

Trinity University Guidelines for Political Activity Events by Student Organizations

As a non-profit, private institution of higher education, Trinity University's activities are regulated in part by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code ("IRS"). As a tax-exempt institution, this prohibits the University from participating in political campaigns for candidates or ballot initiatives. The University is further prohibited from conducting lobbying activities. A violation of IRS regulations by the University could result in serious consequences, including but not limited to the loss of our tax-exempt status. Therefore, the University does not directly or indirectly engage in partisan political activity, including the endorsement of any political candidate or ballot initiative, nor does the University solicit funds for any candidate or ballot initiative. However, the University recognizes students and student organizations may independently engage in partisan political activity. The University uses the [American Council on Education \(ACE\) Memorandum](#) regarding political and campaign-related activities of and at colleges and universities as a guide for event review. Per the statement on [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), Trinity University encourages and supports free speech, expression, and the open exchange of ideas and opinions.

1. Student Organization Sponsored Events Involving Partisan Political Activity

In addition to following the guidelines presented here, student organizations hosting partisan political activities must also comply with all other relevant policies related to student organization activities.

Due to the nature of their close relationship with the institution, University Sponsored Organizations (USOs) may not host or co-sponsor partisan political events. (USOs share the institution's tax-exempt status and are advised by a full-time employee whose job description includes obligations to provide oversight of and support to the organization.)

Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) may independently host partisan political activities and campaign activity on campus under the following conditions:

- a. Candidate appearances may constitute speeches, question-and-answer sessions, or similar communications in an academic setting. Candidate appearances that include fundraising are deemed campaign rallies and are not permitted.
- b. University resources are not used. University resources include, but are not limited to:
 - i. University funds, including student activity fee money, to purchase campaign material, solicit donations, pay for campaign ads, contribute in any way to a political campaign or pay honoraria, transportation, support services, accommodation or meal expenses in support of any candidate, party, or partisan issue;
 - ii. University's tax-exempt ID;
 - iii. Campus mail, official Trinity University social media platforms, and/or Student Involvement banner printing services.

Note: RSOs may use University facilities for political activity in the same way and under the same conditions as they do for non-political activity. Student Organizations do not pay rental fees for use of University facilities. In some circumstances, and dependent on the proposed event, additional fees may be considered, including but not limited to, security, audio visual support, janitorial services, etc.

- c. Materials that are informational or educational in nature may be made available. Distribution of materials soliciting financial support are not permitted.

- d. The University's name and/or logo/marks are not used in conjunction with campaign-related or partisan political activity.
- e. The following requirements must be satisfied:
 - i. All marketing materials and publicity must be pre-approved by the Vice President for Strategic Marketing and Communication or designee.
 - iii. Announcements must be made at the beginning and end of every event and in all marketing and promotional materials to clearly indicate:
 - Trinity University does not support or oppose candidates for political office;
 - The opinions expressed are not those of Trinity University;
 - The name of the Registered Student Organization (RSO).
- f. Fundraising in University facilities is prohibited.
 - i. Student Organizations may not charge admission fees or solicit donations to raise funds to benefit a party, candidate, or political cause.
- g. The Student Organization may be required to collect a Certificate of Insurance from the third party that names Trinity University as an additional insured. The third-party being hosted by the Student Organization is required to provide insurance, not the RSO. Therefore, there should be no cost to the RSO.
- h. For all events involving political activity, the Student Organization leader will review, agree to, and sign an acknowledgement statement with the University that identifies the responsibilities of the Student Organization with regard to holding the event on the Trinity University campus. In addition, the Student Organization leader will be required to get the signature of the Student Organization adviser and the third party in order to facilitate the sharing of these requirements with the person/organization being hosted.

2. Student Organization Sponsored Events Involving Non-Partisan Political Activity

In addition to these guidelines, student organizations hosting non-partisan political activities must also comply with all other relevant policies related to student organization activities.

University Sponsored Organizations and Registered Student Organizations may sponsor non-partisan political activity, including, but not limited to:

- a. Voter Education:
 - Student Organizations may conduct non-partisan training programs designed to increase public understanding of the electoral process or to encourage citizens to become involved in the process.
 - Student organizations may circulate questionnaires or conduct public opinion polls. Such activities should not be skewed to the advantage or disadvantage of individual candidates, political parties, or ballot issues.
- b. Voter Registration:
 - Student Organizations may organize or participate in voter registration activities.
 - Voter registration activities may include non-partisan educational materials.
 - Voter registration activities should not include the presence of a candidate for office.