

**MARCHING
THUNDER**

2026-27

Handbook



Marching Thunder Mission:

It is our mission to: Provide a quality educational experience, an atmosphere of acceptance, be a source of pride for all, and provide a sense of purpose for our members.

- **Education** - The Marching Thunder is first and foremost a collegiate entity which utilizes fundamental student-centered learning and development to perpetuate enduring motivation toward higher levels of excellence in all objectives.
 - **Acceptance** - We strive for a connection among our diverse members that is based in an open-minded and welcoming environment for students to have a safe and family-oriented experience.
 - **Pride** - The continued achievement of excellence and development of autonomy among its members which instills pride within the Marching Thunder program, in turn strengthening the sense of pride within the university.
 - **Purpose** – The unique role we serve within the Marshall University student-centered experience, rooted in the artistic endeavors within the School of Music, provides our members with a clear understanding that they are part of something bigger than themselves.
-

Marching Thunder Purpose:

The Marching Thunder aims to represent Marshall University with the highest degree of performance, integrity, and pride at all designated university and athletic events, in addition to community, state, and national appearances.

Marching Thunder Vision:

The Marching Thunder is one of the core entities on the Marshall University campus and is an icon within the Marshall University experience. We are an essential part of the Marshall University identity, as it has been for over 100 years. As we represent the university, the Marching Thunder will continue to offer its members the essential tools and experiences necessary to be a contributing member of society.

The vision of the Marching Thunder: To instill integrity and acceptance within the organization as we collaborate with the university and community, and inspire creativity, collaboration, and commitment among its members.

One Family. Herd Pride. We are Marshall.

Dear Marching Thunder Member,

The document you are about to read is your handbook and your course syllabus for the MUSE 425 course and it holds a great deal of information about membership in The Marshall University Marching Thunder. While we do not want to overwhelm you, we do want to provide you with the important details regarding membership.

Please read this document before you officially check-in for band camp on or before August 6th, at which time you will digitally sign it, acknowledging that you have read and understand everything in this handbook. The policies in this handbook were developed so that this year's Marching Thunder can reach its greatest potential!

If you have any questions regarding this handbook, you are encouraged to contact me. Have a great season and Go Herd!

Sincerely,

Dr. Christopher Schletter
Director of Athletic Bands
Associate Professor of Music

2026-2027

Marching Thunder Staff

Dr. Christopher Schletter
Director of Athletic Bands

Maurica Smith
Color Guard Coordinator

Nikolas Camp
Percussion Coordinator

TBD
Front Ensemble/Sound

Adam Abshire
Majorette Coordinator

Dr. Phil Vallejo
Director of Bands

Chip Thompson
Color Guard Instructor

Marlee Kaiser
Percussion/Cymbals

Alexia Clark
Bass Drums

Isabella Boehm
Graduate Assistant

Marshall University Marching Thunder Handbook & Syllabus

“It takes but one positive thought when given a chance to survive and thrive to overpower an entire army of negative thoughts.”

- Robert Schuller-Author

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook addresses three main areas:

- **Operations:** How the marching band operates and the processes, organizational structure, and guidelines pertinent to its functioning throughout the year and how the marching band functions in its unique capacity as both an organization and a university course.
 - **Academics:** This will function as a course syllabus for MUSE 425. This entire Handbook will also apply to membership in our spring semester pep bands, particularly with respect to rules, regulations, policies, and expectations.
 - **Code of Conduct:** All that is expected of all marching band members and staff in alignment with the university Code of Conduct at all times.
-

THE NEED FOR A MARCHING BAND HANDBOOK

There are procedures and policies with which all members need to become familiar, and this handbook provides those necessary materials. Both veteran members and new members must carefully read and understand this information in order to commit to membership for the 2026-2027 season.

You will find that much of this document is quite specific about the expectations, rules, and policies that we have in place, but please understand that these are necessary if we are to have an environment in which fairness, consistency, and efficiency are to be present. Please also understand that any university organization's policies must reflect the core philosophy, mission, and expectations of that university and the community it services. The main purpose of our handbook is to make the Marshall University Marching Thunder the best organization possible.

Please note: During your official band camp check-in process, you will provide a signature which indicates that you have read this document and agree to its contents as it pertains to membership in the Marching Thunder. If you have any questions about this document, please do not hesitate to contact the director.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

To be a fully active member of the Marshall University Marching Thunder, members must meet the following requirements:

- Must be registered for MUSE 425
 - Must be in good financial standing with University Bands and Marshall University, including the dispensation of all camp fees, university fees, or other charges incurred in prior membership
 - Must complete and have on record with University Bands a **Medical Information Form**
-

MEMBERSHIP LIMITS

- Undergraduate students may participate in the Marching Thunder for up to six (6) years.
 - Graduate students may participate in marching band for a maximum of two (2) years.
 - Any additional years would require the approval of the Director of Athletic Bands, the Director of the School of Music, and the Dean of the College of Arts and Media.
-

REQUIRED CLASS MATERIALS

All Marching Band members will be required to bring the following materials to all rehearsals including game-day rehearsals:

1. Instrument or appropriate equipment
2. Mobile device with the following apps installed:
 - a. UDPapp: Powered by ARC – drill and attendance
 - b. Beam: Powered by ARC – app with music and exercises downloaded (musicians only)
 - c. GEO: Powered by ARC – app for communications and scheduling.
 - d. Healthy Roster
3. An eFlip mobile device holder and lyre, or some way to connect to your instrument or person.
4. Proper rehearsal attire (sandals, crocs, or similar foot apparel are not acceptable and you will be asked to sit out until footwear has been improved). Jeans during band camp (and other high temperature rehearsal) are heavily discouraged.
5. Water Bottle for hydration. We will not be supplying cups.

Recommended Items: Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, cooling towels, etc.

GRADING & ATTENDANCE

Attendance is the most important factor in the success of any group activity. Students should follow University procedures through the Office of Student Affairs when applicable. Documentation provided through Student Affairs will be considered by the Director when determining marching band attendance consequences. This includes the Sun Belt Conference Championship Game (if the team gets in) and the (possible) bowl game that takes place post-season. ***An absence from a performance will result in the removal of eligibility to travel with the MT for the conference championship and/or bowl game (if applicable).*** The director makes all final decisions on attendance and membership eligibility regarding absences/attendance. If a member foresees an absence or tardy due to reasons that he/she feels may merit special consideration, present your case in writing to Dr. Schletter for consideration.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

1. All members must set up the attendance and fundamentals block by 4:00 PM each day for rehearsal. If a member is absent, they must submit an excuse using the GEO app to provide information and documentation regarding the absence.
2. You must check in with the UDB app to be considered present and on time. Check in between 3:30 and 4:00 is considered present, check-in between 4:01 and 4:20 is considered late, and anything after 4:20 is considered absent, unless a course conflict form was filled out.
3. If a member is late or has a class conflict, the member should report to the section leader when he/she arrives to be marked present.
4. Attendance will also be taken on Game Day or any additional performance (this includes exhibitions).

TARDY PROCEDURES

1. If an emergency arises and a member is going to be tardy, he/she must contact the director or a GA to inform them.
2. The member should submit an excuse using the GEO app to provide information and documentation regarding the tardy.
3. The member should then report to rehearsal as soon as possible and check in with the director, GA, or Section Leader so that the member's attendance can be marked "tardy" rather than "absent".

Leaving rehearsal early is analogous to being tardy because rehearsal time is lost in both instances. Conflicts must be reported.

ABSENTEE PROCEDURES

The absent member required to use the GEO app to provide information and documentation regarding the absence. If a member knows he/she is going to be absent, he/she must email Dr. Schletter and contact the Office of Student Affairs who will determine if the absence is excused

or not. Student Affairs will then contact the director with their decision.

IF A MEMBER NEEDS TO BE EXCUSED FROM ANY PART OF A CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME TRIP OR BOWL GAME TRIP, A WRITTEN STATEMENT MUST BE PRESENTED AT LEAST 3 WEEKS IN ADVANCE TO BE CONSIDERED TO BE EXCUSED. SUBMITTING THE FORM DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY EXCUSE THE ABSENCE.

ACCEPTABLE EXCUSES FOR TARDINESS OR ABSENCES

1. University-Sponsored Activities
2. Student Illness or Critical Illness/Death in Immediate Family:
3. Short-Term Military Obligation: Official active duty or reserve training.
4. Jury Duty or Subpoena: Required court summons or legal obligations.
5. Religious Holidays: Observance of official religious dates.

Note: Weddings are only excused if they are for an immediate family member, or you are in the wedding party. Please communicate with Dr. Schletter as soon as you know about the wedding event.

If a student is absent, they must follow the university guidelines to secure an excused absence (if applicable).

CLASS CONFLICTS

A member is permitted to miss the equivalent of one (1) rehearsal day per week due to a class conflict, if the class is required of their major and has only one (1) available section. Also, acceptable is for a maximum of 20 minute overlap for 2 or 3 of the classes, given the class if required of their major and has only one (1) available section.

All students with conflicts must fill out [this Course Conflict Form available online here](#) and must be submitted to the director by the end of band camp. In order for a class conflict override to be issued, an email must be sent to your advisor, copying Dr. Schletter, and a clear explanation regarding the class that conflicts with MUSE 425 by the end of band camp. If another section of the course is offered that doesn't conflict and can fit in your schedule, you must take that section to avoid missing marching band.

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT MEETING ATTENDANCE/TARDY EXPECTATIONS

Attendance is expected at every rehearsal and performance. However, with the understanding that life happens, each student is allotted 2 rehearsal absences and 4 rehearsal tardies (excluding approved class conflicts). After the allotted absences and/or tardies, the following consequences begin

1. One additional unexcused absence may result in possible suspension from the week's half-time performance and/or future performances. Every two additional unexcused tardies = 1 unexcused absence (class conflicts not included).
2. Every additional unexcused rehearsal absence will lower your overall grade by 2.5% and will result in suspension from the current half-time performance and/or subsequent

performances.

3. An absence from Saturday rehearsal (excused or unexcused) will result in not being allowed to perform that day. The student is still expected to attend the game.
4. An unexcused absence on Friday will result in removal from the current week's performance.
5. Excessive absences due to an illness or injury can result in alternate status, adjusted performances, and/or suspension from performances.
6. **An unexcused absence from a performance will lower your grade by two letters** and will make you ineligible for any pending trips.

This applies to all post-season performances. Note: your grade for the fall semester can be retroactively changed if circumstance warrants.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Monday, Wednesday, Friday4:00 PM – 6:00 PM. Please arrive by 3:45 PM
Other SectionalsTBA by section leaders (required when scheduled)
Game Day Dress Rehearsals TimesProvided the week of the game

Additional sectional rehearsals will be scheduled and will be required. In addition, video assignments will be provided and all members are expected to complete the given assignment in the allotted time.

**“It’s not enough to be good
if you have the ability to be better.”**

- Alber Lee Cox

GRADING

Because of the inherent nature of ensemble classes, the grading system is different from academic classes. If a member follows all prescribed guidelines and meets all expectations, he or she will receive a final grade of “A” for the course at the end of the semester. However, if a member does not follow the guidelines and expectations as outlined in this handbook, they will have their final grade lowered in accordance with the attendance policy noted above. These guidelines and expectations include the following:

- **Game Day Performances and Exhibitions** (each 100 points)
- **Attendance**
Please see the section on “Attendance” above.

- **Preparedness and Performance**
Including, but not limited to, music, memorization, drill, choreography, required materials, etc.
- **Conduct, Attitude, and Participation**
Including but not limited to The Marshall University Student Code of Conduct, respect for fellow students, staff, fans, and the institution of the “Marching Thunder” (please see *“Policies and Expectations”*)

TUITION WAIVER

A percentage of members receive tuition waivers. The terms of the waiver are prescribed in the agreement letters the recipients sign. Scholarships are generally awarded to those who apply and audition each year.

- Marshall Band members that would like to be considered for a tuition waiver should submit an online application form to the Director of Athletic Bands at the appropriate time.
- All members of the Marching Thunder who receive a tuition waiver will be required to register and participate in marching band and pep band. If a student does not participate in an athletic band each semester, they will forfeit their waiver for that semester.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

Any student who has a disability that requires accommodations to complete the essential functions of MUSE 425 should contact The Marshall University Office of Disability Services Program. Every effort will be made to provide reasonable accommodations.

Essential Functions of MUSE 425:

- Attend all scheduled rehearsals and performances (most of which are outdoors at our practice field)
- Perform assigned music and/or choreography
- Perform assigned drill maneuvers

INJURIES

Injuries are common in all areas of marching band and the marching arts. If a member sustains an injury that results in the inability to rehearse or perform, they must provide a doctor's excuse that includes applicable dates OR an excuse from our Athletic Trainer (AT). Members must still attend rehearsals and shows. For less serious injuries, members should still march their dot or spin on the sideline when possible.

We are fortunate enough to have an AT, so if you do experience any physical issues throughout the season, please be sure to be seen and you will be guided to recovery, strengthening, or any other medical assistance that you may need.

- THINGS THAT TAKE NO ABILITY -

Effort
Positive Attitude
Accountability
Integrity
Responsibility

Promptness
Respectfulness
Trustworthiness
Honesty
Commitment

Team Unity
Compassion
Dedication
Empathy
Efficacy

**“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way,
and shows the way.”**

- John Maxwell, author

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

If you have any questions, concerns, or should a problem arise regarding any aspect of the Marching Thunder, you should proceed through the following organizational structure:

Section Leaders → Drum Majors → Graduate Assistants → Staff → Directors

If you do not feel comfortable approaching any particular level of the organizational structure, you are encouraged to make an appointment to meet with the **Director of Athletic Bands**. If you do not feel comfortable approaching the Director of Bands, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the **Director of The School of Music**. Marshall University has specific procedures in place to handle issues of concern. If you do not feel comfortable approaching the Director of the School of Music, you can make an appointment with the **Dean of the College of Arts & Media**. Please make every effort to utilize these procedures within the Marshall University system should an issue of concern arise.

UNIFORMS

Marshall University has invested significant time and resources into creating a strong image for the band. When wearing the Marching Thunder uniform, you represent both Marshall University and the entire organization. Therefore, all members are expected to conduct themselves with professionalism, respect, and appropriate decorum at all times. Remember: fans, alumni, and members of the community are always observing you while you are in uniform. As one of the most visible ambassadors of Marshall University, the Marching Thunder carries a great responsibility to uphold the traditions, values, and reputation of the university.

Membership in this organization is a privilege, and wearing the uniform represents a commitment to representing Marshall University with pride and integrity.

The Uniform Committee consists of designated student leaders and staff responsible for uniform fitting, maintenance, and distribution.

UNIFORM ASSIGNMENT AND REQUIREMENTS

1. Uniform Issue and Responsibility

Wind and percussion members will be issued the following items during Band Camp:

- Sleeveless jacket
- Bibber pants
- Two “We Are Marshall” shirts (green and black)
- Shako and shako case
- Garment bag

Once you are fitted for your uniform, you are responsible for maintaining it in performance-ready condition for the duration of the season.

2. Uniform Care and Cleaning

Members may only wash their “We Are Marshall” shirts. Under no circumstances should members wash the jacket or bibber pants.

If your uniform becomes stained or damaged, notify the Uniform Committee immediately when turning in your uniform. Do not attempt to clean, repair, or alter the uniform yourself.

3. Uniform Storage

Uniforms must be properly hung after every use and stored safely at home. Uniforms may not be stored in the band complex.

4. Uniform Alterations and Fit

Uniforms will be professionally fitted during Band Camp to ensure a consistent appearance. Members may not make any alterations to their uniforms. If adjustments are needed, contact a member of the Uniform Committee.

5. Marching Shoes and Socks

All wind and percussion members are required to have black marching shoes and are responsible for keeping them in performance-ready condition. Failure to meet this requirement will result in being removed from a performance.

Members must also wear tall, plain black socks. Footies or ankle socks are not permitted. Socks must be tall enough to prevent any visible ankle between the shoe and the bottom of the pants while marching or sitting.

6. Damage, Loss, and Accountability

Members are responsible for any lost or damaged uniform items. Charges for replacement or repair will be applied to the member’s Marshall University student account. Failure to properly care for the uniform may result in removal from a performance and, at the discretion of the Director, dismissal from the band.

7. Performance Appearance

Every member is expected to arrive at performances with a clean, complete, and properly maintained uniform. Failure to maintain the required appearance may result in removal from that day’s performance.

WEARING YOUR BAND UNIFORM

The Marching Thunder uniform is a symbol of the pride, professionalism, and tradition of our organization. Every member is responsible for wearing the uniform correctly and maintaining a polished appearance. These guidelines help ensure a consistent, professional image while representing the Marching Thunder, the School of Music, and Marshall University.

1. Winds and percussionists must wear the assigned uniform shirt color for each performance. Proper uniform fit is essential to the overall appearance of the ensemble. During designated rehearsals, members may be instructed to wear only their bibbers and uniform undershirt. When not being worn, jackets should be neatly folded and placed with your shako in your section's designated area.
2. Except during rehearsals or other situations specifically designated by the Director, the uniform is considered **either fully on or fully off**. Members may not wear a partial uniform unless directed to do so. Shakos may be carried separately when appropriate.
3. The uniform may only be worn at official Marshall University or Marching Thunder functions, or at events approved by the Director.
4. Long hair must be neatly secured and pulled back under the shako so that it is not visible from the front while the shako is worn.
5. Shoes must be clean and in good condition.
6. Only Marching Thunder-issued hats may be worn with the uniform. Personal hats, bandanas, or headbands are prohibited unless an alternate head covering has been approved by the Director for specific instrument needs (e.g., sousaphone players).
7. Smoking, vaping, consuming alcohol, or using illegal drugs while in uniform is strictly prohibited.
8. Members should not visit concession stands while in uniform. Hydration and approved snacks will be provided by the staff at designated times on game days. This helps maintain the full ensemble in the stands while supporting Marshall Athletics and reduces the risk of damage to the uniform.
9. Only small stud earrings are permitted while in uniform. Large hoops, gauges, facial jewelry, or other conspicuous accessories are not allowed. Members with other piercings should replace jewelry with clear retainers while in uniform. Visible tattoos must be covered, and fingernail polish must be clear or a natural color.
10. Members are expected to conduct themselves professionally while in uniform. Profanity, inappropriate language, or behavior that reflects negatively on the organization is not acceptable. Always remember that you represent the Marching Thunder, the School of Music, and Marshall University, and your appearance and conduct should reflect the high standards of the organization.

Remember: When you wear the Marching Thunder uniform, you are representing something larger than yourself. Wear it with pride, respect, and professionalism.

UNIFORMS IN THE STANDS

1. Uniform Expectations

Members are expected to remain in full uniform while in the stands unless directed otherwise by the staff. Jackets must remain on at all times during the game.

2. Shako and Hat Guidelines

The Drum Majors will provide the signal for when shakos may be removed. Members should only remove their shakos when instructed to do so.

When directed, members are expected to wear the official Marching Thunder hat while in the stands.

3. Sunglasses

Sunglasses are permitted in the stands but must be conservative in style and appropriate for a professional performance setting.

EQUIPMENT

By signing this document, you agree to the following:

1. Students will be required to compensate Marshall University for any damage caused to university-owned equipment. Charges for lost or damaged items will appear on the student's account. At the discretion of the Director, lack of appropriate care of university-owned equipment may result in dismissal from the band.
2. If your university-owned equipment needs repair, see the Director. University Bands will handle repair costs related to everyday wear and tear. University Bands Graduate Assistants are responsible for the delivery of equipment to the music store. Do not take your instrument for repair on your own without speaking with the director first
3. Do not switch or return university-owned equipment without completing the appropriate paperwork. Students are responsible for the equipment listed on the *"Borrowed Property Agreement"* form that they signed.
4. Please load and unload equipment carefully onto trucks and buses.
5. DO NOT leave equipment in the hallways of the music building after rehearsals and/or performances. Put equipment and cases in the correct storage locations and be sure that the room(s) is locked.

UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT TURN IN PROCEDURES

- The dates and times of uniform and equipment return will be announced later.
- No uniforms or instruments can be dropped off at the University Bands office or anywhere else outside the designated return areas and times. If you do so, your service award will be revoked. There will be no exceptions to this policy.
- At the end of football season and the week before uniform/instrument return, we will remind you of the uniform and instrument return specifics.
- Whether you check your e-mail, receive an e-mail from us, or check our website, you are

responsible for turning in your equipment and uniform as required.

- In order to receive your end-of-season stipend, you must turn in your entire uniform.

MARCHING THUNDER BAND COMPLEX AND REHEARSAL FIELD

The Marching Thunder Band Complex is a shared space and as such we all share the responsibility to maintain the band room and equipment storage. Do not leave any personal items in the band room when not in rehearsal and make sure you take care of throwing away trash. If you see something on the floor, even if it is not yours, please take care of it

The rehearsal field is shared with the rec center. Please make sure you take all your belongings with you after rehearsal and throw away any trash.

SECTION SHIRTS

Each section is welcome to create their own shirts for the season. It is the responsibility of the section to design the shirt, place the order, collect the money, and distribute the shirts. It is important that you follow University style guides when designing the shirt. There are various rules for using University trademarks.

Also be aware that not every company is allowed to print the Marshall logo. Websites like Custom Ink do not have permission to use the logo without approval from the Office of Communications. Glenn's Sporting Goods, Bulldog Graphix, and Hometown Sport are all local and able to produce shirts with the logo.

“Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.”

- C.S. Lewis

SENIOR RECOGNITION (SENIOR NIGHT)

For the purposes of senior night and senior recognition, a senior is defined as the following:

- A student in their final year or semester attending Marshall as an undergraduate or graduate student.
- The student has no additional years/semesters of eligibility.
- The student can no longer reasonably participate in the Marching Thunder due to substantial course requirements – documentation must be provided to the director.

POLICIES ON CONDUCT

Please note that, in addition to the following *"Policies on Conduct"*, The Marshall University Student Handbook is in effect whether you are on or off campus as long as you represent Marshall University.

You have more freedom now than you have had at any time in your life thus far. With this freedom comes the need to demonstrate maturity. If you show a lack of maturity, lack of freedom follows quickly.

SPORTSMANSHIP AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

All members of The Marching Thunder are expected to conduct themselves with pride and professionalism at all rehearsals, performances, appearances, and other functions regardless of the outcome of the event.

The essential elements of sportsmanship and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of character building and six core principles: respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, integrity and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these six principles.

Member institutions' student-athletes, coaches and staff shall conduct themselves in an appropriate manner in connection with all intercollegiate sporting events in which they participate ("Events"). They shall conduct themselves as positive role models and represent their institutions in a manner that exhibits the principles of sportsmanship. They shall exhibit respect and courtesy towards all participants, and comment about other institutions, coaches and student-athletes only in a positive manner.

Members and staff will not engage in any unsportsmanlike conduct, intimidation tactics, celebratory acts that demean others, use inappropriate language regarding others, or engage in similar abusive and degrading behavior reflective of a general lack of respect and civility.

ALCOHOL AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

The following are strict and incontestable guidelines for the behavior of ALL Marching Thunder personnel. If the behavior of a participant or staff member is found not to be commensurate with these guidelines, his or her membership with any and all athletics bands will be permanently terminated. **This is your first and only warning. You will not be afforded a second chance!**

At no time when acting as a participant, agent, staff member, or representative of The Marching Thunder shall any person act in violation of any federal, state, or local alcohol or controlled substances laws. These laws include the following:

1. Possession or consumption of alcohol by an individual under the age of 21 is prohibited.
2. Possession or consumption of any illegal substances by any person of any age is prohibited.
3. Consumption of alcohol on an ICC-regulated vehicle (e.g. a bus or university vehicle) is prohibited.
4. Acquisition of alcoholic beverages for an individual under the age of 21 is prohibited.

5. At no time when acting as a participant, agent, staff member, or representative of The Marching Thunder, or when in transit to or from a University Bands function, or when staying in accommodations provided by official university means (e.g. hotel), shall any band member, regardless of age, be in the possession of, or consume, alcoholic beverages or controlled substances.

SMOKING/VAPING

- Smoking and/or vaping in university classes is prohibited; MUSE 425 is a university class, therefore smoking/vaping is not permitted at any time during a band function.
- Smoking/vaping while in uniform is strictly prohibited and entirely unacceptable.
- Smoking/vaping in high profile areas such as stadium parking lots, hotel parking lots, etc., where it is clear that Marshall University is being represented, is prohibited.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

It is the policy of Marshall University to maintain a work and educational environment free from all forms of sexual harassment of any employee, applicant for employment, or student. Sexual harassment in any manner of form is expressly prohibited. It is the responsibility of the University to provide educational opportunities to create this free environment and to take immediate and appropriate corrective action when sexual harassment is reported or becomes known.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated and all students and staff must abide by Marshall University Policy GA-1 and West Virginia State Code 18B-1-6. If you suspect harassment, please contact the Director immediately. If you are uncomfortable going to the Director of Athletic Bands, you may contact the Director of the School of Music and Theater.

HAZING

A college experience is an exciting time for students. A successful organization should include education about leadership, foster academic achievement and promote positive experiences that are free from hazing. Hazing is not a part of the Marching Thunder and will not, under any circumstances, be tolerated.

The University defines hazing as "Any action taken or situation created intentionally whether on or off campus, to produce mental, emotional, or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule. Such activities and situations may include paddling in any form; creation of excessive fatigue, i.e. any activity which deprives a student of at least six continuous hours of sleep; physical and psychological shocks; inappropriate quests, i.e. stealing items; treasure hunts; scavenger hunts; road trips; or any other such inappropriate activities carried on either on

or off campus, or in a Greek house. Wearing publicly any apparel which is conspicuous and not normally in good taste, as defined by the proper hearing bodies; engaging in public stunts and buffoonery; morally degrading or humiliating games and activities; or any other activities which are not consistent with fraternal law, ritual, or policies or regulations of national organizations or otherwise compromise the dignity of the individual including forced use and abuse of alcohol and drugs.”

All complaints and/or requests for definition of hazing are to be filed with the Director of Judicial Affairs. All cases decided by the Judicial Board are appealed to the Student Conduct and Welfare Committee, and finally to the President of the University.

Essentially, members are expected to maintain a positive, respectful, and professional team environment at all times. Members must treat teammates, captains, instructors, directors, and affiliated programs with courtesy and respect. Harassment, bullying, gossip, rumor-spreading, exclusion, or unnecessary drama will not be tolerated. As representatives of the Marching Thunder, members must conduct themselves appropriately both in person and online; negative or disparaging remarks about the program, staff, teammates, or other organizations/teams in person, on social media or other platforms are prohibited.

BUS AND AIR TRAVEL

- Be reminded that the *“Alcohol and Controlled Substance”* policy is in effect throughout all band functions and trips. A representative on each bus is required to report any infractions of this policy immediately, meaning the representative will ask the bus driver to stop the bus immediately and report the incident to the directors. This will result in the immediate removal of the violators from the bus at the first appropriate location and permanent removal from the band. Remember if you bring any alcohol or controlled substances on a bus, you have already violated University and University Band policy whether or not you have consumed the substance. You are also in violation of Federal Law if you consume alcoholic beverages while in an ICC-regulated vehicle. **This is your first and only warning. You will not be afforded a second chance!**
- All buses will have a staff member responsible for checking to be sure everyone is on the bus prior to our leaving each time the bus stops and our members exit the bus. It is of the utmost importance for members to keep noise at a minimum while the staff member is making sure we have all of our members. Individual members are responsible for communicating any alternative transportation plans that you may have made with the staff member that is in charge of attendance on your bus.
- All videos must be approved by the Director. The Director has the final word on what videos will be shown during trips. If any members on a bus find a video objectionable, they should voice their objections and the video will be stopped.
- No one is to open the emergency exits or windows, including restroom windows, unless there is an actual emergency.
- Do not react in a negative fashion to anyone outside the bus. It does not matter how

disrespectful someone outside the bus is acting – you are not to respond. Anyone found to have responded to someone outside the bus in a manner that is found to be at odds with the mission of the Marching Thunder will be dismissed from the class.

- Be respectful of the bus driver, guests, director, and your fellow band members who are also on the bus.
- Only members, personnel, staff, and approved guests are allowed to ride the buses.

HOTELS

- Be reminded that the *“Alcohol and Controlled Substance”* policy is in effect throughout all band functions and trips.
- Avoid congregating in the halls, lobby, or other areas of the hotel where you might disturb other guests. Socializing on trips is an enjoyable part of the band, but please limit it to rooms or areas away from the regular hotel guests.
- Only members, personnel, staff, and approved guests are allowed to stay in the hotel rooms provided by the university.
- Please avoid slamming hotel doors.
- Any student acting in a manner that embarrasses the band and/or brings harm to self or others will be restricted, if not banned, from future travel with the band.

BUS AND HOTEL SIGN-UP PROCEDURE

Members will be allowed to sign up for their hotel room with up to three other people. The bus lists will be assigned from the hotel room lists. This will make checking into hotels much easier. Members are guaranteed to be on a bus with their roommates. More detailed information will be available when it is time to sign up for rooms.

“GOOD TEAMS BECOME GREAT TEAMS WHEN THE MEMBERS TRUST EACH OTHER ENOUGH TO SURRENDER THE ‘ME’ FOR THE ‘WE’.”

-Phil Jackson

IN THE STANDS

- Only uniformed personnel and staff should be seated in the band section. Please do not invite people who are not associated with the band to sit in the band section. Staff and guests of the band should sit in designated areas
- No band member should leave the band area during a game unless it is absolutely necessary. If you must leave, notify a staff member or section leader, and return to the band area as soon as possible. You must travel with another member.

- We attend games to perform and provide a service to the university and athletics. Our responsibilities include cheering for and supporting our teams. Thus, all members are expected to participate fully in all cheering and performing in the stands, i.e. vocals, horn moves, et al.
- Pay close attention to the conductors and cheerleaders at all times.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In order for The Marching Thunder to continue to maintain its status as one of the most well-respected organizations on campus, students will be held accountable if the aforementioned rules and expectations are not met. Corrective measures for violations of rules and inappropriate behavior are based on the severity of the incident, relevant circumstances, and a student's prior conduct and attitude. Disciplinary action may include but is not limited to the following:

1. Loss or reduction of future tuition waivers
2. Exclusion from travel with the band
3. Suspension from performing
4. Dismissal from the program

If you miss a performance for any reason, you will forfeit your ability to travel with the band to any bowl game we are asked to attend, AND you will not receive your end-of-season stipend.

SOCIAL MEDIA & ONLINE CONTENT

We understand and are respectful of our students' right to free expression; however, we would urge you to carefully consider what it is that you place on websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, et al) and understand that if you represent yourself in word or image on websites as a member of The Marching Thunder, we will hold you responsible for what you have posted, particularly as it relates to the University's Handbook. The Internet isn't a proper forum for resolution of issues relating to the band. We understand our organization to be a team, a family, and what takes place within the confines of our activities should remain there. With membership comes responsibility, and we would hope that you would take seriously your responsibility to our organization and not place material on the Internet that would be embarrassing to both yourself and our marching band.

SMARTPHONE APPS

Students should download the following applications as they pertain to their involvement.

- **Ultimate Drill Book (UDPapp: Powered by ARC) – All must download!**

In an effort to save paper, the Marching Thunder will not print and distribute drill this year.

Drill will be emailed to all students prior to rehearsal and you are expected to bring that with you to class. Ultimate Drill Book is an app that will allow students to view drill, animation, and other information directly on their smartphone or tablet.

- **Beam: Powered by ARC – All musicians must download**

To further our effort to save paper and go fully digital, the Marching Thunder will not print and distribute music this year. Pdf files can be requested, but the integration of the Flip Folder app will make many aspects of rehearsal and game day procedures easier.

- **GEO: Powered by ARC – All must download**

GEO is a dedicated calendar and attendance-tracking mobile app designed primarily for marching bands, performing arts groups, and similar organizations. Developed by Ultimate Drill Book, it helps staff and members manage schedules, check in to events, and track attendance.

“INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT TO A GROUP EFFORT - THIS IS WHAT MAKES A TEAM WORK, A COMPANY WORK, A SOCIETY WORK, EVEN A CIVILIZATION WORK.”

- Vince Lombardi

CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct is derived from the basic concept of utilizing sound, respectful judgment in our interaction with others. It has been established to encourage and produce a positive learning and performing environment for all. Affiliation with the Marching Thunder requires the recognition and adoption of the following essential elements that will be utilized as a positive modeling structure for all Marching Thunder participants. The general principles of this Code are supplemented by specific rules and guidelines found in other materials provided to you.

1. The physical and mental health of the members of the Marching Thunder is always of primary importance under all circumstances. These concerns derive and govern our rules, policies and procedures - not only to protect and assist our members, but also to ensure they can fully participate and benefit from their experiences with us.
2. Members of the Marching Thunder are always under the direct or indirect supervision of the administration and instructional staff. Insubordination or disrespect toward management, staff, member leaders, or any volunteer will not be tolerated. This includes staff, instructors, or faculty members outside our organization.
3. Members are to always conduct themselves in a professional and respectable manner. Proper conduct includes, but is not limited to, appropriate treatment and the display of respect toward all others. Appropriate and mature language, demeanor and interactions are expected.
4. Treating others with dignity and respect is the responsibility of each individual. Failure to do so risks the health and well-being of individual members as well as the educational and competitive purposes and goals of the Marching Thunder. Bullying, hazing, insults, sexual harassment and retaliation are behaviors utterly contrary to the Marching Thunder, and will not be tolerated.

5. The violation of any law is unacceptable, including but not limited to the use or abuse of alcohol, controlled substances and tobacco, theft, destruction and vandalism of property, and crimes against other individuals.
6. While a member of the Marching Thunder, at rehearsals or performances, in uniform or during the off-season, you represent not only yourself and your fellow members, but decades of individuals who have worn the uniform. The reputation of the Marching Thunder is their legacy to you and your responsibility to uphold.
7. Your staff, whether instructional, administrative, or medical, are always available to help, regardless of the circumstances. If you are in need of assistance, help, advice, or good conversation, seek the confidential council of any staff member, administrator or adult.
8. If you have any concerns about any action, behavior, or situation that you witness, have experienced or have knowledge about, please seek assistance, guidance and support. The instructional staff and administration are here to support you, and it is the responsibility of all participants to help ensure and protect the integrity of the educational programs offered by the Marching Thunder.
9. THE GOLDEN RULE: Treat others as you wish to be treated. This is a proven philosophy in effective team building, communication, human interaction and in life. Take care of yourself and of one another.

Any possible violation of this Code will be investigated and evaluated by the Director or their Designee in the interest of a fair and just resolution for all involved. Results of this evaluation may result in any action deemed necessary or appropriate in the sole and absolute discretion of the Director or their Designee, up to and including immediate dismissal from the Marching Thunder.

2026-27 Marshall University Marching Thunder Performance Calendar

(Tentative - Subject to change)

This performance schedule does not include local exhibitions to be determined.

August

- 6th-14th – Band Camp
- 13th – Freshman Parade (Drum Line)
- 14th – Herd Rally Downtown
- 27th – Paint the Capital Green (Small Ens. – TBD)

September

- 5th – Opening Game @ Penn State (Traveling)
- 11th – Game Opening Party (Small Ens. – TBD)
- 12th – Home Game vs. MTSU
- 25th – Homecoming Parade & Bonfire
- 26th – Homecoming Game vs. Gardner Webb

October

- 10th – Home Game vs. Coastal Carolina
- 20th – Home Game vs. South Alabama (Tuesday)
- 24th – Possible Exhibition (Dawson Bryant HS)

November

- 7th – Tri-State Marching Championships and Exhibition
- 14th – Home Game vs. App. State
- 21st – Home game vs. Georgia Southern

There will be early basketball games at which we will also perform. Schedule TBA

December

- 5th – Potential Sun Belt Conference Championship
- Potential Post-season Bowl Game

February

- 18th (Thurs.) – High School Honor Band Performance

Membership Agreement & Acknowledgement

As a member of the Marshall University Marching Thunder and MUSE 425, I understand that membership is both a privilege and a commitment. By signing this agreement, I acknowledge that I have read the Marching Thunder Handbook and agree to abide by its policies, expectations, and procedures.

I understand and agree to the following:

1. I must remain eligible for membership by meeting all enrollment, financial, and medical requirements (p.4).
2. I will attend all required rehearsals, performances, Band Camp, football games, postseason events (if applicable), and other scheduled activities unless officially excused (p.5).
3. I understand that attendance, punctuality, preparation, and participation directly affect my course grade, performance eligibility, travel eligibility, and membership status (p.5-7).
4. I will communicate absences, tardies, class conflicts, illnesses, or emergencies using the required procedures and within the established timelines (p.5-7).
5. I will arrive prepared for every rehearsal and performance with all required equipment, music, drill materials, and appropriate rehearsal attire (p.6-7).
6. I understand if I am injured, I am required to provide medical documentation to be excused from rehearsals and performances (p.8).
7. I understand that I am responsible for maintaining all issued uniforms and university-owned equipment and may be financially responsible for lost or damaged items (p.9-13).
8. I will wear the Marching Thunder uniform and designated informal uniforms correctly, maintain them in performance-ready condition, and represent Marshall University with professionalism, pride, and integrity whenever in uniform (p.9-13).
9. I understand that failure to maintain proper uniform standards may result in removal from a rehearsal or performance (p.9-13).
10. I will conduct myself respectfully toward fellow members, student leaders, staff, faculty, officials, fans, and members of the community at all times (p.14).
11. I understand that possession or use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or controlled substances while participating in any Marching Thunder activity or while representing the organization is prohibited and may result in immediate dismissal from the program (p.14-15).
12. I understand that hazing, bullying, harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or any behavior that threatens the safety or well-being of another individual will not be tolerated (p.15-16).

13. I understand that smoking and vaping are prohibited during all Marching Thunder functions and while wearing the uniform (p.15).
14. I will conduct myself responsibly during travel, in hotels, on buses, and at all university-sponsored events (p.16-18).
15. I understand that social media posts and public behavior that negatively reflect upon Marshall University or the Marching Thunder may be subject to disciplinary action (p.18).
16. I will uphold the Marching Thunder Code of Conduct and the Marshall University Student Code of Conduct (p.19).
17. I will follow all instructions provided by directors, staff, graduate assistants, drum majors, and student leaders (p.19-20).
18. I understand that failure to follow policies outlined in the Marching Thunder Handbook may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to loss of performance opportunities, loss of travel privileges, reduction or loss of scholarships or stipends, suspension, financial responsibility for damaged property, or dismissal from the organization.
19. I understand that the Director of Athletic Bands (or their designee) has final authority regarding membership decisions, performance eligibility, disciplinary actions, and interpretation of Marching Thunder policies.
20. I acknowledge that the Marching Thunder Handbook serves as both the official handbook and the course syllabus for MUSE 425, and I agree to abide by all policies contained therein.

Specific To Color Guard:

- All performances require the predetermined uniform, hair, and makeup, which will be checked prior to each performance. Hair must remain a natural color throughout the season, and alterations to the approved hair or makeup design are not permitted without instructor approval. Skin-tone full body tights must be worn under the uniform as directed. Failure to meet uniform, hair, or makeup requirements will result in the member sitting out of that performance.
- Damaged items, including ripped flags, missing earrings, or broken weapons, must be repaired or replaced prior to the next scheduled performance. Performance flags must remain stored in the band room unless otherwise directed. Uniforms will be checked out and checked in for each performance.
- Each member is required to pay for ordered items in full by the first day of camp. A payment plan will be set up to break down expenses. Once the order is placed, you are obligated to pay the full amount even if you are dismissed or quit. There will NOT be any reimbursements of money or distribution of items if you are dismissed or decide to quit. Required equipment includes, but is not limited to:
 - Pom-poms
 - Practice Silks

- Necessary apparel:
 - informal uniforms
 - jewelry
 - jazz shoes
 - body tights
 - undershirts
 - gloves
- Video assignments are mandatory and must be submitted by the stated deadlines. Members are responsible for having the necessary technology and planning ahead to complete assignments, including during travel, work, or personal commitments. Late or missing submissions may result in performance restrictions, and repeated failures may result in dismissal from the guard.

Specific To Majorettes and Feature Twirlers:

- Selected members will only be fielded for parades, Pregame/ Halftime shows. The rehearsal before a show and show day rehearsals are mandatory for participation in the performance unless excused.
- Each member should be dressed properly for practices and performances. Band class will require matching clothing on Fridays and show days. Performances will require predetermined set hair & make-up. Which will be checked prior to each performance. Do not alter hair or make-up without permission from the instructor. All visible tattoos and body piercings must be covered. Hair should remain a "natural" color through the entire season that matches required hair piece. Skin colored tights must be worn with your uniform. Failure to dress properly will result in sitting out for the performance.
- Video assignments are mandatory and must be submitted by the stated deadlines. Members are responsible for having the necessary technology and planning ahead to complete assignments, including during travel, work, or personal commitments. Late or missing submissions may result in performance restrictions, and repeated failures may result in dismissal from the guard.
- Members are responsible for their equipment. Damaged baton ends, missing earrings, ripped tights, and missing rhinestones on uniform must be replaced by our next performance. Required equipment includes, but is not limited to:
 - Batons
 - Glitter
 - Hair Piece
 - Necessary Apparel
 - Crop
 - Skirt
 - Sweatshirt
 - Warm-up Jacket
 - Earrings
 - Full coverage makeup
 - Backpack
 - InStep Twirling shoes
 - Tights
 - Knives (majorettes)
 - Nike pro black spandex shorts

Student Acknowledgement

By signing below, I acknowledge that:

- I have received access to the 2026–2027 Marching Thunder Handbook.
- I have read and understand the policies and expectations contained in the handbook.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to remain familiar with these policies throughout the season.
- I agree to abide by all Marching Thunder and Marshall University policies as a condition of membership.

Student Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____

Marshall ID #: _____

Date: _____