

# Student Organizations: Political Activities

## Definitions

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| Campaign Rally: | Describes a large public meeting that is held in order to show support for something such as a political party or candidate. <i>Note that recognized student organizations' club meetings are not considered campaign rallies.</i> |
| Endorsement:    | The action of publicly declaring one's personal or group's support of a candidate for elected office, ballot issue, or political party.  |
| Non-Partisan:   | Describes freedom from party affiliation, bias, or designation.  |
| Partisan:       | Describes adherence to a political party, faction, idea or cause.  |

## Other Applicable Policies and Procedures

- [C.10:](#) RIT Political and Legislative Activities Policy
- [C.11:](#) RIT Policy on Freedom of Speech and Expression
- [CCL:](#) Posting Procedures for Advertisement and Announcements
- [CCL:](#) RIT Club/Organization Manual

## Scope

The scope of these guidelines are limited to recognized student organizations as defined in the [RIT Club/Organization Manual](#). Lobbying and political activities concerning faculty and staff are addressed in RIT's Policy on Political and Legislative Activities ([C.10](#)). Additionally, activities concerning individual students who are not affiliated with a recognized student organization or who are acting outside of their membership in a student organization are addressed in RIT's Policy on Freedom of Speech and Expression ([C.11](#)).

### A Note on Student Government

The RIT Student Government (SG) is recognized as a University governance group and contributes members to [University Council](#): *an advisory body comprised of representatives from Academic Senate, Staff Council, and Student Government*. Appendix A offers guidelines specifically for Student Government. Additionally, activities concerning individual members of Student Government who are acting outside of their roles in the organization are addressed in RIT's Policy on Freedom of Speech and Expression ([C.11](#)).

## Specific Activities

The following is a list of common types of lobbying and political activities in which recognized student organizations may/may not participate. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but should provide examples of the types of activities that may be permitted. All activities are subject to interpretation by

the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs in consultation with the Office of Government and Community Relations.

### **1. Candidate Appearances, Forums, Debates**

- A. Recognized student organizations may receive permission to provide speaking opportunities to public officials and/or candidates for office. Any appearance by a public official or candidate should be for an educational or informational talk to the University community and must be sponsored by a recognized student organization.
1. Any such appearance must be approved at least 2 weeks in advance through the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs in consultation with the Office of Government and Community Relations and in accordance with RIT's Policy on Political and Legislative Activities ([C.10](#)) and Event Guidelines (see [Club/Organization Manual](#)), and [Posting Procedures](#). In certain situations and at the discretion of the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs and/or the Office Government and Community Relations, the Office of Legal Affairs may be consulted.
  2. Such events shall be limited to speeches, Q&A, or similar communications in an academic setting and are not to be conducted as campaign rallies.
  3. When hosting such events, attention should be paid to representing all sides of the political spectrum/issue when possible.
  4. In the event that an organization decides to represent one side of the political spectrum/issue, the event will be considered "partisan" and use of university recourses including student activity fee dollars is not permitted. Organizations may use money generated via club dues or fundraising (see section 3) for these purposes.
- B. Recognized student organizations may receive permission to sponsor public forums or debates to which public officials and/or candidates for public office are given an opportunity to speak.
1. Any such appearance must be approved at least 2 weeks in advance through the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs in consultation with the Office of Government and Community Relations and in accordance with RIT's Policy on Political and Legislative Activities ([C.10](#)) and Event Guidelines (see [Club/Organization Manual](#)) and [Posting Procedures](#). In certain situations and at the discretion of the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs and/or the Office Government and Community Relations, the Office of Legal Affairs may be consulted.
  2. Such events shall be limited to speeches, Q&A, or similar communications in an academic setting and are not to be conducted as campaign rallies.
  3. When hosting such events, attention should be paid to representing all sides of the political spectrum/issue when possible.

4. In the event that an organization decides to represent one side of the political spectrum/issue, the event will be considered “partisan” and use of university resources including student activity fee dollars is not permitted. Organizations may use money generated via club dues or fundraising (see section 3) for these purposes.
- C. Recognized student organizations are not permitted to compensate a public official or candidate for public office for a speaking engagement or appearance.

## **2. Candidate endorsing and Campaigning**

- A. Recognized student organizations may endorse a political party, candidate for public office, and/or take a position on a ballot issue. All endorsements shall make it clear that the endorsement represents the view of that organization and does not represent the position of the University. Any endorsement by a recognized student organization should include the following:
- i. *This endorsement represents the views of [insert organization] and not RIT, its officers, administration, faculty, staff or Board of Trustees.*
- B. Recognized student organizations may participate in campaign-related activities for a candidate for public office, political party, or ballot issue. Campaign-related activities for a candidate for public office, political party, or ballot issue must comply with all applicable RIT policies.
1. Campaign-related activities in classrooms, libraries, residential halls, or faculty or administrative offices shall not be permitted except when approved in accordance with the event approval process.
- C. Recognized student organizations may not place signs or other fixed exhibits (ribbons, flags, banners, etc.) on property owned or leased by the University that supports or critiques a particular candidate for public office, political party, or ballot issue.
- D. Recognized student organizations may not use University resources or student activity fee dollars for the purpose of producing materials that support or critique a particular candidate for public office, political party, or ballot issue. Organizations may use money generated via club dues or fundraising (see section 3) for these purposes.
- E. Campaign rallies are not permitted on property owned or leased by the University.

## **3. Financial Support and Fundraising**

- A. Recognized student organizations may not use University resources or student activity fee dollars for partisan activities. Organizations may receive permission to engage in fundraising activities to support partisan activities and events and to provide financial support to a candidate for public office, political party or ballot issue, provided that:
1. The fundraising activities do not occur on property owned or leased by the University and do not make use of university-managed platforms (e.g. Campus Groups, RIT crowdfunding platform);

2. No University resources or student activity fee dollars are used in the planning or execution of the fundraising activity.
  3. Any money raised is deposited into the appropriate RIT agency account.
  4. When money is raised in order to provide financial support for a candidate for public office, political party, or ballot issue, the organization does not accept the money directly and instead directs donors to the candidate's, parties, or issue's official fundraising mechanism (i.e. official candidate website).
  5. The activities are approved by the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs and the Office of Government and Community Relations at least 2 weeks in advance.
- B. Recognized student organizations may use University resources or student activity fee dollars for non-partisan activities. Organizations may also receive permission to engage in fundraising activities to support non-partisan activities.
1. RIT Crowdfunding Platform: Recognized student organizations should use the RIT crowdfunding platform when soliciting donations for the organization provided that:
    - a. The fundraising goal is \$1,000 or more;
    - b. The organization is collecting money for itself and not for a third party charitable organization or business;
    - c. The organization is not considered a social fraternity or sorority; and,
    - d. The Division of Development and Alumni Relations approves use of the platform;
  2. RIT Campus Groups: Recognized student organizations may use Campus Groups when soliciting donations with a goal of \$999 or less or for the purposes of raising money through the sale of goods (e.g. t-shirt sale) provided that:
    - a. The organization is collecting money for itself and not for a third party charitable organization or business; and,
    - b. The organization is not considered a social fraternity or sorority.
  3. Recognized student organizations that are not covered by the above conditions may use a third party platform for fundraising.
  4. These activities must be approved by the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs and the Office of Government and Community Relations at least 2 weeks in advance.

#### **4. Use of University Facilities**

- A. Recognized student organizations must comply with applicable guidelines related to the use of University facilities and must register events via the EMS system.
- B. Recognized student organizations who engage in partisan activities that require the use of university facilities may not use university resources or student activity fee dollars to cover the costs associated with using the facility (facility use fees, catering, technology setup/use fees, DPS, etc.). Organizations may use money generated via club dues or fundraising (see section 3) to cover these costs.
- C. Announcements or advertisements for political events using University facilities must clearly indicate the following:
  - i. The opinions expressed are not those of RIT;*
  - ii. The name of the sponsoring organization;*
  - iii. Other required information as outlined in the [Posting Policy](#).

#### **5. Voter Education**

- A. Recognized student organizations may conduct partisan and/or non-partisan training programs designed to increase students' understanding of the electoral process or encourage students to become involved in the process.
- B. Recognized student organizations may not use University resources or student activity fee dollars to create or deliver partisan education activities. Organizations may use money generated via club dues or fundraising (see section 3) for the purpose of planning or executing partisan training programs.
- C. Partisan voter education training must be sponsored by a recognized student organization and open to the campus community only.

#### **6. Voter Registration**

- A. Recognized student organizations may organize or participate in voter registration activities subject to the requirements of the Monroe County Board of Elections and NY State Election Law.
- B. Voter registration activities must be non-partisan. The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement offers non-partisan voter registration opportunities as well as training for student organizations interested in conducting voter registration drives on campus.
- C. Voter registration activities should not include the presence of a candidate for office.

#### **7. Voter Transportation**

- A. Recognized student organizations may provide transportation for student voters to polling locations. Such transportation must be available for any eligible student voter regardless of political affiliation. Additionally, such transportation must be coordinated through an RIT approved transportation vendor ([see RIT-Approved Charter Bus Companies](#)).

# Appendix A: RIT Student Government

## Specific Activities

The following is a list of common types of lobbying and political activities in which Student Government may/may not participate. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but should provide examples of the types of activities that may be permitted. All activities are subject to interpretation by the Center for Campus Life, Division of Student Affairs in consultation with the Office of Government and Community Relations.

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  2. Such events shall be limited to speeches, Q&A, or similar communications in an academic setting and are not to be conducted as campaign rallies.
  3. When hosting such events, Student Government must make every effort to include candidates who represent all sides of the political spectrum/issue.
- B. Student Government may receive permission to sponsor public forums or debates to which public officials and/or candidates for public office are given an opportunity to speak.
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  2. Such events shall be limited to speeches, Q&A, or similar communications in an academic setting and are not to be conducted as campaign rallies or events.
  3. When hosting such events, Student Government must make every effort to include candidates who represent all sides of the political spectrum/issue.

- C. Student Government is not permitted to compensate a public official or candidate for public office for a speaking engagement or appearance.

## **2. Candidate endorsing and Campaigning**

- A. Student Government may not endorse a political party or candidate for public office.
- B. Student government may, in the form of a resolution or official statement, support or oppose local, state, or federal actions that impact college students generally or RIT students specifically.

## **3. Financial Support**

- A. Student Government may not engage in fundraising activities to support a candidate for public office, political party or ballot issue.

## **4. Use of University Facilities**

- A. Student Government must comply with applicable guidelines related to the use of RIT facilities and must register events via the EMS system.

## **5. Voter Education**

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- B. Voter registration activities must be non-partisan. The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement offers non-partisan voter registration opportunities as well as training for organizations interested in conducting voter registration drives on campus.
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### **Effective Date:**

October 2019

### **Procedures History:**

Reviewed and Affirmed by Vice President, Government & Community Relations, SR. Vice President for Student Affairs, and University Counsel August 2019  
Endorsed by Student Government October 2019