

Policy on Political Campaigning on Campus

Policy Statement and Purpose

The University of Florida is committed to the principles of free expression, including the exchange of political viewpoints and ideas for all members of its community. The University encourages its students and employees to fully exercise their personal rights of citizenship, such as voting, supporting a candidate of their choice, and donating to politicians they support. Federal law, however, restricts the University from engaging in activities which may directly or indirectly benefit or negatively impact candidates for political office. These restrictions extend to University employees and other representatives when they are acting on behalf of the University in their official capacities. This policy describes the limitations the University must place on political activities to ensure compliance with applicable law.

2. Applicability

All University Employees and representative including faculty and staff.

3. Definitions

Campus: any University owned, occupied, or controlled property or facility located within the state of Florida.

Political Campaign: the promotional efforts of any individuals running for a national, regional, state, or local political office.

Political Candidate: any individual who has announced publicly their intention to be a candidate for election to any public office or who is being promoted publicly to join a race and become an official candidate. Incumbent public officials are not considered Political Candidates until they have either publicly announced an intention to run for reelection for their current position or to be a candidate for another public office.

Political Event: any event at which a Political Candidate speaks or is prominently featured including, without limitation, partisan events intended to promote a particular Political Candidate such as campaign rallies and non-partisan events such as debates or town halls.

A Political Event does not include educational presentations by Political Candidates who are invited to Campus to speak about subjects completely unrelated to the Political Candidates' candidacy. For example, when Political Candidates who are experts on certain educational topics give educational presentations on those topics at the University's invitation, their presentations will not be considered Political Events.

University Resources: any University property or service, such as facilities or space, office equipment, email, postage, vehicles, University name, logo and other University trademarks, letterhead, and technology resources, including, without limitation, its websites, social media, and online discussion boards.

University Sponsor: The University of Florida and any University college, school, center, academic department, administrative unit, University employee acting in their official capacity on behalf of the University or direct support organization seeking to hold an event on Campus . This definition does not include Registered Student Organizations (or any other student organizations) or students who are not employed by the University as such organizations and individuals are neither agents nor representatives of the University.

4. Exclusions

As noted above, University employees' participation in the political process is only limited when they are acting in their official capacity concerning the University; therefore, this policy does not apply to political activities in which University employees engage personally.

University resources for University employees who want to learn more about their rights and responsibilities concerning political activities, include the following:

[The University's Employee Handbook](#);

[The University's HR Policy on Political Activity](#); and

[The University's Updated Information and Guidance on Lobbying and Other Government Contacts from October 22, 2018](#)

Unless otherwise stated, this Policy applies only to elections for national, regional, state, and local positions; it does not apply to University elections, including elections for positions held by students (e.g. Student Government and Inter-Residence Hall Association).

This policy does not apply to the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections' use of certain Campus facilities as polling centers during any scheduled or special election cycle. Under such circumstances, all aspects of the polling centers, including the placement of candidate signs in areas surrounding such polling centers, shall be governed by the Supervisor of Elections and Florida law. The University may impose additional restrictions on the number and location of signs Political Candidates are permitted to place on the Campus.

5. General Requirements

To uphold its commitment to free expression and political discourse, and to comply with applicable law, the University has developed the following general requirements:

Neither the University nor anyone acting in their official capacity on its behalf shall directly or indirectly, participate in any Political Campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for elective public office.

Examples of prohibited activities include, without limitation, the following:

- Soliciting or making contributions to political funds;
- Endorsing or opposing any Political Candidate for public office or any Political Candidate's official platforms; and
- Allowing a Political Candidate to use University's Resources without allowing equal access to such resources to all other candidates for the same position.

Examples of permitted activities include, without limitation, the following:

- Non-partisan voter education and registration activities;
- Hosting non-partisan political forums and debates; and
- Non-partisan courses, coursework, and curricular activities of the University.

University employees questioning whether a proposed activity is permitted may contact the Office of Government & Community Relations at gcr@ufl.edu for guidance and assistance.

6. Educational Presentations by Candidates for Non-Political Purposes

As noted above, when Political Candidates are invited to the University to offer educational presentations about a topic completely unrelated to their candidacy the presentation is not considered a Political Event.

The Political Candidate's educational presentation must be delivered in a non-partisan manner and the Political Candidate can only speak in their educational, rather than political capacity. Further, any communications or promotional activities concerning the Political Candidate's presentation shall indicate the educational capacity in which the Political Candidate is appearing and shall exclude all mention of the Political Candidate's candidacy or the election.

University employees and representatives inviting Political Candidates to Campus for non-political educational presentations apply to and receive written approval from both the Office of Government & Community Relations at gcr@ufl.edu and the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs at ufba-events@ufl.edu. Please allow at least 10 business days for review of an application.

7. University Facilities and Outdoor Space for Political Events

University facilities and outdoor space are regularly used by a wide array of individuals, including faculty, staff, students, registered student organizations, members of the Gainesville community and community groups; therefore, the University has established

regulations and policies governing such use. Additional rules provided in this policy apply to Political Events taking place on the Campus facilities.

The University may, in its sole discretion, create and enforce reasonable and content-neutral restrictions on the time, place or manner for any event or activity on the Campus. These include, without limitation, a more appropriate Campus location, alternate event date or time, and restricted attendance or capacity at the proposed event.

Unless otherwise permitted within this Policy, the use of temporary signage and other marketing on Campus is only permissible for Registered Student Organizations; and official University groups and organizations. This includes, without limitation, the following:

- Adhesive Stickers, Labels and Decals
- Banners
- Chalking
- Posters or Flyers outside of designated outdoor bulletin boards
- Sandwich Boards or A-Frames
- Temporary Directional and Wayfinding Advertising
- Yard Signs

8. Political Events held by University Sponsors (“University-Sponsored Political Events”)

University Sponsors planning to sponsor a Political Event must notify the Office of the Vice President of Government and Community Relations at grc@ufl.edu and the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs at ufba-events@ufl.edu at least 60 days prior to the scheduled date of the Event.

University-Sponsored Political Events must be non-partisan and politically neutral so that no candidate receives or appears to receive any preferential treatment from, or endorsement by, the University.

Permissible forms of non-partisan and neutral University-Sponsored Political Events include without limitation candidate forums or debates, question-and-answer sessions, or similar forms of political discourse.

The University cannot sponsor any political fundraising activities or campaign rallies. To promote neutrality among Political Candidates at University-Sponsored Political Events.

Sponsors must take the following precautions:

- Political Candidates must not receive any compensation, honorarium, or expenses (either directly or to anyone else on their behalf) for their participation in University-Sponsored Political Events;

- Either all Political Candidates running for the same public office shall be invited to a Political Event or all such candidates shall be invited to attend substantially similar events (e.g. if there are too many candidates running for political office to accommodate during one debate, the University may schedule a series of similarly planned and executed debates to which all the candidates can be invited); and
- All Political Candidates attending a University-Sponsored Political Event must also be invited to attend any associated University-Sponsored receptions and other social activities. Restrictions imposed upon any Political Candidates which might appear to give an advantage to any of the Political Candidates' opponents must be reviewed and approved by the Vice President of Government and Community Relations (grc@ufl.edu). Restrictions will only be approved when imposed in a neutral, non-partisan manner that do not benefit or harm any specific candidate or group of candidates.

When University-Sponsored Political Events are held in University facilities, the following guidelines apply:

- The University Sponsor must pay all facility charges and ancillary service costs associated with the event, including, but not limited to, custodial, parking, equipment setup and operation, and security;
- Neither the University Sponsor nor any University facility member may charge any individual an admission fee to attend a University-Sponsored Political Event;
- All promotional material for University-Sponsored Political Events must include a clear statement that the University, the University Sponsor, and the University officials involved in the event do not endorse any political candidate or any position of a political candidate; and
- University officials may publicize any University-Sponsored Political Events in any appropriate manner and may encourage or arrange for coverage by media organizations, including University media.

9. Political Events Sponsored by Registered Student Organizations (“RSO”)

Student Government is responsible for creating rules that govern RSO use of student activity and service fees. RSO are not considered part of the University and are not agents or representatives of the University. In accordance with Student Government rules, RSO are permitted to use student activities fees to support their own expressive activities and viewpoints and may sponsor partisan events for individual Political Candidates provided it complies with all applicable Student Activities and Involvement and Student Government funding regulations, rules, policies, and procedures (including University permitting) requirements, governing events organized by an RSO.

The sponsoring RSO shall be responsible for all charges, costs and fees it would normally incur if holding another event of similar size and scope within the same University facility.

Promotional materials for any Political Event organized by an RSO must not state or imply that the University endorses a political candidate, political party or any political position of any candidate.

The University's name, trademarks, or logos shall not be used to promote any Political Event organized by an RSO or used in any way to suggest the event is endorsed or sponsored by the University.

An RSO wishing to sponsor a Political Event must apply to and receive written approval from the Vice President for Student Affairs at eventservices@ufsa.ufl.edu. Please allow at least 10 business days for review of an application.

Existing Tables found in Turlington Plaza and Plaza of the Americas only can be reserved by an RSO.

10. Political Events Sponsored by Individuals and Groups Unaffiliated with the University

The University has designated space on Campus available to third parties unaffiliated with the University, when not in use for official University business. In addition, third parties wishing to use such space, including Political Candidates and organizations, must comply with the same regulations, policies, terms, and conditions when using University space for Political Events as any other third party when using University space for non-political events.

The third-party using University space is responsible for paying the full facility use fees and any applicable ancillary service costs (including, but not limited to, security, custodial, parking, audio-visual equipment set-up and operation) associated with the Political Event.

The facility use fee and ancillary service costs must be paid as prescribed by the University facility or space where the Political Event is held.

The University's name, trademarks, or logos may only be used to identify the location of the third party's Political Event; University marks cannot be used in any way to suggest the event is endorsed or sponsored by the University. Any proposed marketing efforts to promote a Political Event must be pre-approved by the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs at ufba-events@ufl.edu. Please allow at least 10 business days for review of proposed marketing material or ideas.

Third Parties wishing to sponsor a Political Event must apply to and receive written approval from both the Office of the Vice President of Government and Community Relations at grc@ufl.edu and the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs at ufba-events@ufl.edu. Further, applications from Third Parties to host a Political Event at the University must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the scheduled event.

11. Political Events sponsored by Individual Students and Groups of Students who are not RSO

Students, when acting in their individual capacities and not as University representatives, are free to engage in the political process including donating to and volunteering for political campaigns and expressing their views on political matters provided their actions comply with University rules and regulations.

The University also encourages its students to educate and inform their fellow students about the political process, including urging students to exercise their right to vote.

The political actions of University students are not and shall not be attributable to the University.

Individual students and groups of students not registered as an RSO who wish to sponsor a Political Event must apply to and receive written approval from both the Office of Vice President for Student Affairs at eventservices@ufsa.ufl.edu and the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs at UFBA-events@ufl.edu. Further, such applications to host a Political Event at the University must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the scheduled event date.

12. Political Events and Activities Within University Housing

All events and activities, including those of a political nature, occurring within University Housing are governed by rules, policies and procedures established by the University's Housing & Residence Education and by the Student Conduct Code.

Housing & Residence Education's policies are available within the [Community Standards \[https://residents.housing.ufl.edu/housing-conduct/community-standards-student-conduct-code/\]](https://residents.housing.ufl.edu/housing-conduct/community-standards-student-conduct-code/).

The residential nature of University Housing limits the types of political and other activities that may take place there. For example, Political Campaigning involving personal interactions (such as unsolicited door-to-door communication and direct distribution of partisan political information) is prohibited within the residence halls because unsolicited door-to-door communication, in general, is prohibited within University Housing.

Additional restrictions and exclusions may be placed upon people who do not reside in the University Housing facility.

Anyone who has questions about whether they can sponsor a Political Event or engage in political activity in or around University Housing and Residence Education facilities should contact HREConduct@ufsa.ufl.edu.

13. Miscellaneous Political Activities

Voter registration drives

Are permitted if the drive is conducted lawfully and in a non-partisan manner.

Distribution of printed political materials is permitted by individuals and groups provided they follow all applicable University regulations and policies, including UF Regulation 2.003, which specifically addresses the Distribution of Printed Material [<https://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2.003.pdf>]

Printed material for distribution may not state or imply that the University endorses any Political Candidate, political party or political platform.

Personal Distribution of Printed Political Materials

The following practices are prohibited:

- Distributing printed materials inside any building or facility on the University's campus, including any athletic or recreational facility;
- Leaving printed materials unattended;
- Utilizing Amplified sound;
- Setting up structures such as tents or tables on the outdoor space where materials are being distributed (e.g. tables, tents, et cetera);
- Distributing food, beverages and promotional items of any type, without prior written approval from the Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs; and
- Engaging in any fundraising activities such as the collection of funds or donations, in any amount.

Unmanned Distribution of Printed Political Materials within Modular Units

The University has established a process through which printed material can be placed in specifically designated Modular Units for unmanned distribution of such materials.

Individuals and groups wishing to distribute their printed materials in one of the University's Modular Units must apply for a license to do so through the University's Business Services at web@bsd.ufl.edu.

Commercial Filming

Requests for commercial filming or photography on the Campus for any political purpose, whether non-partisan or in support of any Political Campaign, Political Event or Political Candidate shall be submitted to UF Strategic Communications and Marketing at news@ufl.edu. Please allow at least 30 days to review a filming or photography request.

Policy Violations

The University may take administrative or disciplinary action concerning violations of this Policy up to and including termination of employment or expulsion.

RELATED INFORMATION:

Links to other resources such as the research policies, NIH, etc.

Link to Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees (F.S. 112.311 – 112.326)