

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Office of the President / Human Resources

Political Events and Activities Policy

Woodbury University's status as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code prohibits it from participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office. Accordingly, the University may not endorse a candidate, provide or solicit financial or other support for candidates or political organizations, or establish political action committees. Participating in political campaigns by or in the name of the University could jeopardize the University's tax-exempt status. Conferences and Events will be glad to respond to any questions an event organizer may have regarding political events.

Prohibited political activities include campaign rallies, canvassing, lobbying, support of, or opposition to, candidates for public office, giving gifts to public officials, and other such activities. These regulations also apply to virtual events.

While the applicable regulations permit the University itself to engage in some lobbying and ballot measure activities related to matters impacting the University and higher education, members of the University community, including outside individuals, entities, and employees who are not acting in their official capacities, are not permitted to use the University's resources to support political activities.

Except as otherwise outlined in this policy, members of the University community are prohibited from using University resources to support political activities in the following manners:

Using University facilities, monies, accounts, credit, vehicles, postage, telecommunications, computer hardware and software, web pages, personnel, equipment, materials, buildings or any other thing of value, except as outlined below.

Using the University's name and seal, on-campus addresses, and nonresidential telephones, resources, services, equipment, supplies, meeting rooms, email lists, or personnel (including research assistants).

Using a university school, department, or institute's name to endorse a candidate while using University resources.

Using a university school, department, or institute's name on a candidate's campaign website or collateral materials to endorse a candidate.

Recruiting volunteers for campaign activities during events.

On-campus solicitation of campaign contributions for candidates.

Payment of fees to candidates, and discounting or waiving fees for political events.

Student Voter Events

Departments/units/recognized student organizations may coordinate voter education activities (including public forums, the publication of voter education guides, and voter registration drives) if they are carried out in a non-partisan manner. Voter education or registration activities conducted in a biased manner that favors (or opposes) one or more candidates is prohibited. All such events must be coordinated in advance and have an approved space reservation.

Hosting Candidates in Their Capacity as Political Candidates

When inviting a candidate to speak in their capacity as a political candidate, event organizers must:

provide an equal opportunity to participate to all political candidates seeking the same office. This applies to both the nature of the event to which candidates are invited, as well as the manner of their presentation/promotion);

refrain from supporting or opposing a candidate both prior to, during, and after their visit;

prohibit political fundraising from occurring for any/all candidates.

Hosting Candidates When Appearing/Speaking as Non-Candidates

When inviting public officials who currently hold, or formerly held, public office to speak, event organizers must:

be explicit in their communication with the candidate that they are speaking in a non-candidate capacity;

refrain from mentioning the individual's potential future candidacy for public office (both before, during, and after their visit); and

maintain a non-partisan atmosphere where the candidate is present.

Issue Advocacy and Political Campaign Intervention

University-hosted political debates and public forums are permitted consistent with the institution's legitimate, purely educational purpose if they do not endorse, support, or oppose a political candidate or party and follow the Federal Election Committee rules on sponsoring debates or forums.

With respect to university-sponsored public forums, the following guidelines must be met:

All legally qualified candidates for a particular public office or party are invited;

All participating candidates are given equal treatment, i.e., access and opportunity to speak;

The format and content of the forum are presented neutrally; it is not structured to promote or advance one candidate over another; and

No political fundraising occurs in conjunction with the forum.

Under the Internal Revenue Code, all section 501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. Contributions to political campaign funds or public statements of position (verbal or written) made on behalf of the organization in favor of or in opposition to any candidate for public office violate the prohibition against political campaign activity.

Approval

Any events regulated by this Policy must be approved in writing in advance by the President, who will consult with others as determined appropriate. They will not be approved if it cannot be demonstrated that the above criteria will be met throughout the event.

Resources

Internal Revenue Service, Rev. Rul. 2007-41, 2007-25 I.R.B. (June 18, 2007)
(<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-tege/rr2007-41.pdf>)

American Council on Education (ACE) Issue Brief on Student Voting and College Political Campaign Related Activities in 2023 (<https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Student-Voting-and-College-Political-Campaign-Activities-Issue-Brief.pdf>)