



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND

VI-1.40 - POLICY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CULT TASK FORCE

(Approved by the Board of Regents on December 8, 2000; Technical amendments by the Board, December 12, 2014)

Origin and Purpose

In response to constituent concerns in the late 1990s, the Maryland General Assembly mandated in House Joint Resolution 22 (1998 Legislative Session) the creation of a Task Force to Study the Effects of Cult Activities on Public Senior Higher Education Institutions, which adopted as its mission

to determine the extent to which there are groups whose activities on the campuses of USM institutions, St. Mary's College, or Morgan State University are, intentionally or innocently, inappropriately, causing demonstrable physical, psychological or emotional harm to students; interfering substantially with the educational mission of the institution; and/or violating institutional policies and/or federal, state or local laws, and to make recommendations concerning courses of action that might be pursued by individuals or institutions to assist in the prevention and/or resolution of those problems.

The Task Force issued its final report in September 1999. While the Task Force found that the extent of such activities is very small considering the large number of students attending public institutions, there exists in some interactions between students and groups the possibility for serious harm. Therefore, the Board of Regents supports efforts to ensure that students are well-informed about opportunities for group participation, well-prepared to make wise choices, and well-supported in those cases where they perceive themselves to be under inappropriate or undesirable pressure.

Policy

In order to respond to the concerns and recommendations of the Task Force, each President shall:

1. periodically assess the training needed for heightened institutional awareness of potential problems of groups referenced in the Task Force Mission Statement quoted above;
2. provide a regular forum for interested members of the campus community (advisors, counselors, residential staff and chaplains, etc.) to exchange information about issues related to the activities of outside groups;

3. where appropriate, include in policies for university personnel language concerning the need to be sensitive to the distinction between their professional responsibilities and their personal biases in discussing with students participation in extra-curricular groups;
4. create and maintain a concise description of resources regarding interaction with groups and make them widely known and available to students;
5. provide a central resource on campus to record complaints concerning group activities or actions and annually summarize the number and nature of such complaints and actions taken, if any, in response to them;
6. have in place an institutional policy requiring registration and establishing clear guidelines for groups not sponsored by an institutional agency or program that wish to come onto campus to address students, and otherwise dealing with access to campuses by outside groups; and
7. provide both new and returning students with educational programs designed to help them make informed choices in their decisions to participate in groups or activities.

Implementation

In order to ensure that the above actions are taken and are periodically monitored for compliance, an advisory committee, comprising the chief institutional officers for student affairs from each institution, is hereby constituted. The advisory committee, which shall be chaired by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, shall meet periodically, but at least once annually, specifically to review institutional activities with regard to the implementation and administration of the actions required by this policy. The committee shall communicate unresolved concerns about compliance to the Chancellor, who shall report those concerns, along with appropriate recommendations for their resolution, to the Board of Regents.