

Political Activities Policy

Adopted by President's Cabinet 5/27/14

Revisions Adopted by President's Cabinet 5/22/18

Policy Statement: East Georgia State College provides a forum for the exchange of information for its students, faculty and staff through a variety of classroom, field experiences, conferences, exhibits, cultural and community events to encourage open discussion and critical thinking opportunities about responsible citizenship. EGSC encourages all students, faculty, staff, and students to exercise their rights and duties as citizens to participate as individuals in the electoral process. Nothing in this policy is intended to limit the rights of faculty, staff or students to express personal opinions or engage in political activities in their individual capacities and as private citizens. In addition, college administrators, faculty and staff are not authorized in their official capacity to make public or media statements in support of or in opposition to political campaign or public candidate for office. When making such statements in their capacity as private citizens, such persons must clearly indicate that they are not representing the college or speaking for the college.

Federal and state laws, however, clearly distinguish between the political activities of individuals and those of tax-exempt institutions such as EGSC. Tax-exempt institutions are prohibited from engaging in "substantial efforts to influence legislation" and from participating or intervening in any "political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office."

Purpose and Scope of the Policy: The purpose of the policy is to establish guidelines to prevent intervention in political activity by the college or its employees and to establish procedures for using campus facilities for political events that comply with federal tax laws governing tax exempt organizations. The policy also covers an employee's political candidacy, election or appointment to office and the management of political campaigns by employees. This policy applies to all students, faculty staff and all college services, activities, operations and facilities. "Political event" is defined as an event where a political candidate or political organization speaks or is prominently featured. A forum or public debate held in a college facility must follow the procedures as outlined in Exhibit "A". Non college sponsored individuals or groups seeking use of college facilities for expressive purposes may request permission to engage in speech activities through the EGSC Event Planner. See EGSC Freedom of Expression Policy for outdoor preferred locations and see Facilities Usage, Scheduling Policy and Fees for procedure and fees for requesting use of indoor campus facilities.

A. Political Events sponsored by College: As a public, tax-exempt institution, the college is not permitted to endorse any political philosophy or any candidate for public office. However, the college may, through its academic or administrative units, provide institutionally sponsored opportunities to educate its students, faculty, staff and citizens at large through candidate lectures, debates, forums and other political discourse on campus, as outlined below.

1. Approval: A political event may be sponsored by a department or unit of the college, after approval of the Vice President and President, or designees, and must be in the format of a forum or debate. To ensure viewpoint neutrality, the forum or debate must follow the guidelines in Exhibit "A". 2. Publicity: The College may publicize the event in accordance with its existing policies, provided that promotional material for the event must not imply or state that the college or sponsoring unit or department endorses a political candidate, political organization position of a political candidate or political organization. 3. Costs, Expenses, Fees and Honoraria. Facilities rental charges will be waived, but any service costs related to the event (security, custodial, parking assistance, IT, etc.) must be paid by the institutional sponsor. No compensation, honorarium, or expenses may be paid to any political organization or political candidate; no admission fee may be charged, and no political fundraising activities may be conducted.

B. Political events sponsored by College Recognized Clubs and Organizations: Political events may be sponsored by a college recognized student, faculty or staff group or organization. 1. Approval: The sponsorship must be approved by the President or his designee. Campus facilities will be made available for events in accordance with the Facilities Usage, Scheduling Policies and Fees and any associated guidelines or policies. Receptions must include all candidates that are invited to participate in the political event. 2. Publicity: The promotional material is subject to the same limitations as paragraph A(2) herein; the sponsoring organization may limit the extent of media coverage of the event, subject to the college's right to publicize the event in any manner it deems appropriate. 3. Disclaimer: At the beginning of each political event, after the event is fully convened, the political candidate or a representative of the political candidate, the political organization or the sponsoring group or organization must deliver the following oral disclaimer: "This event is sponsored by ____ (name of organization). The use of EGSC facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by the College. EGSC does not endorse this candidate or organization or any candidate or organization in connection with this or any other political campaign or election." 4. Costs, Expenses, Fees and Honoraria: Facilities rental charges and service costs will be charged in accordance with EGSC policy for recognized college organizations. No political fundraising activities may be conducted.

C. Non-College Sponsored Political Events: 1. Approval: An individual, a candidate, campaign or political party or other political organization acting independently, without a college sponsor, may request to rent college facilities for a political event. Use of campus facilities for such events is governed by the Facilities Usage, Scheduling Policies and Fees, and associated guidelines and policies including debates and forum guidelines in Exhibit "A." The President has final approval of the usage of campus facilities for any political event. 2. Publicity: Promotional materials must be in accordance with paragraph A(2) of this policy. Requests for press conferences or similar events on campus, by or on behalf of political candidates or their campaigns, are subject to this policy. 3. Disclaimer Statement: The disclaimer statement in B(3) above must be used at the time and in the form as noted therein. 4. Costs, Expenses, Fees, Honoraria: The political candidate or political organization must pay the full facility rental charge and all service costs associated with the event. All facility rental charges and the estimated service costs must be paid in full in advance of the event. Admission charges must be in an amount necessary to cover reasonable costs of the event. No political fundraising may be conducted.

Example: The college auditorium is booked by the local radio station for a political forum. All qualified candidates and incumbents from all political parties are invited. An EGSC professor serves as one of the moderators. The guidelines in Exhibit "A" must be followed and documentation made evidencing compliance.

D. Political Appointments or Elective Office and Management of Political Campaigns: EGSC employees are encouraged to fulfill their civic obligations and engage in the normal political process of society. Nevertheless, it is inappropriate for college employees to manage or enter political campaigns while on duty to perform services for the college or to hold elective political office at the state or federal level while employed by the college. Additionally, college employees must not speak or act in the name of the college in a political campaign. Those who in their official capacity speak for the college should make it clear when expressing individual views that they are not stating a college position. The following policies governing political activities apply to all EGSC employees:

- 1.** An employee may not manage or take an active part in a political campaign that interferes with the performance of duties or services for which he or she receives compensation from the college.

- 2.** An employee may not hold elective political office at the state or federal level.
- 3.** An employee seeking political or elective office at the state or federal level must first request a leave of absence without pay beginning prior to qualification as a candidate in a primary or general election and ending after general or final election. If elected to state or federal office, the employee must resign prior to assuming office.
- 4.** An employee may seek and hold elective office at other than the state or federal level, or appointive office, when it does not conflict or interfere with the employee's duties and responsibilities to the college or to USG. Prior to seeking such office the employee must obtain the prior approval of his or her supervisor and the President for this activity through submission of the EGSC Permission for Outside Employment form.

Example: History professor may participate in a political campaign and endorse a candidate, but must do so in his/her individual capacity, clarify that he/she is not speaking for the institution, use personal stationery, and must engage in such activity outside usual work hours and duties. This activity includes, but is not limited to, soliciting signatures for a political petition, writing letters in support of an issue or candidate, soliciting contributions for a political campaign or promoting a candidate or political agenda on the professor's institution owned website.

- E. Use of Institutional Resources:** College employees and students are prohibited from using college resources (funds, vehicles, copier, fax, supplies, services, mailing labels) for political campaign purposes, except as permitted by this policy. College marks, letterhead, insignia or seals should not be used in such correspondence and the employee's title, if used, must be for information only.
- F. Appearance of Candidates in a Non-Candidate Capacity** Candidates may appear at the college as a speaker in a non-candidate capacity provided the speaker is chosen to speak solely for reasons other than his or her candidacy, the individual speaks only in his or her non-candidate capacity, no reference is made to the election and the college maintains a nonpartisan atmosphere on the premises and at the event. The introduction of the speaker should state the speaker's distinguished career, expert in non-political field, or as a celebrity. Campaigning at the event is prohibited. The college must clearly indicate the capacity in which the candidate is appearing and should not mention the candidacy or upcoming election in any communications announcing the candidate's attendance.

G. Examples of permissive activities:

Non-partisan course assignments or political speakers designed to educate students about the political process: Professor can require students observe local political campaign, but cannot mandate which campaign. (F)

Non-partisan education or training programs created to enhance public understanding of the electoral process. (F)

Public forums to which all candidates are invited and to whom equal access and opportunity are provided. (See A, B, C)

Candidate or incumbent may deliver the commencement address. (F)

Student Republican Club invites speaker to club meeting. (B) Debate (F)

Candidate may initiate a campus visit and tour with the President; this is not a political event if all elements of paragraph F above are observed. However, due to the appearance of a political event, the USG Office should be notified in advance. (F)

Voting in any election (with time off per leave policy).

Personal, individual membership in a political party.

Holding elective office on the local Board of Education, after demonstrating no conflict or interference with EGSC duties and obtaining prior approval of supervisor and President. (D)

H. Examples of impermissible activities:

Participation in political activities during regularly scheduled work hours.

Endorsement of political candidates by the college, its officials, administrators or agents in their official capacity.

Donation or campaign contributions by college officials in their official capacity or on behalf of the institution.

College reimbursement of its officials, administrators, faculty or staff for political donations or activities.

Appendix “A”

Guidelines for Political Debates or Forums on Campus

1. All legally qualified candidates for office must be invited to participate and a record is made of the invitations and responses;
2. An announcement is made at the event, prior to its start, of the names of all candidates invited and whether declined or in attendance;
3. The event moderator, whether an EGSC employee or not, shall remain neutral in opinion toward all candidates and topics at all times and will ask a broad range of questions within the candidate’s expected job responsibilities;
4. All candidates will be given equal opportunity to answer questions; and
5. No campaign literature or fundraising is allowed at the event.

The EGSC Event Planner will inform users of the above requirements and document the user’s compliance