



Policy

UNIVERSITY POLICY PA-01.03-01/19

TO: University of West Florida Community

FROM: Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

SUBJECT: University Media Relations

Responsible Office: Office of the President

I. Purpose

The University of West Florida is committed to working proactively to maintain positive, productive relationships with members of the media and media outlets in order to leverage media opportunities and enhance the University's reputation by increasing the visibility and awareness of the University. This policy will serve as a guideline to maintain consistent University messaging to the media and public.

For the purposes of this policy, "members of the media" refers to media outlets, such as representatives of broadcast television/radio stations, newspapers, magazines and online publications, among others.

II. Policy Statement

In order to promote consistent University messaging, UWF has designated the Office of Institutional Communications to serve as the primary contact and official liaison for all members of the media. Institutional Communications is responsible for official media outreach and messaging as well as dissemination of news information to the public.

The University respects the legal concepts of academic freedom and free speech. Nothing in these procedures shall be construed to diminish the academic freedom of faculty or the First Amendment rights of any University employee. The University protects the professional right of faculty to freely write or speak in fulfillment of their professional obligations as teachers, researchers and scholars.

III. Procedures

A. Media Inquiries

1. All inquiries from members of the media that seek comments on behalf of the University must be referred to Institutional Communications, unless the individual is authorized by the President to speak on behalf of the University or unless written permission via an official Media Relations Protocol has been given by Institutional Communications. In an instance where an individual is authorized by the President to speak on behalf of the University, these statements must be made in consultation with Institutional Communications.
2. When members of the media contact a faculty or staff member to make specific inquiries regarding areas of expertise, it is recommended that Institutional Communications be contacted prior to the faculty or staff member speaking with the media representative in order to avoid confusion or duplication of effort. It is also recommended that the faculty or staff member contact his or her appropriate supervisor or department chair to make him or her aware of the request.
3. In cases where a faculty or staff member is speaking on his or her own behalf, the employee should emphasize to the media that he or she is speaking personally and not on behalf of the University.

B. Media Outreach

1. Institutional Communications issues all press releases and facilitates all media outreach on behalf of the University and its departments and units unless written permission via an official Media Relations Protocol has been given by Institutional Communications.

C. Media Events

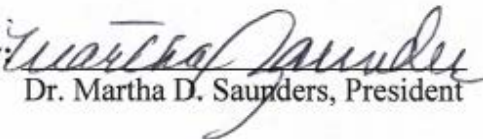
1. All official UWF press conferences are to be planned, arranged and managed by Institutional Communications. Institutional Communications shall determine the necessity and appropriateness of all UWF press conferences unless written permission via an official Media Relations Protocol has been given by Institutional Communications. Intercollegiate Athletics is allowed to plan, arrange and manage own events.
2. All official meetings between UWF representatives and editorial or management boards of media outlets are to be coordinated through Institutional Communications. Institutional Communications shall determine the necessity and appropriateness of all meetings with such boards.

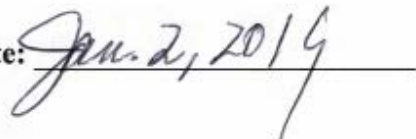
D. Official Spokesperson

1. The Executive Director of Institutional Communications or designee may serve as one of the official UWF spokespersons. In crisis and issue management, the spokesperson or designee has sole authority to make statements on behalf of the University. Institutional Communications is responsible for disseminating information and alerts.

IV. Best Practice Guidelines

In order to effectively utilize this UWF Media Relations Policy, [Best Practice Guidelines](#) are attached as an appendix to this policy.

Approved by: 
Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

Date: 

History: January 2019, December 2003.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Media Relations Best Practices

Media relations helps the University maintain professional, open lines of communication with local and national media outlets. Effective media relations also assists in increasing the University's visibility and positively impacting its reputation.

As part of its strategic external communications, Institutional Communications acts as the primary liaison between the media and the University. Institutional Communications is responsible for pitching to the media, preparing for interviews and events where media will be present, and coordinating press conferences. Institutional Communications also develops and maintains positive relationships with members of the media, which are enhanced by providing honest and helpful information to reporters in a timely manner and in an atmosphere of mutual respect and candor.

Institutional Communications often engages in media relations to promote new programs and upcoming initiatives, or to recognize outstanding student or faculty successes. They also provide resources for journalists seeking information for stories.

Interacting with the Media

As a member of UWF's faculty or staff, you may be asked by Institutional Communications to participate in media relations through various capacities, including speaking at press conferences or events or responding to media inquiries with information about specific topics. These interactions provide valuable opportunities for you to share information and positively represent the University.

The following tips are suggestions and best practices to follow when interacting with members of the media. When possible, Institutional Communications will help you prepare prior to a media interview by providing background information, potential interview questions or information on the reporter and media outlet.

Tips for Participating in Media Interviews:

- Remember that nothing that is said to members of the media before, during or after an interview is “off the record.”
- Review any relevant background information about the topic, especially if the media outlet has covered this topic in the past.
- Practice delivering the answers in a way that is sincere, specific and direct.
- Tell stories. Examples and anecdotes can help communicate your message.
- Use colorful, lively quotes and speak in active rather than passive voice.
- Avoid using overly-academic language. Simplify the topic for the general reader/viewer/listener.
- Familiarize yourself with the background information of the reporter who will be interviewing you, as well as the media outlet they represent.
- Prepare a few key points you plan to focus on throughout the interview. Support them with examples and facts.
- Balance the interview by being an active responder and listener. Listen to each question carefully and think through your answer completely before responding. Remain calm and natural.
- If you are conducting a televised interview, it is recommended that you wear solid colors. Specifically, a gray, brown, blue or mixed-color suit or dress is best. Ties should be simply patterned and should coordinate monochromatically if possible.

Tips for Speaking at Press Conferences or Related Events:

- Rehearse your delivery to make sure that your timing fits the schedule provided. It is often helpful to read your speech aloud while using a mirror and a tape recorder.
- Based on the audience and presentation, determine what, if any, equipment is needed. If you are uncertain, Institutional Communications will work with you to arrange your needs/preferences.
- Institutional Communications will conduct a run-through with you and the equipment if applicable and/or if time allows. At that time, they will also check the lighting and sound systems.
- If you are using slides, be sure you are comfortable with using a remote from where you are speaking, or arrange for someone else to advance the slides for you.
- Stand up straight and direct your voice toward the audience. Speak loudly, slowly and distinctly. In addition, establish eye contact (or appear to do so) with the audience from time to time and stay within the allotted presentation time.
- When answering questions, remember to remain friendly, cool-headed and confident.
- Answer only the questions asked and do so as succinctly and clearly as possible. If you are asked a question that you are unsure how to answer, respond by stating: “Our communications staff will find you at the conclusion of this press conference/event to make sure that they have your contact information to follow up with this.”

Contact Us

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