



Policy Number: 820

Policy Suffix:

Campus Demonstrations

I. General Policy

As a leading research university with a distinctive commitment to undergraduate education, Rice University aspires to conduct pathbreaking research, deliver unsurpassed teaching, and contribute to the betterment of our world. It seeks to fulfill this mission by cultivating a diverse community of learning and discovery that produces leaders across the spectrum of human endeavor.

To foster such an environment, Rice must provide its community of students, faculty, and staff multiple avenues for the safe and robust expression, discussion, and exchange of diverse points of view, even if they are unorthodox, unpopular, or controversial. Within reasonable limits, Rice therefore permits eligible persons in the Rice community to organize and hold demonstrations, protests, counter-protests, and similar activities on Rice property.

When eligible persons engage in these activities, they act as individuals and not in the name of the University. Rice permits these activities as long as their organizers and participants comply with all conditions upon which the activity was approved, and with all applicable Rice policies.

II. Definitions

Demonstration: Includes a demonstration, protest, counter-protest, picketing, speechmaking, marching, holding of vigils or religious services, and all similar forms of conduct that also:

- a. involve the communication or expression of views or grievances;

- b. are engaged in by one or more persons;
- c. are reasonably likely to attract a crowd or onlookers;
- d. occur on property Rice owns, operates, occupies, or controls, or on which it holds a University-sponsored event; and
- e. are not sponsored by the University.

This term does not include casual campus activities that are not reasonably likely to attract, and do not attract, a crowd or onlookers.

Demonstration Request: A request to hold a Demonstration. Requests must be filed through [this link](#), and may be filed only by an Organizer, who must be an Eligible Person. Requests filed fewer than 48 hours before a proposed Demonstration begins may not be approved.

Approval Notice: A written notice from the Campus Events Manager (or their designee) granting a Demonstration Request and including all conditions, limitations, or other requirements that Rice issues to the Organizer. Every approved Demonstration must comply with the Approval Notice.

Hate Speech: Any act that incites imminent criminal activity or consists of specific threats of violence targeted against a person because of that person's membership in a protected class. Hate speech does not include speech that is ordinarily considered constitutionally protected speech.

Eligible Person: Individual, current Rice students, faculty, and staff, and registered Rice student organizations. This term does not include University units such as schools, residential colleges, divisions, departments, offices, or other administrative units.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

Organizer(s): An Eligible Person who files a Demonstration Request.

Responsible Person(s): A current Rice student, faculty member, or staff member who is the principal person responsible for the Demonstration complying with its Approval Notice; attends the entire Demonstration; and furnishes the Demonstration's Approval Notice when requested to do so by the Campus Events Manager, Monitor, RUPD, or other authorized Rice officials. The person must have agreed to be the Responsible Person and may be, but need not be, the Organizer or a Club Sponsor.

Campus Events Manager: The Campus Events Manager (or a designee) will review each request and, as necessary, consult with the Organizer, Responsible Person, Club Sponsor, and Rice officials. The Campus Events Manager or designee will then grant, conditionally grant, or deny the request and inform the Organizer. If a request is denied or partially denied, the Organizer may appeal the denial through [this link](#). The Executive Vice President for Operations, Finance and Support (or a designee) will then review each appeal, consult the Provost (or the Provost's designee) and other officials as appropriate, and issue a final decision.

Club Sponsor: If the Organizer is a registered Rice student organization, its faculty/staff sponsor (or the sponsor's designee who is also faculty or staff) must agree to either attend and monitor the Demonstration to assist it in complying with the Approval Notice, or be available by phone during the Demonstration. If the Monitor notifies the Club Sponsor that the Demonstration has violated its Approval Notice, the Club Sponsor must respond and assist in instructing the Organizer or Responsible Person to stop the violation, if it is safe to do so.

Monitor: If requested by the Organizer or Club Sponsor or deemed necessary by Rice, one or more Rice officials will attend and monitor a Demonstration. If the Demonstration violates its Approval Notice, a Monitor may respond and instruct the Organizer, Responsible Person, and/or Club Sponsor to stop the violation, if it is safe to do so.

Rice University Police Department (RUPD): If requested by the Organizer, Club Sponsor, Campus Events Manager or an authorized Rice official, or on its own judgment, RUPD will monitor a Demonstration and, to the best of its ability, ensure a safe, secure, and law-abiding environment.

IV. Elaboration of Policy

A. Standards for Approval

A Demonstration may occur only with Rice's prior approval. Consistent with its commitment to an environment of open inquiry, Rice intends to approve and or conditionally approve all or most Demonstration Requests.

At any time and for any reason, Rice may deny or revoke this approval. Rice is likely to deny or revoke approval if it determines a Demonstration may (or did already) use or threaten violence; harass

an individual or group; engage in hate speech; violate the law or incite violations of the law; restrict a person's ability to move freely, or enter or exit a University building or venue; engage in obscenity; disrupt University operations, teaching, learning, or research; include individuals who are not current Rice students, faculty, staff or otherwise included in the Approval Notice; or interfere with the Rice community's opportunities to engage in safe and robust expression, discussion, and exchange of diverse points of view.

B. Requests to Hold a Demonstration

Only an Organizer may file a Demonstration Request.

C. Participating in a Demonstration

Only these persons may participate in a Demonstration for that event to maintain its approved status:

- a. Current Rice students, faculty, and staff;
- b. Alumni of the University, if included in the Approval Notice; and
- c. Visitors, if included in the Approval Notice.

D. Duration; Time; Number of Requests

A Demonstration approved under this policy may:

- a. Begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m. local time and end no later than 10:00 p.m. local time;
- b. Last no longer than 8 hours in a given day; and
- c. Be held on no more than three consecutive days.

An Organizer may file no more than one Demonstration Request every 7 days, and be approved to hold no more than one Demonstration every calendar week.

E. Location

A Demonstration may be held only in a campus location that Rice approves, which will normally be one of the following:

- Central Quad (quad adjacent to the RMC);
- Ray Courtyard;
- Small patio near RMC Owl Statue and Pavilion (adjacent courtyard near chapel/prayer Room); or
- Academic Quad (near the plinth)

Demonstrations are unlikely to be approved in proximity to (a) the residential colleges or (b) spaces in which teaching and learning (including classes) are occurring.

F. Display of Signs, Posters, Electronic Images, and Similar Materials

Materials such as signs, posters, and electronic images may be displayed during a Demonstration if they comply with the law and Rice's policies. Unless the Approval Notice says otherwise, materials displayed during a Demonstration are not subject to the requirements of Policy 856 (Display of Posters, Flyers, and Similar Materials in Public Spaces). Participants in a Demonstration may not use the Rice University logo without prior written approval from the Office of Public Affairs.

G. Sound

Amplified sound is allowed for a Demonstration between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. local time unless (a) Rice determines that its volume disrupts University operations, teaching, learning, or research or (b) it violates the applicable city's ordinance on sound (the City of Houston's ordinance is available [here](#)). Amplified sound for demonstrations is not allowed in proximity to any classroom or residential college.

If a Demonstration violates the city ordinance, the RUPD will enforce the ordinance. Additionally, persons who violate a city's sound ordinance may be liable for any fines or penalties assessed by that city.

H. Other Restrictions

When Rice issues an Approval Notice, it will inform the Organizer of any other conditions, limitations, or requirements that apply. Additionally, individual or group camping or activities in tents or other temporary structures are not permitted during Demonstrations unless permitted in the Approval Notice. Overnight sleeping in outdoor spaces on campus is not permitted at any time.

I. Consequences for Violations

The University may immediately terminate any unauthorized event, including an unapproved Demonstration or a Demonstration that violates its Approval Notice or this policy.

Moreover, Eligible Persons or Responsible Persons who hold or participate in an unapproved Demonstration, or participate in violating its Approval Notice, may be subject to disciplinary action and be held liable for any damages.

J. Complaints

Apparent violations of this policy should be reported by filing an EthicsPoint report with Rice. Persons may do so by clicking on this [link](#) or calling [866-294-4633](tel:866-294-4633). All concerns about physical safety or criminal activity should be reported immediately to RUPD at [713-348-6000](tel:713-348-6000).

K. Faculty Academic Freedom

Nothing in this policy is intended to diminish Rice's commitment to the academic freedom of its faculty, which remains a principal means of safeguarding free expression in society and an enabling precondition of the academic enterprise, for where people hesitate to speak their mind, critical thinking has no purchase and the university cannot even begin to carry out its mission.

V. Cross References to Related Policies

[Policy 100](#), Standards of Ethical Conduct

[Policy 201, Suffix B](#), Faculty Council Epilogue to Policy 201

[Policy 427](#), Compliance with Law

[Policy 802](#), Use of University Facilities and Scheduling Campus Events

[Policy 830](#), Policy on Discrimination and Harassment

[Policy 856](#), Display of Posters, Flyers, and Similar Materials in Public Spaces

Rice University [Code of Student Conduct](#)

[Faculty Senate Resolution on Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and Tenure](#)

(2022)

Responsible Official and Key Offices to Contact Regarding the Policy and its Implementation

Responsible Official: Executive Vice President for Operations, Finance, & Support

Key Offices: Campus Events Manager; Dean of Undergraduates; Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies; Student Judicial Programs; Human Resources; and Rice University Police Department.

Policy History

Revised

April 6, 2018

August 30, 2024

Clerical Changes

January 18, 2023

August 15, 2023

March 4, 2024

September 6, 2024

September 23, 2024

Issued

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