

CHANCELLOR'S PROCEDURES AND ILLUSTRATIVE GUIDANCE ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE VSC SYSTEM

November 2007

The following procedures and illustrative guidance apply to VSC colleges and programs:

A. Political Events Sponsored by the VSC

1. **Participation and Sponsorship.** Although the VSC is a public, tax-exempt institution and therefore may not endorse any candidate for political office, it may provide and sponsor opportunities to educate its students, faculty, employees and the public at large through candidate lectures, forums, debates and other similar events on campus.
2. **Procedures.**
 - a. **Approval.** A political event may be sponsored by a college or program if approved by the President or designee. If the event is a debate or forum, all announced candidates shall be invited to participate although attendance by all is not required. All candidates participating shall be invited to participate in any reception or other social event that may be associated with such events. If candidate lectures are desired, all candidates shall be invited to give a lecture. No preferential treatment shall be given candidates in terms of scheduling, facilities or publicity.
 - b. **Publicity.** Promotional material for VSC-sponsored political events may not state or imply that the VSC, or any official thereof, endorses a political candidate or organization.
 - c. **Costs, Expenses, Fees and Honoraria.** The VSC shall not charge candidates for use of facilities for VSC-sponsored events. No candidate or organization may be paid any compensation, honorarium or expenses. No admission fee may be charged. At such events, no fund-raising activities may be conducted and only non-partisan voter registration activities may take place.

B. Political Events Sponsored by VSC Recognized Groups and Organizations

1. **Event Sponsorship and Procedures**
 - a. **Approval.** A political event may be sponsored by a VSC-recognized student group or organization with the approval of the organization's leader. Facilities shall be made available on the same basis as would apply to any other student group or organization.
 - b. **Publicity.** Promotional material for the political event may not state or imply that the VSC endorses the political candidate or political organization or any position of the candidate or organization.

- c. Disclaimer Statement. At the beginning of each political event, after the event is fully convened, the political candidate or his or her representative, or the sponsoring group or organization, shall deliver the following spoken disclaimer:

“This event is sponsored by _____. The use of VSC facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by the VSC. The VSC does not endorse this candidate or organization, or any other, in connection with this or any other political campaign or election.”

- d. Costs, Expenses, Fees and Honoraria. The VSC shall not charge the candidate or the sponsoring organization for use of facilities for the event. However, the sponsoring organization shall pay all service costs associated with the event. The sponsoring organization may charge admission only in an amount sufficient to cover reasonable costs of the event. At such events, no fund-raising activities may be conducted and only non-partisan voter registration activities may take place.

C. Candidate or Campaign Use of College Facilities

1. Candidates, campaigns, and political parties, acting independently without a VSC sponsor, may request to use VSC facilities for political events. Such facilities may be made available in accordance with the standards and procedures set forth in Policy 402.
2. Publicity. Promotional material for the political event may not state or imply that the VSC endorses the political candidate, campaign or political party or any position of the candidate, campaign or party.
3. Disclaimer Statement. At the beginning of each such political event, after the event is fully convened, the political candidate or his or her representative shall deliver the following spoken disclaimer:

“This event is sponsored by _____. The use of VSC facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by the VSC. The VSC does not endorse this candidate or organization, or any other, in connection with this or any other political campaign or election.”
4. Costs, Fees, Expenses and Honoraria. The political candidate or political organization shall pay the full facility rental charge as well as all service charges associated with the event. All facility rental charges and estimated service costs shall be paid in full in advance of the event. The candidate or organization may charge admission only in an amount sufficient to cover reasonable costs of the event. At such events, no fund-raising activities may be conducted and only non-partisan voter registration activities may take place.

D. VSC Resources

VSC officials, students, faculty and other employees are prohibited from using VSC resources such as funds, vehicles, fax machines, duplicating equipment, supplies, services or mailing labels for political campaign purposes, except as otherwise may be permitted by Policy 501. In addition, the college logo, letterhead, symbols or other proprietary marks of institutional affiliation may not be used to endorse or oppose candidates, political parties or political campaigns.

E. Illustrative Guidance

Examples of permissible activities include:

- Non-partisan course work and assignments designed to educate students about the political process
- Non-partisan education or training programs created to enhance public understanding of the electoral process
- Student newspaper political editorials
- Public forums to which all candidates are invited and equal access and opportunity are provided
- Candidate appearances on college radio shows provided all announced candidates are invited
- Non-partisan candidate surveys or public opinion polls
- Personal, individual membership in a political party
- Encouraging employees and students to vote and conducting non-partisan voter registration campaigns
- Voting in elections
- Public expression of views in a personal capacity outside of work hours
- Invitation to candidates to appear in a non-candidate capacity, provided the individual is chosen to speak solely for reasons other than his or her candidacy and this is clearly communicated on any promotional materials

Examples of impermissible activities include:

- Endorsement of candidates by the VSC, its Trustees, employees or agents in an official capacity
- Campaign contributions by VSC Trustees, employees or agents in an official capacity
- VSC reimbursement of VSC Trustees, employees or agents for political donations or activities
- Participation by VSC employees in political activities during working hours
- Publication of ratings of the candidates
- Providing hyperlinks to candidate web pages on VSC web pages in a manner that favors one candidate over any others