

Policy Title: **POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

It is College policy to encourage members of the College faculty and staff, who wish to do so as a personal activity, to express their viewpoints on political issues, to participate in political campaigns, to offer themselves as candidates for non-partisan office, and to hold such an office (collectively, to engage in “political activities”). All College employees should feel free to engage in such political activities consistent with their full obligations to the College and in accordance with this policy and applicable laws.

The limitations the College imposes are those reasonably necessary to protect its independence in academic and business matters, and to ensure its adherence to its mission and its compliance with the laws under which it operates. More specifically, those limitations are: (1) to preserve the College’s non-partisan, independent, tax-exempt status; (2) to preserve the College’s resources for its educational, research, and related functions; and (3) to protect against any conflicts of interest or time that may infringe on the ability of College personnel to perform their official duties and meet their responsibilities with maximum effectiveness and objectivity.

General Statement: College employees may engage in lawful political activities. However, such activities, like any other personal, non-official undertaking, must be done on the employee’s own time and should not interfere with College duties or involve the use of College resources. As private citizens, employees may engage in political activities on their own time and with their own resources. However, employees may not:

- Engage in political activities during their working time;
- Use College resources to engage in political activities at any time;
- Solicit contributions, signatures, or services for a political purpose from other College employees while they are engaged in their official duties; and
- Represent their personal political views or the views of any candidate as being those of the College unless there has been specific written authorization from the Administration to do so. This means that care should be taken in using an official College title to promote one political candidate over another. Generally, employees should seek to clarify that the use of their name and/or title indicates neither support nor endorsement by the College of a particular candidate and that the employee is acting solely in their role as a private citizen.

For purposes of this policy, College resources include, but are not limited to FVTC:

- Letterhead, logos, postage, mailing labels, directories, and mailing lists (unless lawfully obtained through a public records request);
- Campus mail;
- Office space and facilities (except as permitted by the College’s Community Use or Lease of District Facilities Policy);
- Office supplies;
- Photocopiers;
- Telephone or facsimile machines;

- Electronic resources, including email, websites, online discussion boards, cell phones, or similar resources; and
- Vehicles.

Campaigning for and Appointment to Public Office: College employees may run or hold public office, except in circumstances where the elective office would interfere with the employee's ability to fully perform their College job duties, where the elective office is incompatible or creates a conflict of interest with the employee's position at the College, or where the employee is legally prohibited from holding both the elective office and a paid position at the College. In the event personal political campaign activities impairs performance or impacts the ability of an employee to perform assigned job responsibilities, then a reduced-time appointment or leave of absence may be implemented.

College-Sponsored Educational Political Events: Educational, non-partisan political events may be held on College property consistent with the Community Use or Lease of District Facilities Policy, the Free Speech and Peaceful Assembly Policy, and the provisions set forth in this policy:

- An educational political event may be sponsored by the College or one of its divisions, academic departments, or administrative units. Such educational events are subject to advance notice to and approval by the Vice President of Human Resources, or their designee, as to the time, place, and manner in which the event will occur.
- Except as specifically provided in this policy, political events or activities sponsored by the College or one of its divisions, academic departments, or administrative units must be solely for voter education. Such events should be in the format of a candidate forum or debate, question-and-answer session, or similar communication and be open to all legally qualified candidates for political office on an equal basis. No fundraising may occur on College property for any ballot initiative, candidate for office, or political activity.
- If the College sponsors an educational political event, all campaigns of candidates seeking election to the same political office will be offered an opportunity to participate.

Violations of This Policy: Employees who are concerned about whether an activity may be a violation of this policy may utilize the Vice President of Human Resources as a resource.

An employee found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Nothing in this policy shall prohibit any legislator or candidate for public office from attending any college-sponsored public function as a guest of the College or, for example, accepting an invite from a faculty member to speak to a class on a topic related to the course material, or from being on the premises as a private individual to conduct business with the College.

The Faculty Association and the Educational Support Personnel Association are not considered political entities so long as their activities comply with this policy.

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