VIRTUAL STUDENT ORG MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Adapted with permission from UNC Charlotte Student Involvement. Updated December 2020.
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Dear student organization leaders,

We hope that you found our original Virtual Student Organization Management Guide useful back in March when COVID-19 first forced campus to shut down and in the fall semester when student activities were limited. **We have revamped and updated this guide to give you the information you need for the spring semester.** Recognize that health and safety are always our top priorities for student organizations but as we prepare to enter spring, we have learned a lot about COVID-19 as well as preparations and resources groups need to be able to host events in-person successfully. Our website is up to date with the latest announcements regarding current state executive orders and restrictions on gatherings. As these can change often, please check it regularly: [www.usm.edu/lsi](http://www.usm.edu/lsi).

We are always here for you! With some creativity and determination, we feel confident you can still craft amazing experiences for your student organizations this spring. We hope this guide serves not as an exhaustive list but rather a starting point for you. As questions arise or if you ever need anything, please do not hesitate to email us at LSI@usm.edu.

- The Office of Leadership and Student Involvement | Division of Student Affairs

**Stay connected with LSI and our office organizations during this time to ensure you are getting up-to-date information on all we are planning.**

**Leadership and Student Involvement**
Facebook: Southern Miss Office of Leadership and Student Involvement
Twitter: @USM_LSI
Instagram: @USM_LSI

**Southern Miss Activities Council**
Facebook: Southern Miss Activities Council
Twitter: @usm_smac
Instagram: @usm_smac

**Student Government Association**
Facebook: Southern Miss SGA
Twitter: @SGA_USM
Instagram: @southernmisssga
Website: southernmisssga.org
Meetings

You might be lost now wondering, “How will I engage my members during this time?” You are encouraged to consider hosting meetings on a semi-regular basis in order to continue to a sense of normalcy for your organization(s) and to keep communication regular for membership engagement.

Tips for Hosting Effective Virtual Meetings
Adapted from Steven Rogelberg’s “The Surprising Science of Meetings” via UNC Charlotte.

What It Takes to Host a Great Virtual Meeting
Harvard Business Review article

Checklist to Run Effective Virtual Team Meetings
Leadership Essentials by HarperCollins Leadership

Connecting Virtually

There are a number of platforms you can utilize to host meetings virtually for free. We recommend Microsoft Teams as you can use this platform easily with your USM email address and it is FREE. Teams has expanded options now since June that allow you to see more people on the screen at a time and have more people attend your meetings.

For more information from iTech on Microsoft 365 options, click here. Please note, other platforms like Google Chat and Google Hangout are also options you could utilize as well.

Zoom is also a virtual option for meetings. A basic account can be set up for free with some restrictions. Additionally, LSI has a Zoom account available to student organizations to request to use for meetings or events. Please email us at LSI@usm.edu to set that up in advance.

Recruitment and Membership

In the fall, we hosted a virtual involvement fair to help you reach out to incoming and current students about membership in your organizations. In the spring, barring any changes to current policies at the USM or state level, we are planning an in-person, outdoor Involvement Fair for February 17th. Check our website and presidents, be sure to read your emails in the new year for sign up information.
Additionally, you could host your own virtual recruitment meetings or workshops through a platform like Microsoft Teams or Zoom. We’d be happy to work through options with your organization specifically if this is something you are interested in. Email us at LSI@usm.edu.

There are a variety of online forms available to you to create membership applications should you wish to hold recruitment this fall. Google forms, Microsoft 365 forms and Qualtrics are all free options you have available to you to host online forms, applications, etc.

**Keeping Your Membership Engaged**

Just because you aren’t able to meet in person doesn’t mean you cannot keep team morale up! You can absolutely plan virtual icebreakers and teambuilders for your organizations and other engagement opportunities for your members. Here are just a couple ideas:

- **Instagram Takeovers**- Assign an officer or member a day of the week to take over the organization’s account and re-cap “A day in the life of ________”
- **General Q & A**- Use social media to allow others to learn more about your organization and how to get/stay involved.
- **Story Telling**- Share pictures and videos letting others know what you did and accomplished this past year. Share stories of your officers, members and advisors!
- **Shout Outs**- take to social media to highlight members or leaders of your group or even shout out to others across campus who have partnered with your organization recently.
- **Mail Drop**- Who doesn’t love getting mail? Think about sending personalized thank you notes or words of encouragement to your members through good the old-fashioned US Postal Service. (You could also send personalized notes through email too 😊).

Here is a list of some virtual icebreakers that you might find interesting to use with your organizations:

**Virtual Icebreakers**

The Office of Leadership and Student Involvement will offer multiple opportunities throughout the spring semester as well for leadership workshops and training virtually that your organization members and leaders can participate in. Make sure you follow us on social media to see when these are announced.

**Events**

Know that our office and the entire Division of Student Affairs continue to work behind the scenes creating virtual options for engagement. Right now, groups are limited to in-person gatherings of ten or less and outdoor events at 50 or fewer attendees. This is an extremely fluid situation. As new information is shared, be sure to check LSI’s website and social media accounts for up-to-date announcements. Also, make sure you are checking your USM student email account often also as that is where any new developments campus-wide will be shared.
LSI has an event planning process developed to assist student organizations on determining what is appropriate to safely be held on campus and what should continue to be virtual. This plan will require organizations work ahead at least one month before the date of any proposed event due to current University policy. You can read information about those steps on our website at www.usm.edu/lsi. For regular ten person or less gatherings, our normal event form with a due date of Mondays at 4pm for activities the following Sunday-Saturday is on our website now for groups to begin requesting space indoors for spring. This includes tabling requests from organization as well.

SGA Student Org Funding for Spring 2021

Your Student Government Association is reassessing current processes and procedures regarding student organization opportunities for Student Organizational Funding (SOF) for the spring semester. Organizations will have the ability to request funds for use the semester the event is to occur and not the semester before. For the spring semester, this means organizations can request funds to use during the Spring semester.

*Look for more information through email to organization leadership from SGA to come this fall.

Virtual Fundraising

We recognize that many organizations rely on fundraising for organizational or philanthropy purposes each year. In an effort to share some additional ideas with you, we offer the below resources that provide ideas for you to think through should you wish to try to fundraise virtually.

Virtual Fundraising Ideas for Student Organizations

Online Fundraising Ideas That Will Increase Donations

*LSI nor the university provide student organizations with campus bank accounts or financial advice. Please ensure should your organization decide to fundraise virtually that you are following all university, local, state and federal applicable laws.

Collaborating with Other Organizations

Take this opportunity to work alongside other student organizations to plan partnerships. Since groups will be organizing virtual activities why not collaborate together to reach even more students? Also, never underestimate taking time to get to know other groups you might not have had time to do before. Interact with other presidents! Host a virtual meeting for organizations with similar missions as yours and learn more about them and their success and struggles. LSI is happy to assist or set this up for groups as well should you need any assistance.
Student Organization contact information can be provided to organization’s who would like to reach out to groups about partnership opportunities. Email LSI@usm.edu to inquire.

**Elections**

If your organization hosts elections for officers or membership each spring, don’t let this situation deter those efforts. There are several ways you can still host online voting and it is actually a secure, more appropriate way to handle elections.

- As a student at Southern Miss, you have access to Qualtrics through iTech. In this system, you can build a ballot, ensure members can only vote once and the site automatically tabulates your results for you. For more information on setting this up, click here.
- Another option would be to use Google to create a form you can send to your members to vote electronically. Click here for a tutorial.

**Officer Transition**

If your organization does select new officers in the spring, a huge part of your future success is officer transition. Outgoing officers should be thinking of a plan to meet with new officers to ensure a smooth transition. A couple tips include:

- Visit this page on our website that outlines successful officer transition. It includes an officer transition guide and leadership checklist that will walk you through every step of the process.
- Incoming and outgoing officers can and should meet regularly through whatever platform is most comfortable for you. Even emails sharing documents back and forth is a great step in preparing your new officers for success.
- If you would like to schedule a virtual meeting for officer transition with incoming and outgoing officers this semester, email us at LSI@usm.edu to set that up.
- Make sure you reach out to LSI to let us know who any new officers might be for your organization so we can update our records and ensure new officers are getting communication from our office. You can use this form to notify us of changes and updates within your organization during the spring semester.
- We also have begun to list student organization contact information as well as social media accounts on our LSI webpage. If you would like your organization listed or have a change to what is currently on the website, please click here to let us know.
LSI Resources

- Utilize the LSI website for a wealth of information. All announcements, resources and information we have to share will be posted there as soon as it’s available.
- We are available at any time to schedule a phone call or virtual meeting. The best way to reach out is to email LSI@usm.edu.
- Check out social media accounts for information the most up-to-date information and be sure to always check your USM email account regularly as that is where we share any news and announcements you need to know about.

Campus Resources

- Dean of Students Office
- Spring 2021 | Flight Path Plan
- Moffitt Health Center
- Provost Office page for COVID-19 updates
- Student Page for Resources