POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Approved by: Office of Student Affairs

History: Revised: July 2021, February 2026

Related Policies: N/A

Related Forms, Procedures and References: Political Activity Request Form (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfR-sS3zLPn9oOyqU23zA-1XXss9fmAN8G0IQR2VeI_9xwQlQ/viewform)

For Questions Contact: Office of Student Affairs | 651.690.6778 | studentaffairs@stkate.edu

Index: Permissible Political Activities | (https://catalog.stkate.edu/policies/stu-non-acad/stu-rights-resp/pol-activity/#Permissible) Candidate Speaking or Participation as non-candidate | (https://catalog.stkate.edu/policies/stu-non-acad/stu-rights-resp/pol-activity/#Candidate%20Speaking) Business Activity | (https://catalog.stkate.edu/policies/stu-non-acad/stu-rights-resp/pol-activity/#Business%20Activity)Attribution of Individual Activities | (https://catalog.stkate.edu/policies/stu-non-acad/stu-rights-resp/pol-activity/#Attribution%20of%20Individual) Guidelines for Political Candidates Appearing on Campus to Campaign (https://catalog.stkate.edu/policies/stu-non-acad/stu-rights-resp/pol-activity/#Guidelines)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to students regarding campus expectations of political activity and political candidates on campus.

Scope

This policy applies to all members of the campus community including, but not limited to, students, faculty, staff, visitors, and contractors.

Definitions

Educational activities: Political activities permissible under Section 501(c)(3). The regulations allow activities to occur if they present a "sufficiently full and fair exposition of the pertinent facts." The presentation of information must not be biased and must "permit an individual or the public to form an independent opinion or conclusion."

Policy Statement

Some activities are permissible under Section 501(c)(3) as "educational" activities. The regulations allow activities to occur if they present a "sufficiently full and fair exposition of the pertinent facts." The presentation of information must not be biased and must "permit an individual or the public to form an independent opinion or conclusion."

Examples of permissible activities are explicated in several non-discrete categories including: 1) Voter Education, Voter Registration, Voter Guides and Get-Out-the-Vote Drives; 2) Organizational Leaders and Political Activity; 3) Candidate Speaking as Candidate; 4) Candidates in Public Forum or Debate; and 5) Candidate Speaking or Participating as Non-Candidate; 6) Candidate requests to rent space.

1. **Voter Education, Voter Registration, Voter Guides and Get-Out-the-Vote Drives.**

   Voter education activities including voter registration, voter guides, get out the vote drives and public forums, when conducted in an unbiased manner, are permissible political activity and essential to the student learning experience.

   The Federal Election Commission provides guidance on conducting a nonpartisan voter registration campaign. Its regulations require that either all candidates or no candidates be named, that all or no party affiliations be given, and all persons interested in registering be permitted to do so regardless of their party preference. The organization conducting voter registration must be a university office, department, or a chartered student organization. The organization must use the required process to reserve space/table. The organization must conduct voter registration in a non-partisan manner.

   Preparing or distributing voter guides may violate IRS regulations if the guide focuses on one issue, a narrow range of issues or if the guide reflects bias, especially in close proximity to an election. Questions in voter guides should be clear and unbiased with regard to content and structure and uniform to the questions posed to candidates. Candidates should be given reasonable time to respond to the questions.

   Candidates' choices should not be narrow or limited and candidates should be given reasonable time to explain their position. Content of the guide should closely resemble the candidates' response. Candidate responses should be subject to minimal editing. All eligible candidates should be given equal opportunity to be represented in the voter guide and the number of issues should fairly represent the range of issues considered by the entire electorate.

   If the university distributes a voter guide published by another entity, it assumes responsibility for ensuring compliance with IRS regulations.

2. **Organizational Leaders and Political Activity**

   Consistent with the federal and state requirements, university leaders retain individual rights of free expression. Speaking or communicating in a partisan fashion, at an official university event or in a university publication, violates the political campaign intervention prohibition.

3. **Candidate Speaking as Candidate**

   Candidates for public office may be invited to, or may seek permission to visit, the campus to make public appearances in connection with their campaigns. If a candidate uses a campus visit as an occasion to make a campaign speech, the campus organization hosting the event should make it clear that the institution does not support or oppose the candidate in all promotional materials related to the event, and state the following: "Views expressed by political candidates are not endorsed by St. Catherine University." This disclaimer must be stated again when introducing the candidate at a public forum as well as at the close of the forum. Absolutely no political fund-raising is allowed.

   Political event requests sponsored by student organizations should originate in the Campus Life Office. Campus Life staff will assist all student organizations in the preparation and implementation of their politically- based programs.

4. **Candidate in Public Forums and Debates**

The university may provide forums for candidate debates. All debates and forums will be conducted in an unbiased manner and provide candidates equal opportunity to participate.

The following factors should be considered in determining whether a debate is a permissible political activity:

a.) The questions presented to the candidates should be prepared by an independent and nonpartisan panel.

b.) The debate topics should cover a broad range of issues, including but not limited to those issues of importance to the organization sponsoring the debate.

c.) A moderator should be selected by the sponsoring organization and their role should be limited to ensuring that the debate ground rules are followed. The moderator should refrain from commenting on the candidates' statements in a way that demonstrates approval or disapproval of their ideas.

d.) The debate should begin and end with a clear statement to the effect that the views presented are those of the candidates and not of the sponsoring organization (e.g. "Views expressed by political candidates are not endorsed by St. Catherine University.").

5. **Candidate Speaking or Participating as Non-Candidate**

Candidates for public office may also be invited to speak at either campus in their individual capacities as a non-candidate. For example, a candidate running for public office may be invited to speak in their capacity outside their candidacy without the activity constituting an impermissible political activity. During the speech, no reference should be made to the candidate's status as a candidate for public office nor should any campaign activity occur in concurrence with the speech. Any promotional material related to the speech should make clear that the speaker is appearing in their specific capacity, without any mention of candidacy for public office.

A candidate may also choose to appear on campus at an event open to the public. If the candidate is asked to speak or be recognized at the event, the university must ensure that:

- the candidate was selected for reasons other than status as a candidate or public office official;
- the candidate speaks only in a non-candidate capacity;
- no mention is made of their status as a public official or candidate;
- no campaign activity occurs in relationship to the appearance; and
- the University much maintain a nonpartisan atmosphere during the event

6. **Candidate Requests to Rent Space**

Candidates for local, state, and national offices who officially have filed in Minnesota may request to have a forum on campus. When considering the request, University officials will take into account ongoing operations and previously scheduled demands on space, time and other resources. Please note that St. Catherine University will not relocate scheduled classes nor cancel pre-existing and planned scheduled events in order to accommodate candidate requests.

Candidates will cover their own travel expenses, costs of all security and any other associated costs. Candidates will pay the rental fee for use of St. Catherine University facilities, as well as costs associated with use of the facility.

Any images or photography taken may not include use of the St. Catherine University trademark, and all images must be free of St. Catherine University branding. Candidates will cover the cost of any modifications to podiums or lecterns used during an event, and will avoid using or including other University materials with the University trademark.

Procedure; Support; & Implementation Guidelines

See above section for specific information.

Help with this Policy

For help with this policy, please contact the Student Affairs Office, studentaffairs@stkate.edu

Policy Authority

The Vice President of Student Affairs has responsibility for this policy and will obtain necessary approvals and changes to this policy.