



Title: Student Organization Policy
Effective Date: August 1, 2024
Issuing Authority: Provost
Policy Contact: Vice President of Student Affairs/Dean of Students, 478-301-2685

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide fair and reasonable guidelines and procedures for student organizations at Mercer University.

Scope

This policy applies to all student organizations at Mercer University.

Exclusions

None

Definitions

As used in this policy, the following term(s) have the meaning specified below:

Social Event: any event on or off campus that is organized solely and independently by the chapter or organization for its members and guests that is separate from official University-sponsored events. University-sponsored events include but is not limited to events hosted by Student Government Association, QuadWorks, and departmental events.

Student Affairs Designee: an employee of the institution that either works for the Division of Student Affairs or is designated by the University to provide Student Affairs oversight and supervision for a specific program (e.g., law, medicine, pharmacy, nursing). Macon undergraduate students work with the Office of Campus Life and Student Involvement. On the Atlanta and Regional Academic Center campuses, the Student Affairs designee is the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. All graduate programs not affiliated with Atlanta or Regional Academic Centers have varied designees based on the individual program.

Student Organization: any group that has been formally recognized by Mercer University as an organization.

University-Affiliated Organizations: student groups that are not directly supervised by the University and/or that receive annual recognition through their academic program, the Office of Campus Life, Recreational Sports and Wellness, and/or the Office of Religious Life. Such groups include fraternity and sorority groups, club sports, and student interest groups recognized by the Student Government Association. These groups generally operate independently in the planning and execution of their events and must comply with this policy.

University-Sponsored Organizations: student groups that plan or host events that are directly supervised by the University and/or professional staff. Examples include but are not limited to Quadworks, the Student Government Association, and the Residence Hall Council Association among others. Such groups may receive direct funds from the University and may be tax exempt. These groups may have additional obligations or exemptions to this policy as granted by the University area overseeing them.

Policy Statement

A. Overview and Recognition of Student Organizations

All Mercer University student organizations must be formally recognized by Mercer University to receive potential funding from the University, reserve space, hold events on campus, and/or advertise meetings or events (on or off campus). All recognized organizations on campus must abide by the Student Code of Conduct found in the University Student Handbook. Although the University will investigate and address possible infractions of policy or law that come to the institution's attention, recognition by the University does not imply oversight or supervision of organizational activities, particularly events that occur off campus and/or without institutional oversight or knowledge. Student organizations operate with a high degree of autonomy, depending on their relationship with the University, and are expected to operate within the scope of institutional rules and regulations in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws, and utilizing best practices.

In order to receive recognition, undergraduate organizations on the Macon campus must go through a process with the Office of Campus Life and be formally approved by the Student Government Association. This includes submission of a constitution and bylaws, the advisor signature page, and list of members. Departmentally recognized organizations and Greek letter organizations must follow the appropriate process for recognition within the respective department. Religious organizations are approved through Religious Life, and club sports are approved through Recreational Sports and Wellness.

Atlanta and Regional Academic Center organizations not directly affiliated with a particular academic program must be recognized through the Assistant Dean of Students in the Atlanta Student Affairs office.

For all graduate programs not affiliated with Atlanta or Regional Academic Centers, the process for recognizing student organizations is the purview of the dean of the

school/college and/or the designee in the academic area in which the organization is seeking to operate.

Absent specific rules or guidelines for recognition for a graduate school, the Campus Life policies for the Macon traditional campus will govern student organizational recognition and events.

Student organizational recognition is not a right and can be evaluated and rescinded by the University at any time for any reason.

The following rules apply to all student organizations regardless of campus to be a recognized student organization at Mercer University:

1. Mercer student organization membership is open only to currently enrolled Mercer University students.
2. All student organizations must have at minimum one faculty or staff advisor.
3. Student organizations must renew on a yearly basis.
4. Student organizations must be open to all students in the population they serve. Additional requirements for leadership positions, competitive organizations, fraternity and sorority, and graduate and academic honor organizations are permitted.

B. On-Campus Events

Student organizations must meet the following requirements to properly host events on Mercer's campus.

In the event of an incident (e.g., injury, policy or law violation) before, during, or after the event, the organization must immediately report the incident to Mercer Police then follow up with the appropriate University official(s) the next business day.

1. Reservations

- a. All on-campus events using reservable space must be reserved through the Mercer system. Events that are flagged by the reservations team or that raise concerns related to appropriateness may be forwarded to the Student Affairs designee on that campus for review and evaluation. Mercer University retains the right to prohibit any event that the institution believes to be in poor taste, violates Mercer's Community of Respect statement, and/or that creates clear safety issues for the campus.
- b. Groups are solely and fully responsible for the safety of the participants involved in the events they sponsor. This stipulation may require an organization to receive additional review and guidance from appropriate offices before the event will be approved.
- c. Each organization or group using Mercer facilities must adhere to University

policies, procedures, and regulations. Each facility should be returned to its original condition. Any excessive cleaning that is needed will be billed to the organization. Failure to use facilities properly will result in possible suspension of privileges.

- d. Individual Mercer students may not reserve rooms for non-University purposes. All reservations must be through a class, department, or registered student organization. Any requests from student organizations for outside organization events/meetings will be subject to external event reservations, policies, and charges.

2. Food at On-Campus Events

- a. Any beverages at Mercer University or student organization events must be Coke products.
- b. Student organizations and departments that are planning to have any type of catering for an event on campus are required to consult with the food vendor on the respective campus before bringing any food on campus by another vendor.
- c. All catering and food trucks must be approved by both the food service provider campus and Mercer administration to ensure that the vendor follows all Mercer policies and local, federal, and state laws. On the Macon and Regional Academic Center campuses, approval is from the Office of Auxiliary Services. On Macon's law school campus, approval is from the Director of Finance and Administration. Office of General Counsel will also review terms and insurance of the vendor, regardless of campus.
- d. All vendors and student organizations should place food allergen information on food tables at events. Signage must be prominently displayed and indicate any known allergens (wheat, eggs, shellfish, nuts, etc.).

Commented [RRT1]: I recommend changing these approvals to Office of General Counsel. We routinely approve outside food service providers and food trucks for other departments to ensure the terms and insurance are appropriate. Or in addition to these offices.

3. Contracts

- a. Any contract or agreement for services (performance, lecture, vendor, or production) is made between the artist/vendor and the student organization as purchaser.
- b. All contracts for services and events utilizing Mercer University space must be reviewed by Mercer's General Counsel to ensure that the vendor is following Mercer policy, insurance requirements, and state and federal laws.
- c. All contracts must be signed by Mercer's Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance.

4. Movie Rights

All student organizations must adhere to the appropriate federal copyright laws when showing a movie/film on campus. Student organizations that violate this policy are responsible for all penalties and fees associated with the violation(s).

5. Final Examinations Period

No social activities, recruitment, initiations, or other scheduled activities may occur during the final examinations period, beginning 24 hours before the first exam each semester through the conclusion of final examinations unless specifically approved in advance by the Student Affairs designee.

6. Beauty Pageants

- a. Student organizations and Greek letter organizations are permitted to hold pageants on campus but must work closely with the Student Affairs designee to ensure the event aligns with the Mercer University Community of Respect and all University policies.
- b. At no time may a pageant have Mercer University in the title (i.e., No Ms. Mercer or Mr. Mercer).
- c. All attire must be tasteful and approved by the Student Affairs designee in advance of the event. Formal wear and sportswear are acceptable. Pageants may not include swimwear. Failure to abide by these policies may result in suspension of the organization or chapter.
- d. The event must be approved at least four weeks prior to the event date by the Student Affairs designee.

7. Advertisements and Posting

- a. All campus advertisements must be in good taste and **may not include inappropriate language, obscenities, graphic content, derogatory or discriminatory statements, or references to alcoholic beverages, drinking, or drugs.** Advertisements that are deemed in violation of the Community of Respect will not be approved and may not be placed on campus. Failure to follow these policies may result in a suspension of posting privileges. Virtual flyers are not subject to review but must follow the above guidelines.
- b. Student organizations, academic and administrative departments, and off-campus individuals or groups must have flyers approved for posting by the appropriate office. Examples of responsible offices are Office of Campus Life (Macon), Dean's Office (Mercer Law), Office of Student Affairs (Atlanta). Once approved, the flyer will be date-stamped. Flyers without a dated approval stamp will be removed.
- c. Due to structural, safety, and aesthetic purposes, flyers and advertisements may only be posted on designated bulletin boards and locations on campus. **Under no circumstances may flyers be taped to walls.** All postings must be removed within 48 hours of the event.
- d. Posters and banners may not be posted on the exterior or interior of any building except for professionally made vinyl banners attached to railings by rope or twine. The Student Affairs designee or building steward must approve banners to be posted from the railings of the student center or outside of a

building. Banners must be removed within 24-hours of the event or promotion ending.

- e. **All flyers for events or meetings MUST include the following statement to be approved.**

To request alternative formats or accessible seating due to a disability, please contact the event organizer at _____ at least 14 days prior to the event date, if possible.

- f. Students may only use sidewalk chalk on non-painted, horizontal concrete surfaces on campus to advertise events or promotions. These surfaces may not be under any rooftops or coverings. Refrain from chalking on top of artwork or statue areas such as the Jesse Mercer Plaza. All chalking shall be at least 15 feet away from any Mercer University building.

Content must be approved before chalking. On the Macon campus, email the chalking message to campuslife@mercer.edu and the sponsoring organization at least two business days in advance of planned chalking. Email the chalking message to Student Affairs on both the Atlanta and Law school campuses for approval at least two business days in advance of planned chalking.

Violators of the posting policy will be forwarded the Student Affairs designee for review and action.

8. Student Organization Travel

Mercer University promotes safe travel to off-campus activities and events. All student organizations planning to travel 60 miles or more outside of the campus location must adhere to procedures of the Student Affairs designee.

- a. All student drivers for the trip must maintain active car insurance.
- b. All student organizations that wish to travel must name a trip leader who will oversee the trip and ensure policies are followed at all times during travel.
- c. All organizations that plan to stay overnight for any trip that is directly related to the organization, whether funded or not funded by the student-led governing body, must have an advisor present or prior authorization and communication between the organization advisor and the Student Affairs designee.
- d. Damages that occur by students during travel are the responsibility of the individual students.
- e. Students are required to follow all Mercer policies and local, federal, and state laws while traveling. Violations may result in charges from the Office of Student Conduct Resolution.

9. Off-Campus Social Events

- a. Off-campus social events are the responsibility of the chapter/organization and are not approved by the University. All events are expected to follow all policies provided by the Student Affairs designee including all social event policies and the Student Code of Conduct.
- b. All social events must be submitted to the Student Affairs designee. By submitting the event, the organization is acknowledging responsibility for compliance with this policy. Student Affairs does not monitor off-campus social events. However, Student Affairs may investigate violations of the law or University policy that occur at any event with other University agencies (i.e., Mercer Police) or local law enforcement.
- c. Groups are solely and fully responsible for the safety of the participants involved in the events they sponsor.
- d. In the event of an incident (e.g., injury, policy or law violation) before, during, or after the event, the organization must immediately report the incident to Mercer Police then follow up with the appropriate University official(s) the next business day.

10. Alcohol

- a. Organizational events that occur off campus are not considered University-sponsored events and are the sole responsibility of the host organization and its members. Mercer does not encourage or prohibit the legal consumption of alcohol at these events.
- b. Under no circumstances should there be alcohol at any event that could be considered a recruitment event. The use of alcohol to recruit any potential new member is considered a violation of Mercer's fraternity and sorority recruitment guidelines.
- c. It is the event host's responsibility to implement a risk management plan and ensure all social events taking place where alcohol is present conform to the following standards. Violation of these risk management guidelines can result in charges against the organization or student leadership under the Student Code of Conduct. All fraternity and sorority chapters must also follow their national organization's risk management policy. If there are differences between the University risk management guidelines and the national organization's risk management guidelines, the student organization must adhere to whichever guidelines are stricter.
 - The possession, sale, use, or consumption of alcohol beverages during a student organization event, in any situation sponsored by the student organization, or at any event an observer would associate with the student organization must be compliant with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. No person under the legal drinking age of 21 may possess, consume, provide, or be provided alcoholic beverages.
 - Alcoholic beverages must either be: (1) provided and sold on a per-drink

basis by a licensed and insured third-party vendor (e.g., restaurant, bar, caterer) or (2) brought by individual members and guests through a bring your own beverage ("BYOB") system.

- Common sources of alcohol, including bulk quantities, which are not being served by a licensed and insured third party vendor, are prohibited (i.e., amounts of alcohol greater than what a reasonable person should consume over the duration of an event).
- Alcoholic beverages must not be purchased with University-administered funds.
- Transportation (e.g., charter bus, designated driver program) is not required but is encouraged to and from any organization-sponsored event where alcohol will be present for the purposes of safety for those who will be in attendance.
- Guest lists are mandatory for events where alcohol is present. Many national organizations recommend this guest list close at least 24 hours prior to the event.
- Guests who are above the age of 21 and will be consuming alcohol must present legal identification at the door by a third-party vendor, security company, or chapter members.
- Guests who are above the age of 21 and will be consuming alcohol must be wearing a wristband with the date for the specific event or a specific hand stamp that is unique to the event.
- Hazing is prohibited, according to the Student Code of Conduct and Anti-Hazing Policy, and must be included in the risk management plan.
- Social events where alcohol is present require responsible event monitors. All responsible event monitors must be a fully initiated member of the organization. There should be two event monitors per 50 people at all events.

11. Raffles and Gambling

- a. Georgia state law requires that organizations wishing to conduct a raffle or provide door prizes in exchange for a fee register for a license with the local county sheriff's office.
- b. Any form of gambling including but not limited to pay-to-play brackets, raffles, casino nights, and bingos are considered forms of gambling and are not allowed. However, organizations may provide free events with prizes if there are no costs to play or enter to win prizes.

12. Fundraising and Financial Expectations

- a. Mercer University does not monitor or take responsibility for organization fundraising efforts. The University recommends that all organizations collecting

money through fundraising ensure that the organization implements a two-member validation process (i.e., two members from each group verify the amount of funds collected, and two members from each organization verify how the funds were used). This process must be reviewed and approved in advance with the advisor of the organization, and a summary of the fundraising effort must be sent to the advisor at the end of each fundraising process.

- b. In order for a Macon undergraduate student organization to receive funding from the Student Government Association, the organization must:
 - Be open to all Mercer undergraduate students;
 - Have a bank account on file in the name of the student organization; and
 - Have a separate employer identification number (EIN).
- c. At Macon's law school, funding is available from the Student Bar Association for student organizations.
 - Student organizations must schedule and attend a Student Bar Association Appropriations Committee meeting no later than the sixth week of the fall semester.
 - Student Bar Association Appropriations manages all funds for student organizations.
 - Active student organizations at Mercer Law are not required to maintain separate bank accounts from the University.
- d. Registered student organizations are not permitted to use Mercer University's tax identification number when using an off-campus bank account.
- e. Student organizations do not receive tax exemption.
- f. All tax information related to off-campus bank accounts must be reported yearly to the IRS by the organizational officer(s). The Office of Campus Life/Student Affairs is not responsible for this reporting and will not monitor this aspect of the organization.

Additional Resources

1. Anti-Hazing Policy: <https://policies.mercer.edu/anti-hazing-policy/>
2. Campus Reservations: <https://reservations.mercer.edu/>
3. Catering and Table Linens: <https://reservations.mercer.edu/contacts/>
4. Hazing Reporting Form:
https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?MercerUniv&layout_id=3

5. Student Code of Conduct: <https://policies.mercer.edu/student-code-of-conduct/>
6. Student Government Association (Macon): <https://sga.mercer.edu/>
7. Student Handbooks:
<https://provost.mercer.edu/resources/handbooks/student-handbooks/>

Website Address

<https://campuslife.mercer.edu/>