



## Guidelines for Faculty and Staff on Advocacy and Interactions with Government Officials

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### I. Introduction and Overview

There are many ways in which university employees engage with government officials and staff in the course of their work, such as inviting officials to campus, testifying at legislative hearings or visiting legislators in their offices. Often, these engagements will be more effective and coordinated if you consult ahead of time with the Office of Governmental Relations (OGR). Specific guidelines are offered below but the principle underlying those guidelines is simple: **please let OGR and your university government relations lead know about university-related interactions with government officials.** By doing so, you help us—and we in turn can help you—to ensure effective advocacy, consistent messaging, strong relationships with key stakeholders, and compliance with legal or ethical requirements.

Below you will find:

- a brief overview of OGR, which is a system-level unit, and the Council on Governmental and External Relations (COGER), which coordinates activities across the three universities;
- guidelines to assist leaders, faculty and staff in any university-related engagement with government representatives at the local, state or federal level;
- contact information in case of questions about governmental advocacy and outreach.

### II. The Role of OGR and COGER

[OGR](#) oversees the University of Illinois System's strategic engagement with federal, state and local governments, officials and staff. Reporting to the President of the system, OGR works with University leadership, faculty and staff to develop and advocate for the system's governmental agenda and interests. OGR monitors issues and activities in Springfield, Illinois, and Washington, DC, pertaining to



higher education, including budget/appropriations, proposed and enacted legislation, and emerging policy debates. In addition, OGR works to develop and maintain strong and fruitful relationships with elected and appointed officials and their staff. OGR staff have extensive experience working in and with the federal and state governments, and maintain offices in Springfield, Chicago and DC. If you have questions, comments or suggestions about federal, state or local policy issues affecting the U of I System, please contact:

- For state issues:
  - Jennifer Creasey, Senior Director of State Relations (based in Springfield, IL) [jcreasey@uillinois.edu](mailto:jcreasey@uillinois.edu) | (217) 333-1086
  - Angelica Alfaro, Associate Director of Local and State Relations (based in Chicago, IL) [aalfaro@uillinois.edu](mailto:aalfaro@uillinois.edu) | (217) 333-1086
  - Nolan Drea, Assistant Director of State Relations (based in Springfield, IL) [jcreasey@uillinois.edu](mailto:jcreasey@uillinois.edu) | (217) 333-1086
- For federal issues:
  - Paul Weinberger, Director of Federal Relations (based in Washington, DC) [paulw3@uillinois.edu](mailto:paulw3@uillinois.edu) | (217) 300-4739
  - Melissa Haas, Associate Director of Federal Relations (based in Chicago, IL) [mshaas@uillinois.edu](mailto:mshaas@uillinois.edu) | (217) 244-4815

In 2018, the Council on Governmental and External Relations (COGER) was established to enhance coordination of government-related activities with the three universities. COGER consists of representatives from across the system whose portfolios include government relations. COGER meets monthly to share information and best practices about outreach and advocacy, and updates on higher education policies and legislation. Jennifer Creasey, Senior Director for State Relations, facilitates the meetings. **Faculty and staff are encouraged to reach out to their university COGER representatives directly regarding government-related activities or questions:**

- UIC:
  - Marty Gutierrez, Senior Director of Community and Government Relations [martyg@uic.edu](mailto:martyg@uic.edu) | (312) 996-1738
- UI Health:
  - Emily Gibellina, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs Advocacy and Government Relations [emilyg@uic.edu](mailto:emilyg@uic.edu) | (312) 996-3615
- UIS:
  - Joan Sestak, Director of Community & Governmental Relations [jsest1@uis.edu](mailto:jsest1@uis.edu) | (217) 206-7794
- Urbana:
  - Bob Flider, Director of Community and Government Relations [rfflider@uillinois.edu](mailto:rfflider@uillinois.edu) | (217) 300-5248

Please visit [this webpage](#) for the names and contact information of all COGER members.



III. **Outreach and Invitations to Government Officials and Candidates for Public Office**

**Any outreach to or engagement with government officials and staff on behalf of or pertaining to the university should be coordinated with OGR and your COGER representative.** In particular, we strongly encourage faculty and staff to consult with OGR before inviting government officials or staff for a campus visit or talk, or to participate in any university-related off-campus activities or events. OGR interacts regularly with government officials and staff, and we can help facilitate and prepare for a successful visit by, among other things, providing logistical support and information about the official and relevant state or federal issues. OGR can also provide background information about relevant lobbying laws and requirements (see below).

Similarly, faculty and staff should notify OGR before inviting *candidates* for federal, state or local office to university-related events. In those cases, OGR will coordinate with the Office of University Counsel and the Office of University Ethics and Compliance to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and rules. As explained in IV below, while acting on behalf of the university, employees should avoid organizing, or taking part in, public engagements with candidates for elected office – including elected officials – during the 30 days that precede a contested election.

IV. **Engaging with Elected Officials and Candidates for Elected Office Within Thirty (30) Days of an Election**

The University of Illinois System is nonpartisan and does not take positions on federal, state or local elections or candidates. In order to avoid any appearance that the University is endorsing candidates or engaging in prohibited political activity as defined by the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (“State Ethics Act”), university employees acting on behalf of the university should avoid organizing, or taking part in, public engagements with federal, state or local candidates for elected office during the 30 days that precede a contested election, including primary elections. Consistent with the definition in the State Ethics Act, the term “candidate” here includes current office-holders.<sup>1</sup>

This policy does *not*:

- limit the ability of faculty and staff to engage in constitutionally protected activities, such as participating in campaign-related activities or events on their own time.
- prevent candidates from organizing their own events on campus, consistent with applicable laws and university policies (see Appendix: Use of University Facilities by Candidates for Elected Office).
- limit the ability of Registered Student Organizations to organize events (also discussed in appendix).

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<sup>1</sup> “‘Candidate’ means a person who has filed nominating papers or petitions for nomination or election to an elected State office, or who has been appointed to fill a vacancy in nomination, and who remains eligible for placement on the ballot at either a general primary election or general election.” 5 ILCS 430/1-5.



Similarly, it is recommended that, while acting on behalf of the university, employees should avoid organizing, or taking part in, public engagements with senior *non-elected* federal or state officials during the 30 days prior to an election involving the President or Governor, respectively. Please [contact OGR](#) if you have questions about who should be considered a “senior official.”

Questions about the applicability and interpretation of the State Ethics Act should be directed to the [University Ethics & Compliance Office](#).

#### V. Responding to Government Inquiries and Requests

Faculty and staff are sometimes contacted by government officials or their staff seeking expertise on particular topics. **Please notify OGR and your university COGER representative if you are contacted by a member or staff of the Illinois General Assembly or the U.S. Congress, or a senior official at a local, state or federal agency, regarding university-related matters.** This includes requests for information or invitations to testify before a committee or share your professional expertise regarding university-related matters. OGR can provide context and background information about such requests. OGR also can assist faculty and staff who have been invited to testify by reviewing draft testimony and providing pointers on hearings.

Expert information and/or testimony should include a disclaimer that it does not represent the official position of the University of Illinois System, unless specifically authorized by the President of the system.

#### VI. Participating in Advocacy through Illinois Connection

Illinois Connection is a grassroots legislative advocacy network comprising of employees, students, and alumni from all three universities of the U of I System. Currently, it has over 21,000 members, and it is organized by the University of Illinois Alumni Alliance. Its mission is to gain greater federal and state support for the system. OGR urges the system community to participate in Illinois Connection’s calls to action and advocacy efforts. See [link](#) for more information.

#### VII. State Lobbying

**Faculty and staff who plan to engage in state advocacy on behalf of the University of Illinois System and/or one of its universities should notify OGR and your university COGER representative.** OGR can provide office space, briefing materials, and suggestions for such meetings. Making OGR aware of any planned interactions with government officials can be helpful to ensure that messages are coordinated across our advocacy efforts.

Employees who have lobbying/advocacy in their job description or job responsibilities do not need to take time off in order to advocate. Other employees should take time off unless directed otherwise by the President of the system. Please contact OGR if you need further clarification.



VIII. Federal Lobbying

In order to comply with federal laws, **faculty and staff *must* coordinate all federal lobbying activities on behalf of the U of I System with OGR and your university COGER representative.** Pursuant to federal law, any university employee who engages in federal lobbying on behalf of the University of Illinois System needs to complete a lobbying disclosure form each time a lobbying contact is made with a federal official or congressional staff. This form can be accessed by visiting <https://go.uillinois.edu/fedLobReport> and should be submitted to OGR within five days of such activity. Accurate and timely submissions are critical to ensuring the system's compliance with the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 and the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. Further information about federal lobbying requirements can be found [here](#).

IX. Communications with Federal Agencies Regarding Research

**Faculty and staff are free to communicate directly with program managers and other agency staff about federally sponsored research without coordinating with OGR.** We are, however, happy to help faculty with questions or concerns about such research. OGR retains consultants in Washington, DC, who have extensive experience interacting with federal agencies on research issues, and we coordinate closely with the Offices of Vice Chancellor for Research at Urbana and Chicago on issues involving federally sponsored research.

X. Personal Advocacy

**Faculty and staff are free to contact state or federal government officials/staff directly when acting in their personal capacity** (i.e., as private citizens on their own time and expense). Faculty and staff should contact OGR if they have questions about what is considered personal versus official advocacy.

Although faculty and staff may indicate their university affiliation when engaging in personal advocacy, the communication should make it clear that they are *not* speaking for or on behalf of the university or the system. We strongly recommend that individuals use their personal phone or personal email account when contacting a state or federal legislator in a personal capacity. **This communication should occur before work hours, after work hours, or during any normally scheduled lunch or break, and should not involve the use of any university or system resources (e.g., phone, fax, computer).**

XI. Participation in Professional Society and Association Advocacy

Many faculty and staff are members of professional societies or academic or trade associations that take positions and advocate on federal, state and local issues. While you are free to engage in personal advocacy, **please consider letting OGR and your COGER representative know if you plan to take part in high-profile advocacy efforts**, such as meeting with legislators in Washington, DC, Springfield, IL, or locally. In addition to providing information about the legislator or issue, OGR may be able to support such efforts by, for example, providing contact information and introductions.



**XII. Conflicts of Interest**

If faculty or staff serve in an elected capacity, or in a policymaking position outside of the System within federal, state or local government, OGR will not ask the official to champion or cosponsor legislation, or to initiate new policy proposals. However, OGR frequently shares information with all legislators and other officials, and will continue to share information with that faculty or staff, in their role as a public official, consistent with other public officials. OGR will keep in mind and be sensitive to the fact that there may be certain bills, policy or regulatory decisions that may potentially impact a member of the faculty or staff who is also a public official, and that they may choose to abstain from voting or taking a position on this matter.



**Appendix: Use of University Facilities by Candidates for Elected Office**

University facilities may be made available for events organized by or on behalf of candidates for elected office:

- If a candidate for political office requests to reserve a space on campus without the sponsorship of a registered student organization (RSO), they should pay the usual and normal charge for a non-university (external) client.
- RSOs occasionally invite or host candidates to appear on campus. As long as the proposed event meets facility management policies, RSOs are able to use institutional premises and facilities to host a candidate at any point in time.
  - If an RSO sponsors the event, reservation fees for most spaces are typically waived. However, there are additional fees for audio/video and other equipment that would need to be paid for by the RSO.
  - RSOs must submit space and event management forms through the appropriate student affairs department. RSOs should consult with their respective student affairs staff to ensure compliance with appropriate policies and procedures to ensure success of the event.
- Below are links to the relevant policies for each of the system's universities:
  - UIC: <https://meetings.uic.edu/reserving-space/>
  - UIS: <https://www.uis.edu/facilities/policies/>
  - Urbana-Champaign: <https://cam.illinois.edu/policies/fo-70/>