

Policy and Protocols for Engaging with Public Officials

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Purpose and Scope

West Chester University ("University") recognizes that strong, mutually beneficial relationships with public officials are integral to its future success and that of its students. The purpose of this policy is to outline the way in which University employees and students will engage with these officials and their offices and how University employees and students may participate in that process. This policy is to help ensure institutional awareness of public official engagement by University employees and students who are acting on behalf of the University. The aim is to encourage and support public official engagement and in no way impede University employees' and students' ability to engage with public officials when acting in their personal capacity or when engagement is linked to employees' professional purposes (e.g. teaching, service, or research) or students' extra or co-curricular activities.

The purpose of the policy is NOT to discourage or prohibit engagement with public officials but simply to provide notice to the administration that a public official will be on campus pursuant to an invitation on behalf of the University. Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with a faculty member's professional judgement regarding the delivery of course content.

Definitions

"Public Official" - any elected official, appointed official, or employee of a federal, state, or local unit of government in the United States, a government corporation, an organization of state or local elected or appointed officials, a national or state political party or any organizational unit thereof, or a national, regional, or local unit of any foreign government, or group of governments acting together as an international organization. Exceptions include a college or university, a government-sponsored

enterprise, a public utility, guaranty agency or an agency of any state functioning as a student loan secondary market. **“Public Office”** - an office created by a constitution or legislative act, having a definite tenure, and involving the power to carry out some governmental function-

“Employee” - an individual employed by the University. This definition does not include independent contractors.

“Student” - anyone registered and currently enrolled in one or more for-credit courses offered by the University. This definition does not include high school students taking courses at the University through any grant-funded or other program or contractual agreement with a local school district or other school entity.

Policy Framework

I. Assignment of Public Official Engagement Responsibilities and Functions

A. Role of the University

It is the University's responsibility to establish all institutional policy, advocacy, and funding priorities and to share those priorities with the campus community. These priorities and goals are established by the University's administrative leaders, namely the President, President's Cabinet, and the Council of Trustees. Divisional and college priorities, as approved by the President and communicated to the Vice President for University Advancement and External Affairs (VPUAEA) and the Office of External Relations (OER), will help inform the identified institutional priorities.

B. Role of the Office of External Relations

Under the leadership of the VPUAEA, the role of the OER as it relates to government affairs is to identify and foster sound government and community partnerships and relationships on behalf of the University in coordination with its leadership, faculty, staff, and students toward fulfilling the institutional mission and

strategic plan and as a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE).

With guidance from the VPUAEA, the Executive Director of the OER cultivates and sustains relationships with local, state, and federal elected officials and their offices and government entities. As the primary point of contact for internal and external stakeholders for this purpose, the OER is responsible for monitoring and tracking legislation, policy issues, and public sector funding requests, reporting on such to University leadership, developing an advocacy agenda based on priorities identified by said leadership, and coordinating the University's advocacy efforts. The OER serves as a resource to help facilitate and support University employees' and students' desire to engage with public officials on behalf of the University. In addition, the OER serves as a partner to support the activities of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) based on funding needs and priorities as outlined by the President and University leadership.

II. Procedure for WCU Employee Public Official Engagement

Engaging with public officials on behalf of the University is a primary function for which the OER is organized and operates. As such, all efforts to engage with public officials and/or their office staff as representatives of the University, on and off campus, should be done in coordination with the OER through a notification process that ensures knowledge of relevant supervisors, the VPUAEA, and, as appropriate, the Office of the President. Engagement of a public official for the purpose of teaching (e.g., a class trip or classroom visit) is strongly encouraged pursuant to this policy in the interest of shared awareness and coordination with the VPUAEA via the OER.

University employees, when serving as a University representative, are responsible for notifying their supervisor, dean or vice president, and VPUAEA by completing and submitting a [Public Official Engagement Notification Form](#) with all appropriate signatures to the OER two weeks prior to engaging directly with a public official and/or associated office staff. If notification needs to be expedited, please contact Dr. Julie Dietrich, Executive Director for External Relations, at jdietrich@wcupa.edu. This engagement includes occurrences in which contact with a University employee is initiated by a public official and/or associated office staff. Understanding that there may be occurrences in which there was no prior awareness of public official engagement, the Public Official Engagement Notification Form should be completed and submitted promptly after the event.

III. Procedure for Student Organization Public Official Engagement

Student organizations need a University employee to sponsor public official engagement. That sponsor is responsible for notifying the OER at least two weeks prior to the visit through the [Public Official Engagement Notification Form](#).

IV. Other Engagement

- A. External clubs, groups, and/or agencies aiming to engage with public officials on University property either in partnership with or independently of the University, need to adhere to the following:
1. The plans for such activities need to be shared in advance with the VPUAEA and coordinated with the OER through the procedure outlined in Sections II and III.
 2. External groups wishing to use University facilities should consult the Office of Conference Services for more information.
 3. Such engagement needs to adhere to the University's Facility Use Policy and Time, Place, and Manner for Expressive Activities Policy.

4. Each group needs a campus sponsor who is responsible for the University's facilities, organization of the event, cost management, and notifying OER per the protocols set out in Sections II and III.

V. Enforcement

The Policy applies to all University employees and students, and it is the responsibility of the VPUAEA to communicate the Policy to them. In addition, it is expected that the University's principal academic and administrative leaders (Vice Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans, and Directors), and all other individuals who may engage with public officials, will be familiar with the Policy. UAEA staff members will help communicate and support the Policy.

For cases in which the Policy is not being observed i.e., outside of the purpose and scope (linked to employees' professional purposes (e.g. teaching, service, or research) or students' extra or co-curricular activities), the OER will reach out to the employee to ensure awareness of the Policy and associated procedures. If the employee continues to not follow the Policy, the VPUAEA will be made aware of the situation and will inform the employee's supervisor of the matter.

Related Policy Links:

[Facility Use Policy](#)

[Time, Place, and Manner for Expressive Activities Policy](#)

Reviewed by:



UNIVERSITY POLICY

Vice President for University Advancement and External Affairs; Vice President for University Affairs; Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Senior Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer;

Policy Owner: Vice President for University Advancement and External Affairs

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