

# BUFFALO STATE COLLEGE

## DIRECTORY OF POLICY STATEMENTS

Policy Number: V:07:00 Date: July 1988  
Updated: March 2009

SUBJECT: **Media Policy**

The basic premise underlying the college's public relations program is the public's inherent right to know what the college is doing. For the most part, this is accomplished through the efforts of public relations in the College Relations Office in its daily interaction with the news media.

Public understanding of the college's policies, plans, and program can best be achieved through establishment of good relations with employees of press, radio, TV, and other communication media. The most advantageous means of developing such a relationship is by providing honest and helpful information in an atmosphere of mutual respect and candor.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to keep the College Relations Office fully and promptly informed about events, incidents, and developments in which there is current or potential public interest.

For anything to be newsworthy it should be timely, fresh, current – something that is now happening, or will soon begin.

The following items are considered newsworthy:

- New or unique educational projects or ideas
- Outstanding speakers coming to campus
- Faculty/staff/student election to state and/or national professional and educational associations
- Research findings from individual or class projects
- Major academic or administrative promotions
- Athletic events
- Awards and honors to faculty/staff/students
- Art or other exhibitions, local/regional/national
- Musical and theatrical events
- Special workshops/symposia, etc., especially when open to the public
- Involvement in projects which fill a civic need
- Research papers or speeches given at state or national meetings (advance copies are most helpful)
- Books/scholarly articles written by faculty/staff
- Unusual hobbies, activities, or interests of faculty/staff

The media seldom have interest in events that happened yesterday and, in general, the greater the lead time, the greater the exposure rule prevails.

The College Relations Office is best equipped to direct releases to news outlets most likely to use them. To achieve coordination, it is essential that the College Relations Office serve as the office for dissemination of all news concerning the college.

While only the president of the College can speak as the chief officer and official spokesperson for Buffalo State, he/she has appointed the Director of College Relations as principal spokesperson for the release of material dealing with college policy, practice, or events which may impact the position of the college to the community.

In the event the college is confronted by a controversial situation, it is the Directors responsibility to work with the Office of Finance & Management, the Office of Institutional Advancement, and those most directly involved to coordinate the release of news, respond to inquiries from the news media, and to offer counsel as needed.

Sometimes reporters may bypass official channels in seeking information, and other information provided by unknowledgeable sources occasionally results in inaccuracies in stories which may tend to embarrass the college. Therefore, media is referred to the College Relations Office.

### **Press Inquiries**

While the College Relations Office distributes releases and responds to all media queries addressed to it, other members of the college staff may occasionally receive press queries. Those questioned should feel free to respond directly only if the request retains to a matter for which one has direct responsibility or relates to his or her area of expertise.

The following points may be helpful in dealing directly with a call from the media:

1. Ask the reporter's name, newspaper, or TV/radio station. If you feel it is a legitimate inquiry, give the reporter your full cooperation, but if you have any questions in your own mind, call the College Relations Office and ask for advice. If that office referred the reporter to you, you would have been previously informed.
2. If questions are outside your area of expertise or they involve more than one aspect of the college, refer the reporter to the College Relations Office. Unless you know the reporter, it is not wise to comment on controversial issues with a promise that your name will not be used.
3. If you supply a personal opinion on any subject, make sure the reporter understands you are speaking for yourself, not your department or the college.
4. Reporters are not bound to show any copy before publication, but if scientific or technical data are involved, suggest that the reporter check back with you. If time permits, they usually will.
5. In radio and TV interviews, remember the time factor and make your answers as succinct as possible.
6. Once you agree to be interviewed, you are "on record", and most reporters dislike material which is "off the record". Therefore, it is a good idea not to supply such information.
7. When the interview is over, please inform the College Relations Office of what transpired.

The proper and prompt handling of press queries, whether directly or through the College Relations Office, helps to create credibility and reporter confidence, encourages reporters to seek information from official sources, and, above all, assures accurate and balanced news stories.

### **Handling an Emergency**

On occasion, the college is susceptible to controversy, unfortunate accidents, or unfavorable incidents. At such times, the college is under pressure from the media. Sometimes this can result in unfavorable coverage in print or broadcast media.

Such incidents must get priority handling. The media must be given information so they can carry a comprehensive story as quickly as possible. This greatly reduces the need for follow-up stories.

Complete cooperation must be given newsmen covering the event. All pertinent information must be passed as rapidly as possible. This serves to place an otherwise potentially misunderstood incident into proper perspective. To give media the impression that information is being withheld can result in a story being featured as a mystery or with some other negative connotation.

When emergencies or accidents occur on campus, please remember:

- Be available;
- Be calm;
- Be factual.

The first to learn or hear of an accident or emergency should make contact with the Director of College Relations.

The media should be given all the assistance possible in coverage of an accident. But do not speculate on the cause, and do not give out any facts unless they are known to be accurate or they have been cleared with the College Relations Office or the appropriate Vice President.

The basic premise underlying the College Relations program is the public's inherent right to know what the college is doing. For the most part, this is accomplished through the efforts of the College Relations Office in its daily interaction with the news media.

For more information, refer to the following web site:

<http://collegerelations.buffalostate.edu/>