

Public Service and Outreach Media Policy

As part of a land-grant university, UGA's Public Service and Outreach programs have a responsibility to keep the public informed of its activities and impact. We want our stakeholders, the citizens of the state of Georgia, to have an understanding of UGA's outreach programs so they are confident that we are using our resources efficiently to help create jobs, develop leaders and address critical issues across the state. It is important to tell our story to the media and we should be responsive to requests for information.

The purpose of this policy is to: (1) formalize existing standard operating procedure related to media interactions; and (2) to ensure that information provided to the media is accurate and reflects the mission of UGA's outreach programs. This policy is in addition to and shall not supplant any Board of Regents, University of Georgia, or Office of Public Affairs policies on media. It is important to keep this in mind in any written communication as well, since almost everything we do is subject to the Georgia Open Records Act.

Please adhere to the following guidelines regarding media inquiries:

- Faculty and staff who receive a media inquiry or interview request should immediately report it to their director. It is important to respond courteously and professionally to all media calls, just as we would respond to a statewide partner. An appropriate response to a media inquiry would be, "I would like to confer with others here to see who can provide you with the best information." An inappropriate response would be, "I am not allowed to speak to the media."
- The unit director should inform the PSO communications director that a media inquiry has been made, including the topic and context. The PSO communications director will confer with the vice president for public service and outreach and coordinate with the Office of Public Affairs. In some cases it may be necessary for Public Affairs or another unit to respond to the request.
- If it is determined that the unit should respond, the unit director should then identify the best spokesperson for the issue at hand.
- Media training is required of any faculty or staff member who may be called upon to provide information to the media. Media training will help faculty and staff best answer anticipated questions and identify which questions to defer, or refer elsewhere. The PSO communications director is available at any time to help prepare PSO employees for interviews with media representatives or to offer media training.
- It is critical that in interactions with the media on UGA-related issues, all faculty and staff provide factual information and data without offering personal opinion or appearing to take a position or present an official institutional position on issues. Faculty and staff should be careful not to engage in public policy debates.
- Faculty and staff should not comment on protected personnel matters or matters in litigation, nor should they convey institutional policies, positions, and decisions to the public. To do so can jeopardize the integrity and credibility of our units, Public Service and Outreach, and the university as a whole.

Failure to follow this policy could result in disciplinary action, to include suspension or termination of employment.