

**Policy 1512
State and Federal Government Relations**

Date of Current Revision: April 2025

Responsible Officer: Assistant Vice President, State Government Relations

Secondary Responsible Officer: Director, Federal Relations and Communications

1. PURPOSE

This policy establishes a process and framework for communication and engagement with federal and state government officials on behalf of James Madison University. The intention is to ensure effective and consistent communication regarding university messaging and priorities. This policy is designed to distinguish between an employee's personal right to voice their opinions to the government versus speaking on behalf of the university to government officials.

2. AUTHORITY

The Board of Visitors has been authorized by the Commonwealth of Virginia to govern James Madison University (JMU). See Code of Virginia § 23.1-1600; § 23.1-1301. The board has delegated the authority to manage the university to the president.

STATE OR FEDERAL STATUTE AND/OR REGULATIONS

Code of Virginia § 30-34.14

3. DEFINITIONS

Advocacy

Any in-person, virtual, or indirect unsolicited communication, including oral, written (including letters of support for specific legislation), or electronic communication, to influence government officials to take a specific position on governmental initiatives including but not limited to: an appropriation request, action on legislation, rules, regulations, contracts, nominations, or any other governmental program or policy. Also includes mandated reports to the legislative and executive branch agencies.

Federal Government Officials

Any members of the United States House of Representatives and United States Senate and their staffs, including staff on joint committees, leadership groups, or committees for either House of Congress or any employee working on a working group or caucus organized to provide legislative services or other assistance to members of Congress. Also includes the Office of the President, Office of the Vice President, employees of the Executive Office of the President; Level I-V of the Executive Schedule (generally Assistant Secretaries, Commissioners, and above); members of the Uniformed Services at pay grade above O-7 (generally top military officers, such as Brigadier General and above); and any officer or employee in a position of a confidential, policy-advocating character.

Speaking on behalf of

An employee speaking to a federal or state government official for the benefit, advantage or interest of the university in their official capacity as an employee of the university.

State Government Officials

Any individual representing the Governor's Office, the General Assembly, the Joint Legislative Review Committee (JLARC), or leading a state agency. This includes Cabinet Secretaries and staff within the offices of the secretaries, state agency directors or their equivalents, legislative staff and general assembly staff.

4. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all James Madison University employees.

5. POLICY

State Government Relations

5.1 Office of State Government Relations as Spokesperson

State law requires 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 president has delegated responsibility for this coordination to the Assistant Vice President for State Government Relations. Unless specifically designated by the president, no employee shall assume the role of spokesperson.

The Office of State Government Relations oversees all state legislative relations. This office coordinates all presentations to legislators, legislative committees, and letters and electronic communications to state government officials on behalf of the university concerning policy or funding issues. This office leads relations with the Governor's Office, General Assembly, Cabinet Secretaries, State agencies, JLARC, and legislative staff, and works closely with all university faculty and staff to ensure coordination.

5.2 Communication with state government officials when not acting as a spokesperson of the university

- a. In the event that a university faculty or staff member is contacted by a state government official to testify before a committee of the General Assembly with regard to their expertise, they must notify the Office of State Government Relations. Faculty and staff should note that their testimonies do not represent the official position of the university, unless otherwise authorized by the president.
- b. Faculty and staff must notify the Office of State Government Relations when inviting state government officials to campus.
- c. Any university office or employee wishing to enter into an agreement for paid or contracted state-level advocacy services must have written permission from the Office of State Government Relations.

Federal Government Relations

5.3 The Division of Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI) oversees federal government relations, with the Office of Federal Relations and Communications directly responsible for presentations to members of the U.S. Congress and their staff and congressional committees, as well as letters and electronic communications to federal government officials on behalf of the university. Unless specifically designated by the

university president or the vice president for REDI, no employee shall assume the role of spokesperson.

5.4 Communication with federal government officials when not acting as a spokesperson of the university

- a. In the event that a university faculty or staff member is contacted by a federal government official to testify before a committee of the U.S. Congress with regard to their expertise, they must notify the Office of Federal Relations and Communications. Faculty and staff should note that their testimonies do not represent the official position of the university, unless otherwise authorized by the president.
- b. Faculty and staff must notify the Office of Federal Relations and Communications when inviting federal government officials to campus.
- c. Any university office or employee wishing to enter into an agreement for paid or contracted federal-level advocacy services must have written permission from the Office of Federal Relations and Communications.

5.5 Employees shall not use university letterhead, phones (landline or cellular), or email to communicate personal opinions or personal positions on political issues to state government or federal government officials

6. PROCEDURES

6.1 In the event that a university faculty or staff member is contacted by a government official related to university business or official university positions, the employee must refer them to the proper spokesperson as follows:

- State Government – Assistant Vice President for State Government Relations
- Federal Government – Director of Federal Relations and Communications

6.2 Employees must clearly indicate when they are speaking or writing as a private citizen or expert in an area of expertise and when they are speaking or writing as an official spokesperson of the university.

6.3 When inviting government officials to campus, send a notification email to the appropriate office: [Office of State Government Relations](#) or [Office of Federal Relations and Communications](#). Include the following information in the message:

- Name and title of each person invited
- Date and time of anticipated visit
- Description of event (ex. Classroom presentation)

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

Heads of departments and operating units are responsible for ensuring that any interactions with state or government officials originating in their respective departments or units comply with this policy.

8. SANCTIONS

Federal and state government relations outreach efforts that do not conform to this policy will be restricted or terminated.

Sanctions will be commensurate with the severity and/or frequency of the offense and may include termination of employment.

9. EXCLUSIONS

This policy does not apply to engagement with state and federal agencies regarding sponsored programs and research in accordance with university Policy [2201](#).

This policy does not apply to routine engagement with state agencies exercising oversight over the institution including Virginia Department of Human Resource Management, Department of Planning and Budget, Auditor of Public Accounts, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and others, or federal agencies exercising oversight over the institution including the U.S. Department of Education.

The university's policy on communication with federal and state officials in no way restricts the First Amendment and academic freedom rights of any employee.

10. INTERPRETATION

The authority to interpret this policy rests with the president and is generally delegated to the assistant vice president for state government relations.

Previous version: NA

Approved by the president: April 2025