

Student Organizations Handbook

2023-2024

Office of Student Engagement
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South Texas
COLLEGE OF LAW
— HOUSTON —

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THE OFFICE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The Office of Student Engagement provides administration of all student organizations and supports organization services. The Office of Student Engagement reports to the Assistant Dean. The Office of Student Engagement is located in Room 234C. Please stop by, call our office at 713-646-1845 or email us at studentengagement@stcl.edu. We are here to help you!

Mission Statement:

The Office of Student Engagement creates and fosters leadership and involvement opportunities that enhance personal, interpersonal, and organizational development for South Texas College of Law Houston students.

Core Competencies:

- Engagement
- Communication
- Recruitment and Retention
- Management
- Leadership

Registered Student Organizations play an important role in campus life at South Texas College of Law Houston. Throughout the year, they sponsor a variety of extra- and co-curricular activities for the campus community as well as participate in service projects on and off campus. In addition, Registered Student Organizations provide a means for students to develop and refine leadership skills and to interact and network with their peers, faculty and staff.

DEFINITIONS

In this handbook, unless the context requires a different meaning:

1. **Advisor** means a full-time member of the faculty who counsels the members of a student organization.
2. **Class day** means a day on which classes or reading periods before semester or summer session final examinations are regularly scheduled or on which semester or summer session final examinations are given.
3. **Student** means a person enrolled or accepted for admission or readmission at the law school while present on the campus.
4. **Student Officers** means a student who has been elected or appointed into a student leadership position in their Student Organization which includes but not limited to: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and any other student leadership position.
5. **Dean** means the President and Dean of South Texas College of Law Houston.
6. **VP, Student Services and Support (VPSSS)** means the Chief Student Officer, their designee, or their representative.
7. **Assistant Dean** means Assistant Dean of Admissions and Student Engagement, their designee, or their representative.
8. **Director** means the Director of Student Engagement, their designee, or their representative.
9. **Organization** means a student group holding a valid provisional or permanent recognition certificate from the Office of Student Engagement.
10. **Law School** means South Texas College of Law Houston.
11. **School facility** means a classroom, auditorium, parking lot, or any other area of the campus.
12. **Social Event** means dances, mixers, receptions, and banquets. Business and/or routine meetings are not considered social events unless such meetings in fact become so as a result of the activity itself.

PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Studies have shown that students who are more active in co-curricular activities tend to persist in college longer and gain more satisfaction from their college experience. Employers are also eager to hire students who have exhibited dedication to activities outside the classroom. Participation in student organizations should be more than just fun and games; it can play a vital role in the educational process and in a student's success at South Texas College of Law Houston. Student-to-student interaction, including participation in student organizations, produces positive outcomes. Students can benefit substantially from being involved in campus organizations. Highly involved students typically devote considerable energy to studying, spend more time on campus, participate actively in student organizations, and interact frequently with faculty members and other students. Serving as an officer

of a campus organization also offers an opportunity to transform knowledge obtained in the classroom into practical experience. As a result, the underlying purpose of student organizations is to contribute to the classroom by serving the following functions:

- Providing support groups for students with common needs and interests
- Improving leadership and communication skills
- Allowing the student to apply learned concepts in a real setting
- Teaching self-discipline, initiative, and responsibility
- Helping students to develop friendships
- Gaining new skills that can be transferred to careers
- Networking with faculty, staff, and employee contacts are gained through the student organization
- Serving as a campus resource to faculty, staff, and other students
- Creating memories that connect you to South Texas College of Law Houston and the student experience

ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

All organizations shall conform to the law school's policy on eligibility for extracurricular activity as outlined in the Academic Deficiency Policy in the [Student Handbook](#):

A student on academic probation (GPA below 2.300) cannot:

1. Hold office in any student organization. Students taking office must certify their satisfactory academic standing. If an officer's GPA drops below the requirement during their term in office, they must resign immediately. An officer's failure to resign will result in the organization's termination and loss of all privileges.
2. Be assigned to, or enter, any intramural or interschool moot court, mock trial, client counseling, negotiation, or other advocacy competition. Students who fail to meet academic requirements will be disqualified from any extracurricular competitions in which they have entered. If appropriate, South Texas College of Law Houston will withdraw its sponsorship of the competition in question.
3. Participate in Law Review, Corporate Counsel Review, or CURRENTS: Journal of International Economic Law. Students who fail to meet academic requirements will be administratively dismissed from participation in these programs.

Grade Checks of Officers

The Director of Student Engagement will verify the cumulative GPA of all Student Officers during the first two weeks of the semester. The Director will notify students that are considered ineligible for office based on this process. The student leader may appeal their eligibility to the VPSSS whose decision will be final.

APPEALS

- A request for review under this Regulation must be submitted in writing by the affected Student to the VP of Student Services within three (3) business days after notification of ineligibility. Failure to submit a timely appeal will result in immediate relinquishment of the office.
- The request must state the grounds upon which the student seeks review of their ineligibility. The student may provide additional supporting documentation to support their eligibility by delivering those documents to the VPSSS Office for consideration within three (3) business days after the notification of ineligibility.
- Within five (5) business days after the request has been received, the VPSSS, or their designee, shall render a decision on the request for review and shall notify the student of that decision in writing.

MEMBERSHIP IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Membership in a South Texas College of Law Houston student organization may not be restricted on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, consistent with the Assurance of Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Executive Order 11246 as issued and amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Non-Student Members of Student Organizations

Only currently enrolled South Texas College of Law Houston students are eligible to hold office in recognized campus organizations. Provisions for membership of faculty and staff members may be made, but non-students may not outnumber

student members in any of the organizations.

Single-Sex Organizations

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities at the law school unless such programs and activities are specifically exempt from the law. The law school is required to be in compliance with the provisions of Title IX. Therefore, compliance with Title IX is a condition to be a registered student organization at the law school.

Since passage of this law and the publication of the implementing regulations, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights has developed a clear set of criteria for determining when single sex organizations are exempt from the provisions of Title IX. These criteria are as follows:

- The organization must have tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- Members must be limited to student, staff or faculty at South Texas College of Law Houston;
- The organization must be a “social fraternity” as defined by the Department of Education. The Department of Education defines “social fraternity” as a group that can answer “no” to all the following questions:
 - Is the organization’s membership limited to persons pursuing or having interest in a particular field of study, profession or academic discipline?
 - Is the membership limited to individuals who have a high level of achievement in scholarship or any other endeavor?
 - Are the members permitted to hold membership in other fraternities or sororities at the law school?
- If a group answers “yes” to any of the questions, it is not a “social fraternity” and therefore is not exempt from the requirements of Title IX and therefore must accept members of both sexes. An affirmative answer to any of these questions is evidence that the organization is professional, service, or honorary in nature and not a social fraternity or sorority for Title IX purposes.

United States Department of Education-Office for Civil Rights Rationale: The rationale for this distinction based on the intangible educational advantage afforded by membership in such professional, service and honorary organizations. Many such honor and service organizations have school and alumni recognition and reputation, which enhance student members’ careers. Members frequently gain enhanced status, which, as alumni, is often influential in decisions affecting law school policy. This type of educational opportunity and benefit is significant and may not be denied to students on the basis of sex. (*U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights*).

Declaration of Non-Discriminatory Practices

The law school is required to file with the federal government each year a report declaring its compliance with the Civil Rights Act. Failure to comply could result in loss of support for virtually all of our student financial aid programs, loss of federal funds for buildings, and ineligibility for federally funded grants in support of institutes, conferences, research, and other activities. The law school cannot properly declare its compliance with the Civil Rights Act if it practices discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin, except as may be provided by law, including the granting of official recognition to student organizations which practice such discrimination. We request your cooperation with the following:

Any student organization that practices discrimination, except as provided by law, will be in danger of removal of its charter and withdrawal of law school recognition. This means that any student who present themselves for membership in your organization must be accepted as long as they meet the necessary requirements as applied to all potential members. In case of recognized social sororities and fraternities, this means that any student who represent themselves for participating in intake activities must be accepted for this program and must be treated in exactly the same manner as all others. All requests for literature related to your organization and to new member intake must be filed without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin. Charges of discrimination will be investigated, and appropriate action taken.

Academic Organizations

Academic organizations include those groups with memberships in honor societies or professional organizations. South Texas College of Law Houston students form honor organizations to recognize academic and/or leadership achievements. Membership is based primarily on scholastic achievement, but also may consider character and leadership. All organizations have criteria for membership that must be met, and some are by invitation only. Some of these organizations are tied to law school departments and belong to national organizations. Departmental and professional organizations are organized to further develop and promote a student's learning within an academic department or program.

These organizations normally work closely with a department and are often part of a larger local, state, national, or international organization. Membership is normally based on an interest in a particular field or discipline that the organization represents.

Mutual Interest Organizations

Mutual interest organizations are groups that have formed solely on the basis of a group of individuals that have common interests. The groups in this category focus on a multitude of different topics, including service to the community. Membership is based on sharing the same interests.

Multicultural Organizations

Multicultural organizations are groups that strive to expand students' knowledge of the different cultures represented in the South Texas College of Law Houston community and abroad.

Spiritual and Religious Organizations

Spiritual and religious organizations are formed to provide a campus community of students who share the same or similar religious faith or spiritual beliefs. Membership in these groups depends on a student's beliefs and interests.

SERVICES FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Bulletin Boards and Posting Posters/Signs

1. Bulletin boards are used for Student Organization flyers which must be stamped and approved by the Office of Student Engagement before posting.
2. All flyers should be emailed to studentengagement@stcl.edu one week prior to the date of event. The sooner the better. The longer the flyer is posted the better turnout you will have.
3. All flyers should be in portrait format. The file size should be 1920 high X 1080 wide.
4. The flyer will be printed, stamped, initialed and available for pick up two business days after receipt in the Office of Student Engagement, Suite 234C.
5. Flyers must be removed by the organizer the day after date of event.
6. Make sure to not cover other flyers.

Mail and Mailroom Policies

Students should not use the law school address to receive personal mail. Mail addressed to student organizations will be delivered by Mailroom personnel to the Office of Student Engagement, Suite 234C.

Office Space/Keys

Some student organizations are assigned shared office space. Office assignments are re-evaluated at the beginning of each fall semester by the Office of Student Engagement.

1. Organizations with an office are allotted two office keys. The keys are assigned to the President and their designee.
2. Organization officer's assigned keys are required to complete the 'Student Office Key Agreement'.
3. Keys **m u s t** be returned at the end of each Spring Semester or when new officers are elected.
4. In the event that the keys are not returned to the Office of Student Engagement as stipulated above and on the Student Office Key Agreement Form, the following actions, among others applicable, may also be taken until the key is returned:
 - a. Withholding of grades
 - b. Withholding of diploma
 - c. Withholding of certification to take the bar exam
5. Lost or misplaced keys must be replaced. A \$50 rekeying fee will be assessed to the organization responsible for the lost key.
6. Organizations not assigned an office may use the Student Organization Workroom in Suite 234C.

Planning an Event or Meeting (including but not limited to: speakers, tabling, general meetings)

Ultimate responsibility for any actions at an event rests with the organization. Students are at all times accountable to the law school while attending on-campus or off-campus events and therefore are responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with law school policies and procedures as well as representing themselves, their organization, and the law school in a positive light.

If you plan to host an event or meeting on-campus start first with completing the [Student Organization Event/Meeting Request Form](#). This form will guide you through the process of successfully hosting an event/meeting.

South Texas College of Law Houston Logo/Letterhead

1. The type style and font of the South Texas College of Law Houston letterhead are registered trademarks.
2. Organizations cannot print or use South Texas College of Law Houston letterhead for stationery, business cards, etc. without express permission from South Texas College of Law Houston.
3. Letterhead should read, " _____ Law Society, a student organization at South Texas College of Law Houston."

Student Organization Directory and Historical Information

The Office of Student Engagement maintains records of organizations' officers, constitutions, by-laws, and other important documentation.

Student Organization presidents are required to submit current member lists to studentengagement@stcl.edu by October 1 and April 1 each year.

Web Pages

Web pages for individual student organizations will list, at a minimum, the mission or purpose of the organization and contact information.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ACCOUNTS

Bank Accounts

Organizations are required to use the South Texas College of Law Houston Student Organizations umbrella account at JP Morgan Chase Bank Texas. The following procedures apply for depositing and withdrawing funds from student org accounts:

1. Membership dues are paid online [here](#).
2. Fundraisers held on campus to supplement the student organization operating budget should be donated online [here](#).
3. All swag sales are paid online [here](#).
4. Cash or Check Deposits: Fill out a purple "Student Organization Deposit Slip" form in the Office of Student Engagement and attach all checks and/or cash. A written receipt will be given for each deposit made. Treasurers of each student organization are responsible for keeping track of their organization's deposits and account balances. Please try to consolidate all deposits to once a week. Deposits should be made by the treasurer of each organization vs. individual students dropping off payments. All checks should be made payable to South Texas College of Law Houston, with a notation in the memo section of the relevant Organization Name and purpose of check (i.e. P.A.D. dues, HLSA Cafecito, etc.).
5. Reimbursements: Each student organization treasurer will be responsible for overseeing the budget and accepting, approving, and submitting all reimbursements. You may complete the reimbursement form [here](#) which explains the policy on reimbursements.
6. Monthly Reports: It is the organization's treasurer's responsibility to reconcile records with the Office of Student Engagement monthly.

Credit Card Fees

Fees will be applied to all transactions occurring on the Office of Student Engagement website per the following:

- Visa, MasterCard, Discover, JCB: 2.5% + \$0.30 per transaction (USD)
- American Express: 3.5% + \$0.30 per transaction (USD)
- ACH/Direct Debit: 1% + \$0.30 (max. \$5) per transaction (USD) and \$5.00 per returned transaction (USD)
- PayPal: 2.9% + \$0.30 per transaction

ORGANIZATION FUNDING

It is **mandatory** that Registered Student Organizations that do not hold a 501(c)(3) status (**A recognized status by the federal government**) have a bank account with the Office of Student Engagement. The Student Organization Bank Account is a free banking service provided by the Office of Student Engagement. The student organization bank account balance will be made available to the president and treasurer after each month's reconciliation is complete.

Funding Source

All entering and continuing students pay a \$350.00 registration/general services fee per semester. A portion of this fee is allotted for the Student Bar Association and the student organizations receive \$250 each August for the academic year.

Student Organizations may also charge membership dues, conduct fundraisers, and deposit those funds in their student organization bank account maintained by the Office of Student Engagement.

Funding Process

1. Student Bar Association (SBA)
 - a. The SBA receives a portion of their allotment each semester (including summer session) after the last day to withdraw without receiving a failing grade. The Office of Student Services and Support initiates the necessary documentation to transfer the student fees to the SBA, which is approved by the Office of Student Engagement and disbursed by Accounting Services.

- b. The SBA can use the funds at their discretion, but within the parameters of the approved budget and policies and procedures of the law school, including the appropriate authorized signatures on checks.
2. Remaining Student Organizations
 - a. The remaining student organizations will each receive \$250 on the first day of the fall semester.
 - b. Organization members will use personal funds for approved events and will be reimbursed by the law school upon submission of the [reimbursement form](#) along with appropriate receipts and proof of payment.
 - c. Organizations must present the South Texas College of Law Houston tax exempt form to applicable vendors. Organizations will be responsible for sales tax, if purchases are made without using the tax-exempt form.

Funding Criteria

1. South Texas College of Law Houston will consider funding on campus student organizational activities that meet the following criteria:
 - a. Serves some educational, pro bono, or charitable purpose, AND
 - b. Are open to all South Texas College of Law Houston students.
2. Conferences
 - a. Student Organizations are responsible for conference-related expenses. The law school generally does not fund conference attendance for members of student organizations.
 - b. Petitions for funds to attend conferences will be considered only from student organizations that have members serving in a regional or national office for their respective organization. Attendees must be in good standing with the law school.
3. Speaker Events – must be approved in advance
 - a. The [Speaker Request Form](#) must be completed and submitted to the Office of Student Engagement five (5) business days prior to the event. Each speaker will be vetted and the organization will be notified of the approval.
 - b. One round trip coach airfare at the lowest possible rate, based on 30-day advance purchase.
 - c. One night at a hotel
 - d. Meals at \$50.00 per diem for a two-day maximum
 - e. Entertainment, alcohol, and/or personal expenses will not be funded.
 - f. Because the law school (as a tax-exempt non-profit educational institution) may not engage in or sponsor political activity, student organizations may not invite as speaker, persons who are candidates for public office, or who speak on behalf of the candidacy of others.
 - g. **Organizations sponsoring speaker events on campus will be asked to affirm when completing the speaker request form that no invited speaker is a current candidate for office at the time of the event.**
4. All speakers are required to complete the [Photo/Video Release form](#). Upon completion the form should be emailed to studentengagement@stcl.edu.
5. Receptions and Food for Speaker events
 - a. Receptions in conjunction with an educational, pro bono or charitable event must be approved in advance by completing the [Student Organization Event/Meeting Request Form](#) and the following rules apply:
 - i. Vegetarian options should always be included in selecting food items.
 - ii. Beverages (excluding alcohol) – if alcohol is served, all in attendance must adhere to the [Alcohol Service Policy](#). The [Consent to Serve as Event Facilitator](#) form must be approved at least two weeks prior to any event where alcohol will be served. Failure to do so will result in not being allowed to serve alcohol.
6. Student Events Serving Alcohol on Campus
 - a. All alcohol is to be labeled and stored in the Emilie Slohm pantry on the 6th floor. Students bringing alcohol into the building will check-in at the security desk and inform the officers they have alcohol to store for an upcoming event. A security officer will escort the student and the alcohol to the Emilie Slohm pantry. It is the student's responsibility to label the alcohol.
 - b. Approximately 1 hour prior to the event, a student may make contact with the security desk and let them know they have an alcohol event and need to recover the alcohol from the Emilie Slohm pantry. An officer will confirm the event and then escort them to the Emilie Slohm pantry to recover the alcohol and escort them to the event location.

Organization Viability

1. To maintain active status with South Texas College of Law Houston, student organizations must meet the following criteria:

- a. Meet on a regular basis (at least once a month).
 - b. Elect officers once every academic year (preferably in the spring). Officers must be in good standing with the law school. Entire membership must be notified at least two weeks before the election date. Election must adhere to the organizations constitution.
 - c. Observe posted office hours (minimum of eight hours per week), if you have an assigned office.
 - d. Sponsor at least one pro bono, educational or charitable event per semester.
 - e. Provide a status report regarding the above to the Office of Student Engagement at the end of each fall and spring semester.
2. Documentation
- a. Organizational by-laws and constitution should be submitted to the Office of Student Engagement.
 - b. Create, update, and publish a roster with names, email addresses and phone numbers of current officers and name of faculty advisor and submit to the Office of Student Engagement by October 1 and April 1 each year.

OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

The Office of Advancement and Alumni Engagement staff look forward to speaking with you about your student organization's fundraising goals and plans, and can help you determine whether or not gifts are tax deductible. The Office of Advancement and Alumni Engagement must approve all fundraising activities involving alumni, friends, corporations, foundations, law firms, or other potential supporters of South Texas. Please review the [Student Fundraising Policy](#). To communicate with the Office of Advancement complete the [Fundraising Application Form](#) at least four weeks in advance of the desired solicitation. The Office of Advancement and Alumni Engagement will follow-up as forms are received.

EVENT GUIDELINES

Specific Guidelines for Campus Events:

- Must be open and marketed to **all** South Texas College of Law Houston students and free of charge
- Must be in a form of an educational activity or event
- Must have a school-wide impact
- Must submit all forms of marketing materials, including but not limited to social media, flyers, posters, etc., to the Office of Student Engagement five days before event to studentengagement@stcl.edu.
- The [standard law school forms](#) must be submitted for certain services and speaker agreements
- All acceptable methods and formats for submitting the documents are: JPEG, PNG, PDF and DOC.
- Canva is a great tool to use.

FUNDRAISING POLICIES

Registered Student Organizations may raise funds on and off campus at South Texas College of Law Houston pursuant to the [Student Fundraising Policy](#).

Fundraising

Provided below are some thoughts on how you can approach the concept of on-campus fundraising, as well as some examples of things to get your brainstorming started. Before you begin you should be able to answer the following questions:

- 1. What do we want to accomplish with this fundraiser?**
 - a. This should be the first question your group considers.
 - b. You need to understand how the money will be used so you can explain to others what your goals are.
- 2. Who is the audience for the fundraiser?**
 - a. Students
 - b. Faculty and Staff

- c. All of the above
- d. Establishing your target audience will give you a clearer vision of how to promote your event.

3. What is the financial goal for this fundraiser?

- a. You need to know at the beginning what your end goal will be.
- b. Do not forget to factor in your initial/startup expenses.
- c. It is important to know how much money you may have to invest up front before you see a return.
- d. Knowing how much money is needed up front will give you a clearer picture of how you will proceed.

4. How much time and energy can you devote to this fundraiser?

- a. Raising funds takes time and energy.
- b. Is your organization setting realistic goals when it comes to the project?
- c. Do you have enough people who are willing to put in the time necessary?
- d. Have you given your group a reasonable amount of time to achieve your goal?

Now that you have answered these questions, it is time to begin brainstorming ideas for what your group would like to do. Always remember you have to tailor your event to campus and your target audience. With that in mind your group should do the following:

1. Determine fundraising categories

- a. Ongoing – events that raise funds over a period of time and are often sales oriented.
- b. Event specific – event that occurs once and can incorporate services.

2. Establish fundraising goals

- a. Assemble a budget
 - For the fundraiser
 - For the event it supports
- b. Develop a realistic picture of the income and output required to conduct the fundraiser.

3. Create a checklist

- a. Include everything, such as advertising, decorations, donations, paperwork, pre-event deadlines, reservations, timeline, post-event thank you notes, etc.
- b. Make sure all group members have a copy of the checklist.
- c. Remember that you will probably be running the fundraiser along with your regular events. It is an additional responsibility that may require you to adjust your events.
- d. Plan for advertising and publicity needs.
- e. Be clever with promotion and don't forget to remind participants how the proceeds will be used and the benefit(s) they get by contributing.
- f. Publicize your results

4. Evaluate

- a. Assess the overall value.
- b. Determine whether it was worthwhile.
- c. Write up recommendations for what went well, what could be done better, timeline adjustments, etc.
- d. Review the questions you addressed when you began planning to see if you met or exceeded your goals.
- e. Was this fundraiser worth the effort involved? Or was it a drain on everyone?

5. Follow up with participants

- a. Ask them to contribute to the evaluation.

- b. Send thank you notes.

NOTE: Plans to sell any items should be approved by the Office of Student Engagement before you start. The sale of food requires a sign that states: "This food was prepared in a kitchen that is not subject to regulation and inspection by the City of Houston or any other health inspection agency".

Student Fundraising Policy

Any fundraising activity, whether internal or external in nature, must first be approved by the Office of Student Engagement. This is to ensure that activities are consistent with the mission of South Texas College of Law Houston and are in keeping with all school policies, procedures, and priorities, as well as comply with all local, state, and Federal laws and ordinances. Please review the [Student Fundraising Policy](#).

General Limitations on Fundraising Activities

1. Solicitation by credit card or telephone card companies.
2. Fundraising events/programs that solicit students, alumni, friends, parents, faculty, or staff, with the exception of those approved and supported by the South Texas Office of Advancement. This includes galas, luncheons, or any other event where tickets or table sponsorships are sold.
3. Fundraising using crowdfunding platforms (e.g., Kickstarter, GoFundMe, Patreon, etc.).
4. Fundraising for any candidate for political office or political campaigns.
5. Raffles, lotteries, or other games of chance.
6. Sale or distribution of items that violate the College trademark rights or existing contracts.
7. Receipt by individuals who organize a fundraising event/program of proceeds from the event/program (ie: using Venmo, Zelle, CashApp, or other bank transfer mechanism).

South Texas recognizes that an individual student, group of students, or student organization may have contacts with potential corporate or foundation-funders or might know external constituents who could be interested in supporting the law school.

The Office of Student Engagement and the Office of Advancement are eager to support such efforts where appropriate. Any such fundraising effort must be coordinated through the Office of Advancement. Please contact alumni@stcl.edu to setup a meeting to discuss further.

Collecting Gifts

For approved fundraising activity, student organizations can collect gifts/payments through the following vehicles:

- A. Cash – Cash may be accepted by a student organization and its representatives. Student representatives are to collect cash and turn it in to the student organization treasurer for processing with the Office of Student Engagement. **Students are prohibited from accepting cash by depositing it into a personal account to then withdraw and give to the law school for processing. Doing so violates the IRS definition of a donation to a charity.**
- B. Checks – Checks may be accepted by student organizations. Checks are to be made out to: South Texas College of Law Houston, with the student organization and purpose noted on the memo line.
- C. Pay for a Fundraising Event [here](#).

All off-campus fundraising requests must be approved by the Office of Student Engagement and the Office of Advancement & Alumni. Please complete the [Fundraising Application Form](#) at least four weeks in advance. You will be contacted thereafter.

Charitable Bake Sales

Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, food prepared in a kitchen of a private home that is not licensed hereunder may be offered for sale for human consumption without any food permit, subject to full compliance with the following requirements:

1. The items offered for sale shall be limited to baked food products that are not potentially hazardous;
2. The items are offered for sale at a function conducted by or under the auspices of a sponsoring organization, which may be a school or religious or nonprofit organization;

3. The sale shall not be conducted in a food establishment, except that if the sponsoring organization is a food establishment, then sale may be conducted on its premises, provided that the sale is conducted separately and apart from the sponsoring organization's food sales or service; and
4. The consumer is informed by a clearly visible placard at the sales or service location that "This food was prepared in a kitchen that is not subject to regulation and inspection by the city of Houston or any other health inspection agency." The person conducting the bake sale shall provide the placard, which shall be in a form approved by the health officer.

Baked goods such as cupcakes, cakes, cookies, pastries and pies prepared in a private home or catered are acceptable for donations.

Example: A student organization has prepared some homemade cupcakes and cookies for Valentines Day asking for \$1 donations.

Foods that may have the potential to become hazardous cannot be used for donations or sales. This includes foods such as meats or foods that must remain a certain temperature to prevent spoilage.

Example: SBA Rooftop Social serves hot pizza for their events. The SBA offers the pizza free of charge and does not receive donations for the pizza.

If you are having an event and would like to offer hot food, or foods that must remain a certain temperature, it must be offered as a gift. This means that you cannot receive donations or sales from those items.



Charity Bake Sales

"This food was prepared in a kitchen that is not subject to regulation and inspection by the City of Houston or any other health inspection agency."

Alumni and Other External Constituents/Referrals

The Office of Advancement is solely responsible for all fundraising efforts on behalf of South Texas. Individual students, student organizations, and other campus groups are not permitted to solicit external constituents, including but not limited to alumni, friends, corporations, foundations, law firms, or other potential supporters of South Texas for monetary support. The law school provides each student organization with annual operation funds. Additionally, each student organization is encouraged to apply for additional funds through the Office of Student Engagement as needed. The two funding mechanisms, in concert with membership fees, swag sales, and other internal efforts, provide sufficient funding for student organization events and programs.

South Texas recognizes that an individual student, group of students, or student organization may have contacts with potential corporate or foundation-funders or might know external constituents who could be interested in supporting the law school. The Office of Student Engagement and the Office of Advancement are eager to support such efforts where appropriate. Any such fundraising effort must be coordinated through the Office of Advancement. Please contact alumni@stcl.edu to setup a meeting to discuss further.

Tax Deductible Gifts

Gifts to student organizations are not considered gifts to the law school; they are considered gifts to the student groups, which, in most cases, are not non-profit organizations with the ability to issue tax-deductible receipts. Some student groups may be affiliated with a national non-profit organization, which would give them some ability to fundraise under that organization's policies and procedures.

Gifts to student organizations are not tax deductible to the donor. Most donations to these groups are small and not motivated by a tax benefit; so 99% of the time this is not an issue. If there was a donor who wanted to make a large donation to a group and there could be an educational purpose to the donation or activity, you should consult with an academic department, if appropriate, to see if they would be willing to "run the donation through" their academic account.

For example, if the Accounting Honor Society might want to raise funds to attend an accounting related competition/event in Dallas, and if they identify one donor willing to fund \$5,000, it would be reasonable to expect that the Accounting Department would be willing to assist them by accepting the donation into their account, following all applicable rules of the law school. In that instance, the gift would be reported by the department to our office for instructions on how to handle the gift, and the donor would receive a tax-deductible receipt from us. The related expenses would need to be paid by the department out of their account, following standard law school policies.

We would be happy to talk through any situation with you to brainstorm ideas whenever you have a substantial donor (\$5,000 or more).

RIGHTS OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Student organizations are recognized on the assumption that their activities and programs contribute to the educational, professional, civic, and social development of the students involved. Neither the student organization nor its representatives may suggest that either is acting with authority or as an agent of South Texas College of Law Houston. Student organizations have the following rights:

- Use of the South Texas College of Law Houston name as part of the student organization's formal name, specifically at the end of the organization's name. Example: The Chess Club at South Texas College of Law Houston.
- The right to recruit new members from the South Texas College of Law Houston community.
- The services of the Office of Student Engagement, including assistance in planning, carrying out, and evaluating activities and programs, organization accounting, and assistance in making the organization more effective and efficient.
- The right to hold events and the use of law school facilities free of charge or with a minimal fee.
- Invitation of off-campus speakers and artists to appear for regularly scheduled meetings and assemblies, subject to scheduling in accordance with the [Speaker Request Form](#).
- Distribution of literature relating to the organization's purpose and activities in those areas authorized by the law school
- The right to be listed as a Recognized Student Organization.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

- To manage and carry out activities within its own constitution; local, state, and federal laws; and law school rules and regulations.
- To conduct its business and fiscal operations in accordance with standards of good business management and practice.
- To be cognizant of the special role the organization holds as an integral part of South Texas College of Law Houston and to act accordingly in the best interest of its members and the law school, as well as the surrounding community.
- Follow the Policies and Procedures for Student Organizations as outlined in this Handbook.

Annual Registration Renewal

Every organization must renew their registration during the spring semester by submitting the End of the Semester Activity Report by April 1.

The Director of Student Engagement will review each report to determine if the organization is eligible for continued recognition as a registered student organization. If the Director determines that an organization is ineligible for registration, or is inactive, the Director shall notify the organization President and Advisor via email of its status.

- Information in the End of the Semester Activity Report should include: officer positions, officer name, when office hours were held, date of event, type of event, attendance #, explanation of event – member meeting, speaker meeting, social or pro bono event. The organization President or designee will be responsible for ensuring that this information is kept current.
- The officers listed on the most recent registration request will be recognized as those authorized to speak for and represent the organization in its relations with the law school.
- The President must attend the mandatory Presidents' Meeting at the beginning of fall semester. The Office of Student Engagement will arrange additional training times if officer transition happens between the fall training and when the registration process reopens in spring semester.
- Organizations must have at least ten eligible members, two of which must act as officers.

Failure to register your student organization by the deadline will result in your organization being **designated as inactive**, and all privileges granted to your student organization will be suspended.

Meetings

Organizations must give their members and advisor reasonable advance notice of its meetings. Organizations must conduct its meetings in accordance with its charter and constitution. All disputes shall be appealed to the Director of Student Engagement.

South Texas College of Law Houston Trademark Licensing Policies

All student organizations must adhere to the South Texas College of Law Houston Brand Standards when using South Texas College of Law Houston trademarks on marketing materials or apparel.



Student Organizations Requirements for Recognition

Students who wish to form a recognized South Texas College of Law Houston student organization, with all the related rights and privileges, must comply with the following:

1. Exist in a formative/conditional status (i.e. an interest group) for two complete and consecutive semesters (does not include summer session).
 - a. Interest groups do not receive any funds from the law school.
 - b. Interest groups must comply with all policies and procedures of the law school, in particular those that relate to student organizations.
2. Demonstrate interest of 10 or more current South Texas College of Law Houston students and choose a faculty member who agrees to serve as advisor.
3. Conduct at least one educational event; open to all South Texas College of Law Houston students, per semester.
4. Sponsor one pro bono, educational or charitable event each semester.
5. Meet on a regular basis (at least once a month during each semester).
6. Elect officers from full participation of all persons interested in the group and provide the names, titles and phone numbers of the officers to the Student Organizations Office.
7. Provide documentation of the following:
 - a. Organizational purpose and goals
 - b. Statement of benefit to the law school community
 - c. Constitution and by-laws
 - d. Membership list including names of members and email addresses, and phone numbers of each elected officer for the current academic year

Eligibility

A group is eligible for recognition if:

- Its membership is limited to South Texas College of Law Houston students, faculty, and staff.
- Its membership is not denied anyone based on race, color, creed, sex, or national origin, except as may be provided by law.
- The group has at least ten eligible members, two of which must act as officers.
- It has a faculty advisor employed by South Texas College of Law Houston.
- Officers are not under disciplinary sanction prohibiting recognition.
- It conducts its affairs in accordance with law school rules and regulations.
- Its purposes are in accordance with the stated purpose and goals of the law school. No organization may be recognized if the actions or activities of the organization are adverse to the educational purpose and work of the law school.

Requirements for Recognition

The Office of Student Engagement will notify the organization president and advisor by email when a decision has been made about their application for recognition. If the application is approved, the office will create a new STANLEY website for the organization. Then, the organization President must ensure the following steps are completed:

- Submit the organization's Constitution and Bylaws to studentengagement@stcl.edu.

After these steps are completed, the organization is given conditional status (i.e. an interest group) for two complete and consecutive semesters (does not include summer session). During this time, the organization has the following privileges:

- The right to reserve law school facilities for the purpose of holding organizational meetings.
- The right to publicize the initial organizational meetings in line with law school posting policies.
- The right to invite membership.

During a student organizations provisional status, student's organizations are not permitted to apply for co-sponsorship. Once their permanent recognition and charter is approved they will be able to apply.

Permanent Recognition and Charter

The Director will consider applications for permanent recognition after the two complete consecutive semesters have been met. In considering an application, the committee shall permanently recognize the applicant unless it does not meet the rules for eligibility.

The student organization will be notified via email if they have been approved for recognition.

If the Director refuses to grant permanent organization recognition, the applicant organization may petition in writing to the Assistant Dean. The applicant organization shall attach a copy of its application to the petition.

If the Assistant Dean, at its discretion, agrees to review the Director's refusal, it shall direct the Director to furnish it and the organization a copy of the written statement of the reason for refusal.

The Assistant Dean shall confine its review of the Director's refusal to the petition, application, and Director's statement. The Assistant Dean may:

- Affirm the Director's decision;
- Refer the matter to the Director for reconsideration; or
- Grant recognition to the provisional student organization.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION DISCIPLINE

Organization Conduct Offenses

Student organizations are responsible for conducting their affairs in a manner that reflects favorably upon themselves and the law school. Such responsibilities include:

- Compliance with law school regulations, policies and/or procedures except for those offenses listed below, will be reported to and adjudicated by the Assistant Dean of Admissions & Student Engagement;
- Taking reasonable steps, as an organization, to prevent violations of law or law school regulations by its members; and
- A willingness to deal individually with those members of the organization whose behavior reflects unfavorably upon the organization or upon the law school.
- Failure to accept the responsibilities of organization membership may subject the organization to permanent or temporary withdrawal of law school recognition and/or support, social probation, denial of use of law school facilities, or other appropriate action.
- The Director has responsibility for initiating and expanding disciplinary action in any group offense cases.
- A student may also be disciplined for a violation under the Student Code of Conduct even though the organization of which they are a member is penalized for the same violation growing out of the same factual situation.

- Judicial and appeal procedures are outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

Administrative Offenses

When the Director of Student Engagement receives information that an organization has allegedly violated an administrative rule or regulation, they shall investigate. The Director of Student Engagement may then dismiss the allegation, requiring no further action, or conduct a meeting with the student organization and their advisor to obtain more information about the allegations. An organization violates a school regulation or administrative rule when:

- One or more of its officers or authorized members acting in the scope of their general responsibilities commits the violation;
- One or more of its members commits the violation after the action that constitutes the violation was approved by a majority vote of those members of the organization present and voting;
- One or more members of a committee of the organization commits the violation while acting in the scope of the committee's assignment; or
- A majority of the members of an organization commit the violation.

Sanctions

When, after the meeting, the Director of Student Engagement finds that an organization has violated an administrative rule or regulation, they may make their recommendation for sanction to the Assistant Dean of Admissions & Student Engagement. The Assistant Dean may choose to penalize the student organization by one or more of the following actions, including but not limited to:

- Suspend for not more than one calendar year the organization's right to do one or more of the following, including but not limited to:
 - publicly post signs;
 - publicly assemble or demonstrate;
 - sponsor or present a public performance;
 - publicly raise funds or make a solicitation;
 - reserve the use of law school facilities;
 - engage in recruitment of members;
 - apply for co-sponsorship funding;
 - suspend for not more than one calendar year the organization's recognition; or
 - cancel the organization's recognition for not less than one calendar year.

Appeals

If a student organization believes these procedures were not followed it may choose to appeal to the Assistant Dean of Admissions & Student Engagement. All appeals must be submitted within five class days from the date of notification to the Assistant Dean. The letter of appeal must provide a clear explanation of how this process was not followed or their disagreement with the severity of the sanction.



Publicity Policy for College Events

EVENT SIGNS

1. **Type/Size.** Signs must be letter-size (8 ½ x 11 inches) in Portrait layout.
2. **General Information.** Signs must contain the following information: sponsor, date, time, location, including service of beverages, food, snacks, etc. (if any), is optional. **No reference to service of alcoholic beverages** of any kind may be made under any circumstances.

NOTE: If the event is held at South Texas College of Law Houston, the sponsor must submit a fully completed and executed *Student Organization Event/Meeting Request Form* within **two weeks prior** to the event to reserve a room. If alcohol is to be served at any event on the college's property, the Alcoholic Beverages Policy must be fully complied with. That policy requires, among other things, that the sponsor submit to the Office of Student Engagement (Suite 234C) a fully completed and executed *Consent to Serve as Alcohol Facilitator Form* no later than **10 businesses days** to the event. All forms satisfying the above requirements are available on the Office of Student Engagement [website](#).

Signs must be stamped by the Office of Student Engagement (Suite 234C) as approved for posting. No signs may be affixed, placed or located anywhere except as described below.

EVENT SIGNS: There are designated bulletin boards near the tower elevators for posting of approved student organization events. Events will also be posted to the student engagement website subject to approval by the Office of Student Engagement and displayed on the TV monitors in the atrium and student lounge. Please allow 7 business days for TV screens to be produced. Advance approval for TV screens must be obtained from the Office of Student Engagement.

Brainstorming

- What type of event are you planning?
- What is our theme?
- What is our goal of this program?
- Is this program consistent with the purposes and constitution of your group?
- Who will be invited to the event/what is the audience?
- How do you need the room to be arranged? Do you need extra tables, chairs, staging? Imagine yourself walking into the room the day of the event – how should it look?
- What time will the event begin and end? Do you need extra time to set up, decorate, clean up?
- Do you need any special equipment (microphone, projector, lectern, etc.)?
- Are you charging admission or selling anything? How much? Do you need a cash box?
- Are you having food? Where is this coming from? How will it get to the event?
- What is your budget? Will we need to do any fundraising?

Planning

- **Date:** Find a convenient date for your audience and for the activity you would like to sponsor by reviewing the STCLH Calendar in Teams. Choose a date that doesn't conflict with other existing campus programs.
- **Activity:** Determine the type of activity you would like to sponsor, research local, regional and national possibilities. Contact your options and negotiate a fee. If an option requires a signed contract this must first be approved by the Director of Student Engagement. If approved the contract will be submitted to the President & Dean for signature. Students are not to sign any contracts on behalf of a student organization.
- **Location:** Project the attendance and determine type a reasonable space and setup you might need.
- **Time:** Determine a convenient time for targeted audience.
- **Budget:** Project all expenses and incomes – fees, advertising, security, food, damage fees, etc. Brainstorm additional funding sources if needed – co-sponsors, fundraising, etc.
- **Publicity:** Consider all publicity possibilities and be creative! Design your promotion to fit the style and theme of the program, keeping your publicity neat and accurate – include name of program, date, time, place, etc. Put publicity up/out in ample time for guests to plan – two weeks in advance. **Food:** Determine food needs, work with the appropriate sources to find menu items that are appropriate for your theme.
- **Liability:** Assure that all law school regulations, local/state/federal laws concerning fire and safety regulations, necessary security, and conduct will be followed during your event.

Implementation

1. Develop a list of tasks that need to occur before, during, and after the event and determine who is responsible for them. Consider a list of volunteers to assist with set up, elements during the activity, or cleanup afterwards.
2. **Day of the Program:** Begin to execute all your planning! Don't worry if something goes wrong, your audience does not know what you had planned and will go with the flow! For events with a stage, or one focal point, consider planning a brief introduction statement to welcome guests and let them know what to expect.
3. **At the end of the Program:** Work to restore the space to the condition it was upon your arrival. Reset any tables, chairs and equipment to their original locations. Properly remove all your decorations, props, etc. either to the trash or your storage location. Leave the space ready for the next user.

Evaluation

1. Do an evaluation of the program at your next meeting: Determine if you have accomplished your program goals. Record results (positive/negative) for future planning. Begin to tally up your expenses and account for any revenue.

2. Send thank you notes to appropriate people

The Event Request

Registered Student Organizations will need to complete the [Student Organization Event/Meeting Request Form](#) within **two weeks prior** to the event to reserve a room. This form is extremely thorough and guides you to know if another form is required to be completed if you request use:

- AV (microphone, podium, show a PPT or play music): or
- If planning to serve alcohol

Common Hold-Ups

The Office of Student Engagement requires ample time to allow all parties to review and process your request.

- Depending on location and what is requested, approval may be required by several law school offices.
- Lack of clear or required information for all fields on the form.
- Vague or inconsistent information that causes question, either for risk management or logistical concerns.