

# **Valdosta State University**

## **The Office of Student Life**



## **Student Organization and Advisor Handbook**

### **2024-2025**

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**<https://www.valdosta.edu/student/student-life/student-organizations/>**

This handbook is subject to revisions throughout the academic year by the Office of Student Life and is not available in printed format. The most current version of the Handbook is accessible online at this URL. <https://www.valdosta.edu/student/student-life/student-organizations/>

### **Table of Contents**

Section 1. REGISTERED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (RSOs) .....	3
1.1 Student Organization Status .....	3
1.2 Classification of RSOs .....	3
1.3 Organization Coaches .....	4
1.4 Benefits of Becoming a Registered Student Organizations .....	4
1.5 Expectations of RSOs .....	5
Section 2. Starting a New Student Organization .....	7
2.1 Creating a New Organization .....	7
2.2 Eligibility for Membership and Officer Status .....	8
Section 3: LIABILITY INFORMATION .....	8
Section 4: FINANCES AND FUNDING .....	8
4.1 Money Transfer Apps .....	8
Section 5: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION .....	9
5.2 Parades, student rallies, and other such gatherings: .....	9
5.3 Amplified Sound/ Noise Policy .....	9
5.4 Events with Alcohol .....	10
5.5 Film Screening Guidelines .....	11
5.6 Auction Events .....	13
5.7 “Pieing” Events .....	13
5.8 Travel .....	13
5.9 Advertising and Publicity .....	13
5.10 Resource Room .....	14

## **Section 1. REGISTERED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (RSOs)**

### **1.1 Student Organization Status**

- **Large Student Organization**
  - Any organization comprised of 16 or more members
- **Small Student Organization**
  - Any organization comprised of 15 or less members

### **1.2 Classification of RSOs**

- **Professional**
  - Organizations related to an academic discipline/college or professional field available at Valdosta State University
- **Club Sports and Recreation**
  - Organizations that are formed to promote recreational purposes. These organizations are managed by the Recreational Supervisor in Campus Recreation.
- **Fraternity & Sorority Life**
  - Organizations affiliated with the College Panhellenic Council, Multicultural Greek Council, Interfraternity Council or National Pan-Hellenic Council.
- **Honorary**
  - Organizations formed to recognize or honor excellence in a specific field and which have selective membership; i.e. requirements for membership
- **Community Belonging**
  - Organizations that promote or enhance specific traditions or related activities on campus. Their goals are to explore and celebrate their heritage while offering programs and services.
- **Religious/Spiritual**
  - Organizations affiliated with or promoting a religion, set of religious beliefs or lack thereof.
- **Service**
  - Organizations providing volunteer services or assistance to the university and local community through altruistic or philanthropy events.
- **Special Interest**
  - Organizations promoting or related to a specific, defined interests

### **1.3 Organization Coaches**

To better serve student organizations, each classification will be assigned to a member of the Student Life staff. This staff member will serve as the Organization Coach and provide one-on-one advising, support, and be the organization's main contact point.

- **Dr. John Wright, Associate Director of Student Life**  
[jowright@valdosta.edu](mailto:jowright@valdosta.edu)
  - Special Interest, Professional, & Religious/Spiritual
- **Madison Beaumarchais, Assistant Director of Student Life**  
[mmbeaumarchais@valdosta.edu](mailto:mmbeaumarchais@valdosta.edu)
  - Fraternity & Sorority Life, Honorary, & Service
- **Brea Thomas, Student Life Manager**  
[Breathomas@valdosta.edu](mailto:Breathomas@valdosta.edu)
  - Fraternity & Sorority Life & Community Belonging

### **1.4 Benefits of Becoming a Registered Student Organizations**

Benefits of Becoming a Registered Student Organization (RSO) Organizations with the status of Registered Student Organization (RSO) have:

- Access to leadership development opportunities and resources for individual and organizational development including access to leadership resources, such as books and program guides.
- The ability to reserve university facilities for meetings and events for free within business hours. Additional costs may be added under special circumstances.
- Access to post announcements on university bulletin boards and appropriate campus structures.
- Campus posting privileges including chalking and posting flyers in compliance with the University Posting Policy
- Eligibility to win awards through the Student Life Office's Excellence Program
- Specialized training to develop a better understanding of organizational processes, and university policies and procedures.
- Authorization to request funds from the Student Government Association (SGA) in accordance with established procedures and guidelines.
- Access to volunteer opportunities, event planning resources, supplies for retreats and presentations.
- Connection to other Student Affairs departments and their resources for events and programs.
- Utilization of BlazerLink to send out announcements and manage RSO operations.
- Ability to utilize the Valdosta State University (VSU) name and logo in accordance with Visual Standards.

- Assistance from the Student Life Office in starting and maintaining a student organization and consultations to help in organizational development

## **1.5 Expectations of RSOs**

At Valdosta State University, RSOs are granted privileges and resources. In exchange, it is essential to adhere to and fulfill the following expectations of being a registered student organization.

RSOs will:

- Complete the annual registration process with the Student Life Office by submitting all required information on BlazerLink, participating in the RSO workshops, and making timely updates to organization's information (officers, constitution, etc.) as changes occur.
- Meet with their organization coach at least once a semester.
- Submit the Student Organization Excellence packet located on Blazerlink in the Spring semester of each year.
- Host at least two events a semester
- Attend the Fall Student Organization Summit and the Spring Leadership Conference
- Follow and abide by all federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and all policies and procedures of Valdosta State University, including the Valdosta State University Student Code of Conduct and the Student Organization Handbook.
- Remain in good standing with all Valdosta State University campus departments and conduct themselves in a manner that correlates with the mission of the University.
- Obey the rules and regulations expressed in the organization's constitution, including the non-discrimination and non-hazing requirements for membership.
- Meet all financial obligations incurred by the organization and abide by the SGA Finance Guidelines when applicable.
- Submit a Financial Report (located on Blazerlink) if the RSO collects or handles funds in any way.
- Obtain a Valdosta State University Foundation account or checking account with a bank to secure the organization's funds.
- Ensure proper planning and execution of organization events and consult with the Student Life office for help with event policies and contract management.
- Provide sufficient training during the officer transition process.
- Have an advisor who is a full time VSU faculty, staff or administrator. If an advisor resigns, the student organization has one month to find a new advisor. If they cannot find an advisor, they will be placed on the inactive list.
- Meet with the organization Advisor at least once a semester. It is recommended that RSOs meet with their advisor once a month.

- Ensure proper use of campus resources, including meeting and event space, office space, and other benefits granted to the organization.
- Unauthorized or malicious damage to the property of the University or other persons or entities resulting from organizational activities is prohibited and the student organization shall be responsible for all damages
- Organizational activities that encourage or precipitate riots or other disturbances, which materially interfere with the regular operation of the University, are prohibited.
- No organization shall commit, encourage, condone or contribute to violations of university statutes and regulations, and policies of the Board of Regents, of the Laws of Georgia and the United States.
- Conformance with organizational purpose- Activities or organizations must be in conformance with their application's stated purposes.
- Transition status each year to receive full RSO benefits. Any group which renews after this time or is chartered during the fiscal year will be inactive.
- Late organizations will only receive active status after meeting with their organization coach.
- Maintain a minimum of five (5) fully matriculated members.
- Maintain a President and Event Planner who is currently enrolled as a student at Valdosta State University in good standing.
- Not discriminate in their operation, programs and activities on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, and political affiliation, status as a veteran, genetic information or disability. Notwithstanding the foregoing:
  - Religious student organizations will not be denied registration solely because they limit membership or leadership positions to students who share the same religious beliefs.
  - Student organizations which qualify as social fraternities or sororities under Title IX of the U.S. Education Act Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(6)(A)) will not be denied registration solely because they limit membership or leadership positions on the basis of sex as permitted by Title IX and its implementing regulations.
- Report use of off-campus facilities. RSOs which use non-campus property (property owned or controlled by the RSO) or use an off-campus facility on a regular basis for meetings and programs, which include houses, lodging and community space, proof of insurance, certificate of building inspection and proof of fire inspection must be provided when registering as a student organization. It is the expectation of Valdosta State University that non-campus property will be inspected by the appropriate local and state inspectors on an annual basis to maintain quality conditions for utilizing the space. Documentation will be valid for one academic year: August-July.

- Any group planning to host an event, which meets any and/or all of the following guidelines, must submit a completed RSO event registration form at least two weeks prior to your event. Events cannot be advertised until final approval from The Office of Student Life has been received as coordination of activities and management of space is essential with the end goal being a safe and successful event. This form ensures all University officials, student organizations, event services, agree on the expectations and execution of the plans for the event.

## **Section 2. Starting a New Student Organization**

### **2.1 Creating a New Organization**

An organization seeking registration must meet with the Student Life Office to start the process of becoming a Registered Organization. After the initial meeting the organization must complete the follow items:

- Constitution containing the following information:
  - The name of the organization.
  - Purpose statement – Your goals and programming should connect clearly to this purpose. This purpose statement will be used in publications advertising your organization.
  - Qualification of membership – what does it take to be a member of your RSO?
  - President and Event Planner must be a VSU Student currently enrolled in good standing.
  - Officer position and structure – how are your officer positions selected and organized?
  - Non-Discrimination Statement and Anti-Hazing Statement
- Number of students wishing to join (must be 5 or more students), unless approved by the Student Life office.
- Valdosta State University Full-time Faculty or Staff Advisor (name, phone number and VSU email)
- Explanation of any extra-campus affiliation (e.g. national parent organization)

Once the above-mentioned items are submitted to the Student Life Office, the Organization Coach will set up a meeting to complete the registration process and review any policies with the organization.

The Student Life Office will examine each application and reject those not submitted in the proper form. A representative from the prospective organization may request a hearing on the proposed registration and, if necessary, may appoint a registration committee to review all facts pertinent to the establishment of such an organization on the Valdosta State University campus.

## **2.2 Eligibility for Membership and Officer Status**

- Active membership shall be confined to currently enrolled Valdosta State University students.
- Twelve credit hours is the minimum course load for any student participating in a student organization.
- A student must maintain a semester GPA of a 2.0 to be a member of a student organization and must keep a 2.0 GPA per semester to remain a member in good standing. A student must have and maintain a 2.5 GPA per semester to be eligible to serve as an officer of a student organization. Organizations have the right to raise or require a higher GPA for membership or officers.

## **Section 3: LIABILITY INFORMATION**

Valdosta State University holds each organization responsible for the actions of its members and their guests. Furthermore, all student organizations will abide by the Valdosta State University Code of Conduct. It should also be noted that if disciplinary actions are taken against a student organization, the disciplinary process under Appendix B of the Student Code of Conduct would be followed.

Although the University cannot provide constant, on-site supervision of all activities, it reserves the right to attend organization functions and enter any premises under the control of an organization when it deems necessary. Valdosta State University also reserves the right to discipline organizations and individual students when there is evidence of misconduct or the alleged violation University rules, regulations or outside laws are brought to the attention of the University. Your organization can be held accountable for upholding the Valdosta State University student code of conduct even if the event is held off-campus.

## **Section 4: FINANCES AND FUNDING**

### **4.1 Money Transfer Apps**

Money transfer apps include: Venmo, CashApp, Zelle, Facebook Pay and any other apps that transfer money through a peer-to-peer model. Student Organizations can use such applications following this policy.

- Only one transfer app account can be used at the event.
- The balance of the account must be at \$0 and a screenshot of the balance must be sent to another member (President or Treasurer) and their advisor.
- Each transaction that happens through the app must receive a receipt, one for the purchaser and one for the organization.
- After the event, the balance should be screenshotted and sent to the same member (President or Treasurer).
- The receipts are tallied and compared to the total on the money transfer app.



- The account holder of the money transfer app should withdraw and deposit the money via check or cash to the organization back account within 48 hours of the end of the event.
- The money transfer post event form should be fill out within 48 hours of the event to notify Student Life of the handling of the money.
- Submit this information with your financial report at the end of the year.

If an organization is found to have mishandled organization funds in any way, they will be placed on inactive status for one semester. When the inactive status is lifted, the RSO must use a University Foundation account to handle funds.

## **Section 5: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **5.1 Food Options**

- Valdosta State University has contracted with Aramark to provide all food service, including catering. All groups wishing to have food at their event need to contact Catering, conveniently located in the Student Union. Donated food will be allowed. Donated food is defined as food brought in by the users and not delivered (i.e. Pizzas, sub- sandwiches, etc. - prepackaged, premade foods).
- Organizations are prohibited from cooking food on campus unless it is with University Catering (Aramark) or an approved vendor. Exceptions to this policy may be approved by Campus Reservations.

### **5.2 Parades, student rallies, and other such gatherings:**

- Must be limited to areas designated by either the published notice for such activities or designated by the General Public Forum Venus policy as described in the Student Handbook's Code of Conduct, Appendix D.
- Outside parades, student rallies, and other such gatherings which interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic on campus must be cleared with the Student Life Office and the Department of Public Safety, before they may be undertaken, as well as with the proper civil authorities if the event is held off-campus.
- Use of facilities, equipment, and other University property shall be subject to reasonable scheduling by Campus Reservations to promote fair sharing of their use.

### **5.3 Amplified Sound/ Noise Policy**

Organizations hosting events that involve amplified sound must indicate this when completing the Event Registration Form. This includes events in which the organization will not use equipment provided by the Office of Student Life or Student Union, such as a DJ. The Office of Student Life reserves the right to deny the use of amplified sound if excessive noise will disrupt academic or religious pursuits or the sleep environment in the residence

halls. Quiet hours in the residence halls are from 11pm- 10am. Music with vulgar or explicit language is prohibited.

#### **5.4 Events with Alcohol**

The Student Life Office recommends that all events where alcohol is present take place at an insured and certified third-party vendor. It is the event host's responsibility to implement a sound risk management plan and ensure all social events taking place where alcohol is present conform to the following standards as well as the Valdosta State University Alcohol Policy stated in the Student Code of Conduct:

- Registered Student Organizations at Valdosta State University may not host, financially support or participate in any event open to the public where alcohol is permitted. Any exception must be reviewed in consultation with the Associate Director of Student Life or their designee at least 5 business days prior to the beginning of the event. RSOs may host closed events where alcohol may be present and where invited guests may be in attendance, subject to compliance with state and federal law, local ordinances and University regulations.
- All social events where alcohol is present will be private events. A private invite is limited to the members of the host organization and their invited guest. The event must also be BYOB (bring your own beverage) or closed functions using a third-party vendor to handle the alcohol. The host organization cannot purchase alcohol with organizational funds or participate in the purchase of alcohol in any other manner (no bar tabs, use of personal checking accounts, pooling of funds or "passing the hat," etc.).
- Alcohol products above 15% ABV are PROHIBITED in any organization facility or at any organization event, except when served by a licensed third-party vendor.
- The total number of people present may not exceed three times the membership of one host organization or 100 guests, whichever is greater. Any exception must be reviewed in consultation with the Associate Director of Student Life or their designee at least 5 business days prior to the beginning of the event.
- The event, on or off campus, must be registered through Blazerlink at least 72 hours before it begins.
- A sign shall be conspicuously displayed at all entrances indicating the event is restricted to members and invited guests and stating the ending time of the event.
- If alcohol and invited guests are present at an event, the host organization must provide adequate identifiable security personnel or other security measures to ensure the safety of others in attendance during the entire event, including the 30-minute allowance for crowd dispersion at the end of the event.

- Advertising on campus or social media of a social event where alcohol may be present is prohibited.
- Each person attending the event is responsible for bringing their own alcohol for personal consumption (no more than one six pack of beer per person). Underage persons may not bring alcohol into any social event hosted by a registered organization. The Registered Student Organization is responsible for ensuring individuals bring in and consume only their own alcohol.
- RSOs are responsible for taking steps necessary to prevent uninvited guests and noticeably intoxicated people from entering the event; to prevent underage persons from bringing alcohol into the event; to prevent persons from leaving the event to drink, then being readmitted to the event; and to make certain individuals do not leave the event with open containers of alcohol.
- All common source containers of alcohol, including but not limited to kegs, community coolers (coolers shared with others), punch bowls, bulk quantities, and any other container that may be shared with others, are prohibited.
- All entrances and exits to the event must be monitored at all times. ALL registered organizations hosting a private party are responsible for providing a certified law enforcement officer to check IDs of all those attending to assure compliance with the State of Georgia's legal drinking age requirements.
- Glass bottles are strictly prohibited at any social event, unless provided by a third-party vendor.
- The host organization is responsible for ensuring that a safe means of transportation is available for its members and guests such as cabs or designated drivers.
- RSOs must also conform to all standards established by their respective national organizations regarding social events with alcohol present.
- Any outdoor event must be registered with the Valdosta-Lowndes County Police Department or other local municipalities, where required, if the event does not occur on university property.
- All social event forms are to be turned in on Blazerlink. Compliance with these policies is the responsibility of the host social organization. Failure to comply with this policy may result in referral of the student organization to The Student Conduct Office. Any questions should be directed to the Associate Director of Student Life or their designee.

### **5.5 Film Screening Guidelines**

All film events scheduled by RSOs must comply with federal copyright law, which regulates the public exhibition of films. Screenings for public display on campus do not qualify as "educational fair use" exemptions granted by the federal code. To ensure that the University complies with federal law, permission or license from the copyright owner must

be obtained for any film that will be displayed to the public. To obtain a license or permission, sponsors of screening events must follow procedures described by the three criteria below. Only one of these three criteria must be met to authorize a screening event. It is the sole responsibility of the RSO to ensure that one of these criteria has been met prior to their screening event. Failure of an RSO to fulfill these obligations will result in their screening event's cancellation. A cancellation for this reason will not absolve the RSO of its financial obligation for the event.

### Criteria for permissible screenings:

- Provision is made with the Campus Activities Board or its program advisors to obtain a license and rent the film through a theatrical or non-theatrical vendor. CAB and its advisors will then obtain a license and, in most cases, provide the film to be exhibited. Unless other arrangements are made with CAB, the RSO will be billed for the licensing fee.
- The RSO will assume responsibility for obtaining the license from the film's non-theatrical distributor. Contact information for most distributors may be obtained from Student Life. A copy of the distributor's invoice and a record of payment for the license must be submitted to Student Life before the screening. All text on these copies must be legible, including the distributor's contact information.
- Permission to publicly display the film is obtained from the copyright holder or their agent. A letter providing clearance is required for Student Life files. Each letter should be under a letterhead, indicating the discoverable titleholder for the film's copyright. Letters should describe the specific circumstances of the screening, including place, date, time, number of screenings allowed, and whether an admission charge is allowed. The letters should clearly state that Valdosta State University and the sponsoring organization are granted permission to screen the film under the specific circumstances described.

### **Proof of Licensing or Copyright Clearance Required:**

The necessary paperwork required by criteria #2 and #3 should be provided to Student Life with the organization's event registration form. Should the RSO fail to provide a record of licensing or similar clearance for a screening with their event registration, Student Life has the right to cancel the booking and the event. Any public notice of a screening that has not yet met one of the preceding criteria shall likewise make the event subject to cancellation. (Such cancellation will not affect any reservation fees or other billable expenses associated with the event).

## **5.6 Auction Events**

RSOs are permitted to host silent or in-person auctions for merchandise or donated professional services (e.g. certificate for free manicure). RSOs are not permitted to host auctions of any type that offer acts of personal servitude outside of professional services through a licensed vendor or business (e.g. date auctions). Events like these may be considered as sexual discrimination and/or hazing.

## **5.7 “Pieing” Events**

RSOs are permitted to host “pieing” members events with items such as whip cream and other ice cream toppings to help raise money for the organization. Due to the nature of the whip cream staining the concrete walls and sidewalks on campus, it will be required at all “pieing” events will need to take place on Converse Square grass. RSOs must provide water and paper towels for the participants to clean themselves up. Any “pieing” events outside of the approved location will be a violation of this policy and the RSO will be responsible for all costs with clean up and maintenance.

## **5.8 Travel**

RSO traveling to an activity, whether or not that event is sponsored by the registered student organization or utilizing university funds or resources, must complete an [Authority to Travel Form](#). “Travel” is defined as any time a student organization leaves Valdosta/Remerton area for organization-related business. The necessary forms can be accessed through the university website [Travel Procedures](#).

Recognized Student Organizations are reminded that travel should generally not be required of the organization’s members unless it is fundamental to the purpose of the organization, or otherwise critical to its mission or goals. Please note students will be held to all institutional policies, state and federal laws while traveling and representing the organization and university. For example, if the RSO, VSU Fun is traveling together for Spring Break, an Authority to Travel Form is not needed if they are just going somewhere and the common thread is they are all in the same organization. However, if the group is traveling on Spring Break and attends a conference or conducts a game watch, the Authority to Travel Form would be necessary.

## **5.9 Advertising and Publicity**

RSOs must make sure that all materials used to advertise for meetings or events are approved by the Student Life Office or Event Services. These materials or advertising strategies include:

- Indoor signage at event site

- Outdoor banners/ sheet signs approval of sign from Student Life.
- Use the campus digital signage to advertise, all flyers must be approved by New Media Center.
- Bulletin board postings
- Sidewalk Chalk
- Print Shop
- Email Messages for the list-serve may be e-mailed to [activites@valdosta.edu](mailto:activites@valdosta.edu)
- Spectator
- BlazerLink flyer board

### **5.10 Resource Room**

This room is available for all organizations to use for crafts and sheet sign painting. Student Organizations are upheld by the rules on the door and the handbook. If there is a mess or supplies have been left without proper cleaning and returning to their original place the organization can get fined and lose their rights to use the room.