

# Communicating with the Press and Public: Amplifying Voices thru Media Relations

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# Skills for Today

Identifying Issues – Matt O'Connor

Amplifying the Issue – Janet

Tools of the Trade – Matthew Boedy



# Biographies

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# Identifying Issues

- **Strategic Planning**
  - Agree on what winning looks like
  - Agree on what role public relations may play
  - Agree on public relations capacity
    - Member engagement
    - Staff & leaders' time & effort
    - Budget

# Identifying Issues

- "To Be, or Not to Be (Public)?"
  - Know your risks
    - Pro's & cons?
  - Know your issue
    - What resonates?
  - Know your audience
    - Public vs. narrower targets?

# Identifying Issues

- **Stories from the Field**
  - New private college organizing campaign
  - Faculty & staff contract campaign
  - Public higher education funding campaign
  - Tuition-free public university campaign
  - Defending public research/teaching school campaign

# Creating the Right Message

- Pick THREE MAIN POINTS – Variations on a theme or 3 separate points.
- Keep message simple and crisp. KISS. Think in terms of a headline or a catchy, quick quote. TV/Radio will use a 10-20 second soundbite. Newspapers will use one or two sentences. Say what you want to say and STOP.
- Avoid jargon, acronyms and complicated explanations.
- What are you FOR, not just what you are AGAINST.
- Use real-world examples that come from your classroom/campus. The reporter will want a good example of what the problem/solution is.
- PIVOT if a reporter tries to get you to say something you don't want to say. BRIDGE back to your THREE MAIN POINTS. "Here's what I think is important." or "I'd rather focus on..."
- Buttress your points with survey/poll results or other data to give your points gravitas.

# Be a Smart Communicator

The first example is from the most recent presidential campaign. I'm not making a political statement about it – I'm using it as an example of why it's so important listen to the question, take breath, think about your answer and be able to pivot to what you want to say.

<https://youtu.be/SJRk5PV588Q>

What could she have said that wouldn't have been so damaging to her campaign?

- Practice, practice, practice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXORTribU2Q>

[Known as the interview that sunk Ted Kennedy's candidacy.]



# Spokesperson Best Practices



- Express yourself: use colorful anecdotes, strong/striking analogies to illustrate a point.
- Cite facts/data to add authority to the interview.
- Sound bites, complete, short lines
- Relax (to a point). Keep it conversational.
- Correct Mistakes. If you misspeak, simply say so and correct your response.

# Press Advisories & Releases

Media advisories inform press on an upcoming event, rally, march, or press briefing. Think of it as an invitation compelling them to come.

Advisories should be brief.

Try to give press about a week's notice

Follow up personally before event.

Press releases are what your ideal news article for your event would look like. The goal is to give reporters all the info they need to write up a story, even if they don't show. Aim to keep the release one page.

# Utilizing Social Media



- Use Social Media to amplify your message
- Tweet at reporters, admin, allies, influencers
- Use hashtags/develop hashtags
- Utilize tweet threads
- Share photos/videos/livestreams

# Op Eds



## Tips:

- Read submission requirements carefully
- Try to call or discuss the opinion piece with the editor before submitting
- Clearly connect piece with current news or controversy
- Keep the most important message at the top
- Include a strong personal or compelling story to hook readers
- Clearly explain issue for less engaged readers
- Frame: Idea, Argument, Evidence, Wind Back, Conclusion

# Chancellor Search Op-Ed

How this Op-Ed came about

The pros/cons of writing it

What was left out

The effects

My first line:

“There are two important traits the next chancellor of Georgia’s university system should have.”

My thesis: “These two must-haves should eliminate from consideration former Gov. Sonny Perdue.”

# Relationships with Reporters

- Know their beat
- Know their recent stories
- Know their needs
- Like politicians, don't contact them merely when you need something
- Become a source of context
- Have a bench of others
- Send them thanks, praise, criticism
- Try to meet in person

# Small group work

## Define your issue

### Examples:

- Recruitment and retention: What's causing this? what's the fix?
- Academic freedom: How is this impacting teaching?
- Tenure: Why should faculty have tenure?

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