

Commonly Asked Questions

1. Is it mandatory to register my student organization and University Student Account each year?

In order to have access to University facilities and services a student group must be registered with the Department of Student Life. Registration for organizations begins every year, starting August 1. Organizations that do not re-register before October 15th of each new academic year will not be eligible to conduct business at the University until they re-register. If the organization has a university financial account, those forms need to be completed at the same time as registration forms, so the account remains open. Accounts close every year after October 15th if new account forms are not filed with the Student Life office.

2. What are the benefits of being recognized as a registered student organization?

There are many advantages to being one of the 600+ registered student organizations (RSO) at Michigan State University. As an organization that is dedicated to improving the campus community and providing exciting opportunities for your members and other MSU students to learn, grow, and have fun. Gaining RSO status is the ultimate way to establish your group in the East Lansing/MSU campus community. RSO membership will enhance many organizational functions, including recruitment of new members, event planning, securing computer access, and understanding of university policies and practices.

Other member benefits include:

- The ability to book University facilities and use University services
- Discounted rates for building usage, such as the Union, IM Sports facilities, and the MSU Union
- Automatic invitation to the annual student organization fair “Sparticipation” connecting RSO leaders with some 7,000 new students to MSU during the time that classes begin
- University accounts to handle financial issues, and conduct fundraising activities on campus
- Student leadership training programs on organizational structure, financial management, and event programming and planning
- Eligibility to be nominated and receive awards at the annual Student Life Leadership Awards program each April
- Free RSO Email and Web space access
- Program funding available through ASMSU Funding Board
- Free consultation on major event planning and implementation
- And more!

3. Is it mandatory to have a University account and how do I open one?

No. A university account is only necessary if you have a revenue-producing event (fundraising) on campus, or if you use a University service such as Physical Plant. Some University departments will only allow your group to pay for services through University accounts. See the sections on revenue-producing events and University accounts in this handbook for more detailed information.

4. When do we receive monthly account statements (ledgers) for our University account?

Statements are printed on the 10th of each month in the Accounting Department. They are then mailed to the Department of Student Life. Student Life then mail the statement to the individual student group contact. Realistically, they do not get mailed to student organizations until about the 15th of each month. Student organizations are encouraged to use good accounting practices and not solely rely on official account statements to keep up-to-date with their account balance.

5. How do I check the balance of my University account and get past ledgers?

To get the balance of your account you need to call the Accounting office at 355-5000. To request back ledgers you need to come into the Department of Student Life, room 101 Student Services Bldg. Give the staff at least a few days to process the request.

6. We haven't been receiving our mail. What's the deal?

The first step you should take is to check with the Student Life office, room 101 Student Services Bldg, or call 355-8286 to check if the correct mailing address is on file. Whenever your group changed your mailing address, you need to notify the Student Life office. An incorrect address is the most common reason for lost mail.

7. Can our group have an account off campus?

Yes. MSU does not require student organizations to have their financial accounts with the University. However, financial accounts held at off-campus financial institutions are not monitored by the Department of Student Life, and student leaders are still expected to follow good business/banking procedures.

8. Are registered student organizations at MSU automatically tax-exempt?

No. Registered student organizations do not benefit from the University's tax-exempt status. Each RSO must apply directly to the Internal Revenue Service to secure its own tax-exempt status. The Department of Student Life can assist in getting the appropriate IRS forms.

9. How does our organization apply for an EIN (Employer Identification Number)?

EIN's are necessary so that you, as a leader, do not get taxed for interest earned on your student group account with an off campus bank. A "SS-4 Application for Employer Identification Number form" must be filed with the Internal Revenue Service in order to get an EIN. Copies of the form are available on line at the Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service.

10. If we change officers or advisors, do we need to notify anyone?

Yes. One of the original E-board members has access to make changes online to the RSO application. A member needs to go to the Student Life web site at www.studentlife.msu.edu, click on the "Student Organizations Registration" link, and follow the instructions from there. Once the forms have been submitted, the forms will need to be printed and signed by the President and Advisor, then deliver the signed forms to the Student Life office, room 101 Student Services Building for processing. It normally takes us a week to process accurately completed forms.

11. Why is an Activity Planning Form (APF) necessary?

APF's are necessary for at least three reasons:

- It is a Student Group Regulation that events and activities sponsored by student organizations must be "approved" through a routing process conducted by the Department of Student Life, 101 Student Services.
- Registered student groups are recognized to have access to University facilities and services, and the APF authorized by Student Life staff is your verification of registration to other campus units.
- A copy of the group's "approved APF" should be kept on site at the event in case there is some question by a University official.