

# PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

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Photo provided by the University of Oklahoma



## OVERVIEW

From recruitment to community outreach, your campus undoubtedly does great work—and people should know about it! Ever wish you knew how to tell more people about your services and events? Working with local media and other avenues of publicity can help you get your messages out to key audiences and increase the effectiveness of your events.

No public relations experience? No problem! This section contains everything you need to promote your program and get the recognition you deserve. And as always, OCAP staff members are available to assist you with your publicity efforts.

## SECURING MEDIA COVERAGE

Whether you're promoting an event or gearing up for a recruitment blitz, start by issuing a press release (also known as a news release). A press release is a written announcement sent to news editors or reporters about general news or an upcoming event.

A proper release should answer the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? It's best to write press releases in the inverted pyramid style, which means placing the most important information near the beginning of the release and funneling down to the least important information. Your lead, which is the beginning of the release, should contain the key elements of the story and is used to grab the editor or reporter's attention. If your release is hard to follow or too wordy, an editor won't read any further and it may end up in the trash.

Remember to think about your audience when you write a press release. This will help you develop your angle and produce a press release that's of interest to your target audience.

Don't be disappointed if your release isn't printed verbatim. Remember, it's a tool used to get the editor or reporter's attention, not the story itself.

### *TIPS FOR STRUCTURING A PRESS RELEASE*

- Keep it one to two pages in length, double-spaced with indented paragraphs. In the upper left-hand corner, include the name and contact information for the person responding to reporter's questions; this person is identified as the contact.
- State the timing for the release, usually indicated by "For Immediate Release" unless a specific release date is needed.
- Include a couple of sentences or a small paragraph providing background information about your organization at the end of the release.

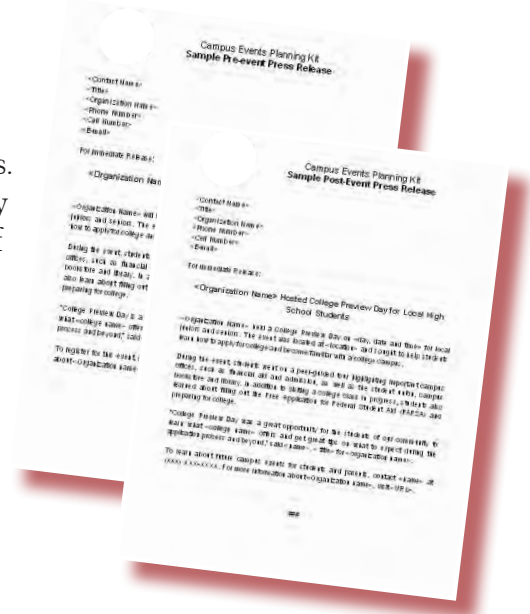
- Close your release with (###) or (-30-); these are editor’s marks that indicate the end of your information.
- If your release is more than one page, place (-More-) at the end of the first page to let the editor know that there’s additional information.

See Pages 22 and 23 for sample press releases.

### SENDING A PRESS RELEASE

Protocol for issuing a press release is different for all newspapers. Check out their Web site or call to find out which method they prefer. Most accept press releases via e-mail, but because of concerns about computer viruses, many media outlets prefer that you include your release in the body of an e-mail versus attaching it as a document.

Also, be respectful of printing deadlines, especially if you’re sharing your release with a weekly publication, which may “close” a week before it’s circulated. To avoid missing deadlines, send your release two to three weeks in advance.



### WORKING WITH REPORTERS

Congratulations! Your press release grabbed the attention of a local reporter and they want to write a story. More than likely, the reporter will want to meet with you for an interview to obtain more information. Don’t panic! You’re an expert on the topic—that’s why you’re doing the interview. The following information can help you take control of the discussion and get your points across.

### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

It’s important to be prepared for the interview. Allow yourself time to think about your story and what the audience should gain from the information. Anticipate questions you may be asked and mentally prepare answers. You may also want to jot down a few talking points and bring them with you to the interview. If it makes you feel more comfortable, ask the reporter for a list of questions in advance. They may not always provide them, but you never know unless you ask. If you’re still not comfortable with the idea of an interview, roleplay with a coworker or friend for practice.

Also, prepare some information that may help you get your point across. Gather statistics, organizational background information, biographies of key leaders and facts about your organization to aid the reporter in writing the story.



Photo provided by Southwestern Oklahoma State University

### *DURING THE INTERVIEW*

Introduce yourself and thank the reporter for taking the time to visit with you. Start the interview with a short summary of your story. State your points and make sure you reference where you received the information. Allow the reporter to ask questions. If you don't know the answer, don't be afraid to say so—it's better to say that you don't know than to give inaccurate information. If this happens, tell them you'll find the answer and get back to them.

Stick to the topic and don't get sidetracked. Make sure the points you wish to cover are addressed and most importantly, have fun with the interview! Laugh, smile, gesture and enjoy the conversation.

### *AFTER THE INTERVIEW*

Exchange business cards and, again, thank the reporter for visiting with you. You may want to ask when the story will run and if you can receive a complimentary copy of the publication. Also, remember that there is no such thing as "off the record." Even if the interview is over, never say anything that you wouldn't want to see in print.

### **NO PRESS, NO PROBLEM!**

Hard news like fires, police chases and weather can happen in an instant and upstage your story. If a newspaper was unable to cover your story, don't worry. You can still get publicity after the fact.

### *PHOTO/POST-EVENT RELEASE*

The best way to obtain post-publicity is through a post release—a press release written after an event has happened. In this release, you'll want to highlight what happened at your event, how many people came, special guests that attended, etc. Choose the best picture from your event and in your post-event release, say "photos available upon request."

Also, for the best print quality, make sure your digital photos are at least 300 dpi and saved as JPG or TIF files. If your photo is requested, write a brief caption describing the action in the photo, identifying people from left to right.

### **ADVERTISING**

Press releases aren't the only option for publicity through newspapers, but they certainly are the cheapest. You may wish to purchase advertising space in your local community or campus newspaper to promote recruitment efforts or events.

Newspaper rates aren't uniform—they're based on circulation. If you feel that advertising is the best option, go for it! If you need assistance developing the ad, don't hesitate to call OCAP.

### **Try This:**

Need help designing an advertisement or getting your press release just right? Contact Outreach Support Services at 866.443.7420 for all your event planning needs!

