

Student Organization Universal Recognition Policy

This policy constitutes the University procedure for the conferral of recognition of all student organizations at Cornell University. It applies to all university student organizations (USO), general student organizations (GSO), and sorority and fraternity student organizations (SFSO), whether residential or non-residential. Provided the organization meets the requirements for recognition, and without necessarily approving or disapproving of an organization's goals and activities, the University will provide certain benefits and privileges. However, the benefits and privileges extended to all recognized student organizations under this, or any other University policy, are subject to the availability of University resources for the purposes specified and the organization's continued compliance with this policy. Recognition pursuant to this policy does not constitute an endorsement by Cornell of a particular student organization or its activities.

This policy may be amended at any time by action of the Vice President for Student and Campus Life or designee.

A. Student Organization Types:

There are three broad categories of student organizations at Cornell:

1. **University Student Organizations (USO)**– are affiliated with and sponsored by a university department or unit. USO activities fully relate to the educational, research, and/or community-service missions of the university and to the goals or objectives of the university department or unit with which they are affiliated. The department or unit acknowledges the organization as part of its operations, approves and oversees the organization's activities, and has assigned a staff or faculty member to advise the group as a part of their job responsibilities.
2. **General Student Organizations (GSO)** are formed by students based on a shared interest or activity. **GSOs are independent legal entities responsible for their own actions and meeting their own legal duties and obligations.** The members of each organization adopt a constitution, select officers, and establish a meeting schedule suitable to meet the goals of the organization, as determined by its members and consistent with applicable university policies. Each GSO is advised by a volunteer staff or faculty member whose duties and responsibilities, and/or university job description, do not require service as an advisor to that organization. Advisors work with organizations on their own time. GSOs qualify for Club Insurance coverage through the payment of the Student Activity Fee.
3. **Sorority and Fraternity Student Organizations (SFSO)** are chapters of a national organization. **Sororities and fraternities are independent legal entities responsible for their own actions and meeting their own legal duties and obligations.** They may either be residential or non-residential and may be located on or off campus. Sororities and fraternities belong to one of the three governing councils at Cornell (the Multicultural Greek & Fraternal Council, the Interfraternity Council, and the Panhellenic Council). Sorority & Fraternity Life (SFL) provides resources and support to the chapters and councils in partnership with local and regional advisors and national headquarters and supports the sorority and fraternity community at Cornell.

Recognition does not alter the legal relationship between the university and a GSO or SFSO, each of which is and remains an independent legal entity responsible for its own actions and for meeting its own legal duties and obligations. Cornell does not assume any legal responsibility for the supervision or control of GSO or SFSO activities and operations but reserves the right to withdraw the privileges conferred by this policy and to take such other appropriate action, including but not limited to exercising control over activities and operations occurring on its property or over misconduct subject to the Student Code of Conduct.

B. Fundamental Conditions of Recognition for All Student Organizations:

Regardless of type, all student organizations at Cornell are subject to the following conditions of recognition:

1. **All student organizations must abide by federal, state, and local law, as well as all applicable University policies, rules, and regulations.**
 - All student organizations are collectively responsible for the behavior of their members when acting as a group, which includes the behavior of members when in a residence owned or controlled by the organization.
 - All student organizations must annually review and maintain familiarity with all applicable University policies, rules, and regulations, including the Student Code of Conduct, which applies to all recognized student organizations.
 - Certain university policies, rules, and regulations apply uniquely to USOs, GSOs or SFSOs. The VPSCS or their designee may adopt additional standards and procedures applicable to all or only one type of recognized organization at any time as deemed necessary or appropriate.
2. **No student organization that discriminates on the basis of any legally protected status shall obtain or maintain University recognition.**
 - While organizations are permitted to be subjectively selective in their membership, consistent with federal, state, and local law, and university policy, no student organization shall discriminate on the basis of race, ethnic or national origin, citizenship and immigration status, color, sex/gender, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, age, creed, religion, actual or perceived disability (including persons associated with such a person), arrest and/or conviction record, military or veteran status, sexual orientation, gender expression and/or identity, an individual's genetic information, domestic violence victim status, familial status, marital status, and any other legally protected class. The following narrow exceptions apply:
 - SFSOs shall be entitled to single-sex membership consistent with regulations promulgated pursuant to Title IX of the U.S. Education Act Amendments of 1972 and such other laws or regulations as may apply.
 - A club sport student organization may restrict membership based on gender where selection for such clubs is based upon competitive athletic skill or the activity involved is a contact sport.

- Organizations may also make requirements based on vocal range or quality, which may result in a chorus or choruses of one or predominantly one gender.
3. **Student organizations may not implement, engage in or otherwise tolerate any hazing activities pursuant to the Student Code of Conduct.**
 4. **Membership in any student organization must be voluntary and is limited to full-time, matriculated undergraduate and graduate students who have commenced attendance at Ithaca based campuses.**
 - Members may disassociate at any time following reasonable procedures established by the organization.
 - Students on leave of absence or who are studying abroad or at a location other than their home campus (i.e., Ithaca, Geneva or Cornell Tech) may not serve as officers, executive board members, or hold voting positions in any recognized student organization while on leave or studying abroad or away.
 - When permitted by their inter-national organization, an SFSO may be eligible to draw their membership from other local institutions of higher education if approved to do so by the VP SCL or their designee. However, only the membership drawn from Cornell's student body will be recognized as the official fraternity and sorority chapter; participants from outside the University will be considered "guests" of the fraternity or sorority. The president (or equivalent position) of the group must be a Cornell student.
 - Some organizations are subject to additional requirements regarding new member selection and pre-initiation/selection activities (e.g., SFSOs are subject to the Deferred Recruitment Policy overseen by SFL). The university may also impose ad hoc requirements on membership activities related to new member selection and pre-initiation/selection activities based on information provided by the organization or others in order to maintain public order and safety.
 5. **The purpose(s) of a student organization may not conflict with the educational functions or established policies of the University and, generally, should not duplicate the purpose and/or functions of an existing student organization or operate solely to carry out a single activity or initiative, such as an event.**
 6. **All student organizations are required to have an advisor.**
 - Advisors must be familiar with the organization's constitution, activities, and membership, as well as the applicable policies and procedures of Cornell University. Advisors are expected to serve as continuing resources to the organization, providing advice and guidance to the organization in reaching its stated goals and planning and conducting its activities.
 - Advisors to USOs and GSOs must be full-time faculty or staff at their respective Cornell campuses.
 - Certain exceptions are granted for SFSO chapter advisors.
 - Graduate students may not serve as advisors to GSOs but may be appointed by a sponsoring university unit to advise a USO provided that appointment is not under University Policy 1.3.
 - GSO advisors are not responsible for managing or supervising the GSO.
 - USO advisors oversee and approve all USO activities consistent with Campus Activities or

- equivalent department guidelines
- Residential SFSOs are required to have a chapter advisor consistent with SFL guidelines.

7. All student organizations must register on campus events with the university.

- Off campus travel must follow the off-campus travel policy (University Policy 3.2).
- SFSOs are subject to additional SFL policies and requirements governing their events, including social events.
- GSO, USO, and SFSOs are permitted to host events during the academic year. Events may not be hosted during finals week.

C. Benefits of Recognition

All recognized student organizations have the following benefits:

- 1. Use of the University's Name and Symbols.** All recognized student organizations are permitted, but not required, to use the University's name and symbols in accordance with University Policy 4.10, Use of Cornell's Name, Logos, Trademarks, and Insignias, including with respect to any publications (i.e. newsletter, brochure, newspaper, etc.). Recognized student organizations must comply with [all Cornell University brand guidelines](#) when using the university name, logo, and/or artwork and submit their naming and logos for review and approval by University Relations consistent with Policy 4.10.
- 2. Use of University Facilities.**
 - All recognized student organizations are eligible to license University facilities (such as meeting rooms, event spaces, and playing fields) subject to availability and the University policies and procedures governing the use of such facilities.
 - SFSOs may operate a residential program in a university-owned residence pursuant to the terms of an operating agreement between the SFSO and the university, consistent with the 2003 Board of Trustee Statement of Policy relating to Fraternity and Sorority Use of University Housing.

USOs and GSOs receive the following additional benefits:

- 1. Student Activity Fee Funding Eligibility.**
 - To be eligible to receive any funds from the student activities fee collected and administered by the University and Student Assembly, the USO or GSO must comply with the provisions adopted by the Student Assembly, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly and/or one of the designated Primary Funding Boards.
 - If the USO or GSO receives any funding, it shall comply with these provisions and related requirements administered by Campus Activities or equivalent department, the Student Assembly, and/or the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly pursuant to the powers delegated to them.
 - The USO or GSO will assure that all bills incurred related to the organization's events are submitted within 30 days of the event or sooner if funding deadlines dictate an earlier date.

GSOs and SFSOs receive the following additional benefit:

2. Qualified Second Year Housing Eligibility.

- GSOs and SFSOs (as well as university-owned co-ops) are eligible to house second year students pursuant to the terms of the [Residential Policy](#).

GSOs have the following additional benefit:

3. Club Insurance Eligibility

- GSOs are eligible for club insurance offered through the university.

D. Process for Obtaining Recognition:

USOs and GSOs: During each academic year, a designated period exists wherein students are allowed to submit applications to SCL to establish [new organizations](#). This process ensures the establishment of a strong foundational framework for the prospective organization, thereby enabling successful operation. SCL, in collaboration with campus affiliates and departments, engages in a thorough assessment process to discern the classification of an organization as either a GSO or USO.

SFSOs: SFSOs obtaining recognition for the first time or after a loss of recognition or for the first time are subject to the [Expansion Policy](#) for Sororities and Fraternities as a part of a process overseen by SFL.

As a part of the Campus Activities (or equivalent department) and SFL processes for obtaining recognition, student organizations seeking recognition will have to meet the requirements annually for maintaining recognition detailed below.

E. Maintaining Recognition: To maintain recognition, on an annual basis each recognized student organization must:

1. **Complete the Annual Registration Process in CampusGroups.** This process includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Acknowledging and agreeing to compliance with all the conditions of recognition and requirements to enjoy the benefits of recognition as set forth in this policy.
 - Certifying its status as a not-for-profit New York State corporation, an unincorporated association existing under the laws of New York pursuant to its constitution, another legal identity separate from Cornell or, in the case of USOs, as under the sponsorship of a university department or unit.
 - Submitting the organization's most recent constitution and purpose.
 - Registering, at a minimum, advisor, president, vice president, and treasurer or equivalent positions.
 - Updating membership (and continue to update membership throughout the year), maintaining a minimum of 10 total club members on file. (exemptions may be granted for SFSOs at the discretion of the VP SCL or designee and full rosters for SFSOs are managed outside of this process)
 - Complete all trainings required for registration.

2. **Review and Maintain Familiarity with University Policies applicable to recognized student organizations.** A non-exclusive list of such policies and corresponding guidance and highlights is maintained by [Campus Activities](#) and Sorority and Fraternity Life.
3. **Review and Maintain Familiarity with Campus Activities (or equivalent department) and SFL Policies and Guidance.** This includes but is not limited to policies, rules, and guidance regarding event registration, facilities use, reserving space, maintaining accounts, funding guidelines, and working with minors.
4. **Attend All Required Trainings.** Campus Activities (or equivalent department) and SFL trainings are mandatory and must be completed for any recognized student organization to adequately review and maintain familiarity with the policies, rules, regulations and guidance applicable to recognized student organizations. Certain university policies, rules, and regulations apply uniquely to USOs, GSOs or SFSOs and training requirements are tailored to reflect this.

In addition, certain categories of USOs and GSOs (e.g. Interfaith organizations, Club Sports, Professional Fraternities/Sororities, are subject to specific requirements, reflective of their unique interest, established by Campus Activities or equivalent department at their discretion (e.g. maintaining membership in a council, attending specialized trainings, agreeing to the Sports Club addendum).

In addition, each recognized SFSO must:

4. **Complete SFL's Supplemental Registration Process.** This includes but is not limited to:
 - Articulating common goals and standards by the University and chapter.
 - Adherence to [SFL Policies](#) that include, but are not limited to, the SFL Insurance Policy, Expansion Policy, Social Event Policy, and the Deferred Recruitment Policy.
 - Maintaining membership in an undergraduate council (MGFC, IFC, PHC) and compliance with relevant council governance requirements.
 - Complying with the four-week New Member Program and agreeing to submit recruitment and new member education plans to SFL semesterly.
 - Complying with SFL Supplemental Recognition Requirements.

Withdrawal of Recognition

Recognition may be withdrawn at any time for non-compliance with this policy. The University reserves the right to suspend or terminate recognition for the relevant academic year if SCL, in its sole discretion, determines a student organization has not complied with the necessary requirements to maintain recognition, separate from and regardless of whether a disciplinary referral is made to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for misconduct covered under the Student Code of Conduct. Non-compliant student organizations will be given written notice of the reasons for such determination and will be given an opportunity to respond. All decisions made by SCL are final.

In some cases, a national organization may determine organizational status that may cause the withdrawal of recognition.