

Media Relations at Southern Oregon University

THREE COMPELLING REASONS TO USE THE NEWS MEDIA

1) **There is a lot of it.** Southern Oregon has multiple network TV affiliates, daily newspapers, and daily radio talk shows that require a large amount of local news content daily. SOU has plenty of content to provide to them.

2) **It's free.** News coverage is also known as “earned media” as compared to “paid media.” It's not advertising. You aren't allowed to dictate the message or placement but if the message is strong and newsworthy, it can stand on its merits.

3) **It's credible.** Unlike advertising that can be seen as self-serving, news stories are typically seen as objective and believable.

How to “earn” media coverage:

Editors are always looking for stories – especially ones that have TIPCUP:

- **T**imeliness: Do I need to know it today?
- **I**mpact: Will it change what I do?
- **P**rominence: Do I know whom it's about?
- **C**onflict: Am I interested in the battle?
- **U**nusualness: Is it the first, last or only time it's happened?
- **P**roximity: Did it happen around me?

Background of local media:

- The **Mail Tribune**, **Ashland Daily Tidings** and **The Nickel** are local newspapers owned by Local Media Group, a subsidiary of Newcastle Investment Corporation, headquartered in New York.
- **KOBI-5-NBC** is locally owned by Patricia Smullin. The company, California Oregon Broadcasting, Inc. is the oldest continually independent broadcast group in the western United States.
- **KTVL-10-CBS** is one of 74 TV stations owned by the Sinclair Broadcast Group.
- **KDRV-12-ABC** is owned by Heartland Media.
- Turnover of local TV reporters is high. For many local TV reporters, this is their first job. Most come from outside the area. Often they are assigned to cover a story they know nothing about and you may be required to help them understand the content. Be patient and friendly.
- A number of local newspaper reporters are freelancers, paid by the piece. They often need a minimum of two sources quoted per story to satisfy their editor. It helps if you can

direct them to a second source – preferably a student who can relate a personal experience.

What to do if you get a call from a reporter:

- Write down the reporter's name and news organization. Find out what prompted their call and what the angle of their story is, as well as their deadline, and tell them you'll call them back as soon as possible.
- Call the Marketing and Communications office at 552-6186 before calling the reporter back. We may intervene, although we will do so only if absolutely necessary or upon your request. We may have some useful background information, know what the reporter is looking for and/or how to answer their questions. We may also suggest that another person on campus conduct the interview.
- We are here to help. If at any point you want or need the assistance of the Marketing and Communications office, please don't hesitate to contact us.

When returning the reporter's call:

- Be mindful of the reporter's deadline.
- Before calling, take a deep breath and relax. Remember the interview begins at the moment of contact. Any remark you make is fair game. Be careful with sarcasm – it doesn't always translate well. **There is no such thing as "off the record."**
- Avoid saying "no comment." It sounds suspicious and weakens your credibility.
- Be positive. Don't say anything you'll regret reading in the paper. Don't be flippant. Remember everything you say is quotable.
- Be clear and concise. Short, simple words are best. Avoid using acronyms, jargon, and technical language.
- We are a public institution. Remember that you are talking through the reporter to the public. How does what you are saying affect individuals in the community? How does it affect their children's education? How will the University be affected?
- Cite facts if you have them. Reporters like numbers – they lend credibility to the story.
- Encourage the reporter to call you back for clarification. Do not expect the reporter to send you a copy for review before it's printed.

When the story runs:

- Don't be surprised if the headline and the story seem unrelated. Reporters write the stories and copy editors write the headlines.
- If there are factual errors you were misquoted, let our office know. Newspapers make changes to their online editions and print corrections to their print editions. TV stations can make changes before the story runs on another newscast.