

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

POLITICAL AND CAMPAIGN EVENTS

I. POLICY

As an organization exempt from federal income tax pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, Robert Morris University is prohibited from directly or indirectly participating or intervening (including the publishing or distributing of statements) in any political event or campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for elective public office. Even activities that encourage people to vote for or against a particular candidate on the basis of non-partisan (not favoring one party over another) criteria are prohibited.

A political event includes candidate appearances, political rallies, speeches by identified supporters of a candidate or appearances by people speaking on behalf of a ballot issue or other political causes.

Notwithstanding the above, the University does not seek to inhibit the expression of personal political views by any individual in the Robert Morris University community. Faculty, students, and staff may support candidates for office or may promote activity of political causes. There is no restriction on discussion of political issues or teaching of politics or campaign-related topics.

II. GUIDELINES

An appearance of a candidate for public office on campus must be for a speech that is open to the Robert Morris University community and must be sponsored by a recognized University organization or department. An open event is defined as one for which no fewer than one-half the available seats or spaces are available to the general University community based on a non-biased distribution of tickets on a first-come, first-served or other suitable basis.

Sponsoring organizations must secure approval for such appearances from the Office of Student Life at least one week in advance of the date of the event for smaller venues and one month in advance for larger venues. Room reservations must be granted by the Office of Student Life and/or Conference and Facility Services, and/or the Registrar, depending on the room availability or space approval required.

The University encourages Students, Faculty and Staff to exercise their civic duty by registering and voting, and further encourages political debate and discussion in doing so. In this regard, the University does permit and/or prohibits the following activities which are illustrative of permissible and proscribed conduct and which are not intended to be exhaustive.

A. Permitted Activities

Students, faculty and staff, on behalf of the University, may:

1. Engage in certain voter education activities, including the presentation of public forums and the publication of voter education guides, conducted in a non-partisan manner.
2. Engage in voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, if conducted in a non-partisan manner.
3. Invite a candidate to speak as a political candidate at the University if equal opportunity is afforded all political candidates seeking the same office, and no support or opposition is shown the candidate and no political fundraising occurs.
4. Freely express individual or collective political views provided the understanding that the individual is not speaking for or in the name of Robert Morris University.

B. Prohibited Activities

While students, faculty and staff may engage in the following activities as private citizens, they may not, as representatives of the University, engage in any of the following activities:

1. Endorse any candidate for political office.
2. Make donations to political campaigns.
3. Engage in political fundraising.
4. Distribute statements in support of particular political candidates or parties.
5. Engage in voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives with bias that would favor one candidate over another, oppose a candidate in some manner, or have the effect of favoring a candidate or group of candidates.
6. Invite a political candidate to speak as a political candidate at the University without affording equal opportunity to all political candidates officially on the ballot seeking the same office.
7. Become involved in any other activities that may be beneficial or detrimental to any political candidate.
8. Use the University name, seal, logo, insignia or any University entity supported in part by University funds on stationery or any other material used or intended for political purposes.

9. Solicit funds or contributions for political candidates in the name of Robert Morris University or on any Robert Morris University campus or property. University resources may not be used in soliciting such funds, nor can University resources be utilized to make contributions to any political campaign, candidate or political action committee.
10. Candidate campaigning (solicitation), including transmission of campaign materials over the internet, Robert Morris University email, leaflet distribution, bumper stickers, display of posters or political statements on University owned assets, vehicles, or uniforms is strictly prohibited anywhere on University property.

C. Use of University Facilities and Resources

University facilities or resources (including but not limited to mail distribution services, mailing lists, facsimile, duplicating or photocopying services, email addresses, telephone numbers, bulletin or message boards) may not be used by or on behalf of an outside organization or outside individual whose purpose is to further the cause of a specific candidate or specific political party. No University office should be used as a return mailing address for political mailings.

Campus organizations and departments may use campus communications to announce political forums and discussions sponsored by recognized University organizations or departments, but **may not** use campus communications -- including those provided by Robert Morris University campus mail service, Robert Morris University email, phone system, or its computer network -- for partisan political activity.

Use of University property is subject to University policies. Once sponsoring organizations or departments have been granted approval for a political event by the Office of Student Life, they may contact the Office of Conference and Facility Services for appropriate planning and logistical support.

D. Student Newspaper, Television and Radio Station

The Robert Morris University student newspaper, television and radio station may publish or broadcast editorials that oppose or endorse specific legislation and/or candidates for political office. Editorials must state clearly that the views reflected are those of the student editors and not of Robert Morris University. Neither the Robert Morris University administration nor its faculty may exercise control over the editorial content of the newspaper, television or radio station in this regard.

The Robert Morris University newspaper, television and radio station may accept paid political advertising as long as the following guidelines are followed:

1. The acceptance and airing of the advertising must be made on the same basis as other non-political advertising and the advertisements must be preceded by a statement that they are paid advertising and not reflective of the views of Robert Morris University;

2. Ads will be solicited in a fair and consistent manner and equal opportunity should be given to all candidates who wish to use the Robert Morris University newspaper, television and/or radio station for paid political advertising.

E. Voter Registration

RMU may provide a forum for on-campus voter registration under the sponsorship of a campus department or organization. Conducting voter registration on campus does not constitute impermissible political campaign activity as long as the drive is conducted in a non-partisan and fair manner and all persons interested in registering are permitted to do so regardless of their party preference.

RMU will not give preferential treatment to particular groups seeking to conduct voter registration drives on campus. Non-partisan voter registration activities conducted by off-campus organizations need to be approved by the Office of Student Life. Voter registration activity must not target voters of a particular party or help particular candidates and must not target specific geographic areas that favor any party or candidate.

III. PENALTIES

1. If the IRS determines that the University has engaged in prohibited campaign activity, the University could, among other things, lose its tax-exempt status.
2. In addition, contributions to organizations that lose their tax-exempt status because of prohibited political activities are not deductible by the donors for federal income tax purposes.

IV. QUESTIONS

Any administrative questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of Student Life.

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