Departmental Group Guidelines

As part of the Division of Campus Life & Student Services, the Student Activities Office (SAO) leads campus efforts to support over 400 student organizations at Brown. Most commonly, our office works with student groups to plan events and other initiatives on campus, to process financial and budget transactions within university systems, and to manage a variety of risk management factors which may arise in co-curricular activities. We also help students to develop leadership skills and address issues (conflict, officer transition, etc.) that may arise within organizations.

The BearSync online platform (brown.edu/bearsync), managed by the SAO, serves as the official university record of active student organizations. While the SAO maintains this system, it does not recognize student organizations directly. Most student organizations receive official recognition in one of three ways:

1) Recognition from student government (the Undergraduate Council of Students, Graduate Student Council or Medical Student Senate)
2) Recognition as a Club sport through the department of Athletics.
3) Recognition through the Office of the Dean of the College as a Departmental Undergraduate Group (DUG) affiliated with an undergraduate academic concentration.

A handful of student organizations also receive recognition from other departments at Brown. However, due to the relative infrequency of this, these departments may not have a standard process for recognition and maintenance of student organizations. This document is intended to provide guidelines to such departments, allowing for a degree of parity between other university processes, as well as assuring the SAO is able to connect with and support departmentally recognized groups most effectively.

Recommended Minimum Requirements for Group Recognition

Groups should provide the following information both at the initial stage of recognition and at least once annually. The SAO can provide sample versions of/assistance with developing mission statements, constitutions and risk management plans upon request.

- A group mission statement – the mission statement should indicate how the organization contributes to the Brown community, develops leadership skills and/or provides a learning environment to its members, and provide evidence that the group differs in a substantive way from other student organizations which already exist on campus. The mission should also indicate how the group’s purpose is connected to the recognizing department.

- A group constitution – the constitution should include a description of the leadership structure of the organization, the process by which officers are elected and their duties, the process by which amendments are made to the constitution and the process by which members are selected (if the organization is not open to all students) and by which members may be removed from the organization.

- A risk management plan when relevant – groups engaged in any of the following as a regular part of their activity should have a plan to manage the associated risk. Groups who may, on rare occasion, engage in one of these activities may develop plans on an ad hoc basis in consultation with their group advisor and the SAO.

  o Engaging in physical activity with any degree of risk of injury
Additional Rights

- Working with non-Brown affiliated people who may be considered vulnerable populations (e.g. minors, prison inmates, homeless individuals, people with disabilities)
- Traveling off campus
- Serving alcohol
- Preparing and serving food (this does not include providing food from a licensed caterer or snacks from a sealed container)
- Contracting services or goods (only university officials who have been delegated authority to do so, may sign contracts on behalf of the university)
- Screening films – film rights must be obtained for all public screenings

A group roster – due to the limited resources available, we recommend that all recognized student organizations be able to show at least 10 active student members, unless extenuating circumstances make this minimum overly burdensome (e.g. an organization aimed at increasing representation of a cultural group in a specific field may, by its nature, have a small number of student members).

At least one primary contact – all groups should have at least one student (preferably two) who will take responsibility for being the contact for the group should a university official need to communicate with them.

Agreement to abide by all university policies and procedures including, but not limited to, the university’s anti-hazing policy, alcohol policy and event registration policy. A list of the policies most commonly relevant to student organizations can be found on the SAO website.

A group advisor – for departmental groups, the group should have a faculty or staff advisor in the department providing recognition who can serve to provide advice, subject matter expertise, and serve as liaison to other aspects of the university including the SAO.

Additional Responsibilities of Student Groups to Maintain Recognition

In addition to maintaining all of the above:

- All activities of the organization should fall under the organization’s mission statement. Individual members may not use the organization’s recognition to access university resources for other purposes.
- Groups must update primary contacts at the end of each semester, as needed, to assure an active student is listed as contact at all times, accounting for graduation, study abroad, etc.
- Groups must plan early – many processes require the coordination of various offices and individuals on campus. To assure student groups are able to achieve their goals, early planning is essential. A planning timeline for events is available on the SAO website.

Privileges of Group Recognition

Upon recognition, groups are entitled to:

- A page on the BearSync system, indicating their active recognition by the university.
- Ability to book space on campus, as available, through the Scheduling Office and the 25live online system.
- Ability to advertise events sponsored by the organization on campus including in approved posting locations and through Morning Mail.
- Ability to have a financial account to manage university funds.
Responsibilities

- Ability to use the university name in association with their organization (e.g. the Brown University Chapter of...).
- Access to university electronic resources such as listservs and websites.
- Ability to participate in Activities Fairs sponsored by the Student Activities Office (space is limited and groups are given tables on a first come, first served basis).

Responsibilities of the Recognizing Department
The department recognizing the group is ultimately responsible for oversight of the group and should:

- Inform the SAO when a new group has been recognized. This allows the SAO staff to connect with the group leadership to create their BearSync page which triggers the group’s ability to access other privileges.
- Provide a group advisor – for departmental groups, the group should have a faculty or staff advisor in the department providing recognition who can serve to provide advice, subject matter expertise, and serve as liaison to other aspects of the university including the SAO. The advisor provides general support for the group’s initiatives as they seek to fulfill their goals.
- Understand that the SAO does not provide funding to any student group and that needed group funding must come from the department, from fundraising or from contributions from other sources.
- Have a process for group de-recognition – when a group no longer has sufficient interest to sustain its activity or when a group has engaged in behavior which violates university policy, departments should have a process in place to remove recognition from the university. The department will notify the SAO when a group has been de-recognized.

Support Provided by the Student Activities Office

- Event planning support, including assistance with room booking, event support and media services scheduling, obtaining security when necessary, etc.
- Providing a financial account and assistance in processing all financial transactions within the university system (Workday). Please note: the SAO does not provide funding to any student organization, only support in processing transactions.
- Support with group member leadership development and management of group dynamic issues such as conflict resolution or officer transition planning.
- Support with other university processes such as contracting speakers or performers, obtaining waivers, navigating various policies and procedures, etc. This includes support in navigating processes for all of the risk management factors detailed above.
- Provide advice and support to departmental group advisors. The SAO is happy to consult with our colleagues across campus about various issues which may arise in student organizations, how various processes for groups work at Brown, etc.