



PRESIDENT'S POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 268

TO: All Virginia Tech Employees and Students

FROM: Charles W. Steger

DATE: October 12, 2010

SUBJECT: Communication with Government Officials

Approved by Academic Council: October 6, 2010
Approved by the President October 6, 2010
Effective Date: Immediately

Reason for Policy:

This policy establishes a structure for communication with State and Federal government officials. The policy is intended to help the University maintain one voice in government relations work to ensure that the University's message is presented most effectively. This policy should not be construed to require prior approval for ongoing contacts with alumni who are elected officials and who are involved with University organizations.

Policy Statement:

The President is responsible for developing all University positions on State and Federal legislation and regulations and for coordinating University relations with the General Assembly, the Governor, Congress, Cabinet Secretaries, Executive Branch officials, State and Federal agencies, Congressional and legislative staff, and any and all communication with government officials concerning official University positions on policy issues.

The University's policy on communication with government officials in no way restricts the right of any employee (i.e., faculty, classified and University staff, professional research staff, etc...) from communicating their personal opinions with government officials. However, when communicating such personal opinions it is the affirmative responsibility of all employees not to represent their personal opinions as positions or policies of the University, unless the President has specifically authorized them to do so.

University employees should use neither University letterhead nor electronic mail sent through University mail servers to communicate their personal opinions or positions on political issues unrelated to the University. Legislative or Congressional Testimony or other communication on behalf of professional societies or other academic organizations should be coordinated with the Office of Government Relations. In this case "coordinated" simply means notification in advance.

State Government:

State law and directives from the Office of the Governor require the University to designate official spokespersons to communicate its positions to the General Assembly and to coordinate its legislative proposals through the Governor's Cabinet Secretaries. The University President and others specifically designated by the President are authorized spokespersons. The Vice President for Government and Community Relations oversees all state legislative relations. This office coordinates all presentations to legislators, legislative committees, and letters and electronic communications to elected officials on behalf of the University concerning policy or funding issues. This office coordinates relations with the Governor's Office, General Assembly, Cabinet Secretaries, State agencies, and legislative staff and works closely with our Vice Presidents, Deans, Departmental Chairs and faculty members to ensure coordination. In the event that University faculty or staff is contacted by a Member or staff of the General Assembly to testify before a committee or otherwise engage with the General Assembly with regard to their personal and/or professional expertise, such faculty and staff should notify and coordinate with the Office of Government and Community Relations. Faculty and staff must note that their testimonies do not represent the official position of the University, unless otherwise authorized by the President.

Federal Government:

The Vice President for Government and Community Relations oversees all federal relations. This office coordinates all presentations to Congressional offices, Congressional committees, and letters and electronic communications to federal elected officials and their staffs on behalf of the University concerning policy or funding issues. Requests for meetings with Members of Congress or with Congressional staff to discuss funding requests or policies affecting the University must be

coordinated with the Office of Government and Community Relations. In the event that University faculty or staff is contacted by a Member of Congress or Congressional staff to testify before a Congressional committee or otherwise engage with the Congress with regard to their personal and/or professional expertise, such faculty and staff should notify and coordinate with the Office of Government and Community Relations. Faculty and staff must note that their testimonies do not represent the official position of the University, unless otherwise authorized by the President.

Visits to Campus by Officials:

Visits to campus by elected and appointed officials and their staff members, state and federal, are an important part of government relations efforts and are encouraged. Invitations to certain officials (e.g. Governor, U.S. Senators, Cabinet Secretaries) in most cases should be extended by the President of the University. However, all invitations to these officials and visits to campus should be coordinated with the Office of Government and Community Relations.

Procedures:

In order to manage and coordinate communications regarding government policies, funding issues, or visits to campus by government officials contact the Office of Government and Community Relations by phone (540-231-7111) or email (governmentrelations@vt.edu). For more information about the Office of Government and Community Relations, visit: <https://www.govrel.president.vt.edu/>.

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Note: Titles and contact information for the Office of Government and Community Relations were updated February 11, 2022.