



# OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

## University Policy DRAFT

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### Policy # 1202

### UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

**Responsible Oversight Executive:** Vice President for Governmental Relations  
**Date of Current Revision or Creation:** XX-XX-XXXX

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#### A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for faculty, staff, and administrators engaging with appointed and elected state and federal government officials. This policy seeks to balance the University's obligations to maintain a neutral, nonpartisan environment conducive to learning and academic inquiry with the rights of individuals to engage civically and politically. This policy ensures that employees act in compliance with applicable state and federal laws, uphold the University's mission and reputation as an institution of higher education, and avoid conflicts of interest when engaging in political activity.

#### B. AUTHORITY

Code of Virginia Section 23.1-1301, as amended, grants authority to the Board of Visitors to make rules and policies concerning the institution. Section 7.01(a)(6) of the Board of Visitors Bylaws grants authority to the President to implement the policies and procedures of the Board relating to University operations.

Code of Virginia Section 2.2-2902.1, codifies the right of any state employee to express opinions to state or local elected officials on matters of public concern.

#### C. DEFINITIONS

Civic Engagement- Refers to the service of an individual intended to benefit a community through both political and non-political processes and organized around collective action and social responsibility.

Political Engagement – Refers to the active participation of an individual in political, social, or cultural activities aimed at influencing decision making. Key components defined for the purpose of this policy include advocacy, participation in public discourse such as debates, discussions, or forums, community organizing, or other means of participation publicly.

Political Activity- Refers to actions in support or opposition of a political party, candidate for partisan office, or organization that engages in the political process. Key activities defined for the purpose of this policy include volunteering for political campaigns or candidates, endorsements, soliciting or making political contributions, advocating for or against the priorities of a member or specialty organization, lobbying, and influencing funding from state or federal officials.

Government Relations - Staff members authorized by the Vice President for Government Relations to represent ODU with state and federal officials in an effort to inform, educate, and advise on matters of importance to the University.

Official University Position - A written or oral statement that represents the opinion, stance or intentions of the University as an entity, as directed by the Board of Visitors and President.

Spokesperson - Staff member authorized by the President to represent or issue public comments that represent an official University position on behalf of Old Dominion University.

Brand - The distinctive identity that differentiates Old Dominion University's unique competitive advantages and core values from others in the marketplace. The sum of every exposure, interaction, opinion and story shape internal and external audiences' perception of Old Dominion University.

Logo - A graphic mark or emblem commonly used to aid and promote instant public recognition. Logos are either purely graphic (symbols/icons) or are composed of the name of the organization (a logotype or word mark).

#### **D. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all employees. Employees include all staff, administrators, faculty, full- or part-time, and classified or non-classified persons who are paid by the University.

#### **E. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Old Dominion University Office of Government Relations, at the direction of the Office of the President, serves as the primary point of contact between the University and government officials at the state and federal level. The Vice President for Government Relations serves as the official University spokesperson and conveys the official University position on all legislative and budgetary matters at the state and federal level.

An ODU employee's outreach or engagement with a representative of the state or federal government at the legislative, executive, or judicial level of a professional nature must be coordinated prior with the Office of Government Relations. For the purpose of this policy, coordination means notification in advance. Political or personal position statements should not explicitly or inferentially be attributed to any department, school, or program within the University, or the institution at large. Any activities to influence or obtain state or federal funds must consult with the Office of Government Relations prior to outreach or engagement with elected officials and agency representatives.

Notwithstanding University Policy 2010, this policy prohibits the use, wear, or otherwise display the University logo by employees when participating in personal political activities or engaging with government officials unless they are appointed by the University to a position on behalf of the institution, or as permitted by the President.

In accordance with the rules and regulations of University Policy 2001, this policy does not negate University support for faculty to communicate with state or federal officials regarding their research, scholarship, teaching and professional expertise. This policy does not prohibit the chair of the Faculty Senate from commenting on academic matters and the professional affairs of the faculty.

Any employee who is unsure whether a particular political activity is permissible under this policy is encouraged to seek guidance from the Office of Government Relations prior to

engaging in such activity. Should the activities adversely affect the faculty members' integrity or capacity to complete the duties and responsibilities of their role, corrective or disciplinary action may be taken.

This policy is not intended to restrict or interfere with appropriate, authorized job activities, such as researchers' routine communications with federal agencies relating to ongoing grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, or future solicitations.

## F. PROCEDURES

This guidance is intended to assist employees in political and civic engagement with government officials when permissible and/or appropriate given the nature of their role at the University.

### Correspondence with Government Officials

- **Personal and professional contact with government officials and staff**, whether by letter, email, telephone, social media, in person, or virtual setting, must be done in the name of the individual and not on behalf of the University.
- Employees should not use the University letterhead, branded materials such as folders or handouts, or **display the logo** on their person via attire, buttons, hats, etc. when engaging in political activity, advocacy, lobbying, etc.
- Employees should **not use their ODU email account** to communicate personal opinions or political positions to prevent affiliating their position with that of the University.
- The Office of Government Relations should be informed at least 30 days in advance of **invitations to government officials** and/or their staff to visit any campus or facility of the University in their official capacity to ensure coordination with key University offices and awareness of political sensitivities, conflicts of interest, and compliance with state and federal law. Conversely, should an employee receive a request for their attendance to a meeting, speaking engagement, roundtable, etc., that is hosted by, or involves government officials and staff, please promptly provide notice to the Office of Government Relations for awareness.
- The **pursuit of state funding or federal appropriations** shall be coordinated through and reviewed by the Office of Government Relations. The Vice President of Government Relations shall work with the President, Chief Financial Officer, Provost, Vice President for Research and Economic Development, and other University officials to ensure that institutional priorities are considered in requests for public funds.
- Reference to the University should only be made as an aid to identification or credential.
- Communication and activities with federal agencies relating to grants, contracts, cooperative agreements are excluded from these procedures.

## G. RECORDS RETENTION

Applicable records must be retained and then destroyed in accordance with the [Commonwealth's Records Retention Schedules](#).

## **H. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**

Associate Vice President of Federal Relations and Assistant Vice President for State Relations and Health Policy.

## **I. RELATED INFORMATION**

[Commonwealth's Department of Human Resource Management Policy 1.75 - Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media](#)

[Board of Visitors Policy 1003 – The University's Name and Identification](#)

[Board of Visitors Policy 1011 – Freedom of Expression](#)

[Board of Visitors Policy 1301 – University Governance](#)

[Board of Visitors Policy 1210 – Authority to Act on Behalf of the University](#)

## **POLICY HISTORY**

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### **Policy Formulation Committee (PFC) & Responsible Officer Approval to Proceed:**

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Responsible Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Policy Review Committee (PRC) Approval to Proceed:**

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Chair, Policy Review Committee (PRC)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Executive Policy Review Committee (EPRC) Approval to Proceed:**

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Responsible Oversight Executive

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **University Counsel Approval to Proceed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
University Counsel

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Presidential Approval:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Policy Revision Dates:**

### **Scheduled Review Date:**