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Employee Resource Groups

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EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP POLICY

Area:	Office of Inclusive Excellence	Number:	
Applies to:	All non-student employees	Issued:	January 8, 2021
Sources:	GS Strategic Plan Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy	Revised:	August 31, 2022
Policy Owner:	Associate Vice-President for Inclusive Excellence	Reviewed:	
		Page(s):	3

I. Purpose

Employee Resource Groups, hereinafter referred to as ERG(s), promote [Georgia Southern University's Strategic Plan](#) and [Inclusive Excellence Plan](#) by contributing to the University's vision by fostering an environment where employees can "grow themselves to grow others" and pushing the Georgia Southern community closer to its goals around Inclusive Excellence.

II. Policy Statement

Georgia Southern (GS) recognizes Employee Resource Groups as a critical initiative to support the growth and development of a diverse and inclusive workforce. ERGs provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all employees and advance a respectful and caring community; serve as a vehicle for the personal and professional development of their members and build professional networks; provide an opportunity for social connection outside of the routine environment, comfort and belonging for members who feel disconnected in the workplace; create an open forum to share common interests/concerns and support one another in creatively addressing those concerns; support and engage in community outreach and volunteerism with an emphasis on inclusive excellence; share insights for the purpose of positively impacting employee recruitment and retention, specifically among underrepresented populations; and promote meaningful collaboration across ERGs

The University reserves the right to reject an application from any group or discontinue any groups that violate University policies, regulations, and procedures and that are not aligned with the mission and values of the University.

III. Exclusions

These are no exclusions or exceptions to the policy.

IV. Procedures

- A. Members must be employed by Georgia Southern University. All full time and part-time non-student employees are eligible to participate.
- B. Each ERG will be assigned an “Executive Sponsor,” which is a delegate from the President’s Cabinet responsible for executive oversight.
- C. ERGs are not authorized to negotiate issues concerning wages, hours or any other term or condition of employment.
- D. GS shall allow full time employees up to four hours per month of work time (non-overtime) to attend ERG meetings, participate in ERG activities, and complete administrative related tasks with approval from their supervisor.
 1. Supervisors shall work with part time employees interested in participating to calculate a prorated amount of time that may be spent on ERG activities.
- E. When using work time to participate in activities, employees shall request prior approval from their supervisor to ensure adequate staff coverage.
- F. Members of an ERG are responsible for all functions of their respective groups. This includes, but is not limited to the following:
 1. Determining how it will be organized.
 2. Selecting officers and recruiting members.
 3. Scheduling meetings and activities including frequency, location, purpose, and content.
 4. Developing and maintaining a contact database for membership. The Office of Inclusive Excellence will receive a copy of this list for internal records but will not share the information unless required by law.
 5. Facilitating communication among its members.
- G. To be recognized by Georgia Southern University and receive financial support from the Office of Inclusive Excellence, each ERG shall designate two employees to complete the following:
 1. Complete the ERG application, located on the [Office of Inclusive Excellence](#) website. This process includes developing a formal charter and workplan, outlining membership roles, and establishing rules to ensure group sustainability. ERG Charters must be resubmitted annually as part of the renewal process.
 2. Elect or appoint at least two leadership co-chairs who will facilitate regular touchpoints with ERG members, guide ERG’s plans and activities, meet on a regular basis with the Council of ERG Leaders, liaise with the Office of Inclusive Excellence, be listed on the Office of Inclusive Excellence website as ERG contacts, and promote smooth leadership succession at the conclusion of each term. Members of the Council of ERG Leaders will be inducted on a rolling basis.
 3. Maintain at least 10 active members and meet at least twice each semester.
- H. Submit an annual report by June 30th of each year.

The Office of Inclusive Excellence will provide support to ERGs in the following ways:

 1. Provide an operating budget, subject to fund availability, to be managed internally by the Office of Inclusive Excellence. ERGs are encouraged to collaborate and pursue their own fundraising efforts, which must comply with all [University policies regarding sales and solicitation](#).

2. Review, manage, and provide feedback on the application for establishing an ERG.
 3. Review, manage, and provide feedback on the ERG work plan to help align ERGs with the goals and mission of the University and the OIE.
 4. Review the annual report submitted by each ERG.
 5. Promote and advance the awareness of ERGs for increased membership.
 6. Identify any deficiencies that preclude recertification for the following year.
 7. Facilitate a Council of ERG Leaders made up of the co-chairs of each ERG to provide consultation around advancing the University's Strategic Plan and the Office of Inclusive Excellence Action Plan.
 8. Recruit and identify executive sponsors for each ERG.
- I. The designated Executive Sponsors will provide support to the ERGs in the following ways:
1. Provide advice and coaching to the ERG's executive leadership.
 2. Serve as a sounding board for issues and recommendations regarding, but not limited to, events, programming, and recruitment.
 3. Support and attend, if possible, ERG general body meetings and programming events.
 4. Attend the Council of ERG Leaders meetings when requested.
 5. Take an active role in advocating and advancing the mission and goals of the ERG by leveraging their positions to distribute pertinent information to the University community.
- J. An ERG may be discontinued by providing a letter describing the reason for ceasing activity. This letter must be submitted by an ERG chair or co-chair to the Office of Inclusive Excellence and signed by a simple majority (51%) of the members of the executive committee.
1. Once the letter has been reviewed, the Office of Inclusive Excellence reserves the right to request a meeting to allow for more clarifying discussion before rendering a decision.
 2. The OIE has the right to issue a letter of discontinuation to an ERG at any time during the year.
 3. Reasons for discontinuation may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Unprotected action or conduct that reflects negatively against the University.
 - b. Low membership (under ten members) or prolonged inactivity.
 - c. Unlawful discrimination against interested or active members.
 - d. Inability to demonstrate sufficient achievement of the ERG groups goals or work plans.
 - e. Inability or unwillingness to comply with the requirements of the ERG policy.
- K. ERGs must adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local law and University and Board of Regents policies.