

# Media Relations Policy

The Board of University and School Lands (Board) seeks to work cooperatively with the media to disseminate information of public interest and concern in an accurate, complete, and timely manner consistent with the official position of the Board. The Commissioner will receive directive from the Board.

1. To achieve the Board's goal, the Commissioner and Secretary of the Board is designated as the Board's Public Information Officer (PIO) and is responsible for implementing this policy. When the Commissioner is unavailable, the Commissioner may designate a Department of Trust Lands (Department) spokesperson as the Acting Board PIO.
2. The Commissioner should engage with the media in a courteous, polite, and professional manner. Any media inquiries received by Department staff should be referred immediately to the Commissioner for response.
3. Inquiries from the news media have a high priority and the Department should respond as quickly and accurately as possible. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and to ensure that all information released is accurate and complete.
4. When contacted by the Commissioner for information needed to respond to a media inquiry, all Department Division Directors shall immediately provide the Commissioner the most accurate and complete information available for the response.
5. If the Commissioner determines that a response to the media can best be achieved by having someone with more background or expertise speak for the Board on a particular topic, the Commissioner may designate one of the authorized spokespersons to assist with or give the Board's response.
6. To assure that the members of the Board have accurate, complete, and timely information to fulfill their responsibilities, Board members shall be informed by email of the substance of significant media inquiries and of the Commissioner's official response. They shall be notified of all official Board press releases.
7. The Commissioner may not make policy statements to the media on behalf of the board about any issue before the board unless or until the board has taken an official position on the issue.

## **BOARD SPOKESPERSONS:**

Authorized Board spokespersons that the Commissioner, in his or her judgment, may designate for a particular response include:

1. Department Directors;
2. Department Public Relations Specialist; and
3. Board Members.

**RECORDS REQUESTS:**

1. Media requests for records will be handled in accordance with this policy, and consistent with the North Dakota Open Records law, N.D.C.C.ch. 44-04.
2. The Commissioner must be notified of all media records requests.
3. The Commissioner shall forward the request to the person responsible for responding to open records requests.
4. The Commissioner is responsible for assuring that all records requests are handled in an accurate, complete, and timely manner.

**PRIVILEGED AND PRIVATE INFORMATION:**

1. Most of the records and affairs of the Board and Department are public information which citizens, including the media, have the right to access.
2. If a media request for an interview or for records appears to involve a subject matter that may be privileged or confidential, the Commissioner should consult with the Attorney General's Office for review.

**PERSONAL POINTS OF VIEW:**

Board members answering media inquiries regarding Board issues should state that their views may not necessarily represent the views of the Board.

**BOARD AND DEPARTMENT-INITIATED INFORMATION:**

1. Media contact, including news releases, media advisories, and personal contacts with reporters and editors, on behalf of the entire Board should be processed through the Commissioner.
2. Employees seeking to publicize Department events or activities or needing to collaborate with the media regarding important information to the public, shall coordinate with the Commissioner, and Board members should consider doing so as well.