



Guidelines for University Advocacy and Interactions with Government Officials

As of October 9, 2026

Overview

The Office of Community Relations, operating within the area of Marketing and Public Affairs, conducts, coordinates, and oversees all of Chapman University's activities involving government officials, their staff, and other public offices and governmental agencies. At the direction of the Office of the President, the Office of Community Relations is charged with advancing and protecting the university's interests at all levels of federal, state, and local government, consistent with laws applicable to non-profit educational institutions in California, and is the designated point of contact for government officials and their staff.

All university engagement with public officials must comply with lobbying laws, regulations, and ethics at local, state, and federal levels.

These guidelines address interactions between Chapman University and all levels of government. The purpose is to ensure that engagements with these individuals and entities are conducted in a lawful, centralized, strategic, and consistent manner across the institution.

Audiences

These guidelines apply to all Chapman faculty, staff, and students, including students representing student organizations.

Definitions

- **Government or Diplomatic Officials:** Elected or appointed officials, employees of government agencies, and representatives of public offices at federal, state, and local levels. This also includes diplomats and representatives from embassies and consulates.
- **Official University Capacity:** Any activity conducted on behalf of or representing the university's interests, resources, or reputation, including the use of Chapman University affiliation and/or title.
- **Government Relations Activities:** Communications, advocacy, partnerships, or interactions intended to inform, influence, or collaborate with government entities. This extends to interactions with advocacy/lobbying groups and associations that

represent higher education, such as the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU).

- **Institutional Coordination:** The process undertaken by the Office of Community Relations to ensure alignment of university interactions with government officials.

Roles and Responsibilities

As a standard practice, Chapman University administrators, faculty, staff, and students should contact the Office of Community Relations before engaging in their Chapman capacity with Government or Diplomatic Officials. This includes situations in which a legislator or agency contacts an individual directly to discuss a university-related matter, whether related to the university as a whole or to a school, department, unit, or group within the university. By putting them in contact with the Office of Community Relations, the individual ensures that Chapman provides an appropriate and coordinated response, with a consistent voice, while adhering to local, state, and federal lobbying laws.

Government Relations Activities must be coordinated between schools, colleges, units, student groups, and university administration to prevent multiple, uncoordinated outreach efforts that may reflect competing priorities or interests. Additionally, the Office of Community Relations must prioritize these requests to align with Chapman's strategic goals and legislative priorities.

Chapman works diligently to develop government relationships and craft legislative priorities in the best interests of our students, faculty, and staff. Early coordination allows the Office of Community Relations to understand university departmental needs and to evaluate how they align with university-wide legislative priorities. Working with the Office of Community Relations can help to ensure effective and legally appropriate advocacy, consistent messaging, and strong relationships with key government stakeholders.

Only individuals authorized by the Office of the President, through the Senior Vice President of Marketing and Public Affairs, may represent Chapman University in engagements with local, state, and federal officials, which includes members of municipal and county offices, the California State Legislature, the United States Congress and their staff, and the White House. On-campus student voter registration and voting activities are encouraged and permitted, in accordance with all applicable policies and laws, and in direct coordination with Student Affairs and Community Relations. Guidelines for participation in the political process as an individual private citizen are outlined further within this document.

Government Relations Activities and Associated Procedures

Government Relations Activities may take several forms, including but not limited to individual or group meetings; attendance at events; testimony before executive or legislative bodies; presentation of written materials or electronic communication;

invitations to visit campus(es); requests for certificates or proclamations; and responses to requests for information.

Employees of Chapman University are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

Campus Visits by Government or Diplomatic Officials

The university welcomes visits by Government or Diplomatic Officials and staff, whether they visit as private citizens or in their governmental capacity. All outgoing invitations to Government or Diplomatic Officials, as well as incoming requests from international or domestic officials to visit any university campus, site, or event in an official capacity, must be coordinated with the Office of Community Relations. This includes invitations to specific events or programs hosted by individual schools, colleges, and units. We want to ensure official visits follow appropriate protocol and represent Chapman well, thus a high degree of planning and coordination are required.

During times when Government Officials are running for office, it is essential to consider our obligations to remain non-partisan and not give the appearance of supporting a particular candidate. Please reach out to the Office of Community Relations for guidance and direction, and refer to the University's [Facility Use and Event Policy](#), which clearly outlines requirements and procedures for political events.

Visits to Offices of Government or Diplomatic Officials or Appearances before Executive and Legislative Bodies, Committees, Study Groups, Commissions, and Consular Groups

If a visit or appearance is in a person's Official University Capacity, the Office of Community Relations must be notified in advance and provide approval. This applies to any instance in which participation is requested or granted based on the individual's affiliation with Chapman University.

If the visit or appearance is in a personal capacity (including on behalf of a professional or other external organization), the university employee must clearly state that they are not acting or appearing on behalf of Chapman University. The Office of Community Relations should still be notified of the visit or appearance in this circumstance.

Written Materials or Electronic Communication

When requests for information, reports, and data related to Chapman University are made to the campuses or individual faculty, staff, students, or student organizations, responses to such requests must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Community Relations before they are submitted.

Lobbying

The university complies with all applicable local, state, and federal disclosure laws and regulations and ethics rules associated with governmental entities and tax-exempt organizations. **All university engagement with public officials must comply with lobbying laws, regulations, and ethics at local, state, and federal levels.**

University employees must not engage in lobbying activities on behalf of Chapman University, or give the appearance of engaging in lobbying activities, without specific prior authorization by the Office of Community Relations. Lobbying includes communications with legislative, governmental, or regulatory officials that aim to influence policy, legislation, or funding decisions on behalf of Chapman.

Research and Government Affairs

With limited exceptions, the Byrd Amendment prohibits institutions from using appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with a contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement with a federal agency.

Letters of Support

Obtaining letters of support from government officials for a grant application must be requested 20 days in advance of the proposal deadline. Please make requests through the Office of Research to your Pre-Award Administrator or e-mail sps@chapman.edu providing the solicitation information.

Please note that soliciting letters of support from members of Congress can be considered lobbying activity. These documents may only be requested if such letters are specifically listed as mandatory components within the solicitation or Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Student Activism and Government Affairs

Chapman University respects the rights of students and student organizations to engage in lawful political speech, advocacy, debate, and other expressive activities consistent with the University's [Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech](#) principles. Student expression and political activity are not automatically attributed to Chapman University. However, students and student organizations may not represent that they are speaking or acting on behalf of Chapman University unless specifically authorized to do so. Activities undertaken in an official University capacity or intended to communicate University positions or interests to governmental entities must be coordinated through Student Engagement and the Office of Community Relations.

Students should first approach Student Engagement, and then Student Engagement will determine next steps, which may include a consultation with the Office of Community Relations if the activity is appropriate.

Individual Participation in the Political Process

Chapman University respects the rights of individual citizens to speak and assemble freely and to participate in discussion on public policy issues. Each year, many members of the university make very important contributions to current public policy debates.

However, as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, Chapman University is prohibited from participating or intervening in any partisan political activities.

Participation or intervention includes, but is not limited to, making financial contributions and publication or distribution of written or verbal statements in favor of or opposition to a particular official or candidate. Violation of this prohibition may result in monetary fines and exposes the university to possible revocation of its tax-exempt status. This prohibition for the university extends to elections, officials, and candidates at all levels—federal, state, and local.

Members of the staff, faculty, and administration may engage in partisan political activity **ONLY** in a personal capacity, provided that they clearly state that they are acting in their capacity as private citizens and are not speaking or acting on behalf of Chapman University. This includes any statements, written or verbal, which could be construed as an endorsement of a particular political party, candidate, or partisan cause.

Please note that engaging in any personal political activity during an employee's regular work hours is prohibited.

Students and student organizations may engage in partisan political activity in their individual or organizational capacities, provided that these activities do not violate Chapman's policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech, Facility Use and Events Policy, or other University policies applicable to students and recognized student organizations. Such activity should not be represented as being conducted on behalf of Chapman University unless specifically authorized by the University. Students should first consult with Student Engagement regarding proposed events or activities, and then Student Engagement will provide guidance, which may include a consultation with the Office of Community Relations.

Use of University Resources

University resources—including funds, property, event spaces, letterhead, email, and information technology like computers and websites—should not be used for individual or personal political activities. Individuals may not host partisan political events on university property—or use university funds, information technology, or other resources to plan or promote such events—in their capacities as private citizens. Schools, colleges, and academic and administrative departments within the university may not sponsor or host partisan political events and may not use university property or resources for such events.

Disclaimer

This guidance does not address every possible situation. Please contact the Office of Community Relations for assistance in interpreting these guidelines or planning any government-related engagement.