October 30, 2020: **UPDATED Student Organization Event Planning Guide**

In recent weeks, Texas A&M University has published updated guidance and expectations for student organizations conducting on-campus events and travel activities. In order to support the health and safety of our student organization community in their efforts to maintain operations and engagement in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Student Activities is providing the following updated recommendations regarding student organization events and programs based on current university, local, state, and federal guidance.

**ORGANIZATION MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

- Continue to conduct virtual-only meetings and events whenever possible. It is strongly recommended that, if not already initiated, organizations plan for virtual and/or hybrid options for spring programs to allow for maximum flexibility and compliance with state and university guidelines.
- If holding in-person meetings, provide a virtual attendance option for those who can’t attend in person, and consider adjustments to membership attendance requirements to support member health and safety.
- Avoid conducting events in crowded public spaces and/or as a part of larger mass gatherings.
- *For in-person activities, ensure compliance with limitations on the size of your gathering by observing both the capacity limitations of your event venue and any local or state restrictions on gathering size at the time.*
  - For on-campus events involving more than 25 people indoors or more than 10 people outdoors, a [MaroonLink Event Form](#) must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event for review and approval by the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs.
  - For off-campus events involving more than 10 people outdoors, an Application for Outdoor Gatherings must be submitted at least one week prior to the event for review and approval by the Mayor.
  - When utilizing a venue without a posted capacity, set attendance limits based on the square footage of the space being utilized, calculating for 113 ft² per person.
  - For specific information about reservations in the MSC or Rudder, visit the University Center website.
- *For in-person attendees, require all individuals to utilize personal protective face coverings in order to comply with the Texas A&M Face Covering Policy, which requires all individuals to wear face coverings both on campus and at off-campus student organization activities.*
- *For in-person attendees, implement measures to encourage and ensure compliance with physical distancing and personal health practice guidelines from the university and local health authorities.* For example:
  - Instruct potential attendees to monitor health conditions before attending. Those showing symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend, and attendees that exhibit symptoms at the event should be sent home.
  - Spread out seating options at appropriate distances (6’ apart) and remove or block off other seats.
  - Direct attendees to avoid contact with each other, including typical greetings (handshakes, hugs, etc.), and avoid contact with high-touch items or surfaces.
  - Provide hand-sanitizer or wipes for use by attendees during the event. Provide facemasks if possible.
- If food will be provided, avoid self-service buffets or snack bowls. Instead, provide single-serving packages or have staff with facemasks and gloves serve food. Coordinate food service plans to maintain physical distancing between participants, and set up food service areas away from the normal flow of attendee traffic.
- Prior to and at the beginning of any event, remind attendees of expectations for behavior at the event, as well as the risks involved in attending an in-person activity. Consider the use of a required Acknowledgement Statement or risk waivers for in-person attendees that addresses COVID-19 risks and safety measures.
- Avoid the distribution of any printed materials or physical items, utilizing digital options where possible. When contact with physical items is necessary, provide and require gloves during assembly and distribution.
- Maintain clear records of in-person attendees and contact information in order to facilitate contact tracing in the event that an attendee is diagnosed with COVID-19 after attending the event. Establish a plan and protocol for communication and notification to attendees in such an instance.
- Communicate and enforce required COVID Reporting protocols that comply with existing Reporting Guidance.
- If your event will involve minors, be aware that all camps and programs for minors must continue to contact and coordinate with the University Youth Programs office for compliance. Strategies for hosting youth programs are...
available on the UYP website, but all organizations are encouraged to prepare for virtual alternatives, as future restrictions may be possible.

- Concessions activities are allowed on campus in a limited capacity. Organizations must submit a Concessions Form for approval and must provide documentation of a COVID-19 risk management plan. Merchandise sales must be pre-sold online only through university approved channels (e.g. Marketplace), with orders delivered by shipping or a single in-person pickup location in Koldus Plaza, which can be reserved through UCEN.
- For all events, establish plans and protocols for cancelling or adjusting to a virtual option on short notice due to the constantly evolving public health circumstances, and be prepared to notify attendees of any changes.

ORGANIZATION TRAVEL

- University guidance states that domestic travel essential to the mission of the University will be permitted at the discretion of the applicable administrator, and that student travel as part of student organizations must be routed through the Division of Student Affairs. Visit Texas A&M’s Travel Guidance page to view the university’s guidance in full, and note that international travel by recognized student organizations remains suspended.
- Requests for domestic student organization travel to be considered as Texas A&M University mission-essential travel must be submitted using the MaroonLink Event Form at least two weeks in advance of travel. The Event Form will be routed to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs for final review and approval, which is required prior to departure.
- Submitted event forms should address organization plans to comply with all existing COVID-19 protocols. The Travel Guidance page also provides a helpful checklist of protocols for Domestic Field Trips that can serve as a baseline for student organization travel as well.
- Please note that any planned student organization travel must also comply with all normal student travel guidelines, including the submission of a Travel Information Form at least 48 hours in advance of travel and the use and collection of waivers from all participants.
- Educate and encourage members to maintain appropriate physical distancing and personal health practices while engaging in collective travel or group transportation within 25 miles from campus.

ORGANIZATION FINANCES AND FUNDRAISING

- The Student Organization Finance Center (SOFC) continues to operate to support organization financial needs, encouraging virtual services where possible. Visit their Virtual Office Hours for assistance. To schedule an appointment or for other questions, email sofc@stuact.tamu.edu or call 979-845-1114.
- Due to the current conditions surrounding COVID-19, the SOFC (Koldus 235) will be open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:00am-3:00pm and Thursdays from 10:30am-3:00pm until further notice.
- SOFC payment requests and other documents are available digitally through SOFC eForms. eForm signers must be authorized on the organization’s current Signature Card and use their @tamu.edu email address to login.
- SOFC Signature Cards may be signed, scanned, and emailed between all signing parties, but must be signed in ink, as digital signatures are not accepted on Signature Cards. Email completed cards to sofc@stuact.tamu.edu.
- Marketplace can be used for organization business like collecting dues, selling merchandise, and soliciting small donations. For assistance, or to set up Marketplace for your organization, contact sofga@stuact.tamu.edu.
- SOFC Trainings are available online. Officer and Advisor Essentials modules and Marketplace trainings are available in the StuActOnline Training Center, or visit the SOFC YouTube Channel for topic-specific videos.
- Services such as Cash Advances, Credit Card Terminal check out, and in-person office appointments may be limited, so contact the SOFC team before traveling to Koldus.
- Evaluate student organization financial needs in light of reduced programming and services, and where possible consider reducing membership dues and/or event participation fees. Also consider providing expanded refund policies to encourage appropriate attendance decisions by registrants in support of attendee health and safety.

As an organization, it is critical to understand that caring for and protecting the health and safety of members and participants engaging in organizational activities is a primary responsibility. *Student organizations will be expected to comply with the TAMU System guidance requiring the observance of event size limitations and health precautions recommended by local health authorities at the time of an organization event.* Failure to comply may result in restrictions or sanctions for the organization. Utilize the recommendations above to help guide organization planning and compliance, and continue to watch for future guidance from the university and local, state, and federal authorities to stay informed. For additional support, continue to contact Student Activities staff at soda@stuact.tamu.edu for direct student organization assistance or info@stuact.tamu.edu for general Student Activities questions.