Our Word
Columbia University School of the Arts
BYLAWS

ARTICLE I. PURPOSE
Section 1: Our Word is a student organization whose mission is to enrich the Columbia University School of the Arts Writing Program (“Writing Program”), and the literary community in general, with outreach, advocacy and inclusion of new and old literary voices.

Section 2: Our Word is a student organization whose history is based on activism. In 2000, Our Word was created as the direct result of the protest artist Victor Cervantes staged to highlight the lack of attention for artists of color on campus. In 2015, Our Word continues to serve diverse writers whose identities are non-normative, including, but not limited to, persons of color, international students, LGBTQIA and women. Notwithstanding, Our Word, is open to any MFA student in the Writing Program.

Section 3: Our Word will organize events which foster a community of like-minded individuals within and outside the Writing Program. Such events will consist of, but are not limited to, readings, meetings, Writer-in-Residence, special guest Q&As. Our Word events, except the Writer-in-Residence program, are open to the public, space permitting.

Section 4: Our Word will work with Writing Program administrators to create an open forum for the advocacy and discussion of diversity within the Writing Program.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP
Section 1: Our Word membership shall consist of current students and alumni who were members of Our Word.

Section 2: Our Word membership will be granted on a rolling basis.

Section 3: Our Word membership shall be tracked via Current Member Mailing List. Mailing List will be cleared at the beginning of each Fall Semester. Our Word Co-Presidents will then solicit members, via email and/or in person, for continued membership.

Section 4: Our Word membership will use best efforts to meet once a month, with the time and place to be determined by the Co-Presidents.
Section 5: Our Word membership grants voting rights (current student members only), participation in Writer-in-Residence, priority seating at events with limited space, and the opportunity to run for Our Word Co-Presidency.

ARTICLE III. CO-PRESIDENTS

Section 1: Our Word Co-Presidents shall be responsible for the organizing and running of Our Word events, the maintaining of its membership and wider community, the management of its finances with the approval of the Writing Program administration, the election of new Co-Presidents, the training of Co-President elects, and meetings with Writing Program administrators and faculty advisors concerning the running of Our Word.

Section 2: The term for Co-President goes from the beginning of the Fall Semester to the end of the Spring Semester. Co-Presidents can hold more than one term and must run in the elections for successive terms.

Section 3: Two Our Word Co-Presidents will be democratically elected every school year by current-student members of Our Word.

ARTICLE IV. ELECTIONS

Section 1: Our Word Co-President Elections shall begin with members announcing their candidacy via a brief statement of intent, emailed to Columbia.OurWord@gmail.com by the end of the first week of the Spring semester.

Section 2: Our Word Co-Presidents shall email candidate statements to membership and/or facilitate a meeting in the second week of the Spring semester during which candidates can give brief statements for their candidacy.

Section 3: To elect new Our Co-Presidents, a quorum shall represent one-half (½) of the members of Our Word plus one (1).

Section 3: Our Word Co-Presidents shall facilitate a time-sensitive online election where each member gets one vote and candidates can vote for themselves. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the election, a neutral third party within the Writing Program, to be determined by the Co-Presidents, will count the votes and inform the membership of the total vote count for each candidate.
Section 4: Two candidates holding the most votes are elected Our Word Co-Presidents. In the event of two candidates tying for the second-most number of votes, another election will be held for those two candidates.

Section 5: In the event, only two candidates participate in the Spring semester election, those two candidates shall be elected Our Word Co-Presidents. If only one candidate participates in the Spring semester election, that candidate shall be elected an Our Word Co-President and outgoing Our Word Co-Presidents shall appoint a second Co-President from the membership. If zero candidates participate in the Spring semester election, the current Co-Presidents shall continue with their duties until a new cohort of students begin Fall semester of the Writing Program; in the Fall semester the current Co-Presidents will facilitate an election and follow all steps as described in Article IV, Sections 1-5 herein.

ARTICLE V. BYLAW VOTING

Section 1: To amend or pass Our Word Bylaws, a quorum shall represent two-thirds (2/3) of the members of Our Word.

Section 2: To amend or pass Our Word Bylaws, Co-Presidents shall provide written notice to members and facilitate a meeting to discuss Our Word Bylaws one week before the Bylaws vote.

Section 2: Bylaws votes shall take place either via email to the members, or at any meeting at which a quorum is present. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the election, a neutral third party within the Writing Program, to be determined by the Co-Presidents, shall record the votes and announce the outcome. Results of vote shall be recorded in the Our Word Google Drive (Columbia.OurWord@gmail.com).

Section 3: All members and Co-Presidents get one vote.

Section 4: Members or Co-Presidents with conflicts of interest concerning a vote shall recuse themselves and cannot vote.

Section 5: Bylaw changes shall be effective immediately upon passing.

ARTICLE VI. FINANCES

Section 1: At the start of every Fall semester, Our Word Co-Presidents shall formulate a spreadsheet of projected budget and expenditure, based off the previous year’s budget, and set a meeting to present it to Writing Program administrators.
ARTICLE VII. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Section 1: Our Word shall support and abide by all applicable Columbia University policies, and shall not discriminate against anyone because of race, color, religion, political affiliation, age, national or ethnic origin, disability, status as a veteran, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Revised March 11, 2016