



To: TVP, P & D

From: Andrew Thomson, Chief of Government Relations

Re: Guidelines for University interactions with partisan officials during election periods

Issue: This memo provides guidelines to University officials on their interaction with partisan/elected officials or advocacy groups during campaign periods.

As senior administrators, you could reasonably be perceived to speak on behalf of and/or represent the views of the University of Toronto. It is important to allow student and faculty participation in the election but also to ensure that the University itself is not perceived as being partisan, or biased.

As questions come up about how to engage candidates or issues on the campus, please reach out to the Government Relations Office (GRO) if you have any questions.

The University recognizes that an important element of political campaigns is the ability of candidates to canvass voters in their constituency. With regard to canvassing in student residences on campus, the University will comply with the [relevant law](#) and foster engagement, while concurrently respecting the health and safety, and privacy of the student living in residence.

On-Campus Campaigning

Candidates or their designates will be required to request access to student residences and dormitories from residence administrators. Access is required under the [election act](#), but to ensure the health and safety of our students and broader University community, protocols for external guests must be adhered to.

[Campus Events](#) will be open to external bookings. Campus space inquiries will be considered based on the University's policies, health guidelines, and availability as would be the case for any external group. Please contact the Government Relations Office should you receive a request to host or assist with an election-related, virtual, or in-person event.

General Principles

The University must be seen as impartial and non-partisan. As a publicly supported institution, the University of Toronto neither supports nor endorses any candidate or party, at any level of government. The University of Toronto will work to advance its mandate and mission - which routinely includes collaboration with government - regardless of the government's political affiliation.

We recognize that our faculty and students support many differing views and parties, and democratic engagement is encouraged. This engagement should be guided by a sense of fair play and impartiality at an institutional level. In 1992, the Governing Council of the University of Toronto passed the University's *Statement of Institutional Purpose* and its *Statement on Freedom of Speech*. These statements have served as the cornerstones upon which the University of Toronto has built its commitment to free expression.

Use of Photos/Images, and U of T Branding

- Images with U of T branding or senior leadership should not be used for any purposes during campaign periods. For example, university executives should not pose with candidates for photos, or offer quotes for campaign literature as it may be perceived as an endorsement.
- While it is our regular practice for a university executive to serve as host or emcee for a government announcement held at other times, during the campaign period such roles are generally inappropriate, as a university executive's participation could be seen to imply an institutional endorsement of a candidate or party.
- The University of Toronto logo or signage is not to be used at election-related events without explicit University permission, and internal systems (email, listserv, social media channels, etc.) are not to be used to distribute candidate or party materials with the objective of engaging in partisan discourse.

Hypothetical Scenarios

- **During a campaign, a political group requests that a university administrator attend an event and introduce a political figure.**
It would be inappropriate for a university executive to play an official role, including emcee, even if the request originates from a campus political group.
- **A candidate sends the University campaign literature with the request that it be distributed to staff, students, and faculty.**
It would be inappropriate for the University to circulate campaign literature. U of T resources should not be used to distribute partisan literature. These includes University listservs and email. Requests can be made to make campaign literature available in student residence common areas only.

- **During a campaign, a division hosts an academic panel discussion on an issue and wishes to invite a political official to participate.**

This event could be described as directly related to the University's academic mission. However, equal opportunity must be given to registered parties and nominated candidates. We recommend consulting with GRO on potential participation by a university executive.

- **A division hosts a candidates' debate independently or in partnership with a student group.**

It is expected that invitations to participate be extended to all major candidates. At the provincial and federal levels, major registered parties include Progressive Conservative, New Democratic, and Liberal parties. Official presence and/or participation by a university executive is not recommended given the nature of the event. A candidates' debate hosted independently by a student group may be encouraged to invite all major candidates.

University of Toronto Resources

- Freedom of Speech
- Statement of Institutional Purpose
- Statement on Freedom of Speech
- Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Excellence
- Policy on the Temporary use of Space
- UTogether

Contact

For questions and additional information, please contact Forrest Parlee, Executive Director, Government Relations and Public Affairs at 416-978-7311 or (forrest.parlee@utoronto.ca).