

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM**

SECTION: Human Resources

NUMBER: 02.A.39

AREA: General

SUBJECT: Political Aid and Legislative Influence

1. PURPOSE

This document prescribes policies and procedures to ensure compliance with provisions set forth in Texas Government Code, [Section 556.001](#), et seq., and [Board of Regents Policies](#).

2. POLICY

2.1. State appropriated funds shall not be used for influencing the outcome of any election or the passage or defeat of any legislative measure. This prohibition shall not be construed to prevent any System official or employee from furnishing to any member of the legislature or committee upon request, or to any other state official or employee, or to any citizen, information in the hands of the employee or official not considered under law to be confidential information. This prohibition does not extend to officials or employees furnishing information or facts pertinent to the official duties and responsibilities of a particular agency. The Attorney General has ruled that this prohibition does not prevent state employees from testifying before legislative committees on their own time or during working hours on behalf of the employee's agency that supports or opposes legislation. Any action taken against an employee or official for supplying such information shall subject the person initiating the action to immediate dismissal from state employment. Furthermore, employees may not coerce, restrict, or prevent contributions to candidates or political organizations. Doing so may also result in immediate dismissal from state employment.

2.2. No funds under the control of the System or its component universities, including but not limited to state-appropriated funds, may be used directly or indirectly to hire employees or in any other way fund or support candidates for the legislative, executive or judicial branches of government of the State of Texas or the U.S. Government.

2.3. None of the funds appropriated by the legislature shall be expended in payment of the salary for full-time employment of any state employee who is also the paid lobbyist of any individual, firm, association or corporation. None of the funds appropriated by the legislature shall be expended in payment of the partial salary of a part-time employee who is required to register as a lobbyist by virtue of the employee's activities for compensation by or on behalf of industry, a profession

or association related to operation of the agency or institution for which the person is employed. A part-time employee may serve as a lobbyist on behalf of industry, a profession or association so long as such entity is not related to the System or its component universities. Except as authorized by law, none of the funds appropriated by the legislature shall be expended in payment of membership dues to an organization on behalf of the agency if the organization pays all or part of the salary of a person required to register under Texas Government Code, [Chapter 305](#).

- 2.4. No employee of any component university shall use any state-owned vehicle and property except on official business of the state, and such employees are expressly prohibited from using such vehicle, property and equipment (i.e., charging personal long distance phone calls to the component university, or using a component university office to operate a business) unrelated to the employee's job or in connection with any political campaign, personal or recreational activity.
- 2.5. No employee shall accept any public or private gift (i.e., items of significant financial value), favor, service, or benefit that would influence the outcome of a political campaign, a legislative measure, place others at a disadvantage, or interfere with an employee's performance of their official duties that would create a conflict of interest with his/her commitment with the component university.
- 2.6. No state-appropriated funds shall be paid to any official or employee who violates any of the provisions of this section.
- 2.7. Nothing in this policy shall be construed as prohibiting the payment of reasonable dues to an organization that is designed to represent student interests in the state legislature or federal congress from that portion of mandatory student service fee collections that is allocated to the student government organization. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to permit such mandatory student service fees to be used to influence the outcome of any election.
- 2.8. Component universities may not:
 - a. Contribute institutional funds to candidates, parties or political action committees.
 - b. Reimburse faculty or staff for contributions to political campaigns.
 - c. Conduct voter education activities that show favor to a candidate or issue.
 - d. Raise funds for a political candidate.
 - e. Publish ratings of candidates.
 - f. Use component university letterhead in support of a candidate or party.

2.9. Component universities may:

- a. Provide candidates with opportunities to speak at the component university, provided that all candidates are extended the same invitation.
- b. Participate in non-partisan voter registration drives.
- c. Rearrange student schedules to provide students time off to work on political campaigns of their choice.
- d. Conduct public-opinion polls on issues, but not on candidates.
- e. Allow faculty and administrators to endorse candidates, provided the officials indicate that their views do not represent those of the component university.
- f. Subject to applicable use fees, allows its facilities to be used for political purposes in the same manner it allows other non-university groups to use university facilities.

2.10. Upon employment and annually, employees of the System will be enrolled in the system-wide ethics training. A record of this enrollment and the employee's progress in completion of this course will be maintained in the employee's official training record.

3. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility: Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance

Review: Every five years on or before March 1

4. APPROVAL

Approved: Jim McShan
Interim Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance

Renu Khator
Chancellor

Date: July 28, 2015

REVISION LOG

Revision Number	Approval Date	Description of Changes
1	02/23/1996	Initial version
2	08/30/2002	Applied revised SAM template to meet current documentation standards. Updated Section 1 with references to documents. Changed “University of Houston” to “System component university” throughout text. Revised Section 2.1 on prohibiting state-appropriated funds. Added information on membership dues to Section 2.3. Updated Section 2.4 for vehicles, property, and equipment. Updated Section 2.5 on accepting public and private gifts. Added Section 2.6 on paying state-appropriated funds to violators of the policy. Changed documentation references in Section 2.8. Changed responsibility to Assistant Vice Chancellor for Human Resources. Changed review period from annually on or before September 1 st to every three years on or before September 1 st . Added Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance to approval process. Added Section 5, Indexing Terms
3	06/09/2009	Applied revised SAM template to meet current documentation standards. Added hyperlinks to documents in text. Revised Section 2.8 to outline activities which component universities may not perform. Added Section 2.9 on activities which component universities may perform. Added Section 2.10 on system-wide ethics training requirement for each employee. Changed responsibility to Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance. Changed review period from every three years on or before September 1 st to every five years on or before March 1 st . Removed Section 5, Indexing Terms
4	07/28/2015	Applied revised SAM template and added new Revision Log. Added Section 2.9.f on use of facilities for political purposes