



Student Organization Formation and Recognition

Purpose

Stephen F. Austin State University recognizes the right of enrolled students to form voluntary organizations for purposes that are not forbidden by state or federal law.

Persons Affected

This policy applies to all students.

Definitions

Academic or Administrative Unit: means any office or department of the University.

Dean of Students: Dean of Students of SFASU or their Designee

Officer: a student designated to represent or speak for a Student Organization in its relations with the University and to receive official notices, directives, or information from the University on behalf of the Student Organization.

Registered Student Organization: private entities and are not viewed as extensions of an Academic or Administrative Unit, or of the University. Registration ensures allows organization to function within the institutional context.

Registered Student Organization Advisor: a person serving in an advisory capacity to a Registered Student Organization to provide guidance to the Registered Student Organization and its members. In accordance with section 51.9361 of the Texas Education Code, a person serving as an advisor to a Registered Student Organization must be someone who

- is at least twenty-one years of age;
- is not enrolled as a student at the University; and
- serves as either a part-time or full-time employee of the University.

Sponsored Student Organization: organizations sponsored by a university department and designated as such by the Office of Student Engagement.

Sponsored Student Organization Advisor: a university staff or faculty member from the sponsoring Academic or Administrative Unit who is serving in an advisory capacity to provide guidance to the Sponsored Student Organization and its members. In accordance with section 51.9361 of the Texas Education Code, a person serving as an Advisor to a Sponsored Student Organization must be someone who

- is at least twenty-one years of age;
- is not enrolled as a student at the University; and
- serves as a part-time or full-time employee of the University.

Policy



A. Registration Required

Any group of students that wants to exercise any of the rights and privileges as a student organization will apply to the Office of Student Engagement to be recognized as a Student Organization. An application for a new organization may be submitted semesterly during a period prescribed by the Office of Student Engagement. Annual registration for existing Student Organizations occurs during a period prescribed and advertised by the Office of Student Engagement.

B. Membership

Student Organizations may not deny membership on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender identity, or gender expression, except that a Registered Student Organization created primarily for religious purposes may restrict the right to vote or hold office to persons who subscribe to the Registered Student Organization's statement of faith; and a Registered Student Organization may restrict membership based on the provisions of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Student Organizations must limit membership to students, faculty members, and staff members of the University.

C. Use of University Name

With the exception of the following, no student, unregistered group, or Registered Student Organization may use the name of the University or an abbreviation of the name of the University as part of its name. A Student Organization may use terms such as "campus" or "[name of organization] at Stephen F. Austin" as part of its name.

- a. No student, unregistered group, or Registered Student Organization may advertise or promote any event or activity in a manner that suggests that the event or activity is sponsored by the University.

D. University Sponsorship of Student Organizations

Only a Sponsored Student Organization may use the name of the University or an abbreviation of the name of the University or any of the university trademarks or service marks as part of or in conjunction with its Student Organization name. Sponsorship may not be extended to Registered Student Organizations involved in political or religious activities or in projects for private gain.

E. Recognition and Activities

1. A Student Organization is entitled to the following as per SFASU Handbook of Operating Procedures to be listed as a Student Organization:
 - a. to reserve the use of university facilities
 - b. to raise funds or make other permissible solicitations on university property
 - c. to distribute literature
 - d. to post signs
 - e. to hang banners
 - f. to set up a table



- g. to set up exhibits
 - h. to use amplified sound
 - i. to publicly assemble
 - j. to apply for recognition and awards
2. To protect the student-led nature of student organizations, university employees may not serve in any officer role within the organization other than advisor without the written approval of the Executive Director of Student Life.
3. No university employee has the authority to open a bank account in the name of, or for the benefit of, any student organization nor should any employee be included as an allowable signatory on any off-campus bank account of any student organization. Student employees are exempted from these prohibitions.
4. Responsibility for any views expressed in a meeting or activity of a student organization is solely that of the individuals concerned and the university is not to be held to approve or disapprove such views, whatever their nature. The university is to be concerned exclusively with the discharge of its educational obligation and to facilitate free discussion of all points of view to the extent constitutionally guaranteed.

Procedures

A. Obligations

1. In addition to completing registration annually, Student Organizations must meet these requirements in order to maintain their Student Organization status. The Student Organization shall:
 - a. maintain a complete and accurate roster of at least four (4) student officers;
 - b. keep a current contact email address for their officers for the purpose of receiving university communications,
 - c. complete the risk management training annually,
 - d. require the Student Organization's advisor to complete the risk management training advisor training at least once in their tenure as an advisor,
 - e. conduct its affairs in accordance with local, state, and federal laws and SFASU Handbook of Operating Procedures.
2. A Student Organization that is granted recognition from Sorority and Fraternity Life is subject to additional policies administered by the Office of Student Engagement.
3. No Student Organization may re-register or use the facilities of SFASU as long as it owes a monetary debt to the University and the debt is considered delinquent.
4. The Dean of Students retains discretion to revoke or deny registration of Student Organizations under disciplinary action; groups disciplined by their governing body; or groups that attempt to register under a different name to circumvent university policy or a disciplinary sanction.
5. A Student Organization may be subject to discipline by the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SFA HOP 04-105) and for violating a university regulation, or administrative rule.

B. Administration and Jurisdiction



1. The Dean of Students has primary authority and responsibility for the administration of Student Organization discipline. The Dean of Students works cooperatively with faculty members, staff members, and formal hearing officers in the disposition of alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.
2. The leadership of a Student Organization is provided a copy of this policy annually in the form of a link on the university website. Hard copies are available upon request from the Office of Student Engagement. Students who are members of Student Organizations are responsible for reading and abiding by the provisions of this policy.
3. This policy and the student conduct process apply to the conduct of all Student Organizations. Student Organizations that have lost university recognition may still be subject to provisions in this code. Individual students who are members of a Student Organization are still subject as individuals to the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity and may be held individually accountable for their behaviors also attributed to the Student Organization. Individuals who are members of a Student Organization may, through their actions, subject the Student Organization to disciplinary action under this policy, whether or not those individuals are also adjudicated under the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.
4. This policy applies to behaviors that take place on the SFASU campus, at University or organization sponsored events whether on or off-campus and may also apply to other off-campus behaviors when the Dean of Students determines that the off-campus conduct affects a university interest.

C. Requirements for Maintaining Recognition

1. The authority of an organization to function as a student organization may cease upon:
 - a. The removal or resignation of the advisor, unless a qualified replacement is registered within 90 days.
 - b. Violation by the organization of any rules or regulations of the university or state or federal law.
 - c. Failure by the organization, its officers or advisor(s) to adhere to the requirements set forth by the university.
 - d. The organization remaining in an inactive status for three or more long semesters.
 - e. Failure to provide acceptable documentation of affiliation with any parent organization when requested.
2. Students selected, elected, or appointed as a student organization officer (an officer is an individual in a leadership position as defined in the organization's constitution) shall be in good standing with the university and:
 - a. For undergraduates, be enrolled for six (6) or more credit hours during their term of office.
 - b. For graduate students, be enrolled for four (4) or more credit hours during their term of office.
 - c. All meetings and activities of each student organization shall be subject to, and held under, all applicable university regulations and policies.



- d. Student organizations must abide by the policies and procedures set forth by the University.

D. Application

1. A group of students that wants to be recognized or maintain their status as a Student Organization must
 - a. apply on a form prescribed by the Office of Student Engagement;
 - b. identify at least 4 officers including one as president;
 - c. provide and maintain a complete and accurate roster of all members;
 - d. provide a copy of the organization constitution;
 - e. submit an organization constitution that includes all sections and content prescribed by the Office of Student Engagement and provide any other information required by the Office of Student Engagement.

E. Action on Registration Application

1. In considering a completed application, the Office of Student Engagement will not base approval on the merits of the proposed Student Organization's purpose.

F. Student Organization Risk Management Training

1. At least once during each academic year, SFASU shall provide a risk management training program for student organizations registered with the Office of Student Engagement at the institution.
2. Four members of each organization are required to attend the training program at least once during the time(s) it is presented during the fall semester. The organization's president and vice president, or their equivalents as listed on the organization's registration must be among the four members attending. If an organization has officer positions equivalent to a risk management officer and/or a new member officer, these officers must also attend the program. If the organization does not have officers with the specific titles named, the four highest ranking leaders of their organization are required to attend the training.
3. Newly registered student organizations must have four appropriate members receive this training within the first 30 business days following its initial registration.
4. Each listed student organization advisor(s) who has not previously received risk management training as outlined in this policy must also receive this training.
5. The content of the risk management program will include topic areas mandated by the Texas Education Code, as well as topical areas deemed relevant by the university, to include:
 - a. possession and use of alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs, including penalties that may be imposed for possession or use;
 - b. hazing;
 - c. sexual misconduct (including abuse) and harassment, and reporting procedures;



- d. fire and other safety issues, including the possession and use of a firearm or other weapon or of an explosive device;
 - e. travel to a destination outside the area in which the institution is located;
 - f. behavior at parties and other events held by a student organization;
 - g. adoption by a student organization of a risk management policy; and Student Organization Risk Management Training
 - h. issues regarding persons with disabilities, including a review of applicable requirements of federal and state law, and any related policies of the institution, for providing reasonable accommodations and modifications to address the needs of students with disabilities, including access to the activities of the student organization.
 - i. review of university policies and procedures that impact student organization processes.
6. The university may impose reasonable sanctions on any organization failing to meet the requirements of this policy.

Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

U.S. Const. amend. I, XIV

Tex. Educ. Code § 51.9361

SFA HOP 04-106 Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity

Responsible Executive

Vice President of Student Affairs

Forms

Forms required by Office of Student Engagement

Revision History

September 1, 2023 (original)