



Election Guidance for Managers

FAQS

To help Cornell managers field questions from and support their teams during and after Election Day, we developed an FAQ on a range of topics. If you have additional questions, please reach out to your college/unit [HR Representative](#).

Does Cornell support political candidates?

Cornell University neither endorses nor opposes any candidate for public office. [University Policy 4.18, Political Campaign Activity](#), prevents the use of university resources for political campaign purposes. IRS laws and regulations expressly prohibit non-profit organizations like Cornell from engaging, directly or indirectly, in political campaign activity; violations could result in the loss of the university's tax-exempt status. Compliance with Policy 4.18 is extremely important.

Why have I received communications from the university about the election?

Cornell is a place where all voices can be heard, where the concept of free and open expression and the corollary freedom to engage in rigorous and reasoned debate are enshrined among [our core values](#). We encourage all faculty, staff, and students to exercise their civic right to vote for their candidates of choice.

What should I do if members of my team are discussing the candidates, election, or politics at work? Should I tell them to stop?

Cornell University **does not** have a policy prohibiting faculty and staff from engaging in conversations about politics in the workplace and is careful not to restrict political speech that might relate to working conditions.

Managers should encourage employees to be mindful of colleagues who may be uncomfortable with having political conversations at work or feeling pressured to share their views. Employees should also be encouraged to be careful that such discussions do not turn into conversations about legally protected characteristics. For example, discussions about someone not being qualified for office based on their age, race, religion, or sex could give rise to complaints of harassment and/or discrimination.

We also know that these conversations can become heated at times. While employees may disagree, Cornell University expects all employee interactions to uphold the institution's standards of professionalism, collegiality, and respect. As a leader, intervene as needed, and if you become aware of potentially harassing or discriminatory behavior, contact your college/unit [HR Representative](#), the Institutional Equity Office and Title IX Office or the Office of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity for guidance.

Are employees allowed to share political information through their work email?

Nothing in University Policy 4.18 prevents employees, acting as a private citizen, from participating fully in all aspects of the political process as long as they do not use university resources or give the impression that they are speaking on behalf of Cornell. This means that you should not use the Cornell name, logo, seal or insignia in connection with any activity that expressly supports or opposes a candidate's campaign for elected office,

whether at the federal, state or local level. Similarly, you should not use Cornell resources – including your cornell.edu or med.cornell.edu email address, university (including departmental) social media accounts, or university office supplies and equipment – to support or oppose candidates for elected office. And while you may identify your affiliation with Cornell in a political campaign-related communication, you must be clear that you are acting in your capacity as an individual and not as a representative of the university.

No matter the outcome of the election, I expect some of my employees will be upset. What advice can I give an employee who comes to me expressing sadness, stress, or anxiety after the election?

Any form of loss can be devastating, and it is important to accept that the mental and physical effects that an employee may feel after political or social moments are real. Offer employees the ability to take a break, if needed, to center themselves. Encourage them to practice self-care and to stay connected with family or friends. Finally, if you think an employee may need more support, refer them to the counseling resources below.

What counseling resources are available for employees who may be struggling with the outcome of the election?

There are a variety of options available if employees would like to speak with someone:

- The Faculty Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) offers free, professional, and confidential counseling for a broad range of issues. More information can be found at <https://fsap.cornell.edu/>.
- eni Confidential Counseling Services – 1-800-327-2255 – provides services at no cost for up to three visits to benefits eligible employees and family members. Available 24/7, licensed mental health professionals provide phone or in-person counseling for a variety of stressors and needs.
- Telecounseling is also available through the [employee health plans](#).

What should I do if an employee requests time off for their mental health?

This has been an especially challenging year and employees may periodically need to take time off to focus on their mental health and wellbeing. Managers are encouraged to do their best to allow employees to use their accrued HAP (health and personal) and/or vacation days to recuperate as scheduling permits.

What should I do if an employee requests time off to attend a protest?

Cornell University recognizes that many employees are passionate about political and social issues and may wish to use their accrued vacation and/or HAP time to protest. Managers should treat an employee's time-off request to protest as they would any other leave request. The same internal policies regarding advanced notice and scheduling needs still apply.