

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 institution's chief financial officer. 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.

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 should be approved 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.

Facilities Use: Student political clubs may use college facilities in the same manner as other officially recognized student clubs. College facilities are considered a neutral public forum.

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.

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.

Use of Funds:

1. 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 be 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.

2. Orchestrated grassroots lobbying or other indirect forms of lobbying, i.e., mailing campaigns of postcards and letters; "call your legislator now" campaigns; mobilizing non-state employees to action; rallying public support; organizing rallies in Olympia; and creating citizen action groups, are not "through proper legislative channels; and are not permitted with public funds.