



Michigan Technological University Frequently Asked Questions Regarding University Volunteers

1. Who is a volunteer?

The Volunteer Policy defines a volunteer as “an individual who performs work or provides services in support of university activities without the expectation of compensation”. Volunteers may perform a variety of functions, however the university does not intend for volunteers to perform or displace work that is presently being performed by university employees.

Individuals who have unpaid academic appointments to the university are not considered volunteers when acting in that capacity. They are, however, permitted to volunteer their services according to the terms and conditions set forth in the Volunteer Policy.

2. Who’s responsible for selecting volunteers?

Pursuant to the Volunteers Policy, “The department is responsible for properly screening, engaging, and terminating a volunteer. The department is responsible also for ensuring an individual has appropriate experience, qualifications, and training for the tasks to be performed.

3. What forms are needed for volunteers?

To determine what forms are necessary, see the “Services Requiring a Volunteer Agreement” section of the Use of Volunteers Policy.

4. What if volunteers fail to complete the required forms?

The volunteer risks not being formally recognized as a University volunteer and possibly not covered for liability.

5. Can volunteers get reimbursed for expenses?

Yes, the appropriate department has the authority to decide whether to reimburse a University volunteer for actual and reasonable expenses so long as the expenses fall under the University’s reimbursement guidelines. Reimbursement cannot be used as a substitute for compensation nor can it get linked to the volunteer’s productivity.

6. What are volunteers prohibited from doing?

Pursuant to the Volunteer Policy, volunteers are prohibited from performing the following activities:

- working in any capacity in which he/she is employed by the University, or which is essentially similar to the individual's regular work at the University, or under circumstances that suggest the decision to volunteer is not made freely
- operating heavy equipment (e.g. forklift, hi-lo, backhoe, etc.);
- working with highly hazardous or toxic chemicals or agents and/or dangerous equipment or environments (i.e.: anything that could cause severe injury or death).
- any activity considered inappropriate for an employee;
- entering into any contract on behalf of the University;
- rendering professional services without possessing the required credentials;
- any actions beyond the scope of the volunteer assignment.

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7. What is the minimum age for University volunteers?

The minimum age for volunteers is 16 and they must have parental consent before they can serve as a University volunteer. Volunteers who are between the ages of 16-18 need to abide by Michigan Law with respect to Work Permits.

8. Are volunteers covered for liability?

Yes, Indemnification for claims against volunteers arising out of and in the course of volunteer activity will be provided in accordance with University Policy.

9. Are volunteers agents of the University?

No. Volunteers are not considered to be agents of the University.

10. Are volunteers entitled to Workers Compensation?

No, University volunteers are not covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act and are not considered employees for any purpose. Therefore, they are not eligible for any university benefits, including Worker's Compensation, as a result of this volunteer association

11. Can volunteers receive a charitable contribution receipt for their service?

Yes, the IRS allows departments to reimburse and/or provide charitable tax receipts to volunteers for expenses such as parking or reward the volunteers at an appreciation event. Upon the request of the volunteer, the supervisor may provide him/her with documentation acknowledging time spent without placing any numerical value on that amount of time.

12. What privileges and benefits are extended to volunteers?

Free access to events if the event is related to their volunteer duty, but no extra tickets are allowed. Use of other benefits such as special uniforms, parking permits, food vouchers are allowed at the discretion of the supervisor and are available for use only during the time of their volunteer assignment.

13. Can Michigan Tech employees volunteer?

Yes, per Section 551.103 of the Fair Labor Standards Act as amended, employees may volunteer hours of service to their public employer or agency provided, “such services are not the same type of services which the individual is employed to perform for such public agency.” In other words, hourly employees are not eligible to do the same type of work as their employment. Office professionals cannot volunteer to do clerical/secretarial work. Grounds employees cannot volunteer to do the same type of work. If an hourly employee does the same type of work they do as an employee, they must be compensated, including the payment of overtime if appropriate.

14. Can volunteers drive University vehicles?

Yes. Public Safety and Police Services will conduct a driving history check on the volunteers and make sure the volunteer has a valid, restriction-free driver's license or else they are not allowed to drive a University vehicle under any circumstances. Departments are required to maintain the history check and driver's license documentation along with the Volunteer Application and Service Agreement. Any volunteer assigned to a University vehicle must be at least 18 years of age and have a valid driver's license recognized by Michigan law. All drivers are required to have no more than a total combination of five (5) current points in the Michigan (or any other) point system, with no single infraction totaling more than three (3) points.

15. When are training, credentialing and/or licensure required for volunteers?

Michigan Tech volunteers must have the necessary training and/or supervision to safely carry out the volunteer work and, depending on the function performed, must meet the appropriate licensing requirements and Michigan Tech program specific requirements.

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An individual who volunteers services in a field which requires a license or certificate must satisfy that requirement prior to performance of those duties. For example, a medical doctor volunteering services must have a current license to practice medicine before volunteering. Volunteers in professions that require licensure must have a current license in their field of service, and current insurance coverage.

16. Does Michigan Tech track their volunteers?

Yes. Departments must maintain a completed and signed copy of the Volunteer Application and Service Agreement along with any other associated document(s) for a period of three years following the end of the volunteer assignment.

17. Can volunteers use institutional marketing tools?

No. Volunteers should not receive any institutional marketing materials reflecting their volunteer position and University logos such as: Business cards, letterhead, unless approved by University Marketing and Communications.

18. Can volunteers bring their own equipment, vehicle, tools, and personal items on campus?

Yes, volunteers may use their own equipment while fulfilling their volunteer duties at their own risk. The University will not cover any damages or reimburse volunteers in the event that their items are harmed.

PLEASE NOTE: The University's auto insurance will not cover personal vehicles. The owner's auto insurance will be the primary coverage for liability and collision damage.

19. Can volunteers be granted an mtu.edu email account?

The use of University Email accounts is a privilege extended to advance the teaching and learning, research, service, and administrative work that constitutes the University's mission. As a general rule, volunteers do not receive e-mail accounts however if a specific volunteer assignment requires e-mail account usage, the sponsoring department must submit a formal request to Information Technology Services.

20. Can volunteers have access to Michigan Tech's systems (i.e. Banner)?

As a general rule, volunteers do not receive computer system access. If a specific volunteer assignment requires computer system access, as required by University policy, the sponsoring department must complete and approve a request for access form.

21. Can a group volunteer?

Yes. Each member of the group must complete individual Volunteer Application and Service Agreement forms.

22. Can volunteers have access to financial, private and confidential information?

Yes, so long as the volunteers with access to sensitive information are required to abide by privacy laws that govern the University, such as FERPA, HIPPA. A background check may be required.

23. When is a criminal background check required?

Criminal background checks will be made depending on the type of work the volunteer is to perform (example, assisting with minor children, working unsupervised, handling cash, or handling private and confidential information). If required, a criminal background check must be conducted before granting the volunteer permission to serve. Forms are located on the Public Safety and Police Services website.