

Checklist for Starting a New Chapter

- ❑ **Contact the National Office.** Now. They can get you everything you need to get started, as well as list you among the student chapters on the website and put you in touch with Guild contacts in your area so that you can get involved in local activities. It's possible that there are other member students and member professors already on your campus, and the N.O. will help you find them. The N.O. exists for support – it has tons of publications, recruitment resources, and can help you connect with other Guild members. Ask the N.O. to also send you Disorientation Handbooks and other publications for you to hand out at your first meeting or while tabling campus involvement fairs.
- ❑ **Get recognized on campus.** Talk to other student organizations and your school administration to learn what is required of a new student group on campus. If you need to submit a constitution and bylaws to the student bar association or administrators, see the student section of nlg.org or contact the N.O. for samples. If you need a faculty advisor, try your critical studies department (or an equivalent) or ask the N.O. if there's a Guild professor on staff.
- ❑ **Host your first meeting.** Put up fliers with information about the meeting around school and announce it in as many places as you can: school email lists, social networking sites, campus web forums, classroom chalkboards—everywhere! If it's the beginning of the school year, schedule a time during 1L orientation to table for new members—talk up the Guild and plug the first meeting.
- ❑ **Organize around an issue.** See what people want to work on—a campus issue, something in the local community, a national campaign, or Guild programs. Once you find an issue or two, get going! It's important to harness your energy and run with it. Invite people from nearby NLG chapters and committees, and search the web for community organizations, sister legal organizations, and campus groups who are working on these issues to the initial planning meetings: you'll build critical relationships, learn what's already being done, and plot the best ways to support current projects as Guild students. In all things social justice, unity is key.
- ❑ **Communicate.** It is impossible to stress the importance of regular meetings, but realistically, not everyone will make all of them, and not everything will be resolved at them, either. Contact the National Office so we can set up an NLG listserv for your new chapter so that organizing can continue even when you can't all get together.
- ❑ **Join the Guild.** Applications are available online and on the last page of this Disorientation Handbook, so have everyone fill one out and send it with their \$15 to the N.O. or to the local staffed chapter if you live in Michigan (\$15), Massachusetts (\$25), or in the Bay Area (\$25). Los Angeles students join for free as dues are subsidized by LA attorney members.
- ❑ **Get organized.** Once you have a solid group of people, elect or organize your decision-making structure. You can organize your “leadership” or chapter body in whatever way fits best: some chapters elect a President, VP, Secretary, and Treasurer; some chapters have two chairs and several board members that oversee projects; and other chapters adopt a collective model with two contacts chosen to communicate with and receive notices from the Regional VPs, National Office, and other Guild entities. Your chapter, your call. Contact the National Office with the names and information of two principal contact people for the new chapter.
- ❑ **Get what's coming to you.** Law schools earmark thousands of dollars for student groups and activities. Once you're official, talk to your school administration about setting up a budget and securing funds for all your plans. Also look into funding for travel to the Guild's national and regional conventions. And don't forget to ask established student groups for tips—there are almost always tricks to the process.
- ❑ **Vigilance!** There may be people who at first weren't interested in the chapter because it didn't have a clear identity or defined projects—recruit them! Talk about what sets the Guild apart from other organizations, what you are working on, and always encourage others to participate in meetings and events. Make it clear that they can bring their own ideas and projects to the group as well.
- ❑ **Always feel free** to call the National Office and your Regional VP(s) for contact information in your area, to discuss ideas, or to tell us about the work you are doing so we can share it with other members. The national membership coordinator is always eager to talk about radical projects, campaigns, and actions, but is also there to help you brainstorm around the less exciting—but equally critical—items on the agenda: everything from how to run a better meeting to how to plug into the network.

—Zach Campbell, National Membership Coordinator