

# INTERNAL CONTROL GUIDANCE: PUBLIC RELATIONS

## I. Public Relations Management

**Description of Risk:** Misinformation can negatively impact the Institute's image.

**Criteria:** Good business practice calls for a central voice to represent the Institute in providing information to the public. The Institute Communications Office web site at <http://www.comm.gatech.edu/> provides a listing of contacts for media and other public relation inquiries.

**Auditor's Overview:** The importance of this subject is to ensure that campus units are adequately addressing public relations.

### **Best Practices:**

1. Empower one person with the responsibility and authority to oversee public relations management
2. Communicate the importance of this issue to the entire unit, enlisting their full cooperation and compliance in this matter
3. Develop internal policies and procedures on public relations management and disseminate to the entire unit to promote compliance in this area
4. Notify the Institute Communications Office of all media requests for information
5. Verify the accuracy and timeliness of information released to external sources by your unit
6. Verify the accuracy of information published on your unit's website
7. Develop a process to monitor and/or advise employees speaking as experts in their areas

### **Process:**

#### DEVELOPMENT OF AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The development of an awareness campaign **begins with management's communication and dissemination of internal policies and procedures on telecommunications.** Management establishes the tone from the top that will affect how the entire unit handles public relations. Management should communicate to faculty and staff the role of Institute Communications, and that good business practice calls for a central voice to represent the Institute in providing information to the public. Further, internal policies and procedures should also address the unit's advisement to employees on speaking as experts in their areas. Additionally, the unit employees should be made aware that public relations encompasses the effective communications with prospective students, parents of prospective students, current students, parents of current students, other higher education institutions, general public, media, private and public agencies, foundations, alumni and friends etc.

Notify the Office of Institute Communications of all media requests

Contact the Director of Media Relations & Issues Management or the individual assigned to your unit within the communications office.

## Accuracy and timeliness of information released

Internal policies and procedures may require all written communication be reviewed and approved prior to release.

## Accuracy of information published on your unit's website.

The Internet provides the general public with access to information regarding your unit potentially eliminating verbal communication. Care should be taken in ensuring the accuracy of information published on external web site.

## II. Association with External Organizations

**Area of Risk:** Association with External Organizations

**Description of Risk:** Mismanagement of the fiscal matters of external organizations by Georgia Tech faculty, staff, or students could subject the Institute to financial loss and adverse publicity.

**Criteria:** In instances where faculty, staff, or students are involved with the financial management of external organizations (i.e. professional societies, student organizations, etc.), good business practice calls for basic fiscal internal controls. Some tips on basic fiscal controls are shown in a document prepared by the Department of Internal Auditing located at <http://www.audit.gatech.edu/> under Best Practices.

**Auditor's Overview:** The purpose of reviewing this area is to ensure that campus units communicate with faculty, staff and students the importance of exercising prudent fiscal controls when participating in the financial management of external organizations.

### **Best Practices:**

1. The Unit Head communicates the importance of adequate fiscal controls when faculty, staff, and students participate in the financial management of organizations associated with Georgia Tech
2. An individual, or individuals within the unit, are designated as contact points for employees to be referred to the appropriate level for counsel in instances where they have questions regarding fiscal matters of external organizations with which they assist in managing

### **Process:**

#### UNIT HEAD COMMUNICATION TO THE UNIT

Communicate with unit employees to ensure that everyone in the unit understands that if they are asked to serve as Treasurer, or in some other advisory capacity in an external organization that is prompted by their being a Georgia Tech employee, that certain fiscal controls need to be exercised to preclude financial liability and adverse publicity to the Institute.

**DESIGNATE A PERSON WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING THIS AREA AND WHO SERVES AS A CONTACT FOR THE UNIT ON THIS MATTER**

Unit Head should designate an individual, for example someone in the business office, to serve as a point of contact and advise to employees who are asked to serve in some financial management capacity in an organization external to Georgia Tech. The designated person should establish a system to make sure that individuals report instances when they become financially responsible for external organization matters. If faculty, staff or students are identified as having financial responsibility for an external organization, a staff member should be designated to provide advice on fiscal controls.