

## Media Guidelines

The Office of Institutional Advancement serves as the FIRST point of contact for the media to provide accurate and timely information. For this reason, we value your input and updates on campus news.

### Preparing for Media Interviews

#### *Factors that you CAN Control*

- You can control where the interview will occur.
- You can control the time of the interview.
- You can control your appearance.
- You can control your attitude.
- You can control your words.

#### *Factors that are out of your Control.*

- You cannot control the length of time you are on air or the length of your article.
- You cannot control what sound bite or quote the reporter will use.
- You cannot control the camera angle or whether they shoot you from a wide or tight angle.

#### *Interview/Media Relations **Don'ts***

- Do not repeat negative questions: "not guilty of fraud." "We run a clean operation around here."  
Remember that reporters can take your words out of context and may not use your entire sentence.
- Do not let reporters put words in your mouth. "Those are your words not mine."
- Do not assume that the notepad is ever put away or the camera is turned off. Avoid unguarded talk—it will come back to haunt you.
- Do not look like a bureaucrat. Stay away from jargon to avoid this.
- Do not argue or lose your temper with the reporter.
- Do not assume that your words are ever "OFF THE RECORD." Remember that the editor can override the reporter. It is best to stay away from this type of conversation even if the reporter suggests an "off the record interview."
- Do not speculate. You do not need to answer hypothetical questions.
- Do not hide bad news. The reporter will find the story - be honest in the beginning. One negative story is better than 5 or 6 down the road.
- Do not expect to see only your side of the story.
- Do not lie to a reporter under any circumstances. If you do, they will never cover you, your event or program again.
- Do not use the phrase "no comment." If you cannot talk about the situation, explain why. If you do not know the answer, tell them...do not make one up.

### *Interview/Media Relations Do's*

- Do call Institutional Advancement first—we'll be there to give you a hand.
- Do respect reporters. They represent the public.
- Do respond promptly; be accessible; return phone calls. Remember, they have very strict deadlines and if they do not hear from you the first time...there will not be a second.
- Do be open and honest.
- Do ask them if you are the best source for the interview.
- Do admit it when you do not know the answer to a question.
- Do admit mistakes...fast.
- Do correct reporters' mistakes...fast.
- Do be quick to refute incorrect statements made by a reporter. However, ask yourself, are these factual mistakes or perceptual mistakes.
- Do take time to prepare for interviews; organize your thoughts; pick out one or two key messages
- Do be concise.
- Do anticipate questions. Before your interview make a list of all the possible good and bad questions.
- Do be personable; keep your sense of humor.
- Do lead the interview - if possible. Remember you know more about your topic (event/program) than the reporter...this will allow you to lead.
- Do bridge to positive messages.
- Do keep it simple and conversational.
- Do relax.

Remember to call the Institutional Advancement Office at x77771 when you have conversations with reporters. We'll help widen the coverage of good news and help counsel you to deal with bad news. Remember: PR is free news coverage and cannot be controlled to the full extent. You can only control your message through paid advertising. However, a news story is often seen to be more reliable and credible than advertising because the story is drafted by an outside source - the reporter.

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We build relationships with those involved within our college and maintain a good working knowledge of PVCC's programs so that we can positively relay that information and "tell our story" to the Valley's print and electronic media.

## **Maricopa Community Colleges Media Guidelines**

Working with the media can be either enjoyable or terrifying, depending on the focus of your interaction. Each of the Maricopa Community Colleges is fortunate to have professionals on staff who are well-versed in meeting the needs of the media. These public relations experts are best equipped at helping you make the most of your media experience, if you agree to participate in a newsworthy event.

Although your level of participation may vary, there are some general guidelines that you will want to consider:

- **Touch base with your Public Relations professional if a reporter contacts you, *before* you agree to answer any questions.**  
Although a reporter may appear good natured and sincere about an inquiry, there may be ulterior motives to the contact. There may also be another situation occurring that you may not know about, either on campus or in current events, which could leave you feeling trapped or unprepared once you are already in front of that microphone or camera. Your public relations professional has likely worked with this reporter or the media organization and has established a rapport that may help you.
- **Define the scope of your conversation with a reporter before it takes place.**  
This will allow you to prepare a few thoughts and even create some bullet points for use during the interview. Your public relations professional is trained to help you do this and can provide some tips for on-camera or on-mic situations, based on what your individual needs may be.
- **Establish how your interview will be used before it takes place.**  
Will this interview be for use in only a news broadcast, for use by itself, with comments from others, is there research or a study, or an incident that your comments are being used to support, defend or attack? Campus public relations professionals have access to a vast array of information and can help provide some perspective on what else may be going on in the day's news... throughout the district, around the state or in the world.
- **Will a photographer be taking pictures?**  
The type of story, the medium for which it is being produced and the other news of the day all have influence on whether a still or video camera will be part of your interview. Your campus public relations professional can help you best prepare for the presence of a camera.
- **When will this report be broadcast or printed? Who will see it – local, national?**  
Is the reporter willing to give you a copy for college archives? It's not only nice to have a clipping for your own files, it's good to let others know about what you've done and what the college is doing. When your campus public relations professional is involved in your interview from the beginning he/she can help make sure copies are obtained.

Reporters are typically seeking information from an expert. When they call you, you should feel flattered that your knowledge and opinion are of value to them. Your public relations professional is there to augment your knowledge and ability. He or she is trained to help you think through a potential media interaction before you may be placed in an awkward situation. Working with someone who is there to look out for your best interests, from the beginning, will pay off greatly in the end.

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