, but at this point, you are eligible to apply for it (see the current Budget Policies for more information).

When all of the information is together, your purpose and starter constitution will be sent to the Executive Board for approval. You will be informed when this is happening, as a representative from the club should be there to answer any questions that may arise.

If the Executive Board approves, you are now a Union recognized club. You have the rights of any other club in the Union. Have fun! But you’re not quite finished yet:

5. Prepare your Permanent Constitution
- Your starter constitution will expire in 36 months. Use the Guidelines for Preparing Your Permanent Constitution to help you out.
- Your club may want to take a little time to get some experience before deciding what changes to the starter constitution that it wants to make, but don’t wait too long to get started.
- The Constitution Committee will provide you with someone from the committee to help you through the writing process, if you desire. Contact the committee chairperson through termim@rpi.edu.
- The committee will review your constitution, and may send it back to you with some recommendations for changes.

After the committee is satisfied with your constitution, it will be sent to the Executive Board for final approval. A representative of the club should be at the meeting to answer any questions.

The journey is complete, and hopefully you will be a happy and successful club for many years. You should be happy with your constitution, but it is not etched into stone. Just remember that if you choose to amend to revise your constitution, it must again be submitted to the Constitution Committee for review.
Criteria for Club and Program Approval

The Rensselaer Union Executive Board has the right and responsibility to approve student organizations and their programs (activities) in an effort to expand opportunities and enrich the student experience at RPI. The Executive Board may choose not to approve any club or program that it considers, for any reason, to not serve the best interests of Rensselaer students or of the Rensselaer Union at large.

Newly forming and operating clubs of the Rensselaer Union must follow all policies of the Rensselaer Union and of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Incongruity with these policies may be sufficient reason to deny approval of a new club, or a program of any existing club. These policies include, but are not limited to the following:

• Rensselaer Union clubs shall not perpetuate or encourage hate mongering, violence, racism, sexism, or discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual preference, age, race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, marital status, or handicap. Nor shall any club be linked to a non-university local, regional, or national organization that sponsors programs or activities that do perpetuate or encourage such activities.

• The purpose and/or program of Rensselaer Union clubs shall not encourage students to terminate their Rensselaer education prematurely.

• No non-university local, regional, or national organization shall have an unreasonable advantage in recruitment of members or a monopolistic forum for influencing students over other comparable organizations through the Rensselaer Union or its clubs or organizations.

• Rensselaer Union club activities must not involve an extraordinarily high risk of personal injury, liability, or be unduly life threatening or uninsurable.

• It is the policy of the Rensselaer Union that all officers, appointed officers, committee chairs, and Voting Members of recognized clubs and organizations be full-time activity-fee-paying students or their spouses. Only Voting members can vote in business and election matters. Only Regular or Voting members can run for and hold elected offices.

• Those not affiliated with RPI as students or their spouse or legal dependent, faculty, staff, alumni, or students of Hudson-Mohawk Consortium schools currently enrolled in courses at Rensselaer may not comprise more than 5% of the membership of any Rensselaer Union club without specific approval of the Rensselaer Union Executive Board.

• Hazing, reckless or intentional endangerment to health, or forced consumption of alcohol or other drugs for the purpose of initiation into or affiliation with any Rensselaer Union organization is prohibited.

• The official language of all business meetings shall be English, unless, by unanimous vote of all of those present in the meeting, an alternative language is preferred.

• Rensselaer Union clubs shall not require excessive startup or ongoing financial resources.

• Funded clubs must conform to all current budget policies as specified by the Rensselaer Union Executive Board.

Executive Board Approved—4/10/2001
Guide to Writing Your Permanent Constitution
For clubs that are operating under the Starter Constitution

So, your club has been approved, and you have a starter constitution. Now comes the fun part: you can operate as a Union Club! You can do all the things you set out to do when you formed the club! There is something else you need to do, though: you need to start putting together your permanent constitution (trust me, this is not as bad as it may sound).

The Starter Constitution was developed as a way for clubs to be able to operate as a club as they are discovering the way they want to run themselves on a permanent basis. It contains all the elements that a governing documents must contain to take care of the everyday operations of a club and its members. As written, the Starter Constitution may adequately meet the needs of your club, but on the other hand, it may seem too narrow or restrictive. What you need is a constitution that works for your club. Don’t forget though: your Starter Constitution is your constitution until you have a new one written and approved, so those are the rules that you need to operate under.

Don’t delay! You may notice that you have a total of three years from the time that your Starter Constitution is approved to get a permanent constitution approved. That doesn’t mean that you should wait to get started – the process of writing a permanent constitution may begin even before your purpose and starter constitution are approved. The quicker you get a constitution finished the more beneficial it will be to the club.

If you find that the Starter Constitution fits the needs of your club and you don’t have any changes that you want to make to it, you must still submit a permanent constitution to the constitution committee for review and approval, but all you will have to do is remove the third article and renumber the remaining articles.

Most areas of the constitution are free for you to change to fit your needs, but there are some restrictions that have been placed on constitutions by the Rensselaer Union Executive Board that must be adhered to. When the Constitution Committee reviews your permanent constitution, they will make you aware of any requirements of the constitution that you have not included. It is recommended that your permanent constitution follow the same basic structure of the starter constitution.

The following page should be a guide for what from the Starter Constitution must be included as written and what you can change.
Permanent Constitution Guidelines:

**Articles I & II** – These must appear exactly as written, or else it requires specific approval of the Rensselaer Union Executive Board.

**Article III** – This section should be removed from your permanent constitution (and all further sections renumbered appropriately).

**Article IV** – Sections 4.1 and 4.2 must appear in this article exactly as written, unless otherwise approved by the Union Executive Board. When reviewing the rest of this article, you should, in particular, consider what requirements you will place on attaining or losing voting membership.

**Article V** – This section can be adjusted, as you desire.

**Article VI** – This article can be changed to reflect how your meetings are run, but the language in 6.4 must be included as written somewhere in the article.

**Articles VII, VIII, IX, and X** – These articles should be changed to reflect how your club will run. It is important to have an element of fairness in the election and removal sections, and the Constitution Committee will review that when it is submitted.

**Article XI** – The assignment of responsibilities in this section may be changed as you desire, but all the items noted in the section must be included. Additional items may be added to the section is needed.

**Article XII** – This section must be included exactly as listed.

**Article XIII** – If your club becomes affiliated with a national or regional organization that has a governing relationship with the club (such as a sports club being governed by NCAA rules) that relationship must be stated in your constitution. Otherwise the language written in the Starter Constitution must be included.

**Article XIV** – This language must appear exactly as written.

Good luck! Remember that advice on writing your constitution can be obtained from the Constitution Committee or the Administration Office when you need it.