TO: University of West Florida Community

FROM: TBD
Dr. John C. Cavanaugh, President

Subject: News Media

Responsible Party: Office of the President

Policy Purpose: University Media Relations Policy
Relations with the News Media
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 purpose 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.

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.

The Office of Marketing Communications, through the Director of Communications, has primary responsibility for contact between the University and the news media. It is through the media, including print, broadcast, and electronic, that the University maintains contact with its various constituencies within the general public.
Although the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications or designee serves as the primary spokesperson for the University, it is not the University’s intent to censor communication between members of the University faculty, staff, or administration, and the media. University faculty, staff and administrators are encouraged to communicate with the media as necessary, being mindful that they are representing the University to several constituencies in the general public.

**Procedures**

**I. Media Inquiries**

a. 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

**II. Media Outreach**

a. 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.

**III. Media Events**

a. 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.

b. 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.

**IV. Official Spokesperson**
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.

**Best Practice Guidelines**

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

**Marketing Communication’s Responsibility**

The Office of Marketing Communications is responsible for marketing and publicizing both on campus and off campus, University policies, programs, research, resources, plans, procedures, events, and personnel-related events.

The Office of Marketing Communications works to present positive aspects of the University community and University life to the University’s constituencies. Accomplishing this in a programmed manner requires coordination of dissemination of information to the media and is best accomplished through the Office of Marketing Communications. The office will ensure that:

1. local media are not inundated with requests for publicity for similar events from different sources;
2. various University departments are not inundated with requests for advertising from different institutions;
3. media are treated fairly in the release of “breaking news stories”;
4. material about the University community is as accurate, journalistic, creative, engaging, and informational as possible.
5. University publications advertising and equipment receive optimum value for monies spent.

Information to be disseminated to the media should be provided to the Office of Marketing Communications well in advance of planned events. Material of a topical nature (dealing with upcoming events particularly) should be submitted to the Office of Marketing Communications at least three weeks prior to the upcoming event.

When events worthy of media coverage occur spontaneously, the Office of Marketing Communications should be contacted as quickly as possible and provided all pertinent information.

The Office of Marketing Communications will provide advice and assistance to any University unit seeking to disseminate information to the general public through the media. Such assistance may consist of preparing news releases and/or broadcast materials or may include the development of particular public relations advertising campaigns, or development of specific media contacts and/or interview assignments.
University units that deal directly with the various media representatives should provide Marketing Communications with copies of information provided to the media along with timetables on when the information was provided, and, as appropriate, information on the media personnel involved. Marketing Communications should be apprized whenever media personnel contact members of the University community for materials or information related to University policies, practices, programs, research, and events. Any member of the University community receiving an inquiry from the press may refer that query to the Office of Marketing Communications for handling.

The Director of Communications also has responsibility for maintaining and enhancing employee communication, most often through a print and/or electronic newsletter distributed periodically, and through meetings with University constituents and/or the facilitation of meetings with various employee groups. These internal devices communicate select information between components of the UWF community and are generally of interest only to those within the UWF community.

Marketing strategy, including advertising, i.e., display advertising for magazines, newspapers, Internet, radio, or TV, is handled through the Office of Marketing Communications. Press Conferences

All press conferences and scheduling of formal interviews of guest artists or speakers will be arranged and conducted by the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications or his/her appointed representative. Normally such conferences involve notable personages who are the guests of the University. A properly executed press conference insures fair ground rules for the media so that all may participate in the exchange.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are to be regarded as expressions of personal opinion on behalf of the writers. A faculty member may also wish to indicate the highest degree held and his discipline, following his signature (e.g., Robert O. Smith Ph.D., English), particularly if the content of the letter concerns his field of academic expertise. Letters to the editor must be written on personal stationery rather than University letterhead to avoid suggesting that the opinions expressed are the policy of the institution. The use of University equipment and clerical personnel in producing letters to the editor should be avoided, unless the material is clearly supportive of the University, its mission, programs, policies, research, resources, and events. All letters to the editor from University faculty and staff should be copies to the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications.

Release of Public Information

All public records in University custody shall be open for inspection by any person, at reasonable times and under reasonable conditions. University custodians of public records shall furnish copies of public records. A reasonable charge may be imposed for the cost of duplication and labor.
University records which are exempt from the inspection and duplication requirements of the Public Records Law, and/or which are protected against public disclosure by Federal or State law are called confidential and non-public records and generally include, but are not limited to: Student records; medical/psychological records; certain policy, personnel records, research-related, and direct support organization records; social security numbers in state employment records; and certain information concerning university police, mental health workers and their families. See also University Policy GC 01.00-11/99—Public Records.

Release of Classroom Produced Materials

Materials produced in classroom projects or for other instructional purposes may be released to the press by faculty. Faculty members should exercise discretion in releasing such materials, taking into account the authenticity, thoroughness, and fairness of the subject matter treated. Anyone with doubts about the release of classroom produced information should bring the matter to the attention of the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications before release commitments are made to the media.

APPROVED: Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

Approved: John C. Cavanaugh, President

Date: 12/15/03
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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