

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas State University System

SRSU Policy: Freedom of Speech and Expressive Activities

SRSU Policy ID: APM 4.17

Policy Reviewed by: VP for Student Affairs

Approval Authority: Executive Cabinet

Approval Date: September 30th, 2025

Next Review Date: September 30th, 2030

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is (1) to protect the free speech rights (expressive activities) of students, faculty and staff on all Sul Ross State University Campuses; (2) to preserve the University's primary academic mission; and (3) to protect the health and safety of the University community. In accordance with state and federal law, as well as applicable provisions of the Texas State University System (TSUS) Rules and Regulations, the University established the following reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions. Any restriction listed below applies equally to individuals and groups, regardless of viewpoint.

Only students enrolled at, and employees of, Sul Ross State University have the right to peacefully assemble in the common outdoor areas of Sul Ross State University campuses for expressive activities, including listening or observing the expressive activities of others if the expressive activity is not unlawful and does not materially and substantially disrupt the functioning of the university.

Individuals not affiliated with Sul Ross State University may only assemble peacefully in areas designated as traditional public forums by Sul Ross State University unless invited, sponsored, and approved by the university.

Nothing in this policy may be construed to limit or infringe on a person's right to freedom of speech or expression protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or by Section 8, Article 1, of the Texas Constitution.

In the event of a conflict between this policy and the TSUS Rules and Regulations, the Rules and Regulations shall control.

All university students and employees must present valid identification upon request by peace officer or authorized university personnel.

1. Definitions

1.1 Amplified sound— is sound volume that is increased by any electric, electronic, mechanical, or motor-powered means. Shouting, group chanting, and acoustic musical instruments are exempt from this definition and are not subject to the special rules on amplified sound but are subject to general rules on disruption/noise violation.

1.2 Antisemitism - a certain perception of Jews that may be expressed as hatred toward Jews.

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The term includes rhetorical and physical acts of antisemitism directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals or their property or toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

1.3 Commercial Speech - speech or writing on behalf of a business with the intent of earning revenue or a profit.

1.4 Common Outdoor Areas – All outdoor grounds that are owned or leased by Sul Ross State University are designated as limited public forums except for that area designated by the President, if any, as a traditional public forum.

1.5 Limited Public Forums – Limited public forums may be used by students enrolled at and employees of the university to engage in expressive activity, subject to reasonable restriction, including to listen to or observe the expressive activities of others, that is not unlawful and does not materially and substantially disrupt the functioning of the university.

1.6 Traditional Public Forum – this is the specific area on campus designated by the President as a traditional public forum. Individuals not affiliated with Sul Ross State University may only assemble peacefully in areas designated as traditional public forums by Sul Ross State University unless invited, sponsored, and approved by the university.

The area that is designated as a traditional public forum encompasses the paved areas directly in front of the Morgan University Center (east entrance facing the mall area). The area extends 54 ft. from the doors and 210 ft. in width, providing 11,340 sq. ft. of paved space.

1.7 Designated Areas – areas where amplified sound, exhibits, and temporary structures may be used or displayed within the time, place, and manner specified by the University.

1.8 Disruptive activities mean:

1.8.1 Obstructing or restraining the passage of persons to the campus or an area of the campus or to an exit, entrance, or hallway of any building without the authorization of the SRSU administration;

1.8.2 Seizing control of an area of the SRSU Campus or any building or portion of a building for the purpose of interfering with any administrative, educational, research, or other authorized activity

1.8.3 Disrupting and/or preventing or attempting to prevent by force or violence or the threat of force or violence any lawful assembly authorized by the SRSU administration. A lawful assembly is disrupted when a person in attendance is rendered incapable of participating in the assembly due to the use of force or violence or a reasonable fear of force or violence, or

1.8.4 Any acts that are disruptive to the normal operations of the university including classes and university business, or that invade the rights of others.

1.9 Expressive activities– means any speech or expressive conduct protected by the First

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Amendment to the United States Constitution or by Section 8, Article I, Texas Constitution, and includes assemblies, protests, speeches, the distribution of written material, the carrying of signs, and the circulation of petitions. The term does not include commercial speech, defamation, unlawful harassment, incitement of imminent unlawful activity, obscenity, or threats to engage in unlawful activity.

1.10 Grounds— means all common outdoor areas, as that term is defined herein, on any SRSU University Campus, including the Rio Grande, Uvalde and Eagle Pass campuses.

2. Prohibited Behavior

The University strictly enforces the TSUS Rules and Regulations' prohibition of disruptive activities (see Chapter VI, Subparagraph 5.4 and Chapter VII, Subparagraph 3.7) on the SRSU Campus. Any person who violates the prohibition will be subject to any remedies provided by law and the TSUS Rules and Regulations, including, but not limited to, removal from campus, the student or employee disciplinary process, or criminal prosecution.

2.1 Amplified Sound. Use of amplified sound during class hours: Individuals engaging in expressive activities on campus during class hours or during scheduled final exams may not use amplified sound if such amplification interferes with campus operations, or interferes with a university employee's or a peace officer's lawful performance of a duty, or effectively denies a student equal access to the institution's programs or activities (e.g., sound that is objectively intimidating or disruptive).

2.2 Camping – erecting tents or other living accommodation on campus for the purpose of expressive activity is prohibited.

2.3 Time restrictions - Expressive activity between the hours of 10 p.m. and 8 a.m. is not permitted if the expressive activity can be heard from the campus residence halls.

2.4 Date restrictions - During the last two weeks of the Fall Semester, Spring Semester, and Summer I and Summer II semesters, any person engaging in expressive activities as defined in this policy is not permitted to materially and substantially disrupt the functioning of the institution by inviting speakers to speak on campus, by using a device to amplify sound, or by using drums or other percussive instruments.

2.5 Destruction of Property - Destruction, alteration, or appropriation of the University's property is strictly prohibited. For example, a person may not lower the U.S. or state flag and raise another flag in its place as doing so would constitute the unauthorized appropriation of Sul Ross University State property.

2.6 Disguises - A person engaged in expressive activities may not obstruct the enforcement of the University's rules and policies, or applicable laws by avoiding identification, by intimidating others, or by interfering with the university's employees or peace officer's lawful performance of a duty.

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3. Speech, Expression, and Assembly

The following time, place, and manner restrictions shall apply to all expressive activities on University Grounds:

3.1 Expressive activities must not at any time interfere with or disrupt the academic mission of the University.

3.2 No table, tent, or equipment associated with an expressive activity may block or interfere with the means of entrance or egress to any SRSU building, facility, or classroom.

3.3 All tables and chairs must remain within the reserved space for the duration of the activity.

3.4 Use of amplified sound must comply with the restrictions contained in the Amplified Sound sections of this Policy.

3.5 Some areas of the University may be reserved by off-campus groups. Fees may apply.

3.6 Improper use of any University equipment or policy may result in loss of reservation and use privileges.

4. Reservations

Common Outdoor areas (limited public forums) and the area designated by the President, if any, as a public forum are available for reservation, but not required:

Reservations are made through the Campus Activities Office by a representative of the sponsoring organization. Reservations may be denied if the activity is scheduled at the same or similar time as another University function or meeting.

5. Amplified Sound

To preserve the academic and core business of the university, the use of amplified sound is restricted to certain times and designated areas as stated herein.

Use of amplified sound is permitted subject to the Amplified section of this policy and to the following:

5.1 Location: Use of amplified sound is permitted subject to the Amplified section of this policy and only in reserved areas and with an approved written reservation.

5.2 Reservation: An amplified sound request must be made in conjunction with a reservation request.

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5.3 Equipment: All events using amplified sound in the permitted areas are required to use an SRSU sound system. No personal speakers or sound amplifiers (manual or electronic) will be permitted.

5.4 Frequency: Organizations are allowed one (1) amplified sound event per week. Only one (1) amplified sound event at a time is permitted in each designated area.

5.5 Volume: All sound levels will be set by SRSU based on class and campus activities schedules and are not to disrupt the academic mission of the University.

6. Off-Campus Speakers

6.1 Only recognized student, faculty, or staff organizations may request authorization to invite an outside speaker to speak on campus. Off-campus speakers who have not been sponsored or invited by a registered student, faculty, or staff organization or by the SRSU administration may not speak to groups in campus facilities and buildings unless the speaker is speaking to an off-campus organization that has been approved under the procedures provided in Chapter VII, Subparagraph 3.24 of the TSUS Rules and Regulations. No invitation shall be issued to an outside speaker without the prior written concurrence of the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Dean of Students, or designee.

6.2 Any speaker request shall be made in writing to the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Dean of Students, or designee by an officer of a registered student, faculty, or staff organization, or by an administrative officer of the Component, desiring to sponsor the proposed speaker no later than fourteen (14) business days prior to the date of the proposed speaking engagement. This request shall contain the name of the sponsoring organization; the proposed date, time, and location of the meeting; the expected size of the audience; and the topic of speech. Any request not acted upon by the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Dean of Students, or designee within five (5) business days after submission shall be deemed granted.

7. Banners, Exhibits, and Chalking

7.1 Recognized Student Organizations, faculty, and staff may hang banners and display exhibits on campus by reservation through the Campus Activities office only. Banners, flyers, or posters may not be affixed in any way to campus buildings or trees for any purpose.

7.2 Outside groups or individuals are not permitted to hang banners or to display exhibits on any campus property.

7.3 Chalking (use of chalk to write on SRSU property) is strictly prohibited.

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8. Violations/Reporting

8.1 Student violations and grievance procedures are governed by the Student Grievance Procedures.

8.2 Employee violations and grievance procedures are governed by Human Resources Policy.

9. Disciplinary Process

9.1 Students who violate this policy will be subject to appropriate discipline under [SRSU's Code of Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

9.2 SRSU staff who violate this policy will be subject to appropriate discipline under [Human Resources Policy](#).

9.3 SRSU faculty who violate this policy will be subject to appropriate discipline under [Chapter V. Paragraph 4](#) of the TSUS Rules and Regulations.