



FAQs on Events – Sept. 9, 2020

Q: The Provost’s September 4, 2020 message stated that through Sept. 18, on campus events are suspended, other than official events conducted by University academic and administrative units. What if I want to engage in expressive conduct in outdoor areas of campus between now and Sept. 18?

A: Due to the large and growing number of COVID cases identified as students have returned to campus, as one aspect of the broader effort to slow the spread of COVID and ensure a successful semester, the University has temporarily suspended on-campus events through September 18.

That said, the University will not prohibit members of the campus community from engaging in noncommercial expressive conduct in generally accessible outdoor areas of the campus that are generally accessible to members of the campus community, so long as the conduct does not materially and substantially interfere with the functioning of the University. Because of the potential risks to other members of the campus community, the University reserves the right to discipline students or employees based on their failure to maintain safety practices such as maintaining social distance or wearing masks when it is not possible to maintain a safe distance. Such discipline would not be based on individuals’ expression.

The University strongly encourages members of the University community who wish to engage in expressive conduct between now and Sept. 18 to utilize alternative means of communication such as social media and virtual meetings, rather than in-person events.

The University is hoping that this action can be a short-term measure because campus events are a valuable part of the college experience.

Q: Is the University forcing students to cancel all off-campus gatherings where there are 10 or more guests?

A: No, but if the University receives a report of a **large party or similar social gathering** where students **are not following COVID safety practices**, the University will look into the matter (which may include conducting interviews), follow its disciplinary policies, and possibly administer discipline if the report is warranted. Reports are evaluated for their credibility, and verification can come through various forms of evidence, as is always the case with matters involving student discipline. Students always have the opportunity to respond to a charge if they believe they are not responsible. The key is whether organizers and attendees are creating health and safety risks.

Note that the University expects members of the University community to follow ADH guidance in any group-type setting, regardless of the nature of the activity.

Q: Why is the University trying to address gatherings that occur off-campus, not just on-campus?

A: The University has always reserved the right to address off-campus student conduct with a substantial impact on the campus community. Even if the conduct occurs off-campus, unsafe gatherings can lead to rapid campus spread on campus and within the University community in ways that may hinder the University's ability to carry out its educational mission.

Under the Student Handbook, the University has jurisdiction to address off-campus student conduct that:

“may have an impact on the mission of the University, or that may have an impact on the health, safety or welfare of any individuals involved. . . . In determining whether or not to exercise off-campus jurisdiction, the Student Affairs officials may consider, among other criteria, the seriousness of the alleged offense [and] the risk of harm involved . . . “

Keep in mind, the University's goal is not to charge a number of students with disciplinary offenses. The University's goal is to encourage students to consistently engage in safe behavior and not endanger fellow students and members of the community.

Q: The Provost's message said that "Students must hold each other accountable for safe behavior and lead the way in modifying conduct to prevent COVID Spread." Is the University trying to get students to turn each other in for attending large parties?

A: Students can and do hold each other accountable for good conduct in a variety of ways. One of the most important is to speak up and prevent unsafe events and behavior from occurring in the first place. As with other types of violations, reporting conduct that may endanger others has always been encouraged when fellow students choose not to conduct themselves responsibly. In this current emergency, students need to understand that they are accountable for their choices and how those choices may impact the health and wellbeing of others.