

Responsible and Inclusive Programming by Students and Student Groups

August 8, 2014

The Washington University in St. Louis community values equity, civility, human dignity, and respect both locally and globally. Recognizing that student led programming is an integral part of the social and educational experience, we ask students and student organizations to consider the ethical, cultural and social implications of their efforts as well as how their decisions may impact members of the community. Students and student groups are highly discouraged from undertaking programs and events that are contrary to these community values including those described in this document.

Auctions

Recognizing that student organizations hold auctions as a form of fundraising, we ask student organizations to think critically about the potential implications of such auctions. Students are asked to consider the following before undertaking such events:

- Equating a human being to merchandise or comparing the relative value of one person to another does not promote human dignity.
- Auctions selling people or services for the sake of fundraising make light of the serious social issue of human trafficking.
- Auctions focusing on the sale of a person can create an environment where racism, heterosexism, sexual coercion and gender stereotypes are reinforced.
- All participants should be able to engage in an activity in a safe and equitable way.
- An organizer has no way of guaranteeing the safety of auction participants, including the person(s) performing or providing the services/items sold and the person(s) purchasing auction services/items.

Party Themes and Costumes

Themed parties and costumes are problematic when they negatively portray and stereotype someone's culture or identity. These actions/decisions create an environment of racism, heterosexism, gender stereotyping, classism and discrimination and dehumanization. The impact of these actions undermines the values of our community and creates an unwelcoming and unsafe environment. Students are asked to consider the following when planning a theme-based function:

- Themes that focus on a culture, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion or socio-economic status are problematic when they rely on representations that are highly stereotypical and/or disrespectful. This includes promotional materials, decorations and costumes.
- Student led programs and events should offer welcoming and inclusive environments.

Food Related Contests/Events

Communities across the St. Louis area and throughout the world are challenged by food insecurity, hunger, homelessness, and the inability to find accessible, affordable and nutritious food. We also acknowledge that there are those in our community who have access to food but struggle with eating disorders and maintaining a healthy body image.

Student organizations have planned eating contests that feature individuals/teams consuming excessive amounts of food or host events where participants are asked to immerse themselves in large quantities of food for fund raising, entertainment or as a way to promote their group. Students are asked to consider the following before undertaking such events:

- Eating large amounts of food in a short period of time is not healthy for any of the participants involved and can lead to negative health consequences.
- Contests where food is consumed or used in other ways in great quantities reflects a level of insensitivity related to hunger in our community as food is often wasted through the course these event. This same food could be given instead to people who experience food insecurity and consequently hunger.
- Some food contests mimic symptoms of eating disorders such as bulimia. This could serve as a trigger to students participating in or observing the event who have struggled with or continue to struggle with eating disorders.
- Please note – when food is included as part of an event, those planning the event are encouraged to consider the dietary needs and restrictions of participants as necessitated by health, religious or cultural concerns.

Students or Washington University community members with questions or concerns regarding the type of programs described in this policy statement are encouraged to contact staff in Student Involvement and Leadership, the Community Service Office or the Center for Diversity and Inclusion.