

MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY



RSO HANDBOOK
2025–2026

Welcome and Purpose	3
What is a Registered Student Organization (RSO)	3
Officer Roles & Election Guidelines	4
Advisor Guidelines	4
Registration, Renewal, and Inactivity Policy	4
Event Planning & Facility Reservation	6
Financial Procedures & Funding Sources	7
Social Media Guidelines & Branding	8
Campus Posting & Publicity Guidelines	9
Code of Conduct	11
Compliance Expectations	11
Travel	12
FAQs	12
Forms & Templates	12
RSO Financial Accountability & Index Code Requirement	13
RSO Handbook Revision Procedures	13

Welcome and Purpose

Welcome to the vibrant community of Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) at Missouri Southern State University (MSSU)! RSOs play a vital role in enriching campus life by promoting leadership development, service, and school spirit. Whether you're starting a new group or leading an existing one, your involvement makes a meaningful impact on our campus culture.

This handbook is designed to support both students and advisors by providing clear guidance, essential resources, and helpful tools for creating and maintaining effective, engaging organizations. Inside, you'll find information on the registration process, event planning, financial management, and University policies that apply to RSOs.

All student organizations are coordinated through the Student Activities Office (SAO), located in Billingsly Student Center (BSC), Room 210. The SAO maintains the master list of RSOs via LionLink and is responsible for reviewing, registering, and recognizing all student groups affiliated with MSSU.

University recognition is required for RSOs to access campus facilities, sponsor activities, receive funding opportunities, and participate in University-wide programs.

We're excited to have you involved and look forward to seeing your organization thrive!

Sincerely,

Samantha Sweet
Director of Student Activities

What is a Registered Student Organization (RSO)

An RSO is a student-led group officially recognized by the University that operates in alignment with its mission, policies, and student development goals. RSOs are supported by the SAO and gain access to campus resources, funding opportunities, and promotional platforms.

Officer Roles & Election Guidelines

Each RSO must have, at minimum, two designated officers to be recognized: one primary contact (typically a President) and one individual responsible for managing the organization's finances (typically a Treasurer). While the official titles of "President" and "Treasurer" are not required, these functions must be clearly defined within the group.

Most organizations elect officers in early April, allowing a transition period through the end of the academic year. Others may hold elections in November, transitioning leadership before the winter holiday break. It is up to each organization to determine the election timeline that works best for them, but all officer information must be kept current in LionLink.

Typical officer roles include:

- **President** – Oversees daily operations, presides over meetings, and serves as the primary liaison with University offices.
- **Vice President** – Supports the president, manages committees, and coordinates events.
- **Treasurer** – Manages the organization's finances, submits funding requests, and maintains budget records.
- **Secretary** – Keeps meeting minutes, oversees internal communications, and maintains organizational records.

Effective leadership ensures the success and sustainability of the organization. If officer roles change throughout the year, be sure to update LionLink.

Advisor Guidelines

Each organization must have a full-time MSSU faculty, or professional staff member serve as the on-campus advisor. This advisor should be selected by the organization and must complete the Advisor's Agreement Form annually. The Advisor must be current on Title IX & FERPA training and be a signatory to the organization's bank account. Advisors serve as mentors and University liaisons. Responsibilities include:

- Attending applicable meetings or having a backup in place if you are unable to attend.
- Providing guidance on University policies.
- Booking all events and meeting spaces in EMS.
- Reviewing and approving financial and travel requests.
- Supporting leadership development.

Registration, Renewal, and Inactivity Policy

Registering a New RSO

Students interested in forming a new RSO must complete the following steps:

1. **Gather Interest** - Recruit at least five currently enrolled MSSU students as founding members. Consult with the Office of Student Activities in Billingsly Student Center, Room 210, to ensure against unnecessary duplication with similar organizations and to see if an organization of this type has existed in the past.
2. **Secure an Advisor** - Identify a full-time MSSU faculty or professional staff member willing to serve as the organization's advisor.
3. **Draft Governing Documents** - Create a constitution and bylaws outlining the group's mission, membership criteria, officer roles, and operating procedures.
***Examples can be found in LionLink via the Organizations tab in the "1. Student Activities at MOSO!" section.
4. **Submit the New RSO Application** - Complete and submit the New RSO Application Form, available on LionLink.
5. **Attend Orientation** - At least one officer (preferably two) and the RSO Advisor must attend the mandatory RSO Orientation hosted by the SAO.
6. **Await Approval** - The SAO will review your application and notify you promptly.

Important Dates

Applications for new RSOs are accepted beginning in August through the second Friday in September. Applications submitted after this deadline require special approval from the SAO.

Annual Renewal of Existing RSOs

To maintain active status, RSOs must renew their registration each academic year by the last day of the Spring semester. The renewal process includes:

- Updating officer and advisor contact information
- Confirming or revising the organization's constitution and bylaws
- Submitting the RSO Renewal Form through LionLink
- Ensuring at least one representative and the RSO Advisor attends the annual RSO Orientation.

The renewal form is made available in April to support officer transitions and summer planning.

Inactivity Policy

- **One Semester of Inactivity** - If an RSO fails to submit the required Recap Form or host any meetings/events during a semester, it will be deactivated from LionLink, and lose privileges to accessing room reservations, and other University resources. To regain active status, the organization must contact the SAO.
- **One Year of Inactivity** - If an RSO remains inactive for a full calendar year, it will be removed from LionLink. To regain recognition, members must complete the new RSO application process from the beginning.

Disbanding an RSO

If an RSO decides to disband or dissolve:

- The President and/or Advisor must notify the SAO in writing.
- Any remaining financial accounts must be properly closed by the end of the academic year.
- RSOs that fail to complete the renewal process or comply with MSSU policies may lose official recognition.

Event Planning & Facility Reservation

RSOs may host events and reserve campus facilities, provided all proper procedures are followed. The event planning process ensures that events are safe, well-coordinated, and aligned with University policies.

Steps to Plan an Event

1. RSO Officer or Advisor Must Request/Create a New Activity in Suitable:
 - a. Login to LionLink
 - b. Click the “Activities” Tab
 - c. Click on “Request New Activity”
 - d. Follow process
 - i. When titling your event, begin the title with your RSO Name or Acronym
 - ii. Under the “Associations” section in the details of your event, make sure to select your RSO from the dropdown menu under “Student Organization” to make sure the event is tagged to your RSO.
 1. If your RSO’s name is not available, reach out to the SAO for assistance as soon as possible.
2. Advisor Must Request an Event Space
 - a. Request made via [EMS](#)
 - b. Follow process – provide necessary details
 - c. Await approval
 - d. Confirmation will be sent to RSO Advisor
3. Advisor Must Coordinate Logistics & Services
 - a. Charges for after-hours services (i.e. custodial support, IT assistance, etc.) will be billed to your RSO’s on-campus index account.
 - b. If your event includes food, a custodian is required, and a [Catering Request](#) through Fresh Ideas must be submitted two weeks in advance. Any catering requests, regardless of vendor, must be approved by Fresh Ideas. Related fees may include setup, takedown, and cleanup.
4. Promote the Event
 - a. Follow University marketing and publicity guidelines outlined in this handbook.
 - b. All physical promotional materials must be stamped and approved by the SAO before being posted on campus.
5. Wait for Final Approval
 - a. Do not consider your event officially confirmed until you receive approval from the SAO.

By following these steps and communicating early with the SAO, you'll ensure your event runs smoothly and meets all institutional requirements.

Financial Procedures & Funding Sources

RSOs at MSSU may manage and utilize funds from a variety of sources, including membership dues, fundraising efforts, sponsorships, and Student Senate appropriations. To ensure transparency and compliance with University policies, RSOs must follow one of the two financial management options listed below and adhere to all applicable financial procedures.

Financial Account Options

- **On-Campus Activity Account** MSSU offers on-campus activity accounts for the convenience of RSOs. To establish an account:
 - The RSO's Advisor must serve as the budget authority and approve all financial transactions.
 - The Advisor will work with the Bursar's Office to open the account.
 - All RSO funds must be deposited into this account, and University purchasing policies must be followed.
 - The University is a tax-exempt agency. Items purchased through on-campus accounts may be tax-exempt if done properly.
- **Off-Campus Checking Account** RSOs may maintain their own off-campus checking accounts and purchasing procedures. To establish an account:
 - The RSO's Advisor must serve as the budget authority and approve all financial transactions.
 - The account must ***not*** use the name of MSSU.
 - The University assumes no financial or legal responsibility for funds in off-campus accounts.

****The University will not reimburse taxes on purchases for off-campus accounts****

Important Contacts

- **Financial Services Office (Hearnes Hall 211):** 417-625-9512
- **Bursar's Office (Hearnes Hall 105):** 417-625-9381

Sources of Funding

- **Membership Dues** - Some RSOs assess dues to generate operating funds. These may include one-time fees, recurring charges, or national affiliation fees. If required, dues must be stated in the organization's constitution or bylaws.
- **On-Campus Fundraising Projects** - All fundraisers must be approved in advance:
 - Follow the Event Planning and Facility Reservation steps above.

- While we support your fundraising efforts, the University does not accept liability for merchandise or monetary losses that may occur.

Sponsorships

- **Primary Responsibility** - RSOs are responsible for identifying, proposing, and initiating contact with potential sponsors. Officers should ensure that the proposed sponsorship aligns with the RSO's mission and does not conflict with University policies or values.
- **Required Advisor Review & Approval** - All sponsorships must be reviewed and approved by the RSO's faculty/staff advisor before any agreements are finalized. Advisors are expected to consider the reputation, appropriateness, and potential impact of the sponsor on the University community.
- **Final Approval by Student Activities** - Once advisor approval is granted, RSOs must submit sponsorship proposals to the SAO for final review. This ensures consistency with University policies, prevents conflicts with institutional sponsorships, and protects all parties involved.
- **Liability & Endorsement Disclaimer** - Approval of a sponsorship does not imply University endorsement of the sponsor or its products/services. The University assumes no financial or reputational liability related to third-party sponsorships secured by RSOs.

Student Senate Funds

To request funding from Student Senate:

- The RSO must be officially recognized and in active status.
- The RSO must have an active financial account—either on or off campus.
- Appropriation Request Forms must be submitted online. QR code provided in SAO office.
- RSOs must comply with Student Senate policies as outlined in the Student Senate Constitution.
- Appropriations are available for trips, events, and capital improvements that benefit the student body.

Key Appropriation Rules

- All purchases must match the original funding request.
- Personal gain purchases are strictly prohibited.
- RSOs must submit original itemized receipts. Photocopies or digital versions will not be accepted.
- RSOs are not reimbursed for sales tax.

Social Media Guidelines & Branding

Account administrators should represent their Student Organization in a positive and professional light. Posts should be accurate and not misleading. If a mistake is made, it should be

corrected promptly. Keep in mind that an inactive or poorly managed social media account can reflect negatively on the Student Organization.

Administrators of Student Organization accounts are expected to follow all University policies when using social media platforms.

Do not share confidential or protected information. This is especially critical when it relates to regulations under HIPAA and FERPA.

Respect copyright and intellectual property rights—both those of others and of the University. Adhere to all University policies concerning intellectual property.

Have a plan. Administrators should thoughtfully consider their messages, target audience, goals, and strategies to keep content current and relevant. University Relations and Marketing can assist and advise student organizations in developing a social media strategy.

Protect the Student Organization's voice and brand. Maintain a professional tone and use good judgment. Content should always reflect positively on the organization and MSSU.

Strive for accuracy and give credit where credit is due. When using quotes, ideas, images, videos, or any other content from outside sources, provide appropriate attribution and links when necessary.

In emergency situations (e.g., inclement weather), always share official University posts rather than creating original messages. This ensures consistency and avoids confusion.

Respect the opinions of others and use discretion in what is shared. MSSU will not tolerate posts that are threatening, defamatory, illegal, obscene, infringe on intellectual property rights, invade privacy, contain profanity or libel, or are discriminatory, harassing, bullying, abusive, or hateful. Content that violates University policy or is otherwise deemed inappropriate may result in removal of the content and/or administrative access.

New social media accounts must be approved and submitted via the [Social Media Application](#) before being established.

The University reserves the right to review and recommend changes and/or removal of content via the [Social Media Policy](#). These guidelines are not intended to limit the expression of differing viewpoints or discourage legitimate, respectful social media engagement.

Campus Posting & Publicity Guidelines

Follow the [Brand Guide](#) when promoting events.

Recognized and approved RSOs at MSSU have access to several free and effective resources for promoting their events and initiatives. To ensure compliance with University policy, all materials and publicity methods must follow the guidelines below.

Flyer & Poster Approval

- All flyers and posters must be approved by the SAO before posting.
- Each flyer must display the official SAO approval stamp on the front in a visible location. Flyers without this stamp will be removed.
- Flyers must not reference illegal substances, alcohol, nudity, or contain discriminatory or inappropriate content.

Posting Locations

- The SAO maintains a list of approved bulletin boards and public posting areas. Only these designated areas may be used for flyer distribution.
- Flyers must not be posted on unapproved surfaces, such as walls, doors, or vehicles.

University Relations, Marketing, and Communication Support

The University Relations and Marketing Office is a valuable partner for campus publicity. They:

- Provide graphic design consultation and trademark guidance.
- Edit campus publications and help maintain consistent University branding.
- Requesting projects of URM must go through the RSO Advisor to be submitted into our project queue.

Location: Mansion Annex

Phone: 417-625-9364

The Director of Communication Office

- Distribute approved MSSU news to the media.

Location: Hearn Hall

Phone: 417-625-9365

General Publicity Tips

Make the most of your outreach with these tips:

- Utilize on-campus posting procedures through the SAO.
- If your event aligns with a specific academic department, ask to attend a faculty or staff meeting to promote it directly.
- Announce your event during your classes.
- Use official University social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and X to share approved content on your personal accounts, helping to promote campus events and initiatives.
- Distribute flyers in the Joplin community—grocery stores, churches, daycares, laundromats, and other high-traffic areas (with permission).

- Ask guest speakers if they provide professionally designed posters to help promote the event.
- Don't underestimate the power of word of mouth—talk it up and get people involved!

For questions or approvals, contact the SAO directly.

Code of Conduct

RSOs are expected to:

- Abide by the Student Code of Conduct, University policies, and applicable laws.
- Promote respectful and inclusive environments.
- Report concerns to the Dean of Students Office.

Sanctions for violations may include:

- Probation.
- Loss of privileges.
- Deregistration.

Compliance Expectations

RSOs are expected to operate in compliance with all applicable University policies, local/state/federal laws, and institutional expectations. Areas of compliance include, but are not limited to:

- **Title IX:** RSOs must ensure activities, events, and membership practices are free from discrimination based on sex.
- **FERPA:** RSOs must safeguard student educational records and refrain from sharing private academic information.
- **ADA Compliance:** RSOs must ensure events and activities are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities.
- **Risk Management:** RSOs must take reasonable steps to manage risks associated with travel, fundraising, physical activity, and event safety.
- **Financial Compliance:** All funds allocated by the University or Student Senate must be used in accordance with outlined procedures and reporting requirements.
- **Hazing & Harassment:** Any form of hazing, harassment, or abusive conduct is strictly prohibited and subject to University sanctions.

Failure to comply with these policies may result in probation, loss of funding or privileges, or deregistration of the organization.

For questions RSOs should contact the Dean of Students Office.

Travel

Some RSOs travel to conferences, competitions, workshops, and other off-campus events. Before any travel occurs, the following steps are required:

1. **Student Travel Pre-Approval Request Form** - A travel form must be completed prior to the event. You can find on LionLink.
2. **MSSU Travel Code of Conduct** - Each participant must also complete the MSSU Travel Code of Conduct form in advance.
3. **Student Travel Roster** - The University faculty or staff organizing the event must also provide the SAO with a completed Student Travel Roster at least three days prior to leaving for the event.

Failure to submit the above documents prior to travel may jeopardize your RSO's standing.

Advisor Travel Guidelines

- If an advisor is attending and plans to drive with students:
 - The advisor must rent a vehicle and must be the only driver.
 - MSSU has existing rental agreements with Enterprise, though there are no specific vehicle requirements.
 - If the advisor chooses to drive their personal vehicle, they may not transport students.

Student Travel Guidelines

- If students are traveling without an advisor:
 - They may drive individually and are fully responsible for their own liability.
 - Students may also carpool at their own discretion, but assume all expenses and liability associated with the trip.

FAQs

Q: Can non-students join an RSO?

A: No

Q: How often should RSOs meet?

A: We recommend monthly at minimum.

Q: How do I access my RSO's funds?

A: [Financial Services](#)

Forms & Templates

Available via LionLink:

- New RSO Application
- Constitution Template
- [Student Senate Funding Request Form](#)
- Advisor Agreement Form
- RSO Renewal Form

RSO Financial Accountability & Index Code Requirement

To ensure fiscal responsibility, transparency, and compliance with University policies, all Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) that wish to receive institutional support must maintain an on-campus index code administered through the SAO.

Index Code Requirement

An active index code is required for any RSO that:

- Requests for University funding (e.g., student activity fees, departmental contributions, or grant allocations)
- Utilizes University purchasing, travel, or reimbursement processes
- Reserves campus space or facilities
- Participates in University-hosted events requiring financial coordination

RSOs Operating Independently

RSOs that choose not to receive University funding or use campus resources may operate without an index code. However, these organizations will be:

- Ineligible for financial support from the University
- Ineligible for on-campus purchasing or reimbursement services
- Restricted in access to priority room reservations and certain University-hosted activities

Establishing an Index Code

To initiate an index code, RSOs must:

- Be in good standing with the SAO Office
- Have an active advisor and registered leadership
- Submit a completed RSO Financial Authorization Form each academic year

The University reserves the right to audit RSO accounts and suspend access to index codes in cases of misuse, policy violations, or inactivity.

RSO Handbook Revision Procedures

The MSSU RSO Handbook is updated annually by SAO and may also be revised throughout the academic year. The SAO oversees the RSO handbook updates, including policies, procedures,

and contact information. Before finalizing the RSO handbook for the academic year, it is reviewed by department administration to ensure accuracy and relevance.

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