We Are Here to Help You!

The Department of Student Activities (StuAct) works to provide students, faculty, and staff with the information and resources necessary to support the efforts and success of all recognized student organizations.

This Organization Manual was created by StuAct as a one stop resource used in the day to day management of recognized student organizations. It includes policies, procedures and lots of information to help you be successful!

If you still need assistance, please contact the Office of Student Organization Development and Administration at (979) 458-4371 or email soda@stuact.tamu.edu. We are located in Koldus 224!

Please note that policies, rules, procedures, and even the law can change from year to year, so be sure to visit the manual often.

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RECOGNITION OF STUDENT ORGS

What is Recognition?

Recognition is the process whereby student organizations become “official” in the eyes of the university.

The purpose of recognizing student organizations at Texas A&M University is to provide a structure through which students may exercise their right to freely associate in a common purpose or goal that unifies them to form an organization.

Classifications and Categories

Each student organization granted recognition by Texas A&M University first receives a classification based on its mission and purpose. These classifications include:

- Academic
- Arts and Culture
- Campus Service
- Community/Volunteer Service
- Cultural/International
- Enthusiasts
- Global Service
- Greek Life
- Healthy Living
- Honor
- Military
- Professional/Career
- Recreation
- Religious
- Residence Halls
- Social and Political Issues
- Special Interests
- Spirit and Tradition
- Sport Clubs
- Student Government

Each student organization granted recognition by Texas A&M University is also categorized as sponsored, affiliated, or registered. This categorization is determined by assessing the student organization's relationship to the university, the scope and complexity of its activities, and the perceived potential risk to participants and the university.

Four Main Goals of Recognition Process

1) Establish an on-going relationship with newly elected student leaders and newly appointed advisors.
2) Provide resource information to student leaders and advisors.
3) Make student leaders aware of expectations, rules, responsibilities, and enhanced expectations of student leaders, student organizations, and their advisor.
4) Gather information from student organizations within a reasonable time frame.
Recognition Requirements

The recognition components are as follows:

⇒ **Leadership Positions**: An advisor, chief student leader, and treasurer are required at a minimum to have a student organization. However, other officer positions may (and should) be officially listed on your organization’s roster so that they may access the information and resources that are available on StuAct Online.

⇒ **Officer eligibility including GPR and university conduct standards**: Students must be currently enrolled and be in good conduct standing with the university. Advisors must be employed as faculty or staff by Texas A&M University.

⇒ **StuAct Online Profile Update**: This step helps us collect important information about your organization and is displayed in the organization’s public profile. This information is also used in our OrgMatch feature.

⇒ **Advisor Training**: Advisor training can be completed through the Student Activities Online Training Center. As a reminder, ALL advisors listed on the account must complete the advisor training on an annual basis.

⇒ **Officer Training**: Officer training can be completed through the Student Activities Online Training Center. All Chief Student Leaders and Treasurers must complete the officer training on an annual basis.

⇒ **Student Organization Finance Center (SOFC) Signature Card**: The SOFC Signature Card requires the advisor, Chief Student Leader, and Treasurer signatures at a minimum and is required to conduct financial transactions through the SOFC.

⇒ **Constitution**: A current version of your constitution must be uploaded each year for review by the Department of Student Activities. You will be notified for any revisions that are necessary. Required components are outlined in the Constitution Checklist.

*Failure to complete the recognition process within sixty (60) days of being approved will negatively affect your organization's recognition status.*
What Are Registered Organizations?

Registered organizations are those that are consistent with the mission and culture of the university and primarily present events limited to their membership.

These organizations are primarily interest groups capable of functioning with minimal support from or interaction with the university.

The activities and events of these organizations are considered to involve a lower level of complexity due to their limited scope.

Registered Org Requirements and Expectations

In addition to the university resources available to all recognized student organizations, registered organizations may:

- Select their own advisor, who may be a faculty member, professional or associate staff member, or graduate assistant.

In addition to the responsibilities of all recognized student organizations, registered organizations must also meet the following expectations:

- Prior to hosting events beyond the membership of the organization, it is the responsibility of these organizations to develop an event plan and review it with the organization’s advisor and the Department of Student Activities.
- Registered organizations will be assessed during the recognition process to determine whether the organization must meet additional requirements, such as developing an operations manual and/or carrying additional liability insurance.
- The organization is responsible for complying with any conditions, stipulations, or restrictions placed on its recognition. Officers of registered organizations must complete student leader training on topics in the areas of event planning, accountability, and organizational development.
- Advisors to registered organizations will also complete advisor training as outlined in the Advisor Agreement Letter.
What Are Affiliated Organizations?

Affiliated organizations are those that contribute to the mission and culture of the university by routinely presenting events for their members and invited guests.

These organizations are often housed within or connected to larger sponsored organizations.

The activities and events of these organizations are considered to involve a moderate level of complexity due to their nature and/or scope.

Affiliated Org Requirements and Expectations

In addition to the university resources available to all recognized student organizations, affiliated organizations may have the option to:

- Select their own advisor in cooperation with the Department of Student Activities. This person must be a full-time university employee who possesses the skills and/or training necessary to advise the organization.
- Receive increased consideration for funding and space allocation requests.

In addition to the responsibilities of all recognized student organizations, affiliated organizations must also meet the following expectations:

- Prior to hosting events targeting the campus or broader community, it is the responsibility of affiliated organizations to develop an event plan and review it with the organization’s advisor and the Department of Student Activities or other designated university department.
- Affiliated organizations will be assessed during the recognition process to determine whether the organization must meet additional requirements, such as developing an operations manual and/or carrying additional liability insurance.
- The organization is responsible for complying with any conditions, stipulations, or restrictions placed on its recognition.
- Officers of affiliated organizations must complete student leader training on topics in the areas of pre-event planning, accountability, and organizational development.
- Advisors to affiliated organizations will also complete advisor training as outlined in the Advisor Agreement Letter.
- Affiliated organizations connected to sponsored organizations are responsible for complying with any rules, procedures, and expectations established by the sponsored organization.
What Are Sponsored Organizations?

Sponsored organizations are those considered critical to the mission and culture of the university. These organizations are inherently linked to the university because of their role in representing TAMU or in presenting events that are considered an integral part of the institution.

Sponsored organizations routinely present events for the campus and broader community, and typically have a close relationship with a university department or office.

The activities and events of these organizations are considered to involve a higher level of complexity because of their scope and perceived association with the university.

Sponsored Org Requirements and Expectations

In addition to the university resources available to all recognized student organizations, sponsored organizations shall have:

- A full-time professional staff member whose job description designates them as the primary advisor to the sponsored organization.
- Designated office or workspace provided by the university.
- Access to funding from university revenues and student fees.
- A university fiscal account and accounting staff support.
- Priority consideration for reserving university facilities, such as meeting rooms.
- Benefits for student leaders, such as opportunities for regular interaction with the Vice President for Student Affairs and other key administrators, the opportunity to apply for reserved garage parking as available, and appointment to university committees.
- Priority consideration for participation in university publications and new student conferences.

In addition to the responsibilities of all recognized student organizations, sponsored organizations must also meet the following expectations:

- Work closely with the appropriate university department or office in the planning of these events.
- Designate a risk management officer who is responsible for developing and maintaining an operations manual for the organization, which must be reviewed at least annually by the Department of Student Activities.
- Carry liability insurance to cover membership and events as deemed appropriate by university review (if applicable).
- Officers must complete student leader training on topics in the areas of pre-event planning, accountability, and organizational development.
- Advisors will also complete advisor training as outlined in the Advisor Agreement Letter.
- Sponsored organizations that serve as governing bodies for affiliated or registered organizations are responsible for providing appropriate levels of support and oversight for these organizations.
Student Org Recognition Status Descriptions

- **Recognized**: Meets all current requirements for recognition and can operate without restrictions.
- **Renewing Recognition**: Recently switched between two recognition cycles, and is renewing its original recognition requirements.
- **Pending Recognition**: Just started the recognition process for the first time.
- **Recognized with Restrictions**: Still considered active, but has failed to meet all necessary organizational standards and is limited in its ability to utilize campus resources.
- **Not Recognized**: No longer recognized by the University, nor is it considered an operating organization. To reactivate, the group’s representative will need to attend a New Student Organization Informational and meet with a Student Organization Development and Administration member.

The New Student Organization (NSO) Process

The Department of Student Activities has implemented the following process in order to appropriately assess the request for recognition and to allow the organization the opportunity to participate in the recognition process.

**Approval Process Phases**

1. NSO Informational
2. Application Submission
3. Application Review
4. Advisor Identification and Approval
5. Account Number Assignment
Steps to Take

The following steps will need to be taken:

- All students interested in starting a new student organization must attend a New Student Organization Informational.
- Once the informational has been attended, complete and submit an Application for Recognition of New Student Organization through the StuAct Online system.
- Submitted application and any supporting items will be reviewed by appropriate staff members in the Department of Student Activities. Only complete application packets will be accepted.
- Student Activities staff may request additional information or a meeting with students to discuss the organization mission, purpose, and/or activities. In order to proceed with the application review process, we must receive a response within one month.
- Applications are reviewed for unique mission and purpose "that are consistent with the philosophy and goals that have been developed for the creation and existence of Texas A&M University" (Student Rule 41) http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule41. Student organizations that are approved to begin the recognition process will be assigned a classification as either sponsored, affiliated, or registered (based on mission/purpose) and categorization (based on risk assessment), and may be assigned enhanced expectations depending on the proposed activities of the organization.
- Upon approval, student leaders will receive electronic confirmation from the Department of Student Activities and further instructions for beginning the student organization recognition process. Upon receipt of approval, you will have 60 days to initiate and complete the annual Student Organization Recognition process.
The Facilitator University Model

The Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University greatly values the engagement of students in co-curricular activities, and therefore has adopted a philosophical approach to partnering with individual students and student organizations as "facilitators" of the involvement experience.

As facilitators, student organization members, leaders, and advisors work with administrators, faculty and staff to make intelligent, fair and reasonable choices within the boundaries established by state, federal, and local laws, university rules, and the educational mission of the institution.

Guiding Boundaries for Student Organizations

1. Student organizations operate within the larger picture of Texas A&M’s mission and core values, representing the university and its goals.
2. Student organizations must comply with all local, state, and federal laws during organizational activities or events, whether on- or off-campus.
3. Student organizations are governed by the Student Rules of the university and the Standard Administrative Procedures of the university.
4. Student organizations are also governed by the policies of the Department of Student Activities, available in this Student Organization Manual. Student leaders are expected to familiarize themselves with this manual and use it as a reference tool when planning their events and activities.
5. Finally, student organizations create their own rules too! Each organization submits a constitution with its internal policies and structure. Groups that are affiliated with any local, national, or international organizations may have guidelines from those organizations as well. We also strongly encourage student organizations to develop operation manuals.

Students are not expected to memorize all of these documents or websites. However, as constituents of a Facilitator University, they must be proactive and communicate their events and goals to campus administrators and staff advisors. Together, we will all assist in ensuring that our student organizations operate safely and successfully within the guiding boundaries.

The privileges of becoming a recognized student organization at Texas A&M University are not extended without careful consideration. Once recognized, an organization may associate with Texas A&M University; therefore, the events and activities presented by the organization should accurately and positively reflect the mission and purpose of the university, as well as the rules and standards of the institution. The recognition process requires action by both student leaders and the university. As such, this process creates a mutually beneficial relationship between student organizations and the university.
Expectations

In order to reach these goals, be recognized and retain official recognition, student organizations must meet certain expectations. Some of the expectations for student organizations include:

- Applying for and achieving university recognition annually through the Department of Student Activities.
- Adhering to all municipal, state, and federal laws, the Texas A&M University Student Rules (http://student-rules.tamu.edu), and all university rules and procedures.
- Remaining in good standing with the university, including full compliance with any conditions, stipulations, or restrictions placed upon organizational recognition.
- Keeping the Department of Student Activities informed of changes to organizational leadership or governing documents in a timely fashion.
- Demonstrating respect for the university community and other student organizations.
- Operating in a manner consistent with the mission and goals of the university and the governing documents of the organization.
- Consulting with the appropriate university departments, offices, or representatives when planning large, unusual, or potentially complex events.
- Ensuring continuity in leadership from year to year by training newly selected leaders and maintaining good record and transition materials.
- Establishing and communicating appropriate advisor expectations.

Privileges

There are a number of benefits that come from being a recognized student organization at Texas A&M. These benefits are not afforded to non-recognized organizations or individual students. Some of the privileges of recognized student organizations include:

- Association with Texas A&M University, including the ability to incorporate the name of the university into the name of the organization and the ability to use university logos and trademarks for organizational needs or products (please see the Office of Collegiate Licensing for more information).
- A free web site with 20 MB of memory and a free e-mail address for the organization, as well as the support of IT specialists who work within the Division of Student Affairs.
- Access to concessions permits to reserve space for the sale or exchange of items.
- Participation in the MSC Open House.
- Free banking services at the Student Organization Finance Center (SOFC).
- Eligibility to apply for office, cubicle, or storage space for the organization.
- Use of university facilities and priority use of campus space.
- Eligibility to apply for special funding for student organization events and risk initiatives.
GPR Requirements

Statement(s) found in the University Student Rules must be used as the minimum standard. The wording of the below statement may be made specific to the student organization, but no student organization may enact eligibility requirements for officers less stringent than those appearing above. Student organizations may enact requirements more stringent than those provided by the university under the condition that the more stringent requirements are reasonable in nature and consistent with the mission and purpose of the organization.

"The officers of this organization must meet the following requirements:

(a) Have a minimum cumulative and semester grade point ratio (GPR) as stated below and meet that minimum cumulative and semester GPR in the semester immediately prior to the election/appointment, the semester of election/appointment and semesters during the term of office.

1. For undergraduate students, the minimum cumulative and semester GPR is 2.00. In order for this provision to be met, at least six hours (half-time credits) must have been taken for the semester under consideration. In one limited circumstance, summer semester hours may be applied to this provision. In order for summer coursework to qualify toward a grade point ratio prior to election/appointment, at least six credit hours must have been taken during the course of either the full or two summer session(s).

2. For graduate level students the minimum cumulative and semester GPR is a 3.00 and for first professional students the minimum cumulative and semester GPR is 2.50. In order for this provision to be met, at least four hours (half-time credits) must have been taken for the semester under consideration. In one limited circumstance, summer semester hours may be applied to this provision. In order for summer coursework to qualify toward a grade point ratio prior to election/appointment, at least four credit hours must have been taken during the course of either the full or two summer session(s) unless fewer credits are required as they complete the final stages of their degree.

(b) Be in good standing with the university and enrolled:

1. At least half time (six or more credit hours), if an undergraduate student (unless fewer credits are required to graduate in the spring and fall semesters) during the term of office. Students enrolled in the Blinn TEAM program are also eligible to hold an office, as long as the student is meeting all applicable Blinn TEAM requirements and is in good standing with the program.

2. At least half time (four or more credits), if a graduate level student (unless fewer credits are required in the final stages of their degree as defined by the Continuous Registration Requirement) during their term of office.

(c) Be ineligible to hold an office should the student fail to maintain the requirements as prescribed in (a) and (b)."

The wording of the above statement may be made specific to the student organization, but no student organization may enact eligibility requirements for officers less stringent than these. Again, student organizations may enact requirements more stringent than those provided by the university. To request an exemption from these grade requirements, the student leader must download and complete the GPR Exemption Request Form and submit it to the Department of Student Activities.

Membership

Student organizations must be open in their membership unless otherwise permitted under applicable federal law, according to Student Rule 41.1.5. Organizations may choose to set higher standards for membership including higher grade point requirements for officers and/or members. You should provide a general statement about your membership eligibility, standards, and requirements in your constitution. You should also review your constitution to ensure that it does not contain discriminatory language or provisions.
Constitution and Bylaws

Every recognized student organization at Texas A&M University is required to file a current copy of its constitution and bylaws with the Department of Student Activities each year during recognition. A constitution contains the fundamental principles that outline the purpose, structure, and limits of an organization.

A constitution provides a foundation upon which your organization operates, serves to clarify your purpose, and outlines your basic structure. The document should be the cornerstone for building an effective group and can give members a better understanding of the organization’s functions.

The constitution should be tailored to the needs of your organization and must include:

- Your organization's name
- Purpose
- Membership requirements
- Officer standards
- Plans for handling finances

Bylaws are secondary principles that govern the internal affairs of your organization, essentially serving as an expansion of the articles or sections of your constitution. Student organizations are not required to have bylaws, but they are helpful in fully describing the procedures for the organization to conduct business effectively and efficiently. For instance, you might add information about the various committees or sub-areas of your organization, procedures and goals for meetings, budget procedures, and amendment procedures for the constitution.

Remember the reasons for having a constitution and bylaws. They articulate the purpose of your organization and spell out the procedures to be followed for its orderly functioning. Constitutions usually require a 2/3 vote of the membership for adoption. Bylaws only require a simple majority for passage. Once you have developed your constitution and bylaws, review them often. The needs of your group will change over time, and it is important that the constitution and bylaws are kept up to date to reflect the current state of affairs.

Officer Positions

At a minimum, each student organization is expected to designate one officer as the chief student leader (usually titled "president" or "chair") and one officer authorized to deal with the organization's finances (usually titled "treasurer"). The titles of these positions may vary according to the needs of the organization, but the two separate job functions must be provided for in your constitution.

In your constitution, be sure to clearly lay out for your officers their:

- Job responsibilities
- Qualifications
- Selection process
- Term of office
- Transition process
- Procedure for removal from office, etc.
The following components are required of all constitutions:

- **Organization name and/or abbreviation** - Name of organization stated clearly and any acronym/abbreviation is noted
- **Purpose and goals** – General purpose, type of activities, affiliation with other groups or national organizations
- **Membership eligibility, standards and requirements** – Outlines who is eligible for membership, and any requirements that must be met before applying for membership.
- **Officer disciplinary procedures (notice)** - Procedures for disciplining and/or removing an officer: including a notice to the officer of the issue
- **Officer disciplinary procedures (perspective)** - Procedures for disciplining and/or removing an officer: a process whereby the officer is given an opportunity to share his/her perspective.
- **Member disciplinary procedures (notice)** - Procedures for disciplining and/or removing a member: including a notice to the member of the issue.
- **Member disciplinary procedures (perspective)** - Procedures for disciplining and/or removing a member: a process whereby the member is given an opportunity to share his/her perspective.
- **Officer selection processes (timing)** - including the timing of the selection
- **Officer selection processes (process)** - voting membership or appointment process
- **Officer duties** - Specific officer duties listed for any elected, selected or appointed leadership position
- **GPR requirement** – See previous page on GPR Requirements
- **Financial procedures** – the following statement must be inserted in the constitution: "All monies belonging to this organization shall be deposited and disbursed through a bank account established for this organization at the Student Organization Finance Center and/or the Fiscal Office. All funds must be deposited within 24 hours after collection. The advisor to this organization must approve and sign each expenditure before payment."
- **Advisor expectations** – These can be adapted from the advisor agreement letter.
- **Constitutional amendment procedure** – voted and approved by membership, indicating the number of votes needed from membership/leadership for approval.
- **Statement of Annual Review** – reviewed annually and subject to the approval of the Department of Student Activities.
- **Free of discriminatory language** - as consistent with the university’s statement on harassment and discrimination, see http://student-rules.tamu.edu/statement

Make sure your advisor and every new member of the organization has a copy of your governing documents. This will help to unify your members by informing them about the opportunities that exist for participation and the procedures they should follow to be an active, contributing member. A thorough study of the constitution and bylaws should be a part of officer training and transition.