

# Duke University Office of Government Relations Style Guide

The Office of Government Relations presents the following recommendations pertaining to official letters sent on Duke University letterhead to U.S. Government Officials, Military Personnel, Foreign Officials, and Nobility. The style guide also provides the appropriate form to be used in a spoken greeting.

The purpose of this style guide is to provide consistency for Duke communications in the political and foreign relations arenas. For guidance on correct writing style, word usage, capitalization, punctuation, and other general issues that arise daily in written communications, please refer to the Office of News & Communications Style Guide: [http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke\\_community/style.html](http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke_community/style.html)

To ensure compliance with federal regulations and university policies, communications regarding inviting officials to campus or expressing a university position on a policy matter should be shared and discussed with the Office of Federal Relations.

## Capitalization:

Proper names are always capitalized. A proper name is a name or a title that refers to an individual person, an individual place, an individual institution, or an individual event. Here are several examples:

There will be a debate between Professor Lacey and Doctor Davis.  
The Queen will address the House of Commons today.  
Last week President Clinton met Chancellor Kohl.

However, do not capitalize when a word is used in a general matter. For example, observe the difference between the next two examples:

We have asked for a meeting with the President.  
I would like to be the president of a big company.

In the first, the title, though does not precede a name, is capitalized because it is a title referring to a specific person. In the second, there is no capital, since the word *president* does not refer to anyone in particular.

Always capitalize the first letter of each word in a title when used in conjunction with a name. For example: Chief Justice John G. Roberts.

Always capitalize the first letter of each word of all official functions and political entities, such as: Capitol Hill, House of Representatives, Congress, Senate, etc. Do not capitalize stand alone words, such as administration, congressional, etc.

## Salutations:

The chart below gives the appropriate forms to be used in written and spoken greetings.

Person	Letter Address	Letter Greeting	Spoken Greeting
President of the United States	The President The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mr. President	Mr. President
Former President	The Honorable John Smith	Dear Mr. Smith	Mr. Smith
Vice President	The Vice President Executive Office Building Washington, DC 20501	Dear Mr. Vice President	Mr. Vice President
Cabinet Members	The Honorable John Smith The Secretary of _____ or: The Attorney General	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Secretary	Mr. (or Madam) Secretary
Chief Justice	The Chief Justice The Supreme Court Washington, DC 20543	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Justice or: Dear Mr. (or Madam) Chief Justice	Mr. (or Madam) Chief Justice
Associate Justice	Mr. Justice Smith or Madam Justice Smith The Supreme Court Washington, DC 20543	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Justice	Mr. (or Madam) Justice or: Mr. (or Madam) Justice Smith
United States Senator	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith United States Senate Washington, DC 20501	Dear Senator Smith	Senator Smith
Speaker of the House	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith Speaker of the House of Representatives United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Speaker	Mr. Speaker or: Madam Speaker
United States Representative	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Representative Smith	Representative Smith
Secretary-General of the United Nations	His (or Her) Excellency John Smith Secretary-General of the United Nations United Nations Plaza New York, NY 10017	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Secretary-General	Mr. (or Madam) Secretary-General
United Nations Ambassador	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations United Nations Plaza New York, NY 10017	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Ambassador	Mr. (or Madam) Ambassador

Person	Letter Address	Letter Greeting	Spoken Greeting
Ambassador	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith Ambassador of the United Nations American Embassy	Dear Mr. (or Madam) Ambassador	Mr. (or Madam) Ambassador
Consul General	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith American Consul General	Dear Mr. (or Mrs.) Smith	Mr. (or Mrs.) Smith
Foreign Ambassador	His (or Her) Excellency John (or Jane) Smith The Ambassador of	Excellency or Dear Mr. (or Madam) Ambassador	Mr. (or Madam) Ambassador
Governor	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith Governor of _____ State Capitol	Dear Governor Smith	Governor or Governor Smith
State Legislators	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith	Dear Mr. (or Mrs.) Smith	Mr. (or Mrs.) Smith
Judges	The Honorable Judge Joe Jones (the official title of the judge on 2 <sup>nd</sup> line) Associate Justice, Appellate Division Supreme Court of the State of	Dear Judge Jones	Judge Jones
Mayors	The Honorable John (or Jane) Smith or: His (or Her) Honor the Mayor City Hall	Dear Mayor Smith	Mayor Smith Mr. (or Madam) Mayor Your Honor
King or Queen	His (or Her) Majesty King (Queen) (Letters traditionally are not sent directly but via the private secretary.)	Your Majesty or: Sir or Madam	Varies, depending on titles, holdings, etc.
Military Personnel: Army, Air Force, Marines	The full rank is used as title <b>only</b> in addressing letters and in formal introductions. Major General Sarah Miller Lieutenant Colonel Smith Fleet Admiral Jones	In greetings, the full rank is shortened:  Dear General Miller Dear Colonel Smith Dear Admiral Jones	In greetings, the full rank is shortened:  General Miller Colonel Smith Admiral Jones