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**Policy Name:** FLCC Spokesperson, Media and Public Statements

**Policy Number:** K-1

**Functional Area(s) Responsible:** Enrollment Management

**Owner(s) of Policy:** Public Relations & Communications

**Most Recent BOT Approval Date:** March 2011

**Most Recent Review Date:** Spring 2025

**Most Recent Review/Revision Type:** ☐ none ☐ minor/non-substantive ☒ substantive/extensive

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### **Policy Statement:**

Communications to external stakeholders of Finger Lakes Community College will be based on factual information and reflect the values of the institution.

Responsibility for developing or releasing public statements will depend on the circumstances as noted in procedures.

Employees, students, and other representatives of the College may not issue public statements on behalf of the College unless they have the authority to do so pursuant to this policy. Employees may make public statements within their areas of expertise following guidelines in procedures below.

Public statements of personal opinion should include a clear statement that the expressed views are personal and do not reflect the College's official position. College letterhead and other institutional resources may not be used to communicate personal statements and/or positions.

### **Reason(s) for Policy:**

This policy limits the persons authorized to issue public statements in any form on behalf of the College in order to safeguard the institution's reputation and mission. It provides guidance on how to respond to inquiries for information that will be made public.

### **Applicability of Policy:**

This policy applies to all employees, students, and representatives of Finger Lakes Community College.

### **Definitions:**

#### Public Statement

Any verbal, written or electronic communication of statements relative to College policy, operations or other institutional matters that is publicly accessible, including without limitation any statement made to print or broadcast or online media outlets (in an interview or otherwise), a letter to the editor, or an online posting.

### **Related Documents:**

- FLCC Emergency Procedures
- Trademark and Service Mark Use
- Student Right-to-Know & Campus Security Act of 1990

- FLCC Right to Know
- HIPAA
- Academic Freedom
- Freedom of Speech

### **Procedures:**

All College employees or other institutional representatives, including employees of the FLCC Association, must contact the PR and Communications Office if they:

- 1) Receive inquiries from any individual seeking public statements of College policy or position.
- 2) Wish to issue a public statement or suggest an idea for public media.
- 3) Learn of situations within their area of responsibility that are sensitive and could become a crisis or issue; learn that stories about their department or division will appear in local, regional, or national media; or learn of an emerging incident or issue that may be of concern to internal or external stakeholders of the College.

### **Endorsements, Use of College Logos, et cetera**

Any use of the College's trademarks, service marks, logos and/or symbols must be approved in accordance with the College's Policy on Trademark and Service Mark Use as well as logo guidelines that have been developed by the Marketing office.

### **Issues/Emerging Events**

In cases that may affect the institution's reputation, senior leadership, PR and Communications, and employees or representatives of the relevant College office(s) or department(s) should be notified as soon as possible. This group should collaborate on a potential response – with legal counselor or law enforcement, if necessary – and establish a designated spokesperson.

When dealing with emerging issues, College employees must inform their supervisor, who in turn must notify the relevant Cabinet officer. Cabinet officers should then include the President, PR and Communications, and other relevant Cabinet officers and employees. Notification should be done by phone for time-sensitive issues, followed by email with relevant facts.

A brief written summary of the emerging issue will be compiled, including all pertinent facts, timing of events, background information, identification of both internal and external parties involved (including key contact information) and expected/anticipated next steps. Documentation must be shared only with those who will maintain its confidentiality.

Only designated spokespeople may provide statements about emerging events, controversial issues, or college decisions. If an employee speaks in a manner contrary to the College's message, the College reserves the right to respond in the following manner in order to clarify for the media:

*"The College seeks to foster a healthy exchange of ideas, and we recognize an individual's or group's right to express an opinion. However, College leaders must make decisions based on the best interests of all employees and students, whose opinions and interests may not be reflected in the debate. The institutional message should be conveyed by the designated College spokesperson(s) in order to accurately reflect the College's position on a particular issue."*

Whenever possible, key College stakeholders, especially staff, faculty, board members and students, should learn about pertinent decisions BEFORE the media communicates them in a public forum.

Examples of emerging issues and/or events include, but may not be limited to:

- Health or safety issues
- Environmental hazards
- Emergencies inside the building or on our grounds (in accordance with the College's Emergency Management Plan)
- Allegations of criminal misconduct or impropriety
- Accidents or death related to FLCC in any way
- Community issue of concern to key stakeholders
- Severe weather (in accordance with the College's Emergency Management Plan)
- National, state, or local emergencies

### **Routine Media Protocols**

Routine inquiries for information that will become public should be routed through PR and Communications, which will provide basic facts (e.g., enrollment numbers), identify a subject matter expert, and provide training and assistance for media interviews.

The following is a recommended response:

*"FLCC's standard protocol for requests for information to be shared publicly involves passing your inquiry through our PR and Communications Office first. Let me transfer you to this office (also provide the appropriate names/contact information in case the call is lost.)"*

Another option: Tell the individual that you will share the message with the PR and Communications Office immediately (do not delay if you make this statement). Inquiries requiring the individual professional expertise of faculty members may be handled at the department level, with a courtesy notification to PR and Communications. This allows the office to monitor important media relationships at FLCC and to be aware of faculty members who may speak to trends and stories of interest.

### **Interview Protocols**

FLCC will not issue "off the record" comments. If a comment is not appropriate for a public arena, it should be left out of conversations with individuals who would share that information publicly.

"No comment" is not an appropriate response to media inquiries. Responses should explain the College process for determining a course of action in general terms.

Designated FLCC spokesperson(s) must adhere to the interview topic and must not give a personal opinion on FLCC policies or decisions without prior approval.

If an FLCC student perspective is requested by the media, a student's academic standing and record must be checked prior to any media interviews.

If inaccurate information about FLCC has been reported by the media, notify the PR and Communications Office.

### **Position Statements**

In some instances, the College may wish to take the initiative to issue statements on issues of public importance. The following questions should be asked before a statement is issued:

- Does the statement align with the mission, vision and values of the institution, ideally with multiple elements to show a strong connection to the topic.
- Does the College have a way to meaningfully influence the issue either with current programming (e.g., nursing shortage) or special programming (e.g., a blood drive following a disaster)?

- Is the event local or impacting the College community in some way?
- Will the statement be consistent with any past statements?
- Do we have the time and resources for drafting and reviewing a statement that can be released in a timely fashion?

**Forms/Online Processes:**

None

**Appendix:**

None