Be strategic.
Media relations at CU Boulder

“I want a reporter to cover a story. What do I do now?”

First, you need to determine what stories might be worth sharing with a broader, external audience through the media and our own robust CU Boulder communications channels, such as CU Boulder Today or the campus Facebook, Twitter and other social media accounts. The unit communicator and Strategic Relations will devise a story plan and identify markets and relevant outlets for your story.

What interests the media

- **Outreach.** Programs or individuals presenting in schools or the community.
- **Surprising findings.** Things that are surprising or counterintuitive.
- **Findings with direct applications.** “News you can use.”
- **Forecasts/predictions.** A report or expert who makes predictions about business, politics or other.
- **Important new findings.** Discoveries that are milestones in your field of study, particularly if they impact people’s daily lives or understandings of the world.
- **Research that is topical.** Things that add to current events conversations.
- **Events and exhibits.** Out of the ordinary or of national prominence.
- **Visual projects.** Ongoing research or other work that would make striking pictures or videos.
- **Programs/initiatives/services.** A new service or program, or one that will garner public interest.

Types of media outreach

- **News release.** We will write, edit, place and send a news release if story has widespread or strategic interest to the general public. The story is also retooled and shared in CU Boulder Today.
- **Media pitch.** We may determine that a pitch is more effective. A pitch is sent to an individual journalist via phone call or email with a short, catchy blurb about the story. Some stories may be shared exclusively with one journalist.
- **Op ed.** We appreciate a heads up about opinion pieces by faculty or campus experts and are happy to edit them, recommend outlets and handle submissions.
- **Tip sheets.** We capitalize on current events and hot topics to encourage media to interview our faculty members and researchers.

Preparing for an interview

We will work with you to prepare you, a faculty or staff member for the media interview by anticipating journalist questions and developing key messages.
When reporters call

Calls from reporters can mean incredible outreach opportunities – or signal a brewing controversy. For starters, find out:

- Who is the interviewer?
- What publication or media outlet are they calling from?
- What is the deadline?
- How much time does the interviewer need?
- If TV or radio, is it live, taped or call-in?
- When will the piece run/air?
- If the topic is potentially controversial, contact Ryan Huff (ryan.huff@colorado.edu) and Deborah Méndez-Wilson (deborah.mendezwilson@colorado.edu) who will help you navigate these issues, if not manage them for you.
- It is perfectly fine to gather information then tell the reporter or producer you will get back in touch. You do not need to respond on the spot.

Other tips

- **Be realistic.** Not every story is going to make it into *The New York Times* and that may not even be the best place for it. It’s more important to think strategically about what audiences you want to reach and why.
- **Use our expert news and research writers.** We know how to tell stories using techniques that engage readers and build trust. Faculty and staff will be able to review and offer suggested edits during the writing process.
- **Respond quickly.** Reporters are often working under very tight deadlines and we don’t want to miss a good opportunity to share CU Boulder’s high impact stories with the world.
- **Coordinate with unit communicator and Strategic Relations.** We may have information not broadly known that could affect the reception of your news. We can help you leverage your story by plugging into the main campus comms channels and picking the best day to get your news out there. We subscribe to robust media tools and have relationships with top journalists in Colorado and beyond. Contact your unit communicator and Strategic Relations and Communications at cunews@colorado.edu or 303-735-0122.
- **Think about Spanish language media.** We are also looking for stories of interest to our Spanish speaking community members. If you or experts in your field speak Spanish, we will add them to our expert database.
- **Photos are critical.** Quality images attract media and social media. Take the photo at eye level. Focus on one or two subjects engaged in an activity vs. a large group or posed shots. Get information for a photo caption that tells who is in the photo and what the people are doing.
- **In-depth media training.** We can arrange an in-depth media training workshop that would give you on-camera experience and the confidence you need to be successful.

*The Office of Strategic Relations and Communications offers an array of additional services including: advertising, Be Boulder branding templates and training, design, integrated marketing strategy, social media strategy and training, photography, project management, publications, video, website design and development, external relations and crowdfunding. Fill out this form ([http://www.colorado.edu/strategicrelations/work-us](http://www.colorado.edu/strategicrelations/work-us)) to get connected with these services.*