

Message originally send to campus community on Oct. 6, 2015

Campus Update

Dear Campus Community,

As we approach election day and candidates continue to campaign in the area, it is appropriate to remind the campus community about State University policy on the use of campus facilities and other resources for campaign-related purposes.

As an academic institution, we recognize and welcome the educational benefits of exposing students to political debate and information, including partisan political speech. We have made some of our facilities available to a wide range of outside speakers and expressive activities and, therefore, have legal obligations to open such facilities to political speech, as well. In handling requests for permission to use campus facilities, we must be guided by the principle of viewpoint neutrality and evenhanded treatment as to terms and conditions of use (i.e. rental charges, security costs, insurance, etc.).

With regards to political speech and speakers, the State University has placed certain limits on access to its facilities. It has been longstanding State University policy – going back to at least the 1970s – to prohibit use of State University property for partisan political candidate fundraisers. This policy is consistent with our legal obligations, the educational mission of the State University, and other strong interests, such as avoidance of the inevitable impression of endorsing particular candidates.

» [2014 Memo from SUNY System Administration Regarding Political Campaign Activity by NYS Employees](#)

The policies that address the most commonly asked questions are the New York State Public Officer's Law and SUNY policies on facilities usage for non-commercial purposes. The applicable provisions are:

Public Officer's Law:

No state employee may use his/her official title, position or authority in any

any type may be used in furtherance of these activities, including, but not limited to, telephone, office supplies, postage, photocopying machines, computers (including e-mail) and support staff (see Advisory Opinion No. 93-9) nor may campaign activities be conducted from a state office or during state business hours unless leave is taken. Finally, no state employee may solicit from subordinates, as this practice is strictly forbidden by Civil Service law §107. (See also Election Law §17-158.)

Use of Facilities by Non-Commercial Organizations and Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech:

Political organizations are included in SUNY's definition of non-commercial organizations that are permitted use of campus facilities and in the College's policy on Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech. All non-commercial organizations are required to obtain a revocable permit for each use of campus facilities. These permits, obtained through Student Activities and Union Services for use of the Student Union Building (SUB), Conference Services and University Police for other campus locations, establish the terms and conditions for use of facilities, including reimbursement for any associated costs. If a political candidate wishes to speak in one of the free speech zones identified in the Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech policy during non-blackout dates outlined in the policy, they should contact the Office of the Vice President for Administration and Finance. The Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech policy may be found at this link:

<http://www.newpaltz.edu/sub/thirdpartypolicy.pdf>

The SUNY policy on Use of Facilities by Non-Commercial Organizations imposes the following additional conditions for use of facilities by partisan political organizations:

1. That the proposed meeting gives promise of contributing to the educational purposes of the institution.
2. That the institution sees a reasonable possibility of making the facilities available for other viewpoints to be presented.

Distribution of Campaign Materials:

Individuals campaigning for office shall have access to students and employees in parking lots, entrances to buildings and other areas to which members of the public are admitted, provided that such activities do not inhibit the movement of people or vehicles, impair the safe and efficient conduct of the operation or interfere with work duties or work performance. Individuals are not allowed to campaign in residence halls.

Individual campaign posters are not permitted in public spaces on campus. Meeting notices and other organizational materials shall not be hung upon, posted or otherwise affixed to the walls, doors, windows, trees or other appurtenances of facilities and buildings owned or leased by the state. More information on State University policies regarding use of facilities by non-commercial organizations can be found at [this website](#) (scroll down under Policy I to Section K: Use of university facilities for political purposes).

