

Title/Subject: PUBLIC STATEMENT POLICY

Applies to:  faculty  staff  students  student employees  visitors  contractors

Effective Date of This Revision: November 1, 2022

Contact for More Information: University Communications

Board Policy  Administrative Policy  Procedure  Guideline

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### BACKGROUND:

University Communications is responsible for initiating proactive outreach to media, serving as the primary point of contact for media, and also managing appropriate responses to inquiries from journalists, media outlets and other stakeholders on all university matters. In this capacity, University Communications works with the Office of the President to coordinate and issue all official University Public Statements.

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on issuing and responding to requests for official Public Statements from the university. This policy applies to all university employees, including faculty and staff, as well as to students and student employees.

### DEFINITIONS:

For the purposes of this policy, Public Statements are defined as any messages issued on behalf of the university and shared via public channels, including social media, broadcast or print media, university website and more. These Public Statements are intended to outline the university's position on or response to events, activities and issues **external** to the university community, as well as to internal matters impacting the university community.

### POLICY:

#### ***Issuing Public Statements and/or responding to requests for official university comment.***

As a leading public regional research university, Central Michigan University may elect to issue institutional messages, or Public Statements, on matters related to or directly impacting the CMU community and/or our region, higher education, and more. These matters may include but are not limited to events, activities or issues at the local, state, regional, national or international level that may affect the CMU community. In addition, the university may be called on by stakeholders to issue an official comment or statement in response to current events or issues.

The university president may choose to issue an official Public Statement on social, political, economic or policy issues, or on current events, when:

- The issue directly affects CMU's ability to pursue its academic, teaching, research and service mission;
- The issue directly affects members of the CMU community, including their physical, emotional or mental wellbeing.
- The issue, event or activity is directly related to the CMU mission, vision or core values.

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Authority: Robert O. Davies, President

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When issues, activities and events external to the university do not directly impact the university, its operations or its community members, the university president may choose not to issue a Public Statement. In addition, for issues, events or activities that impact a segment of the CMU community, university leaders may take a more personalized approach, issuing communications and resources directly to the affected individuals.

The university president should not issue Public Statements that conflict with the university's mission, vision or values. In addition, as outlined in the [CMU Advocacy Policy](#), the university is a public agency supported by public revenues and should not issue statements that violate its posture of institutional neutrality with respect to partisan issues.

***Authority to issue Public Statements***

Only the university president or their designee may issue an official Public Statement on behalf of the university. CMU University Communications is responsible for working with the university president or their designee to distribute the Public Statement. Other university leaders, administrators, faculty and staff members are encouraged to share the official Public Statement; no other unit, division, department or individual may issue a separate Public Statement on behalf of the university.

University Communications will coordinate release of official University Public Statements to appropriate media and community partners.

***Speaking on behalf of Central Michigan University.***

Authority to speak on behalf of the university is granted exclusively to the university president by the [bylaws of the Central Michigan University Board of Trustees](#). The president reserves the right to delegate that authority to an appropriate member of their administration.

No administrator, faculty or staff member is authorized to issue official Public Statements nor to speak on behalf of the university without the express permission of the university president. Individuals who receive such permission are required to work in collaboration with University Communications to develop the official statement.

University Communications will coordinate interviews with media and other appropriate stakeholders when the president and/or their designee speak on behalf of the university.

***Statements on behalf of colleges, divisions, departments and other units of the university.***

As a general rule, individual units, including colleges, academic departments and student service divisions, should only share the university's official Public Statement. However, in the event that the university does not issue an official Public Statement, leaders of individual units (e.g., deans and division vice presidents) must seek permission from the Office of the President before developing a statement on behalf of their unit/division. All such statements must be reviewed and approved by the Office of the President.

***Requests for interviews related to sensitive issues***

Individual faculty and staff members may be contacted by the media to provide context and insight related to sensitive issues and events based on their subject-matter expertise. When this occurs, those individuals must consult with University Communications before speaking with the journalist.

Any questions that arise during an interview that fall outside the faculty or staff member's area of expertise, or any requests for an official university position or response, must be directed to University Communications for appropriate follow-up.

***Academic freedom***

In alignment with the principles of academic freedom, all faculty members may choose to issue statements as individuals using their own communication channels. These statements should be clearly made in the faculty's individual capacity and not be represented as official university Public Statements, nor should they be issued as statements on behalf of an individual's college, department, division or unit of the university.

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Faculty, staff and administrators are encouraged to share their subject-specific knowledge, based on their areas of research and/or professional expertise, with media. When individuals are contacted by media, they should notify University Communications. University Communications often shares and amplifies media coverage involving CMU faculty and staff, and monitors the impact of those stories on the university's overall reputation for excellence. University Communications also has media tools it can use to show faculty members the audience and reach of their interviews across all media platforms.

***Personal speech and free speech.***

As an institution of higher learning and an inclusive marketplace of ideas, CMU actively encourages the robust, free and open exchange of ideas. CMU invites members of its community to explore, discuss and challenge ideas, including those related to challenging and/or sensitive topics. These exchanges can take the form of, but are not limited to, classroom discussions, open forums, guest speakers, public debates, demonstrations, marches, tabling and signage (as outlined by the [CMU Advocacy Policy](#)), and more.

Any member of the CMU community may express their thoughts and perspectives publicly on any matter as a private citizen. When publicly sharing personal perspectives on any topic, individuals may not include any images, text or other material that suggest the message represents CMU or any department, division or unit of the university. These private statements should not include the name of the university, nor should they be issued using university-sponsored communication channels, including official CMU and CMU campus partner social media accounts, university-branded letterhead or stationery, or cmich.edu email accounts.

Central Michigan University reserves the right to make exceptions to, modify or eliminate this policy and or its content. This document supersedes all previous policies, procedures or guidelines relative to this subject.