



Campus Expression and Space Utilization

Policy Type: Administrative

Responsible Office: Division for Student Affairs, Office of the Provost and Office of Safety and Risk Management

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Policy Statement and Purpose

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) supports and advocates for free expression, understanding the pivotal role open dialogue and the exchange of ideas play in the pursuit of knowledge and innovation. Our commitment to fostering an environment conducive to civil discourse is rooted in the belief that academic excellence and societal progress are linked to the vibrant exercise of protected speech and other forms of expressive activity.

The purpose of this policy is to provide requirements for any use of university property, including for expressive activity. The requirements of this policy enable VCU to carry out its academic mission, promote a safe environment, and preserve the functional integrity of the campus. The restrictions are designed to comply with the Code of Virginia § 23.1-401 and are narrowly tailored to serve the university's interest in maintaining the safe and effective educational and administrative operations of the university without regard to the viewpoint of any speech or expression. Expression by individuals or organizations as described in this policy is not speech made by, on behalf of, or endorsed by VCU, unless otherwise specified as a university-controlled event/activity.

This policy governs the use of university property by students and others, including employees when not performing their official duties; it does not govern the university's use of its property.

For the purpose of this policy, the term "person" may include an individual, group, or organization, affiliated or unaffiliated with the university, based on the context.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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I. Who Should Know This Policy _____

All university personnel, students, and other parties seeking to use university property are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

II. Definitions _____

Affiliated Person

Any individual student or employee or any student organization or university unit.

Amplified Sound

Sound (e.g., voice, music, or other noise) amplified through the use of equipment, to include, but not limited to speakers, sound systems, stereos, amplifiers for musical instruments, and bullhorns.

Assembly

A gathering of 30 or more individuals in a location for a shared purpose - including, but not limited to, a demonstration, rally, performance, or coordinated discussion.

Bulletin Board

Designated space where information, notices, and announcements can be posted for public or targeted viewing and dissemination of information relevant to a specific audience or the broader community.

Camping

Camping shall include: (a) the use of any item to create a shelter; (b) the outdoor use of heating devices, generators, or the use of portable toilets; (c) sleeping outdoors with or without a tent between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Chalking

Drawing or writing on concrete or asphalt sidewalk with water-soluble chalk (commonly referred to as "sidewalk chalk").

Employee

Any person (faculty and/or staff) with a direct employment relationship with VCU, including those who work on a part-time, temporary, or adjunct basis.

Event

Assembly or organized activity, including expressive activity.

Expressive Activity

All forms of expression, including speech and actions, which may include but are not limited to, speaking, protesting (verbal or silent), distributing literature such as leaflets or pamphlets, displaying signs, wearing certain clothing or accessory items, dancing, meeting, performing, demonstrating, rallying, and participating in vigils.

Handbill

A small printed sheet to be distributed (as for advertising) by hand.

Organized Activity

Activity is organized if it is planned, coordinated or developed in advance, rather than spontaneous activity (meaning activity arising from momentary impulse).

Prior Written Authorization

Written notice, including electronic notice, issued by a university official representing the unit with operational control of the space that provides approval for space utilization.

Public Speaking

The act or process of making speeches in public.

Solicitation

Selling or promoting products, goods or services; using staff and faculty listings for the purpose of selling/promoting goods and/or services; seeking contributions or pledges, including distributing printed materials; and conducting membership drives

Student

All persons taking credit or non-credit courses through VCU, either full-time or part-time, on-line or in-person, single or dual enrolled, pursuing undergraduate, graduate, or professional studies.

Student Organization

Any student group recognized by the university. For additional information, see the [Student Organization Handbook](#).

Tent

The term "tent" shall include any structure, enclosure, or shelter with or without sidewalls or drops that is constructed of canvas or pliable material supported in any manner except by the contents it protects.

Unaffiliated Person (including an Unaffiliated Organization)

An individual who is neither a student nor employee. Unaffiliated person includes, but is not limited to, a visitor, contractor, participant in a university program such as continuing education, intern, donor, prospective student, friend or family member of a student or employee, personal attendant for a student with a disability, employee of the Health System who is not also employed by the university, and any other individual with an invitation to be on campus for limited purposes and with limited access. An unaffiliated person includes an organization (regardless of the involvement of students and/or employees) not recognized by the university.

University Property

Any property owned, leased, or controlled by VCU, including, but not limited to, buildings, grounds, and land, and any such property leased, rented, or otherwise contractually reserved for VCU operations, either permanently or on a temporary basis.

III. Contacts

The Office of Safety and Risk Management and the Division of Student Affairs are responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions through the appropriate governance structures as required by the policy *Creating and Maintaining Policies & Procedures*. The Office of the Dean of Student Advocacy officially interprets this policy. Please direct policy questions to the Dean of Student Advocacy Office.

IV. Use of University Property

University property, including outdoor areas, is designated primarily for use by students and employees to advance the educational mission of the university. A person's authorization to use university property depends on their status as affiliated or unaffiliated with the university:

- Any affiliated person (university student, employee, student organization, or unit) may generally use campus spaces in accordance with university policy.
- Any unaffiliated person may access public areas of university property as needed to attend programs, activities, and services open to the public, or as otherwise specifically invited by an affiliated person, such as prospective students meeting with university officials. However, any unaffiliated person may only use university property for assembly, public speaking, or hand billing (1) if sponsored or hosted by an affiliated person with authority under an applicable university policy and in accordance with the university's event reservation process or (2) by reserving the Park Plaza Amphitheater on the Monroe Park Campus or the Patterson Gardens on the MCV Campus.

The university may require persons to pay applicable rental or usage fees and comply with appropriate contractual obligations. In addition to complying with the restrictions set forth in this policy, persons desiring to use certain university spaces must comply with requirements established by the university office responsible for the specific space. Such requirements, including restrictions for reservation, scheduling, insurance, posting, and other use of such space, must be consistent with this policy and other reasonable

time, place, and manner restrictions and not based on the content or viewpoint of the expressive activity or the persons involved. If any such restriction conflicts with this policy, this policy governs.

V. General Prohibitions

The university prohibits any person from interfering with the university's educational functions, including activities and events, and from participating in unlawful conduct. As such, the university generally prohibits the following on university property unless subject to prior written authorization:

1. Disrupting, disturbing, or interfering with education, including administrative activities, events, or operations inside or outside any building.
2. Obstructing or impeding vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, or other traffic.
3. Obstructing or impeding any entrance or exit of any such area, including blocking both physical spaces and the movement of people.
4. Entering any building, facility, or reserved outdoor area, without written authorization or outside of operating or authorized hours, or occupying (i.e., taking possession or control of) any university property, including outdoor space.
5. Obstructing, disrupting, canceling, silencing, or discontinuing speech or the observation of speech by any person intending to see or hear the speaker or speech.
6. Overwriting, erasing, defacing, or altering another's expressive activity.
7. Damaging, defacing, marking, or destroying university property, including surfaces, structures, grass, shrubs, trees, or other landscaping.
8. Affixing or planting any item to any tree, garbage/recycle can, window, interior or exterior wall, door, chair, table, bench, light or utility pole, bus stop, newspaper distribution box, vehicle windshield, monument, building, lawn, ground, or any other university property without prior written authorization.
9. Attaching sticks, poles, or other rigid supports to signs, banners, flags, pickets, or similar items, or using such supports to carry these items.
10. Installing, constructing, or occupying any structure (such as an art installation, bounce house, platform, canopy, or other tent) without prior written authorization, except for the occasional use of equipment for games or sport (e.g., volleyball net, cornhole board) between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. in accordance with this policy.
11. Setting up a table or similar furnishing except where expressly permitted through the university's reservation process and only in designated areas.
12. Sleeping or camping with or without a tent, structure, or enclosure for sheltering.
13. Making noise outdoors, including but not limited to amplified sound or using items or instruments, when audible indoors.
14. Leaving any item, object, or belonging unattended without prior written authorization.
15. Violating any applicable federal, state, or local law, rule, or ordinance.
16. Failing to comply with any reasonable instruction or directive by university police or any university official acting in the performance of their duty.

17. Causing any threat to the health or safety of any person, including any passerby or member of the university community.

VI. Campus Expression

A. Expressive Activity

VCU supports the exercise of constitutionally-protected free speech and expression even when the ideas put forth are thought to be controversial, illogical, offensive, immoral, or hateful. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution requires VCU to strike a balance, allowing the widest latitude for free expression and debate while maintaining order and an educational environment free from disruption. It allows VCU to regulate the time, place, and manner of expression.

The following section outlines forms of expressive activity and specific regulations associated with each expressive activity.

1. *Amplified Sound*

The university requires a reservation for any use of indoor or outdoor amplified sound, as defined in the Definitions section of the policy, except use of amplified sound devices designed for personal use (e.g., Bluetooth® speaker, handheld stereo).

The university generally authorizes amplified sound, subject to the General Prohibitions, through its applicable reservation procedures in the following areas:

- University Commons Plaza
- Rooms inside the Student Commons
- Park Plaza Amphitheater and Patterson Gardens (only between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday)

For inquiries about all other areas, contact the university official with operational control of the space.

2. *Bulletin Boards and Posted Materials*

The University has designated spaces for the posting of materials and maintains the authority to regulate general time, place, and manner restrictions on the materials posted. VCU has three bulletin board types for the display of posted materials:

- Instructional Bulletin Boards: Instructional bulletin boards are designated for instructional purposes as authorized by the respective instructors and may be situated within or outside the classroom. Materials posted on these boards are approved by the respective instructor.
- Unit/Department Bulletin Boards: Unit/Department bulletin boards are designated for specific university units or departments and are often positioned near the physical office of the respective unit or department. Materials posted on these boards are approved by the respective unit/department.

- Community Bulletin Boards: Community bulletin boards are designated for the display of information on various topics including, but not limited to, campus events, job opportunities, research opportunities, political causes, and personal opinions. Materials posted on these boards do not require approval.

Posted materials, such as flyers, brochures, posters, handbills, and similar items, are permitted to be displayed on the appropriate bulletin boards. These materials must be two-dimensional, no larger than a standard A3 (approx. 12 inches x 17 inches), and in compliance with guidelines for the specific bulletin board type (instructional, unit/department, or community). Posted materials may be affixed to bulletin boards using tacks or push-ins. Other methods, including putty, tape, or staples, may not be used to avoid damage to university property. Multiple postings for the same event on the same bulletin board are not permitted nor may posted materials be affixed to the bulletin board covering other posted materials.

Posted materials on Community Bulletin Boards are removed on a regular basis. Instructors and Units/Departments set their own timeframe for removing posted materials for their respective bulletin boards. Only the posting party or university official acting within their duties may remove posted materials from bulletin boards.

If an individual believes a posting violates the posting procedures or other university policies, they may report the posting to the building manager or the Dean of Student Advocacy (vcudean@vcu.edu).

3. *Chalking*

Chalking on university property is permitted and limited to exposed, exterior concrete or asphalt sidewalks or walkways in specific locations. Only water-soluble chalk is permitted. Chalking is not allowed on other concrete or asphalt surfaces, such as benches and walls, or on bricks.

Specific chalking locations include concrete or asphalt sidewalks surrounding Harris Hall and Park Plaza Amphitheater on the Monroe Park Campus and the concrete or asphalt sidewalks parallel to the entrances of Hunton Student Center, Larrick Student Center, and within the Mini-Compass on the MCV campus. For specific chalking boundaries, refer to the Campus Expression and Space Utilization maps (see Related Documents).

Chalking is removed by university facilities and grounds personnel, regardless of content, in the course of their usual and ordinary campus maintenance activities.

4. *Signage/Displays*

The university may set reasonable restrictions designed to securely install signage/displays and to protect the physical safety of nearby persons and property.

Individuals may carry or hold temporary signs, including, but not limited to, banners, flags (without poles), posters, or similar items on university property provided they are not in violation of this or other university policies, including restrictions on installing or affixing items. Temporary signs and displays must not exceed the size of a standard poster board (24 inches by 36 inches). All other signs require reservation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Signage or displays to be temporarily installed in Park Plaza Amphitheater, Patterson Gardens, or other approved locations;

- Any sign or display intended to remain overnight;
- A tabling reservation permits a student organization or university department to display signage that exceeds the standard poster board size within the confines of the designated reservation area and otherwise in accordance with this Policy and all other applicable university policies.

Exceptions to this limitation rule:

- Coursework Transport - Students transporting coursework that exceeds the standard size parameters provided there are no violations of the general prohibitions.

5. *Vigils/Memorials*

Students, faculty, and staff may wish to honor the passing of a member of the VCU community or larger community with a vigil or memorial. Vigils and memorials are permitted in designated areas (see Campus Expression and Space Utilization Maps in Related Documents) and do not need prior written authorization, unless the vigils/memorial implicates this or other policy, including policies on open flame (e.g., candles) (see Open Flame Devices Procedures in Related Documents). Items related to the vigil/memorial may not remain unattended or overnight without prior written authorization by the Dean of Student Advocacy or designee. Items may not remain longer than the authorized timeframe.

B. Spontaneous Activity

The university may require spontaneous activity, including expressive activity, to move to designated locations on university property (e.g., Park Plaza or Patterson Gardens), pending availability, to avoid potential disruption to university operations and activities or other activities conducted by reservation.

C. Unprotected Expression

Certain limited categories of speech do not receive First Amendment protection and may violate university policy or law. The following speech may not be protected:

- Speech that is intended and likely to produce imminent unlawful action (“incitement”).
- Statements where the speaker means to communicate a serious expression of an intent to commit an act of unlawful violence to a particular individual or group of individuals (“true threats”).
- Face-to-face communication of words that, by their very utterance, inflict injury, or tend to incite an immediate breach of the peace (“fighting words”).
- Material that appeals to the prurient interest, that depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way, and that, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value (“obscenity”).
- Harassment as defined by the Policy on Preventing and Responding to Discrimination or the Student Code of Conduct.
- Speech that infringes on the First Amendment rights of others (“heckler’s veto”).

Determining whether any specific expression falls into a category of unprotected speech requires careful analysis and consultation with appropriate university officials and the Office of University Counsel.

VII. Space Utilization

Effective space utilization is a critical component of maintaining smooth campus operations and fostering a vibrant, engaged university community. At VCU, a variety of events — ranging from student organization meetings to large-scale conferences — require advanced notice and careful coordination with university officials.

The amount of advance notice required varies based on the type of event and guidelines established by the unit with operational control of the space. VCU requires event organizers to coordinate with university officials, for the purposes of allocating spaces efficiently, addressing logistical needs, and upholding safety standards. This proactive approach fosters collaboration across departments while maximizing the impact of each event on the campus community.

University officials will carefully evaluate and consider factors such as required accommodations, traffic, noise, time, relationship to nearby areas and activities, security needs, and other relevant considerations to determine (a) to what extent a suitable location exists and (b) if special precautions or arrangements are necessary. The university reserves the right to move any reservation or reserved use of its space to an alternate location for any reason at any time with reasonable notice or to deny, cancel, or postpone any reservation, on one or more of the following grounds or as otherwise authorized by the Dean of Student Advocacy:

- Conflict with a pre-existing reservation or university use of the location that would unreasonably interfere with the reserved or university event;
- Conflict with applicable university policy or procedure; or
- Inadequate notice for purposes of providing security, facilities support, resources, or other preparations necessary for the protection of persons or property.

All persons and event organizers are responsible for costs of damage, repair and clean up arising from their use of university facilities. Examples of such costs related to event reservations include the cost of providing tents, platforms, special fixtures and equipment, or the assignment of maintenance or security personnel. The university will determine any fee for security based on viewpoint-neutral standards used to assess risk, such as the number of expected attendees as determined by the university, the location of the event, the time of day, and presence of alcohol or special equipment. Consistent with lawful protection of expressive activity, VCU will not charge security-related fees based on the content of the expressive activity, the likelihood of disruption caused by others other than event attendees, or the actions of those who may protest the expressive activity.

A. Persons Making Reservations

Any reserving person is responsible for the compliance of all event attendees or participants with this policy and may be held accountable for any violation of this policy by the reserving person or any participant or attendee. An unaffiliated person (including an individual or organization) must coordinate with the university unit with operational control for the specific space to enter into a contractual agreement, such as a facility use agreement, with the university.

1. Responsible Contact Individual

Event organizers must designate a responsible contact individual. The responsible contact individual must be on site or immediately available via telephone/internet conferencing for a period beginning two hours before the event, throughout the event, and continuing two hours after the event. University officials will coordinate with the responsible contact individual regarding logistics, events details, and possible issues related to safety, time, and location. If the responsible contact is not immediately available during the event, the university may terminate the reservation immediately and/or end the event.

2. Student Organizations and University Departments

Through authorized representatives, student organizations and university departments must reserve certain campus facilities or areas by submitting requests to the unit with operational control of the space. Each unit establishes its own guidelines, timelines, and requirements for reservations. Because these expectations vary, individuals seeking to reserve space should review the procedures set by the unit with operational control of the facility they wish to use.

3. Faculty

Faculty may reserve certain campus rooms or areas for academic, research, or scholarly purposes by submitting requests to the administrator responsible for that area, with sufficient notice to ensure logistical support. Faculty must comply with applicable facility requirements, including the requirements of any facility use agreement. All reservations must adhere to established academic space protocols governed by Faculty Affairs. (See Space Utilization Guidelines for Faculty in Related Documents).

B. Reservable Locations with Restrictions

Various locations on campus are available for reservation. Other than the operational units whose procedures are listed under Policy Exceptions in the Related Documents section of this policy, all reservations must adhere to this policy, along with specific facility guidelines and procedures. The following locations have reservation restrictions:

1. Academic Spaces

When not in use for scheduled classes or rehearsals, some academic buildings are available for use by affiliated persons for meetings, conferences, studying, or other gatherings. Priority in scheduling shall be given to scholarly and academic activities. Some academic spaces are not available based on the nature of the space.

2. Park Plaza Amphitheater and Patterson Gardens

The university has designated the Park Plaza Amphitheater on the Monroe Park Campus and the Patterson Gardens on the MCV Campus as reservable spaces on a first-come, first-served basis. Anyone can reserve these locations through the Park Plaza Amphitheater and Patterson Gardens Reservation Form (see Forms section). The individual or organization must identify a responsible contact individual for the reservation. The responsible contact individual must cooperate with appropriate staff and law enforcement with respect to any security arrangements. The university makes these areas available to promote the variation of activities available to students. As a result, these spaces are designated for occasional use. For example, individuals or groups may make reservations for daytime use, with each reservation not exceeding three consecutive days and with reservations not recurring during more than three consecutive

weeks. The university will determine within its sole discretion whether a particular individual or organization's use exceeds occasional use.

3. *Residence Halls*

Reservations in residence halls are available only to resident students, resident staff, and units with offices in residence halls.

4. *The Compass*

The Compass is one of the most distinguished and vital areas on VCU's Monroe Park campus. At the center of VCU's educational enterprise. The Compass is designed as a pivotal crossroads where students, faculty, and staff journey daily to access scholarly resources at Cabell Library, attend class, dine at Shafer Dining Hall, and where prospective students and their families are introduced to the campus during tours. For a map of the Compass, which includes the bricked area and lawn adjacent to Cabell Library, see <https://maps.vcu.edu/>

Certain locations on the edge of the Compass are designated only for tabling by affiliated student organizations and university units with a tabling reservation. The Compass is otherwise not available for events.

C. Events with Special Considerations

VCU encourages the planning and hosting of impactful and memorable events that bring our community together and enhance the university experience. Certain events require advance notice because they are larger, involve additional risks, or may affect the regular flow of campus life. Coordination with the university is necessary to ensure their success and to maintain smooth campus operations.

1. *Major Events*

Space for Major Events must be reserved in advance and receive written authorization so the university can implement safety precautions, manage resources, and minimize disruption to normal operations. These events may require coordination of multiple university units, such as Catering, Facilities Management, Parking and VCU Police. Event organizers must submit reservation requests through the applicable reservation procedures managed by the university unit with operational control of the desired space (see Related Documents). VCU requires 30 calendar days advance notice (outside of university breaks according to the [VCU academic calendar](#)) and written authorization for certain events (Major Events) based on reasonable and viewpoint-neutral risk factors including but not limited to the following:

- **Size:** Events with expected or actual attendance over 175 attendees in an outdoor area with a maximum capacity over 175. Fire regulations do not permit any indoor or outdoor event to exceed the maximum capacity.
- **Nature/Complexity:** Events that, by the type of activity, carry increased risk or require coordination. Examples include:
 - Athletic exhibitions or competitions other than university programs
 - Memorials or commemorations

- Any speaker, presenter or performer who is not an affiliated person (including but not limited to political figures, entertainers, advocacy groups)
- Events that are open to the public
- Presence of any object or substance requiring review by the [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#) including but not limited to any animal, open flame, firework, pyrotechnic, or other flammable or hazardous item
- Use of specialized equipment, including but not limited to rental tables, tent, stage, scaffold, bleacher, bounce house, film screen, or carnival-style ride
- Event using a vehicle, including, but not limited to, a gaming truck, food truck
- Alcohol is served
- **Impact:** Events that may disrupt normal university operations, such as classes, administrative work, or daily campus life.
 - Activities that generate noise audible indoors (e.g., amplified sound near libraries, classrooms, or study spaces)
 - Events that involve traffic control or road closures

The university reserves the right to cancel, postpone, or modify a Major Event that has not been authorized in writing.

2. *Non-University Commercial Activity*

Non-university commercial use of university space must be authorized in writing by the Vice President with oversight of the unit with operational control of the space or designee authorized by that Vice President. Commercial door-to-door activities and commercial solicitations, including leafleting, are prohibited except by authorized university officials.

The university does not permit the solicitation, distribution, or selling of products or services of any kind at any time on university property by university employees other than as a required job function. Student organizations may, however, engage in promotional and fundraising activity in designated locations with approved reservation if such activity does not conflict with other provisions of this policy.

VIII. **Compliance**

In accordance with VCU's Space Use Regulation (see Related Documents), entry upon and use of university property must be in accord with this policy. Any person who violates these restrictions may be excluded from university property, asked to leave an event, subject to criminal penalties for trespassing, or subject to university action under applicable policy, such as the *Student Code of Conduct* or employee conduct policies, such as the *VCU Code of Conduct* (see Related Documents).

VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any student or employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

IX. University Events

The university conducts a variety of events and activities related to its operations and educational mission. The university may conduct activities that it prohibits others from conducting (e.g., use of amplified sound, signage/displays, chalking). The university exercises its discretion to conduct events including these elements as university officials have the responsibility and ability to assess the condition of the events in real time as it relates to the university's educational mission. Attendees at these events must comply with the provisions outlined within this policy and in related procedural documents.

Some university events and activities have additional requirements for attendance, and attendees are subject to the rules of decorum for such events, which include but are not limited to Board of Visitors meetings, classes, meetings, commencement, State of the University, New Student and Faculty Convocation, and University Athletic events.

For Board of Visitors meetings, the following is prohibited:

- Seating room capacity cannot be exceeded; overflow space is typically provided.
- Standing is only permitted for BOV members and university officials. Prolonged standing by members of the public is prohibited.
- Conduct that distracts the participants or otherwise disrupts the meeting—including yelling, chanting, playing music, dancing, or similar activities—is prohibited.
- Signs larger than 8 ½ in. x 11 in. are prohibited.
- No item may be left unattended.

Forms and Related Documents

Park Plaza and Patterson Gardens Reservation Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1n51e-6uUzeaDY68cHK4TYP_wtQ8SJTt15KHIFTdffqw/edit

- Virtual EMS - Space Reservation Platform for Affiliated Individuals/Organizations
<https://vcu.emscloudservice.com/web/>
- Student Conduct Incident Reporting Form
https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?VirginiaCommonwealthUniv&layout_id=0
- Request for Assistance Form
https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?VirginiaCommonwealthUniv&layout_id=6
- Open Flame Devices Form
<https://srm.vcu.edu/media/srm/assets/occupational-safety/OpenFlamesDeviceProcedure3-2-18.pdf>

State Laws and Regulations

- VCU's Space Use Regulation, 8 VAC 90-70-10 et seq.
<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincodeexpand/title8/agency90/chapter70>

- Virginia law governing restrictions on student speech; limitations, Va. Code § 23.1-401
<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/23.1-401/>

University Codes and Policies

- Student Code of Conduct (Interim)
<https://vcu.public.doctract.com/doctract/documentportal/08DA32A740D329EA999AE55858CBBECA>
- VCU Code of Conduct
<https://acs.vcu.edu/university-code-of-conduct/>
- Creating and Maintaining Policies & Procedures
<https://vcu.public.doctract.com/doctract/documentportal/08DA32A63EDBCE236F06FFB7914C0599?slu=08DD1F97BF0040E6252E8C4E8551FBEO>
- Free Speech at Virginia Commonwealth University
<https://freespeech.vcu.edu/>

Procedures and Operational Guidelines

- Tent Authorization Procedures
<https://vcu.public.doctract.com/doctract/documentportal/08DCC8420DF29B9885F5DF04A624896E>
- Open Flame Devices Procedures
<https://srm.vcu.edu/media/srm/assets/occupational-safety/OpenFlamesDeviceProcedure3-2-18.pdf>
- Guidelines for Addressing Disruptions to Educational and Other University Operations
<https://vcu.public.doctract.com/doctract/documentportal/08DCF1E9CC2F9A881938732DA987E523>
- Space Utilization Guidelines for Faculty
<https://vcu.public.doctract.com/doctract/documentportal/08DCDBD2A2F4436BC8C6588818F25F1E>

Reservation Procedures

- Commons Space Reservation Guidelines and Procedures:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qtBhZ1A037-XUkDx714TYyw3dOij3dLlkqPUlpD5b1U/edit?tab=t.0>
- Library Study Rooms Procedures:
<https://www.library.vcu.edu/media/vculibrary/documents/policies/VCULLibrarygroupstudyroomguidelines.pdf>
- VCU Libraries Classroom and Events (Available for use by VCU units and departments)

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdgrqn27AQZd_Jmoujf06dshAHLtP8NUZx88SkqvfIbdUTQfg/viewform

Maps and Student Resources

- Ram Voice - Student Resources and Information
<https://dos.vcu.edu/student-resources-and-information/ram-voice/>
- Campus Expression and Space Utilization Maps
<https://dos.vcu.edu/student-resources-and-information/ram-voice/-space-utilization-maps/>
<https://map.concept3d.com/?id=2114#!ce/84740?ct/84740,85167,85170?s/>

Policy Exceptions

- Athletics
siegelcenter.com
- Cabell Library
[https://www.library.vcu.edu/media/vculibrary/documents/policies/UseofLibraryrevision2020\(1\).pdf](https://www.library.vcu.edu/media/vculibrary/documents/policies/UseofLibraryrevision2020(1).pdf)
- Shafer Dining

Revision History

This policy supersedes the following archived policies:

Approval/Revision Date	Title
December 11, 2017	Reservation and Use of Space – Interim
September 11, 2018	Reservation and Use of Space <i>Minor revision to repair typographical error</i>
February 28, 2019	Reservation and Use of Space <i>Added definition for “Member of the Public”</i>
August, 9, 2024	Campus Expression and Space Utilization <i>Substantive Changes — Interim Policy</i>
September 19, 2024	Campus Expression and Space Utilization - Interim Policy <i>Minor Revision More specific information added to FAQ 15.</i>
November 12, 2025	CESU <i>Substantive Changes</i>

FAQ

These Frequently Asked Questions are intended to provide guidance about the application of this university policy, which is available in the Policy Library. If any interpretation of this guidance is inconsistent with the policy, please refer to the policy or policy owner to resolve any discrepancy.

1. How does the university determine if an activity is organized?

In determining whether a particular activity is organized, rather than spontaneous, the university considers certain indicators or factors that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) Advance coordination
 - b) Coordinated attendance or participation of 10 or more individuals
 - c) Regular or scheduled occurrence
 - d) Presence of supplies, tools or equipment for the activity
 - e) Tables, chairs, or other furniture
 - f) A-frame or other self-supporting signs
 - g) Sound amplification devices
 - h) Advance promotion of the activity, via social media or another channel
 - i) Extended duration based on the academic calendar (typically 2 hours)
- The University does not consider the viewpoint of any expressive activity in determining whether a particular activity is organized.

2. Why does it matter if an activity is organized?

See section IV of the Policy.

To preserve the academic environment and because areas that are well-suited for group activity are limited on the University's urban campuses, the University requires reservations for all organized activities. Reservations are not required for activity that is spontaneous (arising from a momentary impulse).

The University permits affiliated persons (students, student organizations, faculty and staff) to conduct organized activity if pursuant to a reservation. It also generally permits students to participate in short-term, informal organized yard games in outdoor areas if the area is not in use by the University and other policy requirements are satisfied.

The University permits unaffiliated individuals to conduct events only if pursuant to a reservation of the Park Plaza Amphitheater or Patterson Gardens.

3. How is event space reserved?

Many university spaces are managed through the Commons using the [Event Management System \(EMS\)](#) scheduling portal. If the space you are interested in is not managed by the Commons, you must make a reservation directly with the [unit with operational control](#) for that specific location. Unaffiliated persons may reserve space for events by completing the Park [Plaza/Patterson Gardens reservation form](#).

Certain areas of campus may be reserved. Persons who desire to reserve campus facilities for any reason, including to conduct expressive activities, must submit their requests to the

Unit with operational control with sufficient notice to allow for logistical support and to otherwise comply with the applicable facility requirements.

4. Do activities of student organizations require reservations?

Yes. As set forth in the Student Organization Handbook, all student organization activities, meaning activities organized or conducted by a student organization, using university property, including indoor and outdoor areas require reservations. The student organization must go through the event request process. This requirement ensures the university is aware of the event details, can coordinate necessary support, and can confirm the activity aligns with applicable policies and space use guidelines.

5. When does an activity require an event reservation?

An activity requires a reservation when it is an Event, as defined in this policy.

6. What form can I use to reserve the Park Plaza Amphitheater or Patterson Gardens?

Anyone can reserve these spaces by utilizing the [Park Plaza/Patterson Gardens Reservation Form](#), which allows same-day reservations.

7. What conduct by any person is prohibited on university property?

The university prohibits any person from interfering with university and authorized functions, activities, and events and from participating in unlawful conduct on university property. Section I.A. of the Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy describes specific conduct that is prohibited no matter the relationship of the individual with the university.

8. Can political groups use space on campus?

Yes, under the parameters set forth in this policy. Any person, including any organization, may use university property as described in this policy. The university's grant of permission to individuals and organizations to use its property under the conditions of any other university policy does not indicate its support for or endorsement of any particular viewpoint, which may be expressed by any such individual or group.

9. What other requirements are in place for use of space?

The unit with operational control of a room, building or other area may set space use requirements in addition to and consistent with those set forth in the Campus Expression and Space Utilization policy, including restrictions for reservation, scheduling, insurance, and use of such space. For more information, consult the [university reservation manager](#) of the responsible office or contact the office directly.

10. How are events generally managed? Am I required to notify the university?

Section V.B. of the Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy requires organizers of events, including Major Events and other events in reserved spaces, to provide advance notice to the university and receive written authorization, for example, through the [Event](#)

Management System (EMS System).

11. **Should I notify campus Police about my event?**

Organizers of all events are encouraged to provide advance notice to VCU Police prior to commencement of an event or activity to promote the safety and security of all persons on campus. University officials will coordinate with the primary organizer or responsible person regarding appropriate logistical issues related to safety, time, and location.

12. **How do I notify VCU Police about my event?**

Notify VCU Police by calling the non-emergency dispatch at (804) 828-1196. To be useful, advance notification must include the day, time, estimated size of group and items associated with the event, and the location where the event is expected to begin and be carried out as well as the full name and detailed contact information for the primary organizer and/or person responsible for the activity. University officials will consider factors such as the anticipated size, required accommodations, traffic, noise, time, relationship to nearby areas and activities, security needs, and other relevant facts and circumstances to determine to what extent (a) a suitable location exists and (b) special precautions or arrangements are necessary.

13. **Can leaflets be distributed on campus?**

Unaffiliated persons or groups may conduct expressive activity, such as public speaking and leafleting, only in the Park Plaza Amphitheater and Patterson Gardens with a reservation according to the Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy.

14. **What are major events?**

Please see section VII.C.1 of the [Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy](#).

15. **What are the boundaries of the Park Plaza Amphitheater?**

A map can be found [here](#).

16. **May 'counter' expressive activities occur during expressive activities?**

Yes, individuals may participate in expressive activity that protests or is 'counter' to the expressive activity of others. Such counter expression is subject to the same requirements under the policy, including that it may not disrupt or block expressive activity of others. Please review the map of the Park Plaza Amphitheater for information about the areas designated for such use.

17. **What type of restrictions does the University require?**

University officials may provide reasonable guidance to individuals about the specific places, specific times and specific manner in which they may engage in expressive activity in order to maintain the safe and effective educational and administrative operations of the university, including carrying out its academic mission, promoting a safe environment, and preserving the functional and aesthetic integrity of the campus.

18. **Does this policy apply to non-university property?**

The Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy applies only to university property and does not govern events or activities occurring on property not owned or controlled by VCU, including city, state, federal or private property. When the university is aware of events or activities on non-university property that may impact the university community or its operations, it will evaluate the potential impact and take reasonable steps, consistent with applicable law, to promote the safety of all members of our community and avoid unreasonable disruption.

19. Is chalking allowed?

Yes, chalking on campus is permitted subject to the restrictions outlined in the Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy Section VI.A.3

20. Are there specific times and places on campus where I can use speakers or other amplified sound equipment without asking for prior approval?

Yes, speakers and other Amplified Sound equipment can generally be utilized in Park Plaza Amphitheater on the Monroe Park Campus and Patterson Gardens on the MCV campus on Monday thru Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. without specific prior approval. Additional information about Amplified Sound can be found in the [Event Services FAQ here](#).

21. Can I bring or display signs larger than 24x36 inches?

Yes, but only in limited cases. Student organizations may display signs larger than 24x36 under a confirmed tabling reservation, provided they remain within the reserved area and comply with all other policies. In addition, students may carry or transport coursework that exceeds the size limit, as long as it does not violate other campus rules.

22. How do I receive written authorization for my event?

Written authorization is provided by the university unit with operational control of the space you are reserving. Authorization can be granted through one of the following (but not limited to):

- **Event Management System (EMS):** Used by students, student organizations, and employees to request many indoor and outdoor spaces.
- **Park Plaza Amphitheater/Patterson Gardens Reservation Form:** Used by affiliated and unaffiliated persons to reserve these outdoor areas.

23. What are examples of “university operations” that can be disrupted by outdoor noise?

Examples of university operations that can be impacted include:

- Classes and Labs – Lectures, seminars, science labs, and hands-on learning activities.
- Exams and Testing
- Academic and Administrative Work – Office’s processing records, financial aid, admissions, and other critical functions.
- Meetings and Events – Board of Visitors meetings, faculty meetings, search committee interviews
- Student Support Services – Counseling and mental health appointments, advising sessions, tutoring, and career counseling.
- Libraries and Study Areas – Quiet study zones, research areas, and group workspaces where focus is expected.

- Special Programs and Performances – Lectures, recitals, or performances requiring controlled sound levels