

Dartmouth College Alumni Relations

Volunteer Leader Communications Policy

8/25/17

Dartmouth College's alumni classes, clubs, and groups ('organizations' collectively) and their leaders are valuable partners in advancing Dartmouth's mission. The College appreciates receiving input on myriad topics from organizations and leaders. To promote organization success and effective communications, Dartmouth's Office of Alumni Relations provides this policy to guide alumni leaders.

1. Communications from an organization should be authorized following the organization's procedures.

From time to time, it is appropriate, for an organization (or group of organizations) to communicate with other alumni, alumni organizations, or Dartmouth, on an important issue. Examples include issuing a formal statement to comment on a proposal to add a new program that an organization deems worthy, express disagreement with a decision to end a program that an organization deems important, or encourage Dartmouth to take a stance on a national matter. If alumni leaders wish to communicate as an organization on such topics, it should adopt a written policy as a part of its constitution or bylaws that helps its members, other organizations, and the College to understand the necessary steps that the leaders must follow before an authorized statement can be issued. There are several approaches to developing a policy, including requiring a vote of the organization's leadership. Alumni Relations is always a resource in developing policies in collaboration with volunteer leaders. An organization without a written policy that identifies the process of how the organization authorizes formal communications should not issue such communications.

2. Communications from organizational leaders should clearly indicate whether the communication reflects the view of the organization or individual(s).

Assuming the organization has authorized the communication in compliance with its written procedures, it is appropriate for one or more leaders of an organization to share the communication. However, it is important to remember that leaders can only communicate on behalf of an organization that has authorized them to do so. It can be helpful to the recipient of the communication if that authority is made clear. For example, a message could say: "The Directorate of my organization has approved this message" or "Our leadership has asked me to communicate with you." a

Leaders within an organization, on individually or collectively, may want to communicate with other organizations or Dartmouth on their own about a particular topic. Again, it is helpful

to the recipient to understand the position from which the message is delivered. For example, a message could say: “While I am the vice president of X, I write to you today on my own to share my view” or “The undersigned are both members of X, but we write to you on our own and are not speaking for X or its leadership.”

When communicating outside your organization, via email or various social media platforms, by clearly indicating whether you are communicating officially on behalf of your organization or on your personal behalf, you help the recipient understand to whom the information and sentiment belongs and how to best respond.

3. Communications should be distributed in accordance with the Dartmouth Volunteer Information Access Policy.

Alumni organization leader contact information provided by the Alumni Relations Office (via the Alumni Relations website or other means) may only be used for Dartmouth and Dartmouth Alumni Relations related activities. Organizations planning to communicate with others using the contact information provided by Alumni Relations are encouraged to be respectful of the different purposes of organizations and their diverse structures, the diversity of perspectives and opinions of their leaders, and their communications preferences and platforms. Individuals communicating on their own are not authorized to use the contact information because individual actions or opinions are neither Dartmouth nor Alumni Relations “related activities.” Use of contact information for private or commercial purposes is prohibited. If you are unclear about the appropriateness of a communication, please contact the Alumni Relations staff and review the [Dartmouth Volunteer Information Access Policy](#) for guidance.

4. Communications must not be in violation of local, state, or federal law, particularly regarding support for political candidates or political issues.

Per IRS guidelines, “all section 501(c)(3) organizations are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) a candidate for public office.” Public charities are also prohibited from making financial donations to campaigns. Public charities may, depending on the facts and circumstances, may engage in certain activities, including taking a position on a public policy so long as the action does not function as political campaign intervention.

Organizations may not engage in advocacy that interferes with a political campaign, but may share information about a candidate (e.g., sharing that “Jane Smith, ’82, is running for Congress in her home state of X” in a newsletter is fine but encouraging alumni to vote for her or to contribute to her campaign is not.) Organizations that choose to make such an announcement are encouraged to have a written policy and to make such announcements only for Dartmouth alumni.

An organization that is unclear about how a potential action or communication may violate the IRS restriction should review the charities and non-profits portion of the [IRS website](#),

including the publication [Compliance Guide for 501\(c\)\(3\) Public Charities](#), consult with an attorney, or contact Alumni Relations.

Questions

Questions about volunteer leader communications should be directed to the Alumni Relations officer with whom the organization works.