

Administrative Memo 31

Participation and Recognition of Faculty Activity in Policy Development

November 1, 2017 (rev. 1993, 2007)

Faculty¹ in the College of Forestry have an obligation to contribute their knowledge and scientific expertise to support the development of policy about natural resources and related products and ecological services. Many forestry and natural resource problems are extraordinarily complex, consequential, and controversial. As such there is often wide disagreement among stakeholders with respect to the underlying values, desired outcomes, appropriate frames for understanding, and scientific facts and knowledge within a natural resource problem. The public is often asked to state their preferences based on contradictory allegations of fact and context, and often struggles to separate fact from fiction, or half-truth from artful distortion. The scientific record, even when long and broadly accepted, is often inappropriately manipulated in favor of one outcome or another. Outside of academia, few in society have the expertise, broad understanding, limited conflicts of interest, and freedom to speak authoritatively on these complex natural resource issues.

It is not the role of the College to take positions on specific natural resources policies, nor to advocate for specific policies. However, the College believes that it is appropriate, under Oregon State University guidelines for academic freedom, for College scholars to educate, and in some cases directly advocate about the science that influences policy development or major management decisions.

The college encourages such participation, which will vary widely in scope and extent among faculty. However, it is important that faculty participation be appropriately conducted, including clear differentiation and identification of their roles—which can include being a representative of OSU or the College of Forestry, a member of a professional or scientific society, an independent scholar from OSU with knowledge of the subject area, and as an individual citizen speaking personally.

The purpose of this administrative memo is to clearly identify College policies and guidelines for appropriate faculty participation in the policy development process, and their connection to larger OSU policies on such engagement. Following these policies and guidelines will help ensure legal protection for faculty members and the university, help preserve and enhance the integrity of those involved, and improve the quality and value of their contributions to society. In addition, the memo provides guidelines for how faculty are to be recognized for such activities in their annual review, promotion, and tenure evaluations.

¹ By “faculty” we include all tenured, tenure-track, research assistants, research associates, lecturers, and adjunct or courtesy faculty.

University Policy

The University [Strategic Plan for 2014-2018](#) recognizes the importance of public engagement, stating that “Oregon State will be a leader in solving society’s most pressing challenges through innovative, integrated, data-enabled research, outreach and creative activity.”

University policy describing rights and recommendations for public participation is contained in the OSU Faculty Handbook in the sections on [academic freedom and outside activities](#). It states:

“The faculty and administration of Oregon State University jointly accept the responsibility for maintaining an atmosphere in which scholars may freely teach, conduct research, publish, and engage in other scholarly activities. This responsibility includes maintaining the freedom for the examination of controversial issues throughout the University...

The University does not attempt to control the personal opinion, nor the public expression of that opinion, of any member of the faculty or staff of the institution. Indeed, the faculty and administration of Oregon State University feel a responsibility to protect the right of each employee to express his or her personal opinion, but in doing so, employees have an obligation to avoid any action which purports to commit the institution to a position on any issue without appropriate approval.

As a scholar in an academic discipline, each faculty member is expected to:

- seek and state the truth as he or she sees it
- develop and improve his or her scholarly competence
- exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge to diverse audiences on-and off-campus
- contribute to the development of the discipline
- practice intellectual honesty.”

In some cases, participation by the faculty member may be at the request of another organization with financial remuneration. If so, the faculty member is required to:

- Use the Request for Approval of Outside Employment [form](#), obtaining all required signatures and filing with the Office of Academic Affairs before the activity begins.
- Make it clear to the outside employer and others that he or she is acting in an individual capacity and does not speak, write or act in the name of the university or directly represent it.
- Not list his or her university telephone number or address in commercial listings or other public documents, the purpose of which is to draw attention to the individual’s availability for compensatory service.
- Follow university [policy](#) pertaining to use of online services at OSU. It states that “Personal use of computing resources may be permitted if it does not interfere with the University's or the employee's ability to carry out University business, and does not violate the terms of this policy.”

College Policy and Guidelines

In addition to the university policies stated above, the College of Forestry policies include the following:

- Faculty will keep their department head or comparable supervisor informed about their significant participation in policy-related activities including statements to, and work with, legislative bodies, boards, agencies, and statements in the public media. This will help keep everyone informed on matters of potential public relations importance to the College. The appropriate frequency and level of detail of communications will be agreed upon between the faculty member and department head.
- Because of their generally limited association with OSU and the College of Forestry, courtesy and adjunct faculty will seek approval from the Dean before their OSU or COF affiliation is used in science outreach or advocacy.
- When potentially ambiguous, faculty will specifically note that their views do not reflect those of Oregon State University (or the College of Forestry or the Forest Research Laboratory). This is most important when they are identified as a member of the university faculty when speaking, testifying, or writing.
- When acting as a private citizen or are receiving remuneration for services, the use of university email addresses should be avoided or minimized. Faculty should also avoid all use of OSU logos and stationery, and not list their OSU facilities (laboratories, affiliated institutes, etc) on private web sites, communications or reports.
- Faculty should be cognizant of the Freedom of Information Act and Oregon public records laws in their scholarship, teaching, outreach, and policy engagement communications. All emails, notes, documents (drafts or final), pictures, or other tangible records are documents to which public members (including the media) are likely to be entitled. Further information and communications may be discoverable through litigation. Consult OSU legal [counsel](#) to understand your rights and obligations, including possible legal support.

Some useful guidelines to keep in mind when participating in policy activities include the following:

- Help your audience understand your role and the capacity in which you are acting by stating it clearly. Make clear whether you are providing information as a representative of the college or FRL responding to an official request by a policy-maker or government body, or if you are participating as an individual expressing your personal or professional views and values.
- If you are appearing in a consultative capacity as a professional, either as an individual or part of a group, make sure you do not give the impression of representing the university by using OSU stationary or business cards. If you use your academic title and rank, make sure your audience knows that it is for identification purposes only, not as a representative of the College/FRL.
- If you are serving first as a representative of the college/FRL and wish to change roles and provide personal/professional opinion or views, preface your remarks with a statement that clearly indicates such a shift in role.
- When providing information to policy-makers, clearly identify what is known, what is unknown and what is contentious or uncertain. When synthesizing information or providing personal/professional judgment or opinion, let audiences know that you are doing so. Our purpose is to avoid being misleading.
- When acting as a university faculty member or representative, confine your participation to areas where you have qualifications and expertise.

Consideration of Science Policy Engagement during Annual Performance and Promotion/Tenure Reviews

The College will recognize engagement during annual performance and promotion/tenure reviews. Such engagement may take many forms, such as organizing scientific responses to policy proposals from experts; writing op-eds or articles for peer review journals that analyze policy solutions; and helping corporations, NGOs, and government entities to fully understand the science to help develop sound policies for managing natural resources or derived products. This should result in an improvement of performance and impact, stimulate faculty to search for new sources of funding to support engagement efforts, and attract new and highly motivated students.

The [OSU faculty handbook states](#) that “Many faculty make important service contributions to university relations or to the community that are not directly related to their appointments. Though valuable in their own right, and ideally a responsibility of all citizens, these efforts are considered in promotion and tenure decisions only to the extent that they contribute to the mission of the University.” Thus, to ensure that engagement qualifies for consideration as service during promotion and tenure it is important that faculty position clearly delineates that such engagement is a significant dimension of their work. The following guidelines apply:

- Only engagement activities that are directly related to the faculty members’ areas of scholarly expertise will be considered for performance review purposes. The linkages must be reflected both in their position description and publication record. The expression of personal opinions about desired policies will not, however, be considered. Only statements that address the relevant science surrounding policy options may qualify as engagement.
- It is strongly recommended that faculty receive some form of explicit training in methods and approaches for public engagement as part of their professional training. The form and source will be geared to individual faculty member needs and activities, and discussed during performance reviews.
- Engagement activities may use any of the traditional and emerging forms of online and social media.
- Many forms of policy engagement are possible. Examples of the kinds of efforts and impacts that could be considered in performance reviews include:
 - a. Evidence of impact of the faculty member’s scientific contributions to policy actions, or as stimulus for policy analysis and organized action.
 - b. Scholarly quality of engagement forums they take part in.
 - c. The level of decision making affected (e.g., international, national, regional, and state vs. local levels of political and business influence).
 - d. The extent of readership/viewership, including measurements such as web site views, downloads, likes, and retweets (and other new and developing social media indicators).
 - e. The ability to raise funding for science and research related to policy, such as from foundations and crowdfunding campaigns that are dedicated to policy-relevant research and engagement.
 - f. The degree of innovation in activities and products.

Approval:



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Date