

Wingate University Policy on Campus Political Activity

INTRODUCTION

Wingate University believes that in order to produce informed global citizens and critical thinkers, it is vital that we promote the free exchange of ideas. Free speech is the fertile soil in which curiosity and worthy ideas take root and blossom. Over the years, speakers from a variety of backgrounds have challenged Wingate students to question their preconceived ideas and think for themselves, and we plan to continue to bring interesting, thought-provoking speakers to campus.

By the same token, Wingate University is a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) nonprofit and is therefore prohibited by law from participating in any political campaign. For this reason, any political activity sponsored by the University must serve a specific academic purpose and cannot serve as a call to action for any political candidate or cause.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Students and employees are free to express their individual political views and exercise their right to participate in the political process, provided they understand and make clear they are not speaking for, or in the name of, Wingate University, or any unit, department, or office of the University. (As determined by the institutional and Board of Trustees bylaws, only the President speaks for the University.)

Campus resources, including Wingate's campus mail, email and phone systems, social media, computer networks, office supplies, support services, or facilities may not be used to further political campaigns. Wingate University recognizes that some official student organizations have partisan orientations, and the University respects the right of these groups to participate fully in the political process. The University also recognizes that some academic classes have robust discussions on policy issues, and there may be times when partisan speakers are brought in to enrich those discussions. These regular class and organization activities are permissible. However, if an audience beyond the regular class or organization membership is sought for a political speaker, permission must be granted by the Provost, as appropriate.

The following political activities, provided they are carried out in a nonprejudicial manner, are also permissible:

- Speakers who are representing matters of public concern in the context of an educational lecture or presentation, even if the speaker holds or is a candidate for a political office.
- Issue talks by current holders of political office.
- Debates between or among candidates for political office or about policy issues.
- Impartial voter education and/or registration drives.
- Events and educational efforts encouraging students to vote either locally or in their hometowns.

The University uses the following criteria when considering requests for the use of campus facilities for political activities:

- The student organization or sponsoring department is responsible for compliance with all policies related to the rental of University facilities.
- The student organization or sponsoring department is responsible for ensuring that all costs associated with the events are paid (including telephone usage, photocopying, rental fees, broadband, electricity, facilities personnel, Campus Police or local police coverage, receptions, travel costs, etc.).
- All publicity for the event must include identification of the sponsoring organization or department and a disclaimer indicating that the University does not support or oppose candidates for political office and that the opinions expressed are not those of the University. A member of the sponsoring organization must make the same disclaimer at the beginning of the event. Posters and leaflets promoting the event must be approved and posted in accordance with the Wingate University policy for posting notices on campus.
- No Wingate University banners or insignias may be displayed at the event in a manner that implies institutional support for a particular candidate.
- University spaces and facilities may not be used to solicit funds for political candidates.
- All requests for events must be in writing and submitted in advance for approval by the Office of Marketing and Events, along with all plans, publicity, and other information related to such activities. The Marketing department is available to consult with members of the Wingate community about such activities.

University space and facilities will be made available on an impartial and “as available” basis. Consistent with Wingate’s educational mission and given the high demand for University space in general, requests made in association with an academic class will be given the highest priority.

Individuals representing political campaigns are prohibited from entering University facilities for purposes of distributing campaign literature or engaging in other campaign--related activity.

LOBBYING AND FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY

Wingate University employees are prohibited from lobbying on behalf of the University without first receiving approval from the Executive Leadership Team.

Funds or contributions for political candidates or campaigns may not under any circumstances be solicited in the name of Wingate University or on campus, and University resources may not be used in soliciting such funds. If Wingate University students, faculty, or staff make political contributions, they must do so as individuals and not on behalf of Wingate University.