

WILLIAMS COLLEGE STUDENT ORGANIZATION CONSTITUTION TEMPLATE

WILLIAMS EFFECTIVE ALTRUISM

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Williams Effective Altruism, established to introduce new people to the guiding moral and epistemic ideas behind Effective Altruism, provide a space for students to learn together about specific cause areas such as biosecurity, and connect students with opportunities in the broader EA network, do ordain and establish this constitution and subscribe to the regulations and policies of Williams College

[REQUIRED STATEMENT]

In establishing this constitution, we understand that Williams EA must abide by the Williams College Student Government and Registered Student Organization Relationship Statement and that registration with and recognition by Williams College should not be considered as the College's endorsement of the purposes or beliefs of the student organization or its members.

ARTICLE I - Name

Williams Effective Altruism, which can be shortened as "Williams EA" or "WEA"

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

Williams EA hopes to introduce new people to the guiding moral and epistemic ideas behind Effective Altruism, provide a space for students to learn together about specific cause areas such as biosecurity, and connect students with opportunities in the broader EA network.

WEA runs introductory fellowships in the fall which cover the main ideas behind Effective Altruism, and their applications in the real world. WEA runs additional fellowships and book clubs on specific cause areas.

The board will let EA members know of upcoming educational, research, and work opportunities in the broader EA network, and encourage them to apply. If WEA sends a contingent to some event in the Northeast, it will borrow a college car/van and use FAST or CEA funding to pay for gas.

Williams EA hopes to foster a warm and curious community of Effective Altruists through community dinners and other social events, for its own sake, and as a "social technology" to help people incorporate their values-upon-reflection into their actual motivational systems. For example, a student might have a eureka moment about just how unfortunate it would be if humanity went extinct, and suddenly desire to do something to prevent that by pursuing a career in existential risk reduction. We hope that Williams EA, by providing an exciting community in which such ambitions are normalized and commended, can help students sustain high-minded, abstract desires to "do good," and transform them into actionable career plans.

ARTICLE III - AFFILIATION

Williams EA is affiliated with Effective Altruism, and it receives funding from the [Centre for Effective Altruism](#) for uses such as buying books, event planning and catering, and (in the past) hosting a website domain.

Williams EA is united with the broader EA community by shared values and interests, but it by no means "takes marching orders" from any particular EA headquarters. In planning our fellowships and events, we have used many resources—most importantly, the advice for EA groups available here <https://resources.eagroups.org/> and the reading lists on AI safety and biosecurity curated by BlueDot Impact.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

Williams EA is open to all students on campus. Students will have to sign up to participate in fellowships, but there will be no vetting process, and we hope to get as many people involved as possible. Community dinners will be open to everyone who either (a) has in some way engaged with the club's offerings, be that a fellowship, book club, or opportunity in the broader EA world or (b) wants to meet the community and talk about EA-related things, and isn't just there to eat the food and leave!

To qualify as a member of Williams EA (for voting purposes) it is necessary to either be

- (a) on the board
- (b) currently attending some fellowship, bookclub, or discussion group
- (c) the 'alumni' of some fellowship, bookclub, or discussion group held during a previous term who has also attended at least one WEA event this term

All voting will take place via Discord and Google Forms linked from Discord. It is not Williams EA's responsibility to reach out via email to members who aren't on Discord.

If someone is disruptive or mean or disingenuous, they can be barred from attending Williams EA events and stripped of their membership by a unanimous vote of the board.

[REQUIRED NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT]

Williams EA agrees not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ancestry, or military service. Any member of the College community who on any of these grounds feels discriminated against by another member of the community should take action and reach out to the Office of Campus Life, Dean's Office, Davis Center, or Office for Institutional Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Advancement.

ARTICLE V - OFFICERS/ELECTIONS

Section 1: Elected Positions

President(s)

- Organizational contact
- Responsible for running a booth at the Purple Key Fair
- Responsible for advertising club offerings
- Responsible for running community dinners
- Responsible for informing members of opportunities in the broader EA world
- Responsible for running an introductory fellowship in the fall
- Responsible for running other fellowships, book clubs, or discussion groups
- Responsible for ensuring the board regularly communicates
- Automatically made member of the board
- Term lasts one year, however if not re-elected automatically stays on the board
- Shall have the power to break a tie during a vote of the board

Treasurer

- Financial contact
- Responsible for filing and negotiating start-of-year budget with FAST
- Responsible for end-of-year auditing process with FAST
- Responsible for requesting funding from CEA
- Responsible for using CEA funds to reimburse members who use their credit cards to pay for community dinners, books, or other incidental expenses
- Responsible for ordering books and food
- Responsible for maintaining a spreadsheet of club expenses
- Shall have the power to make signatures on behalf of WEA's financial interests
- Automatically made member of the board
- Term lasts one year, however if not re-elected automatically stays on the board

Section 2: Discretionary Positions

1. Assignment procedure
 - a. Discretionary positions will be offered to members as deemed necessary by the board
 - b. Delegates may rescind assigned responsibilities, thereby automatically reassigning duties to respective elected member (all positions predicated on consent of delegate to assume certain functions of elected member's role)
2. Assigned roles
 - a. Those assigned positions may be granted a seat on the board, granted unanimous consent of the current board
 - b. Roles may be added as needed by the current board
 - c. Community dinner organizer(s)
 - Responsible for ordering and picking up food
 - Responsible for inviting speakers or planning activities
 - Responsible for making posters to advertise the kickoff community dinner
 - Responsible for reserving a classroom on behalf of WEA
 - d. Fellowship facilitator(s)
 - Responsible for creating a group chat for their cohort
 - Responsible for coming prepared to meetings, having read or reread/skimmed assigned readings, with a list of topics to cover

Section 3: The Board

1. The spirit of the board
 - a. The board regularly confers with each other through Discord, email, call, or in person, and aims for consensus in decision making and delegating responsibilities
 - b. The board does not make a big deal about which responsibilities officially belong to which board member; instead, members volunteer to do certain tasks according to availability, skills, and enthusiasm
2. Settling disputes
 - a. If consensus can't be reached, the board will decide by majority vote, with the president breaking any ties
 - i. If there are co-presidents, and they are on opposite sides of a tied vote, the matter will be decided by a chess game
3. Impeachment from the board
 - a. If a board member stops communicating with the rest of the board, consistently shirks their duties, or is involved in some explosive scandal, they can be removed by the agreement of the president(s) and treasurer *or* the unanimous agreement of all other board members
 - b. If a board member thinks their impeachment is unfair, they can explain their side of the conflict in the Discord and summon a vote of all WEA members. If this member receives a ½ or greater voter turnout, and of that turnout achieves ⅔ in their favor, then their impeachment is overturned.
4. Studying abroad
 - a. If a board member studies abroad and wants to stay in the loop and/or keep some responsibilities, the rest of the board must keep them in the group chat and up to date. This board member keeps voting privileges
 - b. Otherwise, they should delegate their responsibilities for the semester/year. They automatically rejoin the board upon returning to Williams.
5. Board makeup
 - a. The board should aim to have at least one sophomore or freshman for club longevity
 - b. The board should seek to represent a variety of interests within EA
6. In the case of a vacancy
 - a. The board decides what to do
7. Membership
 - a. Membership on the board lasts until graduation, resignation, or impeachment
 - b. The board can invite someone to join the board by unanimous agreement; it is not necessary to offer that WEA member a specific assigned role.

Section 4: Elections

1. The board will call elections via Discord sometime in the late spring, at least two weeks before the last day of classes
2. WEA members will have one week after the board announces elections to declare that they are running as either president, simultaneous co-presidents, non-simultaneous co-presidents, or treasurer
 - a. To enter the race, one must write a statement on Discord about why one thinks one could do a good job
3. After that week, if any elections are contested, the board will release the ballot (a Google form), which will itself be open for a week. Every member of WEA can vote for their preferred candidate(s) for president and treasurer. Plurality wins.
4. After that week, the board will disclose who won. The board will disclose vote totals upon individual request.

ARTICLE VI - ADVISOR

In past years, Sarah Jacobson has advised Williams Effective Altruism, so the board will reach out to her again to see if she is still interested. If she isn't, the board will find a professor in a department such as philosophy or economics that has some affinity with WEA. We will email our advisor about any important changes in the club, and our advisor will always be welcome to check in on our Discord or website.

[REQUIRED ADVISOR CLAUSE]

This organization must select and secure an advisor from the active faculty or staff of Williams College and will register their name with Campus Life annually. The advisor will be informed of all meetings and activities of the organization and may call a special meeting of the organization to discuss concerns. The advisor may also be asked to be present at meetings/events and may need to approve events put forth by the club.

ARTICLE VII - MEETINGS

*All meeting times are tentative and can be decided by the board.

1. Williams EA will meet most Sundays at 7pm for a community dinner.
2. The introductory fellowship will meet most Sundays at 6pm.
3. The one or two additional existential risk fellowships (details to be determined) will meet weekly, at the time which best suits prospective fellows' availability.
4. The facilitator(s) of fellowship cohorts will have the authority to reschedule or cancel that week's meeting depending on their own or their fellows' availability.
5. During winter study, the book club will meet weekly as best suits people's availability.
6. Any member of the board can call a meeting or plan some event, but if it's potentially controversial they should consult with the board first; a majority vote of the board can cancel any plan hatched by an individual board member.

ARTICLE VIII - CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

1. Anyone can propose an amendment via the group Discord channel, and the vote is by default set to resolve exactly three days later (to the hour, minute, second).
2. Members can vote on the amendment via thumbs up and thumbs down emojis.
3. Within ten minutes after the time is up, the person who proposed the amendment is responsible for taking a screenshot and posting that screenshot on Discord with a statement of whether the amendment passed (if they fail to do this, the amendment is automatically void).
4. An amendment needs voter participation of $\frac{1}{2}$ the current membership (otherwise it is automatically void), and a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote in order to pass.

[REQUIRED AMENDMENT CLAUSE]

All amendments, additions, or deletions must be approved and filed with the Office of Campus Life.

ARTICLE IX - FUNDING

[REQUIRED FUNDING CLAUSE]

This student group agrees to abide by all funding [bylaws](#) set forth by the FAST. This includes the [process](#) for applying for funding and the possible uses for FAST funds by student organizations. A finance officer/treasurer will be responsible for budgeting the student organization’s funds in accordance with FAST Funding bylaws. The finance officer (and organization as a whole) is responsible for all activities involving funding.

In approving this constitution, this student group also acknowledges that it may fundraise of its own accord, but alumni solicitation must be coordinated through the Development Office.

ARTICLE X - DISSOLUTION

If the board unanimously votes to dissolve the club, it is dissolved. If Williams EA holds no events or fellowships for a semester, it is considered dissolved.

[REQUIRED DISSOLUTION CLAUSE]

Any money that Williams EA has acquired prior to dissolution will be donated back to the sector from which it came.

APPROVAL

Date Approved by the RSO Recognition Committee _____

BY-LAWS

Williams EA uses Robert's Rules!