Essential Policies
FOR THE COLUMBIA COMMUNITY 2011-2012
Policy on Partisan Political Activity

Columbia University, as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, is prohibited from participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Political intervention includes not only making financial contributions but also the publication or distribution of written or oral statements on behalf of or in opposition to a particular candidate. There are no exceptions to this prohibition. Even an insubstantial violation may lead to monetary fines and expose the University to the possibility of revocation of its tax-exempt status.

Nonetheless, the University is dedicated to the free expression of ideas. It encourages students, faculty, and other employees, in their individual capacities, to participate fully in the political process during campaigns by candidates for public office as long as they do not, either overtly or implicitly, involve the University.

In order to permit the most robust political discussion during partisan political campaigns for public office, while at the same time ensuring Columbia’s compliance with the restrictions placed on the University as a tax-exempt organization, the University has created a Statement of Columbia University Policies and Practices on Campus Political Activities in 1976. That policy remains in effect today and prohibits all individuals and groups within the University community from using University resources or the University’s name in connection with partisan political campaign activities. Thus, in accordance with both the law and stated University policy, everyone connected with the University must observe the following rules with respect to his or her participation in national, state, or local partisan political campaign activities:

1. When endorsing or opposing a candidate for political office or taking a position on an issue for the purpose of assisting or opposing a candidate, individuals and groups within Columbia University should undertake to make it clear that they are speaking only for themselves and that they are not acting as a University position. This is particularly important for those who in their official capacity frequently speak for the University.
2. Faculty and other employees may take part in partisan political activities freely on their own time, but they must not do so at the expense of their regular responsibilities to the University and its students.
3. Columbia University’s name or insignia cannot be used on stationery or other documents intended for political purposes, including soliciting funds for political support or carrying on a political campaign.
4. Funds or other contributions may not be solicited in the name of Columbia University for political support or carrying on a political campaign.
5. Columbia employees may not—and should not be asked to—perform tasks related to partisan political activities during working hours.
6. The following may not under any circumstances be used for political campaign purposes:
   a. the University’s bulk-mailing privilege;
   b. University mailing lists—including the addresses and email addresses of departmental offices or the offices of faculty or other employees;
   c. University-provided office supplies, telephones, facsimile machines, copiers, etc.
   d. the University’s sales tax exemption for purchases of goods and services.
7. Any communication disseminated through the Columbia email system that could be construed as relating to political activity must include a clear statement that such communication represents the personal position of the author.
8. University-related organizations composed solely of members of the corporate University community and its educational affiliates may utilize available University building space. University facilities regularly reserved for student use, or other University space such as lecture halls and meeting rooms, may not engage in partisan political campaign activities within the University community, provided that such organizations will pay the costs of such activities (typically, telephones, duplicating, electricity, etc.) and will pay full rental fees for the use of such facilities that would otherwise be charged. A disclaimer should be made at the beginning of any such event (and in any printed materials or advertising) that the University does not support or oppose candidates for political office, that the opinions expressed are not those of the University, and that the University-related organization has sponsored the event. All plans, publicity, and other information relating to such activities must be approved in advance by the appropriate student affairs office and the General Counsel’s Office. The Office of the Director of Government Relations and Policy Coordination is available to

* Note, however, that when such student organizations engage in partisan political campaign activities aimed outside the University community, they may not utilize University space for such activities, but instead must conduct all such activities off campus.
consult with Columbia affiliates about such activities. The University's outdoor grounds may not be used for partisan political events.

9. Organizations that are composed of non-University members, participants or employees, in whole or in part, are ineligible for use of University space to engage in partisan political campaign activities.

10. Certain nonpartisan political activities (such as properly organized voter registration activities, voter education programs, and candidate debate) may be permissible if they do not evidence a preference for or opposition to a political party or to candidate who have taken a particular position. In order to ensure that all legal and University requirements are followed, advance approval for these events must be obtained from (and all materials must be reviewed by) both the appropriate student affairs office and the Committee’s Office, which will, if necessary, provide further guidance to the organizer. The Office of the Director of Government Relations and Policy Coordination is available to consult with Columbia affiliates about such activities. In addition, an announcement should be made at the beginning of each such event and in any written materials setting forth the disclaimer described in paragraph 8 above. As noted above, these policies are not intended to infringe in any way your individual right to support a particular candidate or participate in a political campaign. You remain entitled to be involved in the election process as you choose, so long as you do so in a way that does not—either overtly or implicitly—involve the University.

Your cooperation in this matter is both necessary and appreciated. If you have any questions, please call either Latif Flawaz, Director of Government Relations and Policy Coordination, 212-650-3508, latif@colubris.com, or Howard A. Jenkins, Deputy General Counsel, 212-650-5003, hjenkins@columbia.edu. At the Columbia University Medical Center, Ross A. Frommer, Deputy Vice President, 212-305-6877, rfromme@columbia.edu. is also available for assistance.

PARTISAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN EVENTS ON CAMPUS

When a University-related organization composed solely of members of the corporate University community and Columbia educational affiliates sponsors a partisan political campaign event, there are a number of considerations to keep in mind.

1. All places, publicity, and other information must be approved in advance by the appropriate student affairs office and the General Counsel’s Office. The Office of the Director of Government Relations and Policy Coordination is available to consult with Columbia affiliates about such events.

2. The University-related group selects the indoor University venue, based upon availability and size of expected audience.

3. No campaign rallies, campaign banners, campaign literature or button distribution, or fund-raising are allowed.

4. A disclaimer must be included in all written materials and advertising (including pheremone and announced at the beginning of all events: "Columbia University does not support or oppose any political candidates. The views expressed are those of the candidate or other partisan political speaker(s)."

5. Columbia University IDs are required for attendance.

6. Columbia University or school, banners may not be displayed; University-related group banners may be.

7. All costs (such as for University security, telephones, facsimile machines, and duplicating expense) must be paid by the sponsoring group or the speaker.

8. No room charge will be assessed if the sponsoring University-related group does not pay room charges for other (nonpolitical) events. If the sponsoring University-related group is charged for room usage for other (nonpolitical) events, a room charge must be paid for a political event.

9. Columbia University will not issue any press releases, but the University-related group may.

10. Candidates and supporting groups may not use the University's bulk mailing list, University mailing lists, or the University's sales tax exemption for the event.