

# Center for the Common Good Risk Management Policies

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**Policy owner:** Executive Director, Center for the Common Good

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## **I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

These policies are designed to minimize and mitigate risks that may arise when providing community engagement opportunities for students through the Center for the Common Good (the “Center”).

Community-based engagement offers students an opportunity to expand their knowledge base, develop their skills level, and serve the community outside of the boundaries of a conventional learning environment. Because community-based engagement typically occurs in non-conventional learning environments, it is important for faculty and staff developing and leading these activities to identify, prepare for and take steps to mitigate risks that may arise in connection with these activities.

## **II. APPLICABILITY**

All faculty and staff participating in activities sponsored by or offered through the Center are expected to comply with these policies.

## **III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

In the Center’s activities, events and programs, we strive to:

- Respect and listen to our stakeholders, recognizing that they bring talent and knowledge that enrich the relationship
- Foster equality and respect differences by living in solidarity and practicing subsidiarity in decision-making
- Act with integrity and transparency in planning and implementation of common good activities
- Do no harm, including by enacting processes that consider the impact on vulnerable populations
- Construct sustainable, long-term and mutually beneficial relationships
- Commit to learning and reflection that promotes social action, systematic change, social equity and justice

## **IV. SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

### **A. Due Diligence**

Before advancing a community engagement program opportunity with a community organization, information about the community organization must be submitted to the Center for Common Good for the completion of appropriate due diligence regarding the suitability of the organization as a host or collaborator for community engagement programs. The Center’s executive director has sole authority to approve community organizations for this purpose.

Thank you to Barb Davey, Dr. Connie Mick and the Center for Social Concerns for providing much of the content for this document.

## **B. Program and Project Expectations**

In an effort to develop, nurture and provide strong and sustainable relationships with community organizations, the Center seeks to set clear, shared expectations with the community organization prior to approving a community engagement activity. The following matters must be addressed with the community organization before a community engagement program or project will be approved.

1. Determine what learning objectives can be achieved by developing a community-based program
2. Determine the student requirements for participation in the program, including at a minimum academic background, required skillsets and specialized training
3. Collaborate to develop a learning plan
4. Understand and determine collaboratively how to facilitate compliance with any background, motor vehicle, health or other participation screening requirements
5. Determine the logistics of the program
  - a. Location of the worksite
  - b. Hours of operation of the worksite
  - c. Transportation to the worksite
  - d. Hours of work by each student/class
6. Determine if the community organization will require students or other participants to sign any waivers, agreements or other paperwork before participating in the activity
7. Clarify if student participation in the activity will be evaluated and, if so, how and by whom
8. Establish the consequences for students not meeting expectations, and who will assess whether students are meeting expectations
9. Determine the details of the program orientation as set forth in this policy and whether the orientation will be on-site at the community organization or other worksite

## **C. Orientation Topic List**

Before a community engagement program or project begins, designated St. Thomas faculty or staff are expected to provide St. Thomas participants in the project with a brief orientation in collaboration with the Center and the community organization. At a minimum, all orientations must address the following subjects:

- Community organization's mission
- Description of community organization's programs and clients
- Eligibility requirements and who pays for any required background checks or other required participation screening requirements
- Community organization rules, processes and expectations for those participating in the community engagement activities
- Any applicable confidentiality requirements, including without limitation the ability to take and share pictures, audio and/or video recordings
- Risks of the community engagement activities, if any

- A tour of the worksite, noting all available emergency exits
- Other safety and emergency policies or protocols for the worksite
- Emergency contact person and contact data
- Ethical guidelines and Institutional Review Board protocols, if applicable
- Conflict of interest considerations, if applicable

Other topics that may be considered as part of an introduction to the program include:

- Skills and learning that the participant can expect to gain from the experience
- Community organization or worksite address, parking and directions
- Training requirements and schedule
- Information and contact data for site and supervisor including how often students meet with supervisor
- Unscheduled absence procedures
- Program attire
- Required supplies
- Tommie Link check-in procedures
- Overview of University policies related to placement

## **V. CONTRACTS WITH EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Some community organizations require St. Thomas to enter into an agreement or sign an organizational release before the University or our students can participate in an activity with the organization. In other situations, we may need to enter into an agreement to secure off-campus space for the activity, necessitating an agreement with a third party, or the community organization may seek to use on-campus facilities to host the activity, necessitating a facilities license agreement with St. Thomas. Only specifically designated staff are authorized to negotiate and sign contracts on behalf of St. Thomas. If a contract is required by a community organization or for the use or rental of a facility or the provision of services, the contract must be reviewed and approved by authorized St. Thomas contract managers and may be signed only by an authorized signatory at St. Thomas. All proposed contracts received by a community organization or another third party must be provided to the Center, who will facilitate the processing of contracts with appropriate St. Thomas contract managers and legal counsel, as needed. If the community organization wishes to use space at St. Thomas, notify the Center, and it will work with Conference and Event Services to make appropriate arrangements.

## **VI. WAIVER AND RELEASE AGREEMENT**

Students participating in a Center-sponsored community engagement activity must sign a St. Thomas waiver and release agreement in a form approved by St. Thomas, prior to engaging in the activity. This policy applies regardless of whether the community organization requires its own waiver and release, regardless of the source of funding for the activity or related travel, and regardless of whether the student will receive a stipend or expense reimbursement for participation in the activity. Approved waiver and release agreement forms may be obtained through the Center.

Questions regarding the waiver and release may be directed to the Center or the [Office of General Counsel](#).

## **VII. STUDENT TRANSPORTATION**

Participation in community-based engagement activities typically require students to travel off campus. Methods of travel may vary depending on the circumstances of the trip. Regardless of method, the safety of students and employees is paramount to the University, and therefore all travel must be in compliance with this policy and all applicable University travel, purchasing and insurance policies. These policies apply regardless of whether the travel is local, domestic or international. Please see the [University's Motor Vehicle Policy](#) or the [Student Transportation Policy](#) for more information on transportation.

The approved waiver and release agreement for students includes provisions addressing personal and public transportation to community engagement sites.

### **A. University Vehicles and Rentals**

The University's Parking and Transportation Services maintains vehicles for domestic travel use for approved University activities. These vehicles, which are professionally serviced and maintained, are available to faculty, staff and students for a reasonable daily rate, subject to Parking and Transportation Services policies and procedures. Parking and Transportation Services will also assist with the engagement of commercial bus carriers or the rental of vehicles from outside vendors when needed. An approved list of vendors may be accessed from Parking and Transportation Services. All vehicle rentals and commercial bus engagements related to Center-sponsored activities require prior approval of the Center.

### **B. Air Travel**

Air travel for Center-sponsored activities must be arranged through [Travel Services](#) and approved in advance by the Center's executive director.

### **C. Public Transportation**

Students may walk, bike and/or access public transportation (e.g., bus, light rail) to a community organization site. In considering whether to offer group transportation as an alternative to walking, biking or public transportation, faculty and staff should consider proximity of location and be aware of any potential safety considerations.

### **D. Personal Vehicles**

Personal vehicles are acceptable forms of transportation so long as University transportation policies are followed. Students may not transport minor children in personal vehicles in connection with Center-sponsored activities. All vehicles used in connection with approved University activities are required to have primary liability coverage in the event of an accident regardless of who was driving the vehicle. Further, insurance coverage must be maintained for physical damage to the vehicle. The University does not provide insurance coverage for damage, loss or theft of any personal vehicle. Faculty, staff and students who use personal vehicles for approved community engagement activities may be permitted a mileage allowance in accordance with St. Thomas expense reimbursement policies.

## **E. Registration of Non-Local Travel**

Regardless of the travel method used, travel outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area by faculty, staff and students for Center-sponsored activities must be registered in accordance with the University's travel registration policy. This allows the University to expedite emergency protocols when needed.

## **VIII. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATION SCREENING REQUIREMENTS**

Some community organizations require background checks, motor vehicle checks, fingerprinting, health testing and certification, or other, similar screening checks or certifications for anyone volunteering with the organization or visiting their worksite. The University's role in facilitating compliance with these requirements depends on the particular facts and circumstances and the terms of any agreement with the community organization. If the community organization requests that the University manage a compliance requirement on its behalf, contact the Center, which will work with the community organization to make these determinations. Faculty and staff are not permitted to make any agreements regarding screening checks or certifications on the University's or students' behalf.

## **IX. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Students, faculty and staff involved in community engagement activities may have access to confidential business information and personal information about other students, volunteers, community organization clients or organizational employees. Such information is subject to confidentiality requirements under applicable law and policies and must not be used, shared or accessed without proper authorization and in accordance with applicable laws and policies, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Questions about the confidentiality of student information may be directed to the University Registrar or the [Office of General Counsel](#). Questions about the confidentiality of community organization client information should be directed to the community organization.

## **X. EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

There are numerous circumstances that may necessitate the need for an emergency response on the part of faculty or staff leading students in a community engagement activity. Regardless of the circumstances of the emergency, a prompt and prudent response is imperative. In case of an emergency, faculty and staff are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University's policies and emergency response protocols, including but not limited to guidance provided through USTCares.

Faculty and staff also are expected to discuss with the community organization and to maintain familiarity with the emergency notification and evacuation protocols of the community organization, and to follow such protocols in the event an emergency occurs at a community organization work site.

If an emergency occurs off-campus, call 911 and follow their instructions. If an emergency occurs on-campus, call [the Department of Public Safety](#) emergency number at 651-962-5555.

After following emergency procedures, faculty and staff must promptly notify Public Safety and the Center for Common Good of any off-campus emergency that occurs in connection with a Center-sponsored activity.

In order to assure compliance with FERPA, faculty and staff may not contact parents in connection with an emergency without prior authorization from the vice president for student affairs or the vice president's designee.

## **XI. PRIVATE RESIDENCES**

Faculty and staff may not permit or make arrangements for students to provide volunteer services or attend events in private residences, whether single-family homes or multi-family residences, in connection with Center-sponsored activities, without the advance written approval of the Center's executive director.

## **XII. OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

All faculty, staff, students and volunteers participating in Center-sponsored activities must comply with all St. Thomas policies that apply to them. These policies include, but are not limited to:

- Alcohol and drug policies
- Code of Student Conduct
- Code of Professional Conduct
- Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Policy
- Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Weapons Policy

## **XIII. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students participating in community engagement activities should expect:

- To receive an orientation to the organization, its mission and, if applicable, its facilities
- To receive training, supervision and guidance for the activity
- To be provided with information regarding the need for background, motor vehicle, health or other compliance-related checks
- To receive documentation of service hours through the [Tommie Link](#) system
- To be respected if they say no to an activity or request because they feel uncomfortable or unsafe
- A positive experience

Students participating in community engagement activities have a responsibility to:

- Participate in all orientation and training required by the University and the community organization
- Abide by and respect the learning site's rules and standards of conduct
- Participate with enthusiasm and be open to new experiences
- Be honest with St. Thomas and the community organization regarding their skills and abilities relevant to the placement
- Complete all assigned tasks and responsibilities in a timely manner

- Maintain reasonable flexibility with respect to time and task as requested by St. Thomas or the community organization
- Follow the University's [mission, vision and convictions](#)
- Comply with all applicable St. Thomas policies and procedures
- Represent the highest standards of ethics and integrity