



EAB

University Research Forum

Four Ways to Invest in Research Communications Staff

Communicating the Value of Research: Part 1

March 14th 2018

Today's Presenter



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Our Full Webconference Series

Communicating the Value of University Research

Four Ways to Invest in Research Communications Staff

Learn ways to more effectively organize communications staff, foster collaboration across campus, and develop templates and protocols to improve staff competencies.

→ **TODAY**
Wednesday, March 13
1:00 – 2:00pm ET

How to Prepare Faculty to Talk About Their Research With External Stakeholders

Hear strategies to encourage faculty to engage in research communications, train them to speak to nonacademic audiences, and leverage strong communicators

→ **Wednesday, March 22nd**
12:00 – 1:00pm ET
REGISTER NOW

Five Strategies for Elevating Research Communications Efforts

Learn strategies for developing and assessing communication campaigns, improving your social media presence, and creating more compelling communications materials and events.

→ **Wednesday, March 28**
1:00 – 2:00pm ET
REGISTER NOW

Build a Better Research Website

Learn strategies for organizing and designing your research website to better engage stakeholders, highlight strengths, and demonstrate impact.

→ **Thursday, April 26**
1:00 – 2:00pm ET
REGISTER NOW

1

Why We Need to Tell Our Story

2

Four Ways to Invest in Research Communications Staff

3

Questions?

Defining Contemporary Communication

	Traditionally, we include:	But today, we also need to include:
Audience 	Academia	Public at-large, corporate partners, philanthropic donors, and lawmakers
Metrics of Success 	Publications, grant dollars, citations	Social media followers, email click through rates, popular media exposure
Impact 	Discipline-specific	Economic and social impact, broader implications for humankind
Communication 	Academic and technical language	Plain English, concise and compelling language
Goals 	Engage peers, obtain federal funding for new discoveries	Engage broad set of stakeholders, obtain funding from diverse sources

Critical to University Research, Especially Now

Making the Case for Contemporary Communication

Four Key Reasons

Attract New Donors

- Need to communicate the value of faculty work to attract funding from non-traditional sources
- New donors care about impact instead of publications

Garner Public and Legislative Interest

- Create public support around work and the tax dollars that support it
- In some cases, must preemptively defend faculty work from less than trusting politicians

Secure NSF and NIH Funding

- With funding thresholds higher and higher, it's important to strengthen "broader impacts" section in proposals
- Crucial to justify needs to further public support of stagnating federal funding

Build Name Recognition

- Create awareness of your university in your city and nationally
- Helps retain top faculty and attract research partners and students



Public (Dis)Engagement



While Data Vary, It's Clear There is More Work to Do

Unengaged in Science...

81%

Of public cannot name a living scientist

66%

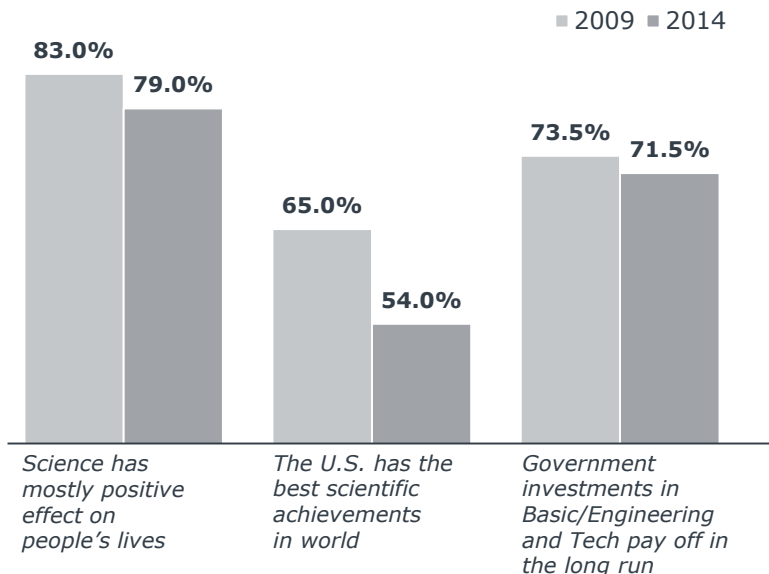
Of public cannot name where science is done

60%

Of public do not report having confidence in science

...And Signs That Opinions Are Slipping

Public Opinions About Value of Science



Sources: Research America, available at <http://www.researchamerica.org/>; Pew Research Center, available at <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/29/public-and-scientists-views-on-science-and-society/>.

Breaking Through the Noise

Effective Communication Strategy Is Complex

A Ton of Noise in the Public Sphere...

330+

Research universities

6,000+

Research articles published every day

500M

Tweets per day

...And With Each Communication, a Series of Strategic Decisions:



Which **research project** should we feature in our communication?



How do we **frame** the message?



What are the best **channels** to communicate our message?



What is the **best time** to send our communication?



Who is our target **audience**?



How can we **measure** our communication's success?

Facing Obstacles Internally

CROs Report Two Key Challenges with Communications

Siloed Research Communications



- Centralized and decentralized staff in separate reporting lines, no effective means to collaborate
- Limited resources and support to coordinate efforts
- Unclear and unaligned strategy for supporting larger research goals

Difficulty Sourcing the Best Stories



- Faculty and communications staff do not have optimal working relationship
- Communications staff unable to identify highest-impact stories
- Staff learn about important stories too late to make greatest impact

Three Core Imperatives for CROs

1 Build Staff Capabilities and Coordination



- Coordinate with communicators across campus
- Invest in communications staff to effectively seek and develop research stories
- Foster relationships between communication staff and faculty

2 Cultivate Faculty Engagement



- Engage faculty in value of broad communications
- Train faculty to communicate value of research in plain English, focusing on potential community and societal impact
- Identify and leverage specific faculty for communication leadership

3 Optimize Communication Channels



- Build followers and engage the unengaged
- Invest in focused efforts to convey specific messages to specific audiences through the appropriate channel
- Improve research website and social media presence to become more compelling
- Systematically evaluate communication efforts to determine effectiveness

Telling the Story of Research

Tactics for Communicating the Value of University Research

1.

Building Staff Capabilities and Coordination

- 1) Campaign-Based Templates
- 2) Purpose-Driven Collaborations Forums
- 3) Beat Reporting
- 4) Faculty Feedback Protocols

2.

Cultivating Faculty Engagement

- 5) Faculty Media Spotlight
- 6) Immersive Training
- 7) Faculty Leader Fellowship

3.

Optimizing Communications Channels

- 8) Targeted Campaigns
- 9) Website Enhancement Audit
- 10) Social Media Improvement Guide
- 11) Compelling Content Library
- 12) Community-Connected Events
- 13) Strategic Scorecard

1

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Four Ways to Invest in Research
Communications Staff

3

Questions?

Facing Challenges, with Varying Control

Key Research Office Challenges:



Communications related to research sent from many parts of campus



Decentralized communications operations



Difficulty identifying and sourcing research stories



Lack of relationships between researchers and communications staff

CRO Priorities:



Foster working relationships to improve communications outside research office

Tactic #1: Campaign-Based Templates

Tactic #2: Purpose-Driven Collaboration Forums



Improve competencies of research office staff

Tactic #3: Beat Reporting

Tactic #4: Faculty Feedback Protocols

Informal Communications Are All Across Campus



We Will Never Control Every Message

Communication You Control



Research
Communications Office

But Other Communication Comes From Many Sources



Departments



Research Centers
& Institutes



Deans



Colleges



Individual
Faculty



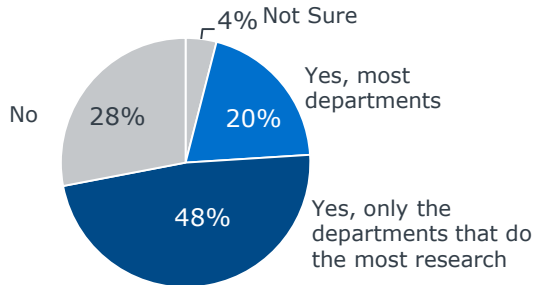
Medical School

Some Level of Decentralization Is the Status Quo

Where Do Research Communications Staff Live?

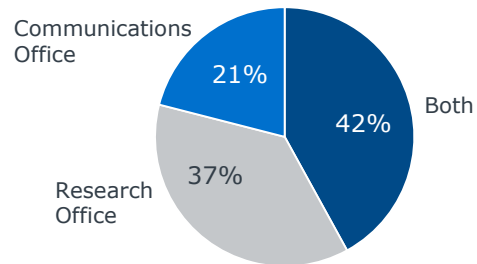
Communicators Outside Your Control...

Do individual colleges or departments have their own FTEs dedicated to research communication?



...Sometimes Reporting to Multiple Offices

Do (non-departmental) communications staff report to the central office or the research office?



Communications Pulse Check Survey in Brief

- 25 University Research Forum member institutions participated:
 - 13 from Highest Research Activity universities
 - 7 from Higher Research Activity universities, 2 from Moderate Research Activity universities
 - 3 from Masters Colleges and Universities – Larger Programs
- Asked 12 questions on communications strategy, model, and opinions of performance

Lack of Public Understanding Created Need to Unify

Templated Resources for Dispersed Communicators Maintains Brand

Public Perception Research Spurs Branding Campaign



60%

Overall positive
community perception
of UMN in 2005



26%

Community perception of
UMN conducting research
that improves lives in 2005



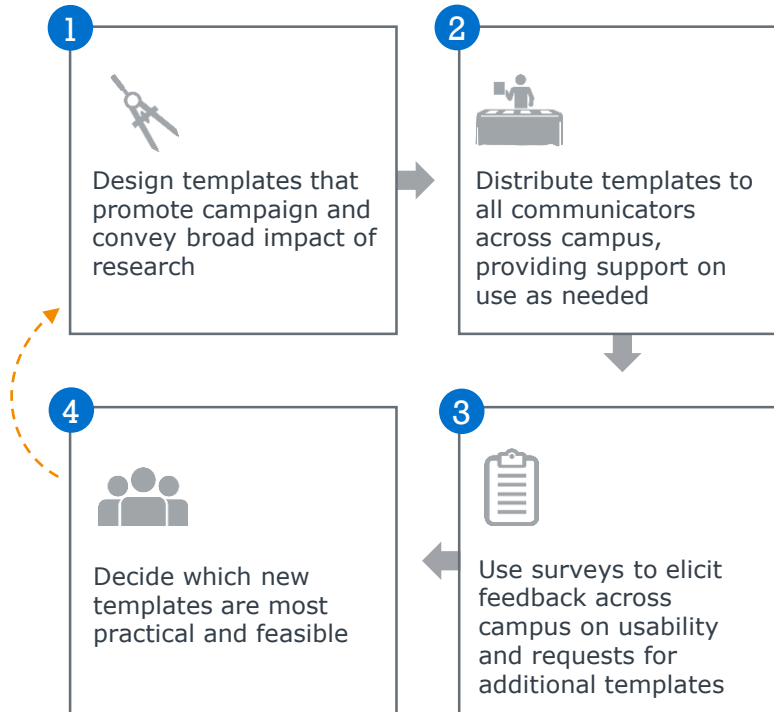
Case in Brief: University of Minnesota System

- Public Research University with 5 campuses in the Twin Cities, Duluth, Crookston, Morris, and Rochester, Minnesota
- \$880M+ in research expenditures at the Twin Cities campus in FY2015
- Launched "Driven to Discover" campaign in 2006 to build brand reputation of university
- "Driven to Discover" campaign has been embraced and adopted system-wide over the past decade
- Needed to first ensure consistent branding across all university communication output
- Provided all campus communicators with branded templates to produce their own communication materials



Getting Faculty and Staff to Adopt Templates

Encouraging Early and Continued Use



“What if no one uses them? Or uses them incorrectly?”

- Reiterate importance and benefits of brand consistency
- Enlist peers to champion use of templates
- Offer the option of having research communications staff prepare materials

Using the Campaign to Tell a Research Story



Three Core Components Included in Templates

Example Content



Make a Compelling Statement

"I am Driven..." Statement

"I am driven to create localized painkillers that won't reach the brain."

– Carolyn Fairbanks



Relay the Impact in Plain English

Short Format

We seek to shield the brain from analgesic drugs and pain signals.

Medium Format

We research ways to keep both pain signals and potentially addictive painkilling drugs from the brain. Gene therapy is among the promising approaches.

Long Format

We research ways to keep both pain signals and potentially addictive painkilling drugs from the brain. We have found drugs that work in the spinal cord and peripheral areas. We are also pursuing a gene therapy approach that would erect biochemical "stop signs" for pain signals en route to the brain.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSM



Share on Social Media In Consistent Way

Tweet

@UMN-Pharmacy Prof Carolyn Fairbanks is #UMNdriven to #endaddiction by creating localized #painkillers that never reach the brain.

Facebook Post

Creating localized painkillers that won't reach the brain.

University of Minnesota professor Carolyn Fairbanks is determined to end addiction by keeping both pain impulses and potentially addictive painkilling drugs away from the brain.

A Plug and Play One-Page Resource

Ease of Use Fosters Adoption

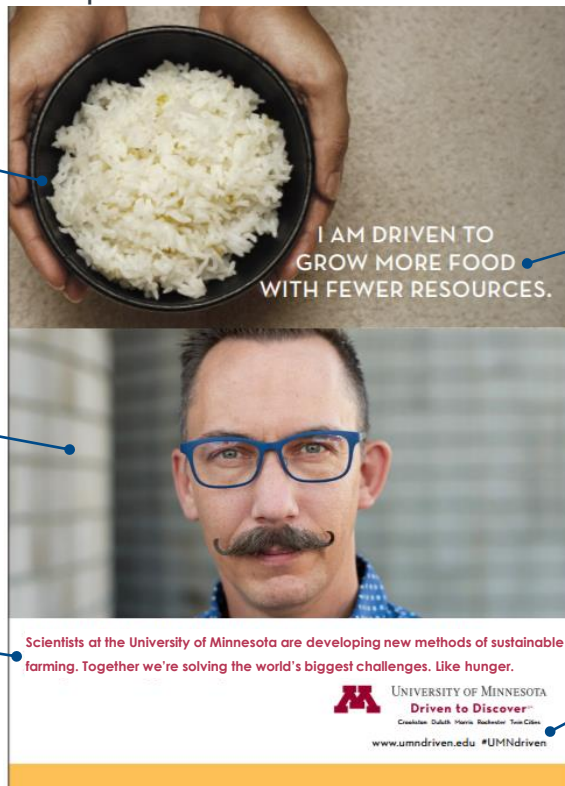
Use one of several category images for your field

Use a photo of the researcher that is modern or candid instead of a typical headshot

Use a medium length impact description


UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™

Plug in "I am driven..." statement



I AM DRIVEN TO GROW MORE FOOD WITH FEWER RESOURCES.

Scientists at the University of Minnesota are developing new methods of sustainable farming. Together we're solving the world's biggest challenges. Like hunger.

 UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™
Cristina, Dulak, Harris, Beckner, Tom Cline
www.umndriven.edu #UMNdriven

Drop in the appropriate URL and hashtag

Broad Internal Utilization, External Engagement



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to Discover™

Communicators Embracing the Campaign...

15 of 17



Colleges integrated the campaign into their communications efforts within the first year of launch

46+

Unique research posters created from January to May of 2016

...And Garnering Public Support for the University

53% *"Inspiring"*



60% *"Progressive"*

54% *"Innovative"*

Percent of respondents using specific words to describe UMN research after viewing digital media ads

Assessment, Three Ways



UMN Uses Multiple Methods and Metrics to Determine Impact



External Phone Survey

N= 300
(2016)

- Conducted annually since 1998 (pre-D2D campaign)
- Measured overall public perception and indirect impact of campaign as a whole



Public perception of the University improved every year the campaign was funded

69.3%

Percent of respondents who were favorable toward the University in 2016 (up from 66% in 2015)

External Online Survey

N= 841
(2016)

- Conducted in 2016
- Measured direct impact of D2D campaign messages on perceptions
- Included baseline questions, a short TV or digital add from the D2D campaign with real-time reactions, and follow-up questions

51%

Percent of respondents who indicated they were initially very unfavorable toward the University, but indicated they were somewhat or very favorable toward the University after viewing the campaign adds

Internal Online Survey

N= 16
(2017)

- Conducted in 2017
- Measured internal participants' (researchers, deans) perceptions of the D2D campaign's value and effectiveness

83%

Percent of respondents indicating there was more awareness of their or their college's work as a result of being featured in the D2D campaign

92%

Percent of respondents indicating being part of the D2D campaign helped support their efforts (e.g. fundraising, recruitment)

True Collaboration Hard to Come By

Just Getting in the Same Room Not Sufficient

Varying Levels of Interaction Among Research, Department, and Central Communicators



*No Interaction or
Collaboration*

- Communications staff across campus don't know who the other communicators are
- Collaboration solely relies on individuals reaching out to other communications staff one-off, with irregular frequency



*Electronic
Collaboration*

- Collaboration is enabled (through internal newsletters or online announcements), but not necessarily encouraged
- Campus communication remains predominantly siloed



*Infrequent,
Low-Value
Meetings*

- Departments that are already linked (by grand challenges or interdisciplinary work) meet regularly on shared initiatives
- Additional shared meetings poorly attended, don't lead to collaboration



*Regular, Truly
Collaborative
Meetings*

- Campus communicators develop mutual rapport
- Staff share news and identify opportunities to optimize their communication efforts through shared learning, resource creation, and joint media efforts

Creating a Central “Council” for Collaboration



**Lots of Research Communicators,
Little Collaboration**



**Research Communications Council
(RCC)**

- All research communicators across campus (including college-level and central office)
- Approximately 35 members
- Meets on monthly basis



Case in Brief: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- Public Research University located in Champaign, Illinois
- University Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- \$630M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- As a strong interdisciplinary university, needed to facilitate effective collaboration across communications staff
- Organized the “Research Communications Council,” a monthly cross-campus communications staff meeting series using professional development opportunities as a means of educating staff and promoting collaboration



Creating the Culture was Critical for Collaboration

VCR¹ Buy-In Fostered Broader Support for Research Communications Council

I ILLINOIS



Funding the Effort

- Director of Research Communications appealed to the VCR for the creation of a collaborative group meeting
- Early VCR support was critical for getting the Council off the ground
- VCR provided dedicated budget to fund meeting lunches



Showing Up

- VCR signals value by attending monthly meetings of the RCC and speaking with communications staff in-person
- VCR looks to the RCC to inform strategic decision making



Talking it Up Across Campus

- VCR references and credits the RCC when speaking with deans, faculty, and other administrators
- VCR leverages RCC expertise when making recommendations



“The bigger picture is the spirit in which we’re collaborating; seeking ways to enrich the **intellectual vibrancy** and making sure we’re **supporting the true research mission** of the university. As communicators we need to reflect the reality of Illinois, which is a **highly interdisciplinary, highly collaborative** place.”

*Melissa Edwards, Director of Research Communications
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

1) Vice Chancellor for Research.

Professional Development as the Jumping Off Point



Valuable Information Even Better Than a Free Lunch

I ILLINOIS



High Profile Speaker Ensures Attendance



General Research Office & Department Updates Keep Staff Informed



Collaboration Planning Sets Up Opportunities

Approx. 30 Minutes

- Presentation relevant to communications activities, time for Q & A included
- Popular Guests Include:
 - Vice Chancellor of Research
 - Director of Research Compliance
 - Director of Government Relations

Approx. 30 Minutes

- Updates from the research office
- Department communications staff share research stories they have in the queue

- Identify similar stories or releases that can be linked
- In the moment, schedule follow-up time to collaborate

Observable Benefits of a Communicators Council



Why Staff That Meet Face-to-Face Continue to Do So



Helps Avoid Duplicative Communication Efforts

- Staff can repurpose articles from other sources
- Allows staff to partner on similar stories to reduce work load
- Enables staff to identify and coordinate large-scale media releases in tandem



Creates Opportunities to Amplify Messaging

- Staff can promote speakers, articles, and initiatives that they wouldn't have known about otherwise
- Helps staff drive attendance at events that are billed to one department but are actually relevant to faculty and staff across campus



Provides Staff With Information They Need

- Shows staff their needs are recognized and validated
- Ensures all communications staff have received the same information

Who Are You, and Why Are You in My Lab?

Why Don't Faculty and Communication Staff Have a Working Relationship?



So Many Researchers, So Little Time

A single research university might have several thousand researchers on campus, and only a dozen communications staff (if they're lucky)



Blurred Lines of Communication

Researchers are not sure who they should talk to about media interactions



Faculty Not Sold on the Value

It takes time to explain complicated work to the communications staff so they may not reach out if it feels more like a nuisance than a service



"I doubt many people even know we have a Media Relations Office now. I didn't know they existed until they questioned me about something I had said to the press. I would have been asking for their help years ago."

Center Director, Public Research University

Weak Faculty Rapport Makes Reporting Difficult

Communications Staff Haven't Garnered Sufficient Faculty Trust



Faculty Worry About Media Misrepresentation



High-profile misrepresentation of research in the media makes faculty concerned about interacting with media outlets

Concerns include:

- Misunderstanding of findings
- Watering down of science
- Drawing conclusions that are not realistic
- Perpetuating myths about their field of research
- Misinforming or scaring the public

Misinformed News Headlines

BAD SCIENCE

The University of Maryland Has a
Burgeoning Chocolate-Milk Concussion
Scandal on Its Hands

**3 Women Lost Their Eyesight After Shady
Stem-Cell Treatments**

**These Shoddy Studies About Sexy Dance
Moves Show That Sometimes, It's Good to
Shame Researchers**

Assigning Communicators to a “Beat”

Designated Staff Source and Write Up Stories



4

Dedicated staff specialized by research discipline



Reporters are assigned to **specific research areas** and focus on those departments to source and write stories



Stories are published in multiple campus-wide newsletters, through their social media page, in the alumni magazine, and shared with journalists through online news services



Case in Brief: University of Wisconsin - Madison

- Public Research University located in Madison, Wisconsin
- University Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- \$1B+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Wanted a better way to connect with researchers and source news
- Assigned specializations to on campus reporters who collaborate with departments, which includes participating in their events

Allocating Beyond Specific Disciplines



Director of Research Communications

- 5 Beat Areas
- 3 Liaison Areas
- 9 Oversight Issues
- 4 Projects



Some overlap in beat areas and oversight issues ensures nothing missed

Science Writer #1

- 6 Beat Areas
- 3 Liaison Areas
- 4 Oversight Issues
- 1 Project

Science Writer #2

- 9 Beat Areas
- 3 Liaison Areas
- 1 Oversight Issue

Science Writer #3

- 8 Beat Areas
- 2 Liaison Areas

Definitions

Beat Areas: Specific **disciplines** for sourcing and knowledge (e.g. neuroscience)

Liaison Areas: **Collaborations** with department communications staff (e.g. department of chemistry staff communications writer)

Oversight Issues: Management of **controversial issues** (e.g. animal research)

Projects: Management of **large scale** communication efforts (e.g. campus wide campaigns)



How Reporters Spend Their Time



Sourcing Stories



Walking the "Beat"

- Walk department hallways studying research posters
- Attend department events (symposiums, colloquia) to stay up to date on research



Choosing Stories

- Learn about through direct request from departments and faculty
- Work with departmental communication staff to identify key stories
- Prioritize chancellor research communication requests and time sensitive issues

Other Responsibilities



Campus Support

- Lead campus-wide organizations and events
- Help administrators source information on key initiatives



Issue Management

- Manage issues relating to controversial subjects, such as a lab that was continuously protested for its treatment of cats in their experiments

Published Work



Articles achieve national and international exposure via:

- [UWMadScience](#) webpage
- Social media networks
- Outlets such as [www.LabManager.com](#)
- Local paper (Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel)

An Offensive and Defensive Strategy

Beat Reporting Serves Multiple Purposes



Builds Rapport With Skeptical Faculty

Identify the Key Players

Get to know the top funded researchers, the young go-getters, and the people who are on the edge of a breakthrough

Become a Clear Point of Contact

Make yourself accessible to researchers who want to communicate



Finds Breakthroughs in Complicated Fields

Pinpoint Breakthrough Moments

Develop an understanding of how basic research contributes to major advancements in developmental and applied research

Know What's Needed in the Field

Anticipate the next great success in the field



Helps Avoid Public Relations Crises

Anticipate Questionable Releases

Keeping abreast of what's going on in labs can help institutions stay ahead of public concerns

Learn from Your Peers

Orient yourself to what other institutions are doing in this field and learn from their successes and their mistakes

High Faculty Satisfaction with Beat Reporting

Relationship Building and High Quality Reporting



Faculty Report That the Final Media Product:

Was Effective

93%

Strongly Agree or Agree

Accurately Reflected My Work

95%

Strongly Agree or Agree

Helped Me Achieve My Goals

90%

Strongly Agree or Agree

...And That Communications Staff:

Worked Efficiently

95%

Strongly Agree or Agree

Was Courteous and Respectful

97%

Strongly Agree or Agree

Knew the Background and Content

89%

Strongly Agree or Agree

Beat Reporting With Limited Resources

A Scaled-Down Version

Identify Priority Research Areas...



Have you conducted any **cluster hires** or taken on any **grand challenges**?



What departments and/or colleges are **well-ranked**?



What research areas are prioritized in the **strategic plan**?



What areas have you made significant **investments** in?



What is your institution **uniquely positioned** to study?



What departments or fields are likely to generate **newsworthy** research?

...And Allocate Beats Accordingly



Utilize beat reporting to cover research strengths and major initiatives



Staff prioritize time in major research areas

- Example: 50% of time covering 2-3 key areas and 50% of time covering all other fields



Department-level communications staff devote increased attention to covering departmental research

- Example: 50% of time covering department research and 50% of time covering all other department news

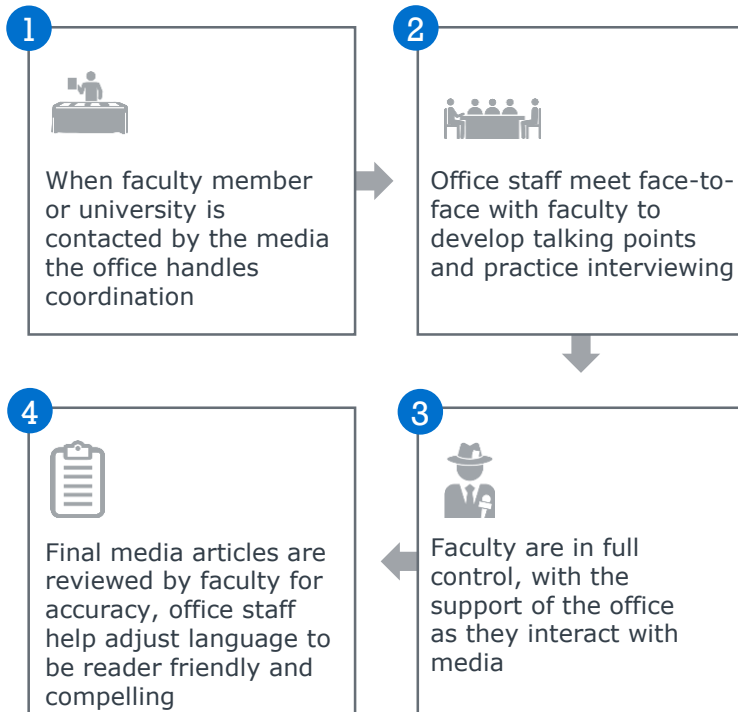
Getting the Right Story by Getting the Story Right

The University Communications Office Process at Cal State San Marcos



The Faculty-Media Communications Protocol

- Central office houses staff of communications experts who work with faculty
- Staff actively reach out to faculty doing hot-topic work and offer 1:1 training
- Staff accompany faculty during media interviews
- Staff tour the university on an annual “roadshow” to discuss their services and protocol



A Central Point of Contact for Support

Creating a One-Stop Email Address for Faculty



Faculty Communications Challenges

- Faculty don't know **who to contact** with questions about media
- Faculty are often **unaware** of resources offered by the research communications team
- Faculty tend to contact central communications team with **research-specific questions**

Research Communications Email Account

- Established a single point of contact:
research.news@ucdavis.edu
- Emails are **routed to key stakeholder list** (e.g. campus news representatives and communications directors) for triage
- **Easy to promote** across campus (e.g. email signatures, newsletters, flyers, websites)

Benefits of Designated Contact

- Provides faculty with a **clear and easy to remember** point of contact for research communications
- Gives faculty a **simple mechanism** to route their news through campus channels
- **Captures newsworthy research** that communications staff otherwise would not have been aware of

Making the Most of Your Membership

Research Communications Services and Resources

www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications

Services



Facilitated Onsite Presentations

Our experts visit campuses to lead sessions highlighting key insights for senior leaders and helping internal teams select the most relevant practices and next steps



Research Strategic Plan Review

Receive a personalized evaluation of your strategic plan along with feedback and recommendations



Schedule an Expert Phone Consultation

Let us be your thought partner in strategizing about your research communications approach



Ask EAB

Send us your institution-specific questions. Our team will provide you with relevant practices, resources, and next steps

Resources



Communications Self-Assessment

Use this self-test to assess the current status of research communications on your campus



Effective Media Conversations Planning Worksheet

This tool will help communications staff guide conversations with faculty who are preparing to speak with the media



Research Website Self-Audit

Complete this checklist to evaluate how your research website measures up in terms of the 14 most valuable website features



Research Fact Sheet Template

Use this template to develop your own fact sheets that articulate the value of research in a compelling way to key stakeholders



Social Media for Research Communications

A guide for increasing public engagement through social media communications

1

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Questions?

Next Meeting Series Around the Corner

Our 2018 Agenda

Research Enterprise Strategy in the Trump Era

- Federal policy trends and their implications for research growth strategy
- Assessing and competing for best-bet federal funding opportunities

Confronting the Future of Facilities and Administration (F&A) Funding

- Articulating the value of F&A internally and externally
- Effective policies and procedures to maximize F&A recovery

Helping Faculty Achieve Their Full Research Potential

- Supporting faculty to increase extramural funding
- Best-in-class grant writing boot camps, internal review panels, and mentorship programs
- Holistic career development to retain faculty and keep them engaged in the research enterprise

Small-group breakout workshops

An opportunity to get more customized support to help you:

- Build and maintain partnerships with corporations
- Communicate the value of university research
- Tackle the mounting burden of research administration

Register Now!

National Meetings:

Executive Sessions:

*June 20, 2018
Washington, DC*

*August 10, 2018
Chicago, IL*

*October 16, 2018
Dana Point, CA*

Team Session:

*September 13, 2018
Washington, DC*