

DePaul University Media Relations



Faculty & Staff Policies and Procedures for Media Relations Assistance

The Media Relations Department reserves the right to amend these policies and procedures when deemed appropriate. The policies and procedures contained herein were drafted during the 2003-2004 academic year and will be updated as necessary.

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICIES & PROCEDURE MANUAL

This manual should be used as a reference tool for the dissemination of information to the media about College of Law news and activities. Below are key contacts:

KEY CONTACTS

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OVERVIEW

Media Relations builds and maintains relationships with journalists with the goal of placing positive stories about DePaul University in media outlets nationally, locally and, when appropriate, internationally. It also serves a crisis management function by deflecting or shaping stories that are negative or could negatively impact the university.

One of the overall goals of media relations is to promote DePaul's position and prominence. Media relations sets the bar at stories that have potential to attract daily news coverage or above when deciding which stories to pitch.

With over 50 full-time faculty members and hundreds of full- and part-time students, the College of Law has the potential to generate far more stories than the media market will bear. The reality of the situation is that the College of Law is located in the third largest media market where competition for higher education news coverage is stiff. Add the five other Chicago law schools competing for coverage and the difficulty of attracting media attention becomes clearer.

No matter how many excellent stories faculty, students and staff generate, they are still pitched to the same finite pool of reporters. This has led Jerry Crimmins, who covers law schools for the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, to remark: "You give me great story ideas, but, unfortunately I can't write about them all. I have several other law schools to cover, too."

Looking ahead, we will have to become more strategic in our approach to putting our best stories forward if we want to remain an attractive media source.

Yet, even in the face of these obstacles, attracting media attention for the College of Law is an exciting and challenging proposition. The College of Law, its students and faculty have appeared in mainstream or specialty legal publications an average of 220 times a year during the past five years. Looking ahead, however, we will have to become more strategic in our approach to putting our best stories forward if we want to remain an attractive media source.

This Media Relations Procedure Manual is designed to describe some of the types of stories that result in media coverage and those that most likely will not. It also provides guidelines to follow and issues to consider when seeking Media Relations assistance for pitching your story or event.

STORIES MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED (also known as) ATTRACT MEDIA INTEREST

Stories with national scope or impact

- These stories illustrate a national trend in legal education; highlight a unique aspect of the College of Law faculty, students or staff, or have potential to interest or impact a general and legal audience alike.

Example: DePaul develops a new method for teaching law that breaks from the Socratic Method.

Example: DePaul law students help free wrongly convicted Death Row inmate.

Example: Former president Bill Clinton to teach legal ethics at DePaul.

Example: International Human Rights Law Institute is awarded \$3 million a year for 3 years to rebuild legal education programs in Iraq.

Example: Intellectual property clinic to help develop legislation to regulate the Internet.

Stories that are unique/human interest

- These stories exemplify the unique or human face of the College of Law faculty, students or staff.

Example: Quadriplegic man earns law degree from DePaul.

Example: DePaul professor teaches law by day and leads the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by night.

Example: New College of Law Dean also an astute businessman and professional magician.

Example: DePaul law professors switch places with students for a day to raise money for charity.

Compelling stories with news/feature undertones

- These stories most often appeal to a general audience and involve the activities of a person. They often have a direct correlation to an issue in the news or a national/local trend. They can be compelling, whimsical or present an issue that is on the brink of innovation.

Example: Former gang leader gets life on track and earns a law degree from DePaul.

Example: Computer age sparks record numbers of engineers to pursue law degrees.

Example: Center for Race and Bioethics study shows minorities get less care in health care system.

Example: Student with interest in family law draws on personal experience to help single fathers gain custody of children.

Other stories that sell

- Activities that can be connected to major issues in the news or that offer a fresh spin on an old topic have potential to get a reporter's attention. Currently, reporters have expressed interest in such topics as: terrorism/international affairs; celebrity trials, money and consumption, sex, computers and technology, religion, family and values.

STORIES MOST LIKELY TO ELUDE MEDIA ATTENTION

Copycat stories

- These are stories where the specific topic already has been written about. The story we want to pitch offers nothing additional or original to what already has been covered.

Example: "We have a program just like law school X and there was a story about it in today's Tribune. Can we get a story written about ours?" The answer is usually no. Once a story has been told, the likelihood of a reporter writing about the same thing in a second story is slim.

Conferences, lectures, luncheons, etc.

- Unless someone of the caliber of William Rehnquist or President Bush is speaking at your program, it is not likely to attract reporters. If, however, you offer a conference, seminar or lecture that explores a topic that is inventive, cutting edged, or well-timed, reporters *might* be interested. If a conference, seminar, lecture etc. is likely to attract media attention because of the subject matter or speaker, it is important that if the event is offered off campus that the venue selected is receptive and open to media. Often private clubs will have "no media" policies, which means that the location is closed to media in any form and reporters will not be welcome at your event.

To put media coverage of conferences, seminars, etc. into perspective, Ken Armstrong of the Tribune mirrored the sentiments of most reporters when he said, "I'd probably never attend a conference in hopes of finding a story."

Examples of conferences that have captured positive media responses: the Business Law Journal's conference on the airline industry that was offered in the wake of the September 11th attacks; and a conference on urban health that featured Jesse Jackson as a speaker.

Appointments, awards, recognitions and gifts less than several million dollars

- Outside of industry publications and local press, these types of announcements are usually not considered news by reporters. If appointments, awards and recognitions capture media attention they are usually covered as small blurbs in print publications. Some, however, do garner attention if they are particularly prestigious, involve a high profile donor/recipient or have some unusual purpose or human interest angle.

An example of an award that attracted strong media attention was Professor Bassiouni's Lincoln Award. **It is important to note that awards are most often publicized by the institution presenting them.** Because the law faculty is so accomplished and media relations resources are limited, announcements of awards and recognitions are not usually sent out by the media relations department.

With regard to gifts, the Chronicle of Higher Education has set the bar at about \$20 for the amount of gifts that get its attention. The Chronicle of Philanthropy might be interested but probably not in doing a big story.

MEDIA RELATIONS MECHANICS

Media Relations works to invite media attention for stories and events that are likely to attract the attention of reporters, or in other words stories that are newsworthy. While a result of those efforts can sometimes help market a program, the primary purpose is not to fill seats. When reporters cover an event, any story that results usually does not run until after the event is over. Event organizers who wish to market a program should use direct marketing, advertising or other methods to attract participants. Media relations efforts such as press releases and calendar items are ineffective at attracting significant participants.

Approximately 20 news releases about College of Law activities are issued each year. That is roughly two releases per month. These have the potential to generate news stories or features. We also issue calendar announcements about upcoming events, pitch stories by phone and e-mail and recommend legal experts to reporters working on breaking news stories and features. Often stories are pitched without the use of a news release because of relationships that media relations has developed with reporters.

It takes close to a week to get a news release written, approved, and mailed. Additional time is required to "pitch" the idea to various reporters. With special emphasis placed on increasing national visibility and showcasing faculty, issues and events selected for promotion are based on newsworthiness, timeliness and the dean's priorities for the College of Law.

HOW TO GET YOUR NEWS IN THE NEWS

The following are guidelines for working with Media Relations to get your news pitched to reporters:

PROGRAMS WITH MAJOR SPEAKERS OR ENGAGING TOPICS; LAW TREND OR HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

- All details of your event/story should be complete before seeking Media Relations assistance, although you can always let us know that your event is being planned before you have complete details.
- Only those requests that have complete information will get serious consideration. This includes the dates, times and location of activities. It also includes complete biographical information about speakers including, their title; schedule (if they plan to speak at other locations and DePaul is one of many stops); the reason why the activity is unique, timely or newsworthy or any other information that will help sell the story.
- All requests for media relations assistance should be **made in writing and sent via e-mail to vphillip@depaul.edu**. Requests should be made at least three weeks prior to the event.
- All requests will be considered, and decisions about what gets publicized will be based on the priorities of the dean, newsworthiness, and what is best for the law school and university overall.
- If the story is an event, requests for Media Relations should include all key information about the activity. You should be on firm footing if you follow the same procedures required to include an event in a College of Law publication. (See the Marketing & Communications Procedure Guide for direction).
- If the event is off-campus, the request should include the name of a media or contact person at the venue where the event will be held.
- For human interest stories, provide the phone numbers or e-mail addresses of key subjects in the story. Call them first and advise them that they may get a call from Media Relations. Make sure that they are willing to be interviewed by the mainstream press.
- If the story is about a major grant, please include the amount of the grant/gift, information about the grantee/donor and about the work it will support. If there is an interesting story about the grantee/donor or behind why the grant/gift is being given, please include those details also. If possible, please inform the grantee/donor that Media Relations may call to interview them for a press release and then provide the appropriate contact information for the grantee/donor.
- Media Relations will conduct research to help shape the story, i.e. to get additional details to make the story interesting. Media Relations **will not** make phone calls to get basic information about your story such as background on speakers, or the date, time, location, etc. of the activity.



- The person making a request for assistance is responsible for reviewing the draft release and getting the necessary approvals from the people they are working with. If the person making the request for assistance needs to acquire several approvals on their end, it should be done before final approval is given to media relations. Media relations will not call several parties who are working together on an event to gain approval. If approvals are not given in a timely manner, it will increase the amount of time required to issue the news release.
- Plan to be available to respond to media requests about your event. Provide a home or cell phone number if you will be out of the office.
- You may be interviewed by Media Relations in much the same way that you would be by a reporter writing a story. The purpose of this is to obtain quotes to include in the news release and, if necessary, to help you prepare for questions you may be asked in a real interview situation.
- While media relations will customize a list of reporters to target for a release, if you know of specific reporters or publications that follow your issue it helps to include them with your request for media coverage.

TIP SHEETS

Tip sheets are designed to give reporters a quick reference to experts on breaking news events. A tip sheet contains information about the expert and his or her view of the relevant news issue. If you have expertise about an issue currently in the news, or that might be in the news in the future, you can be pitched as an expert.

Call Valerie Phillips at ext. 25039 if there is a breaking news event for which you would like to be pitched as an expert.

If possible, provide a home and cell phone number and indicate if one or both can be included on the tip sheet. Call Valerie Phillips at ext. 25039 if there is a breaking news event for which you would like to be pitched as an expert. Be prepared to give a line or two about your position on a particular topic.

Media Relations also may call you for background information so you can be included on a tip sheet. If you are able to assist, you will be asked your opinion about the news issue as well as your availability to field calls from reporters.

CALENDAR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Calendar announcements are small mentions in news calendars about upcoming events. They dispense information about a workshop, seminar, panel discussion, speaker or other event that is not suitable for a news release. Calendar announcement should not be used to fill seats at an event. Direct marketing, advertising, etc. are more effective means to accomplish this goal. To request a calendar announcement, send the request via e-mail at least three weeks prior to the event to vphillip@depaul.edu. Things to remember:

- The event should be open to the public and media.
- The time, date, location and cost of the program should be included in the request.
- Information about the event/speaker should be included.
- The topic of the event should be explained if it cannot be readily determined from the name of the speech/program/ lecture.

OP-EDS

Op-eds are opinion editorials in newspapers that appear on the page opposite the editorials. Publications have different length requirements for op-ed pieces. Tribune pieces should be between 500 and 700 words and the Sun-Times has a 600-word maximum. A guide for getting op-eds published can be found at www.newsroom.edu. For assistance with placing or editing op-eds, e-mail a copy of the piece you would like to submit to vphillip@depaul.edu.

Often, Media Relations will call professors and ask if they would like to write op-eds about important issues in the news. A general rule of thumb is that these pieces take a fresh look at a subject or issue in the news.

Note: The requirement that non-breaking news story assistance be sent electronically is firm—faxes and hard copies are unacceptable. If this poses a problem, please have faculty services type and e-mail your document.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN (or where to direct your information)

Advertising

- If you need to advertise your event to attract an audience, Media Relations is **not** the vehicle to use, because reporters rarely write about an event prior to its occurrence. You may want to inform the DePaul community about your event, which is internal communications. Newslines, Newline Online and the university calendar can help you communicate to an internal audience. If your goal is to reach an external audience, those outside the university community, you should consider advertising. For this type of assistance contact Debbie Howard at ext. 25928 to inquire about placing an ad in an appropriate media vehicle.

Awards, honors, and presentations

- This sort of news is most suitable for Dialogue, Newslines and Newline Online, the university's internal publication for faculty and staff. Send news of your awards, speeches and other like accomplishments to pkelly@depaul.edu.

Special Events Assistance

- If you are planning an event and require assistance, contact Howard Rubin at ext. 28298. You also can request assistance from the Special Events department of University Relations. Contact Mindy Barancik, ext. 26638.

Media Training

- Media Relations can help professors prepare for media appearances. Among the services provided are: staging mock interviews; image consulting and help dealing with hostile questioning. Call Valerie Phillips at ext. 25039 for more details.

For additional information about Media Relations visit our Web site at www.newsroom.depaul.edu.

