

Departmental Sponsorship of Registered Student Organization Events or Activities Minimum Requirements

A University department may choose to sponsor some or all of a registered student organization's (RSO's) events and activities. A department electing to sponsor an RSO event or activity should ensure that the nature and extent of the sponsorship is clearly understood by both the department and the organization. In order to sponsor an RSO event or activity, a department must adhere to the following practices:

(Special Notes: If the student organization is a formal part of University Housing, Wisconsin Union Directorate/Hoofers, or Recreational Sports, the policies and procedures established by those units must be followed. If a student organization receives funding through the SSFC student government allocation process, additional financial restrictions imposed with that funding must be followed.)

Advisor/Direct Supervision: A University employee must be appointed to provide "direct supervision" of the RSO program or activity that is being co-sponsored by the department. The chair of the department and the Dean/Director of the School/College involved must be aware of the appointment.

Liability: In order for student organization events/activities to have University liability coverage, members of the student organization must be filling the role of an agent of the University. The member's agency derives from the direction and control received from the University department and in benefit to the University in fulfillment of the University mission. Therefore, the advisor shall provide direct supervision of the group's activities. Coverage can only be extended to events/activities that correlate with the University mission. If you have questions about coverage, the risk management office should be consulted.
Recommendation: It is recommended that the department obtain appropriate review of, and an authorized University signature for, any contracts or legal agreements that pertain to a departmentally sponsored activity of the student organization.

Expenditures: If your department chooses to sponsor a student organization's event or activities, state funds may not co-mingle with an "outside" checking account maintained by the RSO. Any funds controlled by the department to support the RSO's activities, must be paid directly to the vendor from whom goods/services are purchased on behalf of the RSO activities. Property purchased with departmental funds for the benefit of an RSO remains the property of the department, not the RSO. **Recommendation:** If your department "sponsors" an RSO, assists financially with their activities, and the RSO has an outside checking account, it is recommended that the outside checking accounts be used primarily to pay for social activities and expenses that the department or other grants will not fund. It is beneficial for the sponsoring department to pay for any durable goods, such as a personal computer or video camera, to ensure that these items are insured as university property and are available for subsequent groups of students that may be sponsored by the department.

Revenue other than gifts and donations: Student organizations may receive revenue from sources other than gifts and donations. Examples include membership fees charged by the organization or sales of goods, such as t-shirts. If these revenues are earned as a result of an event/activity that is being sponsored or co-sponsored by your department, by state statute, these revenues must be deposited to a university account and then must be expended by your department in support of the student organization to the extent agreed to between your department and the student organization. If the student organization conducts these revenue producing activities without departmental sponsorship, the revenue may be deposited to the outside checking account of the student organization or deposited in a university account.

Acceptance of gifts and donations on behalf of the RSO: Most student organizations are not eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions on their own. Gifts and donations in support of a departmentally-sponsored RSO event or activity are tax deductible to the donor if accepted by a department via the University's Gift or Gift-In-Kind processes, or designated to the department's UW Foundation account. Therefore, if a departmentally-sponsored RSO asks a department to accept a donation or gift on its behalf, it will be the decision of the department on whether or not to accept it and whether to accept the gift/donation internally or direct it to the department's UW Foundation account. Proceeds from the gift/donation must be deposited into and expended from a University account, even where the gift/donation is accepted by the UW Foundation on behalf of the department's RSO.

Use of Fleet Vehicles: University departments may reserve fleet vehicles on behalf of a student organization, only if it is for official University business.