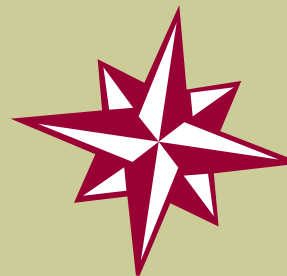


STUDENT  
ORGANIZATION



Handbook

2008-2009

Abilene Christian University

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Student Organizations at ACU	3
Purpose of Student Organizations, Coordination of Student Organizations, Benefits of Becoming a Recognized Student Organization, University Recognition as a Student Organization, Maintaining Status as a Student Organization, Categories of Student Organizations, Eligibility Requirements for Members in Student Organizations	
Advisors	6
Organizations' Responsibilities to Advisors, Advisors' Responsibilities to Organizations	
Policies Regarding Student Organizations' Events and Activities	7
Hazing, Sexual Abuse and Harassment, Work with Minors, Discrimination, Incident and Accident Reporting, Risk Management, Student Organization Events and Special Events, Contracts, Releases and Waivers, Travel, Political Campaign Activity, Gambling/Games of Chance, T-shirts and Other Products, ACU Mailbox, Advertising	
Contact Information	13

## INTRODUCTION

This handbook is a resource for student organizations at Abilene Christian University and serves as a supplement to the ACU Student Handbook. The policies and procedures detailed in this handbook are not intended to be comprehensive and do not supersede the policies in the Student Handbook; they are intended to state the purpose, philosophy, rules, and regulations of student organizations.

## STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AT ACU

### Purpose of Student Organizations

ACU is committed to purposeful living in all aspects of University life, including student organizations. With this in mind, the five principles in the Student Handbook for expected student behavior are the same five principles guiding our student organizations.

1. Integrity: Conduct as individuals, as an organization, and as a university will be trustworthy.
2. Service: The motivating question behind all relationships is "How can I be of service?"
3. Stewardship: Being good stewards of the things that God entrusts to us is essential.
4. Involvement: Decisions and actions that are beneficial to the University require broad-based participation and teamwork.
5. Excellence: Doing the very best requires continuous improvement and learning.

### Coordination of Student Organizations

ACU Student Organizations are under the coordination of the Student Life Office. The Director of Student Organizations and Activities is the primary coordinator and serves as the facilitator for student organizations on campus.

The responsibilities of the Director of Student Organizations and Activities include:

- Coordinating communication to students, advisors and ACU faculty/staff regarding student organizations;
- Educating the campus community about opportunities for membership in student organizations;
- Educating the campus community, especially student organization officers and advisors, about the annual update to be completed by student organizations;
- Approving new student organizations;
- Assigning classification for student organizations;
- Coordinating risk management training for student organizations;
- Assisting advisors in mentoring student organizations and upholding ACU policy and procedures in organization activities; and

- Conducting annual assessments of all aspects of the student organization process.

## Benefits of Becoming a Recognized Student Organization

By becoming a recognized student organization at ACU, the organizations will receive the following benefits:

- Use of the ACU name to identify association with the institution;
- Ability to act as a student organization on and off the ACU campus;
- Opportunity to apply for funding from the Students' Association (in compliance with other SA bylaws and guidelines);
- Accessibility to resources of the Office of Student Organizations and Activities;
- Review of contracts by ACU Office of Legal Services;
- Recognition as a student organization on the ACU website; and
- Ability to publicize announcements and events through all avenues and media that the University offers to student organizations (ex. myACU, ACU Student Events Calendar, student organization fair, etc).

## University Recognition as a Student Organization

Student organizations are only allowed to exist and operate as a student organization after they have been properly recognized by the Office of Student Organizations and Activities. Student groups may start the recognition process at any time during the school year, but new student organizations will only become recognized at the beginning of each semester. In order to become a student organization, a student group must:

- Seek an endorsement from the Students' Association;
  - The Students' Association will consider whether the group is in fact fulfilling a need for the student body that does not already exist on campus. If the Students' Association feels that the need is already being met and refuses to endorse the group, the Students' Association must provide a written reason for its decision to the student group seeking recognition. If the Students' Association refuses to endorse the group, the group may appeal that decision to the Director of Student Organizations and Activities, realizing that the lack of endorsement from the Students' Association will be taken into consideration.
- Complete an application for recognition as a student organization from the Office of Student Organizations and Activities ;
- Have at least one full-time ACU faculty or staff member who will serve as an organization advisor; and
- Forward application and endorsement or the written refusal to the Director of Student Organizations and Activities for consideration.

The final decision regarding approval of any new student organization will be made by the Director of Student Organizations and Activities.

### Maintaining Status as a Student Organization

For existing student organizations on campus, certain requirements must be met in order to maintain recognition as a student organization. They are as follows:

- Have at least one full-time ACU faculty or staff member who serves as an organization advisor;
- Submit the annual update sheet prior to the end of each academic year;
- Submit a current roster of members and officers at the beginning of each semester;
- Attend all required training given by the Office of Student Organizations and Activities (this will depend on the organization's category, as explained below); and
- Abide by all University policies governing student organizations, including any specific to the type of organization, which might be communicated through the recognition process.

Additionally, the University reserves the right to withdraw recognition from any student organization that fails to uphold the standards established by University policy or whose purpose or conduct does not fit within the University mission. Before withdraw, the student organization will be provided with notice and an opportunity to meet with the Director of Student Organizations and Activities.

### Categories of Student Organizations

During the summer after each school year, the Office of Student Organizations and Activities will assign each recognized student organization to a category that helps determine the type of training needed for student organization leaders and advisors for the following year. If the scope of activities for a student organization changes during the course of the school year, it is the responsibility of the organization to notify the Director of Student Organizations and Activities, who will assess the need for any change in category assignment or additional training. For newly recognized student organizations, a category will be assigned in the recognition process. There are three categories of student organizations:

Category 1: Select officers from these organizations will be required to attend mandatory training that is provided by the Office of Student Organizations and Activities to address risk management related issues. Additionally, these organizations may be required to complete supplemental training as determined by the Director of Student Organizations and Activities, based on the organization's activities. If the leaders and advisors do not attend this mandatory training, it may jeopardize their status as a recognized student organization.

Category 2: Select officers from these organizations will be required to attend mandatory training that is provided by the Office of Student Organizations and Activities to address risk

management related issues. If the leaders and advisors do not attend this mandatory training, it may jeopardize their status as a recognized student organization.

Category 3: These organizations have no formal training requirement by the Office of Student Organizations and Activities.

### Eligibility Requirements for Members in Student Organizations

Each organization may determine eligibility requirements for individual students joining or participating in their organization. At a minimum, to join or participate in a student organization, a member must be enrolled as a full or part-time student at ACU. Any current conduct or academic probation may also impact a student's ability to join or participate in an organization. Further, the University reserves the right to set additional guidelines for specific organizations. Organizations admitting new members or allowing current members to participate who do not meet the above requirements may face disciplinary actions, including but not limited to loss of its student organizations status.

### ADVISORS

All student organizations must have Student Life approved advisors, including at least one full-time faculty or staff member of the University. Advisors should sign an Advisor letter agreement and return it to the Office of Student Organizations and Activities. Organizations should select advisors who are mature and responsible enough to fulfill this important role, who can attend meetings and participate in organization activities, and who are willing to enforce university policy. Advisors who are unable or unwilling to accept these responsibilities may be removed from their position. Depending on the nature of the organization, organizations may have additional requirements and responsibilities for advisors.

### Organizations' Responsibilities to Advisors

Student organizations cannot exist or prosper without active advisors. A good advisor will devote a lot of time and care to the organization. Advisors have a right to expect some things in return. Showing courtesy and respect, as well as simply following the "Golden Rule," is important in all relationships. Treatment of advisors is no exception. The following are a few specific responsibilities that organizations have toward advisors:

1. At the beginning of each semester, advisors should be told the time and place of an organization's regular meetings. From that time on, they should be sent reminders before each meeting. They must be consulted concerning any extra meetings that are called or changes in time or place of regular meetings. Many advisors have family and career responsibilities that they must consider in balancing their commitment to the organization. It is very important that advisors be given as much advance notice as

possible. Each organization should formulate a clear, consistent plan for timely communication with advisors.

2. Officers should consult with advisors when developing plans for activities. Advisors can assist and guide in determining appropriateness of activities and locations.
3. At least one advisor in each organization should be kept informed of the club's financial status, particularly during the planning stages of large events. One part of the organization's financial responsibility is to take care of expenses incurred by advisors. Attending organization activities should not be a financial burden to any advisor. The organization should pay for the actual cost of any activity, as well as all other expenses for any activity outside of Abilene.

### Advisors' Responsibilities to Organizations

1. Advisors should make an effort to be at organization meetings and activities, and be present at any event that they deem necessary. Advisors must be present at any special events as defined below unless otherwise approved. No voting is to take place without the presence of an advisor. Advisors must take some initiative in making sure that they are made aware of all meetings and activities.
2. One reason for the requirement that organizations have advisors is to provide the organization with additional wisdom and guidance in making organizational decisions. Working closely with the officers, advisors are expected to help address any problems that may arise surrounding the organization. If an advisor feels it is needed, the advisor is free to address the organization directly and make his or her feelings known. From time to time the advisor should remind the organization of the importance of being a positive part of ACU's mission and suggest how it can work as a group to reflect that mission, including following its rules and regulations. The advisor must use his or her judgment in advising officers of the organization as to discussion of events (e.g. appropriate dress for an upcoming banquet or sportsmanship on the ball field.)
3. Generally speaking, organization members will look to the advisors as individuals from whom they can learn. This is an important reason to set a good example in dress, manners, speech, attitude, etc. As advisors show that they take seriously the responsibility given them, the students will take more seriously their responsibility as organization members.
4. Be familiar with and enforce University policy.
5. Attend trainings as required by the Office of Student Organizations and Activities.

### POLICIES REGARDING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS' EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

#### Hazing

ACU's policy on hazing is simple and straightforward. ACU will not tolerate hazing as defined by Texas law. Moreover, ACU strongly discourages any action that degrades, intimidates,

humiliates or endangers any individual. The university reserves the right, for its private disciplinary purposes, to define conduct as "hazing" whether or not it would constitute hazing under the Texas law. All acts of hazing and any act that transgresses ACU's Student Handbook may receive the full range of discipline set forth by the current Student Handbook. Moreover, as set out in the Student Handbook, a student organization may also be guilty of hazing if it condones or encourages hazing, or if an officer or any group of members commits or assists in an act of hazing. In those situations, the student organization may face disciplinary actions, including but not limited to loss of its student organizations status. Ignorance of Christian principles, cultural meanings, and Texas law will not constitute immunity from appropriate University discipline.

### Sexual Abuse and Harassment

ACU's Student Handbook expressly prohibits all forms of sexual abuse and harassment. Please refer to the Student Handbook for a complete description of the option available to victims of sexual abuse or harassment and the possible penalties that the University may impose in such instances. Further, a student organization may also be guilty of sexual abuse or harassment if it condones or encourages such behavior, or if an officer or any group of members commits or assists in such acts. In those situations, the student organization may face disciplinary actions, including but not limited to loss of its student organizations status.

### Work with Minors

Student organizations may not conduct events or activities with non-enrolled minors unless one of two criteria have been met: (1) all individuals participating in the student organization activity have completed self-reporting forms and been subject to a background check or (2) the organizations institutes a "buddy system" whereby a participating minor is never left alone with only one individual participating in the student organization activity. In other words if a student organization implements a "buddy system," there is no need to complete self-reporting forms or background checks. If your organization is planning an event or activity where participants or members will have unsupervised contact with non-enrolled minors and cannot effectively implement a "buddy system," please contact the Director of Student Organization to find out more about background self-reporting forms and background checks.

### Discrimination

In accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws, student organizations are prohibited from illegally discriminating in matters of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, age, or disability. Please refer to the Student Handbook's Nondiscrimination Policy for more information. If discrimination occurs, the student organization may face disciplinary actions, including but not limited to loss of its student organizations status.

## Incident and Accident Reporting

If an incident or accident occurs in conjunction with a student organization activity, the organization should contact the Director of Student Organizations and Activities for proper reporting procedures as soon as possible.

## Risk Management

Risk management is a process of evaluating potential and perceived risks involved in an organization's activities and taking corrective actions and proactive steps to minimize accidental injury and/or loss. Student Organizations may adopt their own risk management policy addressing organization-specific procedures and guidelines to ensure that the student organization plans and hosts events and special events where everyone involved has a safe and fun experience. For questions about developing an organization-specific risk management policy, contact the Office of Student Organizations and Activities or the Legal Services Office.

## Student Organization Events and Special Events

Student organization *events* include, but are not limited to, regular meetings and other similar routine activities, while *special events* include, but are not limited to, formals, socials, events involving travel outside the city limits, events involving minors, and events outside the normal scope of day-to-day organization activities.

While student organizations should involve their advisor(s) in the planning of both events and special events, at least one advisor must be present at all special events unless otherwise approved. Moreover, all special events must be registered through the Student Organization website ([www.acu.edu/studentorganizations](http://www.acu.edu/studentorganizations)) and approved by the Director of Student Organizations. It is also strongly suggested that when planning a special event, the organization enter a contract for the services (photographers, t-shirts, etc.) and facilities being used. (See the policy regarding university contracts below).

Pursuant to the ACU Student Handbook, ACU student organizations cannot have alcohol or illegal drugs present at any student organization event or special event. Student organizations are not permitted to have or host dances; however, organizations that exhibit cultural expression through dance as part of their organizational purpose may have performances by organization members as approved by advisors and the Director of Student Organizations and Activities.

## Contracts, Releases and Waivers

Student organizations and/or their advisors do not have the authority to enter into contracts on behalf of their organization or ACU. Instead, any contract entered into by a student organization must first be reviewed by the Office of Student Organizations and Activities, as

well as the ACU Legal Services Office before being signed by one of a select number of ACU administrators. Most facilities and vendors will have a form contract. If they do not, the Legal Services Office has developed a Services Contract Form which is available at [www.acu.edu/contracts](http://www.acu.edu/contracts).

Once you have a draft contract, please send it to the Office of Student Organizations and Activities along with a completed Contract Review Sheet, available online at [www.acu.edu/studentorganizations](http://www.acu.edu/studentorganizations). This form must be signed by an advisor and the organization's president, and returned with two copies of the contract to the Office of Student Organizations and Activities. The Director of Student Organizations and Activities will forward the contract to Legal Services for review and final approval. Please allow two (2) weeks for contracts to be reviewed and returned.

Depending on the nature of the event, a release and waiver for participants in organization activities may be required by the Director of Student Organizations or requested by the organization itself. These may be obtained by contacting the office of Student Organizations and Activities.

## Travel

Recognized student organizations may make off-campus trips that are deemed appropriate and approved by the organization. Organizations must submit the online special events form any time they are traveling outside the city limits for an organization activity or event (such as conferences, field trips, socials, etc.) Students and their parents should understand that participation in such off-campus trips and activities *is at the student's own risk*.

For travel in vehicles owned by ACU, organizations must comply with the ACU Driver Policy. In order to use an ACU owned vehicle, the trip must be sponsored by a recognized ACU student organization, and an ACU employee must accompany the group. The following is also required:

- For in-town travel, drivers must be 21 years of age.
- For travel outside the Abilene City limits, drivers must be 25 years old.
- Drivers must have a minimum of 6 years driving experience and submit information needed for a motor vehicle report.
- Passenger van drivers must complete the ACU driver certification program.
- Compliance with any other stipulations given by the University.

For the complete ACU driver policy, contact the Director of Student Organizations and Activities or Physical Resources.

For travel in rented vehicles, student organizations must purchase comprehensive insurance coverage (because ACU provides no physical damage or liability coverage for non-ACU vehicles), and drivers of rented vehicles must be 21 years of age. If the organization is using a rented vehicle for out-of-town travel, the university may impose additional requirements on the organization.

Students may use their personal vehicles to travel to student organization activities within the Abilene city limits. However, the use of personal vehicles for travel to student organization activities outside of Abilene is strongly discouraged. When a personal vehicle must be used for organization travel, it is imperative that the driver and passengers understand that ACU provides no physical damage or liability coverage for non-ACU vehicles. If a student uses his or her own personal vehicle for student organization business or activity, that person's own vehicle insurance will be responsible for all liability associated with the trip.

Additionally, while not a requirement, the Office of Student Organizations and Activities advises the following in regards to all student organization travel:

- Comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws. This includes but is not limited to making sure that all drivers of personal vehicles are licensed and insured and that the vehicle is properly registered and inspected.
- Ensure passengers are seated inside any moving vehicle and secured by their own seatbelt.
- Carry a first aid kit.
- Check the vehicle prior to departing to ensure it is in proper working order (tire pressure, headlights, etc.)
- When towing a trailer or using a cargo rack, reduce vehicle speeds to below the legal limit, especially in heavy traffic and check all lights and hitches prior to departing.
- Leave an emergency telephone number with the Office of Student Organizations and Activities, along with a list of all participants.
- Set curfews for out of town trips jointly with the organization's advisors and student leaders.
- Minimize distractions by not using a cell phone or texting while driving.
- Do not drive for over 12 hours in any given 24 hour period and do not leave after 4 p.m. for a trip exceeding 8 hours or after 10 p.m. for a trip exceeding 2 hours.
- Change drivers every 2 hours.

### Political Campaign Activity

Subject to university policies on permission and scheduling, recognized student organizations may use ACU facilities for partisan political purposes, so long as they pay the usual and normal charge, if any, for such use. However, prolonged partisan use of ACU facilities should be avoided. Moreover, subject to other relevant university policies, recognized

student organizations may temporarily post political advertising (e.g. signage) on university property during their on-campus events. Student groups may also invite candidates for political office to appear in their candidate capacity only if the candidate appearance meets and adheres to the following:

- The appearance consists of speeches, question-and-answer sessions, or similar communications in an academic setting;
- No political fundraising occurs;
- It is made clear that ACU takes no position with regard to the candidate; and
- All candidates seeking the same office must be provided an equal opportunity to appear.

Any complaint regarding a violation of this political campaign activity policy must be made in writing, outlining the facts surrounding the violation and the section of the policy allegedly violated and should be submitted to the office of the VP for Student Life/Dean of Students. This section does not apply to on-campus Student Association elections, which are governed by rules established by the Student Association in consultation with Student Life.

### Gambling/Games of Chance

Illegal gambling is prohibited on ACU's campus and for ACU Students. Moreover, ACU student organizations are prohibited from conducting or organizing events that involve illegal gambling or games of chance, including raffles. However if your organization would like to host a mock gambling event, (i.e. Texas Hold 'Em competitions or a mock casino night) contact the Director of Student Organizations and Activities for approval. Events will only be approved if the organization can show the event does not constitute illegal gambling and fits within the mission of the University.

### T-Shirts and Other Products

Student organizations desiring to sell or distribute t-shirts or other products must obtain the written approval of their advisor and the Director of Student Organizations and Activities before the t-shirts are printed or the products are ordered.

T-shirts should be in good taste and not be questionable or inappropriate in design. Designs and messages on all products must be in good taste; student organizations may not sell or distribute any product that would embarrass the University in view of her constituencies, conflict with the private aims of the University as a Christian institution of higher learning, or violate any of the University's existing contractual obligations. Designs including ACU's name and/or trademarks must also be reviewed by Creative Services. Designs may be submitted electronically or in person to the Director of Student Organizations and Activities after they have been approved by an organization advisor.

## ACU Mailbox

Student organizations are required to have an ACU mailbox used for organization purposes. Organizations should have their own mailbox. The annual cost for an ACU mailbox is \$47. There are many benefits to having a mailbox on campus: newsletters are mailed for no charge (make sure they are in mailbox order), others are able to easily contact the organization, the Office of Student Organizations and Activities may make easy contact, and it gives the organization stability from year to year. If an organization does not want a mailbox specific for their use, they must use the mailbox of an on-campus advisor.

## Advertising

Advertising on myACU student announcements and the Student Events calendar is a privilege for recognized Student Organizations. Announcements and events should be submitted to the Director of Student Organizations and Activities. Any flyers to be posted in and around campus must be approved by the Director of Student Organizations and Activities and the appropriate building personnel in which the flyers are displayed.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Any questions or clarifications may be directed to the Student Organizations and Activities Office.

121 McKinzie Hall  
ACU Box 29004  
325-674-2069 (office)  
325-674-6475 (fax)  
[www.acu.edu/studentorganizations](http://www.acu.edu/studentorganizations)