



# OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

## University Policy

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### Policy #2001

### UNIVERSITY SPOKESPERSON AND MEDIA LIAISON

**Responsible Oversight Executive:** Vice President for University Communications and Chief Marketing Officer

**Date of Current Revision or Creation:** June 30, 2025

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#### A. PURPOSE

This policy establishes authority and requirements pertaining to official university communications with media members.

#### 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.

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

#### C. DEFINITIONS

Issues of General University-wide Impact or Significance - Examples of issues of general University-wide impact or significance include but are not limited to a campus crisis or emergency, student issues, financial matters, or campus infrastructure.

Media - The various means of mass communication, including, but not limited to television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and web/electronic outlets, together with the people involved in their production.

Media Liaison - Staff member in the [Division of University Communications](#) authorized by the Vice President for University Communication and Chief Marketing Officer (“VP”) to serve as a link between the media and the entire ODU community to inform and educate the public by facilitating communication about 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 speak to the media or make public comments that represent an official University position on behalf of Old Dominion University.

## **D. SCOPE**

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

## **E. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Vice President for University Communications and Chief Marketing Officer (“VP”) serves as the official University spokesperson and conveys the official University position on issues of general University-wide impact or significance. Inquiries from the media about such issues should be referred to the VP.

University employees should refrain from publicly commenting on behalf of the University to the media on issues of general University-wide impact or significance. Employees may comment on issues of public interest as private citizens without identifying affiliation with the University or, if so identified by the media, should indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

In accordance with [the University’s Statement on Academic Freedom](#), faculty are “citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should speak accurately, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinion of others, and make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”

This policy does not prohibit members of the Faculty Forum from commenting on academic matters and the professional affairs of the faculty.

Depending on specific circumstances, the President or the VP may designate another University administrator to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue or may give approval for letters to the editor in special circumstances. The VP or President will coordinate with the Executive Vice President for Health Sciences and the Communication Officer for Virginia Health Sciences within University Communications prior to external communications related to Virginia Health Sciences.

University faculty are encouraged to communicate with the media regarding their research, scholarship, teaching, or professional expertise and to identify their affiliation with the University in such communications. In these cases, the [Division of University Communications](#) should be notified as soon as possible so that a media liaison is informed of the contact. Such notification can be particularly important if follow-up inquiries are made with other University personnel to ensure a coordinated, consistent University response. Media inquiries should be referred to the VP if they involve issues with University-wide impact or significance.

## **F. PROCEDURES**

The [Division of University Communications](#) is staffed by media liaisons who cover all academic and administrative units of the University, including Virginia Health Sciences. They promote the University through news stories and press releases that reflect the University’s mission. All releases intended for external audiences should be routed through the [Division of University Communications](#).

Since media solicitation is an integral element of the University's communications program, any ideas for articles or pieces that portray the University, its work or its community should also be directed to the [Division of University Communications](#). In a similar manner, the [Division of University Communications](#) should be notified about occurrences that are likely to rise to the level of a news story.

Guidelines for communicating with the media when the issue is not of University-wide impact or significance and is limited to the employee's area of expertise are as follows:

1. Obtain the name of the person calling, the media organization and, if available, the anticipated time of release of information in print, online, or broadcast. This information should be included when the notification is made to the appropriate media liaison.
2. The best approach with the media is to be prompt, helpful and honest. All contacts from the media should be returned within a half-day, if possible, in deference to reporters' deadlines. If that is not possible, an alternate employee (if appropriate) or the media liaison should be asked to handle the call.
3. Responders should be certain that they understand each question from the media before responding. If unable or uncomfortable providing a response, the responder should obtain the reporter's contact information and advise that someone who can provide the information will contact them as soon as possible. The question should then be referred to the [Division of University Communications](#).
4. Responses to the media should be devoid of speculation or gossip and should be stated clearly and concisely to minimize any misunderstanding. Generally, the responder should not answer a reporter's question with "no comment."
5. Responders should provide a phone number and/or email address for follow-up questions.
6. Any media inquiries that involve information about specific employees or students should be directed to the [Division of University Communications](#).

#### **G. RECORDS RETENTION**

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

#### **H. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**

Assistant Vice President for Public Relations

#### **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](#)

[University Policy 4100 - Student Record Policy](#)

## POLICY HISTORY

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

<u>/s/ Amber Kennedy</u>	<u>6/30/2025</u>
Responsible Officer	Date

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

<u>/s/ Heidi G. Smith</u>	<u>6/30/2025</u>
Chair, Policy Review Committee (PRC)	Date

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

<u>/s/ Kimberly Osborne</u>	<u>6/30/2025</u>
Responsible Oversight Executive	Date

### University Counsel Approval to Proceed:

<u>/s/ Allen T. Wilson</u>	<u>6/30/2025</u>
University Counsel	Date

### Presidential Approval:

<u>/s/ Brian O. Hemphill</u>	<u>6/30/2025</u>
President	Date

**Policy Revision Dates:** December 1, 1988; September 20, 2012; February 22, 2019;  
July 1, 2024; June 30, 2025

**Scheduled Review Date:** June 30, 2030