



Establishing and Maintaining a University Chartered Student Organization (UCSO)

No. 8012

Policy Effective Date:
8/12/1992

Last Revision Date:
1/25/2024

Policy Owner:
Frances Keene

Policy Author: (*Contact Person*)
James Bridgeforth

Affected Parties:
Undergraduate
Graduate

- 1.0 Purpose
- 2.0 Policy
- 3.0 Procedures
- 4.0 Definitions
- 5.0 References
- 6.0 Approval and Revisions

1.0 Purpose

This policy exists to provide the university community a consistent process to establish and maintain University Chartered Student Organizations and to provide the university community with accurate information about the various organizations affiliated with Virginia Tech.

2.0 Policy

A **University Chartered Student Organization (UCSO)** is an organization that has significant campus impact through providing resources and/or services that are best delivered by students in conjunction with their sponsoring campus department. This classification of organization must align with, and is integral to, departmental and university missions to create robust student experiences. The impact and resources must meet a recognized institutional and student need. The Undergraduate Student Senate (USS) and the Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) are a special type of UCSO and operate slightly differently from other UCSOs, as described herein.

2.1 Creation and Approval of a Non-Senate UCSO

1. If an institutional need arises, and it is determined that UCSO status could be considered as an appropriate response, a proposal from the director, or their delegate, of the organization's home department will be given to Student Engagement and Campus Life. The proposal will include an extensive evaluation of the student organization's mission, relationship to university mission and goals, a draft of an organization constitution, and the overall purpose, scope, and complexity of its activities. This proposal will be extensively reviewed and assessed, by Student Engagement and Campus Life (SECL) and the Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA), or their delegate, and a recommendation will be made to the Commission on Undergraduate Student Affairs (CUSA) in the form of a resolution. A majority vote of CUSA in favor of the proposed UCSO is required for approval of the UCSO.
2. In order to be considered for, and maintain, UCSO status, an organization must meet the following criteria:
 - a. Operate with the support and guidance of a university division or department
 - b. Have an Advisor, appointed by the division or department within whom the organization is operating, whose job description designates them as the Advisor to the UCSO
 - c. Be previously established as a Registered Student Organization (RSO), in good standing, for a minimum of five years
 - d. Seventy-five percent of total organizational membership must be currently enrolled Virginia Tech students



Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- e. Have a constitution that includes purposes, officers, and primary functions of the organization. Constitutions must be updated and reviewed by CUSA, at a minimum, every five years.
 - f. Meet a minimum of one of the two following, as referenced in the Definitions (4.0).
 - Mission must show documented significant reach to the student population
 - Carry a high level of complexity in accomplishing the mission of the work
3. Requirements for Maintenance of Non-Senate UCSO Status
- To maintain UCSO classification, UCSOs shall be required to abide by all procedures and policies established by the university regarding UCSOs, and all policies set forth through the Student Activity Fee Allocation Board. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- a. Meet the aforementioned criteria for UCSOs at all times.
 - b. Submit annual registration forms to Student Engagement and Campus Life no later than the date established by the department. Student Engagement and Campus Life will review and record all completed information for inclusion in the student organizations database.
 - c. Update or change officer information within the organization database.
 - d. Undergo a review process every three years initiated by Student Engagement and Campus Life to assure the organization continues to meet UCSO criteria.

2.2 Creation and Approval of a Senate UCSO

The Undergraduate Student Senate (USS) and Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) exist, respectively, to serve and represent the collective voice of the undergraduate and graduate/professional student populations. These senates are formal bodies within the university's system of shared governance, each with its own constitution and bylaws. As such, the charges for these senates and procedures for approving changes to their constitutions and bylaws are specified in the University Council Constitution and Bylaws. The membership of each student senate consists entirely of currently enrolled Virginia Tech students.

3.0 Operating Procedures for all UCSOs (Senates and Non-Senates)

3.1 UCSO Contracts

1. The university shall only enter into contracts on behalf of a UCSO in specified circumstances agreed to in advance by the UCSO, the Procurement Department, and those university officials who have authority to enter into a contract on behalf of the university.
2. All contracts entered into on behalf of a UCSO must comply with [Policy 3015, University Contract Signature Policy and Procedures](#), and [Policy 3220, Direct Payment Procedures](#).
3. Contracts entered into by the university must be reviewed by University Legal Counsel.
4. Virginia Public Procurement Act (VPPA) will not apply to the routine purchases and contracts of the UCSO that do not involve the university.



3.2 Sources of Funding and Location of Accounts

1. UCSO funding should come from multiple sources including student activity fees allocation, generated revenue, and other non-university funding. A UCSO is eligible for student activity fee allocations only through the Student Activity Fee Allocation Board or its successor.
2. The UCSO shall maintain all financial accounts through Student Organization Accounting. UCSO financial data shall be available to appropriate university officials, student organization officers, and Advisors.
3. A USCO must follow Virginia Tech Funds Handling and UCSO Cash Receipts Guidelines and Procedures.

3.3 Tax Identification and Status

The UCSO shall not use the university tax identification number at any time but must establish its own Internal Revenue Service tax identification number and status for use with Student Organization Accounting.

3.4 Use of University Name

The UCSO shall not represent itself as an agent of the university or use names, logos, symbols, or seals of the university without the expressed written permission from Virginia Tech Licensing and Trademarks. These organizations would be affiliated “with” or “of” Virginia Tech, such as Student Government Association of Virginia Tech.

3.5 Advisor

The UCSO is required to maintain a faculty/staff Advisor who is appointed by the sponsoring department head, dean, the Vice President for Student Affairs, or Provost. All appointed faculty/staff Advisors act on behalf of the university as part of their duties and responsibilities as employees of the university. The primary work of the UCSO faculty/staff Advisor includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Regular contact by the Advisor with the leaders of the organization, including those students directly involved in sponsoring particular programs. These expectations will be reflected in the official position description.
2. Provide planned skill training to the group based, in part, on the purpose, scope, and complexities of the organization’s mission and work.
3. Awareness and monitoring of all financial decisions for the organization. Student Organization Accounting will administer the funds for organizations. The Advisor and an officer of the organization will co-sign all vouchers.

4.0 Definitions

1. **Advisor:** A full-time, appointed professional member of the university community that provides continual education, advising, and direction to the student organization.
2. **Significant Reach:** Provides a service, resource, and/or events and programs for the entire campus.
3. **High Level of Complexity:** The activities of the student organization carry high levels of fiscal, physical, contractual, and/or emotional complexity.



5.0 References

Policy 3015, University Contract Signature Policy and Procedures
www.policies.vt.edu/3015.pdf

Policy 3220, Direct Payment Procedures
www.policies.vt.edu/3220.pdf

Policy 8010, Classification of Student Organizations
www.policies.vt.edu/8010.pdf

University Council Constitution and Bylaws
[Governance | Constitution and Bylaws \(vt.edu\)](http://www.vt.edu/governance/constitution-and-bylaws)

6.0 Approval and Revisions

Approved August 12, 1992, by the Vice President for Student Affairs, Thomas G. Goodale.

- Revision 1
Changed name from "Student Organizations" to "Leadership and Student Organization Programs (LSOP)."
- Revision 2
 - Added Section 2.10, Judicial Policy.
 - Changed name from "Leadership and Student Organization Programs (LSOP)" to "Student Activities."
 - Changed name from "Central Accounting" to "Student Organization Accounting."Approved February 26, 1999, by Vice President for Student Affairs, Landrum L. Cross.
- Revision 3
Changed name from "Office of Student Activities" to "Student Activities Office."
Approved April 19, 2002 by Vice President for Student Affairs, Landrum L. Cross.
- Revision 4
Section 2.10 Student Conduct Policy – Revised to clarify process a student organization which loses university recognition through student conduct action must complete before recognition can be restored by the university.
Approved November 28, 2011 by Vice President for Student Affairs, Edward F. D. Spencer.
- Revision 5
Changed name from "University Unions and Student Activities," to "Student Centers and Activities."
Approved July 27, 2013, by Vice President for Student Affairs, Patricia A. Perillo.
- Revision 6
Clarification of general content to correlate with policies 8000 and 8005.
Approved February 11, 2015 by Vice President for Student Affairs, Patricia A. Perillo.



Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- Revision 7
 - Changed from Student Centers and Activities (SCA) to Student Engagement and Campus Life (SECL)
 - Minor updates to section 1, purpose
 - Major edits to section 2, including definition of a University Chartered Student Organization
 - Major edits to section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 including revisions to the creation and maintenance of a University Chartered Student Organization
 - Major edits to section 2.2 including criteria for the maintenance of a University Chartered Student Organization
 - Minor edits to section 2.3 including updated language and referencing other necessary VT policies.
 - Minor edits to section 2.7 including language around the role and relationship of the advisor.
 - Added definitions of appointed advisor, significant reach, and high level of complexity

Approved June 6, 2018 by Vice President for Student Affairs, Patricia A. Perillo.

- Revision 8
 - Added language to Section 2.0 clarifying that the student senates are a special type of UCSO and operate slightly differently from other UCSOs.
 - Minor edits to section 2.1 update to language changing from Commission on Student Affairs (CSA) to Commission on Undergraduate Student Affairs (CUSA) and specifying that approval of a non-senate UCSO rests with CUSA.
 - Addition of new section 2.2 explaining that the student senates are official bodies in the university's shared governance system, and as such, their charges, and the processes for approving changes to their constitutions and bylaws are governed by the University Council Constitution and Bylaws.

Approved by the Vice President for Student Affairs, Frances Keene, on January 25, 2024.