

# **PROTOCOL FOR NEWS MEDIA CONTACT**

Provided by the University Communications Office

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Engaging the news media poses both benefits and challenges. The benefits are clear when information and feature stories are disseminated to a wider audience at no cost. The challenges are also clear. A free press cannot be contained in their inquiry or reporting. This Media Protocol will establish the parameters of interaction with the news media so that positive press is propagated and negative press is minimized.

In order to develop a strong relationship with the news media, **the University Communications Office (herein referred to as Communications) is designated as the point of entry for all news inquiries.** This Media Protocol applies to all queries coming into the University whether directly to Communications or otherwise.

Anyone employed by the University, when approached by the news media, should either redirect the reporter to Communications or consult with the Senior Director or Associate Director before responding to questions. Communications can professionally assess the nature of the inquiry, appropriately direct the call, prepare the employee by discussing an approach, and respond to the inquiry before the reporter's deadline.

This routing of press inquiries to Communications enables the Senior Director to flag any potential areas of concern and discuss with others where relevant. It also allows for CSUSM messages to be communicated, and the opportunity to pitch news stories for future coverage.

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## SECTION ONE

### **Communications Responsibilities:**

Communications is comprised of the Senior Director of Communications, Associate Director of Media Relations and Publications, Web Communications Specialist and Communications Specialist.

#### **Senior Director of Communications:**

- Serves as primary spokesperson
- Serves as public relations/media counsel to senior staff.
- Coordinates press conferences
- Oversees preparation of all incoming/outgoing written and oral communication
- Oversees communication distribution channels
- Oversees press release preparation and distribution

#### **Associate Director of Publications and Media Relations:**

- Develops stories and press releases
- Monitors news reports and oversees preparation of reports of media coverage
- Distributes daily media log to senior staff
- Coordinates local media relations
- Develops and maintains media contacts/lists
- Develops, catalogs and manages university images

#### **Web Communications Specialist**

- Oversees News and Events on the University's website
- Archives news broadcasts and scanned press clippings on website

#### **Communications Specialist**

- Oversees compilation of press clippings
- Distributes electronic press clippings and files hard copies

#### **Communications:**

- Develops press releases that support University's strategic goals
- Solicits media interest through verbal pitches and press releases for positive coverage
- Serves to liaise with relevant University officials to produce timely press releases
- Drafts quotes for President, Vice President, Administrator or Faculty (if appropriate to content) and obtains approval before release
- Obtains approval from all relevant parties for complete release (and quotes where relevant) and agrees on distribution of release with relevant colleagues
- Distributes press release through appropriate means (FAX or email) and records distribution.
- Adds press release to website, prints hard copy for file, attaches distribution list, and ensures final released version is saved on U drive

## **SECTION TWO**

### **Releasing University Information**

All written information released by the University to the news media will be done in cooperation with Communications, which will provide confirmation of facts and final approval for distribution and follow-up, as needed.

The Senior Director serves as the University Spokesperson and will communicate statements released by the University, unless another spokesperson is designated by the President or designee.

All written statements to the media on university positions will require the authorization of the Senior Director, in consultation with the President and/or Vice President for University Advancement or Chief of Staff. Every effort is made to respond to the request by day's end.

### **Freedom of Information Act and California Public Records Act**

Media requests under the Freedom of Information Act or the California Public Records Act will be reviewed by the University's Risk Manager in the Office of Risk Management and Safety (RMS). If the request can be easily responded to, the Senior Director of Communications (or his/her designee) may respond on behalf of the campus and subsequently notify RMS of the request and response. Similarly, RMS will collaborate with the Senior Director of Communications whenever a media-related request is received through RMS. RMS will collaborate with the CSU Office of General Counsel and appropriate campus departments to ensure timely and legal responses to these requests.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **Incoming Request From News Media (phone call/email)**

**If the news media requests information about CSUSM, the following procedure will be followed:**

Communications contacts all relevant persons to gain information to respond to the inquiry.

Depending on nature of inquiry, either Senior Director or Associate Director will respond.

If appropriate, another University official will be identified to respond directly to the inquiry after brainstorming with Communications to prepare text/responses.

If the inquiry requires a more comprehensive response, the Senior Director will meet with the appropriate party to discuss response.

#### **NOTE --**

The Communications Office:

- will first inform CSUSM employees of the nature of the media call and assess their comfort level to respond, before connecting them with the reporter
- will provide the responder with reporter's contact information, topic and deadline
- will not provide news media with employee's direct phone line or cell number, unless responder gives permission
- will communicate with University officials by phone or in person (Email will be used sparingly)
- will first advise Vice President for University Advancement and/or Chief of Staff before response is issued if the query is considered sensitive or in any way might adversely impact CSUSM's reputation.
- will advise Chancellor's Press Office of the approach and provide a draft response if query might have wider "political" sensitivities.
- will complete a media log to document press interaction. Once completed, will save a copy in electronic folder, print a hard copy for file and attach any email correspondence.

**If the press or broadcast media requests a face-to-face interview with a CSUSM employee, Communications:**

- will liaise with reporter to identify background/theme/angle of the news story and other likely interviewees
- will coordinate time and place with interviewee and reporter
- will hold briefing session with interviewee, if warranted, to identify 2-3 talking points to be promoted and also discuss any likely negatives and brainstorm suitable responses
- will be present at the interview, if warranted
- will ascertain when article will appear
- will ascertain (if broadcast interview):
  - program concerned
  - live or recorded interview
  - if it is a panel interview, i.e. will ascertain if CSUSM representative will be pitched against others and who they are

**SECTION FOUR**

**Request for interview with the President**

Press requests for an interview with the President will be handled in the following way:

- All press inquiries for the President will be routed to the Senior Director
- Communications will ascertain if the request requires the President to respond
- Senior Director will confer with the Chief of Staff and compose talking points
- Chief of Staff will prepare President for interview
- Senior Director will arrange time and place for interview according to President's schedule
- Senior Director will sit in for interviews at President's request.
- Senior Director will accompany President to liaise with broadcast news media
- Any broadcast video or transcript of president will be obtained for university use.

- Senior Director will complete a media log to document press interaction. Once completed, will provide a hard copy to the President's Office, save a copy in electronic folder, file a second hard copy and attach any email correspondence.

## **SECTION FIVE**

### **Student Information/Interviews**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) sets forth requirements regarding the privacy of student records and affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. Under these laws and policies, some information is considered public and some is considered private. However, it is possible for students to suppress some or all public information by requesting a nondisclosure. All requests for information from reporters and representatives of news organizations regarding students must be directed first to Communications.

In most cases, the following student information is public:

- Name
- Address
- E-mail Address
- Telephone number
- Major/Minor
- Adviser
- College
- Academic Awards and honors

In most cases, the following student information is private:

- ID and Social Security number
- Birth date
- Gender
- Grades
- Courses taken
- Schedule
- Test scores
- Advising records
- Educational services received
- Disciplinary actions
- International status

News media interviews with students will be permitted when approved by the Dean of Students in consultation with the official spokesperson. If these officials deem that the interview would be disruptive to the educational or operating environment of the school, permission will be denied.

At the beginning of every academic year, Communications will meet with Student Life & Leadership to identify student spokespersons. These students will provide contact information and receive media training before being made available to the news media for interviews.

## **SECTION SIX**

### **Working With External Press Offices (CSU, external partners, etc)**

Communications will ensure that all draft press releases which are politically sensitive or CSU-related are shared with the CSU Press Office prior to release.

If the release is in relation to collaborative work with external partners, Communications will ensure that there is regular communication with that external partner throughout the drafting stage of the release.

In the case of a news release which has been drafted by an external partner but includes details on CSUSM, Communications will ensure that all relevant CSUSM contacts are sent the drafts for approval prior to release. If appropriate, Communications will assess the context of the release and decide whether there should be additional CSUSM exposure such as key quotes (if not already included).

Releases issued by other organizations which involve CSUSM in any way should also be archived and saved in the press release folder on the U Drive. They should be forwarded to relevant colleagues and posted on the CSUSM Media Releases web page.

## **SECTION SEVEN**

### **Restricted and Unrestricted Areas for News Media**

The news media is generally permitted to film or otherwise have access to spaces on campus that are open to the public, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions. This includes access during regular operating hours to any building or portion of a building that is open to the public.

All campus outdoor sidewalks, green spaces, parking lots, and ramps are open to the media.

Campus events, such as lectures and forums, to which admissions is free and open to the public, are open to the news media. Restrictions may be placed on cameras, lights, flashes, and other equipment to minimize disruption. Advance notice or credentials may be required.

Permission is required for the news media to access University Village Apartments, and:

- Reporters must be escorted by Student Life, Foundation, or Communications staff, or a resident, at all times while in University housing facilities.
- They may film in, or report from, the common areas (lounges, corridors) of residence halls.
- They must first have permission from the occupant of individual living quarters to enter, report from, or film that space.
- Unescorted reporters will be asked to leave.

News media must first obtain permission for access to:

- faculty, staff, or student offices or laboratories. Permission to enter must be granted by the person or persons who work in that office or laboratory.
- any class in session. Permission for media access must be granted first by Communications and the faculty teaching the class.
- Kellogg Library or other areas where quiet study is enforced or where collections may be endangered by media activity or equipment.
- inside any venue charging admission.
- any University facility that is not open to the public, including utility operations, waste facilities, maintenance and repair facilities, and public safety facilities, any marked construction area, crime scene, or hazardous or unsafe location
- the Nursing School and Palomar Pomerado Health which is the primary responsibility of PPH. For more information, call (760) 750-4870.

## **SECTION EIGHT**

### **Publicizing a University Event Through the News Media**

Communications is available to assist in publicizing University events through news media contacts. Requesters should contact Communications well before the event to see if a press release is appropriate. If it is, Communications will draft a release and send it back for comment and approval. Communications will support requests for news media coverage based on the strategic goals of the University,

Event planners who want media coverage should first consider and plan:

- Time of the event -- scheduled with media deadlines in mind (contact Communications for advice and support).
- Contacts-- obtain home telephone and cell numbers of speakers in case of early morning radio news interest-- a tight response time when dealing with the media is absolutely essential.
- Visual aspect-- create good visuals (people speaking at a podium is not a good visual) to improve your chances of coverage. Plan to use the University's name or logo as backdrop for television coverage.
- Photo ops - schedule time into the program for a photo opportunity in an interesting location. Make sure the hosts are briefed about the photo schedule and introduce the photographer to them.
- Communications will draw up a list of news media likely to attend and/or cover the event and try to obtain the names of journalists who will attend. They will try to meet them on arrival and introduce them to the appropriate people.

- Communications can advise about the content of a pre-event press kit, and in some cases, prepare the kit. This may include photos and biographical notes, as well as ‘further information’ or ‘contact’ details of people who can be easily reached (mobile numbers are best) and who can assist in connecting journalists with visitors or guest speakers.
- Whenever possible, it is important that news media are provided with embargoed copies of speeches/papers. It is much easier to obtain press coverage if journalists can be given copies of speeches/papers in advance, even if it is only a few hours in advance.
- If a speaker provides a copy of their speech (before or after an event) this does not automatically give permission to publish the material in full. Always obtain permission from the author of the speech or paper for each and every request to publish the speech in full (even on the web). Permission may also be required if you wish to reproduce photos from the event for media or future use.
- Consider recording some part/s of your event (such as a Keynote Address) for possible post-event distribution to media.
- Set aside a time and place for one-on-one interviews before or after an event. Be sure to check with your speaker/s that they are happy to give interviews. Radio interviews need to be done in a quiet place without background noise.
- Reserve on-site parking for news media prior to event.
- Reserve media seating near the front, allowing for access to power outlets if necessary.
- Brief speakers beforehand on the attending media’s areas of interest.
- Control the event. Be clear about start and end times and format.
- Allow for follow-up or post-event contact with news media representatives who cannot make it to your event.
- Thank press/media as they leave and ensure they have everything they need.

## **SECTION NINE**

### **Press clippings and news broadcasts**

Communications will:

- provide daily electronic press clippings to President, Executive Council, and Deans for distribution to relevant parties.
- provide hard copy of press clippings to President's Office
- archive hard copy of press clippings by date and subject matter
- provide copies of press clippings upon request
- link broadcast news on website under News & Events

## SECTION TEN:

### **Guidelines On How To Talk To The News Media**

All administrators, faculty and staff are representatives of California State University San Marcos, and for that matter, so are our students. When reporters call for information or interviews, each and every employee and student needs to understand how to communicate effectively and represent the institution to the best of his/her ability. It is best to check with the Communications Office first before speaking to a reporter.

- State your purpose clearly. Organize your ideas carefully and leave out everything else. Avoid acronyms and technical terms. If you know the topic beforehand, write down your responses before speaking to the reporter.
- Never lie. Never.
- Repeat important points you wish to make. Write down what you want to say before speaking with the reporter. Keep it short and don't engage in a lengthy conversation.
- There is no such thing as "off the record." If there is a reason you can't comment, let the reporter know. Try to answer negative questions with a positive response. If the question contains incorrect information, correct it immediately.
- Be friendly, but don't be flippant or joke around. State your point in simple, positive words and tone.
- Know your facts. Don't guess or assume anything. If you are not sure about something tell the reporter you do not know and you will call him/her back when you have verified the information, or refer the reporter to a source you believe will be reliable.
- Don't assume that you are the only one that the reporter is talking to about a story, especially if it is controversial. In an effort to be unbiased, a reporter may seek many points of view. Take care to ensure that the information provided is accurate and properly understood by the reporter.
- Don't panic! Reporters are simply doing their jobs by reporting the news. They're calling you because they want your views for their story. They aren't "out to get you." Hostility from reporters only comes when they feel you aren't being helpful.
- When a reporter calls, don't be afraid to ask what the topic will be and the kinds of questions the reporter anticipates asking. This will assist you in responding within the scope of their story.
- After speaking with a reporter, contact the Communications and provide feedback about the interview and the reporter.