

Government and Community Relations

Community Relations

Executive summary

Community Relations is one third of the three-legged structure of UO Government and Community Relations. The Community Relations portfolio is comprised of multiple areas of focus: local government relations, neighbor relations, statewide community relations, engagement and sponsorships, and (in coordination with the VPRI's office) economic development. Our mission is to build bridges between the UO, local communities, and the government entities with which we interact each day by providing ideas, information, counsel, and assistance. In the process, we seek to strengthen support for the UO and public higher education by linking the campus to local government and the community.

Community Relations works in conjunction with the Federal Affairs and State Affairs portfolios by aligning messaging on key issues, ensuring that local executive and elected officials are informed about UO's strategic initiatives, and funding organizations that reflect the larger federal and state affairs goals. Matt Roberts is the Assistant Vice President of Community Relations, Larissa Ennis is the Director of Sponsorships and Community Relations, Cami Thompson is the Assistant Director for Neighbor Relations, and Jessie Rowe is our Community Events Manager and Sponsorships Coordinator.

Areas of Focus

Local government relations

The university has complex relationships with our local government entities, including the City of Eugene, the City of Springfield, Lane County, the local water and utilities entity (Eugene Water and Electric Board [EWEB]), the transit authority (Lane Transit District [LTD]), Lane Community College (LCC), and the three local school districts and regional education service district (Eugene 4J, Bethel, and Springfield School Districts, and Lane Education Service District). Recognizing that the points of contact between the UO and these institutions are many and range from operational to academic, the role of community relations staff is to help facilitate relationships, create opportunities for communication and collaboration, and provide guidance and assistance when issues occur.

The relationship with City of Eugene government is particularly multi-faceted, as our areas of mutual interest and responsibility span law enforcement, fire and life safety, building permits, land use, code compliance, wastewater, storm water, neighborhood livability, and more. When considering our campus as a small city of almost 30,000 students, faculty, and staff with infrastructure similar to a municipality, UO is the 19th largest "city" in Oregon. Community Relations staff and UO colleagues work with city leaders on issues as diverse as transportation infrastructure, parking, land use and development on and near campus, parade planning, crime prevention, and student behavior in near campus neighborhoods. We manage these issues of mutual interest through regular meetings between UO and City leaders, attendance at City Council meetings (a policy-making body) when the agenda is germane to the UO, and frequent meetings with point people from both institutions.

Of special note is our rich relationship with UO Campus Planning and Facilities Management, the City of Eugene, and our near campus neighbors regarding the planning for and construction of new campus

buildings, especially those near the edge of campus. Our office often serves as facilitator for communicating and discussing impacts of site location and construction on near campus neighbors.

Neighbor Relations

Community Relations staff also manages relationships with UO's near-campus neighbors. The University of Oregon's main campus is surrounded on three sides by residential neighborhoods, and UO's multiple properties in Eugene adjoin 8 different neighborhood associations. The new NE Portland campus is an important participant in the Concordia Neighbors association. Like any university, near-campus neighbors experience impacts from student behavior, campus construction, and large academic- and athletics-related events. These impacts include neighborhood parking, traffic, sound amplification, and lighting. Community Relations staff work together with UO colleagues from many departments (Dean of Students, UO Police Department, Campus Planning and Facilities Management, Housing, Transportation Services, Athletics, etc.) to communicate about and mitigate impacts when possible. We meet regularly with leaders of local neighborhood associations, and we proactively cultivate strong relationships with these stakeholders to support positive outcomes when challenges arise.

Statewide community relations

Community Relations works to develop and maintain relationships with elected officials, staff, and relevant departments in municipalities throughout Oregon where the university has a physical presence. In addition to our new NE Portland campus and White Stag presence in Portland's Old Town, locations across the state include Bend and Central Oregon, Medford, and Coos Bay/Charleston. We engage with local offices of federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon's 9 federally recognized tribes (in collaboration with the AVP of Sovereignty and Government to Government Relations), and support UO researchers in their efforts to conduct field studies across the state.

Of special note is our engagement with Portland, as the UO has made strategic institution-wide investments in expanding our programs and presence in Oregon's largest city. Community Relations' goals are to build strategic alliances with civic, philanthropic, business, community, cultural, and educational institutions around the region to increase the UO's visibility and contributions to the state; to grow community awareness of and interest in UO Portland as a preferred option for professional and executive education; and demonstrate the campus' relevance and value to the community as a driver of economic and cultural enrichment.

Community Relations' work with UO Portland includes convening and facilitating meetings between UO and City of Portland and Multnomah County. For example, we bring UOPD and Portland Police together to provide for the safety of students, faculty, and staff on the UO Portland campus, and CPFM and City planning and permitting offices to facilitate construction on our new campus. We are an active participant in UO Portland's strategic plan, and contribute to planning for transportation improvements between the two campuses. Additionally, we establish and cultivate relationships with business organizations like Greater Portland Inc. and the Portland Business Alliance, and foster strategic alliances with community organizations and nonprofits.

Engagement and Sponsorships

Community Relations manages the University of Oregon's sponsorships portfolio. By selectively funding nonprofit organizations across the state and supporting cultural events in key Oregon cities, we strengthen university engagement, increase access to UO resources, and create good will through

community participation and neighbor involvement. Currently our funding priorities align with university initiatives in environment, equity and inclusion, and enrollment management priorities. Examples of sponsored organizations and events include Good in the Hood, an annual African-American cultural festival in Portland; the Pear Blossom Festival in Medford; and Fiesta Mexicana in Woodburn.

Economic Development

Community Relations supports university-wide efforts in economic development by connecting UO faculty and administrators with strategically placed influencers and change-makers, and by partnering with external organizations to expand the impact of UO efforts in locations across the state. By doing so we amplify the activity of UO researchers, faculty, and administrators working in economic development, communicate and enhance the university's value as an employer and economic driver, and inform Oregonians that university research drives innovation. Key partnerships in this category include the Portland Business Alliance, the Eugene and Springfield Chambers of Commerce, Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber, Black Business Association of Oregon, and Economic Development-Central Oregon.