

Interacting with the media

Strategic Media Relations

We're here to help

We will help:

- Determine whether you're the best source for the interview
- Find out the official university stance on the issue
- Help you assess the impact of the story
- Brainstorm potential questions
- Rehearse answers
- Help you develop key messages

Key messages should:

- Advance your and CU Boulder's communication goals
- Factor in public interests/audience attachments, not just advance proprietary interests
- Be backed up with proof points
- Be stated positively using action verbs

Before the interview

Don't wait for a call from a reporter to prepare information you are likely to be called about. Watch the news for trends and topics that could be a positive story, and be aware of sensitive information in your department that would create a headline.

• Feature stories:

The guy who mows the grass. Provide flavor and put bigger issues into local perspective. Can be helpful. Great to share in social media.

• News stories:

About research policies, procedures, trends, events and people. If conflict-driven, call on these *before* responding.

• Investigative stories:

Always conflict-driven and are about budgets, policies and people. Main focus is accountability. Always call on these *before* responding.

When a reporter calls, find out:

- Who is the interviewer?
- What publication or media outlet are they calling from?
- What is the deadline—how much time do you have to respond?
- How much time does interviewer need with you?
- Who else will be interviewed?
- If TV or radio, is it live, taped or call-in?
- Who are the readers/viewers/listeners?
- What is the focus and scope (local or national)?
- How long is the piece? When will it run/air?



Contact Us

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Strategic Relations &
Communications

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

During the interview

- DO state and restate key messages
- DO be concise
- DO remember that journalists need short sound bites and quotes
- DO avoid jargon and “insider” terminology
- DO explain complex facts in segments and sequences
- DO provide accurate background information, fact sheets and graphics
- DO bridge back to your key messages

- DON'T say more than you need to
- DON'T start having a conversation and forget you are being interviewed
- DON'T be rude or aggressive or sarcastic
- DON'T say “no comment”
- DON'T lie or misrepresent information
- DON'T be afraid
- DON'T go off the record (both parties have to agree to off-the-record remarks, NEVER engage this strategy)
- DON'T guess or speculate
- DON'T answer questions that compromise legally protected information (I'm sorry, personnel confidentiality rules prevent me from answering that question)
- DON'T answer hypothetical questions

Bridge statements

A bridge statement is a transition that takes you from a difficult question back to your key messages.

- I'm not going to speculate on that. What matters in this situation is that . . .
- I can't comment on that, but what I can say is . . .
- Let me emphasize again . . .
- What matters most in this situation is . . .
- While _____ is important, it's also important to remember that . . .
- And that reminds me . . .
- Before we leave this subject, I need to add . . .

After the interview

First, let us know how the interview went.

Then:

- Read/watch story carefully and check details
- Is the story “biased” or just not written the way we would write it?
- Were you misquoted? (Make sure you know what you said and how you said it.)
- If you were misquoted, contact media relations and we will discuss corrections
- NEVER call a media outlet angry over a misquote, negative story or a headline
- Reporting errors requires a careful, measured, professional response/request



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Be Boulder.



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