



UNC CHARLOTTE

PR Guidebook

A Handbook for Staff and Faculty

Public Relations
Office

**Published by
Office of Public Relations
July 6, 2015**

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Communications background: Doggett/Lippi Advertising, account executive; Powell & Jones Advertising, media director; Charlotte Magazine, associate editor.

Education background: BA in English, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

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At UNC Charlotte since: May 2006

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Communications background: webinar moderation, presentation preparation, proposal development, project coordination, event planning, and marketing/capital campaign experience

Education background: BA in Art History, Columbia University

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Note: All of UNC Charlotte's colleges and many of its centers, institutes and departments organizations have managers/directors of communications and marketing who handle various communications-related projects. They are another resource to consider, especially regarding tasks that may be better handled at the college or department level. If you are unsure whether your organization has a communications manager, we encourage you to ask your co-workers or supervisor.

Welcome to the 4rd edition of the UNC Charlotte PR Guidebook. Please take a look inside and keep this for future reference. ~ The UNC Charlotte Public Relations Team

Preface

At North Carolina's urban research university, UNC Charlotte faculty, staff and students engage in research, service and scholarship that directly contribute to the economic health, social and cultural well-being of citizens in the state's largest metropolitan region. With more than 27,200 students and 3,000-plus full-time faculty and staff, we have many stories to tell. It's the job of the Public Relations Office to gather newsworthy information from faculty, administrators and staff for dissemination to the media, general public and University constituents.

Getting media attention can be a complex process. Reporters and editors are bombarded by daily phone calls, emails and tweets pushing successes, new ventures and other news tips.

One of our goals is to make the process of getting stories about UNC Charlotte in print, online and on the air less cumbersome. Charlotte is a growing city, with a wide variety of media, including newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, magazines, blogs, social media sites and other publications. We're here to work with you to find appropriate outlets for compelling news.

What We Do

The primary responsibilities of the public relations department include:

- Media Relations
- Internal Communications
- Public Relations Counsel
- Reputation Management and Crisis Communication
- Magazine and Social Media Publishing
- Executive Communications

This work requires frequent collaboration with colleagues throughout the University. Our services are available to all colleges, departments, offices, centers and institutes, and our priority is to advance the strategic goals of the University.

Our primary communication goals, as ratified by UNC Charlotte Chancellor Philip L. Dubois and his Cabinet, are:

Goal # 1

Create awareness and comprehension of UNC Charlotte as North Carolina's urban research university.

Goal # 2

Establish UNC Charlotte as integral to the economic, social and cultural fabric of the Charlotte region.

Goal # 3

Position UNC Charlotte as an important center of higher education, delivering affordable, high-quality education.

Why Do You Want or Need External and/or Internal News Coverage?

1. Awareness and public comprehension
2. Recognition
3. Call to action

What is News?

It's important for the word to get out about the great things happening at the University. The key to success is determining what sets your stories apart from the rest.

So how can you tell if your story is news?

Evaluating a Story Idea

Reporters are more likely to respond to news that fits into one or more of these categories:

- ✓ Proximity – Nearness to your audience/Are they directly affected?
- ✓ Timeliness – Is this something new?
- ✓ Prominence – Are those involved of importance to the audience?
- ✓ Novelty – Is this something unusual, first, largest etc.?
- ✓ Conflict – Are there competing sides, big or small?
- ✓ Wide Appeal – Most local media outlets appeal to mass audiences. Does your story have wide appeal, or can you describe why it should?
- ✓ Consequence – Some articles focus on advice that people should follow to avoid a negative consequence, and/or position the university as part of a solution to a problem.
- ✓ Human Interest – Presents people and their problems, concerns or achievements in a way that brings about interest or sympathy in the reader or viewer.

The Six Ws

It also is important to frame a story using the “Five Ws”:

- Who is doing it?
- What is happening?
- Where is it happening?
- When will it or did it happen?
- Why (and how) is it being done?

A sixth “W” that is important to the media is:

- Why should anyone care? This is, perhaps, the most important, as every editor will ask it before a story sees the light of day.

Be sure you can answer all of these questions. We're here to help you.

Which Medium? Which Method?

Once a story has proven to be newsworthy, it's time to find the right avenue for it. In order to ensure the public relations team chooses the correct medium, here are some things we need from you:

1. Time – Please give us ample time to publicize your story. This will make it more likely for your news story to get adequate coverage. Providing us with several days notice gives us time to look for an interesting angle or a news tidbit that might make the story more appealing to a newspaper or broadcaster.
2. Contacts – We need to be able to present accurate contact information for on-campus sources who are both knowledgeable about the subject and willing to talk to reporters. In addition, if you know of any “experts” outside the University who would validate your story, please provide names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses.
3. Context – What's the “big picture” surrounding your story? Can it be tied to a major strategic priority of the University? Has this topic been covered before by the local press?

Each story is dealt with on an individual basis. Please allow the PR team to help determine the audience and appropriate channels of communication for your story.

PR tools

Here are some of the ways we disseminate news:

- ✓ Inside UNC Charlotte – Our online news site for faculty and staff. Inside is updated virtually every day during the workweek by the Internal Communications Manager. “The Live Wire,” a streaming webcast, airs through Inside on a weekly basis during the academic year.
- ✓ Media pitches – The Media Relations Managers and Director of Public Relations work directly with reporters and editors to place UNC Charlotte stories and higher education trend stories in newspapers, magazines, online and on TV and/or radio.
- ✓ News releases – The public relations department cultivates relationships with reporters by providing well-written, accurate news releases, and other materials delivered in a timely manner. Such releases provide sufficient facts so that reporters and editors can evaluate the story and then follow up.
- ✓ Tip Sheet – A weekly roundup of current news and events occurring at UNC Charlotte is sent to various media outlets. The Tip Sheet serves as a digest of news briefs that are prepared concisely and may be especially compelling to television news assignment editors. Submissions are judged on news appeal.
- ✓ Media advisories – Advisories are brief synopses of information providing only the “Six Ws.” Advisories are used to alert reporters and editors about events that are likely to provide photo and video opportunities.

- ✓ UNC Charlotte – The quarterly magazine for alumni, friends and influencers is targeted to individuals who are associated with or interested in the University’s activities. It includes news briefs, columns, alumni profiles and feature-length stories about research, scholarship, community engagement and athletics.
- ✓ Website spotlights and center promos – Website spotlights refer to the large banner graphic that runs the width of the home page (www.uncc.edu), and the story that is connected to the graphic. These are designed to communicate messages about the University’s strategic priorities and mission; they rotate each time a user clicks on the homepage.

Center promos convey information about important deadlines, events on campus, cultural opportunities and more and are linked to additional details located elsewhere on the University website. Up to three center promos, including a Stake Your Claim video, appear on the University home page at any given time. These also rotate each time the home page is refreshed.

Website spotlights and center promos are coordinated in collaboration with our Web Communication colleagues in the Marketing Services Department. Members of the campus community may submit requests for center promos or website spotlights to spotlights@uncc.edu.

- ✓ SYC newsletter – The Stake Your Claim digital newsletter is emailed to influential friends and stakeholders of the University. It provides them periodic updates about important University news, initiatives and legislative priorities.
- ✓ Social media – The PR team manages content on the official UNC Charlotte Twitter news feed, http://twitter.com/UNCClt_News, and the official UNC Charlotte blog, <http://unccltnews.blogspot.com/>. Our Web Communication colleague manage the official UNC Charlotte Twitter feed <https://twitter.com/UNCCCharlotte> and the University’s official Facebook site, <http://www.facebook.com/UNCCCharlotte> and work with colleagues to produce content for the University’s YouTube channel <http://www.youtube.com/unccharlottevideo> and Flickr site, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stakeyourclaim/sets/>.

Consultation Services

The Public Relations team is committed to telling true stories that burnish the reputation of the University. We provide a variety of services including:

- Advising you on how to respond to media inquiries
- Supporting your crisis communications needs
- Brainstorming tactical ideas
- Helping you devise a communication plan or strategy
- Directing you to outside resources for PR, marketing and advertising needs

We observe well-established standards of practice, including confidentiality when sensitive situations warrant. We adhere to principles of credibility, accessibility and responsiveness, which are the currency of effective public relations. We are the University's advocates whose primary mission is to communicate to the media and other key stakeholders the role of the University as the state's urban research institution.

How it Works

Please feel free to call us if you have questions about the information in this Guidebook. For your convenience, below are some procedures that will prove helpful as you plan to share your news.

Requesting News Releases and Pitches

The Public Relations Department cultivates relationships with reporters by distributing provocative and accurate news releases in a timely manner. The intent is to allow the media to use the material with few changes, or give them enough information to pursue the story further.

The topics we use for news releases come from you – the University community. But there are certain things we need before we can take your ideas and transform them into a news release.

Here are a few tips for putting together an effective news release:

1. Ask yourself if the news/story is relevant to the public and what they will need to know. Get right to the point; don't assume the reader will make it past the first paragraph.
2. Start off with a brief description of the news or event, and then specify who announced it.
3. Spend time on the headline —it should be succinct and catchy.
4. Keep the release's length to one page. The release should serve as a means to an end, not the end-all. A PR expert once said to think of a news release as a job resume. It does not include every bit of information you have, but it should serve to entice the reporter to pick up the phone.
5. Avoid excessive use of jargon or adjectives. Deal with facts. Check and re-check spelling, titles and statistics for accuracy.
6. Provide contact information, such as the individual to contact, address, phone, fax, e-mail and website address.

The PR staff is responsible for making the final determination about the use of any submission. We have the experience and skills to evaluate items and determine whether they are suited for placement through University channels. Some submissions may not be suited for placement. Don't hesitate to contact a PR staffer to discuss your story before you draft a submission.

Providing news for the Tip Sheet

The Tip Sheet includes a headline story, news and business items, community related topics, and arts and cultural programming. We encourage colleges and departments to send for consideration news items or event information that would appeal to the general public.

The Tip Sheet is in production Tuesday and Wednesday and is typically distributed to the media by e-mail at noon on Wednesday. The deadline to submit tips is noon on Tuesday.

Please submit items to Buffie Stephens at Buffie.Stephens@uncc.edu

Contributing to Inside UNC Charlotte

Inside UNC Charlotte is the official online news source for University faculty and staff. It delivers news, information and features throughout the workweek in support of the University's brand channels: Culture and Community, Global Reach, Scholarship and Academic Life, Research and Athletics.

Academic and administrative units may contribute information to better inform the campus community of important news or events that could impact their employment or enable them to better integrate in the life of the University.

Inside UNC Charlotte, produced by the UNC Charlotte Office of Public Relations, utilizes the University's adopted branding template(s) and is updated using the Drupal content management system. Each Wednesday, and occasionally as news dictates, a blast email is delivered to all faculty and staff, advising them of new content and providing a link to the website.

Contributors to *Inside* may submit articles and photos/images for illustrations by email to insideuncc@uncc.edu. Published articles are edited to conform to the Associated Press style guide, which differs from conventional and academic (MLA, APA) styles.

Thanks for reading!

We hope this document has been useful, and we look forward to working with you to spread the word about UNC Charlotte.

Please call 704-687-7207 with inquiries pertaining to the information in this guide.

Appendix

POLICY STATEMENT #605.1

DISSEMINATION OF NEWS

Policy

The Office of Public Relations is the University's agent for communicating with the campus community and with off-campus publics through the mass media. Members of the University community are cautioned against representing themselves as speaking for the institution when approached for information by the media. The Office of Public Relations provides assistance when responding to mass media inquiries.

The University encourages effective communications within the campus community and with the institution's many off-campus publics.

The [Office of Public Relations](#) is the University's agent for communicating with the campus community via print and electronic media and with off-campus publics through the mass media.

Members of the University community are encouraged to seek the assistance of the [Office of Public Relations](#) in all communications endeavors, and to alert the office when either contacted by media reporters or when made aware that media activity may occur.

Procedures and Regulations

1. Members of the University community may respond to representatives of the mass media when approached for information; however, members of the University community are cautioned against representing themselves as speaking for the institution. Assistance from the [Office of Public Relations](#) is available when responding to queries from the mass media.
2. Approaches by members of the University community to the mass media concerning University affairs should be made through the [Office of Public Relations](#).
3. The Office of Public Relations publishes a newsletter of broad general interest to campus faculty and staff. This is the only University office authorized to publish such a newsletter. Offices or departments wishing to inform the campus community may submit information for consideration for the newsletter. This does not preclude the dissemination of user information, such as that prepared by Information & Technology Services, by newsletter. Suggestions for improvement of the campus newsletter are welcomed by the [Office of Public Relations](#).

*All on-campus press conferences are organized by the Office of Public Relations.