

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	STAF Student Affairs and Academic Support
POLICY NUMBER	STAF 1.01
POLICY TITLE	Registered Status for Religious Affiliates
SCOPE OF POLICY	USC Columbia
DATE OF REVISION	July 17, 2025
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Vice President for Student Affairs
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	Student Life

PURPOSE

The University of South Carolina has an educational mission to provide active support and encouragement of spiritual and religious development among its students, faculty, and staff. The aims of higher education include growth in awareness of a variety of religious commitments and practices so that students may develop understanding of their own personal commitments, as well as respect for the commitments of others in the community. While professing no institutional preference, the university seeks to provide as much opportunity as possible for the articulation and expression of diverse, religious, and spiritual beliefs and practices.

POLICY STATEMENT

As an integral part of this support and encouragement, the administration has established a policy of mutual benefit to both the university and the denominations, religions, and other faith/spiritual groups sponsoring religious affiliates on campus. The university recognizes those persons who are properly qualified and credentialed by their respective agencies directly connected to active, registered student organizations on campus. Furthermore, it extends the privilege of campus access and the opportunity to use university facilities in accordance with university procedures and guidelines to provide religious or spiritual counsel for students, faculty, and staff.

DEFINITIONS

Student Leader: any student appointed or elected to a leadership role within their student organization (i.e. officer, committee chair, etc.).

Student Organization: a student group that maintains active status on the University of South Carolina campus, has fulfilled all responsibilities of a student organization and represents a group of students who desire to come together to support a particular view, explore common interests or accomplish identified tasks. Student organizations must be student-initiated and student-led. Two types of student organizations exist at the University of South Carolina:

Associated Student Organization (ASO): student organizations to which the University has delegated certain limited authority to perform specific tasks aligned with the University's mission. These groups are required to maintain a University Advisor who is acting within the context of their University employment. An ASO may serve as a governing body over other RSOs.

Registered Student Organization (RSO): student organizations that are independent legal entities from the University, have no delegated authority from the university, and do not

perform functions on behalf of the university. These groups are not required to maintain a University Advisor. The university views RSOs as private affiliations and does not endorse the mission, goals, or purpose of the organization.

University Advisor: a faculty or administrative staff member acting in an advisory capacity, as opposed to a directive relationship, to an Associated Student Organization. They are designated by the appropriate Dean, Associate Vice President, or their designee to advise the ASO on their activities and University policies and procedures. A University Advisor is not a faculty or administrative staff member who volunteers beyond the scope of their employment to serve as an advisor with a Registered Student Organization.

Registered Religious Affiliate: Religious or spiritual leaders who are associated with a university recognized spiritual or faith-based registered student organization, appointed and credentialed by their respective regional or national governing agency, approved to serve as a university affiliate annually by the Religious Affairs Committee and sponsored by the Department of Student Life. Registered Religious Affiliates are not university advisors.

PROCEDURES

- A. Denominations, religions, and other faith/spiritual groups affiliated with a faith-based or spiritual registered student organization desiring university registered status for a religious affiliate shall submit a letter of appointment to the Vice President for Student Affairs from the hosting faith-based or spiritual registered student organization. Religious affiliate appointments will only be accepted for active faith-based or spiritual registered student organizations. The letter should name the appointed religious affiliate and include:
 1. Certification that the appointee has appropriate training or ordination as required by appointing registered student organization's denomination, religion, or faith/spiritual group;
 2. Indication of the faith/spiritual group's relationship to a registered student organization;
 3. Agreement that the appointee will abide by University of South Carolina regulations; and
 4. Agreement that appointee will submit an annual report to the convener of the Religious Affairs Committee and the Vice President for Student Affairs using the format provided by the Division of Student Affairs.
- B. Upon receipt of a formal request for registered status, the petition shall be forwarded to the Religious Affairs Committee that shall determine whether it meets the established criteria. The criteria are:
 1. Official appointment or endorsement by the faith-based or spiritual registered student organization;
 2. Appropriate training or ordination as required by the appointing registered student organization's denomination, religion, or faith/spiritual group;

3. Evidence of willingness to work in cooperation with the university and to abide by university policies; and
 4. Evidence of desire to work in harmony with other Registered Religious Affiliates
- C. Following the review of a petition, the Religious Affairs Committee will advise the Vice President for Student Affairs that the criteria have been met or identify the unmet criteria. The Vice President has authority to recognize religious affiliates and may choose to interview the candidates during the review process. The appointing registered student organization will be notified of the approval of its petition (or criteria unmet if the petition is not favorably recommended by the Religious Affairs Committee) by a letter from the Vice President. A copy of the letter will be sent to the University President, the convener of the Religious Affairs Committee, the religious affiliate's liaison, and the Chair of Carolina Faith Communities. The appointing registered student organization may appeal a negative decision to the President.
- D. Registered Religious Affiliates shall be designated by the Religious Affairs Committee as religious affiliates as noted below:
1. The religious affiliate shall have an ecclesiastical appointment by the registered student organization as a religious or spiritual counselor to the university and shall be responsible to an officer of that body or a committee established by it.
 2. The religious affiliate shall have appropriate credentials by the sponsoring registered student organization and local, regional, or national religious organization.
 3. The religious affiliate shall assume responsibility for any staff associates working with the registered student organization on campus.
 4. The religious affiliate shall be affiliated with an active faith-based or spiritual registered student organization.
- E. Registered Religious Affiliates will be encouraged to participate in Carolina Faith Communities, which is open to all persons recognized by the Religious Affairs Committee for registered status. Upon receipt of a copy of the Vice President's letter granting registered status, the religious affiliate's liaison will notify the convener of the Religious Affairs Committee, the Chair of the Carolina Faith Communities and Human Resources to confirm they are recognized as a campus affiliate.
- F. Privileges of Registered Status: The university will grant to religious affiliates, the following rights and privileges on campus:
1. A Carolina Card and a university email address;
 2. Staff parking privileges on the campus; and
 3. Such other privileges as may be recommended by the Religious Affairs Committee and

approved by the Vice President for Student Affairs.

4. Responsibilities of Registered Status: Registered Religious Affiliates will accept responsibility for supporting the religious and spiritual life of the university community and the growth and development of the individual student. This responsibility obligates Registered Religious Affiliates to:
 - a. Provide opportunity for religious and/or spiritual instruction and worship in the tradition of the sponsoring body in a manner which contributes to the students' moral, spiritual, and general development;
 - b. Maintain respect for the diversity of religious and spiritual commitments found in the campus community;
 - c. Continue to work in harmony with other Registered Religious Affiliates;
 - d. Submit an annual report to the chair of the Religious Affairs Committee by the first Monday of October of each year;
 - e. Submit a written endorsement letter from the registered student organization's student leaders that supports the affiliate's connection to that specific registered student organization on campus;
 - f. Abide by all relevant University rules and regulations;
 - g. Represent high standards of personal, moral and ethical conduct on campus;
 - h. Assume responsibility for any staff associates on campus; and
 - i. Assume responsibility for annual background checks through the university on themselves and any staff associates.
5. Senior Status: The university, through the Vice President for Student Affairs or his designee, may appoint a Registered Religious Affiliate of long-standing in years of service to Senior Status. Senior Status provides campus access and parking privileges and appropriate professional amenities. Affiliates with this status are no longer responsible for the organization or affiliation of an organization on campus.
 - a. Removal of Senior Status: Senior Status may be removed by recommendation of the Religious Affairs Committee to the university, through the Vice President for Student Affairs or designee.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

[STAF 3.10 Student Organizations](#)

[UNIV 2.50 Affiliate Appointments](#)

[HR 1.90 Background Screenings and Professional References](#)

[UNIV 6.00 Freedom of Expression and Access to Campus](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
June 1, 1992	New policy approval
October 20, 2016	Updates to procedures and clarification for terminology
November 20, 2020	New policy format, updated terminology and updates to procedures
December 3, 2022	Updates to align with updated student organization policy (STAF 3.10) and university procedures. Procedures updated to be more inclusive of all faith or spiritual groups.
June 17, 2025	Non-substantive Update