

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’s history is based on activism. It was created in 2000 as the direct result of the protest artist Victor Cervantes staged to highlight the lack of attention for artists of color on campus. Our Word continues to support 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 organizes events to nurture a community of students within and outside the Writing Program committed to championing diversity in literature. Such events will consist of, but are not limited to, readings, meetings, a Writer-in-Residence program, and conversations with special guests. All 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 faculty to sustain an ongoing dialogue in support of diversity within the Program.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Our Word membership is open to current School of the Arts graduate Writing students and alumni who choose to maintain their membership.

Section 2: Membership is granted through registering to be included on the Our Word Member Mailing List.

Section 3: Our Word membership will meet once a month, with the time and place to be determined by the Co-Presidents.

Section 4: All members may participate in the Writer-in-Residence program and are entitled to priority seating at events with limited space.

Section 5: Only current registered student members of Our Word who have attended two or more meetings or events within the academic year prior to a vote will have voting rights and will be eligible to run for one of the two Co-President positions.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS

Section 1: Our Word shall elect for its officers two Co-Presidents.

Section 2: Only registered full-time second year Writing students in good academic and disciplinary standing are eligible to serve as officers of Our Word. Officers will be elected during the Spring semester of their first year in the program.

Section 3: The Co-Presidents will serve for a one year term, from July 1 through June 30. Co-Presidents cannot serve for more than one term.

Section 4: Co-Presidents are responsible for presiding over Our Word meetings, organizing and running Our Word events, maintaining the Our Word website, managing its budget with the review and approval of the Writing Program's Director of Academic Administration (DAA), and scheduling at least one meeting per year with Our Word's faculty advisors. Co-Presidents will prepare an agenda and take minutes at each meeting. These draft minutes will be sent to all Our Word members within two days of the meeting. At the beginning of each meeting, one of the Co-Presidents will read the draft minutes from the previous meeting for approval by the membership. Co-Presidents are also responsible for maintaining all official records in the Our Word Google Drive, including the Bylaws, the full membership roll, the voting membership roll, meeting minutes, and committee reports. The Co-Presidents are responsible for facilitating administration of the election of the next Co-Presidents and training the Co-Presidents-elect. At the end of each term, the Co-Presidents will transfer all official documents to the Co-Presidents elect, Our Word's faculty advisor(s), and the Writing Program's Director of Academic Administration.

ARTICLE IV. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Section 1: The election of the two Our Word Co-Presidents shall begin with interested eligible members announcing their candidacy via a brief statement of intent, emailed to Our Word's official group email address (soa-ourword@columbia.edu), by the end of the first week of the Spring semester.

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

Section 3: Our Word Co-Presidents shall facilitate an online election where each voting member gets one vote and candidates can vote for themselves. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the election, votes will be emailed to both the Program Administrator and Program Assistant of the Writing Program. The Program Assistant will count the votes and inform the Co-Presidents of the total vote count for each candidate. The Co-Presidents will announce the results of the vote to the membership by email.

Section 4: The two candidates holding the most votes will be elected as Our Word Co-Presidents. In the event of a tie, another election will be immediately held.

Section 5: In the event there are only two eligible candidates for Co-President, those candidates shall be appointed to the positions. If only one eligible candidate participates in the Spring semester election for Co-President, that candidate shall be appointed as one of the Our Word Co-Presidents, and an election for the remaining Co-President will be held in the beginning of the Fall semester and facilitated by the incoming Co-President. If no candidates participate in the Spring semester election, the current Co-Presidents shall continue with their duties until a new cohort of students begins in the Fall semester, at which point the sitting Co-Presidents will facilitate an election and follow all steps as described in Article IV, Sections 1-5 herein.

Section 6: An officer may be removed by vote, if necessary. Such vote must take place at a meeting at which a quorum is present. A two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of the voting members present at the meeting is required for removal. If an officer is removed by vote, an election shall be conducted as outlined in this article.

ARTICLE V. VOTING POLICIES

Section 1: Decisions for the group will be made by vote when not delegated to the officers.

Section 2: Only currently-registered student members of Our Word who have attended two or more meetings or events within the academic year prior to the vote will be eligible to vote.

Section 3: Each voting member may cast one vote.

Section 4: For all issues, except amending the Our Word Bylaws, a quorum shall represent a simple majority ($\frac{1}{2} + 1$) of all current voting members.

Section 5: Actions requiring a vote shall take place either via email (sent to the Co-Presidents and Program Administrator of the Writing Program) or at any meeting at which a quorum is present. Votes that take place at a meeting may either be public (raising of hands) or private (paper ballots). The Co-Presidents shall record the votes and announce the outcome. Results of vote shall be recorded in the Our Word Google Drive. Voting for the election of officers will be conducted as outlined in Article IV.

Section 6: If there is a conflict of interest for an officer or member in any particular vote, that officer or member must recuse him or herself from the discussion and voting process.

ARTICLE VI. BYLAW ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

Section 1: The Bylaws and subsequent amendments shall be drafted in consultation with the Our Word Faculty Advisors and the Associate Dean, Student and Alumni Affairs.

Section 2: To adopt and subsequently amend the Our Word Bylaws, a quorum shall represent two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of all voting members.

Section 3: The Co-Presidents shall make the initial Bylaws and any proposed amendments available to all voting members in writing at least one week prior to a vote, along with written notice of the meeting at which the Bylaws vote will take place.

Section 4: The Bylaws may be adopted or amended by approval of no less than two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of all voting members present at a meeting of Our Word.

Section 5: Amendments to the Bylaws shall be binding immediately upon passage at the meeting.

ARTICLE VII. FINANCES

Section 1: At the start of every Fall semester, the Our Word Co-Presidents shall present a proposed budget for the academic year, based on the previous year's budget, detailing projected income and expenses, for review and approval by the Writing Program's Director of Academic Administration. In the Spring semester, the Our Word Co-Presidents and Co-Presidents-Elect will meet again with the DAA to review the budget vs. projected actual numbers for the year, and to discuss the group's plans for the coming year.

ARTICLE VIII. GOVERNANCE CLAUSE

Section 1: Our Word shall abide by all applicable Columbia University and School of the Arts 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.

Bylaws Drafted March 11, 2016