

Frequently Asked Questions for Political Activities on the University of Vermont Campus

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) have been prepared by the Office of University Relations to assist in interpreting the University's policy on [Political Activities: Tax Exempt Organization Restrictions](#).

Questions about the policy should be directed to Wendy Koenig in the Office of University Relations (e-mail: (Wendy.Koenig@uvm.edu), phone: 656-2992).

Q1. Are door-to-door canvassing activities in residence halls, administrative offices, or other private work or living areas permitted by political candidates, political organizations, or other interested parties (including those that are members of the campus community)?

A. The University does not permit any candidate, campaign, or other interested party, regardless of their University affiliation status, to engage in solicitation, campaigning, or other door-to-door canvassing activities in staff or faculty offices, student residence halls, or other private work or living areas. Incidents should be reported to Residential Life staff and/or UVM Police Services. Canvassing activities are necessarily limited to publicly accessible areas consistent with the University's [Solicitation Policy](#).

Q2. What political activities are permitted by University Recognized Organizations (other than Governance Groups, such as SGA and the GSA, as defined in University Policy), at reserved tables on campus?

A. Examples of **permitted** campaign activities by Recognized Organizations at reserved tables:

- Display and distribution of candidate literature, signs, bumper stickers, and other campaign materials at the table.
- Voter registration activities, so long as no individual is denied the ability to register based on their party affiliation or candidate preferences.
- Opportunities to contact public officials' or candidates' offices to express views on public issues as long as University owned computers or telephones are not used.
- Opportunities to sign letters-to-the-editor supporting individual political candidates or organizations.

A. Examples of **unpermitted** campaign activities by Recognized Organizations at reserved tables:

- Use of a table without reservation in accordance with University Policy is strictly prohibited.
- Events hosted by Recognized Organizations may not be controlled by candidates, campaign staff, or other entities/individuals. Candidates may not make use of tables reserved by Recognized Organization in order to speak to individual students, faculty, or staff, but must instead reserve their own table for those purposes. Candidates who are interested in engaging with potential voters at a reserved table are responsible for

reserving tables and other campus spaces on their own behalf in accordance with the University's Facilities and Grounds Use Policy.

- No political fundraising may be conducted at reserved tables.
- Use of a microphone, bull-horn, or other amplification device is strictly prohibited.

To reserve a table, a request must be made to the Director of University Event Services at www.uvm.edu/eventservices or by calling (802) 656-5665. All activities conducted at a reserved table are subject to restrictions designed to protect public safety and maintain University operations in accordance with the University's Facilities and Grounds Use Policy.

Q3. What political activities are permitted by individuals or groups without University recognition (including candidates, non-recognized student organizations, individual students, faculty, staff, or community members, collectively "Outside Groups") at reserved tables on campus?

- A. Examples of **permitted** campaign activities by Outside Groups at reserved tables:
- Candidate appearances at the reserved table, provided appropriate disclaimers are displayed.
 - Display and distribution of candidate literature, signs, and other campaign materials at the table.
 - Voter registration activities, so long as no individual is denied the ability to register based on their party affiliation or candidate preferences.
 - Opportunities to contact public officials' or candidates' offices to express views on public issues as long as University owned computers or telephones are not used.
 - Opportunities to sign letters-to-the-editor supporting individual political candidates or organizations.

- A. Examples of **unpermitted** campaign activities by Outside Groups at reserved tables which have been requested and paid for by the Outside Group in accordance with University Policy:
- Outside Groups may not control tabling events being conducted by Recognized Groups.
 - No political fundraising may be conducted at reserved tables.
 - Use of a microphone, bull-horn, or other amplification device is strictly prohibited.
 - Use of a table without reservation and appropriate payment by the Outside Group in accordance with University Policy is strictly prohibited.

To reserve a table, a request must be made to the Director of University Event Services at www.uvm.edu/eventservices or by calling (802) 656-5665. All activities conducted at a reserved table are subject to restrictions designed to protect public safety and maintain University operations in accordance with the University's Facilities and Grounds Use Policy.

Q4. May a University recognized student organization conduct voter registration activities in connection with campaign activities?

A. In order to preserve the University's tax exempt status, only non-partisan voter registration activities may be conducted by the University, including student governance organizations. By definition, non-partisan activities are those that do not link voter education or registration activities with campaign events in support of a particular candidate, party, or viewpoint.

While the University encourages and prefers that voter registration activities be conducted in a non-partisan and inclusive manner, there are times and places on campus where recognized student organizations may choose to endorse political candidates. Those organizations may conduct voter registration in connection with partisan campaign activities, provided it is made clear that these activities are not sponsored by and do not constitute an endorsement of the University. For example, reserved tables and public spaces may be used to distribute campaign literature in support of a particular candidate, party, or viewpoint, in conjunction with the conduct of voter registration.

Q5. May political candidates, political organizations, or other interested parties, including those that are members of the campus community, use outdoor, public venues on the UVM campus for political campaign activities?

A5. The University allows certain outdoor public venues to be used, without prior reservation or approval, for political organizing, canvassing, or campaigning, provided the space has not already been reserved, as detailed in the University's [Facilities and Grounds Use Policy](#). To reserve any of these spaces for exclusive use, a request must be made to the Director of University Event Services at www.uvm.edu/eventservices or by calling (802) 656-5665. All activities in these outdoor public venues are subject to restrictions designed to protect public safety and maintain University operations in accordance with the University's [Facilities and Grounds Use Policy](#). In addition, a political candidate or political organization using any University venue or facility may not state or imply that the University endorses the candidate, organization, or any of their positions. **No political fundraising may be conducted at outdoor public venues.**

Outdoor Public Venues (as of 8/1/2018)

- Royall Tyler Theater plaza
- Davis Center oval
- Davis Center outdoor stage area
- Bailey-Howe quad area
- University green area, south of the Ira Allen statue
- Waterman main (east) entrance plaza
- Waterman College Street (south) entrance plaza

Q. May political candidates, political organizations, or other interested parties, including those that are members of the campus community, post campaign materials on UVM bulletin boards?

A. A number of bulletin boards on campus are considered public spaces and are available for the posting of notices, including campaign literature, by members of the public. Others, however, are for the exclusive use of University academic or administrative units, and campaign literature will be removed if posted on these bulletin boards. All public University bulletin boards are cleared regularly to prevent the accumulation of outdated material. The most commonly used public bulletin boards are on the first three floors of the Davis Center, beside the walkway between Morrill Hall and Bailey Howe Library, and behind Cook Commons.

Q. May political candidates, political organizations, or other interested parties, including those that are members of the campus community, distribute campaign materials to employees or students through campus mail?

A. Only University administrative and academic units and University recognized organizations may use the University's non-USPS campus mail service in accordance with the University's [Use of](#)

[Campus Mail and Letterboxes Policy](#). All campus mail must comply with requirements for size, weight, address placement, etc. established by the Print and Mail Center. University units and recognized organizations may send notices of authorized campus political events through campus mail. University recognized student organizations may send other political material they have created through campus mail if it is accompanied by a disclaimer that the communication does not represent an endorsement by the University (Sample disclaimer: *“The University of Vermont does not endorse any political candidate or political organization, and the views expressed in this communication do not constitute an endorsement by the University.”*). Recognized student organizations may not use campus mail when the message or mailing is controlled by a political candidate or campaign. Individual employees or students must use the United States Postal Service to send political mailings to individuals on campus.

Q. May students, faculty or staff use UVM e-mail accounts to send or receive information about political candidates?

A. The general rule is that the University’s E-mail system may not be used to support or endorse a political candidate or political organization. Although limited personal use of the University’s E-mail system is permitted under the [Computer, Communication and Network Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#), a user must distinguish personal views from those of the University, its programs, activities or operations with a disclaimer. (Sample disclaimer: *“The University of Vermont does not endorse any political candidate or political organization, and the views expressed in this communication do not constitute an endorsement by the University.”*)

Examples of **prohibited** E-mail activities:

- A person using a logo, title, signature, or tag line that identifies a University unit (school, college, department, center, institute) may not use his/her University E-mail to distribute political campaign materials.
- A person may not use a University list-serve or mailing list to distribute E-mail endorsing a political candidate or organization.

Examples of **permitted** E-mail activities:

- A person using his/her University E-mail for personal use may send or forward information or personal views about a political candidate or organization if (1) there is no University logo, title, signature or tag line; (2) there is a disclaimer that the information or views do not represent an endorsement by the University (see sample disclaimer above); and (3) the use otherwise complies with the University’s Computer, Communication and Network Technology Acceptable Use Policy.
- A University recognized organization, or a person acting on its behalf, may use University E-mail to send a communication announcing that a political event is taking place (e.g., time, place, format, speaker’s name, sponsor’s name, etc.) but may not use the communication to endorse a political candidate or organization. A disclaimer that the University does not endorse any political candidate or organization should appear prominently in the E-mail.
- A person may receive incoming political E-mail for personal use only if he/she complies with the University’s Computer, Communication and Network Technology Acceptable Use Policy. That policy states that University computer resources may be used "for occasional and incidental non-University matters, except as otherwise prohibited by this or other University policy or when the use unreasonably interferes with academic uses, job performance, or system performance or operations." Wherever possible, a student or faculty or staff member should use a non-

University E-mail account to receive and send information on political candidates or organizations.

Q. When may students, faculty or staff endorse a political candidate or political organization?

A. University officials, administrators, employees, or agents, may not endorse political candidates or political organizations when acting in their **official** capacity. Expressions of individual **personal** endorsement and support are permitted, but individuals should take steps to ensure there is no confusion about the circumstances of their endorsement. Students and non-governance student organizations may endorse political candidates or organizations under certain circumstances.

Examples of **prohibited** endorsement activities:

- University officials, administrators, employees or agents may not be identified by title or University affiliation as endorsing a political candidate or organization.
- University officials, administrators, employees or agents may not endorse or oppose political candidates or organizations in official institutional publications or at official functions.
- Student organizations that have official University functions and responsibilities (known as student governance organizations) may not endorse political candidates or organizations. Student governance organizations include the Student Government Association, Graduate Student Senate, Inter-Residence Association, Inter-Fraternity Council, and Pan-Hellenic Council.

Examples of **permitted** endorsement activities:

- University officials, administrators, employees or agents may endorse or support political candidates or organizations as long as they do so only in their personal capacities.
- The student newspaper may publish editorial endorsements of political candidates or organizations, provided there is a published disclaimer that the endorsement does not constitute an endorsement by the University.
- Recognized student organizations that are not student governance organizations may endorse political candidates or organizations if the endorsement is accompanied by a disclaimer that the endorsement is that of the student organization and does not constitute an endorsement by the University. The name and affiliation of a member of such a student organization may appear on a list of supporters of a political candidate.

Q. What constitutes “political fundraising”? Can University recognized organizations engage in political fundraising?

A. Political fundraising is the solicitation or collection of money or pledges of money for a political candidate or political organization. University units and University recognized organizations may not engage in political fundraising and may not contribute any of their University-derived funding to a political candidate or political organization. Individual members may engage in political fundraising and/or make contributions to political candidates in their personal capacity.

Q. Does the prohibition on political fundraising apply to the sale of political souvenirs?

A. Books, t-shirts, and other campaign souvenirs or merchandise may be sold by a recognized organization, other than governance groups, only if the price charged for the merchandise does not exceed its retail value and the proceeds are not contributed, directly or indirectly, to a political candidate or campaign.

Q. How can political candidates and political organizations recruit students to work on political campaigns?

A. The University encourages its students to learn about the political process in many ways, including first-hand experience on political campaigns. Political candidates and campaigns can recruit students for campaign activities a number of ways, including contacting students individually or through politically active student organizations (e.g., Campus Progressives, College Democrats, College Republicans, etc.), posting notices on public bulletin boards on campus, or using University internship or volunteer clearinghouse resources.

When a University unit distributes a notice for a position on a political campaign, such as by e-mail or posting on a unit bulletin board or newsletter, the University must include a prominent disclaimer similar to the following: *"The University of Vermont does not endorse any political candidate or political organization, and the distribution of this notice does not constitute an endorsement of this or any other political candidate or organization by the University."*

This posting should also make clear that the notice has been provided by the recruiting organization and all replies should go directly to the organization. Finally, the University unit must afford other political candidates or organizations the same opportunity for distribution of their recruiting notices, if requested.

Revised: 8/21/2018