How To: Finance your Campaign

The USC offers candidates’ financial support to fund campaign efforts. This system is managed by the Elections Governance Committee, and you can review the full Campaign Finance Procedures document and By-Law #2 for more details. Whether you are running to be your faculty’s next councillor or president, a senator, or for a USC executive position, you qualify for financial support through a reimbursement system.

Bond

A bond is a deposit that is used to ensure adherence to election policies and can be subject to financial deductions by the Elections Governance Committee. Bonds must be received to be considered an eligible candidate. The bonds for each positions are as follows:

- Presidential candidates: $300.00
- Vice-Presidential External Affairs and Vice-Presidential University Affairs candidates: $50.00
- Senate candidates: $50.00
- Board of Governors candidates: $75.00
- Faculty president candidates: $25.00
- Divisional candidates: $25.00

Spending Limits

Spending limits for candidates’ campaign expenses and contributions, combined, shall be as follows:

- Each Presidential candidate has a spending limit of $1500
- Each Divisional candidate, excluding Faculty President candidates, has a spending limit of $100
- Each Faculty President candidate has a spending limit of $200
- Each Vice-Presidential candidate has a spending limit of $200
- The spending limit for Senate and Board of Governor candidates shall be determined by the Secretary of the University

All amounts are subject to confirmation by the CRO, or the Secretary of the University for Senate and Board of Governor candidates. Additionally, registered interest parties are eligible for up to 20% of the official side’s allowable spending limit for non-campaign expenses (i.e. research material and administrative costs). See By-Law #2 for further details regarding interest parties.
What is Included in the Spending Limit?

Campaign spending limit = Expenses + Contributions

Expenses
Expenses are any costs incurred to engage in the campaign, such as goods and services. Essentially, anything you need for the campaign and pay for using cash, credit or other currency is an expense.

Contributions
Contributions are any goods, services or privileges, such as rights of use, donated or given to a candidate. Essentially, anything you receive at a discount or for free is a contribution. Contributions must be recorded at fair market value, which is the price someone would have to pay to obtain the same or similar goods and services. Candidates cannot accept cash as contributions. Candidates must also record the name and contact of anyone who provides a contribution.

Fair Market Value Concept
The fair market value is the publicly available price of a good, service or privilege. This means any discounted or donated value must be recorded at the price most people can acquire similar or the same goods, services or privileges for. The fair market value is the sum of expenses and contributions.

For example, your relative owns a printing store and offered to give you campaign signs for free. This is a contribution and it must be recorded at fair market value. If the signs normally sell for $300, then you record a contribution of $300.

Spending Limit and the Fair Market Value Concept
Discounts not available to the general public are also a contribution. For example, a vendor who offers you an exclusive 30% discount is providing a contribution because a member of the general public cannot also receive the discount. If your subtotal is $100, a 30% discount is $30, meaning you pay $70 in cash. Since you paid $70 in cash, this is an expense, and since you received an exclusive $30 discount, this is a contribution. In total, you will record $100 as the fair market value for this transaction.

Remember, both expenses and contributions form your spending limit. Exceeding the spending limit, even through excess contributions, is subject to penalty.

Examples of Acceptable Expenses & Contributions
- At the sole discretion of the Elections Governance Committee and designates:
○ Supplies for campaign (writing utensils, paper, apparel)
○ Printing costs (banners, posters, rave cards)
○ Promotional attire
○ Food at campaign launches and volunteer rallies
○ Space rentals to host events
○ Paid advertising
○ Website domain name
○ Bar cover/wrist bands (exception: alcohol cannot be included with a wrist band)

Unacceptable Expenses & Contributions
  ● At the sole discretion of the Elections Governance Committee and designates:
    ○ Alcohol or alcohol voucher
    ○ Drugs
    ○ Long-term/fixed assets (i.e. printer, laptop)

Special Considerations
Items used in the campaign must be included at the entire cost, regardless if the item was fully consumed throughout the campaign period. For example, a $10 stationary purchase must be declared at the full $10 cost, regardless if you can still use the stationary after the campaign.

Who helps produce content matters for expenses and contributions. Campaign material and media, including videos, apps, graphics, and website design, do not incur a contribution if a volunteer who does this normally does not charge for their service. If the person who helps is normally paid for their service, then you must record their time as a contribution, regardless if they are a volunteer and you do not pay them. Remember, any expenses, such as subscriptions or materials (i.e. sign frame), must be declared at all times.

Campaign Loans
Candidates may obtain an interest-free loan from the USC up to the bond plus spending limit. All candidates may make arrangements with the CRO if they cannot pay the bond on-time.

Tracking Expenses and Contributions
Tracking expenses and contributions must be done using the Campaign Expense Tracker, which is available on WesternVotes.com. You must keep original receipts as this must be submitted for reimbursement. Late submissions are subject to a penalty of 5% per business day.

Reimbursement
Reimbursement = bond + eligible expenses - fines - loans
Contributions are not reimbursable because no cash was transacted.

Eligible expenses are those that can be verified by an original receipt and approvals by the Elections Governance Committee. Non-acceptable expenses may lead to penalties and non-reimbursement. The Committee may also adjust eligible reimbursements if the candidate is not competing in the spirit and purpose of the election system. If the loan exceeds the reimbursement, this must be repaid to the USC within 30 days of ballot closing.