

The Columbia Law Verdict Constitution 2024–2025

Last updated August 2024

I. Name

This organization's name is "The Columbia Law Verdict" ("The Verdict").

II. Statement of Purpose

Our purpose is to build and strengthen the Columbia Law School ("CLS") community by publishing a weekly newsletter.

III. Values and Limitations

The Verdict is committed to three core values: impartiality, accountability, and respect.

Impartiality. The Verdict is a strictly and formally impartial organization. All members of the Verdict are committed to putting aside their personal views, opinions, and beliefs when acting in their official capacity. The Verdict shall not issue an advocacy statement taking a position on any issue not directly connected to the Verdict's operations. The Verdict shall not reprint, highlight, or otherwise support an advocacy statement of another organization.

Accountability. The Verdict is an accountable and transparent organization. All members of the Verdict are committed to the content of the Verdict's issues. The Verdict shall only publish pieces that are publicly attributed to an identifiable author. The Verdict shall not publish pieces written by anonymous individuals, nor shall it publish pieces by groups without individual attribution.

Respect. The Verdict is committed to respect within both the organization itself and the CLS community. All members of the Verdict are committed to respecting their peers, their school, and their profession. The Verdict shall not publish personal attacks, hatred, bigotry, or any other form of discrimination. The Verdict strongly encourages decorum and respect in all its activities.

IV. Membership, Leadership, and Responsibilities

The Verdict is composed of the following positions, which collectively compose the membership ("Members") of the Verdict: two Directors, one Lead Editor, one Lead Publisher, one Treasurer, one Social Chair ("Officers"), and any number of Writers. Membership is open and limited to all CLS students. Dues may be collected as a prerequisite to membership.

Directors. The two Directors are the leaders of the Verdict and are responsible for the publication and the organization as a whole. They are equal in authority and responsibility.

Lead Editor. The Lead Editor is responsible for the editing process of the Verdict's issues.

Lead Publisher. The Lead Publisher is responsible for the publication process of the Verdict's issues.

Treasurer. The Treasurer is responsible for the Verdict's finances.

Social Chair. The Social Chair is responsible for the Verdict's recruitment process, internal member development, and social events.

Writers. Writers are responsible for writing and editing pieces in the Verdict's issues.

Faculty Advisors. In addition to the membership, the Verdict shall have two Faculty Advisors. They are CLS professors that may advise the membership upon request.

Dues. The Verdict may collect dues for the purposes of maintaining the Verdict's website and any other expenses that cannot be funded through Student Senate.

V. Decision Making

A. Definitions

General. Voting procedure must be arranged in a manner that accords with the Verdict's core values of fairness, accountability, and respect. Unless otherwise specified, all votes shall be open and available to all members. Meetings and votes shall be scheduled to give all members proper notice, opportunity, and time to make an informed decision.

Regular Meeting. A regular meeting is a weekly meeting at a consistent time and place.

Special Meeting. A special meeting is a meeting convened for the purpose of a specific vote.

Majority Vote. For a majority vote, each member must cast a vote on a single outcome. The outcome with at least half of the votes wins.

Supermajority Vote. Supermajority voting is the same as a majority vote, but an outcome must receive at least two-thirds of the votes to win.

Ranked Vote. For a ranked vote, each member must cast a vote on a single outcome. If only one outcome is possible, the outcome with the most votes wins.

Tiebreaker. For any vote that results in a tie, the Directors decide the outcome. If the Directors disagree, the outcome that involves the least action wins.

Quorum. For decisions that require a quorum, at least one-half of the membership is required to cast a vote for the vote to have binding effect.

Grounds for Removal. Removal from a position is warranted if that individual either intentionally violates any provision of this Constitution or intentionally or repeatedly fails to carry out their assigned responsibilities such that their failure inhibits the normal functioning of the Verdict.

B. Procedures

Constitutional Amendment. Amending the Constitution requires a supermajority vote during a special meeting. Quorum is required. In addition, both Faculty Advisors must have the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment prior to voting.

Leadership. Officer elections require a majority vote for all positions except the Director positions, which require a ranked vote, during a special meeting. Leadership is elected during a special meeting. Quorum is required.

Faculty Advisor Appointment. Faculty advisors are appointed by the Directors. Both Directors must consent to both faculty advisors.

Removal of a Writer. To remove a Writer, both Directors and either the Lead Editor or the Lead Publisher must recommend removal during a special closed meeting. The Writer must be given the opportunity to address any grounds for removal during such meeting. The Directors must provide a written explanation for the Writer's removal.

Removal of an Officer. To remove a Lead Editor, Lead Publisher, Social Chair, or Treasurer, both Directors and either the Lead Editor or the Lead Publisher must recommend removal during a special closed meeting. The Officer must be given the opportunity to address any grounds for removal during such meeting. The Directors must provide a written explanation for the Officer's removal.

Removal of a Director. Removing a Director requires a supermajority vote during a special meeting. Quorum is two-thirds of the membership. If a Director is removed, a new Director must be voted on by a ranked choice vote. Quorum is required.

Removal of a Faculty Advisor. Removing a Faculty Advisor requires agreement from both Directors as to the ground for removal and a successor. The Directors need not provide a written explanation to the Faculty Advisor.

Membership. Applications to the Verdict must be reviewed by the Directors and presented to the membership. Approval requires a majority vote during a regular meeting. There is no quorum.

Piece Selection. For pieces solicited from the student body, piece selection requires a majority vote (for columns that publish a single piece weekly) or a ranked vote (for columns that publish multiple pieces weekly) during a regular meeting. There is no quorum.

Piece Assignment. The Directors are responsible for assigning pieces written by members to writers. In case of disagreement, the Lead Editor and Lead Publisher break ties.

Editorial Decisions. The Directors and the Lead Editor are responsible for all editorial decisions, defined as those decisions relating to the content of the Verdict's issues with the exception of piece selection. Where there is disagreement, the Directors have the final say; if the Directors disagree, the Lead Editor has the final say.

Publication Decisions. The Directors and the Lead Publisher are responsible for all publication decisions, defined as those decisions relating to the form of the Verdict's issues such as format, design, and schedule. Where there is disagreement, the Directors have the final say; if the Directors disagree, the Lead Publisher has the final say.

De Minimis Decisions. The Directors are responsible for all decisions that would be impractical, unnecessary, or contrary to the Verdict's interest to submit to a vote of the membership. The Directors shall exercise this authority in good faith and in accordance with the Verdict's values.

VI. Bylaws

The Verdict may adopt bylaws to formalize responsibilities, requirements, and procedures to further the organization's goals and values. Creating, amending, or removing bylaws requires a majority vote during a special session. Quorum is one-half of the membership.

VII. Founding Year Exception

Given the difficulties of creating a complex institution from nothing, the Verdict need not adhere to certain requirements of Articles IV and V insofar as they pose practical obstructions to the timely creation and early development of the Verdict.

VIII. Nondiscrimination Policy

The Columbia Law Verdict shall adhere to the Columbia Law School Student Senate's Nondiscrimination Policy as described in the Senate Bylaws VI.B.5. The text of that Bylaw is reprinted below:

Membership and leadership shall be open to all Columbia Law School students without regard to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, age, handicap or disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, political affiliation, or the general exercise of a student's right of free speech or association. Any group which selects a team to participate in an organized competitive activity is deemed to have a membership and leadership which is open to the entire student body so long as all students are allowed to apply or tryout for membership on the team.