

Rockhurst University
Political and Campaign Activity Policy

I. Introduction

The following Policy is provided in order to assist Rockhurst University (the “University”) in distinguishing activities that are permitted during election campaigns from activities that are prohibited. This Policy focuses primarily on the rules set forth by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code because it contains a prohibition, which has been interpreted as absolute, against the participation or intervention in a political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate, as a condition of maintaining federal income tax status. The statutory prohibition on “political campaign intervention” contains three key elements. There must be a “candidate” who is seeking “public office,” and the organization must “participate in, or intervene in” the candidate’s political campaign. Political campaign intervention includes any and all activity that favors or opposes a candidate for public office.

II. Individual Involvement in Political and Campaign Activities

Because of the University’s tax-exempt status, the University is prohibited from endorsing candidates for public office or making any contributions of money, goods, or services to candidates. It is critical that no member of the University community inadvertently cause the University to endorse such a candidate or make such a contribution. Notwithstanding the above, the University does not seek to inhibit the expression of personal political views by any individual in the University provided such involvement complies with the University Policy. The Policy with respect to individual involvement in a political campaign is as follows:

- A. University students, staff, and faculty, strictly in their individual capacity, may become involved in political campaigns so long as they do not utilize the University’s financial resources, facilities, or personnel to do so. This would include using the University’s telephone, mail, e-mail (@rockhurst.edu), or internet facilities to promote a particular candidate or engage in fundraising. An exception to this includes residence hall, Townhouse Village, and On Campus House telephones or computers that are considered “private” in nature.
- B. University staff and faculty must clearly and unambiguously indicate that their actions and statements are their own and not those of the University. They may be identified by their Rockhurst University titles or roles only to the extent necessary for identification purposes and must clarify that their association with the University is provided for identification purposes only.
- C. University staff and faculty may not engage in political campaign intervention at University functions or through official University publications.
- D. University publications may not state or infer that the University will provide members (e.g., students, staff, or faculty) to work on a particular political campaign.

- E. Neither the University's name nor its insignia may appear on any material used or intended for partisan political purposes.

III. Candidacy for Elective Public Office.

If a staff or faculty member decides to run as a candidate for political office (including but not limited to any national, state or local governmental position), he or she must comply with the following procedure:

- A. The public office position may result in a conflict of time or interest which may interfere with the performance of responsibilities owed to the University. Any individual who decides to run for public office must immediately notify Human Resources of his or her intention to run for such public office prior to beginning any activities related to such candidacy. The notice should include a certification by the individual that he or she will not campaign or otherwise engage in any political activities during his or her regular work hours, that the public office will not interfere with his or her duties, and the individual will comply with the Policy set forth in this document. The University shall have the sole discretion to allow the individual to continue in his or her position at the University.
- B. With respect to his or her own candidacy for election to public office, no University staff or faculty member will:
 - i. Solicit support or opposition during his or her regular work hours for his or her candidacy for public office;
 - ii. Solicit support or opposition for his or her candidacy for public office at any time on University property without prior approval of Human Resources and compliance with the Policy set forth in this document;
 - iii. Use University funds, services, supplies, vehicles or other property to support or oppose his or her candidacy for public office; or
 - iv. Use any promise of reward or threat of loss to encourage or coerce any individual to support or contribute to any political issue, candidate or party.

IV. University-Sponsored Political Forums and Debates

The University or a recognized student organization may be approached by a candidate to appear on campus. The appearance of a candidate for public office on campus must be for an educational or informational talk to the University community. The University's policy with respect to on campus appearances by political candidates provides:

- 1) All appearances require prior approval from the University.
- 2) If the program involves one candidate, the University must allow similar programs to be open to other viable candidates running for a particular public office. Although all

- candidates do not need to be invited to the same event, they should be invited to participate in an event of equal participation and attendance.
- 3) A non-partisan moderator should clearly state, at the beginning and conclusion of the event, that the views expressed at the event are not those of the University, and that sponsorship of the forum or event is not intended as an endorsement of any particular candidate.
 - 4) If the appearance is structured as a public forum (involving several candidates for the same office), the program must ensure that the candidate's appearance is an educational or informational presentation and offer an opportunity for questions and answers from a panel and/or the audience. All viable candidates should be invited to appear at the forum. If a candidate declines the invitation, the University should acknowledge that the candidate was invited but declined.
 - 5) The program must not be conducted as a campaign rally or fund-raiser for the candidate or his/her political party.
 - 6) The University reserves the right to require payment in advance from a political candidate or his/her party for costs associated with the program. This may include, but is not limited to: maintenance costs, security, utilities, audio/visual and staff time.
 - 7) The program must not place an undue burden on the University's staff, facilities or other resources.
 - 8) Political candidates/parties must recognize that the University is in no way endorsing the views expressed by the speaker(s) and allows such a program only in the interest of the advancement of education.
 - 9) The University reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to deny any request for an on campus appearance or cancel any program or activity on campus, at any time, which poses an undue burden on the University's staff, facilities or resources, or if it presents a clear and present danger to the University or local community.
 - 10) Persons wishing to approach the University with requests involving political candidates should contact the University's Student Development Office which will serve as coordinator for such a program.

V. University Lobbying

Tax-exempt organizations are permitted to lobby, and the University may engage in lobbying on a limited number of issues, including those affecting education, research, and related activities. Most lobbying laws require registration and reporting by individuals engaged in attempts to influence governmental action. Accordingly, no University employee may lobby on behalf of the University without specific authorization. All lobbying on behalf of the University must be coordinated with the University administration.

VI. Student Publications

Student publications may include editorial material expressing views on candidates for public office. The editorial section of the publication must contain a statement that the views expressed in the editorials are those of the student editors and not those of the University. The student publication must be free from the editorial control of the University administrators or faculty advisors.

VII. Student Organizations

The University encourages and supports the free exchange of ideas and political viewpoints. The University recognizes a student's right to participate in the political process, and a student is permitted to do so provided that he/she acts in an individual capacity and not as a representative of the University. The following summarizes the Policy regarding the activities of the student organizations.

- A. Use of Facilities and Resources. A recognized student organization may use the University's facilities to conduct meetings provided the organizations obtain prior approval and pay any normal fees for use of facilities, if any. The student organizations must make clear that any political views presented at such meetings do not reflect those of the University.

A recognized student organization may not:

- i. Use University facilities to raise funds to benefit a political party, campaign or candidate through admissions, fees, contributions, donations, or sale of materials or services;
 - ii. Use University facilities for planning or participating in the operational process of a political campaign;
 - iii. Use organization or University funds to purchase promotional material; pay for campaign ads or contribute in any way to a political campaign.
 - iv. Use organization or University funds to pay honoraria or cover transportation, audio/visual services accommodation or meal expenses for candidates for public office; or
 - v. Use University resources, including but not limited to, mail distribution services, the university seal or other identifying marks, stationary and letterhead, or facsimile and duplicating machines, for political campaigns or solicitation endorsement of candidates for public office.
- B. Request to Bring a Candidate for Public Office to Speak. If a recognized student organization wishes to invite a candidate to address students, staff, faculty, the Rockhurst community, and the general public, it must secure approval from Student Development and comply with the Policy set forth in Section IV, above.
- C. Voting Education on Campus. A student organization may wish to engage in on-campus voter education programs including the dissemination of voter guides and incumbent voting records provided all groups are allowed to present the information and preferential treatment is not given to a particular group. The time, location and duration of this program shall be determined in advance by the University.

D. Political Signs. The University may allow political signs in residence hall rooms as long as they are in good taste, not offensive and comply with University's policies and procedures. Signs may not be placed in common areas, on the outside of buildings (including facing out from office, classroom, or residential windows), or on the grounds. This is to avoid any suggestions that the University is endorsing a candidate.

E. Campaigning on Behalf of a Specific Candidate/ Attending Rallies.

i. Student organizations are encouraged to help educate and inform students about upcoming elections, including urging students to exercise their right to vote. Distribution of political literature and campaigning may be conducted in residence halls, subject to the University's policies governing the time, place and manner for engaging in such activities. The use of any other building or area on campus will require the prior approval of the University as to the time, location and duration to ensure equal opportunity to all organizations.

ii. Student organizations are also free to express their views about the parties and candidates. If University students wish to volunteer and campaign for candidates or attend rallies, they must do so provided they are acting as individuals and not on behalf of the University.

F. Use of Student Activity Fee Funds.

Student organizations are permitted to use the student activity fees to cover expenses normally related to the organization's regular activities permitted by the University's policies and procedures. This would include expenses associated with regular meetings, special gatherings and events that relate to the organization's activity. However, the student organization is prohibited from using its student activity fee funds for activities that support or oppose a particular political candidate. Student organizations may not use student activity fee funds in a manner which would constitute making a direct gift, contribution, or donation to a particular candidate or political party. Accordingly, if the funding is used for materials, posters and related items and these materials constitute a gift, contribution or donation to a candidate or party, it would not be permitted. Student organizations may, however, use segregated fees to support their own expressive activities and views. Questions about appropriate uses of fees should be referred to Student Development.