



# VCU

## School of Education

### Press Protocol

**Members of the VCU School of Education (SOE) faculty and staff are free to respond to requests from the media (internal to VCU or external) regarding their areas of expertise. Media inquiries should be referred to the Director of Communications and Enrollment Management immediately if they involve issues with school/university-wide significance and/or are of a controversial or sensitive nature. In all cases, the Director of Communications and Enrollment Management should be notified as soon as possible to inform her of the contact.**

The SOE Director of Communications and Enrollment Management, in collaboration with VCU University Relations, promotes the school through press releases or media advisories regarding special accomplishments, research, events and activities, programs and plans. All news releases intended for off-campus or external audiences should be routed through the Office of Communications and Enrollment Management using the **Submit a Story** form on the [Communications Portal](#).

Since positive media coverage is an integral element of the school's communications plan, any ideas for articles or pieces that would positively portray the SOE, its work or its community should also be directed to the Director of Communications and Enrollment Management using the [Communications Portal](#). Likewise, she should be notified as soon as possible about negative occurrences that are likely to rise to the level of a news story.

Guidelines for communication with the media when the issue is non-controversial and limited to the faculty/staff member's area of expertise:

- When you first make contact with a journalist, obtain his/her name, the name of the media organization, a telephone number (preferred) and/or email address and, if available, the deadline for providing input and anticipated time of release of information in print or broadcast. This information should be included when the notification is made to the Director of Communications.



# VCU

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- The best approach with the media is to be prompt, helpful and honest. All contacts from the media should be returned as soon as possible, in deference to reporters' deadlines. At the most, a call should be returned within a day. If that is not possible, the Director of Communications and Enrollment Management should be asked to handle the call.
- If you are being interviewed/commenting as a representative of the VCU/SOE community, please identify yourself using your full title, followed by Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Education.
- Make sure you understand each question from the media before answering. If you cannot answer the question, or are uncomfortable providing a response, take the reporter's number and advise him/her that someone who can provide the information will contact him/her as soon as possible.
- There is no such thing as "off the record." While journalists might try to use that as a method of getting a comment from you, do not provide any information that you would not be comfortable seeing in print.
- Do not offer speculation or gossip. Do not answer a reporter's question with "no comment." Do not be condescending or underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but do make sure the reporter understands your responses. Provide your telephone number and/or email address for follow-up questions.
- Remember that in responding to the media, you are representing the VCU School of Education/your department/your center. Personal opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such.
- Issues that should not be discussed with reporters are: 1) legal issues, 2) student academic or health records 3) personnel issues, 4) questions that involve the VCU/SOE integrity, such as ethics or issues that may result in harm to others, and 5) a campus crisis or emergency. Refer all such inquiries to the Director of Communications.
- Any media inquiries that involve information about specific students should be directed to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Such inquiries will be handled in strict compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

### **Press During a Time of Emergency - Crisis Communications**

Crisis communications can have a lasting impact on institutional reputation and public support. How well we convey our message to the public greatly depends on what is reported to the news media. This is especially true in a crisis. Because of



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the emotions that usually accompany crises, images formed from crisis reporting are especially important in shaping long-lasting public impressions of the institution.

In the event of a major crisis, the Director of Communications and Enrollment Management should be alerted as soon as possible so that an official communications plan can be put into place in collaboration with VCU University Relations to disseminate timely, accurate information and to ensure that inquiries are routed to the appropriate sources.

Some general guidelines for handling media relations during a crisis are as follows:

- Don't panic.
- NOTHING is "off the record" so remember that anything you say could wind up in the news.
- NEVER say, "No comment." If you don't want to talk to a reporter, simply say, "I'm sorry, but I don't feel comfortable speaking with you" and direct them to the Director of Communications.
- The rights and well-being of the people affected are paramount to all other considerations.
- Maintain the good reputation of the VCU School of Education.
- Show that you care.
- Provide accurate information. If you don't know the details, don't guess or assume; refer inquiries to the Director of Communications.

During a campus emergency, faculty, staff and students have a right NOT to speak with the media. The media has the same access to campus as any other member of the community, so it is important, especially during a crisis or emergency, to be vigilant about what you say and who you are saying it to. Any situations where individuals feel a reporter has abused their rights should be reported to the Director of Communications.

The Director of Communications and Enrollment Management is responsible for the development and dissemination of all communications in the event of a campus emergency. This includes internal communications with students, faculty and staff, as well as communications with the media.