



**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**  
Office of Student Engagement

# RSO Advisor Guide

Western Michigan University

2024–2025 Edition

**GENERAL DISCLAIMER:**

Reasonable changes may be made to this document as needed, without notice.

Information about any changes will be made available to RSO Advisors.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **General Information**

- [Mission Statement](#)

## **Campus Resources**

- [Counseling, Health, and Safety](#)
- [Academics and Career](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Multiculturalism](#)

## **Terminology and Acronyms**

## **Advisor Roles and Responsibilities**

- [Advisor Responsibilities to the RSO](#)
- [RSO Responsibilities to the Advisor](#)
- [Roles and Advising Styles](#)
- [Reminders for Effective Advising](#)
- [Advising Through RSO Transitions](#)

## **Risk Management**

- [Financial Risk Management](#)
- [Personal Risk Management](#)
- [Physical and Emotional Risk Management](#)
- [Assumption of Risk Form](#)

## **Policies and Procedures**

- [RSO Registration and Re-Registration](#)
- [RSO Advisor Online Training Modules](#)

## **Advisor Paperwork and Forms**

- [RSO Advisor Expectations Form](#)
- [RSO Advisor Letter of Intent](#)
- [Advisor Evaluation Form](#)
- [Advisor Complaint Form](#)

# OFFICE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (OSE) INFORMATION

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Student Engagement exists to engage campus, empower students and develop leaders.

## PROFESSIONAL STAFF

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## OFFICE SPACES

### Office of Student Engagement (OSE) Main Office

1070 Arcadia Loop

Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5356

Phone: 269-387-2115

Fax: 269-387-2185

Website: [wmich.edu/studentengagement](http://wmich.edu/studentengagement)

### Student Organization Center (SOC)

WMU Student Center

### Faith and Spiritual Development

Office of Student Engagement

Phone: 269-387-2119

Website: [wmich.edu/studentengagement/kanley/about](http://wmich.edu/studentengagement/kanley/about)

**Student Center** – A vibrant community center for campus life. Students and community members can visit the Student Center to eat, buy textbooks, use the computer lab, attend RSO meetings, and more.

Phone: 269-387-4860

Website: <https://wmich.edu/studentcenter>

**Division of Student Affairs (DOSA)** – Envelops all areas of student services (residential life, student conduct, student activities, recreational sports, wellness, career development, counseling and testing services, multicultural affairs, campus police, Student Center, etc.)

Website: <https://wmich.edu/studentaffairs>

# CAMPUS RESOURCES

Students may turn to you as an advisor to ask about campus resources or ask you personally for resources you do not have the capacity to provide. Feel free to direct your students to the campus resources listed below. As always, the Office of Student Engagement (listed above) is available to respond to any RSO-related questions or concerns. Remember: you do not need to know every piece of RSO-related information to be a great advisor, but you should know how to find necessary information and how to point students in the right direction.

## ExperienceWMU Website

Please know that the ExperienceWMU website does not function properly within the Safari search engines that operate within Mac Books

## COUNSELING, HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Sindecuse Health Center Counseling Services** – Professional counseling services for Western Michigan University students.

[wmich.edu/healthcenter](https://wmich.edu/healthcenter)

**Counseling and Testing Center** – Professionals are available for students to speak with confidentially about various personal issues such as substance abuse, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, stress, burnout, etc.

<https://wmich.edu/healthcenter/counseling>

**YOU at Western** – Personalized web portal connecting students to online tools and campus resources to help support their personal goals. Promotes self-reflection, allowing students to be more proactive with their health and well-being in order to make the most of their college experience. <https://wmich.edu/you>

**WellTrack Self-help App** – Free online self-help resource available to all WMU students, faculty and staff. WellTrack users are able to assess their personal well-being and access resources tailored to address symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression.

<https://wmich.edu/healthcenter/counseling/useful-apps/welltrack>

**Invisible Need Project** – Working to serve WMU students with unmet needs including food, menstrual products and emergency funds. <https://wmich.edu/invisibleneed>

**WMU Department of Public Safety (DPS)** – Focuses on four main areas: police, parking services, environmental health and safety, and security administration. [wmudps.wmich.edu](https://wmudps.wmich.edu)

## Uwill

Uwill offers free access to teletherapy that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year to all enrolled WMU students, regardless of their location.

All students have access to 30-minute sessions. After three initial appointments, students can access two additional sessions. WMU mental health staff will then work with students to explore options going forward given the spectrum of support on campus.

In addition to those resources, Uwill offers unlimited 24/7 year-round access to a crisis hotline by calling (833) 646-1526.

Please find more information regarding Uwill by following this link (<https://wmich.edu/students/health/uwill>)

## LET'S TALK

Thinking about a question or concern that would benefit from a brief consultation with a counselor? Curious about counseling and want to find out more about it? Interested in discussing available resources and referrals? Would like to learn coping strategies for reducing distress and increasing wellbeing?

If any of the above applies, Counseling Services has a program just for you! Let's Talk is a drop-in service offering students a chance to connect for a brief, confidential conversation with a [professional counselor](#) to receive consultation, support, advice, and/or referrals.

Let's Talk is held in several locations throughout campus. Registered WMU students are welcome at any Let's Talk Location. Let's Talk consultations are:

- Free
- Confidential
- Drop in: No appointment necessary

## Aira access in WMU

We are pleased to announce that Aira is now available for use at Western Michigan University! Aira is an application designed to provide visual interpreting assistance to empower individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Aira operates as a 24/7 on-demand platform that can be accessed through a smartphone's camera, where highly skilled assistants are available to provide support with navigation, participation in events, emergency assistance, and more. Aira is offered at no cost to users across all Western Michigan University campuses. This application is compatible with both iOS and Android smartphones. After completing the sign-up process for Aira while on campus, you will be granted complimentary access.

Follow this link to download the Aira app for iOS or Android:

<https://aira.io/aira-app/>

## ACADEMICS AND CAREER

**Academic Resource Center** – Enhances teaching and learning by enabling a diverse student population to maximize their potential for academic success and excel throughout their experiences at Western Michigan University and beyond.

<https://wmich.edu/student-services/academic-support>

**Career and Student Employment Services** – Students' home base for exploring career options, building a standout resume, job searching, interviewing, negotiating and finding internships. <https://wmich.edu/career>

**Registrar's Office** – This department manages the process for and maintenance of official student transcripts.

<https://wmich.edu/registrar>

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND MULTICULTURALISM

**Office of Diversity and Inclusion** – "Provides leadership in creating systemic change at Western Michigan University to ensure equitable access, resources and success of all members of the campus community." <https://wmich.edu/diversity>

**Multicultural Center** – Provides the WMU student population with spaces for study, meetings, projects and conversation. Also provides information on diversity, ethnic and cultural issues through speakers, events, exhibits, and displays scheduled by University groups and organizations. <https://wmich.edu/diversity/center>

**Multicultural Affairs for Students** – Helps students identify their unique purpose and potential by providing opportunities to discover and develop their talents and interests. Fosters community involvement and promotes a campus climate that respects and appreciates the history, culture and traditions of all students. <https://wmich.edu/multicultural>

**Disability Services for Students (DSS)** – The mission of DSS at WMU is to make education accessible. DSS advocates for every student to be provided with the appropriate tools to allow them the opportunity to reach their goals.

<https://wmich.edu/disabilityservices>

**LGBT Student Services** – Ensures equitable access for all at Western Michigan University and promotes a campus climate that affirms and supports the academic and personal development of all students regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. <https://wmich.edu/lgbt>

**International Admissions and Services** – This office provides informational, academic, and other resources to Western Michigan University's international students. <https://wmich.edu/internationaladmissions>

## **FLIER DESIGN ASSISTANCE**

At Western Michigan University, there are resources for creating fliers and promotional materials for student organizations registered with The Office of Student Engagement.

The Graphic Design Center at Western Michigan University is available to assist RSOs in making fliers and promotional materials for their upcoming events.

The requirements for requests are as follows:

- The student organization must be registered with The Office of Student Engagement for the current academic year
- This opportunity is free of charge. The RSO is responsible for any printing costs.
- This opportunity is available from September to April
- Requests must be given at least four weeks in advance of when the project needs to be complete.
- Individuals are encouraged to have an idea of what they want their design to look like, however, they should not depict the full concept to allow for the creative freedom of the artists.
- Some examples of items that can be created are fliers, wayfinding signage, infographics, or posters

Registered Student Organizations that meet these requirements can contact Nicholas Kuder by email ([nicholas.kuder@wmich.edu](mailto:nicholas.kuder@wmich.edu)) to initiate the project.

### **Request Template**

**Subject:** Project Request for Graphic Design and Design Center

**Title of Project/Event:**

**Type of design requested:**

**Purpose:**

**Information to Include:**

**Deadline for Project:**

**Size:**

**For Additional Information:**

# TERMINOLOGY & ACRONYMS

## A

*Allocations* – Refers to funds available to Registered Student Organizations through Western’s financial organizational branches. See ‘WSA,’ ‘GSA,’ or ‘CAB’ for further information.

## B

*Bronco Bash* – Sometimes referred to as ‘Bash,’ this is an annual event organized and executed by the Office of Student Engagement. Registered Student Organizations can rent a free booth to recruit new students and can volunteer to assist with the event. This is an excellent opportunity for an RSO to engage with Western’s campus community, the greater Kalamazoo community, and beyond.

## C

*CAB* – Campus Activities Board. Plans many campus-wide activities, including concerts, guest speakers, CABand more. CAB is also available to collaborate with RSOs for events in terms of staffing, funding, and logistics. Visit <https://www.wmucab.com/> for more information.

*Constitution* – A club or organization cannot register with WMU unless they have created a constitution. Constitution outlines, guidelines, and requirements can be found in the RSO Handbook.

## F

*FSL* – Fraternity and Sorority Life. Everything related to Greek Life on campus falls under this umbrella.

## G

*GA* – Graduate Assistant. The Office of Student Engagement employs several Graduate Assistants to lead events, office initiatives, and daily operations (listed on p. 3).

*GSA* – Graduate Student Association. If you advise an RSO composed entirely of Graduate Students, the organization is eligible for funding through this allocating body. Visit <https://wmich.edu/gsa> for more information.

## H

*Homecoming* – During the week leading up to Western’s last home football game, RSOs can sign up to participate in games/activities and win prizes. RSOs can also nominate one of their members to run for Homecoming Court and win a \$500 scholarship.

## O

*Online RSO Orientation* – RSOs cannot apply for funding or reserve rooms on campus until their financial officer has completed Online RSO Orientation. The modules can be found in the ‘Forms’ section of ExperienceWMU.

*OSE* - Office of Student Engagement – Located on the third floor of the new student center, this office is the one-stop shop for campus events/activities, RSOs, and students looking to get more involved with their campus community. The OSE is an excellent place to start if your RSO has any questions about policies, procedures, and more.

## P

*PNC Bank (on campus)* – Located on the ground floor of the Student Center near Textbook Alley, this bank is commonly used by RSOs to maintain off-campus bank accounts. Though the bank is technically located on campus, because PNC is not affiliated with Western Michigan University, RSOs may open off-campus bank accounts here.

## R

*Registration/Re-Registration* – Each calendar year, RSOs must complete this process to officially register with the University via ExperienceWMU. A club or organization will not be officially recognized as an RSO and cannot receive University funding unless they have registered. Best practice is to re-register existing organizations between Spring Break and finals, but new organizations can begin the registration process at any time. More information about registration can be found in the 2023-2024 RSO Handbook and we encourage students to ask questions ASAP to ensure proper understanding of what is needed.

*RSO* – Registered Student Organization. Student organization successfully registered via all processes and procedures designated by the Office of Student Engagement.

## **S**

**SAF** – Student Assessment Fee. A fee of \$21.00 per semester (Fall and Spring) and \$10.50 per session (Summer I and Summer II) collected from all undergraduate and graduate students at the time of registration. This assessment is for the support of student organizations and agencies.

**SOC** – Student Organization Center. This building, located on the first floor of the Student Center, is the campus hub for student organizations. It includes office/desk spaces (for RSOs to request annually) and a conference room, available as a meeting space for all RSOs

**SC** – Student Center. A centralized location for anything and everything related to campus activities. Includes the Office of Student Engagement, the Student Organization Center, and more. (New Student Center opening August 2023).

**Sustainability Grants** – Western Michigan University offers sustainability grants to Registered Student Organizations whose event/initiative encourages sustainability on campus. Visit <https://wmich.edu/sustainability/grants> for more information

## **W**

**WSA** – Western Student Association. This organization allocates funding to Registered Student Organizations. Visit <https://wmuwsa.org/> for more information.

# ADVISOR ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

RSO advisors are important not only because they are role models for students, but also because their involvement in the organization itself provides learning experiences that are transferable to situations beyond college. In order to assist the advisor and the RSO in understanding the roles of an effective advisor, the Office of Student Engagement offers the following list of responsibilities:

## ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE RSO:

1. Serve at the discretion of the organization.
2. Assist officers in understanding their duties, administering programs and plans, organizing projects, and making appropriate transitions.
3. Preserve the continuity of the organization through the constitution, traditions, files, and minutes.
4. Encourage the use of procedures to ensure that the meetings run in an efficient, orderly and consistent manner.
5. Encourage students to understand and apply democratic principles, including the recognition of diverse opinions and rights.
6. Attend as many organization meetings and events as possible.
7. Articulate campus policies and procedures and help with understanding WMU standards when necessary.
8. Support officers and be available for evaluation of ideas.
9. Facilitate discussions among officers and between officers and members.
10. Be familiar with national structure and services if relevant.
11. Assist with specific University services, for example, obtaining an organization account or obtaining facilities.
12. Consult on programs.
13. Advise individual students when necessary.
14. Assist the organization as needed.
15. Provide historical context of RSO to new leadership/information necessary for leadership transitions

## RSO RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE ADVISOR:

1. Notify the advisor of all meetings and events.
2. Confer with the advisor on plans, projects and events.
3. Consult with the advisor before making structure or policy changes.
4. Understand that although the advisor has no vote, they should have speaking privileges.
5. Remember the responsibility for the success or failure of group projects rests ultimately with the group, not the advisor.
6. Acknowledge the advisor's time and energy and express appropriate appreciation.
7. State clearly and openly the expectations of the advisor.
8. Evaluate the advisor and periodically give appropriate feedback.

Source: Reinhardy, G. Training organization advisors. Student Activities Programming, 1981, 14(1), 39-41. Appendix A.

## ROLES AND ADVISING STYLES

There are four common roles advisors can have and each one has implications for student learning. Please keep in mind these are nuanced and can be practiced as more of a moving fulcrum. Sometimes you may need to be a director, while still sliding between the other roles.

### DIRECTOR

- Specific instructions—Students told exactly what to do
- Activities heavily facilitated
- Largely responsible for the vision of the RSO
- Results in low student learning

This advising style is most effective for a newly formed RSO, consisting of students who are unfamiliar with University/OSE processes. As students begin their initial forays into leadership, they may require a more hands-on approach. Once your students begin to understand how to run their organization, it may be beneficial to transition into a more laid-back advising format.

## COACH

- Continue to decide tasks and monitors them, but students execute
- Explain reasoning behind decisions and organizational procedures
- Students are part of RSOs progress and encourage it
- Results in low–medium student learning

Once a new or renewed RSO is up and running, students will begin to express interest in taking on more tasks or handling processes on their own. They may not be ready to take on a full leadership mantle, but they are ready to see how leadership works and take a peek ‘behind the scenes.’ Assign your students tasks and make sure to continue checking in with them to ensure follow-through.

## EDUCATOR

- Students do most of the facilitating of tasks
- Decision-making by students defines RSO
- Encourage, provide information, and intervention as needed
- Support RSOs efforts
- Problem solving is less often
- Results in medium-high student learning

By now, your students’ RSO will have an established presence on campus. Your students will have a shared vision, goals, and a robust knowledge of university processes/procedures. You will no longer need to ask them to do tasks, as they will most likely complete these tasks on their own. An RSO that reaches this stage is very likely to continue its operations in following years. Issues with leadership transitions and large-scale organization may persist.

## MENTOR

- Students make decisions and empower each other to do so
- Present as needed or when asked
- Students have full ownership over the RSO, its accomplishments, failures and successes
- Intentional problem solving is needed less and less
- Learning with you comes from reflection
- Results in high student learning

Your to-do list as an advisor will have decreased exponentially by this point. Leadership, training, sharing of information, and more will be handled by your empowered students. Essentially, your RSO is running itself. Your students may still need you for processes that require an advisor to sign off, to manage conflict should it arise, or assist with operations as needed. You are essentially a safety net for your students, while they run the show.

## REMEMBER:

**Every RSO is different.** RSOs are unique, not only in their statistical and physical attributes, but in the quality of their organization, in their size, and in their esprit. Therefore, an advisor must take the information contained in this manual and modify it to fit their particular organization.

**Every advisor is different.** By accepting this position an advisor agrees to assist the organization in conducting its operations and in realizing its ideals and aspirations. However, each advisor will also have their own philosophy and unique approach to advising and should take those into account.

**Advisors are volunteers.** The advisor is a volunteer and has other important demands on their time. The RSO must, therefore, avoid setting up unrealistic expectations of them.

**Advisors are NOT dictators.** If push comes to shove, an advisor cannot force an RSO to do anything. Their respect and authority are based upon the quality of their relationship with the members.

**There is often no right answer.** (And even when there is, the manual may not have it!)

### 30 REMINDERS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVISING:

1. Care about the students you advise by showing empathy, understanding, and respect.
2. Establish a warm, genuine, and open professional relationship.
3. Show interest, helpful intent, and involvement.
4. Be a good listener.
5. Establish rapport by remembering personal information about students that you advise.
6. Be available; keep office hours and appointments.
7. Provide accurate information.
8. When in doubt, refer to the college/University student handbook and your advisor's manual.
9. Know how and when to make referrals and be familiar with referral sources.
10. Don't refer too hastily; but don't attempt to handle situations for which you are not qualified.
11. Have students contact referral sources in your presence.
12. Contact students you advise frequently; don't always wait for students to come to you.
13. Don't make decisions for students; help them make their own decisions.
14. Focus on students' strengths and potential rather than limitations.
15. Seek out students you advise in informal settings.
16. Monitor students' progress toward educational goals.
17. Determine reasons for poor academic performance and direct students to support services.
18. Be realistic with the students you advise.
19. Use all available information sources.
20. Clearly and professionally outline students' responsibilities.
21. Follow up on commitments made to the students you advise.
22. Encourage students to consider and develop career alternatives when appropriate.
23. Keep an anecdotal record of significant conversations for future reference.
24. Evaluate the effectiveness of your advising.
25. Don't be critical of faculty or staff to students.
26. Be knowledgeable about career opportunities and job outlook for various majors.
27. Encourage students to talk by asking open-ended questions.
28. Don't betray confidential information. \*
29. Categorize students' questions: are they seeking action, information, or involvement and understanding?
30. Be yourself and allow students to be themselves.

Source: [umich.edu/~salead/advisor/handbook.html#roles](http://umich.edu/~salead/advisor/handbook.html#roles)

\*\*If the information in question relates to a Title IX or Misconduct violation, you may need to communicate certain details to University officials. You may be considered a "Responsible Employee" of the University. Please review the "[Responsible Employee Requirements](#)."

## ADVISING THROUGH RSO TRANSITIONS

If you remain with your RSO as an advisor from one academic year to the next, you will likely witness a turnover of leadership and membership within the organization. These times of transition can be difficult for executive officers to navigate, especially if their predecessors did not prepare training/informational materials for the next generation. Below is some advice on how to advise a Registered Student Organization through a transition in leadership.

### TRANSITION DOCUMENTS

Transition documents are a proactive measure to ensure that your RSO's next generation of leaders has access to important guidelines, processes, procedures, usernames/passwords, and other types of information. A transition document (physical and/or digital) may include the following:

- Usernames and passwords for ExperienceWMU, RSO email addresses, Facebook, Instagram, and other accounts
- Important contact information for events, collaborations, questions about policies/procedures, etc.
- Contact information for active alumni
- Information on how to:
  - Access funding/bank accounts
  - Access storage areas
  - Find storage locations for items
  - Rent office or meeting spaces
  - Roles and responsibilities of the position
  - Planning procedures for annual or repeated events/activities
- Information on daily operations; for example:
  - How do you edit the RSO's webpage on ExperienceWMU?
  - How do you re-register each academic year?
  - What is the correct format for an RSO constitution?
  - How do we obtain WSA funding?
- Legacy notes on important experiences and lessons learned, such as:
  - The whys and hows of successful (or unsuccessful) events
  - Major challenges (and the methods for resolving them)
  - Personalized tips/advice on reservations, helpful WMU staff members, making procedures/processes move faster, etc., etc.
  - Running elections smoothly
  - How to maintain positive relationships with the University/University officials
  - Timetables for large campus events i.e. Bronco Bash or WSA Allocations

Make sure to suggest that your RSO's leaders create helpful and accurate transition materials to ensure the continuity of their organization. The OSE recommends having a transition binder for each turnover of each e-board position. Leadership transitions are key factors in determining whether or not a Registered Student Organization remains active on campus.

# RISK MANAGEMENT

Due to the nature of RSO activities, certain types of risk are more prevalent than others. It is important for you to guide your students through risk management because they often tend to focus on the positives of the event without considering potential risks.

Any possibility of loss, harm or damage to individuals, property or organizations associated with an activity or event would be considered to be a risk.

The goal of risk management is to identify, control, and minimize the negative impacts to your organization. It is expected that RSOs take the steps necessary to manage the risks associated.

Please note that the students within your RSO (and *not* Western Michigan University) would be held liable for any incident since Registered Student Organizations are not affiliated with the institution.

As an advisor, you do not need to have every risk management policy memorized. However, it may be helpful to have your students refer to this information (or to have this information on hand) while planning an event/activity.

## AREAS OF RISK MANAGEMENT

- I. Financial: Contracts, verbal agreements, budget and spending
- II. Personal: Travel, events
- III. Physical and Emotional: Hazing, Title IX

## FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

Financial risk management includes contracts, verbal agreements and spending and varying from high to low risk. For example, bringing a speaker to campus for \$250 is relatively low risk. Bringing a large act or musician for \$1,000 is generally going to be a higher risk financial commitment. However, put this broad spectrum into the context of your RSO. If your RSO's annual budget is \$2,000, a fee of \$500 is 25% of the budget.

### VERBAL AGREEMENTS/CONTRACTS

In terms of verbal agreements, ensure that you and your students use language with contractors, agents or acts that are noncommittal, such as, "I'm looking for a quote" as opposed to, "I'm looking to bring you to campus."

### CONTRACTS

**Overview** – Contracts are a binding agreement between two parties in which each gives something in return for something else. Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) routinely work with contracts for various means such as bringing speakers or performers to campus. In contract law it is extremely important to have your agreement in writing and signed by the parties involved. Courts will generally look at a written contract signed by both parties treating it as a final written expression of the parties involved. **Contracts must be notarized.**

### RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY

As an RSO, your student group is recognized by Western Michigan University but is not an employee or a designated representative to enter into binding agreements on behalf of the University. Although RSOs cannot act as university representatives, your conduct and decisions reflect on the University, so it is important that you conduct yourselves and your affairs in an appropriate manner. When working with third parties and vendors while identifying yourself as a RSO at WMU, the recommendation to avoid the possible misperception as to your group's authority to act in a contract setting (either with direct or apparent authority) is to say:

“\_\_\_\_\_ organization is a recognized student organization of the University and does not represent the University. The organization cannot contractually obligate the University. As a (member/officer) of \_\_\_\_\_ organization, I enter into this (contract/agreement) on behalf of the organization in my role as President/Treasurer/etc.”

Including language like this, both orally and in writing, helps avoid any possible links between your activity and the University. Given the autonomy of student leadership, you must be willing to take responsibility for your decisions as they apply to yourself and your group. By signing contracts, you and/or your RSO, not the University, will be held accountable.

## STANDARD SECTIONS OF CONTRACTS

The following information pertains to RSO contracts. You and your students are always welcome to contact the Office of Student Engagement for assistance (particularly the GA for RSO Development: [ose-rsodevelopment@wmich.edu](mailto:ose-rsodevelopment@wmich.edu)).

**Description:** Indicates what the contract covers, such as “Contract for T-Shirts”.

**Caption:** Indicates who the contracting parties are and when the contract was made.

**Background:** Indicates what each party’s business or purpose is, like “Rick’s T-Shirts located at 101 Main St. is in the retail business of selling t-shirts”

**Duration:** Indicates how long a contract is valid (often found early in document)

**Definitions:** Indicates what the meaning of commonly used words in the contract are like “they” means “Y Club” or “late” means “any promise fulfilled after the expiration of the time limit agreed to by both parties.” It is important to define terms that have subtle differences in their meaning like “must” (absolute), “shall” (contingent upon), and “may” (permissive).

**Obligations:** Indicates what each party is responsible for in the contract like “Rick’s T-Shirts shall supply Y Club with 500 t-shirts on September 30 at \$5.00 a shirt. Y Club must pay Rick’s T-Shirts \$2,500 on the date of delivery.”

**Operative Provisions:** Indicates what other provisions are included in the contract such as any warranties or exclusions that may apply. Often, this is the section of the contract where a disclaimer and limiting language is used to give the party who wrote the contract advantage over the party that signs the contract.

**Enforcement Provisions:** Indicates the part of the contract that deals with “What happens if...” (someone does not fulfill their end of the agreement, something not in the contract is causing problems, where to go if there is a dispute, what happens if the other party said we agreed verbally but it is not in the written contract).

**Closing:** Indicates that both parties agree to the contract upon signing the binding document.

RSOs are encouraged to work through contracts with their advisor and the Office of Student Engagement prior to entering into a contractual agreement. **It is important that they seek this help before they sign the contract.** If they wait until after they sign the contract, they may create problems for themselves, the advisor and the organization. It is also advised to approach the Office of Student Engagement if the group plans on purchases over \$1,000 due to the sensitive nature of the mandatory financial approval forms needed by the University.

### **ENTERTAINMENT/SPEAKER CONTRACTS:**

Student Engagement staff members can aid with university entertainment contracts to organizations sponsoring an act. All entertainment contracts funded through the Student Assessment Fee (i.e., GFAC funded, WSAAC funded, etc.) must be reviewed by the Office of Student Engagement. Some contracts may need further authorization from other University entities. Please allow 7–10 business days for review and authorization. The University policy is to **not provide checks any earlier than the day of the event.**

Please approach OSE for any needed forms.

### **FINANCIAL PROCEDURES**

Student organizations must adhere to all University and Student Engagement accounting policies, guidelines and procedures. Organizations that violate University and/or Student Engagement financial guidelines, policies and procedures are subject to disciplinary procedures. Disclaimer: The money is only available through OSE; personal checks **are not a possibility.**

#### **ON-CAMPUS ACCOUNTS**

On-campus financial accounts are utilized for Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) that receive Student Assessment Fee (SAF) allocations from Graduate Student Allocations Committee (GSAC/GFAC), or Western Student Association Allocations Committee (WSAAC). After an RSO secures funding from one of the above sources, an account is established through the Office of Student Engagement. Money in these accounts can only be spent on items for which SAF funds were allocated. SAF money remaining in these accounts following events will be returned (aka: swept) to the allocating body from which it was given. It is possible for RSOs to have two on-campus accounts based upon the source of funding.

#### **NON-WMU BANK ACCOUNTS**

If an RSO collects and/or manages self-generated funds such as membership fees or donations, they can open a non-WMU bank account. Most organizations choose to open a bank account through PNC located in the Student Center. PNC encourages anyone who is interested in opening an account to stop by their branch in the Student Center to receive all the necessary paperwork prior to setting up an appointment.

Remind your students to apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) to use on the bank account rather than an individual student's Social Security Number (SSN). They can apply for an EIN from the IRS (<https://www.irs.gov/>) by completing Form SS-4. It is recommended that at least two students have signature authority for the bank account.

They will also need to request a verification letter from the RSO Development GA: [ose-rsodevelopment@wmich.edu](mailto:ose-rsodevelopment@wmich.edu) or the Office of Student Engagement: <https://wmich.edu/studentengagement/contact>

Students will need to bring two valid forms of identification (driver's license, state ID, passport, etc.) when they go to PNC. They will be given a copy of PNC's Student Organization Certification Form to fill out and return. They will need a deposit of at least \$100 to open an account. Please note: PNC is a separate entity from Western Michigan University, and their policies and procedures are subject to change based on their own discretion.

**Non-WMU bank account names cannot have reference to Western Michigan University.** RSOs are solely responsible for their non-WMU bank account matters. Western Michigan University is not responsible in any way for such transactions unless an authorized university official has

developed a contractual relationship with the RSO. In addition, WMU will not provide vendors and/or creditors with any information beyond that which is considered public information.

Similarly, as with on-campus accounts, outstanding invoices or balances with businesses are unacceptable and are the responsibility of the RSO and/or students involved, not the university. Students and RSOs may be held accountable through the WMU Student Code. Additionally, legal action may be taken by businesses to resolve outstanding balances.

## **PERSONAL RISK MANAGEMENT**

Personal risk management includes travel and events. Both areas cover a broad spectrum of high and low risk activities. Keep in mind that as the RSO advisor, you are liable. Students hosting and/or attending off-campus events will be subject to the same rules and regulations as if they were on campus. Consider factors such as travel distance, event venue rules, local laws/restrictions, event security, and proximity to urgent care. Please view <https://wmudps.wmich.edu/clery-trip-info> available on the WMU Public Safety website for more information about off-campus travel.

Events can be high risk or low risk. A high-risk event could be a controversial musician or a large-scale event with inflatables. A low-risk event could be simply bringing a noncontroversial speaker to campus. Consider factors such as projected attendance, cost, food, venue, security needs, contracts, activities, and attractions to evaluate the degree of risk to the event.

As set forth in the WMU Student Code: All social events sponsored by organizations or University affiliated groups, on or off campus, must comply with university alcohol regulations. In addition, the Student Assessment Fee may not be used in whole or part for the purchase of alcoholic beverages for any purpose.

The possession, use or storage of weapons is prohibited on university owned or controlled premises and at university sponsored events without authorization from the appropriate University official. Using or possessing a weapon, even with proper authorization, in a manner that harms, threatens or causes fear in others, or is otherwise in violation of the Weapons on Campus Policy contained in the Registered Student Organization Handbook, is also prohibited.

## **PUBLIC EVENTS POLICY**

**Statement of Policy.** WMU is dedicated to protecting and encouraging free and open association, discussion, and debate. All are important aspects of the WMU educational environment. The University also seeks to ensure the health and safety of its faculty, staff, students, visitors, and speakers while they are on campus. The University reserves the right to deny any requests for use of space if the proposed use substantially disrupts WMU's educational activities, there is a reasonable forecast of substantial disruption, or the use creates a substantial, non-speculative concern about the safety of the University Community. This Policy sets forth how WMU considers use of event space and evaluates when an event may require security services.

This Policy combines, revises, and rescinds the existing, undated Event Security Policy, Common Area Academic, and Non-Academic Space Event policies. It also rescinds and subsumes the 1997 Outside Speakers Policy. This Policy supersedes any prior, contradicting University policy or guidance. There may be additional rescissions as WMU continues to review and revise existing Policies.

### **1. Purpose of Policy**

WMU seeks to ensure the safety of everyone in the WMU Community and protect all WMU facilities from damage while promoting the free discourse of ideas. Some proposed events may substantially disrupt WMU's educational purpose, create a reasonable forecast of substantial disruption, or create a non-speculative concern about the safety of attendees, the WMU community, the general public, and/or damage to WMU property. This Policy has been formulated to provide for the greatest possible range of

use to members of the University Community, while also protecting individual safety, assuring orderly and safe conduct of a particular event, and maintaining the general functioning of the University consistent with applicable law.

## **2. Stakeholders Most Impacted by the Policy**

Anyone who wishes to use indoor or outdoor common areas on campus to host public, non-WMU-sponsored events or speakers. Anyone who wishes to protest or counter-protest such events or speakers.

## **3. Key Definitions**

- 3.1. Nonpublic forums: WMU rooms and spaces dedicated to special, generally educational, purposes. Interior rooms in campus buildings designated primarily for student use.
- 3.2. Content-Neutral: Decisions made without regard to the content or substance being communicated
- 3.3. Common Outdoor Spaces: outdoor areas generally available to students and the community, to include Registered Student Organizations (RSOs), such as grassy areas, walkways, or other similar areas
- 3.4. Designated Forums: University-owned public property that is open for public expression even though the public property is not a traditional public forum.
- 3.5. Limited Public Forum: spaces made available to a limited subset of groups, e.g., students, faculty, or other employees; or, spaces dedicated solely to the discussion of certain subjects, e.g., student- or University-sponsored lecture
- 3.6. Public indoor spaces: non-commercial spaces in university buildings that are generally available for use to the WMU Community
- 3.7. Commercial spaces: Space for which the University charges a fee or requires an application (not registration) to use
- 3.8. Unreasonable Security Risk: a risk in which the University is unable to provide security to reasonably ensure the safety of the event attendees, the WMU community, the general public, and/or WMU property, even if the security is to be paid for by the event organizer
- 3.9. Time, Space, and Manner: Restrictions the University places on events based upon physical or financial impact to the University. Such restrictions shall be content neutral.
- 3.10. Traditional Public Forum: areas that have been traditionally open to political speech and debate, such as public parks and sidewalks

## **4. Full Policy Details**

- 4.1. Scope of Policy  
This Policy applies to RSO-sponsored or -hosted events. This Policy does not apply to events for which the University has negotiated and contracts with external entities.
- 4.2. Use of Space in General
  - 4.2.1. This Policy applies to the use of common public areas (such as the Flagpoles, the Fountain Plaza, or other outdoor areas accessible to the general public) and interior public areas, such as the rooms available for use or rental in the Student Center or other University buildings. This Policy also describes how the University addresses the safety of the Campus Community during events on campus.
  - 4.2.2. The University will not consider any reaction expected in response to the viewpoints expressed by the individual or group using the space when evaluating space use. However, the University may consider evidence of a likely reaction when evaluating where the event should be held so as to control the safety and security of the campus community and the event sponsor or speaker.
  - 4.2.3. Obstructing building entrances, walkways, and rights-of-way; obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic on or adjacent to campus; or substantially disrupting classes, meetings, events, ceremonies, or other essential processes of the University will generally be considered disruptive of university activities and functions. Continuous or

- repeated sounds audible to those in contiguous or nearby classrooms, offices or other rooms (e.g., loud music) may be considered disruptive.
    - 4.2.4. Users may not damage or deface WMU property or the property of any person who has not authorized users to do so. No electrical modifications, structures, or mechanical apparatus may be erected or installed without specific written approval.
  - 4.3. Common Outdoor Spaces
    - 4.3.1. WMU will not restrict free expression in Common Outdoor Spaces unless the Common Outdoor Space is being used as a Commercial Space, e.g., Bronco Bash. Any Common Outdoor Space may be temporarily reserved for a specific use, as long as the use does not substantially disrupt WMU programs and operations or create significant, reasonable safety or security concerns.
    - 4.3.2. Persons or groups wishing to use WMU's Common Outdoor Spaces for non-WMU-sponsored events are encouraged, but not required, to inform DPS of their intent to be present in such areas. WMU encourages such collaboration as a means to provide event safety and for the equitable use of such areas.
    - 4.3.3. Persons using Common Outdoor Spaces shall not purposefully touch, strike or physically impede the progress of passersby, nor shall they force passersby to accept distributed materials. See Posting and Distributing Materials on Campus Policy.
    - 4.3.4. Organizations that are registered with the Secretary of State as nonprofit corporations or that are WMU-approved RSOs may solicit donations through direct requests, sales of tickets, goods, or otherwise, while using Common Outdoor Spaces.
    - 4.3.5. Those using Common Outdoor Spaces may use amplification so long as it does not disrupt the orderly conduct of the campus, classes, or other lawful activities. Amplification may not exceed 90dBs and is not allowed near classrooms or residential buildings the week of final examinations and other University-designated study days.
    - 4.3.6. In the case of competing use of Common Outdoor Spaces, the University will work with event organizers to attempt to reach a mutually agreeable solution. If the parties cannot agree on a solution, the event that has pre-registered will receive preference.
    - 4.3.7. As discussed later in this Policy, security fees may be imposed for use of Common Outdoor Spaces.
  - 4.4. Academic and other Nonpublic Indoor Spaces The primary purpose of academic buildings is education. Academic buildings are non-public forums and are not intended for free, unrestricted public use. Moreover, some of these spaces contain equipment and may be subject to special rules. The Associate Registrar maintains a list of academic spaces subject to special rules. Those University personnel wishing to use Academic non-public spaces should contact the Associate Registrar. Other non-public indoor spaces include office and/or administrative spaces. WMU may restrict the content of speech in non-public forums; however, if it does so, it may not discriminate based on speakers' viewpoints.
  - 4.5. Public Indoor Spaces
    - 4.5.1. Some WMU rooms and spaces are designated non-academic spaces, such as meeting spaces. These are Limited Public Forums. Use is allowed for such places and at such times as identified by WMU. WMU is not obligated to keep Public Indoor Spaces open. However, if it does, speech in those places receives the same First Amendment protections as speech in traditional public forums.
    - 4.5.2. The University will only consider the following content-neutral, objective criteria when assessing availability of Public Indoor Space:
      - 4.5.2.1. Competing requests for the same space at the same time, based solely on a "first-come, first-served" standard;
      - 4.5.2.2. The anticipated number of attendees;
      - 4.5.2.3. The impact of the event on the WMU community;
      - 4.5.2.4. Maximum occupancy rules;
      - 4.5.2.5. Impact on other events on campus; and

- 4.5.2.6. Human resources necessary to run the event in a safe and secure manner.
- 4.6. Public Indoor Space Use. When available, people or groups may use Public Indoor Space for public, literary, scientific, recreational, or educational meetings, or for discussion of matters of general or public interest, subject to the below. WMU rooms and meeting spaces may not be used for speech, expression, or assembly that substantially disrupts WMU's educational mission, including teaching, research, administration, and other authorized campus activities.
- 4.7. Commercial Spaces the University may regulate speech in Commercial Spaces if that speech is fraudulent or illegal, or if the University has a Substantial Interest in regulating it. Bronco Bash is an example in which the University has a Substantial Interest in regulating the speech that occurs in a commercial setting.
- 4.8. Security
  - 4.8.1. WMU will, at its own cost, provide DPS security services for outside events held on campus. Subject to appeal, WMU will determine how many officers should be present for a scheduled event to maintain campus safety and security. Event organizers may request security at an event, but it is not required.
  - 4.8.2. If, based on the factors stated below, DPS, in consultation with the Office of the President, and the Office of General Counsel, believes that officers beyond those that would otherwise be on duty are necessary to ensure the safety and security of the Campus Community, the event sponsor will be responsible for paying the difference in security costs.
  - 4.8.3. WMU may require event sponsors or organizers to reimburse the University for all security costs if the event is fraudulently or unreasonably misrepresented on the event registration form or other communication and the lack of accuracy leads to WMU incurring unexpected security costs due to the actual nature of the Use.
  - 4.8.4. Factors for Assessing Security Costs. In determining the amount of such costs to be charged to the event sponsor, the University will consider only the following content-neutral, objective criteria:
    - 4.8.4.1. a reasonable estimate of the number of anticipated attendees (events with over 500 expected participants will likely have higher security costs);
    - 4.8.4.2. expected proportion of WMU community program participants/attendees (events with a higher proportion of non WMU Community participants will likely have higher security costs);
    - 4.8.4.3. venue in which the event is to take place (venues that are harder to secure or that could suffer greater property damage will likely have higher security costs);
    - 4.8.4.4. the number of event staff present (events with a higher number of their own staff present may have lower security costs);
    - 4.8.4.5. time of day, day of the week, and date on which the event is to take place (events scheduled on weekend evenings will likely have higher security costs);
    - 4.8.4.6. planned duration of the event;
    - 4.8.4.7. whether tickets are required for attendance, the proceeds for which might be used to defray security costs;
    - 4.8.4.8. amount of cash anticipated to be present at the event (events with significant amounts of cash on hand will likely have higher security costs);
    - 4.8.4.9. whether alcohol will be served (events where alcohol is served may have higher security costs);
    - 4.8.4.10. the general format of the event, e.g., whether it a rally vs. a panel discussion (events similar to a rally will likely have higher security costs than events similar to a lecture or panel discussion);

- 4.8.4.11. confirmed information that violence surrounding the same event with the same participants at another location(s) occurred within the last six months will likely lead to higher security costs;
    - 4.8.4.12. whether, based on evidence from a similar, past event at another location(s), speech is reasonably likely to incite others to create an immediate, clear, and present danger of the commission of violence or unlawful acts at WMU will likely lead to higher security costs.
  - 4.8.5. Written Assessment. If security costs are assessed, DPS will provide the event sponsor or organizer with a written summary of its review of criteria and costs and an explanation for the determination. DPS will provide this explanation in a timely manner so the event sponsor may take advantage of the appeal process.
  - 4.8.6. Additional services upon request. Sponsors may contact DPS to request security services outside of regular DPS patrols for a particular event. Generally, these services must be requested a **minimum of ten days** prior to the planned event and will be at the Sponsor's expense. Requests made less than ten days prior to the date of use will be considered when possible.
  - 4.8.7. Unreasonable Security Risk. If DPS, in consultation with university leadership, determines an event poses an unreasonable and significant security risk to persons and/or property such that it cannot reasonably ensure the safety of the campus community, it may decline a request or terminate an event, even if the event organizers are paying for the security. If the University declines a request or terminates an event, it will provide a written articulation of the reasons for the determination to the person or group requesting space within five University business days.
- 4.9. Endorsements Individuals and organizations may not in any way represent that their activities are endorsed, sponsored, or sanctioned by WMU without the express written consent of the Vice President for Marketing and Strategic Communications. Use of the Student Assessment Fee Funded logo does not imply University endorsement or sponsorship.
- 4.10. Appeal
  - 4.10.1. An event sponsor who disagrees with an event security decision may appeal the decision, including the amount of security costs, to the WMU Vice President for Business and Finance and the Vice President for Student Affairs. Appeals must be in writing and submitted to each Vice President on or before the third University business day after the date the sponsor is notified of the University's decision.
  - 4.10.2. The notice of appeal must contain the name and address of the sponsor appealing the decision, a brief description of the decision being appealed, the basis of the appeal, and the date the sponsor received notification of the decision being appealed.
  - 4.10.3. Sponsors who meet the appeal criteria shall have an opportunity to meet with the Vice President for Business and Finance and Vice President for Student Affairs, or their designees, prior to receiving a decision on the appeal. The sponsor shall be notified of the date and time of the meeting at least one University business day in advance.
  - 4.10.4. In considering the appeal, the Vice President of Business and Finance and the Vice President of Student Affairs, in consultation with DPS and the Office of the General Counsel, will review whether the event was denied, postponed or canceled because of the University's reasonable, content neutral, non-speculative concern about WMU Community safety or property damage. The University will consider appeals promptly and issue a decision within two University business days from the meeting with the sponsor.
- 4.11. Right to Protest or Counter-Protest
  - 4.11.1. Protest is a necessary and acceptable means of expression within the WMU community. However, protest may not obstruct the basic exchange of ideas or the free expression of those whom they are protesting. Such obstruction is a form of censorship, no matter who initiates it or for what reasons.

- 4.11.2. Protests or demonstrations that infringe upon the rights of others to peaceful assembly, orderly protest, free exchange of ideas, or that interfere with the rights of others to make use of or enjoy the facilities or attend the functions of the University will not be tolerated.
- 4.11.3. Picket lines that permit free passage of those who wish to pass, and signs, banners and peaceful assemblies are all acceptable. However, the University reserves the right to request removal of signs that constitute a hazard to other people or that interfere with others' participation in the event.
- 4.11.4. Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, blocking access, obstructing or impeding passage of a person or vehicle, actions that result in bodily harm, erecting or placing of obstructions that result in depriving others of their rights. If individuals do not comply with the University's request, the University may remove either the sign or the individual from the event. The University's determinations in this regard shall be content neutral.
- 4.11.5. Halting a lecture, debate, or any public forum is an unacceptable form of protest. "Halting" means directly or indirectly preventing a speaker from speaking - even for a brief period of time - or seizing control of a public forum for one's own purposes.

## **5. Accountability**

- 5.1. Failure to follow this Policy could result in an event being cancelled or stopped while in progress.
- 5.2. Failure to follow this Policy and any associated procedures may subject WMU employees to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment by the University, consistent with applicable procedures and Collective Bargaining Agreements.
- 5.3. Failure to follow this Policy and any associated procedures may subject WMU students to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University.

## **6. Related Procedures and Guidelines**

- 6.1. Individual facilities may have building-specific guidelines for public or private use. This information should be available on each facility's webpage.

## **7. Additional Information**

Individuals who violate the terms of this Policy may be denied access for future events.

## **8. FAQs:**

- 8.1. How do I reserve space for an event?
  - To reserve outdoor space, please go to: <https://wmich.edu/studentcenter/outdoor-reservation>
  - Note that reserving outdoor space is voluntary; however, doing so allows the University to work with you to evaluate potential space, security, and safety concerns.
  - To reserve indoor space in the Student Center, see available rooms, and for other useful information please go to: <https://wmich.edu/studentcenter/reservation>
  - To reserve the Multicultural Center, Our Space, and Trimpe Conference Room, go to: <https://wmich.edu/diversity/center>
  - RSOs may request space in an academic building at the following web site: <https://wmich.edu/registrar/students-reservationform>
- 8.2. Are there limitations on the use of outdoor space?
  - Yes. See Section 4.3 above.
- 8.3. How do I plan for security at an event?
  - 8.3.1. Users should contact DPS to obtain the cost per hour (or overtime hour) for security personnel. There is no minimum number of hours required for the use of security personnel. These costs may be updated at the beginning of each academic year

by the DPS. These costs are limited to the direct expenses incident to providing the security services.

- 8.3.2. A reasonable fee may be charged as identified by DPS. See Section 4.8.
- 8.4. Does WMU make decisions regarding events based on the viewpoint of the sponsor or individual?
  - No. The University is committed to the free and open exchange of ideas and does not engage in viewpoint discrimination, even if the ideas are controversial, unpopular and offensive to many in the University Community. The University is content-neutral when making decisions regarding on-campus events. Unless stated otherwise, the University does not endorse, agree with, or otherwise approve of the content of any particular event held on campus.
- 8.5. Are Tents considered structures for purposes of Section 4.2.4?
  - It depends on the type of tent. Small, pop-up tents generally are not considered structures. Larger tents that are in any way tethered or attached to the ground would be considered tents. For specific questions, contact Paul Terzino (see below).
- 8.6. Whom should I contact with further questions?
  - Paul Terzino, Director of the Student Center at (269) 387-4864 or using the Contact Us option on the Student Center's webpage, <https://wmich.edu/studentcenter/contact>

## PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT

This includes hazing and Title IX. Copies of the policies related are below and more information can be found in the RSO Handbook.

### WMU HAZING POLICY

No RSO shall conduct hazing activities. Hazing activities are defined as: any action taken, or situation created, whether on or off campus, for the purpose of initiation or affiliation with any University organization or team which jeopardizes the physical and/or mental well-being of an individual; embarrasses, frightens, degrades an individual; or is illegal.

As per the WMU Student Code, Article IV, B. 10, hazing is defined as any act which endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a person, embarrasses, frightens, or degrades a person or which destroys or removes public/private property, for the purpose of initiation, admission into, or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership, in a group, organization or team. The expressed or implied consent of the alleged person against whom the actions have been taken will not be a defense. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of hazing are not neutral acts-they are violation of this rule. In addition, according to the state of Michigan's "Garret's Law," senate bill #783, hazing may result in criminal prosecution resulting in fines and imprisonment.

Hazing can also be defined as any action or situation which intentionally or unintentionally endangers a student seeking admission into or affiliation with any student organization. In addition, any other activities which are not consistent with policy, law or the regulations and policies of the educational institution will constitute hazing. Hazing is in direct opposition to the educational mission of the institution.

*Information used by permission from the Texas education code and Texas Tech University student affairs handbook.*

## UNIVERSITY SEXUAL ASSAULT AND MISCONDUCT POLICY

Western Michigan University encourages all members of our community to participate in the process of creating a safe, welcoming and respectful environment on campus. With the Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Stalking Policy and Procedures, we affirm the commitment of the University and our community to the values of transparency and timely communication, and accountable and responsible behavior within an ethical, compassionate, diverse and respectful environment.

For complete policies, please visit: <https://wmich.edu/sexualmisconduct>

There are also [additional forms](#) available via the Office of Institutional Equity.

This is a vital document to review as advisors that work at WMU are mandatory reporters. As the OIE explains:

“Under Title IX, certain classifications of employees are known as ‘responsible employees’ and are obligated to report all known details of an incident to the campus Title IX Coordinator. Responsible employees include all faculty members, instructors, graduate assistants, administrators, supervisors, academic advisors, residence life and student affairs staff, coaches and their staff, public safety officials and others as designated in the policy. There are several ways to report sexual misconduct. You can use more than one option for reporting, or you can select the one with which you are most comfortable, but it’s important to report what you’ve experienced, witnessed or heard.”

Specific information on how to report can be found at the link above.

## RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEE REQUIREMENTS

Advisors employed by the University are mandatory reporters. Kalamazoo community members who are not employed by Western Michigan University do not fall under the mandated reporter policy. However, we highly encourage all advisors to reach out to the Title IX office if they encounter any issues. Specific information can be found at the link above.

Title IX Coordinator Felicia Crawford is available to host workshops and provide resources for advisors. Feel free to contact her for more information. [felicia.crawford@wmich.edu](mailto:felicia.crawford@wmich.edu) (269) 387-6316.

## ASSUMPTION OF RISK FORM

In current legal tradition, waivers of personal rights have generally been ineffective in protecting an organization from harm or damage sustained by an individual during a sponsored event or activity. A better method of protecting your organization from personal injury and damage claims is the “Assumption of Risk” form. A link to this form can be found at the end of this guide.

Individuals participating in an activity or event should sign this form. The form acknowledges that the individual is aware of the potential risk involved in the specific activity and agrees to participate. Under common law tradition, the individual’s assumption of known risk is a more successful defense against damage claims.

\*For signing and filing official forms with The Office of Student Engagement, the RSO advisor is **not** the official contact person. The official contact person must be a registered WMU student. Any official requests and forms must be signed by the student listed as the Primary Contact on the RSO’s roster in ExperienceWMU.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Does a contract need to be signed for anything associated with this event?
- If this event is held in the community, how will the activity affect the neighborhood?

- What liability does the organization run the risk of incurring?
- What state laws or city ordinances have the potential of being violated?
- What safeguards will be used to keep these laws from being violated?
- List possible problem situations that could present themselves at your activity.
- List how you will resolve each of the situations listed above.
- Do you have an established procedure to follow in case of emergencies?
- Could you convince a reasonably prudent person that your event is not dangerous?
- Is the potential liability for the organization worth the potential benefits to the organization?
- Have you as the RSO Advisor reviewed this activity?

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Registered Student Organizations often require guidance through the particularities of university policies and procedures. As an advisor, you are able to act as a source of information for your students. The Office of Student Engagement's most important RSO regulations and processes are detailed below.

### RSO REGISTRATION AND RE-REGISTRATION

Each academic year, RSOs must complete this process to officially register with the University. A club or organization will not be officially recognized as an RSO and cannot receive University funding unless they have registered. Best practice is to re-register existing organizations between Spring Break and finals, but new organizations can begin the registration process at any time. More information about registration can be found in the 2023-2024 RSO Handbook.

#### ExperienceWMU

RSO registration and re-registration takes place via <https://experiencewmu.wmich.edu/organizations>. All WMU students have access to ExperienceWMU. It is important that prior RSO leadership keeps their roster updated on ExperienceWMU. If a student executive (president, vice president, treasurer, etc.) is unable to access their organization's re-registration page, have them contact the Graduate Assistant for RSO Development ([ose-rsodevelopment@wmich.edu](mailto:ose-rsodevelopment@wmich.edu)) for further assistance.

#### RSO CONSTITUTION

To complete the online registration or re-registration process, your students must create or update their RSO Constitution. The Office of Student Engagement encourages students to customize the Constitution to best fit their organization's mission and values. However, **there is a list of statements that all RSOs must include in their Constitutions**. The list is available to your students during the registration or re-registration process. The required statements are as follows:

- [WMU Notice of Non-Discrimination](#)
- [Statement of University Compliance](#)
- [Statement of Financial Compliance](#)
- Disposition of Funds

It might be helpful to check in with your students (especially with new leadership, or a new RSO) and make sure they have included these required statements in their RSO Constitution (and have written the statements out correctly).

## RSO ONLINE ORIENTATION

To become eligible for university funding, Registered Student Organizations must have at least one financial officer complete RSO Online Orientation. You are welcome to complete RSO Online Orientation as an advisor. However, a student financial officer will still be required to complete Orientation for their RSO. The modules and videos can be accessed in the [Forms](#) section of ExperienceWMU. This information is available for students to refer back to whenever they have a question about RSO operations. When an RSO's financial officer completes Online Orientation, the organization then becomes eligible to apply for funding from the Western Student Association, the Graduate Student Association, the Campus Activities Board, and the Sustainability Fund.

## Prohibition of Duplicate Executive Boards in Student Organizations

This policy aims to maintain the integrity of student organizations by preventing the creation of secondary organizations with identical executive boards to mitigate manipulation, prevent student burnout, and ensure fairness within the system. This policy is implemented to promote a fair and just system within student organizations.

- **Prohibition of Duplicate Executive Boards:** Student organizations are prohibited from establishing secondary organizations that have duplicate executive boards. A duplicate executive board refers to the replication of the same group of individuals holding key leadership positions (e.g., president, vice president, treasurer, secretary) within multiple student organizations simultaneously. This measure is put in place to discourage manipulation of the system, potential conflicts of interest, and to ensure equitable distribution of leadership opportunities.
- **Verification and Compliance:** All new student organizations seeking registration must submit a list of their proposed executive board members for approval. OSE will cross-verify the submitted executive boards to ensure compliance with this policy.
- **Penalties for Non-Compliance:** Any student organization found to have established a secondary organization with a duplicate executive board will not be allowed to register. And/or the status of their organization is subject to change.

## RESERVATION PROCESS for ACADEMIC BUILDINGS

Registered Student Organizations can reserve rooms in academic buildings. Registered Student Organizations requesting a room in an academic building must submit the request at least **five business days before the event**.

When requesting a room in an academic building, the requestor must provide a **WMU email address** and contact information for a WMU faculty or staff advisor.

Please know that RSO advisors should **NOT** complete the request to avoid a delay in being given a room assignment.

## SOC SPACING INFORMATION

We invite all registered student organizations to apply for a space in the Student Organization Center (SOC). In this space, there are offices, desks, and storage lockers that registered student organizations may apply for. In addition, we have larger storage spaces available for large items belonging to registered student organizations. Please know that **ALL** these spaces must be applied for, and that your engagement in the space if you previously had one will be considered when reviewing your application. Your RSO may apply for spacing in the SOC through this link (<https://experiencewmu.wmich.edu/forms>) starting March 1<sup>st</sup> of every year.

## RSO ADVISOR ONLINE TRAINING MODULES

When you are identified as an advisor during the registration of your RSO, you will be required to complete a set of advisor training modules via ExperienceWMU. You will receive an email from the RSO Development GA to notify you of the requirement and provide the necessary links. This is an annual requirement for all RSO advisors. If you have already served as an RSO advisor in the past, you will have the option to complete a shortened version of the training modules. If you advise multiple RSOs, you will still only need to complete the training once.

[RSO Advisor Training Modules](#)

[RSO Advisor Training Modules: Returning/Shortened](#)

# ADVISOR PAPERWORK & FORMS

## ADVISOR PAPERWORK

There are a few items of mandatory paperwork that you will need to complete as an advisor, as well as other types of forms available on an as-needed basis. The items are as follows:

- a) **RSO Advisor Expectations Form:** RSOs and advisors will create an agreement listing the advisor's responsibilities to the organization, and the organization's responsibilities to the advisor.
- b) **RSO Advisor Letter of Intent:** Advisors will be required to sign a letter of intent indicating that they accept their advising position.
- c) **RSO Advisor Evaluation:** At the end of each semester (or as needed), Registered Student Organizations will have the option to provide feedback directly to their advisor and the Office of Student Engagement via this form.
- d) **RSO Advisor Complaint Form:** Should an issue arise between an advisor and their Registered Student Organization; a form is available to submit an official complaint and request action/mediation to the Office of Student Engagement.

## REQUIRED FORMS

Links to these forms are available at the end of this guide. You can also download copies on the Office of Student Engagement's website: <https://wmich.edu/studentengagement/rso>

Advisors are required to fill out the following forms to officially register their RSO with the Office of student Engagement:

### RSO ADVISOR EXPECTATIONS FORM

This form outlines the expectations laid out between an RSO and their advisor. It requires signatures from both parties. Since this form is officiated through the Office of Student Engagement, advisors and RSOs will be held accountable to the Office via this form.

### RSO ADVISOR LETTER OF INTENT

Advisors are required to sign this letter when an RSO submits their Constitution and registers their RSO

through the Office of Student Engagement. The letter indicates that you accept your position as an RSO advisor and that you will complete the required Advisor Training Modules within thirty days of signing.

## **EVALUATIVE FORMS**

The following forms can be completed every academic year, or as needed/requested by the RSO/the advisor.

### **ADVISOR EVALUATION FORM**

RSO executive board members and non-executive board members will have the opportunity to submit this form to the Office of Student Engagement each academic year. The purpose of this form is to help you as an advisor keep track of your relationship with your RSO. Furthermore, if your students have any feedback on how you can improve as a resource, that information will be included in the form. You may also request more frequent evaluations from your students, if you wish.

### **ADVISOR COMPLAINT FORM**

Should an issue arise between you and your RSO, this form is available as a reporting method, mediation request, and/or request for action from the Office of Student Engagement. If mediation attempts between you and your students have not been fruitful, this form is an avenue for official action. It can be submitted by an advisor, or by a Registered Student Organization.

## **LINKS TO ADVISOR FORMS:**

[RSO Advisor Expectations Form](#)

[RSO Advisor Letter of Intent](#)

[Advisor Evaluation Form](#)