

Goucher College Presidential Message Policy

I. PURPOSE

To provide clarification on when presidential statements are appropriate, and the protocol for evaluating and distributing presidential statements.

II. SCOPE

Goucher's president is frequently asked to make statements on behalf of the College on a variety of issues that impact members of our campus community. The president communicates regularly with the community through various formal and informal channels including Town Halls, Community Conversations, faculty meetings, the Goucher magazine, In the Loop emails, and emails to students, staff and faculty. When the president issues any statement, it should only be after careful deliberation to ensure that any communication advances the mission of Goucher College and reflects the values and principles of the institution.

III. USE OF THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE

The voice of our institution's leader is a powerful tool for communicating in good times and bad. Goucher's president will use this voice when deemed appropriate, keeping in mind that the "overuse" of the president's voice can lead to an expectation throughout the college community that the president should respond to a broad range of issues of national or world importance, even when those issues do not directly affect the Goucher community or the core educational mission of the college.

Frequent presidential messaging can undermine the importance of a president's message in times when it is especially warranted. Overuse can also create an expectation among our community that the president "should" respond to every situation, which de-emphasizes the importance of other important, more relevant, and expert voices within the Goucher community.

A. Appropriate Topics for the President

For Goucher's president, it is appropriate to amplify accomplishments that advance Goucher's mission of providing an innovative liberal arts education that inspires students to be global changemakers, and prepares them with a broad, humane perspective for a life of inquiry, creativity, and critical and analytical thinking.

The president will also often communicate during the year whenever senior leadership changes; to recognize the exceptional work of our faculty, students, and staff; to announce new strategic initiatives, programs, partnerships, and plans; and upon receipt of transformative gifts.

Here are additional examples of some, but not all, the situations that may merit a statement directly from the president:

1. Crisis situations that directly affect the college and/or our people (staff, faculty, and/or students). Goucher's emergency response protocol guides our processes and procedures during emergency situations on campus, including when a serious crime occurs, or a weather-related emergency or major disruption to college operations happens. The E2 Campus Emergency Communication System Notifications are typically the first communications sent, with follow-up messages from campus safety and the president. The president may provide an update and share additional information and emotional support, when warranted, during a crisis response and recovery.
2. Incidents that directly affect the college's ability to deliver on its core mission of education (e.g., the FAFSA, or Free Application for Federal Student Aid, debacle; the COVID-19 pandemic, etc.).
3. Matters related to Goucher's strategic priorities (e.g., educational access, equity and inclusive excellence, student recruitment and retention, capital projects, and other initiatives that enhance our campus and the student experience).
4. A death within the Goucher College community. The president will notify the campus community (including faculty, staff, students, and trustees and alumni as appropriate), after consultation with the individual's family, concerning the death of a Goucher College community member. The death of a retired faculty member will be announced by the provost and senior vice president of academic affairs.
5. It is also important to note that there are times when our president will not speak or send a message; for example, Title IX incidents or investigations which are governed by regulations protecting individuals' confidentiality, or other personnel-related matters.

B. Commentary on Matters External to or Originating Beyond Goucher

Our president is frequently asked to communicate about events that are external to Goucher, including local, regional, national, or international activities and politics. When considering whether to make any statement, the president will be careful to not officially associate Goucher with a specific ideological viewpoint should the issue not be directly related to the College's core mission of education. As a 501(c)3 non-profit institution, the College is also specifically prohibited from explicitly advocating for any political candidate, party, or legislation.

Furthermore, speaking out about a particular social or political issue may cause widespread questions about why the president is not speaking about other issues and whether those issues are perceived as more or less important to the College. When external events affect segments of the Goucher community, our staff and faculty leadership will, in most cases, reach out personally to those most directly affected and extend support and resources when needed.

Goucher encourages its students to be global changemakers through dialogue and action. Therefore, students and other members of our Goucher community are free to express their views on a broad range of issues. If members of our community believe that something happening in the world is important and worth supporting or denouncing, then it is the president's responsibility to create the conditions on campus whereby all members of our community feel free and safe to express their opinion.

C. Channels of Presidential Communication

Multiple channels of communication are available for sharing presidential messages. Not all channels will be necessary for every message and not every statement from the president will be disseminated to every audience. The president and his cabinet will decide which statements are most appropriate to distribute to our stakeholders, which include students, staff, faculty, alumni, trustees, and parents, as well as admitted students and their parents. Presidential communication channels include:

1. Collegewide email (or videos) directly from the president.
2. Statements issued through the Office of Marketing and Communications for attribution to the president.
3. Press release on the college website.
4. Letter or statement in the “In the Loop” or AAGC (Alumni Association of Goucher College) newsletters.
5. Letter in the “Goucher Magazine.”
6. Message posted on the Goucher Parents webpage.
7. Social media post on college channels (Facebook, X, Instagram, Tik Tok, LinkedIn).

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office of the President is the office responsible for this policy.

[note that contacts should include the responsible department email, rather than a name]

For more information or if you have questions about this policy, please contact the Office of the President at president@goucher.edu.

V. HISTORY

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