

Our Voice, Our Image
State University of New York at New Paltz

Public Affairs Guidelines

**Updated
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PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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FOREWORD

The mission of the Public Affairs Office at SUNY New Paltz is to assure that the public image of the university reflects the strategic objectives of the university. To be successful, Public Affairs counts on involvement and partnership from all corners of the campus community.

This section of Our Voice, Our Image is designed to create a better understanding of that “involvement and partnership.” This booklet is not meant to be a comprehensive guide to public relations, but is designed to provide basic useful information regarding news releases, OpEd stories, issues management and media interviews.

As an office, we are responsible for carrying out planned communications programs designed to disseminate information about the university, its people, and its programs in our own publications, the media, and various public forums in a tasteful, truthful, positive, and professional manner. While our office is the home of the official “spokesperson,” we are not the only voice. But if all the voices are consistent, we can influence how our story is told and better shape our public image. (Contrary to what some people may think, however, we do not control what is printed in the newspapers or what is broadcast!)

We initiate programs to include the media as a communication arm to reach the public, and we support the media’s specific needs. We are as open and candid as possible in providing information, ensuring we develop concise messages to make our story clear. If an issue arises that may portray the university in an unfavorable way, we respond in such a way as to minimize the negative impact.

As a central point of contact for media, we can ensure the university speaks with a consistent voice, whether the spokesperson is from Public Affairs, the administration or faculty. In crisis or adverse situations, the “central point of contact concept” is critical – it allows us to coordinate our message and prevents other staff and faculty members from inadvertently commenting on issues outside their realm of responsibility.

If the media contacts you directly for an interview or information during an adverse or crisis situation, you should refer the call to Public Affairs (See Issues Management Policy, page 6). Your timely response and effective participation are essential to the university’s public relations efforts.

All of us in Public Affairs look forward to working with you. Please feel free to stop by our office located in Haggerty Administration Building, Room 411 or call us at x3245 if you have any questions.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN GENERAL

News Releases

One of the most effective ways of enhancing the image of a university such as SUNY New Paltz is making the public aware of the accomplishments of its people and departments. Because we have a small department, your assistance in making us aware of research, awards, speaking engagements, etc., will do a great deal in helping us further the university's image and name recognition.

The Public Affairs Office staff is glad to assist all members of the university community in promoting upcoming university-related events such as lectures, concerts, etc. In order to help you with a planned event, we need to receive the information at least four weeks in advance of the event to ensure time to prepare the release and adequately market it to the media. The more lead time, the better our chances are of obtaining good publicity. We are not, however, responsible for insuring a full house!

Releases that have the most appeal to media, but historically are the most difficult to prepare, are stories regarding individual achievements or awards. These stories must be planned in advance to generate quality media interest. For example, if a department is planning a formal event to award scholarships, a release announcing the event should be prepared and distributed up to a week before the event. Trying to sell a news release after an event is extremely difficult.

The information should be provided in a concise manner and should answer the questions "Who, What, When, Where, Why and How." If there is pertinent background information, such as a vita, highlight the key points that define the person's most distinguishing accomplishments and characteristics to help us "sell" the person and event to the media. When the Public Affairs Office prepares news releases and other written documents, it uses the SUNY New Paltz Editorial Style Guide, AP Stylebook, The Chicago Manual of Style and Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as resources to ensure consistency in our written image.

Whenever possible, try to get photographs of a guest speaker or some other visual element of the event. We only need one copy (photograph or electronic image), as we will scan it and distribute it to the media electronically. When you do provide images, include a suggested caption (with full names of people in the picture) and appropriate credits (photographer's name/affiliation) that should accompany the picture.

School of Fine and Performing Arts, School of Business, Athletics

While the Public Affairs Office generates and distributes news releases covering most issues and events on campus, several offices work in conjunction with the Public Affairs Office to produce news releases specific to their department.

School of Fine and Performing Arts: The director of arts services coordinates news releases, advertising and promotions supporting performances, lectures, exhibitions and other events originating in the School of Fine and Performing Arts.

School of Business: The director of business projects coordinates news releases and promotional activities regarding the School of Business.

Athletics: The sports information director coordinates news releases and all media contact regarding athletics results, and manages the Athletics Department Web site with the university Web coordinator.

Public Service Announcements

Radio and television stations are required by The Federal Communications Commission regulations to run public service announcements, commonly called PSAs. Most require that they receive the information 10 days to two weeks prior to the actual event. Our **deadline** is at least three weeks before the event to allow for re-write and distribution. The information should include the “five Ws and one H.” PSAs run from 10 to 30 seconds, so writing copy for these opportunities is a challenge.

News Availabilities

Often the media requests time, before or after an event, to interview a guest lecturer, artist, etc. When you make arrangements for a visitation, please ask if that person would be willing to be interviewed and if the person has a preference as to when. Most media outlets prefer it before an event in order to make deadline. Ideally, the guest will be flexible. Telephone interviews are not uncommon and serve as a good promotional tool for an upcoming event.

Working with you and your guest, our office will arrange a time and place for the interview. A departmental representative will usually be on hand during the availability to monitor and assist where needed.

SUNY New Paltz Experts

Public Affairs routinely links reporters with faculty members who have expertise in a specific area. Providing subject matter experts gives individual faculty members and the university increased positive visibility in the community and peer areas.

Public Affairs’ online expert database, at www.newpaltz.edu/experts, provides media and community groups with ready access to experts. The database is built from profiles submitted by faculty members. To create a profile and be part of the database, login to my.newpaltz.edu and choose “Join the Experts Database” under “My.Staff Services.”

Global Reach through the World Wide Web

The university’s Web Management Office is part of Public Affairs. SUNY New Paltz’s Web presence plays a vital role in extending our voice and image around the world. The Web Management Office creates and maintains the university’s main Web pages and is charged with ensuring that all other Web pages meet specific guidelines, such as visual imaging and disability access. Specific guidance on university Web guidelines is contained in the Web Guidelines section of Our Voice, Our Image.

Publications

The Public Affairs Office is responsible for producing the bi-monthly News Pulse faculty/staff newsletter. News Pulse relies on input from the campus community.

- ◆ News Pulse is designed to highlight activities and achievements involving faculty, staff, students and alumni. Individuals can submit input to News Pulse online at www.newpaltz.edu/newspulse/submit.cfm. Current and past issues can be viewed online at www.newpaltz.edu/newspulse.

University Closure Information

As you no doubt have noticed, SUNY New Paltz rarely closes! On the chance that classes are delayed or cancelled, the Public Affairs Office is responsible for notifying local radio stations and posting the information on the university's home page (www.newpaltz.edu). In the fall, the Public Affairs Office distributes a notice that describes the cancellation policy and lists the media we will contact.

ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Universities are in no way immune to issues or crises. In fact, a wider variety of problems may strike a campus than many much larger organizations because of the complexity and openness that characterize institutions of higher education. An "issue" includes, but is not limited to, fire, outbreak and spread of serious illness, rape, academic controversies, community issues, etc.

Avoiding Issues Through Preparation

The best issues management happens when there is no issue. In fact, by preparing for an issue, organizations often avoid crisis situations — much like the "ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure" adage. Public Affairs uses a communication-oriented process to develop issue contingency plans. Through a facilitated brainstorming session with key individuals likely to be involved in a given contingency, the Public Affairs Office will develop a communication plan that prescribes a set of specific actions designed to address stated objectives.

Incorporated in that planning will be the roles and responsibilities of various offices and individuals, including the president and cabinet members. As an event may escalate, the university has a procedure to activate an issues management team and a communication protocol for issue escalation.

The Issues Management Team

The president of the university is responsible for the operation of the university at all times. When the president has determined that an issue exists, she or he will immediately inform the chancellor's office and convene an issues management team. The team will be formed based on the specifics of the situation and will include all or some of the following university officials:

- Provost
- Vice President for Student Affairs
- Vice President for Administration
- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Executive Assistant to the President
- Chief of the University Police
- Media Relations Coordinator

The president will chair the team. In the president's absence, or at his or her direction, the team will be convened and chaired by the provost, and subsequently, by other members of the issues management team in the order shown above. Depending on the facts of the issue at hand, other members of the campus community or local officials may be asked to join the IMT.

The IMT's responsibilities are to:

- 1 Analyze the situation and recommend to the president (or designee) steps to be taken to resolve the problem.
- 2 Review and approve information relative to the situation to be disseminated on and off campus.
- 3 Coordinate all university response efforts.
- 4 Supervise university cooperation with appropriate outside agencies involved in the situation.
- 5 Prepare an "after action" report assessing the university's performance during the situation and recommend to the president needed changes to the issues management procedures.

In addition to its duties during crises, the IMT will be responsible for conducting periodic issues management drills at the direction of the president. Through these drills, the university can reduce its vulnerability to crises.

The IMT will manage crises for the university according to the following guidelines and principles:

- 1 The safety and security of individuals is to be considered of paramount importance.
- 2 Information from the institution should flow from one source during the situation. That source will ordinarily be the media relations coordinator or a spokesperson designated by the IMT.
- 3 Information should be provided as fully and rapidly as possible to the appropriate outlets, consistent with safety and accuracy. In addition, all information released to the media should be consistent with information being provided to all other parties. All releases of information must be cleared with the president or his or her IMT designee.
- 4 A formal information flow for a potential or real issue is detailed below. However, the IMT should always consider any other communication requirements, to include communication with faculty/staff, student leaders, alumni leaders, other governmental or external agencies, and parents.

Media needs: During a crisis, media will likely be the most demanding for information. The IMT must assume that any information released to any of the individuals/groups listed above will eventually be in the hands of the media.

- 5 IMT assignments will take precedence over ordinary tasks. IMT decisions will be relayed through the highest appropriate organizational level consistent with the need to implement crisis decisions promptly and effectively.

The IMT will operate from a central location that is clearly identified for all who may require access to it. Unless otherwise decided at the time of the crisis by the president or his or her designee, this location is the 9th Floor Conference Room in the Haggerty Administration Building. If the 9th Floor Conference Room is inaccessible, the alternate site will be the conference room in the Service Building. If all campus facilities are inaccessible, the IMT will operate from the Town Hall.

Communication Protocol/Issue Escalation

Issues will vary in their degree of impact on the campus and the community. Many times, issues that would normally go unnoticed become the focal point of larger debates because of related news events elsewhere or political agendas. In short, a seemingly innocuous event can become a full-scale crisis issue. Based on that reality, the university has a communication protocol to ensure that key individuals are informed of potential situations in a timely fashion.

Below are generic situations and associated contact lists. Each person notified will assess the situation and determine if the notification of the next office in line is necessary. A rule of thumb: If there is any doubt as to whether the next in line should be notified, make the call.

Communication Protocol:

Key phone numbers:

	<i>Daytime</i>	<i>After Hours</i>
University Police	(845) 257-2222	(845) 257-2222
President	(845) 257-3288	
Provost	(845) 257-3280	
VP for Administration	(845) 257-3295	
VP for Student Affairs	(845) 257-3260	
Public Affairs	(845) 257-3245	
SUNY System Admin	(518) 443-5116	(518) 443-5500

Event: Fire, flooding or other physical disaster in campus facilities, other than residence halls

<i>Initiating call/contact</i>	<i>Office called</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
First individual aware of incident	1. University Police, Rescue Squad, or Fire Dept. 2. VP for Administration	1. Safety is overriding concern
University Police	1. VP for Administration 2. Media Relations Coordinator	1. Inform Administration 2. Prepare for media/internal communication needs
VP for Administration	1. President 2. Director of Facilities and Operations 3. Environmental Health and Safety Officer 4. Other Cabinet members	1. Inform Administration 2. Prepare for response 3. Prepare for response 4. Inform Administration
President	1. Chancellor's Office 2. College Council Chair 3. Mayor 4. Town Supervisor	1 & 2. Inform SUNY Administration 3 & 4. Inform public
Cabinet members	1. Deans 2. Staff	1 & 2. Begin internal flow of information to campus community
Media Relations Coordinator	1. Campus Community 2. Media	1 & 2. Inform campus and general public/local constituents

Event: Issue involving student(s), residence hall, Student Union Building

<i>Initiating call/contact</i>	<i>Office called</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
First individual aware of incident	1. University Police/Rescue Squad/Fire Dept.	1. Safety is overriding concern
University Police	1. VP for Administration 2. Media Relations Coordinator	1. Inform Administration 2. Prepare for media/internal communication needs
VP for Administration	1. VP for Student Affairs 2. Environmental Health and Safety Officer	1 & 2. Inform Administration
Director of Residence Life or Director of Student Activities	1. Dean of Students 2. Director, Student Health Center	1 & 2. Inform Administration
Dean of Students	1. Chief of the University Police	1. Inform Administration
VP for Student Affairs	1. Dean of Students 2. Director of Residence Life or Student Activities 3. President 4. Other Cabinet members 5. Other Student Affairs (example: student advisor or MRP advisor)	1 – 5. Inform Division leadership and Administration
President	1. Chancellor's Office 2. College Council Chair 3. Mayor 4. Town Supervisor	1 & 2. Inform SUNY Administration 3 & 4. Inform community leaders
Cabinet members	1. Deans 2. Staff	1 & 2. Begin internal flow of information to campus community
Media Relations Coordinator	1. Campus Community 2. Media	1 & 2. Inform campus and general public/local constituents

Event: Issue involving faculty or academic programming

<i>Initiating call/contact</i>	<i>Office called</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
First individual aware of incident	1. Department Chair	1. Inform department leadership, guidance
Department Chair	1. Dean	1. Inform school leadership
Dean	1. Provost	1. Inform Administration
Provost	1. President 2. Media Relations Coordinator 3. Other Cabinet members 4. Other Deans	1. Inform Administration 2. Prepare for media/internal communication needs 3 & 4. Inform Administration and academic leaders
President	1. Chancellor's Office 2. College Council Chair	1 & 2. Inform SUNY Administration
Cabinet members	1. Staff	1. Begin internal flow of information to campus community
Media Relations Coordinator	1. Campus Community 2. Media	1 & 2. Inform campus and general public/local constituents

OP-ED GUIDELINES

The number and quality of OpEd pages has increased across the country in recent years because it has proven to be a lively forum to present viewpoints on a number of issues.

For those of us in higher education, it provides a chance to reach people, other than colleagues, to express an opinion and, sometimes, get paid for it! Newspapers that pay a writer for an OpEd pay between \$50 and \$200 for an accepted article 650-800 words in length (two to two-and-a-half pages, double spaced).

Here are some tips on what editors request in an OpEd article:

- ◆ The article should express the author's opinion. What makes your opinions of interest to the public is your knowledge and fresh approach to the subject.
- ◆ The opinion should be supported with statistics, anecdotes, results of studies, or any other specific information that is available. It is not enough just to state a point of view; it must be supported with logical argument.
- ◆ Try not to be too specialized . . . remember you are writing for a general audience!

- ◆ There are no restrictions on style but most people prefer an informal approach like a newspaper letter-to-the-editor. However, using the Editorial Styleguide (Section 2 of Our Voice, Our Image) is recommended.
- ◆ Remember, the process of submitting the article to OpEd page editors takes time. It must be offered on an exclusive basis to one editor at a time in a particular market.

If you are interested in writing an OpEd, the Public Affairs Office will be happy to work with you in developing and marketing the piece.

INTERVIEW BASICS

1. Know why you were asked for the interview. Know your audience.
2. Establish ground rules (length of interview, subjects, etc.).
3. Know the format and theme of the program (news, feature, or television) and reporter, well in advance.
4. There is no “off-the-record.” Don’t say it if you don’t want to see or hear it the next day.
5. Do your homework. Be prepared, even in your specialty.
6. Question your position beforehand. Play devil’s advocate.
7. Have the Public Affairs Office staff brief you on the “news” of the day before the interview.
This avoids being surprised by any breaking major news story.
8. Establish a professional rapport with the reporter, be cooperative.
9. Be confident, relaxed. You are the expert; most reporters are generalists.
10. If you don’t know, say so. Don’t snow the reporter. Offer to find the answer. If you should know and don’t, be prepared for the consequences.
11. Don’t use “no comment.” Say why you can’t answer.
12. Don’t accept a reporter’s facts or misinformation. Correct the record.
13. Put your conclusion first, then expand. Be positive.
14. Do not use jargon or acronyms. Talk the public’s language.
15. Use short quotes.
16. Keep personal opinions to a minimum.
17. Avoid hypothetical questions.
18. Keep your “cool” under fire, don’t argue. Don’t repeat negative words.
19. Listen carefully.

MEDIA RELATIONS TRAINING

In the event that you are to be interviewed by the press, being well prepared can make a difference. This section is designed to provide you with important information specifically designed to assist you in preparing to successfully complete news media interviews.

Rules of the Game

◆ Who Agreed to the Interview?

The decision to do the interview is yours. In considering a request to do an interview, ask yourself:

- ✓ What do I hope to accomplish by agreeing to the interview?
- ✓ How will I accomplish that . . . what will I say?

◆ Communication Points/Key Messages

- Define the two or three most important points YOU want the audience to hear.
- Anticipate the full range of questions and prepare your answers – always explore how you can use your communication points in your responses.

◆ Control

- Be positive in your attitude; don't be passive.
- Answer questions with your messages in mind – remember, you agreed to do the interview because you have specific points you want the audience to hear.
- Be prepared.
- Be concise.

◆ Body Language/Appearance/Cosmetics

- Look your best.
- For television, eye contact is with the reporter, not the camera.
- Posture is important – don't slouch, but don't be a stiff either.

◆ Commandment

- Thou Shalt Not Lie.

Types of Media Interviews

Newspaper and broadcast reporters work in vastly different worlds. Understand the needs of each and your message will be easier to communicate.

◆ **Print interviews** afford more elaboration and allow for in-depth coverage. Print journalists spend more time developing a story than broadcast counterparts. Use this to your advantage. Provide background materials to substantiate your position and add credibility.

- Print reporters may opt to talk to you by telephone. This cuts out a lot of the “leg work” for them. Our staff is an important resource to help you determine if you should talk with a reporter “over the phone” or insist that they come to your office.
- Most print media journalists will come to your office. If your office is large enough and it's convenient, try to arrange your surroundings so you won't be sitting behind a desk or other “obstacle.” Sit in a chair next to the interviewer.

- ◆ Most **radio** journalists will prefer to telephone you for an interview. Radio news departments are often very lightly staffed, and if you are to get your message across, you'll have to do it via telephone. Be concise and to the point. You usually get only 15 seconds of airtime!
- ◆ **Television interviews** that you might be involved with take three basic forms: talk show, on location, and ambush.

The talk show format is friendly and very non-threatening because the focus of this type of show is generally light news and feature stories. It presents a perfect opportunity to control the interview and get your messages out. Your objectives:

- Find out who else will appear as a guest and what their positions or issues are.
- Arrive early; any contact with the host or producer can help you gauge your interview and relax...and prepare to deal with distractions.
- Ask for water, if needed.
- Take control; get your message out!
- Use vocal variety. Use inflection, be enthusiastic, relax and smile.
- Use analogies or personal experiences an audience can relate to.
- Don't go off on tangents and bring in extraneous, gratuitous material unless you believe the question will allow you to take control.
- There are no simple "yes - no" answers and no question is stupid...treat all questions seriously. Otherwise you risk looking like the bad guy.
- Avoid using "we;" use "I."

The edited news interview, or "stand-up," is one of the most common you would ever have to deal with. Its total air time averages about a minute and a half. Your objectives:

- Look at the reporter, not the camera.
- Your time is brief for a response so get your message up front. Remember, the interview will be edited!
- Choose a setting or background that visually supports your story.
- If you make a mistake, stop and start over.
- Avoid time-wasting phrases – "that's a good question," "I'm glad you asked me that" – and don't repeat the question.
- Take a second or two to form your answer if you need it. Don't speak while you are forming your answer.

The ambush interview is designed to keep the victim off-balance and usually concerns a controversial subject. The reporters and camera crews can be physical in their approach. Your objectives:

- Remain calm – easier said than done! The cameras are rolling, so don't say something you'll regret – that's what they're looking for.
- Take control and be gracious.
- You are under no obligation to comment. Refer the reporters to the Public Affairs Office and exit as gracefully as possible.
- Notify the Public Affairs Office as soon as possible.

HINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL MEDIA APPEARANCES

Impression often outweighs substance; however, style alone cannot replace substance. Television is a vain medium.

◆ Appearance

- Dress conservatively. Men should wear a dark suit and long-sleeved shirt. Solid color shirts are best, preferably blue, not white.
- Women should wear a conservative street-length dress or suit. Avoid red or white.
- Remove loose jewelry or exceptionally heavy rings. Avoid wearing heavy necklaces or bracelets, diamond and rhinestone jewelry, especially earrings or large pins. These objects make great reflectors for the TV lights!
- Remove name tags, lapel pins and all extraneous articles from jacket pockets.
- After you are seated and before the interview begins, keep your jacket buttoned and pull it down to reduce wrinkles.
- Use light studio make-up.

◆ Aesthetics

- Talk to and concentrate on the interviewer; avoid darting eyes and the temptation to “see how you’re doing,” by watching the monitor.
- Cross your legs at the knee.
- Keep your head up.
- Don’t slouch or lean to one side. Avoid swivel chairs.
- When standing, don’t rock back and forth.
- Use your natural hand gestures for emphasis.
- In 99 percent of the cases, a camera or sound technician will attach a microphone to you. Lavalier microphones are the ones most commonly used today and are attached by using a tie-clip device. Whenever possible, hide the microphone cord inside your jacket so it doesn’t become a distraction. In most cases a technician will assist you. It is important not to touch the microphone or breath into it.
- If you have a reason for preferring one profile over the other, say so.