

Outgoing Sponsorships, Advertising and Endorsement

Policy Type: Administrative

Responsible Office: Division of University Relations

Initial Policy Approved: 04/03/2014

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Policy Statement and Purpose

Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes the tangible benefits to the university of participation in appropriate sponsorships of external entities or events, advertising and endorsement opportunities. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that the benefits received from outgoing sponsorship, advertising and endorsement opportunities are maximized for the overall strategic goals, reputation and image of the university.

VCU's standing as Virginia's premier urban, public research university and as a national research university requires that activities and organizations associated with VCU's name must be consistent with the university's mission, vision and support its strategic plan.

The policy is in place to:

- Protect and enhance Virginia Commonwealth University's brand and reputation.
- Establish procedures that ensure appropriateness, consistency and coordination of efforts across the university for outgoing sponsorships, advertising and endorsements.
- Promote the greatest cost savings and appropriate investment of university resources to support strategic priorities, avoid conflicts of interest, avoid duplication of sponsorship and advertising efforts, and provide central coordination for sponsorships and advertising using the university's name.

This policy does not apply to faculty and staff recruitment or procurement advertising.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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Who Should Know This Policy

This policy applies to all university schools, programs and units; therefore all employees (including faculty and staff) engaged in activities covered by this policy are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

Definitions

Advertising: paid, in-kind, unpaid, or otherwise compensated marketing of promotional information by university entities through mass communication channels.

Endorsement: VCU statement of support to promote a product or service.

Gift-in-kind: charitable giving in which goods or services are given instead of money.

Logo: Recognizable and distinctive graphic design, stylized name, unique symbol identifying Virginia Commonwealth University and its entities. VCU maintains several protected wordmarks and logos (refer to VCU Brand Standards Guide and the University Trademarks and Licensing policy).

Name: Virginia Commonwealth University is a registered and protected name, as well as VCU, VCU Health System and others (refer to the University Trademarks and Licensing policy).

VCU Official Relationship: a relationship between a VCU entity and another non-VCU entity established through contract or government affiliation for the purpose of advancing mutual interests such as scholarship, research or economic development.

Sponsorship: Within this policy, the term “sponsorship” refers to all outgoing sponsorship provided by the university to another organization. Specifically, it is the negotiated provision of money, goods or services by a university unit in support of another organization’s activities, events or programs. The VCU sponsor may be provided an acknowledgement of the sponsorship, including advertising and publicity, or other tangible return benefits including event tickets, food or beverages.

Symbols: Mark, sign or word that indicates, signifies or is understood to represent Virginia Commonwealth University. (Refer to VCU Brand Standards Guide and University Trademarks and Licensing policy.)

Contacts

The Division of University Relations officially interprets this policy. The Division of University Relations is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy *Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures* through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct policy questions to the vice president for the Division of University Relations, 828-6057

Policy Specifics and Procedures

General:

VCU sponsorships of external entities and advertising must:

- Align with and support university and unit missions and strategic plans
- Align with university and unit brand communications objectives

Expenditures

Allowable expenditures for advertising and marketing are clearly defined by state law and VCU procurement policies. As a public institution of higher education, VCU is obligated not only to comply with these state and university requirements, but also to ensure that sponsorship and advertising expenditures provide a direct and tangible benefit to the university.

Use of Name, Logo and Symbols

The university's names and symbols, including logo, may only be used by VCU-sponsored entities or in advertising of any kind or cost with permission of the vice president for the Division of University Relations or that individual's designee and in compliance with the VCU Brand Standards Guide and University Trademarks and Licensing policy.

Written Agreements

Terms and conditions of all VCU sponsorship and advertising agreements must be expressed in writing, authorized by the vice president for the Division of University Relations or that individual's designee, and executed by the university official who has been delegated signatory authority. The contract/agreement must clearly define the duration of the agreement, which will be reviewed annually. Any changes to the agreements during the course of the year should be communicated in writing to the Division of University Relations.

Sponsorships

It is recognized that there are many organizations and programs that share VCU's values and contribute greatly to the greater Richmond community and beyond and who seek university sponsorships. However, with limited resources that come to VCU and with the expectation that they directly advance the university's

mission, participation in sponsorship agreements with reputable external entities by university units is limited to those that:

- Produce true advertising value in reaching key university audiences – return on investment – as measured by a calculation of tangible assets (media impressions, audience exposure) in relation to monetary and in-kind costs and, where appropriate, measured against industry accepted metrics such as reach and frequency, impressions, click through rates, and/or;
- Provide a tangible, direct benefit to the university, such as fundraising for student scholarships, student internships, research grants, and/or;
- Involve a VCU or VCU-affiliated entity (one using a VCU name), or an entity with an official university relationship as determined by the appropriate university cabinet official.

Sponsorship participation must be expressed in writing and coordinated through the Division of University Relations in order to prevent unnecessary duplication of sponsorship efforts across the university and to take advantage of negotiating sponsorship benefits.

- Sponsorship request form must be submitted to the Division of University Relations (see the Forms section).
- Refer to sponsorships and advertising procurement rules for approvals and allowable expenditures.

In addition, VCU sponsorships may not:

- Involve the sponsorship of individuals. The university cannot sponsor employees or other individuals for their individual participation in a fundraising activity or event;
- Incorporate symbols and copyrights not owned by the university unless written permission is obtained from the owner of the symbol or copyright;
- Contain obscene, indecent or profane material;
- Promote goods, services or activities that may constitute a violation of the VCU Code of Conduct or other VCU policy.

VCU sponsorship acknowledgements must be made in accordance with the following conditions:

- They clearly identify VCU (or a VCU unit) as a sponsor, within university brand standards and approved by University Marketing in the Division of University Relations;
- Any sponsorship announcement or news release prepared by a university entity or the sponsored organization must be shared with the University Public Affairs office for review before it is released to the external media.

Advertising

The university recognizes the appropriateness of advancing its mission through the use of advertising, including print (e.g. newspapers, magazines, etc.), broadcast (e.g. television, radio), online (including digital and social media), mobile, out-of-home (e.g. billboards, bus wraps, kiosks, movie theater screens, signs, etc.) and direct mail.

The Division of University Relations is charged with ensuring that all university advertising is consistent with VCU's brand and reputation and that it is cost effective.

All advertising (except employment recruiting and procurement) by university entities must be expressed in writing to the office of University Marketing in the Division of University Relations in order to confirm it's:

1. Compliant with all of VCU's brand standards

2. Free of grammatical errors, typos and in University style
3. Claims and statements are accurate and factual
4. Protects and enhances our institutional reputation
5. Produced according to design best practices including ADA compliance standards

Specifically, VCU units must submit a Request to Advertise to University Marketing (see Forms section). Advertising materials must meet the conditions stated above (items 1-5) before they can be placed. (Note: promotional items and premiums such as apparel, pens, pins, stickers and other giveaways are not considered advertising and fall under the University Trademarks and Licensing policy).

- Requests must be submitted at least five business days in advance of the material due date.
- University Marketing will respond within three business days to confirm if the advertising materials meet the policy conditions.
- If they do not meet the conditions, University Marketing will indicate in writing the modifications needed for compliance.
- All media purchases must be made in compliance with applicable procurement policies and procedures.

Advertising by external entities is not permitted on university controlled websites unless an exception has been granted.

- Exceptions to this rule are considered on a case-by case basis by submitting a request in writing to the vice president for the Division of University Relations or that individual's designated representative.
- Advertising that appears in a printed university publication may be included in the electronic version of that publication when it is posted online.

Public Endorsements

Absent an exception in a Board of Visitors approved contract, university employees or units acting on behalf of the university may not make public endorsements. This involves statements that are evaluative, either positive or negative, or that imply exclusivity (such as an "official" product or service). The purchase of a product or service by the university does not imply that the university endorses the product or service.

VCU may use a student-athlete's name, picture, or appearance to support its charitable or educational activities or to support activities considered incidental to the student-athlete's participation in intercollegiate athletics provided certain conditions outlined in the NCAA Division I manual are met and subject to the prior review of the VCU NCAA compliance officer.

Promotional communications that identify VCU or one of its units as a customer or client but that does not give an opinion about the quality of the product or service is permissible. The Division of University Relations must review communications for correct use of nomenclature and brand standards.

Forms

1. [Request to Advertise](#)

2. [Request to Sponsor](#)

Related Documents

[Brand Identity](#)

VCU Policy: [University Trademarks & Licensing](#)

[VCU Code of Conduct](#)

[Procurement / Allowable-non allowable expenditures](#)

VCU Policy: [University Advancement Policies and Procedures](#)

NCAA bylaw 12.5.1.1

Revision History

April 03, 2014	<i>Outgoing Sponsorships, Advertising and Endorsement Policy</i>
May 23, 2018	<i>Outgoing Sponsorships, Advertising and Endorsement [added URLs to documents listed in Forms section]</i>

FAQ

1. **Question:** Does this policy prohibit university units from participating in civic, community or charitable events, such as purchasing tickets for seats at a table for an organization's fundraising event or an annual dinner?

Answer: This policy does not preclude university units or individuals representing the university from participating in these events. However, a sponsorship of the event must comply with this policy.

2. **Question:** Does this policy prohibit in-kind, non-monetary sponsorships?

Answer: In-kind, non-monetary sponsorships must meet the established criteria for eligible sponsorships.

3. **Question:** Does a VCU unit's paid membership in a professional organization constitute an "official" university relationship?

Answer: Some memberships are considered to be contractual. Per the policy, the appropriate university cabinet official will determine if a relationship is official.

4. **Question:** May more than one VCU entity sponsor an event?

Answer: There are instances where it is appropriate for more than VCU entity to sponsor an event. The purpose of the policy is to coordinate sponsorships so that the university may optimize cost savings in negotiating sponsorship packages and to ensure the correct, appropriate and most effective brand communications.

5. **Question:** May I appeal a decision if I am told that my unit may not sponsor an event?

Answer: Yes, by contacting the vice president for the Division of University Relations.

6. **Question:** Does this policy apply to the VCU Health System or to VCU's foundations?

Answer: No. The policy applies to all entities directly governed by the university.

7. **Question:** What is the turnaround time on approvals for sponsorships?

Answer: Normal response time will be within five working days.

8. **Question:** Does my unit need to go through the Division of University Relations for a request to advertise if we use an outside vendor?

Answer: Yes. University Marketing working with your vendor will ensure the correct use of brand standards.

9. **Question:** What is the turnaround time on approvals for advertising?

Answer: Normal response time will be within 3 working days. Units are encouraged to allow time to revise advertising materials that do not comply with brand identity standards.

10. **Question:** Does this policy apply to marketing premiums, brochures or other communications collateral?

Answer: No. However, marketing premiums and other communications collateral must meet university brand identity standards

11. **Question:** Do sponsorships and advertising need to be approved by anyone else besides the Division of University Relations?

Answer: Divisions, departments and units must follow their local approval policies and procedures and any other university and state requirements as noted in the policy.

12. **Question:** What are examples of endorsements that are allowed and not allowed?

Answer: Unless an exception is part of a Board of Visitors approved employee contract, university employees acting on behalf of the university may not make endorsements. For example, an employee who uses a new software database purchased by the university from company XYZ should not provide a statement for company's web site that indicates the software is the best available on the market, or,

that the product is “the official software” of the VCU department. However, the employee could state that VCU uses the software or is a customer of the company.

Request to Sponsor [URL to Come]

Date of request:

Name and contact information of person submitting the request:

Name and description of Sponsorship/Event:

Date(s) of the event:

Type of sponsorship requested (monetary, in-kind donations, volunteers, etc.) If monetary, please indicate cost of sponsorship:

How will the VCU sponsorship benefit the organization?

Describe sponsorship benefit(s) to VCU/VCU unit (please attach sponsorship agreement that identifies sponsorship rights/benefits):

- 1) Advertising value of sponsorship (University Marketing may assist in analyzing advertising value):

- 2) Describe tangible benefit to university provided by the sponsorship (e.g. fundraising for scholarships, student internships, research grants, etc.):

- 3) Please indicate if the sponsorship involves another VCU entity or organization with an official university relationship as determined by the appropriate university vice president.

Does the sponsorship involve the use of VCU's name, logo, or other marketing communications or promotional materials, such as a news release, program, VCU advertising? Please describe if the information is not included in the attached sponsorship agreement.

Name, mailing and street address of organization benefitting from the VCU sponsorship (If not indicated on the attached sponsorship agreement):

Request to Advertise [URL to come]

Date:

Name/contact information of person submitting request to advertise:

Purpose of advertising:

Please attach a media schedule that includes: media outlet(s), ad unit(s), dates of run, number of insertions, cost of insertions, total cost of media buy.

Please attach advertising creative for brand identity review.

Approved by VCU Identity for brand compliance