



Guidelines for Political Campaign Related Activities

Updated September 9, 2020

Vote! Engage!

The University of Minnesota encourages students, faculty, and staff to vote and participate in the democratic process. However, federal and state tax laws prohibit the use of University resources to support or oppose a specific candidate, ballot initiative, or referendum.

While all members of the University community are free to express their political opinions and engage in political activities, it is very important that they do so only in their individual capacities and avoid the appearance that they are speaking or acting for the University in political matters.

An employee's focus while at work should be job-related and respectful of co-workers that may not share political beliefs.

If you have specific questions regarding political campaign issues not covered in this document, please consult the Office of General Counsel or Government and Community Relations for guidance.

Election Day activities; time off to vote & participate

Caucus Days. The Board of Regents permits classes and events to be scheduled after 6:00 p.m. on the evening of major political party precinct caucuses, but encourages citizen participation in the political process and supports efforts by the administration and faculty to make accommodations to promote participation.¹ Employees may take time off to attend caucuses provided they give advance notice of their absence.² The Office of the

¹ Minn. Stat. § 202A.19, subd. 3; Board of Regents Resolution Dec. 9, 2005

² Minn. Stat. § 202A.19, subd. 2.

Minnesota Secretary of State posts caucus locations on their website.³

Election Days. Classes and events may be scheduled as usual during the day on general election and state primary days. During the evening between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. on those days, regularly scheduled classes may be scheduled, but other University events should not be scheduled.⁴ University policy provides for paid leave of absence upon request for employees to vote. Consult the University's Administrative Policy on Military, Court Appearance, or Civil Duty Leaves, for information.⁵ The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State posts polling locations on their website.⁶

Employees may contribute to campaigns as they wish

Employees are permitted to make personal contributions to political candidates and causes. Federal and state candidates are required by law to report contributions above a certain amount by donor's name and work affiliation. The public reporting of this data enables interested parties to search by affiliation. This occasionally results in public statements such as "University of Minnesota employees gave \$X to candidate Y," or "Dean A contributed \$X to candidate B." However, these contributions are personal and do not indicate University support of a candidate or ballot initiative.

Employees may participate in political campaigns

University employees may volunteer for political campaigns during non-work hours and vacation time. Employees may hold paid political positions subject to the University's regularly applicable rules for non-University employment. Employees who are party officers or delegates may take time off to participate in meetings of state central committees, meetings of executive committees of major political parties, and conventions provided they give advance notice.⁷

³ <https://caucusfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

⁴ Minn. Stat. § 204C.03, subd. 2.

⁵ <http://policy.umn.edu/hr/milcourtcivicleave> see also Minn. Stat. § 204C.04, subd. 1

⁶ <http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

⁷ Minn. Stat. § 202A.135.

Authorized University officials can engage in limited political activities on behalf of the University.

Limited activities related to specific federal, state, or local legislation or ballot initiatives are permissible where 1) the subject matter is directly related to core of University interests; 2) the President has determined that the University should take a position; 3) the individuals who speak or write on the University's behalf are specifically authorized to do so.

Residence halls permit candidates to engage in political solicitation with appropriate notice

Campaign activities and political solicitation in and around University of Minnesota residence halls and on-campus housing facilities are allowed under specific guidelines.⁸ All activities should be coordinated with the campus housing/residential life office at least one day in advance. Campus housing/residential life offices have more detailed guidance available. Prior appointments allow University staff to provide advance notification to student staff and residents regarding the candidates' visits.

All campaign activities and political solicitation must comply with State of Minnesota and University of Minnesota COVID-19 pandemic mitigation policies and guidelines.

Literature may be distributed on campus in accordance with University policies

In campus academic buildings, handout distribution is restricted to foyer and lobby areas. Distributing published materials in stairways, classrooms, offices, hallways, doorways, ramps, elevators, or escalators is prohibited. In nonacademic buildings, including all University parking facilities, handout distribution is prohibited except with permission from the offices designated in the Distribution of Temporary Information Through Publications, Banners, or Chalking policy and related campus procedures.⁹ Outside academic and nonacademic buildings, distribution-free zones are

⁸ Minn. Stat § 211B.20.

⁹ <https://policy.umn.edu/operations/publicationsbanners>

established to maintain building ingress and egress. Material may not be distributed within 25 feet of building entrances.¹⁰

Postings and sidewalk chalking

In academic buildings, publications may be posted on bulletin boards expressly provided for public use. In nonacademic buildings and parking areas, posting is prohibited except with permission from the offices designated in the Distribution of Temporary Information Through Publications, Banners, or Chalking policy and related campus procedures. The distributor of the publications is responsible for the removal of outdated publications. Posting outdoors is limited to kiosks or other areas designated for posting. Posters, flyers, and signs for outdoor posting can be no larger than 14 by 22 inches.

Chalking on campus is limited to recognized student groups, University of Minnesota departments, faculty members, staff members and any registered U of M student. The University reserves the right to clean and remove any chalking that does not comply with this policy.¹¹

At the University of Minnesota Duluth, publications sponsored by campus departments and student groups must be approved by the Kirby Welcome Desk and must be posted in accordance with the UMD Posting Policy.¹² Postings by non-university entities are limited to bulletin boards marked as "non-approved posting" areas. There is no outdoor posting at UMD.

University resources cannot be used for fundraising

No University resources may be used to raise money for a political candidate or ballot initiative. University resources include your work-time, campus mail, and University supplies.

¹⁰http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Operations/Facilities/PUBLICATIONSBANNERS_PROC02.html

¹¹ <http://policy.umn.edu/operations/publicationsbanners>; see also <http://policy.umn.edu/operations/publicationsbanners-proc03>

¹² <https://policy.umn.edu/operations/publicationsbanners-appb>

What does this mean? If, for example, you want to host a fundraiser or a meet-the-candidate event at your home and you know that several of your colleagues would be interested in attending, you should draft the invitation outside of work hours and send it without using University copiers, supplies, or campus mail. With respect to email, the best way to engage in personal political activity is using your personal (non-umn.edu) email account.

Use of University facilities

As a public institution, meeting rooms, classrooms, concert and lecture halls, sports arenas, public spaces, and contact tables on campus are available for campaign events. Political campaigns and non-University groups may reserve space, provided they sign a Facility Use Agreement, provide proof of insurance, and pay a guest rate for the use of the facility.¹³ All activities must comply with State of Minnesota and University of Minnesota COVID-19 pandemic mitigation policies and guidelines.

Student groups currently registered with the Student Activities Office are eligible to reserve and receive a subsidized rate for their use of space.

The University must make its facilities available for holding precinct caucuses, legislative district or county conventions, and local, state, or federal elections. The charge for the facility cannot exceed the lowest amount charged to any public or private group.¹⁴

University of Minnesota logos

All official University of Minnesota logos are reserved for official University business and may not be used to promote non-University activities or imply endorsement. Official University logos include the wordmark, unit/wordmark combinations, Block M, Driven to Discover, mascots, and Regents seal.

¹³ http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Operations/RealEstate/REALESTATE_PROC01.html

¹⁴ Minn. Stat. § 202A.192 & § 204B.16, subd. 1.