

# Campus Smudging Procedure

## I. Procedure Statement

Oregon Institute of Technology (University) is committed to diversity and to an inclusive, respectful campus for all people. Religious and spiritual practices are an important part of life for many people in the University community, and the University accommodates both students and employees who wish to express their faith and/or spirituality.

In support of the spiritual lives of Native American/Alaska Native peoples, the University will allow the spiritual, sacred, and/or ceremonial use of sage, sweet grass, tobacco, and cedar, when its use is for the purpose of purification and prayer, consistent with time-honored cultural, traditional, and spiritual observances and complies with the protocols outlined in this document.

## II. History, Tradition, and Context

Ancient traditions concerning the use of plants abound within every Native American tribal culture and all those who practice similar traditions. The uses of these plants address a variety of medicinal and spiritual purposes. Long before Europeans arrived to the Americas, hosts of sacred plants were used in spiritual and ceremonial contexts. However, in the United States the spiritual practices of Native Americans were outlawed for many generations. In 1978, that changed with the passing of the American Indian/Alaska Native Religious Freedom Act which explicitly protects Native Americans' rights to religious practice. Today, well-established sacred patterns of plant use continue to be a part of tribal and intertribal ceremonial traditions. The University recognizes sage, tobacco, cedar, sweet grass and other herbs and plants as traditional Native American medicines and essential elements of sacred ceremony. The University is committed to providing a pathway for students and employees on campus who wish to practice ceremonial smudging.

## III. Reason/Purpose for Procedure

The University is located on the ancestral homelands of Native Americans, and the University recognizes the deep connection that many Native people have to the land. The University is committed to supporting Native American students, staff, and faculty by facilitating the continuation of their religious and spiritual traditions while they pursue and work in higher education. The University has established the Campus Smudging Procedure (Procedure) in order to provide students with specific protocols to practice ceremonial smudging on the Klamath Falls campus.

#### **IV. Applicability**

The University is a smoke free campus, this Procedure serves as a limited exception to the smoke free campus policy. It is also consistent with University's Statement on Diversity, Affirmative Action, and Equal Opportunity. Students/employees who wish to engage in a practice of burning herbs or other material other than the ones listed in this Procedure on campus may request a religious accommodation by contacting the Dean of Students for students or Human Resources for employees to engage in an interactive process.

#### **V. Definitions**

1. **Smudging** is a practice that is common to many Native American religions and spiritual practices. While smudging, a person produces smoke by burning a small amount of sacred herbs. Typically, the smoke lasts only a brief duration of time.
2. **Sacred Herbs** are herbs that are burned during Native American smudging rituals and vary according to tradition. They may include sage, sweet grass, tobacco, and cedar—as well as other herbs or plants.
3. **Facilitators** are officials who have been approved by the Director of Emergency Management from the Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHS) and who are approved to provide training to parties on appropriate means of smudging on-campus.
4. **Ceremonial Use Exemption Form** is the first step in requesting permission to smudge on campus in any areas or spaces not already approved by EHS.
5. **Initial Meeting** occurs when a requesting party meets with a Facilitator. The Initial Meeting will be scheduled to take place in a timely fashion (within two weeks, if possible) after the requesting party submits a completed Ceremonial Use Exemption Form.

#### **VI. Training**

EHS and Multicultural Life (a component of Campus Life) will work together to develop training to ensure safety during smudging practices, cultural responsiveness, and to provide an equity perspective to the oversight of the practice.

#### **VII. Campus Safety Features**

Smudging may occur in any pre-approved spaces in accordance with the safety training guidelines when the space is open for use. Parties may request to smudge in an outside area or in a space not previously approved for the practice through the steps outlined in this Procedure.

## **VIII. Procedure for Smudging on Campus**

Parties who have completed training may smudge in pre-approved spaces providing that all safety guidelines are followed.

In accordance with this Procedure, the University will accommodate requesting parties who wish to practice ceremonial smudging on campus. It is the requesting party's obligation to initiate the request by completing a Ceremonial Use Exemption Form. The Form includes the name of the requesting party, the campus ID number, personal contact information, as well as the location on campus where the requesting party intends to smudge, the frequency of the ceremony, the specific herbs that the requesting party desires to burn, and whether the request involves other people in the ceremony. The requesting party's signature on the form will serve as the confirmation that the requesting party has read and understands this Procedure and agrees to only smudge in the approved area(s) and manner(s).

After the requesting party has submitted a completed Form, EHS or an assigned Facilitator will contact the student within two weeks to schedule the Initial Meeting. During the Initial Meeting, the student will meet with a Facilitator. The Facilitator will review this Procedure with the student and will instruct the student on the requirements and the relevant safety concerns. EHS will determine if the space requested is appropriate for the ceremony, taking into account nearby persons and activities and ensuring there are no fragrance allergies/sensitivities to be aware of. Facilitators will work with EHS to obtain additional approval or will communicate that the pre-approved space must be used. Facilitators will communicate when and where the smudging will occur to all groups in close proximity to the space being used. If all concerns are addressed, at the conclusion of the meeting the Facilitator will send the student the confirmation of allowable smudging with the signed agreement attached and include EHS, the Dean of Students, and the Multicultural Student Services Coordinator. The documents will be saved electronically in a centralized location to which all University Officials have access. If there are any outstanding questions that arise in the Initial Meeting, the Facilitator will contact EHS and then follow up with the requesting party regarding the approval or denial of the request. The final approval to the requesting party will follow the same process as outlined above. Denials of the request must be accompanied with an explanation and supporting documentation and sent to the requesting party, EHS, Dean of Students, and Multicultural Student Services Coordinator.

Parties who are approved for additional space to smudge must ensure that the ceremonial smudging only occurs in the approved space, during the specified hours requested, and doesn't conflict with other outside events nearby. If additional ceremonial areas or manners are desired, the requesting party must submit an additional request to the Facilitator. Subsequent requests may be reviewed and approved without an Initial Meeting. Denials of subsequent requests may not be given without a meeting and explanation from a Facilitator.

When smudging, requesting parties will follow the below procedure. The requirements of this Procedure have been developed in coordination with Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) and Multicultural Life. The requirements of this Procedure are as follows:

1. The requesting party will complete the Ceremonial Use Form prior to meeting with a Facilitator to discuss the procedures.
2. The requesting location, if inside, will be equipped with a fire sprinkler.
3. The requesting location, if inside, will have adequate ventilation (for example, windows that open, operable kitchen hoods, or other means of ventilation) to ensure that smoke generated from smudging will not activate the smoke detector/fire alarm.
4. Smoke detectors and fire alarms will never be disabled in order to take part in a ceremonial smudging.
5. The sacred herbs will be placed in a sufficiently large, non-combustible (metal, ceramic or shell) container, and the herbs must stay within or upon that container throughout the smudging ceremony.
6. If the non-combustible container is placed on a surface while the sacred herbs are still burning, the container will be placed on a solid, non-combustible surface (such as metal, ceramic, or shell).
7. The sacred herbs will be ignited with a utility lighter or a similarly approved device, and not matches.
8. After the approved party has finished smudging, ashes must be disposed of in a safe manner. Herbs that have not been completely extinguished must never be left in an area without the approved party being present.
9. The approved spaces are equipped with air purifiers. The party will ensure that the air purifier is turned on once the smudging has ended in accordance with the safety guidelines.

## **IX. Failure to Follow Procedure**

The Campus Smudging Procedure is intended to accommodate students and employees who wish to smudge as a part of their religious or spiritual practice, and the Procedure is also intended to ensure fire safety compliance. If an approved party fails to follow this Procedure, that action may result in the suspension or termination of the approval to engage in ceremonial smudging in on campus.

## **X. Resolving Disagreements/Filing a Complaint**

The University promotes an atmosphere of equity and inclusion. Discrimination on the basis of religious or spiritual beliefs or other protected classes is strictly prohibited by University policy. If the requestor disagrees with decisions regarding their accommodations, the requestor may request a secondary review through the following options. Students may request a review from the Dean of Students and employees may request a review by the Human Resources Associate Vice President.

### **Other On-Campus Resources:**

- Dean of Students/ Vice President of Student Affairs
  - Phone: 541-885-1011
- Campus Life: Multicultural Life
  - Phone: 541-885-1828
- Housing and Residence Life (HRL)
  - Phone: 541-885-1094
- Human Resources
  - Phone: 541-885-1120
- Environmental Health & Safety (EHS):
  - Phone: 541-885-1225

### **Links to Related Policies, Procedures or Information:**

Statement on Diversity, Affirmative Action, and Equal Opportunity  
Student Housing Handbook