



WHY TALK TO THE MEDIA?

This media training guide was created as a reference tool for you to use when preparing for interview opportunities and also to help make you more comfortable and confident during the interview.

One of the most effective ways of reaching prospective and current students, alumni and the community at large is through the local media. Media coverage can help improve the university's reputation and enhance its standing within the community.

Specifically, media coverage can:

- Keep IPFW top of mind in the community
- Position IPFW as the foremost knowledge source in the northeast Indiana region
- Help raise your own personal profile, establishing your reputation as a recognized expert or commentator in the field



ABOUT REPORTERS

Radio: Radio reporters work under tight deadlines. Because they are limited to approximately 30-60 seconds to present their stories on-air, they look to experts for voice clips of about 15 seconds which describe what the issue is and why it is relevant. During a radio interview, try to sum up your point into brief, succinct sentences. Relax and talk as you would in normal conversation.

Television: Images are the essential ingredient for a TV story. Be prepared to answer questions about the visual aspects of your research. TV reporters have limited time in which to present their stories so they simplify information to keep stories to an average length of 90 seconds.

Print: Print reporters work for daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, and wire services, such as Associated Press (AP). Often, they want a lot of detail because they do not have the benefit of using visual and audio imagery. They rely on description to communicate their stories.

WHEN A REPORTER CALLS

Call back promptly.

Find out what information the reporter is seeking and what information he/she already has obtained.

Determine whether you are the most knowledgeable and responsible person to deal with the subject.

Find out how the information will be used—whether the reporter wants a simple quote for a short news story or extensive background for a feature story.

Buy time to prepare for the interview.



Find out what deadline the person has to meet and do your best to give him/her as much time as possible before that deadline.

Beware of talking “off the record.” Even if the reporter agrees, there are no guarantees.

HANDLING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AN SITUATIONS

If you are dealing with a controversial topic, contact the chief communications officer before you give an interview. The CCO can help you come up with talking points that can be distributed to others who may be called upon to answer the same questions. Stick to the talking points and everyone will say the same thing.

Make notes to help you stay on track during the interview. Take the question back to what you know and what you want to say... "I don't feel qualified to answer that question, but I do know that it is important..."

Avoid saying, "No comment." It is better to manage a situation by facing it head on and providing the information that you are at liberty to give. "No comment" sounds as if you have something to hide. If you can't really say anything, explain that it would be inappropriate for you to comment, because you don't have all of the facts, and that you are working on pulling that information together.



EDITORIAL CONTROL

Whether or not you have any editorial control at all will be determined by the kind of interview it is. If this is a long, background kind of feature, it would not be uncommon for a reporter to check back in with text to see if he or she has gotten the facts right. However, in a breaking news story or a news brief, don't expect to have final approval, or any at all for that matter. Also, be aware that even if the reporter has given you a courtesy look, an editor may make changes at the last minute. And, please know that the reporter most likely does not write headlines or photo captions.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Media Training 101:

A Guide to Meeting the Press by Sally Stewart.
The Media Training Bible: 101 Things You Absolutely, Positively Need to Know Before Your Next Interview, by Brad Phillips.

If you are a faculty member, the university has no problem with you talking to the press about the subjects that you are familiar with. It is completely up to you whether you want to be interviewed or not. We encourage faculty to get involved in discussions about the current events and hot topics because it helps share knowledge and learning and additionally helps position IPFW locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Most often, members of the media will first contact the chief communications officer and ask for an expert to comment on a specific topic. We will not give out faculty contact information until we first get approval. (Unless you have signed up to be part of our "Connections" experts guide.)

If a member of the media contacts you directly related to your subject matter of expertise feel free to grant an interview if you feel comfortable. Please e-mail the chief communications officer, Nicole Wilkins, at wilknn01@ipfw.edu to let us know that you were interviewed.

Should you have specific questions related to media relations, please contact:

Nicole Wilkins
Chief Communications Officer
481-4174
Wilknn01@ipfw.edu

