Student Organization Guidelines & Resources

2024-2025

Dean of Students office

WELCOME

The Dean of Students office welcomes you and your student organization. Being an official organization on campus is an exciting privilege afforded to students to support professional and social development. SWOSU prides itself on its diverse student organizations that provide a means for students to thrive as well as develop professional and personal skills outside the classroom setting.

Officially recognized student organizations are afforded privileges and benefits through the university. Student organizations have the opportunity to request funding for support for exciting events that contribute to campus culture and wellbeing. SWOSU is happy to support student development by contributing to student organizations that outline policies and practices that fit with SWOSU's mission statement, policies, and guidelines.

Please use this document as a resource for developing, supporting, and maintaining a student organization for SWOSU students. The Dean of Students office is available to assist your student organization and provide guidance for the policies that are held within this document.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1
University Policies for Student Organizations pg. 4

Chapter 2
Student Activities pg. 8

Chapter 3
Student Organization Application pg. 10

Chapter 4
Fraternity & Sorority Programs pg. 13

Chapter 5
Student Organization Conduct pg. 16

Chapter 6
Resources pg. 17

Sample Constitution pg. 22

Chapter 1 - University Policies for Student Organizations

1.1 All student organization activities must be in compliance with university rules and policies as well as federal, municipal and state laws. For a full list of SWOSU student conduct policies, please see the SWOSU student handbook.

1.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION

It is the policy that the institution and any student organization does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, genetic information or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices, or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial assistance, housing and educational service.

1.3 HAZING

SWOSU student organizations must uphold Oklahoma Statute - Section 1190 of Title 21:

> A. No student organization or any person associated with any organization sanctioned or authorized by the governing board of any public or private school or institution of higher education in this state shall engage or participate in hazing.
>
> B. Any hazing activity described in subsection "F" of this section upon which the initiation or admission into or affiliation with an organization sanctioned or authorized by a public or private school or by any institution of higher education in this state is directly or indirectly conditioned shall be presumed to be a forced activity, even if the student willingly participates in such activity.
>
> C. A copy of the policy of the rules and regulations of the public or private school or institution of higher education which prohibits hazing shall be given to each student enrolled in the school or institution and shall be deemed to be part of the bylaws of all organizations operating at the public or private school or the institution of higher education.
>
> D. Any organization sanctioned or authorized by the governing board of a public or private school or institution of higher education in this state which violates subsection "A" of this section, upon conviction, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and may be punishable by a fine of not more than One Thousand Five Hundred Dollars ($1,500) and the forfeit for a period of not less than one (1) year all of the rights and privileges of being an organization organized or operating at the public or private school or at the institution of higher education.
>
> E. Any individual convicted of violating the provisions of subsection "A" of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and may be punishable by imprisonment for not to exceed ninety (90) days in the county jail, or by the imposition of a fine not to exceed Five Hundred Dollars ($500.00), or by both such imprisonment and fine.

F. For purpose of this section:

1."Hazing" means an activity which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental health or physical safety of a student for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with any organization operating subject to the sanction of the public or private school or any institution of higher education in this state.

2."Endanger the physical health" shall include but not be limited to any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, alcoholic beverages as defined in Section 506 of Title 37 of the Oklahoma Statues, non-intoxicating beverage as defined in Section 163.2 of Title 37 of the Oklahoma Statues, drug controlled dangerous substance or other substance, or any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health or safety of the individual.

3. "Endanger the mental health" shall include any activity, except those activities authorized by law, which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as prolonged sleep deprivation, forced prolonged exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual.

SECTION 4. This act shall become effective July 1, 1990.

SECTION 5. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

1.4 ADVERTISING

Posting of flyers, handbills and signs and the placing of displays in campus buildings is limited to approved campus organizations. All flyers must have their events submitted and approved on Presence. These must be approved by the Dean of Students before posting and must be stamped and dated prior to duplication:

1. Must have "Approved by Student Services" stamped on each flyer.
2. Must have name of sponsoring organization on flyer.
3. Flyers may be approved for a maximum of 2 weeks.
4. Flyers must be posted only on bulletin boards.
5. Maximum size 8-1/2 X 11 inches.
6. Copy of each flyer will be filed in the Dean of Student's office.
7. Flyers must fall within the guidelines outlined in the Student Handbook.
8. Flyers must be approved by the Dean of Students in room 214 STF prior to making multiple copies.

9. Flyers are to be removed after the event by the sponsoring organizations no later than 1 week after the event.

1.5 DANCES & SECURITY

Any activity which may need the assistance of the Department of Campus Police should request that assistance at least two weeks prior to the event, Phone the Department of Campus Police and speak with the Chief: there is no charge for this service. Dances held on campus must have security assistance. Events held on week-nights within the Student Center must conclude by no later than midnight.

1.6 ALCOHOL ON CAMPUS

The use of alcohol is forbidden on campus as well as at campus events sponsored by recognized student organizations. Publicity encouraging the use or abuse of alcohol at events is also prohibited.

1.6 USE OF CAMPUS GROUNDS

If your organization is planning an activity outside on campus grounds, you are required to check with the office of the Dean of Students and the Physical Plant for information, permission, and assistance.

1.7 FUND RAISING

Any fund-raising activities require prior University approval, particularly for sales and solicitation activity. **State law prohibits some activities, such as lotteries and raffles**. Fundraisers conducted in the Student Center must also have approval from Auxiliary Services. All sales and transactions must be conducted by currently enrolled students of the organizations or the advisor. If students from the organizations are not involved in the sale, the sale must cease.

1.8 ACTIVITIES REQUEST

All student organizations will make a request for any and all planned activities through the Dean of Students office at least three days prior to the event by completing an Event Registration on HilltopCentral and receiving approval. Failure to submit the Event Registration for your activity will prohibit the student organization from hosting their activity.

1.9 MAINTAINING OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION STATUS

Each organization president is required to Re-Register their Student Organization on HilltopCentral by the third week in September of each academic year and at any other time during the year (such as when officers are elected) when information becomes outdated to maintain **active**, official student organization status. The Office of the Dean of Students will approve Re-Registrations for a student organization. You will need the following for your Re-Registration on HilltopCentral:

- A list of officers of the organization with current contact information.
- Roster list of active members with SWOSU student email addresses.

All materials for maintaining official organization status must be submitted via HilltopCentral to be considered for **official** renewal.

1.10 SPONSOR

Student organizations must have a currently employed SWOSU faculty or staff member designated as a Sponsor.

1.11 FUNDING

Funds deposited to or expended from student organization accounts are funds owned by the State of Oklahoma and therefore, subject to the rules, regulations, and best practices of the State of Oklahoma.

- Funds deposited to or expended from student organization accounts are subject to all audits by internal and external audit firms and are subject to open records requests.
- All funds expended to outside vendors for the purchase of products require an invoice which clearly states the name of the vendor, the product was sold to SWOSU, the product purchased and the amount.
- Funds expended to individuals or companies for services, awards or prizes must be reported to the IRS on a income reportable form, the most used form are W2, 1099, 1098T.

1.12 CASH, PRIZES, OR AWARDS

Guidance for cash or other prizes to students:

- Purchase order and check requisition can be made out to the Faculty Sponsor, who can cash the check at the Bursar's window.
- A Student Award or Prize documentation sheet must be signed by the student accepting the award.
    - The original, signed award sheet must be returned to the Business Services office as soon as possible after the event and attached as documentation for the expenditure.
    - The Student Org. Award or Prize Documentation sheet can be found on the Dean of Students webpage under "Student Organizations," or you may contact the Dean of Students at 580.774.3767 to receive one.
- The Comptroller should evaluate the documents to determine which IRS reporting form should be used.

1.13 DRONES

Drones are not permitted to be used by a student organization unless the following requirements are met. Please contact the Compliance Coordinator (580.774.3108) for more information.

- The drones would need to be registered and the operator would need to be licensed through the FAA.
- SWOSU Campus Police Chief and the Compliance Coordinator must grant approval for all flights on campus.
- Additional requirements may apply.

Chapter 2 - Student Activities

The following information has been complied to assist organizations in becoming familiar with University policies as they apply to organization activities and to inform groups of services available to them. The forms referred to may be obtained from the office of the Dean of Students.

2.1 APPROVAL FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY

It is required for student organizations to request approval three days prior to hosting any event, fundraiser, community service hours, or meeting:

- Events and meetings must be submitted for approval using the HilltopCentral Event Registration process.
- You must speak with any office or department offering assistance for your event and receive their explicit support of the event. HilltopCentral event requests are referred to appropriate offices and departments for verification and approval.
- The Student Activities Coordinator will review your request and respond.
- Student organizations must submit any upcoming event to the SWOSU Room Reservations calendar if an on-campus room is required with the exception of the Student Union—contact the Student Union Director at 580.774.3166 for reservations directly.
- All events and meetings must be planned at least two weeks in advance, unless significant or mitigating circumstances affected scheduling.

2.2 RESERVATION OF FACILITIES

To reserve classroom facilities, student organizations may use the SWOSU web calendar.

- to reserve the Student Center facilities, contact the Director of the Student center;
- to reserve the Fine Arts Auditorium, contact the Director of the Fine Arts Center;
- to reserve a room in Pharmacy/ Pharmacy Annex get approval from the Assistant Dean of Pharmacy;
- to reserve a room in the Physical Education Building, contact the Chair of HPER.
- to reserve the Clock Tower, contact the Student Activities Coordinator;
- to schedule events with PEC, contact the Director of the PEC
- to reserve any athletic venues, you will need to contact the Athletic Director.

2.3 ASSISTANCE WITH PUBLICITY

When planning major events of campus-wide interest, the Public Relations & Marketing office (HAB 205) will be happy to assist. They will place a message on the electronic board, include the event on the master calendar for the campus, and assist with media coverage when appropriate.

2.4 UNIVERSITY ACCOUNTS FOR ACTIVITIES

It is recommended that student organizations establish a University numbered account on campus through the Business Office; these are referred to as agency accounts. This allows your organization

to receive a monthly report of your funds upon request. Organizations receiving funding from the Student Activities Allocation Committee must have established this type of account.

2.5 FOOD AND BEVERAGE NEEDS

The Student Center Food Service can supply student organizations with a variety of foods and beverages for any event. For more information, contact the Student Center (774-3783), lower level. A bill will be sent to your organization after the event. All events held in the Student Center must use Auxiliary Services for food needs. Events held in the Students Center are required to utilize Auxiliary services.

2.6 EXPECTATIONS

The university supports student development by providing opportunities for student organizations to organize and provide experiences for students to organize and develop their professionalism skills. As such, the Dean of Students expects student organizations to conduct themselves with appropriateness and professionalism.

Student organizations are expected to:

- Clean up trash, leftover items, decorations, pamphlets, etc. After each event student organizations should ensure the space they used is cleaned.
- If needed, student orgs may contact Physical Plan to get assistance with cleanup and ask for trash cans to be present during events.
- Students and student orgs are expected to conduct themselves according to the SWOSU code of conduct and this resource guide.

Chapter 3 - Student Organization Application

3.1 PROCEDURE

Any group of five or more students with the intention to organize and pursue a common interest may request to be an official student organization. To request recognition from the university to be considered a SWOSU student organization, students must:

Application:

1. Submit a letter of proposal to the Dean of Students listing purposes and objectives of the new organization. A major consideration toward approved organizational membership shall be based upon proof that the proposed organization shall not in any way, at any time, create a substantial disruption of the education process.
2. A letter signed by a full-time Southwestern Oklahoma State University faculty or staff member agreeing to sponsor the proposed organization for one year according to the outlined purposes and objectives mentioned above must be submitted to the Dean of Students. This letter should accompany the letter of proposal.
3. Develop and submit a constitution: A basic outline for the constitution is included at the end of this document. **Two** copies of the organization's constitution must accompany the application.
4. Elect and/or select officers. A roster with names and contact information (student emails) of the officers and members, who are currently enrolled, must accompany the application.
    a. 5 enrolled SWOSU students are required to begin an organization.
5. Submit details of initiation procedures. This applies **only** to Social Fraternities or Sororities.

Evaluation:

6. Consideration is given to the need and objectives of the proposed organization and evaluation as to repetition or conflict with organized groups already sanctioned on campus. Consideration is also based in part upon whether the proposed organization shows evidence of a lasting or continuing nature. This evaluation is conducted by the Office of the Dean of Students.

Approval / Denial:

7. Proposed organizations are required to present their constitution and bylaws to the Dean of Students who will give consideration and approval. (Each developing organization must be chartered by the Student Senate according to its approved constitution.). Final recognition of all student organizations is granted by the Dean of Students. If you have questions about the recognition procedure, contact the Dean of Students (ext. 3767) or the Student Government Association (774-0615).
8. Newly approved organizations are encouraged to work with SGA to become a charted organization through student governance.

3.2 APPEAL

Any organization being denied official recognition may appeal its case to the Student Appeals Board which is composed of three students appointed by the President of the Student Senate and two faculty members appointed by the President of the Faculty Senate. Such notice of appeal should be made in writing within five days of notice of denial and addressed to the Chairman of the Student Appeals Board, c/o Vice President for Student Services, Administration Building,- Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 100 Campus Drive, Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096. Failure to give notice of intent to appeal within three days mentioned above will automatically waive the right of appeal. Any four members of this tribunal shall constitute a quorum for purposes of conducting a hearing. A majority vote of the tribunal is required to over-ride the administrative decision. The decision of the Student Appeals Board is final and the organization will have exhausted its rights of appeal within the institution at this level. Any proposed organization having been denied official recognition by the Student Appeals Board may reapply for recognition after two full semesters have expired, excluding the semester in which application was made.

All recognized student organizations are eligible to use the same services and enjoy the same rights extended to any campus department or agency, and they are expected to operate within University policies and procedures except where exempt by the Office of Civil Rights.

3.3 STUDENT ORGANIZATION SPONSOR

1. **Sponsors:**
    - Sponsors are group consultants – a faculty member or staff chosen by the group to help guide it toward its objectives.
    - To be chosen by a group is regarded as an honor and privilege. In return, the individual in accepting the sponsorship has certain obligations and responsibilities to the group.
    - Student organizations have the discretion to change their Sponsor at the beginning of each academic school year.
2. **Responsibilities of the sponsor:**
    - Attend meetings of the group when needed
    - Help the organization define objectives and goals
    - Serve as a resource person providing, when necessary, information on parliamentary rules, university requirements and regulations and traditions
    - Make recommendations and provide feedback for the organization
    - Approve social events and money-raising events of the organization. Approve purchases and see that no debts are incurred
    - Attend social functions of the organization when needed
    - Provide guidance when conflicts arise
    - Represent SWOSU and the State of Oklahoma in dealing with the organization.
3. **Responsibilities of the organization to the sponsor:**
    - Keep in touch with sponsors and keep them informed
    - Cooperate with them

- Become informed of campus policies and the Student Code of Conduct and follow their guidelines
- Regard sponsors and their spouse or guest as friends when they attend social functions – introduce yourself and your guests

4. **Selecting a sponsor or co-sponsor:**
   Usually, members of the organization are aware of faculty/staff that have shown an interest in the organization and would be willing to serve as a sponsor, if asked. If they accept, notify the Dean of Students office with the name or the change in name of sponsors and ask them to send a brief letter of acceptance for the sponsor's role. Student organizations have the discretion to change their Sponsor at the beginning of each academic, school year.
5. **Sayre organizations:**
   Student organizations that were previously approved as a functioning student organization at SWOSU – Sayre shall be granted official status at SWOSU in the event the organization transitions from Sayre to SWOSU. The Dean of Students will coordinate with SGA review committee in the event Sayre has an org that transitions to the main campus.

Chapter 4- Fraternity & Sorority Programs

4.1 SOCIAL FRATERNITY OR SORORITY

Social Fraternities and Sororities are members of Greek programs at SWOSU. They are held under the same policies and standards as student organizations recognized by the university (except where exempt by the Office of Civil Rights).

Social Fraternities and Sororities are defined by the following criteria:

1) Fraternities and sororities are exclusive organizations. Members of one social fraternity or sorority are restricted from joining other social fraternities or sororities.
2) Fraternities and Sororities are selective of their potential members and may require their participation in Rush and Pledging to determine official membership.
3) Fraternities and Sororities use Greek letters and/or symbols to differentiate their organizations.

4.2 PROFESSIONAL FRATERNITY OR SORORITY

An affirmative answer to any of the following questions is evidence that the organization is professional, service, or honorary in nature and not a social fraternity or sorority for Title IX purposes.

1) Is the organization's membership limited to persons pursuing or having interest in a particular field of study, profession, or academic discipline?
2) Is the membership limited to individuals who have a high level of achievement in scholarship or any other endeavor?
3) Are the members permitted to hold membership in other fraternities or sororities at the same level of education?

4.4 OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS EXPLANATION OF TITLE IX EXEMPTION

Title IX does not apply to the membership practices of a social fraternity or social sorority if the active membership consists primarily of students in attendance at an institution of higher education and the fraternity or sorority is exempt from taxation under the Internal Revenue Code. 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(6)(A); 34 C.F.R. § 106.14(a). All other programs and activities of social fraternities and sororities are governed by Title IX if they receive any Federal financial assistance.

Professional fraternities and sororities and service and honor societies are subject to the requirements of Title IX and may not exclude members on the basis of sex. 34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b)(7). An affirmative answer to any of the following questions is evidence that the organization is professional, service, or honorary in nature and not a social fraternity or sorority for Title IX purposes.

1) Is the organization's membership limited to persons pursuing or having interest in a particular field of study, profession, or academic discipline?

2) Is the membership limited to individuals who have a high level of achievement in scholarship or any other endeavor?
3) Are the members permitted to hold membership in other fraternities or sororities at the same level of education?

4.5 SWOSU GREEK COUNCIL

This council will provide guidance to Greek programs at SWOSU. This council will consist of one representative from each university-recognized Social Fraternity or Sorority. These representatives will be the acting presidents of the Social Fraternities and Sororities, or a designee student within that Greek organization.

The objectives of Greek Council are as follows:

1) Greek Council Rules: Greek Council will annually submit official policies and rules to the Dean of Students office that determine the means, timeline, and expectations by which all Social Fraternities and Sororities will abide when determining Rush & Pledge for new membership. Any changes to Greek Council Rush, Pledge, or meeting rules shall be approved only if two-thirds of the Greek Council representatives approve. No Greek Council rules shall be approved without the consent of the Dean of Students or their designee.
2) Convene Greek Council meetings: Greek Council will determine criteria that outline when and how an official council meeting will be convened. Council meetings will not be convened without notice provided to the Dean of Students 48 hours in advance.
3) Greek week: Greek Council will determine expectations and rules that govern all Social Fraternities and Sororities when conducting Greek week.

The Dean of Students office shall be presented with any proposed changes and will determine final approval for all policies, rules, and expectations set forth by Greek Council.

Any incident which violates the SWOSU code of conduct, university policies or procedures, or federal, state or municipal law may constitute removal of the Fraternity or Sorority from Greek Council and/or removal of official student organization status provided by the university.

4.6 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Greek Council of SWOSU requires all members of SWOSU fraternities and sororities to be responsible for annually instructing their members about this risk management policy.

4.7 ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

1) The possession, use and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages, while on university premises, during an official SWOSU sorority and fraternity event, or in any situation or setting sponsored or endorsed by the chapter, must be in compliance with any and all applicable laws of your state, county, and city.
2) The sale of alcohol, by any SWOSU sorority and fraternity is prohibited. This prohibition includes any action that is a functional substitute for the sale of alcohol such as: charging for admission to parties, passing the hat, selling empty cups, or selling drink tickets.

3) Alcoholic beverages may not be purchased with SWOSU sorority and fraternity funds. Nor, may the purchase of alcoholic beverages be undertaken or coordinated by any member in the name of or on behalf of the chapter.
4) SWOSU sorority and fraternity events may not involve the use of bulk quantities of alcohol, kegs of beer or any common source container of alcohol. All alcoholic beverages consumed at SWOSU sorority and fraternity functions must be purchased and brought by the individuals attending the function or through a cash bar operated by a licensed establishment where the function is held. Any legal use of alcohol should not involve unlimited quantities, the encouragement of rapid consumption, drinking games, or the direct or indirect pressuring of any person to consume alcohol.
5) No SWOSU sorority and fraternity shall sponsor open parties, meaning those with unrestricted access and without specific invitation, where alcohol is present.
6) All recruitment activities shall be dry; that is without the use of alcoholic beverages.
7) No alcohol may be present at any associate (non-initiated) member activity.
8) No SWOSU sorority and fraternity may co-sponsor, co-promote, or co-finance an event with a bar, tavern, distributor of alcohol, charitable organization, or student organization where alcohol is sold, given away or otherwise provided.

9) The possession, sale and/or use of any illegal drug or controlled substance at any SWOSU sorority and fraternity sponsored event is prohibited.

4.8 HAZING

SWOSU student organizations must uphold Oklahoma Statute - Section 1190 of Title 21. No SWOSU sorority and fraternity, colony, collegiate member or alumni member can conduct or condone hazing. Hazing activities are defined as: "Any activity taken or situation created, intentionally, whether on or off campus premises, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, or ridicule. Such activities may include but are not limited to the following: use of alcohol; paddling in any form; creation of excessive fatigue; physical and psychological shocks; quests, treasure hunts, road trips or any other such activities; wearing of apparel that is conspicuous and not normally in good taste, engaging in stunts and buffoonery, morally degrading or humiliating games and activities, and any other activities that are not consistent with academic achievement, fraternal law, ritual or policy or the regulations and policies of the educational institution or applicable state law."

4.9 SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

The SWOSU sororities and fraternities do not condone any form of sexually abusive behavior on the part of its members, whether physical, mental, or emotional. This includes any actions that are demeaning to any person including but not limited to date rape, gang rape or verbal or written harassment.

4.10 FIRE AND SAFETY

No SWOSU sorority and fraternity may be housed in or use the services of a structure that does not meet minimum fire and safety requirements of local civil authorities.

Chapter 5 - Student Organization Conduct

5.1 VALUES

Student organizations are expected to align their organization with the values and mission of the Division of Student Affairs at SWOSU:

- Safety – We want each student to know the SWOSU campus as a place of safety and to feel safe in all interactions with fellow students and employees.
- Healthy Environment – We strive to provide an environment that enables students to sustain and strengthen their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- Diversity – We believe that our world is a place rich in diversity. SWOSU exists in the midst of this variety. We seek to increase awareness and appreciation of diversity and to heighten respect for the value of each human life.
- Collaboration – We will work together as a team for the benefit of students.
- Commitment to SWOSU – We believe that SWOSU is a valuable institution of higher education and seek to increase each student's appreciation of the University.

5.2 STUDENT ORGANIZATION DISCIPLINE POLICY

To uphold the expectation that student organizations align with SWOSU's mission and values, any incident involving a student organization which violates the SWOSU code of conduct, university policies or procedures, or federal, state or municipal law may result in the sanctioning of an organization. Sanctioning may include financial or service reparations, student organization probation, temporary removal of an organization's official status, the permanent removal of an organization's official status, and/or another sanction determined by the Dean of Students.

For events hosted by 5 or more members from an organization (regardless if the event is intended to be hosted by an organization), the student organization may be considered the responsible party for the conduct violation.

Failure to complete assigned sanctions by an organization within the timeline assigned by the Dean of Students may result in the removal of an organization's university official status.

Student Organizations are afforded an appeals process outlined in the SWOSU Student Handbook.

5.3 STUDENT ORGANIZATION DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

Student Organizations will be afforded a conduct process as outlined in the SWOSU Student Handbook when determining responsibility and sanctioning. The Dean of Students, or another university staff person designated by the Dean of Students, will be responsible for conduct investigations and assigning sanctions or reparations to an organization when they are held responsible for misconduct.

Reports of Student Organization misconduct should be submitted to the Dean of Students office.

Chapter 6 - Resources

These resources provide guidance and support to student organizations when organizing, coordinating, and developing into an effective organization. Any student organization seeking assistance with their development should look to their faculty/staff sponsor for help and guidance.

Leading Your Group

No doubt your peers selected you as their leader for many reasons – your past success at completing group tasks, ability to persuade effectively, sound judgment, enthusiasm and commitment to group goals and ability to make people feel good about themselves when you work with them. These skills will definitely be very valuable to you in your leadership role.
However, when you accepted the position of president you agreed to a very subtle change in your responsibility to the group –you are now responsible for seeing that the work gets done, not for doing it yourself. That may not sound like much of a change, but it is. As president, you can no longer afford the luxury of involving yourself in every activity, as you may have done in the past. Trying to do so can cause problems for you and your group, and you may even find that the behavior that earned you the respect of your peers when you were co-workers will not earn you their support now that you are their president. More than one organization president has resigned in frustration at not being able to cope with this change in responsibility.

So—if a leader isn't supposed to do the work, what is a leader supposed to do? Well, leaders inspire. That's tougher than it sounds. In organizations, leadership is recognized as the process of inspiring individual contributions toward a common goal. As your group's leader, you are in the unique position of having access to information and resources necessary to see THE BIG PICTURE. This makes it easier for you to plan work in ways that will keep the group headed toward achievement of its goals. Specifically, you may find yourself:

- Supervising officers in delegated tasks;
- Maintaining reward systems for members;
- Giving personal feedback to members;
- Educating or training workers;
- Developing next year's leaders;
- Assessing the moods of group members;
- Facilitating a group working toward its goals;
- Identifying work that needs to be done; and
- Delegating responsibilities.

In the following sections of this manual we will continue to explore the responsibilities of leadership. We have included those things we feel will be most beneficial in helping you to become a successful leader, no matter how you define the term. We hope that you will read it, use it and grow with it. People have entrusted you with a responsibility, and we believe that you will meet it and deal with it wisely.

Leading an Effective Meeting

Organization meetings are very important, for it is there that you, as chairperson, can generate enthusiasm—which will have a positive effect on motivation—or let apathy reign. Your group's success or failure may rest in the way its meetings are conducted. The following suggestions can help you structure your meeting so that they will be more effective. They are divided into two sections: General Meeting Rules and Developing the Agenda.

I. General Meeting Rules

A. **Begin on time.** Do not reinforce latecomers by waiting for them.

B. **Create a warm, friendly atmosphere** so members feel free to express themselves. (Refreshments are often good ice breakers).

C. **Use visible and readable name tags** if members are not well acquainted with each other.

D. To begin, **summarize briefly** the content and important accomplishments of the **last meeting. State goals for the present meeting.** Be realistic.

E. **Keep all members involved.** Do not carry on a long dialogue with one member. This is the quickest way, next to lecturing, to alienate the rest of the members.

F. **If questions are asked, direct them back to the group.** Ask experienced or creative members to respond and seek input from new members. Do not be the focal point of the meeting. Instead, encourage interaction among the members.

G. **Keep the meeting organized.** Do not let members drift to irrelevant topics, and do not be afraid to ask members to stop carrying on private conversations.

H. **Limit time on topics** if they begin to consume a lot of time. You, as a chairperson, can state that you will allow three more minutes of discussion, and then you will call for a vote.

I. **Use a blackboard** on which to write comments and ideas of members (or take notes). This legitimizes their comments and stimulates further thought. People enjoy seeing their comments in print.

J. **Make members feel that they are solving the problem at hand.** You serve as guide, but let the group decide which direction to take at a "fork in the road."

K. **Delegate responsibilities.**

L. **Keep your meetings short—a maximum of 60 minutes!** Members are more willing to attend if they know when the meeting will be over. So it's important to keep within the 60 minute allotment.

M. In closing the meeting, **summarize important decisions** and make sure all assignments are clear. **Ask for agenda items for next time, and set date, time, and place of the next meeting.**

II. Developing the Agenda

Agendas should be distributed prior to or at the beginning of meetings. Agendas serve as meeting reminders and give members a little advance notice to collect their thoughts

and materials for the meeting. Members also will realize that they will be called upon from week to week to verbally update their assigned areas. This should encourage each member to attend every meeting.

When developing the agenda, include:

- Items from members,
- Items from the last meeting, and
- Items from officers.

It is your responsibility to analyze and place the items in sequence.

Remember, the greater the spirit, morale and interest of your group, the greater participation you will have from the members. So, **make your meeting fun!**

Team Building

It is important that organizations know how to work together. Teamwork does not happen by accident; it takes practice and deliberate effort. Team building is the process of improving the interactions among group members, so the organization as a whole functions more effectively. The major aim of team building is to improve the problem-solving abilities of team members. Successful team building efforts will reduce interpersonal roadblocks, improve group cohesiveness, nurture individual potential and promote support and trust among team members. The higher level of respect that group members gain for one another will help the group achieve its goal.

Team building can take the form of either work or play. What is important is that you can find a task, an activity or an event in which all members of the group can become involved. Since team building is done best early in the group's development, you might consider an intramural competition, a homecoming contest or some other competitive endeavor that will get group members pulling in the same direction. A retreat in the fall, to work on group goals or relationships, can have the same effect. In general, if your group's members enjoy being with each other, you are in a good position to encourage them to develop goals; as a group, that will further the purpose of your organization.

As a leader you are an integral part of the organization. Don't stand on the sidelines while your group is forming. Let members get to know you and understand your goals for the organization. Your role during the team building phase is similar to that of a host during a party: See that everyone feels welcome, and that they are all participating and having a good time!

While team building is essential to newly formed groups or an organization with a large number of new members, there are other times it can be effective as well. You might find it helpful to use team building techniques when:

- Members seem bored or irritable;
- Members appear to be going off in different directions or drifting away from the group;
- There is a great deal of conflict or "infighting";
- Members have been apart for a while, i.e., breaks, vacations, etc.;
- You want to take a break from the normal routine or boost team spirit.

- *Advertising*

The more creative you can be, the more successful you will be.

A. Make sure all advertisements contain:

1. Time (a.m. /p.m.), date, day and location of event
2. Cost
3. Who's sponsoring
4. Any special information about your event

B. Be sure to follow the campus policy on posting

C. Types of publicity stunts you might consider:

1. Handbills
2. Teasers (i.e., little cards, one work ads)
3. Buttons
4. Footprints
5. Doorknob hangers
6. Writing on chalkboard
7. Bumper stickers
8. Jigsaw puzzles (build it piece by piece)
9. Bookmarks
10. Jean pocket patches

Sample Constitution for Student Organizations

Article I

Name of Organization: The name of this organization shall be…

Article II

Purpose: The purpose of this organization shall be to…

(Comment: This article should provide a concise statement of the purpose and/or objectives of the organization.)

Article III

Officers:

Section 1. The officers of this organization shall be…

(Comment: Normally, an organization will have a president, vice-president(s), secretary, and treasurer. Other titles, however, may be more appropriate for your organization.)

Section 2. The qualifications for officers in this organization shall be…

(Comment: To be an officer in a student organization, a member should be in good standing in the organization, a full-time student at Southwestern Oklahoma State University and have at least a 2.0 grade point average. The minimum grade point average may be established at a higher level if that is more appropriate.)

Section 3. The duties of the officers shall be…

(Comment: This section should specifically enumerate each office of the organization and the duties of the office.)

Section 4. The elections of this organization…

(Comment: This section shall include all relevant information about elections: when and how often elections will be held (annually or semi-annually, time of the year, etc.). Also included shall be the terms of office and the method whereby vacancies will be filled)

Section 5. Faculty Advisor…

(Comment: This section should stipulate such information as to how the faculty advisor is to be selected, the length of time a faculty advisor is to serve and the area from which a faculty advisor is to be selected, if such is appropriate. Also included should be the duties of the faculty advisor, such as meeting with and advising the organization, signing vouchers and other duties as are appropriate for the group. The faculty advisor must be a full-time faculty or staff member at SWOSU and must have the approval of his department and the dean.)

Section 6. Other organization officers and committee members…

(Comment: This section should include any other material which relates to other officers and/or committee chairpersons, such as their responsibilities, method of selection and term of office.)

Article IV

Quorum: A quorum for this organization shall be…

(Comment: Usually, a quorum will be established as a percentage of the total membership although this is not a necessity. An organization should consider a method whereby a sufficient number of members are present at meetings to conduct business while not allowing the group to be run by a small number of individuals.)

Article V

Membership:

(Comment: This article should delineate those persons who would be eligible for membership, such as grade point average, major subject or field of interest, experience or skill and other requirements. Southwestern Oklahoma State University does not permit the exclusion of membership to any person on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin or sex. Some organizations utilize the term "in good standing" to indicate membership status. If such is the case, it's necessary to define what constitutes a member being in "good standing" with the organization. Organizations which find it necessary to cite procedures for the removal of any member or official should exercise great care in drafting such procedures to ensure that the member's right to due process and appeal are protected.)

Article VI

Dues:

(Comment: This article should include the details as to the amount of dues, how and when these shall be paid, and delinquencies, penalties for nonpayment, reinstatement procedures and method to expend moneys. No organization is required to charge dues. The amount of dues may be included in the by-laws rather than in this section if desired.)

Article VII

By-laws: A by-law may be passed at any regular business meeting of the organization by a majority vote of those in attendance provided a quorum is present.

(Comment: If a group has the need to draft by-laws and these are not adopted at the same time as is the constitution, provision for such should be included in the constitution. Generally speaking, by-laws are the details of an organization that are not defined and specified by the constitution.)