



# OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

## University Policy

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### Policy #2001

### UNIVERSITY SPOKESPERSON AND MEDIA LIAISON

**Responsible Oversight Executive:** Vice President for Student Engagement and Enrollment Services

**Date of Current Revision or Creation:** February 22, 2019

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#### A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish authority and requirements pertaining to official University communications with members of the media.

#### 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 6.01(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 as a whole, 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 [Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing](#) authorized by the Assistant Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing (“AVP”) to serve as a link between the media and the entire ODU community in an effort 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 and employees of affiliated organizations who are paid through the University. Employees include all staff, administrators, faculty, full- or part-time, and classified or non-classified persons who are paid by the University. Affiliated organizations are separate entities that exist for the benefit of the University through an operating agreement and include the Foundations, the Community Development Corporation, and the Alumni Association.

## E. POLICY STATEMENT

The Assistant Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing (“AVP”) 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 AVP.

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 [Board of Visitors Policy 1403, 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 at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinion of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”

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

Depending on specific circumstances, the President or the AVP 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.

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 [Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing](#) 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 AVP if they involve issues with University-wide impact or significance.

## F. PROCEDURES

The [Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing](#) is staffed by media liaisons who cover all academic and administrative units of the University. They promote the University through news stories and press releases that reflect the University’s mission of rigorous academics, strategic partnerships, and civic engagement and showcase the strengths of academics, research, global reach, diverse inclusion and community, and student success. All releases intended for off-campus

or external audiences should be routed through the Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing.

Since positive media solicitation is an integral element of the University's communications program, any ideas for articles or pieces that would positively portray the University, its work or its community should also be directed to the [Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing](#). In a similar manner, the [Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing](#) should be notified about negative 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 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 him/her that someone who can provide the information will contact him/her as soon as possible. The question should then be referred to the [Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing](#).
4. Responses to the media should be devoid of speculation or gossip and should be stated clearly and concisely in order 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 [Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing](#).

## **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 Strategic Communication and Marketing

## **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 1403 – Academic Freedom](#)

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

**POLICY HISTORY**

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

/s/ Giovanna M. Genard  
Responsible Officer

February 11, 2019  
Date

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

/s/ Donna W. Meeks  
Chair, Policy Review Committee (PRC)

September 25, 2018  
Date

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

/s/ Ellen J. Neufeldt  
Responsible Oversight Executive

February 15, 2019  
Date

**University Counsel Approval to Proceed:**

/s/ R. Earl Nance  
University Counsel

February 21, 2019  
Date

**Presidential Approval:**

/s/ John R. Broderick  
President

February 22, 2019  
Date

**Policy Revision Dates:** December 1, 1988; September 20, 2012; February 22, 2019

**Scheduled Review Date:** February 22, 2024