



Political Neutrality Policy

The essential functions of the university require strict institutional neutrality, integrity, and independence regarding partisan political activities, particularly because perceived partisanship is often interpreted as endorsement by the university's sponsor, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("Church of Jesus Christ"). This policy is designed to protect the neutrality of the university and the Church of Jesus Christ in the course of political activities that involve members of the campus community or university facilities and resources and to preserve the university's tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code.

The university aims to encourage appropriate opportunities for learning and civic engagement without compromising its policy to maintain institutional neutrality in partisan political matters. The university recognizes its responsibilities to:

- prepare students for effective citizenship,
- promote scholarly research and inquiry regarding public policy issues and the political process,
- accommodate faculty efforts to enhance civic dialogue through their research, and
- accommodate appropriate public service and involvement in the political process by university employees and students.

The present policy is adopted in order to

- avoid any impression that a particular political candidate, party, or faction has the support or endorsement of the university;
- enable the university to serve the community in appropriate ways;
- ensure that opinions and actions of university employees or university organizations, including student-chartered clubs and student academic associations, are not construed as university positions in political matters; and
- preclude any political candidate, party, or faction from exploiting a relationship with the university for partisan ends.

Political Speakers and Partisan Political Activities

Events and public expression at the university must not seriously and adversely affect the university mission or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Examples would include expression that:

- contradicts or opposes, rather than analyzes or discusses, fundamental Church doctrine or policy;
- deliberately attacks or derides the Church or its general leaders; or



- violates the [Church Educational System Honor Code](#) because the expression is dishonest, illegal, unchaste, profane, or unduly disrespectful of others.

Partisan political speakers or events may be sponsored by and for the benefit of any of the following groups:

- the university;
- a college, school, department, center, or other academic unit, or a student academic association; or
- Brigham Young University Student Service Association (BYUSA) or a student-chartered club within BYUSA.

Colleges, schools, departments, centers, other academic units, student academic associations, BYUSA, and student-chartered clubs must receive approval prior to extending an invitation to a partisan political speaker or arranging an event (such as a debate or a forum) that involves candidates for public office, public officials, or campaign officials. Student academic associations must receive approval from the academic adviser, the department chair, and the dean. Student-chartered clubs must receive approval from the club adviser, the director of student leadership, and the dean of students. All university units, including colleges, schools, departments, centers, other academic units, student academic associations, BYUSA, and student-chartered clubs, must receive approval from the appropriate responsible vice president, who will consult with the Office of General Counsel. Announcements for and attendance at these speeches and events are limited to members of that organizational unit unless the event is approved for a university-wide invitation and audience.

Where appropriate to the objectives of the course, faculty members may, with the prior approval of the department chair and the dean, invite public officials, candidates, or their representatives into the classroom to speak in a noncandidate capacity. No publicity outside the classroom may precede or follow the appearance, and no attempt will be made to ensure equal time for other candidates except at the discretion of the faculty member. Only course-enrolled students are invited to attend.

The regular academic functions of the university should not be interrupted by campaign or other political activities. Partisan political materials (fliers, posters, bumper stickers, pins, literature, films, etc.) may be distributed only under the sponsorship of student-chartered clubs or student academic associations, as authorized by their respective charters. The only approved locations on campus for campaigning or distributing partisan political materials are display booth tables in the WSC or the arbor booths west of the WSC, as coordinated and scheduled through Campus Scheduling. No campaigning or distributing of partisan political materials is allowed at any area of university housing. Residents of university housing may display partisan political signs in their apartment windows. A student-chartered club or student academic



association may endorse a candidate for public office if the club's or association's charter authorizes endorsement and the official title of the club or association is used.

Activities on campus may not be used for off-campus publicity in a way that could reasonably be interpreted to imply university participation or intervention in a political campaign. Candidates should not arrange to be photographed on campus. Photographs, video, films, or other representations of a candidate taken on campus may not be used for campaign purposes. Any public official or candidate wishing to make a courtesy call on university employees or a university organizational unit may be required to relinquish publicity of any kind in connection with that visit to the university.

Political Activities of Students

The university encourages students to assume civic duties by participating in the political process at the local, state, and federal levels. However, the university will not provide accommodations for students who choose to participate in political activities that conflict with attending class, meeting course work deadlines, taking examinations, or otherwise fulfilling academic responsibilities. Any accommodations afforded to students are at the sole discretion of each individual faculty member, who should exercise that discretion in a nonpartisan manner. In addition, only those students who have received prior approval and have enrolled in appropriate, applicable classes or internship programs offered by the university may receive university credit for their political activities.

Political Activities of University Employees

The Internal Revenue Code and related regulations and rulings generally prohibit the university from participating, intervening, or otherwise showing bias in political campaigns. Because individual activity by university leaders may be imputed to the university, certain university employees who influence or make university policy could compromise the university's position of political neutrality by participating in activities on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Therefore, members of the President's Council, vice presidents, associate and assistant vice presidents, and deans ("Officials") may not participate in activities on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office, publicly endorse partisan political candidates, donate money to or for the benefit of partisan political candidates, or hold partisan political office at the city, county, state, or national level. Regarding non-partisan public offices, such as seats on special district and school boards, Officials must obtain clearance from their responsible vice president before agreeing to become a candidate, making an announcement of intent to run, or accepting an appointment. Members of the President's Council or other employees reporting directly to the president of the university must obtain that clearance from the president. Officials should not allow their names to be used in connection with partisan political campaigns, or by partisan political organizations, nor should they attend campaign dinners, rallies, or other events for a candidate for public office. However, an Official may



participate in activities on behalf of, publicly endorse, donate money to or for the benefit of, and attend campaign events for the Official's spouse who is a political candidate. Also, the university president may authorize an Official or a representative from the university to attend a campaign activity. Officials, like all university employees, are encouraged to participate in mass meetings, but should take care not to endorse a particular candidate or to put forward their affiliation with the university.

No one affiliated with the university is authorized to speak for the university on political matters except the president or those expressly authorized by him. University employees who are not Officials may participate in partisan political activities and public policy initiatives, including legislation, referenda, ballot initiatives, or constitutional amendments; however, they should act, attend, speak, or write in an individual capacity and not use their affiliation with the university.

In appropriate contexts, an individual may state his or her position at the university for identification purposes. For example, a faculty member who testifies in a legislative hearing about a public policy issue or who writes an op-ed or similar publication related to his or her area of academic expertise may note his or her position at the university. In those circumstances, the individual should state that the views expressed are solely those of the individual. Legitimate scholarship regarding public policy issues and the political process is appropriate; consistent with academic convention, scholarship in reputable scholarly literature and professional conferences need not include a disclaimer.

Some advocacy activities have such clear potential for merging with partisan politics or for conflict with Church of Jesus Christ values as to be inappropriate for university employees. In cases of reasonable doubt as to whether a contemplated activity would be inappropriate under this policy, university employees should consult the [Academic Freedom Policy](#), use reasonable prudence and good judgment, and seek counsel from the appropriate supervisor.

Use of University Resources and Facilities for Political Purposes

University resources and facilities may not be used for partisan political purposes. For example:

- expressions of partisan political support by an individual should not list nor imply university affiliation;
- partisan political opinions or support for political candidates may not be transmitted on or through university resources, or supplies, including stationery, letterhead, university-owned computer hardware or software, university networks, university e-mail accounts or Web pages, and university-owned voice communications and messaging equipment;
- campus mail may not be used to distribute partisan political material;
- university classes and other institutional gatherings may not be used to endorse specific candidates, parties, or political programs;



- university records, organizational information, mailing lists, conference attendance lists, and directories of any kind may not be used for partisan political purposes; and
- the university's name, symbols, and logos may not be used for partisan political purposes.

University resources and facilities may be used for partisan political purposes only in the following instances:

- commercial services that are made available to the public for a standard fee, but not including reservations or scheduling of any university buildings, rooms, or other campus space;
- university buildings and grounds, for activities expressly authorized elsewhere in this policy; and
- courses or internships for academic credit that meet the academic requirements of departments, colleges, and schools and that clearly preserve the political neutrality of the university.

Employees Who Run for Public Office or Work Extensively in Political Campaigns or on Other Matters of Public Policy

The university encourages civic engagement by all of its employees, including service on boards, commissions, and councils. In addition, university employees who are not Officials may run for or be appointed to public office, accept opportunities to work extensively in political campaigns, and participate in activities involving legislation, ballot initiatives, referenda, or constitutional amendments, as long as they do not violate the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and their activities do not interfere with university duties. To the extent possible, an employee's activities should be undertaken with only minimal references to the employee's affiliation with the university. Any paid service as an employee, consultant, or officer of a candidate's campaign or a political party must be approved by the president of the university and will generally require a leave of absence from the university.

Seeking or serving in a public office may affect an employee's ability to meet all university responsibilities. Therefore, a faculty member must first establish an agreement in writing with the dean, the academic vice president, and the president of the university before agreeing to become a candidate for public office, making an announcement of intent to run for office, or accepting an appointment to a public office. Staff must obtain approval from their immediate supervisor, the person in charge of their particular area, their responsible vice president, and the president of the university. Candidates running for re-election must renew this agreement each time they run. If necessary, a revised employment agreement will be negotiated that reduces university remuneration and responsibilities. Employees who receive approval to run for office must be especially careful to protect the university's position of neutrality and impartiality. Employees who are candidates for office may refer to their affiliation with the



university in their own campaigns but should be careful to avoid any implication of university endorsement.

An individual jeopardizes his or her employment by allowing campaigning or other political activities to interfere with the performance of regular university duties and other employment obligations or by using university resources for political purposes.

Leave for Elected or Appointed Public Officials

Though the university encourages its employees to provide public service, the need to preserve neutrality and independence requires that employees not be compensated by the university for the time spent working in public political office. Consequently, university employees elected or appointed to public office will need to adjust their employment relationship with the university as described below.

Prior to assuming duties as a part-time public official, each employee must establish with his or her supervisor how much university service will be lost in the provision of the public service and accept appropriate adjustments in compensation. When a faculty member becomes a part-time public official, the supervisor should arrange an employment agreement that does not provide university compensation for the time or during the intervals spent in public service. When a staff employee becomes a part-time public official, compensation from the university should be reduced by an amount proportional to the time lost in the provision of public service.

If the public office requires the full time of the employee, he or she should resign the university position before accepting the public post. Temporary departures from the university can be arranged as leaves without compensation under standard policy.

Exceptions to the Political Neutrality Policy

Only the president of the university can authorize exceptions to the provisions of this policy.

APPROVED: 23 Jan 2012 [Revised 18 Dec 2024]

PRIOR VERSION: 22 Oct 2007

APPLICABILITY: This policy applies to all university employees and students.

POLICY OWNER: Assistant to the President and General Counsel

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Office of General Counsel



RELATED POLICIES:

- [Academic Freedom Policy](#)
- [Church Educational System Honor Code](#)
- [Clubs and Associations Policy](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- [Demonstration Policy](#)
- [Filming and Photography on Campus Policy](#)
- [Internships Policy](#)
- [Media Contact Policy](#)
- [Speakers and Events Policy](#)
- [Staff Leaves Policy](#)