

**UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**GUIDELINES FOR
COMMUNICATING WITH
ELECTED AND
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

GENERAL

This document provides an overview of the procedures for testifying or communicating with the Council of the District of Columbia, Congress and other Governmental Officials.

PURPOSE:

To ensure effective relations with members of the United State Congress, Council of the District of Columbia, Board of Trustees, congressional staff, and other constituencies. These guidelines seek to establish procedures for faculty, administration, staff and students **for communicating on behalf of the University.**



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GUIDELINES FOR OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

University faculty, administration, staff and students, **when acting or purporting to act in a representative or official capacity on behalf of the University of the District of Columbia, should first notify the Director of Governmental Affairs prior to initiating any contact** with, or before responding to, any contacts, requests or inquiries made by any elected or appointed federal, state, and/or local governmental officials or their respective staffs.

All representations of an official capacity relating to University activities involving or related to said federal, state and/or local governmental officials or their respective staffs must be developed in advance in consultation with the Director to insure the University's official position is being properly and appropriately presented and/or to provide for a coordinated and professional response on behalf of the University and its various constituencies. Additionally, the Director will assist in the University's compliance with applicable laws, regulations or ordinances concerning these types of communications or interactions.

It is important to remember that when contacting public officials as a private citizen it is not appropriate to utilize university resources (letterhead, paper, computers, fax machines, etc.) or to prepare such materials during business hours.

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE

1. **Always be accurate and factual** in presenting your case to elected officials. Admitting you do not know the correct answer is not a problem, but always be willing to get the correct answer to the requesting party in a timely manner.
2. **Be sure you have a clear and concise message.** It is important to remember in stating your position that there are many sides to any particular issue. Legislators respect individuals who acknowledge those differences and clearly explain how their position fits into the larger context.



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- 3. Try to understand their outlook, and goals.** In addition, remember lawmakers are generally hard-working and are attempting to represent the interests of their constituents. This attitude will provide positive environment for you to advocate your position on issues of interest to you.
- 4. It is helpful to be a good listener.** The comments made by a legislator provide good information on what follow-up may be needed concerning any particular issue. It is good for you to understand the concerns a legislator may have concerning a particular issue. This recognition does not mean you have to agree or compromise your own position.
- 5. Be on time for your appointment and be respectful of their time.** The demands on lawmakers time are significant. Being organized will assist you in getting your message across regardless of time constraints.
- 6. It is effective to have a one-page fact sheet to leave with the legislator** following your meeting. Be sure to put your name and group you are a part of so after your meeting is over the legislator will know who presented them with this information.
- 7. Be sure to thank the legislator for his/her time.**

PROCEDURES FOR TESTIFYING

If you are faculty or staff seeking to testify in a hearing in an official capacity on behalf of the University or relating to the University, you should inform the Office of Governmental Affairs located in building 39, Room 301-T. Otherwise, the following ***disclaimer should be made: The views expressed in this testimony are those of the witness and should not be regarded as stating an official position of the University of the District of Columbia.***

Persons testifying before Councilmembers must provide (twenty) 20 copies of any written testimony to be given to the Council committee staff person for distribution to the Council for the record.

Any person of the University wishing to address the Council on a matter of public concern may do so at the time set for the public comments during each regular session of the Council. Any individual so addressing the Council shall be limited to a period of three (3) minutes to be heard. The Council, in its sole discretion, may extend this time, or may request further information be presented to the Council on such date and in such manner, as it deems appropriate.



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If you are one person that is speaking on behalf of a recognized group, that speaker may speak for a maximum of five (5) minutes. The Council has the sole discretion to extend the allowable time to that person.

When you are called to the table to testify, take a seat then wait for the Council member to ask you to begin. You should state your name and why you are testifying on that day so that information may be included in the record. If speaking for a group, the speaker should also state the name of the group.

Please turn off all cell phones, blackberries, and other electronic equipment while testifying. It is not sufficient to put them on mute or vibrate. The signals sometimes interfere with the sound system, causing feedback and other problems.

Food or drinks may be consumed in the lobby. Please do not bring them into where you will be testifying. (including bottled water).

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AT THE HEARING?

Expect that there will be a wait. It is a good idea to listen to the testimony of the people before you, especially on issues relating to the University. Their testimony can give you the latest information on the legislation and it is important to know others' position on the legislation.

Expect that Council members will come and go often. Councilmembers are often on other committees and have other meetings or hearings going on at the same time.

Be prepared to speak clearly and concisely.

Be prepared to answer questions.

Be prepared to wait longer periods of time to testify.



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