

COMMON ROOM

Campus field guide

Look up the office, term, or process you are trying to understand. Use the questions and tools to find the current rule at your own institution.

16 office translators / 83 answered questions / 18 practical tools

[The Why Files](#) · [Case Notes](#) · [The Receipts](#) · [Save This](#) · [Make It](#) · [What Changed?](#) · [Behind the Case](#)

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Start with the question you have

Campus titles and responsibilities vary. A general explanation helps you ask a better question, but the institution's current policy or responsible office supplies the local answer.

Greek-letter organizations appear within student life and campus organizations. A university's recognition decision and an organization's own status can be separate.

The entries provide general information. A real dispute, financial decision, or safety concern may need an appropriate qualified office or adviser. Keep identifying details out of a public source log.

Campus offices and roles

Provost

The Group Chat Version

Usually one of the university's senior academic leaders.

The Full Version

Often oversees academic affairs: schools/colleges, faculty strategy, academic programs, and institution-wide academic policy. The exact portfolio varies widely.

Don't assume

Do not assume the provost directly controls every professor, grade, student-organization decision, or conduct case.

Who they work with

President/chancellor, deans, faculty leadership, registrar/academic offices.

When you might care

Program changes, academic policy, faculty/academic strategy, accreditation-related academic work.

Check your campus

Search “[institution] provost” and the current organization chart or office responsibilities.

Dean

The Group Chat Version

A leader responsible for a school/college or a student-facing area. The title alone does not tell you the job.

The Full Version

Academic deans may lead a school or college. Student-affairs deans may handle student support, conduct, or campus life. Assistant/associate deans can own specific portfolios.

Don't assume

Do not assume every dean can overrule a professor, change a bill, or hear every appeal.

Who they work with

Provost, department chairs, faculty, advising, student-affairs offices, depending on role.

When you might care

Academic petitions, school-level policy, student support, escalation routes.

Check your campus

Find the dean's exact title and office page. "Dean" without the portfolio is not enough.

Registrar**The Group Chat Version**

The office that keeps much of the official academic-record and registration machinery moving.

The Full Version

Common responsibilities include course registration, enrollment status, transcripts, academic calendars, degree records, and certain record changes.

Don't assume

Do not assume the registrar controls financial aid, billing, conduct, or every grading dispute.

Who they work with

Academic departments, advising, student accounts, financial aid, degree audit offices.

When you might care

Transcript questions, enrollment verification, registration holds, academic records.

Check your campus

Search your registrar page for the exact service; some institutions split these jobs.

Bursar / Student Accounts**The Group Chat Version**

The office that handles the money you owe the institution and payments on your account.

The Full Version

Common work includes tuition/fee charges, payments, refunds, account balances, payment plans, and financial holds.

Don't assume

This office usually does not decide your financial-aid eligibility, even though aid changes the account balance.

Who they work with

Financial aid, registrar, housing, meal plans, sponsored billing.

When you might care

A balance changed, a refund is missing, a payment did not post, or a hold is financial.

Check your campus

Your campus may not use the word “bursar.” Search “student accounts,” “student billing,” or “cashier.”

Financial Aid**The Group Chat Version**

The office that applies aid rules to grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study.

The Full Version

It determines/communicates aid eligibility under federal, state, and institutional rules and processes required documents and aid changes.

Don't assume

An aid offer is not the same thing as the student-account bill, and an offered loan is not the same thing as a grant.

Who they work with

Student accounts, registrar/enrollment, admissions, scholarship offices.

When you might care

FAFSA/document issues, SAP, grant/loan questions, aid changes, work-study.

Check your campus

Check the office’s current deadlines and whether a scholarship is administered elsewhere.

Department Chair**The Group Chat Version**

The faculty leader of an academic department.

The Full Version

Often manages department operations, course scheduling, faculty assignments, and some academic concerns. Exact authority varies by institution and collective-governance rules.

Don't assume

A chair is not automatically the appeal authority for every grade or policy issue.

Who they work with

Dean, faculty, program directors, advising, registrar.

When you might care

Course availability, department procedures, faculty escalation paths.

Check your campus

Find the department's own page and academic grievance/appeal policy.

Faculty Senate**The Group Chat Version**

A faculty-governance body.

The Full Version

Faculty senates commonly deliberate or act on academic policy, curriculum, faculty governance, and recommendations within shared governance. Powers vary by institution.

Don't assume

Do not assume a senate resolution automatically becomes binding university policy.

Who they work with

Provost, president, committees, schools/colleges, faculty bodies.

When you might care

Academic-policy changes, curriculum, governance debates, faculty recommendations.

Check your campus

Read the senate constitution/bylaws and the specific policy approval chain.

Board of Trustees / Regents**The Group Chat Version**

The institution's governing board.

The Full Version

Boards often hold fiduciary/governance authority over major institutional matters such as leadership appointment, budgets, strategic direction, and certain policy approvals. Public-system boards may have statutory duties.

Don't assume

Boards do not usually run daily student-service decisions or individual classroom issues.

Who they work with

President/chancellor, system office, committees, finance/audit/governance leaders.

When you might care

Tuition approvals, presidential selection, major institutional strategy, high-level policy.

Check your campus

Look up the board bylaws, meeting calendar, committee structure, and agenda.

Student Affairs**The Group Chat Version**

The broad part of a university focused on student life and support outside the academic departments.

The Full Version

May include residence life, student activities, conduct, counseling/wellness, orientation, leadership, campus involvement, identity/cultural centers, and more.

Don't assume

Do not assume every student-facing office reports to the same division at every institution.

Who they work with

Dean/VP for students, housing, conduct, activities, counseling, public safety, cultural centers.

When you might care

Organizations, campus life, support, conduct, housing, orientation, belonging.

Check your campus

Open the division organization chart; titles vary a lot.

Student Conduct Office**The Group Chat Version**

The office/process that handles alleged violations of student conduct rules.

The Full Version

Typically manages notice, meetings/investigation, findings, sanctions, and appeal steps under an institutional code. Structures vary.

Don't assume

A conduct notice is not the same thing as a finding, and a report is not automatically proof of a violation.

Who they work with

Student affairs, hearing officers/boards, Title IX or academic integrity offices where separate.

When you might care

You received a notice, need the code, want to understand steps/deadlines, or need an appeal rule.

Check your campus

Read the current code and process that applies to your case type; academic integrity may be separate.

Title IX Coordinator**The Group Chat Version**

The person/office responsible for coordinating an institution's compliance with Title IX.

The Full Version

The coordinator oversees institutional Title IX responsibilities and the applicable grievance/support process under current federal rules and school policy.

Don't assume

Do not assume every harassment, discrimination, conduct, or safety issue belongs only to Title IX. Other policies/offices may also apply.

Who they work with

Equity/civil rights, student affairs, HR, conduct, campus safety, support offices.

When you might care

You need to understand the institution's Title IX process, supports, reporting options, or policy.

Check your campus

Use the current institution policy and current federal guidance; these rules can change.

Disability / Accessibility Services**The Group Chat Version**

The office that manages disability-related accommodation/access processes for students.

The Full Version

Common functions include reviewing documentation/requests, determining approved accommodations, issuing accommodation notices/letters, and coordinating access with academic or campus units.

Don't assume

An accommodation is not a favor, and the office does not necessarily control every physical-access repair or medical service.

Who they work with

Faculty, housing, testing centers, facilities, HR/employment services depending on context.

When you might care

Academic accommodations, accessible housing processes, testing, communication access.

Check your campus

Check deadlines, documentation rules, grievance process, and emergency-access routes.

Career Center**The Group Chat Version**

The office that helps students navigate career exploration and employment preparation.

The Full Version

Services often include resumes, interviewing, internship/job search, employer events, career coaching, and graduate/professional planning.

Don't assume

The career center cannot guarantee an offer and is not the final authority on employment law or every academic-credit rule.

Who they work with

Academic departments, alumni, employers, experiential-learning offices.

When you might care

Internships, fellowships, resumes, interviews, offers, networking, career decisions.

Check your campus

Search appointment types and whether your school has a separate internship/experiential office.

Student Government**The Group Chat Version**

A student representative/governance body defined by the institution and its own constitution/bylaws.

The Full Version

May allocate student fees, pass resolutions, represent student concerns, appoint students to committees, or administer elections - depending on local rules.

Don't assume

A student-government resolution is not automatically university policy, and its budget authority may be limited.

Who they work with

Student affairs, finance/allocation boards, clubs, university committees, administrators.

When you might care

Club funding, elections, representation, student-fee decisions, campus advocacy.

Check your campus

Read the constitution, finance rules, election code, and university recognition document.

Organization Adviser**The Group Chat Version**

A person assigned/selected to advise a student organization.

The Full Version

Advisers may help with continuity, policy, finance, event planning, and institutional navigation. Some roles are required by recognition policy.

Don't assume

An adviser is not automatically the organization's president, legal guardian, or final decision-maker.

Who they work with

Student leaders, activities office, risk/event offices, national organizations where applicable.

When you might care

Recognition, events, funding, leadership transition, policy questions.

Check your campus

Check the recognition policy and the organization constitution for the adviser's actual powers.

Campus Public Safety / Police**The Group Chat Version**

The campus office responsible for safety/security functions within its legal and institutional authority.

The Full Version

Depending on the institution, this may be a sworn police department, security department, or hybrid. Responsibilities can include emergency response, reports, access control, traffic/parking, and safety programs.

Don't assume

Do not assume every campus-safety office has the same police powers or jurisdiction.

Who they work with

Local law enforcement, student affairs, facilities, emergency management, Title IX/civil rights offices.

When you might care

Emergency/safety questions, incident reports, access/traffic issues, safety notices.

Check your campus

Check whether officers are sworn, the department's jurisdiction, complaint process, and emergency/non-emergency contacts.

Nobody told me this

01 What exactly is a dean?

Usually a senior leader responsible for a school/college or a major student/academic area. A dean can supervise budgets, programs, faculty/staff processes, student matters, or some combination. The title is not standardized.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Search your institution's leadership page and the dean's portfolio; ask which decisions the office actually owns.

02 What does a provost do?

Usually the university's senior academic officer, often overseeing academic strategy, deans, faculty affairs, curriculum structures, and academic resources.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check the provost office scope; some institutions split duties among provost, academic vice president, or chancellor.

03 What is a registrar?

The office that manages core academic records and registration processes: enrollment, course registration, transcript systems, degree/registration records, and often academic calendars.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check the registrar page before asking a billing question; billing usually belongs elsewhere.

04 What is a bursar or student accounts office?

The office that posts institutional charges and payments to your student account, such as tuition, fees, housing, credits, refunds, and payment plans.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check whether your institution uses "bursar," "student accounts," "student financial services," or another name.

05 Why are financial aid and student accounts separate?

Financial aid determines/coordinates aid eligibility and disbursement; student accounts shows charges, payments, and balance. One office can say aid is approved while the other is waiting for it to post.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask both: "Is the aid approved?" and "Has it disbursed to my account?"

06 What does “good academic standing” mean?

An institutional status based on rules such as GPA, credit completion, or program progress. The exact threshold and consequences are local.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Open the academic regulations/catalog and look for standing, probation, suspension, and appeal.

07 What is a hold?

A system restriction attached to your student record/account that can block an action such as registration, transcript release, housing selection, or graduation processing.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Open the hold detail: who placed it, what action it blocks, and what clears it.

08 Can my parent see my grades?

At a postsecondary institution, FERPA rights generally belong to the student, even when a parent pays tuition. Disclosure can occur through consent or specific exceptions.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check your institution’s FERPA/authorized-user process; billing access and academic-record access are different.

09 If my parent pays the bill, can they call student accounts?

They may be able to discuss billing if you add them as an authorized user or the institution’s system permits it. That does not automatically give access to grades or conduct records.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check billing authorization separately from FERPA consent.

10 What is FERPA actually about?

FERPA is a federal education-records privacy law. It gives eligible students rights to inspect records, request amendment in certain circumstances, and control many disclosures, subject to exceptions.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Use the federal Student Privacy guidance plus your institution’s FERPA notice.

11 What is a department chair?

A faculty leader who manages an academic department’s day-to-day academic administration, such as schedules, faculty coordination, curriculum processes, and certain student/faculty issues.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Authority varies; a chair may not control tuition, financial aid, university conduct, or school-wide policy.

12 Who decides whether a class is offered?

Usually several actors: department/program proposes and staffs courses, dean/provost budget/academic structures matter, and enrollment or faculty availability can change the schedule.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask the department what happened before assuming one professor “canceled” a course.

13 What happens when a professor leaves?

The department decides how to cover courses, advising, grading, research supervision, or program needs. Options include reassignment, adjunct coverage, course cancellation, or transition plans.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Save syllabi, feedback, approvals, and advisor communications if the person handled work important to your degree.

14 Who can change a syllabus rule?

A professor usually controls course-level rules within department/university policy and law. Some items are constrained by academic regulations, accommodations, or required program rules.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Compare the syllabus, faculty handbook/policy, department rule, and university regulation before calling something “university policy.”

15 Is a professor rule the same as university policy?

No. A course rule can be binding inside a course without being a university-wide policy. University policies usually come from an authorized institutional process and apply at a broader level.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask: who issued it, where is it published, who can change it?

16 What is shared governance?

A model in which boards, presidents/administrators, faculty bodies, and sometimes students/staff have different roles in institutional decisions. “Shared” does not mean everyone has equal authority over every issue.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Find your faculty senate charter, board bylaws, student-government constitution, and governance policy.

17 What does a board of trustees/regents actually do?

Usually the institution’s governing board: fiduciary oversight, major policies, leadership appointment/evaluation, high-level finance, strategy, and legally reserved powers.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read the board bylaws/reserved-powers document; public/private institutions differ.

18 Who actually decides tuition?

It depends. Boards often approve tuition/fees, but proposals can involve presidents, finance offices, state systems, legislatures, or government policy.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Find the meeting agenda/minutes where the current tuition was approved.

19 What is accreditation?

External quality-assurance/review by recognized accrediting organizations. It can affect institutional/program standing and eligibility for certain federal or professional purposes.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check the institution and program's actual accreditor and current status.

20 Why can two offices tell me different things?

They may own different parts of one process, use different records, or be interpreting a rule differently. Treat the disagreement as a paper-trail problem.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask each office to identify the policy/process and the record they are using; save names, dates, and written follow-up.

21 How do I appeal something?

An appeal is a defined request for review, not just “asking again.” It usually has a deadline, permissible grounds, required record, reviewer, and possible outcomes.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Open the actual appeal policy before writing; organize your request around its grounds and remedy.

22 What records should I save?

Notices, approvals, forms you submitted, confirmation screens, contracts, syllabi, financial-aid offers, billing statements, accommodation letters, conduct/appeal documents, internship/job offers, and major advising decisions.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Save dated PDFs/screenshots in a private folder; avoid storing sensitive records in shared AI/chat tools.

23 What is an academic petition?

A formal request for an exception or action under academic rules, such as late withdrawal, substitution, overload, or requirement exception.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Find the exact petition type, deadline, required approvals, and evidence standard.

24 What is academic probation?

A status indicating a student is below an academic-progress standard. Consequences and recovery requirements vary. It is not automatically the same as dismissal.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read the academic standing policy and any financial-aid satisfactory-academic-progress rule separately.

25 Why can financial aid have different academic rules from my college?

Federal/state/institutional aid can use satisfactory academic progress or other eligibility rules that are separate from the academic standing rules for enrollment.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask both the academic office and financial aid which standard applies and what appeal process exists.

26 What is a withdrawal versus a drop?

Institutions use these terms differently, often based on timing and transcript/financial consequences.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check the academic calendar and refund/aid rules before acting; “drop” on day 2 may differ from withdrawal in week 8.

27 What does “W” mean?

Often a transcript notation for withdrawal, usually without a letter grade. How it affects progress, aid, major rules, or professional-school review varies.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check local policy and ask the relevant adviser/financial aid office for your situation.

28 What is an incomplete?

A temporary grade/status used under specified conditions when required work is unfinished, usually with a completion deadline and approval process.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read the incomplete policy; it is not automatically available because a student asks.

29 Who controls club funding?

Usually the source of funds sets the rules: student government/fee board, student affairs office, department, grant, or external account.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Open the allocation policy, budget deadline, prohibited-expense list, and appeal/reconsideration procedure.

30 What is organization recognition?

University status that makes a group eligible for specified campus privileges and obligations, such as room reservations, funding, listing, advising, or use of the institution's name.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Recognition is not the same as incorporation, national affiliation, or legal existence.

31 What happens if a student organization loses recognition?

Campus privileges may be suspended or removed according to policy. A national/external organization may still exist, but campus rules can restrict on-campus activity/representation.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read the decision notice, scope, duration, appeal route, and national/council status separately.

32 Who owns a student organization's constitution?

The organization adopts its governing document, but recognition policies may require certain clauses or approval. National affiliates may impose additional governing rules.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Compare campus-required language with chapter/local/national bylaws.

33 What is quorum?

The minimum number of members required to conduct specified official business under the organization's rules.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check the constitution/bylaws; do not assume "majority of everyone" unless written.

34 What is a resolution?

A formal statement/action adopted by a deliberative body. A student-government resolution may express a position or request without automatically changing university policy.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check what powers the adopting body actually has.

35 What does an organization adviser actually control?

An adviser can support compliance, continuity, and institutional navigation, but student officers may retain governance authority. Some institutions give advisers approval roles for specific transactions/events.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read the recognition policy and constitution rather than assuming "advisor = boss."

36 What is Greek-life “recognition”?

The campus status of a fraternity/sorority chapter or affiliated group. It can determine access to campus privileges and council participation.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Separate university recognition from national/international affiliation, charter status, and alumni/graduate structures.

37 What is the difference between a chapter and a national organization?

A chapter is a local unit; the national/international organization holds broader governance, standards, trademarks, and charter/affiliation structures.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Which body controls membership, recognition, discipline, property, and appeals depends on the organization’s rules.

38 What are NPHC, MGC, IFC, and NPC?

They are council structures commonly associated with different fraternity/sorority communities. Membership, recruitment/intake practices, and governance differ, and campus council names/structures vary.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Use the campus Greek-life page and the organization’s own official sources; do not treat councils as interchangeable.

39 What is intake versus recruitment?

Terms used by different organizations/councils for prospective-member processes. Procedures, public visibility, eligibility, and timelines differ.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Use the organization/council’s official language; do not infer private membership decisions from social-media rumors.

40 What is new-member education?

A structured orientation/education period for people entering an organization. It must comply with law and applicable university/organizational policy.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Hazing is not a legitimate hidden requirement; safety/reporting resources should be clear.

41 What is a probate/new-member presentation?

In some culturally based organizations, a public new-member presentation can be an organizational/cultural tradition introducing a line or new members after an intake/new-member process. Practices and terminology vary.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Do not universalize it across all organizations; distinguish public tradition from prohibited hazing.

42 What is citywide Greek-letter membership?

Some organizations operate chapters whose membership spans multiple institutions or a metropolitan area. University recognition of that structure varies.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Check the national organization's chapter structure and each institution's recognition policy.

43 Can a university “ban” a fraternity that still exists nationally?

A university can remove recognition and campus privileges under its policies; that is different from the national organization revoking a chapter charter. Either, both, or neither can occur.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read both decisions and their effective dates.

44 What is a conduct notice?

A notice that a conduct process has been opened or that an allegation/charge requires response. It is not automatically a finding of responsibility.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read allegations, policy sections, response deadline, adviser/support rights, meeting process, and appeal rules.

45 What is the difference between report, investigation, finding, sanction, and appeal?

They are different process stages. A report starts information flow; an investigation develops a record; a finding applies a standard; a sanction is a consequence; an appeal reviews defined issues.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Do not collapse “reported” into “found responsible.”

46 What is Title IX on a college campus?

A federal civil-rights law prohibiting sex discrimination in federally funded education. Federal regulations and campus processes govern covered matters; other laws/policies may also apply.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Current federal rules changed recently: always check the U.S. Department of Education and your institution's current policy.

47 Does Title IX only mean sexual assault?

No. Title IX covers sex discrimination in education more broadly. Specific institutional processes may address sexual harassment/violence, pregnancy-related protections, athletics, and other areas.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Use current official guidance; do not treat every campus conflict as Title IX.

48 What is a grievance process?

A formal process for raising and resolving a complaint under a specified policy. It may include notice, evidence, review, decision, and appeal.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Different policies use “grievance,” “complaint,” and “appeal” differently.

49 What is disability services actually doing?

Usually coordinates an interactive process for accommodations and access based on disability law/institutional policy, while faculty/staff implement approved accommodations in their roles.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: The office may not be able to retroactively erase every consequence or change essential requirements.

50 What is an accommodation letter?

A document communicating approved accommodations to relevant instructors/offices without requiring the student to disclose unnecessary medical details.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Timing and implementation rules vary; students should know who receives it and when.

51 Can a professor refuse an accommodation?

Faculty generally must implement approved accommodations unless there is a legitimate process concern such as fundamental alteration or unclear implementation; they should not simply ignore the letter.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Use the disability-services process for disputes rather than making the student negotiate legal standards alone.

52 What is a housing contract?

A binding institutional or private agreement governing room, payment, dates, conduct/occupancy conditions, cancellation, damages, and related terms.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Housing policy and landlord-tenant law may both matter depending on the setting.

53 What is a meal plan contract?

An agreement defining plan type, cost, access, rollover/expiration, dining dollars, and cancellation/change rules.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: “Unused” funds do not automatically mean refundable; read the plan terms.

54 What is work-study?

Federal Work-Study is an aid program that makes you eligible for certain jobs; you generally must find/work the job to earn wages. The award is not a cash grant deposited upfront.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask financial aid and student employment how jobs are posted and paid.

55 Why did my aid change?

Possible reasons include enrollment level, verification, outside scholarships, housing/cost changes, satisfactory academic progress, FAFSA corrections, or funding limits.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask for the specific changed item, reason, effective date, and appeal/review route.

56 What is an institutional hold for money?

A restriction connected to an unpaid balance or account issue. What it blocks depends on policy and sometimes law/regulation.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Ask for balance detail, deadline, payment/aid status, and which action the hold blocks.

57 What is emergency aid?

Short-term institutional/community assistance for urgent needs, often with eligibility and documentation rules. It can be grants, loans, vouchers, housing/food support, or referrals.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Search student affairs/financial aid/basic-needs pages and ask what is currently funded.

58 What does a career center actually do?

Career centers commonly support exploration, resumes, interviews, employer connections, internships, events, graduate-school/career decisions, and alumni resources.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Services vary by school and may continue after graduation for a limited period or longer.

59 What is an informational interview?

A conversation to learn about a role, organization, field, or path. It is not a disguised demand for a job.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Prepare focused questions, respect time, and follow up with thanks.

60 What is networking if I do not already know anyone?

Building reciprocal professional relationships by asking good questions, following up, contributing, and staying connected. It can begin with faculty, staff, peers, alumni, conferences, student orgs, supervisors, and public events.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Do not reduce networking to collecting contacts or transactional asks.

61 What is mentorship versus sponsorship?

A mentor gives guidance/feedback; a sponsor uses influence to advocate for opportunities or visibility. One person may do both, but the roles are different.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Do not assume a mentor is obligated to sponsor or a sponsor must be a close confidant.

62 What should I check in an internship offer?

Pay, hours, duties, supervision, location, expenses, learning goals, worker-status questions, credit requirements, start/end, termination, confidentiality/IP, references, and accessibility.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Unpaid status can raise legal questions; use current DOL/state sources for general information.

63 What does “academic credit available” mean for an internship?

Your school may have a process to approve an internship for credit, often with enrollment, tuition/fees, faculty supervision, and assignments.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Credit does not automatically make unpaid work lawful or financially sensible.

64 What is a fellowship?

A funded or structured opportunity for study, research, leadership, professional development, or service. The term is broad and can describe very different employment/education relationships.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read pay/stipend, taxes, benefits, duties, eligibility, and deliverables.

65 What is an apprenticeship?

A structured paid work-and-learning pathway, often with defined training and credential progression. Registered apprenticeships have specific government-recognized standards.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Do not assume every employer “apprenticeship” is a registered apprenticeship.

66 What is salary versus total compensation?

Salary/wages are direct pay; total compensation can include health insurance, retirement contributions, paid leave, bonuses, tuition support, and other benefits.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Compare offers on the same time basis and separate guaranteed from conditional benefits.

67 What are benefits?

Non-wage compensation such as health insurance, retirement plan, paid leave, disability/life insurance, commuter benefits, tuition support, or wellness funds.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Eligibility, employee cost, vesting, and coverage dates matter.

68 What should I know before negotiating an offer?

Know the role, pay range/market evidence, priorities, full compensation, deadlines, and what is negotiable. Ask clearly and professionally; do not invent competing offers.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Some public/unionized roles use fixed scales with limited negotiation.

69 What is a 401(k) or 403(b)?

Employer-sponsored retirement accounts common in private/nonprofit/education settings, with tax treatment and plan rules that vary.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read employer match, vesting, fees, investment options, and eligibility; get financial advice when needed.

70 What does “at-will” employment mean?

In many U.S. contexts it means employment can generally be ended by employer or employee without a fixed term, subject to contracts, laws, and protected rights.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: State law, union agreements, and contracts can change the analysis; this is general information, not legal advice.

71 What is a lease guarantor?

A person/entity agreeing to be responsible for specified lease obligations if the tenant does not pay/perform.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read the guaranty scope; it can be a major financial commitment.

72 What does credit have to do with renting?

Landlords/property managers may use credit/background/income screening subject to applicable law. Thin/no credit can affect requirements such as guarantor or deposit where lawful.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Know your local tenant/consumer protections and check reports for errors.

73 What is renter's insurance?

Insurance covering specified personal-property/liability/loss risks for a renter; a landlord's property insurance generally does not replace it.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Coverage, exclusions, deductible, and required limits vary.

74 How do I vote while away at college?

Voting residence and absentee/mail rules depend on state law and your circumstances. Students may have choices but cannot register in two places for the same election.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Start at [Vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov) and your state/local election office; check address/deadline requirements.

75 Does living in a college town make me a resident for everything?

No. Voting, tuition residency, taxes, driver licensing, benefits, and legal domicile can use different tests.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Name the exact system before asking "am I a resident?"

76 Who controls public transit around campus?

Often a local/regional transit agency, city, university shuttle operator, or combination. Routes/stops can involve multiple jurisdictions and contracts.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Find the service/operator name on the stop or route page before contacting "the city."

77 What is a public record?

A record held by a government/public body that may be accessible under applicable public-records law, subject to exemptions. Private universities are not automatically subject to the same laws.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Use the correct jurisdiction and request a specific existing record rather than demanding an explanation the agency has not written.

78 What is a campus protest policy?

Institutional rules for expressive activity, space/time/place, events, safety, reservations, disruption, and conduct. Public institutions also operate under constitutional constraints that differ from private institutions.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Read current campus policy and relevant law; do not reduce every disagreement to “free speech means anything anywhere.”

79 Can a student group host any speaker it wants?

Recognition, funding, room reservation, event safety, contractual, and expressive-activity rules can all matter. Public/private institutions differ legally.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Start with the event/space policy, not social-media claims about what is “illegal.”

80 What does campus public safety actually control?

Usually emergency response, safety operations, access/security, crime reporting and related services; exact police authority varies by institution/state.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Know whether the unit is sworn police, security, contracted staff, or a hybrid.

81 What is an accreditation complaint versus a campus complaint?

Campus grievances address institution-specific disputes; accreditor complaints generally concern compliance with accreditation standards and usually are not substitutes for routine grade/individual appeals.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Use the right forum and exhaust required institutional processes where applicable.

82 What should I save before graduation?

Unofficial transcript, degree audit, major approvals/substitutions, syllabi you may need, portfolio/work samples you have rights to keep, recommendation contacts, employment records, financial-aid/tax records, organization files you are responsible for transferring, and copies of important institutional decisions.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Do not remove confidential employer/research/student data you are not allowed to retain.

83 What changes after graduation?

Student status ends, accounts/access may expire, loan repayment timelines may begin, insurance/housing/employment changes may occur, and alumni services may start.

CHECK YOUR CAMPUS / SOURCE: Make an exit checklist 60-90 days before graduation and confirm exact dates with your institution/benefits providers.

Tool 1 / Who Decides?

Use it when: everyone keeps naming different people.

1. Write the exact decision, not the whole problem.
2. Find the document that creates or describes the process.
3. Name who proposes, reviews, decides, implements, and hears appeals.
4. Check whether the decision is local, institutional, state, federal, contractual, or organizational.
5. Ask: who can change this particular thing?

Example: “Who decides whether our club gets \$600?” is easier to map than “Who controls student life?”

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 2 / Rule, policy, law, procedure, or preference?

Use it when: someone says “that’s the rule.”

LAW: passed by a government with lawmaking authority.

REGULATION: rule issued under legal authority by an agency.

POLICY: rule an institution or organization adopts for itself.

PROCEDURE: the steps used to carry out a rule/policy.

CONTRACT/BYLAWS: obligations accepted through agreement or organization governance.

PREFERENCE/NORM: something people want or usually do; not automatically enforceable.

Ask next: Who issued it? Where does it apply? Who enforces it? Who can change it?

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 3 / Find the Original

Use it when: Use before reposting a screenshot, quote, number, or clip.

1. Search the exact wording or title.
2. Open the issuer's page, full recording, report, policy, or post.
3. Check date, location/jurisdiction, and version.
4. Read what comes immediately before and after the quoted part.
5. Save the original link/file, not only the screenshot.

If you cannot find the original, say that. "I can't confirm this yet" is a valid result.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 4 / Before You Repost

Use it when: the post makes you want to react fast.

What exactly is the claim?

Who posted it first?

Can you open the original?

Is the date/location still relevant?

What part is fact, inference, opinion, or joke?

What would change if this is wrong?

Can you share the source instead of the screenshot?

A question mark does not cancel the effect of spreading an unverified image.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 5 / Before You Sign

Use it when: Use for forms, leases, offers, releases, memberships, and agreements.

What am I agreeing to?

What do I have to pay or do?

What can the other party do?

When does it start/end/renew?

How do I cancel, appeal, withdraw, or change it?

What happens if I do nothing?

What linked policy or attachment is incorporated?

What should I save before I click/sign?

If the stakes are legal or financial and the language is unclear, pause and use a qualified resource before agreeing.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 6 / Read a Paycheck

Use it when: the deposit is not the number you expected.

1. Pay period: which dates are covered?
2. Hours/rate: what work is included?
3. Gross pay: earnings before deductions.
4. Taxes/withholding: amounts sent to tax authorities.
5. Benefits/other deductions: insurance, retirement, etc., if applicable.
6. Net pay: what remains after deductions.
7. Compare with your time/shift record before asking payroll a specific question.

Question structure: “My time record shows __ hours for __ dates. This statement shows __. Can you help me understand the difference?”

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 7 / Read a University Policy

Use it when: someone says “university policy.”

Find the policy title and policy number if available.

Check the issuing office and effective/revision date.

Find who the policy covers.

Separate definitions from procedures.

Find deadlines, notice requirements, review/appeal language, and exceptions.

Check linked procedures or handbooks; they may contain the actual steps.

Save the version you relied on.

Do not assume a professor rule, department practice, handbook sentence, and university-wide policy are the same level of rule.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 8 / Public Meeting Guide

Use it when: Use before a school board, council, committee, or other public meeting.

Open the agenda. Find the exact item.

Check whether the body decides, recommends, or only hears information.

Read sign-up/time-limit rules.

Know whether your name/comment becomes public.

Write one request the body can act on.

Bring one or two sources; do not spend your whole time retelling background.

Save minutes/recording afterward to see what happened.

A public comment can influence a process, but it is not itself the decision.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 9 / Ask an Office a Question

Use it when: Use before emailing or calling an institution.

1. What happened? One sentence.
2. What document/record are you looking at?
3. What exact question do you need answered?
4. Is there a deadline?
5. Why is this office the likely owner of the question?
6. What minimum personal information is actually needed?
7. What will you save after the conversation?

Best opener: “I’m trying to understand __. I’m looking at __ dated __. Can you tell me __?”

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 10 / Document an Issue

Use it when: the timeline matters.

Write the date/time and what happened.

Save the original notice, email, policy, receipt, or screenshot.

Record who you contacted and what they said.

Keep your own factual notes separate from your interpretation.

Save deadlines and confirmation numbers.

Do not secretly record where law/policy prohibits it; written notes are often enough.

Store sensitive records somewhere private.

A clean timeline is more useful than 40 unsorted screenshots.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 11 / Read a Source

Use it when: Use with any policy, article, post, chart, study, or notice.

WHO made it?

WHAT type of source is it?

WHEN was it made/updated?

WHERE does it apply?

WHY was it created?

WHAT can it establish?

WHAT can it not establish?

WHAT independent source would strengthen or challenge it?

Institutional does not mean complete. Personal does not mean useless. Ask what job the source can do.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 12 / What Counts as Evidence?

Use it when: people are talking past each other.

Direct record: notice, contract, agenda, minutes, receipt, policy, dataset.

Observation/experience: evidence of what that person experienced, not automatically everyone's experience.

Expert analysis: useful within the expert's field and stated scope.

Research: strongest when methods/population fit the question.

Media/post: evidence of what was published/said; accuracy requires separate checking.

Rumor/hearsay: a lead to investigate, not proof of the underlying claim.

The question is not "Is this evidence, yes/no?" It is "Evidence of what?"

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 13 / Who Can Actually Change This?

Use it when: you know what is wrong but not the route.

Name the exact rule, process, amount, schedule, or decision.

Find who currently owns it.

Find the change mechanism: edit, vote, approval, appeal, contract amendment, administrative decision, election, or lawmaking.

Find the timing: ongoing, annual, meeting date, deadline, renewal.

Find what evidence the decision-maker normally uses.

Choose a next step; “wait and gather more” can be a real choice.

Power follows the decision, not the title. A president cannot personally change every campus rule.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 14 / Email Before the Email

Use it when: Use before drafting the actual message.

WHAT HAPPENED: one factual sentence.

WHAT I KNOW: source/document + date.

WHAT I NEED: one answer, correction, record, meeting, or review.

WHO CAN DO IT: office/person with authority.

DEADLINE: if there is one.

ATTACHMENTS: only what is necessary; redact unrelated sensitive information.

Then write: greeting > context > specific ask > deadline if relevant > thanks/name. The thinking happens before the polish.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 15 / Meeting Prep

Use it when: Use for office hours, advising, conduct/appeal meetings, funding meetings, or supervisor check-ins.

Write your one-sentence goal.

Bring the relevant document(s).

List three questions in priority order.

Circle any deadline or number you need confirmed.

Decide what you will not disclose unless it becomes necessary.

Take notes; repeat back decisions and next steps.

Send a short follow-up confirming what you understood.

Leave with names, dates, next steps, and who owns each next step.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 16 / Appeal Prep

Use it when: a process allows review or appeal.

Find the actual appeal rule and deadline.

Identify who may appeal and what grounds are allowed.

Separate “I dislike the result” from an allowed basis for review.

Build a timeline with records.

Match each claim to a document or fact.

State the remedy you are requesting.

Follow format/submission rules exactly.

An appeal is a defined process. Do not assume it is a complete do-over unless the rule says so.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 17 / Campus Office Translator

Use it when: you are being bounced between offices.

REGISTRAR: enrollment, course registration, academic records, transcripts (varies).

BURSAR/STUDENT ACCOUNTS: charges, payments, account balances, refunds (titles vary).

FINANCIAL AID: grants, scholarships, loans, work-study eligibility and aid rules.

DEAN: academic or student leadership role; authority varies by school/unit.

PROVOST: senior academic leader; exact portfolio varies.

STUDENT AFFAIRS: broad student-life/support division; local structure varies.

DISABILITY/ACCESS OFFICE: disability-related accommodations/access processes.

CONDUCT OFFICE: student conduct process; name varies.

When in doubt, ask: “Which office owns this decision, and what is the name of the process I should look up?”

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Tool 18 / College Title Glossary

Use it when: everyone seems to know the hierarchy except you.

PRESIDENT/CHANCELLOR: chief executive title varies by system.

PROVOST: usually senior academic officer.

DEAN: leads a school/college or student-area portfolio.

CHAIR: leads an academic department.

REGISTRAR: academic record/registration administration.

TRUSTEE/REGENT: member of governing board.

FACULTY SENATE: faculty governance body; authority varies.

ADVISER: may be academic, organization, faculty, staff, or professional adviser - do not assume the same powers.

Titles are clues, not proof. Check your institution's org chart, bylaws, policy, or role description.

Use this for your question

Name the exact issue, the source you opened, what it establishes, and the next person or office you need.

Real documents and source connections

How To Evaluate Your Aid Offers

Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education / StudentAid.gov

Source format: exact guidance with related video | Published: None | Language: English

Federal guidance for comparing aid offers and total costs. The embedded video is specifically about College Scorecard; it must not be mislabeled as a financial-aid-offer explainer.

Ask: Which line items reduce the price, which must be earned or repaid, and which costs are missing from the headline award total?

Use it: Compare two clearly fictional aid offers using the same time period and cost categories. Separate grants, work-study and loans and draft questions for a financial-aid office.

Access: Public article. Video title and embed URL verified; playback/captions unverified. Aid rules and school offers change, so live guidance should be checked when teaching.

<https://studentaid.gov/articles/evaluating-financial-aid-offers/>

FAFSA Submission Summary: What You Need To Know

Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education / StudentAid.gov

Source format: exact guidance | Published: None | Language: English

Official guidance distinguishing the FAFSA Submission Summary, Student Aid Index and school aid offer. It supports a practical document-reading case without using anyone's private account.

Ask: Which document estimates potential aid, and which document states the school-specific offer?

Use it: Sort fictional document cards by purpose, sender and next action. Students explain why an SAI is not itself a bill and identify the office to contact for a changed circumstance.

Access: Public guidance and annotated images; students should use mock documents rather than submit personal financial data. Recheck current guidance before use.

<https://studentaid.gov/articles/fafsa-submission-summary/>

College students: Avoid scammers while you job hunt

Federal Trade Commission / FTC Consumer Advice

Source format: exact article | Published: 2025-05 | Language: English

A specific FTC alert about fake job advertisements and recruiter messages aimed at college students. It connects verification skills to internship and summer-job searches.

Ask: How could you verify the employer through a separately located official channel before sharing information or sending money?

Use it: Annotate a fictional recruiter DM, distinguish red flags from proof and build a verification route that does not use the links or phone number supplied in the DM.

Access: Public readable article. No account or video required.

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2025/05/college-students-avoid-scammers-while-you-job-hunt>

Student Org Financials

American University Center for Student Involvement / American University

Source format: exact institutional policy page | Published: None | Language: English

A concrete campus example showing how organization money is managed and which groups receive activity-fee funds. It places fraternities and sororities within student-life structures rather than in a separate curriculum.

Ask: Which organization controls the bank account, who submits requests, and which groups are excluded from this funding source?

Use it: Map a fictional event purchase from idea to request to approval, then compare AU's public process with the learner's own institution. Do not assume the same rules apply everywhere.

Access: Public explanatory page; the linked Engage management system requires AU access. Use the public page only and label AU-specific rules clearly.

<https://www.american.edu/student-affairs/student-involvement/student-org-financials.cfm>

AU Student Government

American University Center for Student Involvement / American University

Source format: exact institutional page | Published: None | Language: English

The university's description of student government's representative and policy role. Useful for teaching students to distinguish representation, advising, administration and final decision authority.

Ask: Which powers are stated explicitly, and which final decision powers are not established by this page?

Use it: Route three fictional campus issues to potential offices or representatives, mark uncertainty and identify the next governing document needed before promising an outcome.

Access: Public page. Treat it as AU's institutional account; it does not independently establish how effectively representation works in practice.

<https://www.american.edu/student-affairs/student-involvement/au-student-government.cfm>

An Eligible Student Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

U.S. Department of Education Student Privacy Policy Office / Protecting Student Privacy

Source format: exact official guide | Published: None | Language: English and official Spanish translation

A federal guide explaining the transfer of FERPA rights to eligible students. An official Spanish translation supports family communication and bilingual document reading.

Ask: What makes someone an eligible student, and where would you verify your institution's process for requesting records?

Use it: Write a plain-language records-request question and identify the campus records office. Compare English and Spanish terminology without asking students to share an actual educational record.

Access: Public landing pages link downloadable guides. The inspected pages establish dates and scope; use the full guide and current campus procedure before teaching specific exceptions or applying it to a real dispute.

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/eligible-student-guide-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa>