

Procedures for Smudging in UNO Housing and Residence Life

I. PURPOSE

The University of Nebraska (hereafter referred to as “UNO” or “the University”) does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation in its programs, activities, or employment.

Many Native Americans (Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native/Native/Indigenous/First Nations are all interchangeable terms referencing the peoples indigenous to North America and may be used throughout this document) are practitioners of tradition and prayer involving the use of sacred plant medicines. The University recognizes sage, cedar, sweet grass, tobacco and other Indigenous plants as traditional Native American medicines and essential elements of tradition, prayer, and spiritual healing. The University is committed to providing a pathway for Indigenous students living on-campus who wish to smudge.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha is located on the ancestral homeland of Native Americans, and the University recognizes the deep connection that Native people have to the land. UNO is committed to supporting Native students by facilitating the continuation of and rights to their spiritual practices, as acknowledged and protected within the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

The University is a [smoke-free campus](#) and the [Housing and Residence Life \(HRL\) Community Policies](#) prohibit the use of candles and incense within University housing (page 17).

This procedure outlines the process Indigenous students may be granted a reasonable exemption to those policies in order to smudge in on-campus residential facilities.

II. SCOPE

This procedure applies to:

- a. Indigenous students
- b. who live on-campus, and
- c. who request to smudge in accordance with Indigenous tradition and prayer within residential spaces operated by or affiliated with UNO.

This procedure applies to smudging requests and exemptions that are mutually agreed upon by the student and University staff.

III. DEFINITIONS

This procedure will rely on the following definitions:

- a. Smudging – The practice of cleansing or purifying oneself, space, or objects through producing sacred smoke by burning a small amount of sacred or medicinal plant medicines. This tradition is common and vital to many Indigenous peoples throughout North America.

- b. Sacred Plants – Medicinal herbs, plants, and/or grasses that are burned, ingested, carried, or used during ceremony and prayer. These may vary between practices and traditions, but commonly include sage, sweet grass, and cedar. Students who wish to use plants other than these must discuss the medicines to be used with a University staff member during the approval process. The University will not permit the use of any herbs, grasses, or plant materials which violate local, state, or federal laws.

IV. PROCEDURE

Housing and Residence Life will adhere to the following procedure when supporting students who wish to smudge within their living spaces in on-campus housing:

1. The student shall first make their desire known by submitting a Smudging Exemption Form to the Indigenous Student Center (ISC) Advisor. This can be submitted in-person via paper form or by completing the [electronic exemption request form](#).
2. Following receipt of the Smudging Exemption Form, the ISC Advisor will:
 - a. Work in partnership with the Associate Director for Housing and Residential Life (hereafter referred to as the AD) and UNO's Smudging Exemption Review Board to determine approval of the request. The student may be asked to meet with any or all the members of the Review Board as a part of the approval process.
 - b. As a part of the review and approval process, the AD will contact the students' roommates to discuss concerns (allergies, etc.) about smudging in the residential space.
 - i. If no concerns exist, the exemption approval process will move forward.
 - ii. If concerns are raised, the AD will work to help mediate or resolve those concerns before the exemption approval process continues.
 - c. Also, as a part of the review and approval process, the University's Fire Safety officer or their designee will perform an in-person review of the living space in which the student will be smudging. This review will determine if there are any fire safety or suppression devices in the area which may be triggered and, if so, appropriate measures to mitigate the possibility of a false alarm associated with the smudging process.
3. After receiving an approved exemption, the student will smudge according to the following expectations:
 - a. The student will provide all the materials needed. This includes the sacred medicines, a lighter (matches are not allowed), and a sufficiently large, non-combustible (shell, metal, ceramic, etc.) container to contain the sacred medicines.
 - b. The student will smudge within their own residential space, including their individual room and any shared living areas within the residential space which the student and their roommates have mutually agreed upon.
 - c. The student will place the sacred medicines in the container and ignite them. The sacred medicines must stay within or upon the container throughout the smudging.
 - d. Following the smudging, the student will be responsible for extinguishing and disposing of the burnt remains of the sacred medicines in a manner that is consistent both with their spiritual traditions and with UNO fire safety policy/expectations.



Please complete and submit this request form to the Indigenous Student Center Advisor

(112 Milo Bail Student Center)

Questions? Call 402.554.5974

Smudging Exemption Request Form

Please type or print legibly

Name (First, Middle, Last) _____ NU ID _____

Tribal Affiliation(s) _____

Campus Address _____

UNO Email Address _____ Telephone _____

I am requesting exemption from the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s smoke-free campus policy and the Housing and Residence Life Community Policies during the period in which I live in on-campus housing. This appeal is being made on the basis of my desire to sustain an occasional and/or daily practice of smudging that contributes to my personal and spiritual wellbeing. This practice and the sacred medicines involved are essential in my traditional Indigenous cultural ways of life. I use the following in my personal ceremonies and prayers:

(Mark all that apply) Cedar Sage Sweetgrass Other: _____

Submission of this form will initiate the exemption review and approval process. I understand that I may need to meet with the [Indigenous Student Center](#) advisor, UNO’s Smudging Exemption Review Board, and the Associate Director for Housing and Residence Life to discuss my exemption request as part of the approval process. I understand that submission of this form does not in and of itself constitute approval for my requested exemption.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

(Office Use Only)

Approved _____ Denied _____ Date _____

If denied, state reason(s)

Director, Indigenous Student Center Signature _____ Date _____

Housing and Residence Life Signature _____ Date _____