

Mississippi Valley State University
Institutional Policy on Free Speech and Peaceful Assembly

MVSU acknowledges and protects the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition, and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution. “Peaceful assembly” is defined as any purposeful gathering on campus, in or outside a University building or facility, by one or more persons whose conduct is peaceful and is in accordance with University rules, practices, and laws. Peaceful assembly includes meetings, speeches, debates, demonstrations, marches, vigils, sit-in, rallies, protests, and similar meetings or gatherings that do not threaten or violate policies and rules, interfere with the conduct of University business, regular schedules or events, infringe on the rights of others, endanger the health and safety of others, or that damage or destroy property. Any act by student demonstrators that interferes with the rights of others, disrupts or impairs the normal functioning of the University, damages or destroys property, or impairs health and safety is grounds for suspension or dismissal from the University.

Procedure for Arranging Peaceful Assembly

Reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions will be enforced. However, the enforcement will not depend, in any way, on the subject matter involved in an expressive activity. Persons planning or initiating such assemblies to be conducted on the University’s campus are requested to identify their groups and to state their purpose in advance in Student Leadership & Engagement office seven days in advance in order to make adequate arrangements for safety and security and to ensure the space desired is available. Areas may be reserved, if available, for the accommodation of such assemblies.

Otherwise, the following guidelines must be met:

1. Traditional public forums include the University’s public streets, sidewalks, and similar common areas. These areas are generally available for expressive activity, planned or spontaneous, for the individual or small group at any time without the need for reservation or prior approval.
2. Designated public forums include other parts of the campus that may become temporarily available for expressive activity as designated by the University. Examples include parking lots, pavilions, and athletic fields.
3. Non-public forums are areas that are not traditional public forums or designated public forums. These locations will be restricted to use for their intended purpose and are not available for public expressive activity. Examples include, but are not limited to, classrooms, residence hall rooms, faculty and staff offices, academic buildings, administration buildings, medical treatment facilities, libraries, research and computer labs, and private residential housing on campus. Additionally, security considerations may affect the availability of spaces that would otherwise be available.

Guidelines

1. Registered University organizations and University departments may display signs and banners at designated locations on campus. For information regarding these designated locations, contact the Director of the Student Leadership & Engagement office located in the Student Union Building.

2. Literature can be distributed in public forums. However, the party distributing the literature is responsible for cleaning up any discarded paper and restoring the campus to its previous condition. Literature may not be distributed in non-public forums.
3. No amplification equipment may be used.
4. Use of campus land is permitted on a temporary basis.
5. Flyers may be placed on open bulletin boards inside or outside University buildings only with permission from the Office of Student Leadership & Engagement.
6. No activity will be permitted that blocks access to University buildings, streets, sidewalks, or facilities, defaces property, injures individuals, unreasonably interferes with regular or authorized University activities or functions, or disrupts the free flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
7. Private business or commercial solicitation on campus is generally prohibited.
8. Demonstrators refusing to vacate such premises when directed by the instructor in charge or by authorized staff are subject to immediate disciplinary action and arrest under applicable city and state laws.

Distribution of Literature on Campus

Distribution of noncommercial literature, pamphlets or leaflets on campus, or within buildings located on University-owned property, however, is restricted as follows:

1. Distribution of literature in University-owned buildings by individual students or registered organizations recognized by the University is permitted only with prior written approval from the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement.
2. Literature may not include materials which are libelous, obscene, or which encourage the violation of federal, state or local laws.

Distribution of commercial literature and leaflets created by organizations or individuals not recognized by the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement or the University is not permitted on University-controlled property without the approval of the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement.

Use of University Facilities

1. Scheduling events and activities is done on a first come/first served basis and is based upon the Master Calendar held and approved by the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement. Event planning forms may be obtained from the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement. Reservations for food service should be made with the University's contracted food service vendor, Thompson Hospitality.
2. Food is not permitted in the lounges or study rooms.
3. Groups reserving space in University facilities shall be responsible for the behavior of their members and guests.
4. Individuals or groups shall be responsible for any negligent damage of any University property and damages shall be charged to the individual or groups using the facility at the time damages occur.
5. The University is not responsible for any articles lost in its facilities.

6. No student organization, group, or student shall remain in a facility after it is officially closed.

Use of Institutional Name

No student or organization may make use of the institution's name for the purpose of solicitation, unless permission is obtained in writing from the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Advertising

Regulations related to posting materials on campus shall apply to all students and organizations.

1. All publicity must reflect good taste and cannot be misleading in purpose or content. While the names of commercial sponsoring groups or brand names may appear on organizational advertising, they must be of secondary importance and not the main theme of the advertisement. When sponsors are used, approval must be obtained from the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement.
2. Publicity encouraging the consumption of alcohol is prohibited.
3. Signs and other publicity may be placed only on bulletin boards. They may not be attached to interior walls, doors, overhangs, exterior walls, fences, utility poles, waste receptacles, signs, signposts, trees, or shrubbery.
 - a. Posting materials in the Residence Hall is permitted only with the advance approval of the Office of Residential Life or the Residence Hall Director at the time, place, and manner they designate.
 - b. All materials must clearly identify the organization or person responsible for posting the advertisement.
 - c. All materials must be removed within 24 hours following the event advertised.
4. Failure to meet these specifications will result in the removal of all materials and possible disciplinary action.