



The University of Texas at Arlington Spirit Groups Program 2020/2021 Policies & Procedures

VISION STATEMENT

The UTA Spirit Program will dare to be great. Our program will embrace and attract high-achieving students, athletes, coaches, and staff centered on a culture of personal and team development and winning. We continuously strive for success in academic achievement and compliance, and operate with responsibility and integrity in all of our affairs. We will provide first-class experiences and opportunities for all of our students.

MISSION STATEMENT

The UTA Spirit Program will prepare our students to be successful in all aspects of their lives, and help them accomplish their academic, athletic, personal, and professional goals. We will build on the legacy of our predecessors and create a true "college experience" for our current students. We will engage our various constituencies, which include our University, student body, alumni, and community for their input and support. The program is devoted to equality and diversity. We will effectively tell our story to enhance brand recognition and continually build our fan support for future generations.

CORE VALUES

- Respect
- Accountability for Self and Others
- Passion for Comprehensive Excellence
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement
- Dedication
- Professionalism
- Celebration of Diversity
- Integrity in All of Our Affairs

DEFINITION OF UTA SPIRIT PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Participation as a member of The University of Texas at Arlington Spirit Program (Dance, Cheer, Mascots, Wranglers), whether as a student or staff member, is a privilege, not a right.

Participation is at the discretion of the Department of Campus Recreation in its sole determination of the best interest of the department. Final determination of participation by any and all members rests with the Associate Director of Campus Recreation in coordination with the Spirit Coordinator and coaching staff.

All policies and procedures as outlined in this document serve as program guidelines and are not all-encompassing. If at any time the Department of Campus Recreation deems that the behavior and/or actions of a program member is not in line with the best interests of The University of Texas at Arlington the program member will be removed from participation.

Some criteria for suspension or dismissal are:

- Academic ineligibility
- Proven involvement with illegal drugs or any other unlawful activity
- Consumption of alcohol at official Spirit Program events
- Disrespectful attitude towards Coordinator, Coaches and/or teammates



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ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to participate in the UTA Spirit Program, the following eligibility requirements must be met and maintained.

- Be currently enrolled in a minimum of 12 hours at The University of Texas at Arlington or
- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of **2.0** at the time of tryouts or
- If transferring from a different institution, have a minimum cumulative GPA of **2.0** at the time of tryouts
- Agree, in good faith, to attend the University of Texas at Arlington for the fall and spring semesters of the following year. If the student fails to complete both the fall and spring semesters at UTA, he/she will not be eligible to tryout.
- As a returning member, be in good standing with the program

The Spirit Coordinator and individual team coaches check the term & cumulative GPA and class hours of applicants before tryouts to ensure eligibility. Students transferring from another university must be accepted for enrollment at The University of Texas at Arlington prior to tryouts.

To remain eligible once tryouts are completed, a participant must be enrolled in at least 12 hours and maintain at least a **2.0** term **AND** cumulative GPA. At any time, the **term** GPA falls below a 2.0 the student will be placed on academic probation and assigned mandatory study hours for the following term. If the student's **term** and/or **cumulative** GPA does not rise above a 2.0 during the semester on probation, the student will either be removed from the team or not allowed to try out the following year. The Department of Campus Recreation will periodically check enrollment status and GPA. The student must make progress toward a degree, as determined by the appropriate Dean's Office.

A Spirit Program member found to be academically ineligible will be notified of their dismissal from the squad, at which time **ALL UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT MUST BE RETURNED**. A program member found academically ineligible and removed from participation may enter the next tryout, provided their GPA has been raised to meet the established requirements and they have not surpassed five years of participation.

A member of the Spirit Program is eligible for a maximum of five years of participation.

INSURANCE

Members must provide proof of medical insurance, which covers Spirit Program activities. A copy of the insurance policy should be on file with the Department of Campus Rec.

All medical expenses are the responsibility of the individual member. Trainers are available to provide assistance for most minor injuries.



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CODE OF CONDUCT

The Department of Campus Recreation makes every effort to offer a program that assists each student in securing a degree and fulfilling the objectives of the University. Participation as a member of the Spirit Program, carries with it definite standards of personal, academic and athletic conduct for the student as outlined in our core values. The defined standards are as follows:

Personal Code of Conduct

1. Conduct yourself in such a manner that would uphold or enhance the traditions and ethical standards of the University, the Department of Campus Recreation, and the Spirit Program.
2. Do not bring discredit to the University or cause harm to its reputation. This includes the bringing discredit to the UTA Spirit Program as well.

Academic Code of Conduct

1. Attend classes regularly and complete all academic assignments.
2. Keep a course load of at least 12 hours per semester and make satisfactory progress towards a degree. Graduating Seniors may take less if no other courses are needed in their graduating semester.
3. Maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA.
4. Accept responsibility for academic integrity.

Program of Conduct

1. Abide by University, Campus Rec, AACCA and Spirit Program rules.
2. Maintain oneself in top physical condition, within accepted health standards.
3. Attend official events unless absence is excused.
4. Respect all University facilities and use them properly.
5. Take proper care of equipment and return it in good condition.
6. Maintain proper standards of grooming and dress.
7. Abstain from using tobacco and non-therapeutic drugs while representing the UTA Spirit Program.
8. Abstain from consumption of alcoholic beverages while representing the UTA Spirit Program.

Failure to follow the Code of Conduct can result in immediate dismissal from the program.



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SOCIAL MEDIA

- *Spirit Program members risk their participation status, and/or losing a scholarship, by releasing inappropriate material or content on an Internet profile, including pictures, video, tweets, posts and messages that violate the code of conduct.*
- *Underage drinking, libel, defamation, harassment, and other illegal activities posted online are subject to removal from the program.*
- Spirit Program members should not release specific details about how to contact them; especially email addresses, local addresses, online screen names, and phone numbers.
- Spirit Program members should not release specific details about where they may be located; some places may not be suitable for members to be located or seen at. This is also a safety protocol to prevent uncomfortable and possibly dangerous situations.
- Social websites, like Facebook, provide a false sense of security by providing certain privacy settings. Anything posted on the Internet is easily accessible by familiar Internet users.
- Keep in mind that members on social websites may include your coaches, administrators, family members, alumni, media, future employers, or predators.
- Remember as a Spirit Program member you are held accountable to a higher code of conduct.

TIME COMMITMENT

Members of the UTA Spirit Program must be organized in order to fulfill student obligations and Spirit Program responsibilities. Commitment to the Spirit Program includes participation at required practices, games, fund-raising, charitable functions, required workouts as approved by the Spirit Coordinator and coaching staff.

Practices are scheduled 3-5 times a week and additional practices may be required when deemed necessary. Additionally, in June and July, the Spirit Program members must attend a week of summer practices in Arlington followed by NCA/NDA College Camp.

Spirit Program members should anticipate and plan to have considerably less vacation time than other students. Spirit Program members will be expected to participate in athletic events, games and make appearances during most University holidays. This includes, but is not limited to July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Break, and Spring Break. Members should plan accordingly. **EVERY SPIRIT GROUP MEMBER WILL BE EXPECTED TO CHEER/DANCE AT LEAST 2 GAMES DURING WINTER BREAK.**

Spirit Program members will be given access to a calendar for the summer, fall and spring semesters. **Each member must schedule work, dates, sorority/fraternity functions, and other events around that calendar.**



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TRAVEL

Each team will have the opportunity to travel to a variety of events including but not limited to: volleyball postseason games, basketball postseason games, and national competitions. Travel privileges will be determined by the coaching staff based on the following criteria: skill level, appearance points, attitude, attendance, seniority, needs of the program, and academic status, specifically a current GPA of 2.0.

Failure to comply with the Spirit Program's Policies and Procedures while traveling with UTA will result in an immediate return trip to Arlington at the member's expense, as well as indefinite suspension from the program, with the possibility of dismissal.

The Spirit Program assumes that all members would appreciate the opportunity to travel to off-campus events; however, we understand that sometimes members are unable to commit to traveling off campus for long periods of time. All travel plans will be communicated to the Program well before the event. If a Spirit Member does not want to be considered to travel to a certain event, then they must let the coaching staff know before the travel teams are set. If a member is selected to travel and then informs the coaching staff after the fact that they are not able to attend, then there may be additional penalties.

NOTE – Spirit Program Members should not make unalterable plans during Spring Break, as Basketball tournaments, and team practices, should be their first priority. Personal vacations are not acceptable reasons to opt out of Spirit Program travel.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

The UTA Spirit Program has a zero-tolerance policy for alcohol. Spirit Program members are not allowed to acquire, possess or consume alcohol while participating in a UTA event and/or traveling as an official participant of UTA. This policy is the same for all student participants, regardless of age. Failure to uphold this policy while traveling will result in the most immediate return travel home available (Greyhound Bus, etc.), as well as indefinite suspension from the program with the possibility of dismissal. Additionally, the Spirit Program member will not participate in any activities for the remainder of their time on the trip including, but not limited to, performing at games or appearances, and participating in competition.

LEGAL/ILLEGAL DRUGS

Conduct which involves the unlawful possession, use, dispensation, distribution or manufacture of controlled substances by a program member at any time shall result in immediate indefinite suspension from the Spirit Program with the possibility of dismissal. The legal use of prescribed medicines under the direction of a licensed physician is permitted. If deemed necessary, the Spirit Program may implement drug testing at any point during the season.

Buying or using any tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, vape pens, etc.) while representing UTA is strictly prohibited.



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TARDIES/ABSENCES

To be early is to be on time. To be on time is to be late. To be late is unacceptable.

Spirit Program members are expected to arrive on time to every event which they are scheduled to attend. The Spirit Program Coordinator has sole authority to excuse absences or tardiness. Some examples of acceptable excuses are academic necessities, death in the family, or illness of the Spirit Program member. If a Spirit Program member misses a practice or game due to illness they will be required to provide a doctor's statement documenting their appointment.

Examples of excused absences:

- School related/class/exams
- Illness
- Death in the family
- Military responsibilities
- **In order for an absence to be excused, the Coach must be notified AND give approval in advance of the absence. It is your responsibility to directly notify the Coach/Advisor in at least a week in advance.**

Examples of unexcused absences:

- Work
- All-Star cheerleading practices or competitions
- Greek Life functions
- Oversleeping
- Non-emergency medical appointments
- Outside activities
- Vacations

Each Spirit Program member will need to be at all call-times at least 15 minutes prior. For example, if a game call-time is at 6:00, you must be there by 5:45. Each member will be given one warning the first time they are tardy to an event (assuming it is within reason). Each subsequent tardy will be considered a personal strike.

Any unexcused absences from official Spirit events will be considered a personal strike and will cause the Spirit Program member to forfeit their warning. **More than four unexcused absences will result in dismissal from the UTA Spirit Program.**

All tardies and absences will be recorded by the coaching staff.



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BEHAVIOR CONSEQUENCE POLICY

The UTA Spirit Program has a system of strikes in regard to behavioral issues, tardies, absences, and other infractions. Any infraction, including but not limited to tardies, attitude issues, social media issues, withdrawing from appearance and/or game commitments, missing required uniforms or apparel, not properly presenting oneself in public, cursing, etc., will be considered a personal strike.

Each member will be given one warning for each type of infraction. Any subsequent violations will be considered a strike.

PERSONAL STRIKES

STRIKE 1 – Run 1 mile on the track at 6:00 AM (the team has to attend and watch)

STRIKE 2 – Run 1 mile on the track at 6:00 AM (the team has to run with you)

STRIKE 3 – Potential for removal from the team at the Coach's discretion

TEAM STRIKES

If team members begin to create habits where a team is missing someone from practices every week, different team members continue to be late, games are not being fulfilled to our best expectations, the team will be given a team strike.

Team strikes may also be accrued for not meeting minimum requirements for mandatory events (example – minimum number of participants at Holiday basketball games and minimum number of participants for appearances).

If the team accumulates 3 team strikes, then National competition for that season will be cancelled.

CHAIN OF COMMAND/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Spirit Program members are encouraged to engage with their captains and coaches in order to help build the best possible teams and Program. If a Spirit member has a grievance or issue that needs addressing, then they should follow the Spirit Program chain of command as follows:

- 1) Talk to a friend
- 2) Talk to a captain
- 3) Talk to your coach
- 4) Talk to the Spirit Coordinator
- 5) Talk to the Associate Director or Director of Campus Recreation

After going through this procedure if a Spirit Member still feels that their issue has not been resolved then the Director will assist them in taking the matter further up the chain of command.

Spirit members should not text Spirit Program staff after normal working hours, unless responding to a text.



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HAZING

Hazing by any member of the UTA Spirit program will not be tolerated. The UTA Spirit Program abides by UTA's hazing policy as outlined in the UTA Handbook of operating procedures. Hazing is any activity which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental health, physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of initiation or admission into an organization.

UNIFORMS

Uniforms and equipment are the property of the UTA Department of Campus Recreation. Spirit Program members must maintain their uniforms and equipment in proper condition. Uniforms may only be worn for performance and approved special events. Members found ineligible, or otherwise removed from the squad, must return all uniforms and equipment at the time they are notified in writing of their dismissal.

Damage to or loss of uniforms and equipment is the responsibility of the Spirit Program member who checked them out. The damaged or lost uniform/equipment must be replaced by the squad member at his/her expense. Failure to return any uniform or equipment will result in automatic charging of the value of the missing items to the bursar's account of the member who checked it out. Uniforms will not be lent out for Senior portraits or anything other than an official UTA event, UNLESS accompanied with a coach or the Spirit Coordinator.

EXPENSES

UTA will provide uniforms, practice wear, equipment, camp tuition, most transportation to and from off-campus events, and per diem when traveling with the program. UTA will also cover registration fees for competition.

Some personal expenses may include: t-shirts and other apparel not provided by the Spirit Program, gas to local appearances (none outside of DFW), replacing lost or damaged uniforms or equipment, and various team activities. Members may also need to help with the cost of travel for Nationals.

APPEARANCE

All visible tattoos must be covered while in uniform. No jewelry is to be worn during a Spirit Program activity; this includes practices, games, pep rallies, and other performances.

- Only exception – Dance can wear team studs at performances as a part of their uniform.

Every member will be well-groomed in appearance whenever representing UTA in public.

- Women - Full gameday makeup and hair
- Men – Clean-shaven and hair styled
- Both – Fingernails must be trimmed and natural-looking (no crazy colors/designs)

For any and all Spirit Program appearances in public all members are to wear plain white socks (no designs or logos whatsoever).



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SAFETY

Cheer & Dance involves a certain amount of danger of personal injury. Spirit Program members should be aware that all of our activity brings with it the risk of catastrophic injury or death. In becoming a member of the UTA Spirit Program, a program member voluntarily assumes the risk involved by participating in practices, games, and other events. Now, with the pandemic of COVID-19, everyone will be asked to self-screen for any of the symptoms for COVID-19. If you are feeling sick and/or running a fever, you are to contact your coach right away and stay home.

All scheduled practices will be under the direct supervision of the coaching staff. No scheduled practices should occur without the presence of a coach.

The UTA Spirit Program abides by the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Advisors (AACCA) Cheerleading Safety Guidelines. All coaches will be AACCA certified. Furthermore, all members of the athletic program should become thoroughly familiar with and shall carefully abide by the AACCA Cheerleading Safety Guidelines. Members should also be aware that failure to abide by AACCA Cheerleading Safety Guidelines might result in immediate action, including potential dismissal from the Spirit Program.

Any injuries suffered due to participation in outside activities (intramurals, club sports, open teams, leisure activities, All-Star gyms, etc.) may result in loss of scholarship monies.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships will be awarded to each eligible member toward the conclusion of the fall and spring semesters. Each member will receive a set scholarship amount once they've completed their required community service hours. Any additional hours acquired by an athlete, after mandatory hours are complete, will result in more scholarship money. Any member who does not remain on the squad for the full year (July 2020 through May 2020) may be charged back the full amount of their scholarship, as well as the cost of camp, their practice wear, as well as any other expenses incurred on behalf of said member. This includes quitting or being removed from the program for disciplinary reasons.

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Each team, along with coaches, will select members of their team to hold leadership positions. Those selected will receive additional scholarship money to compensate for extra duties assigned by the Coach. Those selected will be required to meet weekly with the coaching staff, as well as potentially spending several hours each week assisting the Coach with day-to-day activities. These activities will include, but are not limited to, recruiting, answering emails, weekly office hours, and marketing events. Any returning member in good standing will be eligible for a leadership position.

COMPETITION

The primary purpose of the UTA Spirit Program is to support The University of Texas at Arlington; consequently, competitive events will only be considered if the Spirit Coordinator and coaching staff feel that the Program's commitments to UTA have been adequately fulfilled prior to the competition. If at any time the Spirit Coordinator and coaching staff feel that competition is taking priority over our primary purpose of supporting UTA, then the option of competing will be removed from consideration.



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Should the UTA Spirit Program elect to participate in competitive events, the Spirit Program coaching staff will then select the team members who are eligible for those competitions. Team members not selected to participate in competition will be considered an alternate for our competition teams, and will be expected to attend all practices relevant to the competition. Alternates will travel with the team to the competition. Withdrawal from the competition team will only be considered for medical reasons, or with prior approval from the coaching staff.

All UTA Spirit Program members should recognize that participating in competitions can be a significant time commitment above and beyond what is already required of them. Once the Spirit Program has decided whether or not competition will be a viable option then all members selected to participate in those competitions will be expected to attend all additional competition related activities including, but not limited to, practices, performances, and other events. In addition to an increased time commitment, Spirit Program members may also be required to engage in fundraising activities in order to facilitate our competition experience.



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2019/2020 UTA SPIRIT GROUPS AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned, a student at The University of Texas at Arlington, agree to represent the University of Texas at Arlington as a member of the UTA Spirit Program, from July 2020 until the formal spring tryout process in April/May of 2021.

I understand I am to conduct myself in a respectful manner appropriate for a representative of the University. I have read, understand, and agree to adhere to the **University's Spirit Groups' Policies & Procedures** established by the Department of Campus Recreation. I further understand I must be available for all practices, games, events, pep rallies, camps, competitions, and all other events.

I fully understand and agree that failure to abide by the UTA Spirit Program Policies and Procedures, and other directives set forth by the University of Texas at Arlington, can result in disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, removal from the Program and loss of scholarship. I also may be subject to disciplinary action from the University's Office of Student Conduct. **I also understand that should I fail to comply with this Agreement and its requirements, all monies used for camp, uniforms and scholarships may be billed back to me.**

By signing this document, I certify that I have read, understand, and agree to the requirements of this document.

MEMBER'S NAME (PRINTED)

MEMBER'S SIGNATURE

DATE

STUDENT ID (1000#)

COACH'S SIGNATURE

DATE

You may be entitled to know what information UT Arlington (UTA) collects concerning you. You may review and have UTA correct this information according to procedures set forth in UT System BPM #32. The law is found in sections 552.021, 552.023 and 559.004 of the Texas Government Code.