560 Student Organization Registration and Recognition

Approved by President

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Sidney A. McPhee, President

Effective Date: _______, 2021
Responsible Division: Student Affairs
Responsible Office: Dean of Students’ Office
Responsible Officer: Dean of Students through University Discipline and Rules Committee

I. Purpose

This policy sets forth the procedures for the registration and conduct of student organizations at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU or University).

II. Categories of Student Organizations

Student organizations are voluntary associations of MTSU students, which are legally separate entities from the University. Student organizations are student-initiated and student-run. Student organizations registered with the University through the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership may have access to certain University-controlled benefits and resources, such as facilities use and funding eligibility. Varying opportunities and mandates exist depending on the type of registered student organization.

Student organizations are either organizations sponsored by MTSU (such as student government associations, associated student body organizations, and professional and honor societies) or organizations officially registered by MTSU. Organizations that may be registered to operate on campus include the following:

A. honors and leadership organizations and recognition societies;
B. departmental organizations and professional fraternities and sororities;
C. social fraternities and sororities;
D. special interest groups (political, religious, etc.); and
E. sports clubs (competes against sports clubs at other colleges and universities).
Registration of a student organization by MTSU does not constitute and should not be construed as approval or endorsement by MTSU of the purposes or objectives of the organization. MTSU is not responsible for injuries or damages to persons or property resulting from the activities of student organizations, or for any debts or liabilities incurred by such organizations.

III. Criteria for Registration

At MTSU, voluntary associations of students are an important part of the educational process. The University has a positive responsibility to encourage such associations as a means by which students can learn and develop outside the classroom. In doing so, it neither endorses nor disclaims any particular idea, system of thought, or point of view.

When groups of students wish to have a continuous association causing them to congregate for activities on the campus, requiring from time to time the use of University facilities and holding themselves out to the general public as a group centered on the campus, it is required that they be registered as a student organization by the University. All registered associations shall be accorded the same privileges and bound by the same obligations. Registration by the University does not constitute endorsement of the purposes or activities of an association by the faculty, administration, or student body.

A. Any proposed student organization shall be open to all students of MTSU who otherwise meet membership requirements. Membership in the organization shall be limited to currently enrolled students of MTSU, provided that organizations may include faculty and staff of MTSU.

Except as provided below, no student organization shall deny membership to any person on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, ethic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability status, age, or status as a covered veteran:

1. Social fraternities and sororities may have sex restricted membership.

2. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-7-156(b), a religious student organization may determine that the organization’s religious mission requires that only persons professing the faith of the group and comporting themselves in conformity with it qualify to serve as members or leaders of the group.

A registered student organization may restrict membership based on the provisions of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

The language in this section must appear verbatim in organization constitutions.
B. A proposed organization must represent the interests of the members and the control of the organization must be within the local campus group. Said purpose must include aims and activities legal under local, state, and federal law, and this statement of purpose must be in conformity with written University regulations. It is required that the actual purpose of a student organization conforms with the purposes stated within the organization’s constitution.

C. The proposed organization must agree to comply with all policies, rules, and procedures established by MTSU and with all federal and state laws and regulations. Registration and annual renewal procedures are outlined in the Student Organization Handbook.

D. The proposed organization must not:

1. have illegal aims and goals;

2. propose activities that would violate policies, standards, rules, or procedures of MTSU, or federal or state laws and regulations, or materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of MTSU; or

3. advocate incitement of imminent lawless action in a manner that is likely to produce such action.

E. The proposed organization must have a minimum of five (5) charter members designated by MTSU and there must be a demonstration of continuous interest in the purposes of the organization sufficient to afford registration on a long-term basis. In the event there is not sufficient interest to warrant long-term registration, MTSU may grant temporary registration to an organization for a limited period of time.

F. New organizations may be denied registration where the purposes are within the scope of a currently registered organization. No organization may use the same name, or a name that is misleading and similar to the name, of a currently registered organization.

G. Student organizations are vicariously responsible and liable for the conduct and actions of each member of the organization while acting in the capacity of a member or while attending or participating in any activity or the organization.

H. No person, group, or organization may use the name of MTSU in any manner, provided that registered student organizations may use the name of MTSU following the name of the organization. No person, group, or organization may use the seal or any symbol of MTSU without the prior written approval of the President or designee.

I. The organization must provide for the distribution of all funds and assets in the event of dissolution.
IV. Officers of Student Organizations

No student who is under academic or disciplinary suspension from MTSU shall be eligible to become, or maintain the status of, an officer of an organization. Faculty and staff who are not enrolled MTSU students cannot serve as officers.

V. Probation, Suspension, and Withdrawal of Registration

A. An organization may be placed on probation, be temporarily interim suspended, be suspended for a specific period of time, or have its registration withdrawn for any of the following reasons:

1. fails to maintain compliance with the initial requirements for registration;

2. ceases to operate as an active organization;

3. requests withdrawal of registration;

4. operates or engages in any activity in violation of policies, standards, or rules of MTSU, or federal or state laws;

5. fails to submit any required reports; or

6. organization and/or any individuals or entities affiliated with the organization including, but not limited to, national organizations, housing corporations, or other entities acting in concert with or on behalf of a student organization, fails to satisfy any financial obligations to the University.

B. An organization that is placed on probation may continue to hold meetings but may not sponsor any activity or program. An organization that is interim suspended or suspended may not engage in or sponsor any activity or program and may not hold meetings. Any organization that engages in operations in violation of this provision is subject to additional sanctions, up to and including withdrawal of registration. Where registration of an organization is withdrawn, it shall cease to exist as an organization.

C. In the event an organization is placed on probation, interim suspended, or suspended, or registration is withdrawn pursuant to this section, the organization shall be afforded the opportunity for a hearing in the manner set forth in Policy 540 Student Conduct.

D. No organization which has been interim suspended, suspended, or its registration withdrawn pursuant to this section shall be reinstated or registered with the University unless the following criteria have been met:
1. The student organization has complied with all conditions and requirements imposed by this policy and the disciplinary decision that resulted in the organization’s interim suspension, suspension, or withdrawal of registration;

2. The student organization has remedied the violation that led to the interim suspension, suspension, or withdrawal of registration and put a written plan in place, which has been approved by the Vice President for Student Affairs, to prevent the reoccurrence of the event that led to the interim suspension, suspension, or withdrawal of registration; and

3. The student organization and any individuals or entities affiliated with the student organization including, but not limited to, national organizations, housing corporations, or other entities acting in concert with or on behalf of the organization, have satisfied all outstanding financial obligations to the University.

VI. Advisor Requirements

Each organization shall be free to choose its faculty or staff advisor who, by accepting appointment, agrees to maintain contact with the organization so as to be familiar with its programs and personnel. The advisor shall be responsible for advising the organization as to its programs and personnel, having in mind not only the objectives of the particular group, but also the best interests of the University.

A. Approved Advisors. An approved advisor shall be one (1) or more of the following:

1. An MTSU employee with the rank of instructor or above;

2. An MTSU employee engaged in research duties, holding the equivalent rank of instructor or above;

3. An MTSU full-time administrator employed in an administrative unit of the University;

4. a director of a religious organization;

5. a chapter advisor of a social fraternity or sorority appointed by the national organization of that particular group; or

6. if the advisor appointed does not meet one of the criteria listed above, an additional advisor must be appointed to meet said requirement.

B. An advisor must be knowledgeable of the financial activities of the organization in the following areas:
1. Sound accounting protocol and money management;

2. University policies as they relate to fundraising;

3. University policies as they relate to funds disbursement; and

4. University policies as they relate to student activity fees including the application and reimbursement processes.

C. The advisor must assist with the financial duties associated with the organization by:

1. counseling and assisting officers;

2. reviewing financial statements and accounts;

3. assisting with the organization’s processes designed for safeguarding funds; and

4. review and confirm the legitimacy of all receipts submitted to the University for reimbursement.

For additional advisor requirements visit the Student Organization Handbook.

VII. Fiscal Procedures

A. Each organization shall maintain a sound financial system related to the collection and disbursement of funds in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. An organization may be subject to audit by representatives of MTSU at any time and appropriate financial records shall be maintained for the purposes of audit. A sound financial system includes, at a minimum, the preparation of an annual financial report reflecting all revenues received and all disbursements made by the organization and financial reports identifying all fundraising activities of the organization.

B. Each organization shall designate an officer of the organization who is responsible for the collection and disbursement of funds and the maintenance of books and records and preparation of financial reports.

C. Financial reporting is required annually during re-registration for each organization.

D. The Director of Student Organizations and Service and/or Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs may require an organization to submit interim financial reports and supporting financial records.

VIII. Nondiscrimination
MTSU will not discriminate against or deny recognition to any student organization, or deny to a student organization access to programs, funding, or facilities otherwise available to another student organization, on the basis of any protected category set forth in Policy 25 Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Nondiscrimination, or on the basis of the protected speech of the organization. In addition, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-7-156, MTSU will not discriminate against a religious student organization on the basis of the organization’s exercise of its rights as stated in this policy.

Forms: none.

Revisions: June 5, 2017 (original); __________, 2021.

Last Reviewed: _____ 2021.

References: T.C.A. § 49-7-156; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Policies 25 Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Nondiscrimination; 540 Student Conduct.