Policy Statement

If an employee (this applies to an individual and to groups) is writing to a government official or elected official (federal, state or local) as a private citizen, he/she/they is free to do so.

However, employees (i.e., faculty, staff and administrators) who submit direct communication with federal, state and local government officials that contain the author’s College of Charleston affiliation or title should provide a copy of the communication to the Division of University Communications prior to submission.

If the author is expressing a personal point of view on an issue not related to the College or his/her/their professional position, it is not appropriate to include College title or affiliation. College of Charleston title or affiliation should be included only if the author’s academic and/or professional credentials, or his/her/their position at the College, is relevant to the communication’s topic.

If there is the possibility of confusion about whether the author might be speaking on behalf of the College, it will be necessary to specifically indicate the author is writing as a private citizen and not as a representative of the College.

The Division of University Communications can help clarify these situations, and employees should contact the Division of University Communications for advice and guidance in advance.

This policy is not intended to require employees to seek approval before writing such communications or to subject the content of such communication to College approval. The College asks only for the courtesy of timely notice and respect for decisions made by the President and the Board of Trustees designating those who are authorized to officially speak for the College of Charleston.

To be clear, all employees, as private citizens, are free to communicate with members of the General Assembly, Congress, executive and legislative branches/agencies, or other elected officials, but in doing so, they must clearly distinguish their personal opinions from
the positions and policies of the College of Charleston.

Policy Manager and Responsible Department or Office

Vice President of University Communications, Division of University Communications

Policy

State law and directives from the Office of the Governor require the College to designate official spokespersons to communicate its positions to the General Assembly and to coordinate its legislative proposals through the governor’s staff. The College president and designated senior staff members are authorized spokespersons in that regard. The president’s office oversees state legislative relations and coordinates all presentations to legislators, legislative committees and letters and electronic communications to elected officials on behalf of the College. The president’s office coordinates relations with State agencies and works closely with senior staff involved. This activity often involves deans, department chairs and faculty members.

This policy supports the College to maintain one voice and agenda in governmental relations work and establishes a structure for communication with federal, state and local government officials and sets forth requirements related to direct communication by faculty and staff with federal, state and local government officials.

It is the affirmative responsibility of faculty and staff members not to represent their personal opinions as positions or policies of the College, unless the president or president’s office has specifically authorized them to do so. College employees should use neither College letterhead nor electronic mail sent through the College mail servers to communicate their personal opinions or positions.

Whenever we communicate with others as a member of the College of Charleston community, our materials, and our words, either strengthen or weaken the College of Charleston’s public image. This is an effect of both the specific information we provide as well as the clarity, tone, style and professionalism with which the information is presented. If the College of Charleston is to be recognized as a first-class university, our communications must be of the highest quality.
Departments/Offices Affected by the Policy

All departments/offices.

Procedures Related to the Policy

Faculty, staff and administrators who submit communications to federal, state and local government officials that contain the authors' College of Charleston affiliation or title should provide a copy of the communication to the Division of University Communications prior to submission. If the author is expressing a personal point of view on an issue not related to the College or his/her/their professional position, it is not appropriate to include College title or affiliation. College of Charleston title or affiliation should be included only if the author's academic and/or professional credentials, or his/her/their position at the College, is relevant to the communication's topic. The Division of University Communications should be contacted before any information is released concerning internal or external matters that affect the College.

Related Policies, Documents or Forms

College of Charleston policy 3.7.5; South Carolina Code of Laws, Title 8 Public Officers and Employees, Chapter 13 Ethics, Government Accountability and Campaign Reform (Section 8-13-1346)

Issue Date: 2/23/2021
Date of Policy Revision:          Next Review Date: 2/23/2026

POLICY APPROVAL
(For use by the Office of the Board of Trustees or the Office of the President)

Policy Number:  

President or Chairman, Board of Trustees  Date: 2/23/2021