

University of Tennessee Guidelines Regarding Official Contacts with State and Federal Government Officials and Entities

Government relations at both the state and federal levels are critical areas for the University. Currently, more than 50% of unrestricted funding comes via state legislative appropriations and federal grants and appropriations. Both state and federal governments are major resources for all campuses and institutes, particularly in the area of research. As an entity that engages in lobbying activities, the University must comply with federal regulations contained in the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 and the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. Therefore, it is imperative that the policies and positions set forth by the Board of Trustees, the President and authorized University officials be coordinated and communicated clearly through one central point of contact with state or federal government elected or appointed officials and external individuals or groups engaged in government relations and advocacy (collectively, “government officials”).

The President, through the Office of Public and Government Relations, directs a coordinated federal and state legislative agenda on an annual basis on behalf of the University of Tennessee system – its campuses, institutes, and units. The Vice President of Public and Government Relations is responsible for coordinating the communications with, outreach activities involving, and engagement of governmental officials relating to all legislative, policy, and budgetary matters relating to the University. The Vice President will assure the involvement of the appropriate members of the University’s staff and/or units in those matters.. Reporting to and under the supervision of the Vice President, the Director of Federal Relations and the Director of State Relations serve as the University’s official liaisons for all official contact with government officials.

University employees may not act, or give the appearance of acting, on behalf of the University when communicating with government officials concerning legislative, policy, or budgetary matters relating to the University unless they are specifically authorized by the President, the Vice President of Public and Government Relations, the Director of Federal Relations, or the Director of State Relations. Faculty or staff who are contacted by government officials relating to a legislative, policy, or budgetary matter relating to the University shall consult with the government relations staff as timely as possible and prior to providing a response that reasonably could be construed to represent the official position of the University on the matter. Staff, whose position may involve activities similar to those of the University’s Director of Federal Relations or State Relations, shall coordinate their outreach or engagement of government officials with the appropriate Director. Faculty or staff who have legislative proposals, funding requests or points of view that reasonably could be construed as the official position of the University are expected to coordinate with the appropriate Director prior to making contact with any government official.

These guidelines are directed only to the issue of official representation of the University. These guidelines are not intended to restrict protected personal expression by University employees nor are they intended to restrict University employees from identifying their profession or place of employment in the context of their communications with government officials. However, University employees must make it clear that they are expressing their personal views and not an official position of the University.

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