



Policy

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, FACULTY AND STAFF

FS.401.1

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Source: [SBHE Policy Manual Section 308.3](#)

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The SBHE recognizes the importance of, and encourages, participation by individuals in the political, social, and economic affairs of the community, state, and nation. While the Board respects the deep concern of individual faculty members and students about current events and issues, and the committed desire to participate actively in elections, the Board must emphasize the distinction between involvement of an individual and involvement of the institution. The Board affirms its traditional concern for the well-being of the society; at the same time, the institution must remain outside the political arena. Adjustment of the academic calendar in order to free students, faculty, or other employees to engage in political activity is not consistent with the foregoing affirmation.

This policy does not bar anyone from active independent participation in political campaigns in behalf of candidates of his or her choice or in the advancement of his or her political beliefs or policy concerns outside the institution. In fact, active participation by all Americans in the political process which is fundamental to the democratic way of life is encouraged.

The Board does not believe it legitimate or wise for a college or university to make political commitments. Further, institutional participation in political activity, however worthy that activity might be in itself, would raise many legal questions.

The fundamental issue is the corporate involvement of an institution and any action that might involve institutional political unanimity which would not represent the views of all members of the academic community.

There is danger that an institution could evolve toward a kind of political orthodoxy, which in certain circumstances might even inhibit and discourage the expression of other opinions.

Any disruption of the normal processes of education at any institution endangers the very heart of our institutions; namely, freedom to inquiry, freedom of thought, and freedom of expression. Every effort must be made to make it as easy to present opposing viewpoints as it is for someone to express his or her views initially. An institution is not a place where anyone expressing a point of view, however much he or she is in minority, can be either silenced or threatened with language or physical actions. The common standards of courtesy that should characterize the academic community must be respected.

While class attendance may be no longer required in some institutions, every student has a right to expect every class for which he or she is registered to be held according to the university or college class schedule. In event of any class disruption or strike, students who choose to attend class must be able to do so without fear of intimidation or injury. Classes will be held in



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accordance with the academic calendar and all members of the faculty are obliged to meet assigned teaching responsibilities.

A university or college must always be a place of learning, a place for discussion, a place to hear differing opinions, a place for dissent, but such dissent must be made in a rational, lawful and peaceful manner. It must be made with due respect of the rights of others. While the Board protects the rights of all those who choose to dissent in peaceful and lawful ways, it must defend, with all the power at its command, the rights of others when any actions by dissenters are clearly disruptive of the work and program of the university or college.