

STUDENT POLITICAL ISSUES

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Student Political Clubs:

S&A fees are public funds, subject to control by the Board of Trustees and expenditure by the college's student life administrator. They may be used to fund officially recognized student political clubs or organizations.

Recognition:

Student political groups should be given recognition on the same basis as other student groups, without regard to viewpoint. Allocation of funds to student political groups must be neutral with respect to the viewpoints of the groups.

Recognition Procedures:

Funding may include fees for political speakers, travel expenses and other relevant club activities as deemed reasonable by the institution. Activities of clubs or student political groups should be approved or sanctioned by the student government association in advance of expenditures and off-campus speakers subjected to a college off-campus speaker policy. "Programs devoted to political or economic philosophies shall result in the presentation of a spectrum of ideas." RCW 28B.15.044.

Political student clubs or groups may use college letterhead if officially sanctioned.

Facilities Use:

Student political clubs or groups may use college facilities in the same manner as other officially recognized student clubs or groups even if the use is political in nature.

The college can establish reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on the use of its facilities. Therefore, if political use is dominating the facility and impacting the use by others, such use may be limited.

Political student groups and off-campus political groups may post, vend, and distribute in the same manner as non-political groups, per college WACs and practices regarding reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on the use of its facilities. Application of such policies must be content-neutral and uniform.

Lobbying with Public Funds:

"Lobbying" means to attempt to influence the passage or defeat of any state legislation. "Legislation" means matters pending or proposed in either house or matters that may be the subject of action.

"Attempt to influence" includes legislative staff as well as legislators.

1. State agencies are prohibited from using, directly or indirectly, public funds for lobbying, unless (a) expressly authorized by statute (rare); (b) officers, employees or students are communicating with a member at that members' request; or (c) communicating a request for legislative action or appropriation through proper legislative channels. "Proper legislative channels" include contacting a legislator in person; attending a legislative hearing; or lobbying

legislators on campus. Such activity should be included in the institution's quarterly report. Student government associations or its equivalent are an exception and are allowed to lobby per item #3 below.

2. State agencies are permitted to (a) provide information or communicate on matters related to official agency business to any elected official or officer or employee of a public agency, including the legislature; and (b) advocate the official position or interests of the agency. Again, these are reportable.

3. Use of S&A fees for lobbying by student government is now expressly authorized by statute. This is a significant change in the law. Student government associations must consult with the Student Life Office so any lobbying activity may be included in the institution's quarterly Public Disclosure Commission report.

4. Voluntary student fees and services and activities fees may be used for lobbying by a student government association or its equivalent and may also be used to support a statewide or national student organization or its equivalent that may engage in lobbying.

Use of Funds:

1. S&A fees may be used to support political speakers, travel expenses and other relevant program or club activities as deemed reasonable by the institution.

2. Under no circumstances, may public funds be used as a gift (including entertainment) or campaign contribution to any elected official or officer or employee of a public agency. Nor may facilities (employees, stationary, postage, machines, etc.) be used for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election or for the promotion or opposition to any ballot proposition unless expressly used by the student government association or its equivalent utilizing services and activities fee funds or voluntary student fees.

3. Student orchestrated grassroots lobbying or other indirect forms of lobbying, i.e., mailing campaigns of postcards and letters; "call your legislator now" campaigns; mobilizing students and non-state employees to action; rallying public support; organizing rallies in Olympia; and creating citizen action groups, are allowable if done by the student government association and are to be reported to the college's student life administrator.

4. Use of S&A fees for lobbying by any other student group other than the student government association is still governed by the constraints on public agencies and reporting requirements in RCW 42.17.190.

References:

[1] Fischer, W.H., Coats, R., Kruger, M. (2001). Student political issues, WA Attorney General.

[2] [RCW 28B.15.044](#)

[3] [SB5776](#) 2009 Legislative Session