

External Publicity for Newsworthy Events, Programs and Initiatives

The Office of Public Information is continually looking for information of interest to the public. If you would like to publicize an event, program, award, presentation, book, article, grant or other student or faculty achievement, please call or e-mail Public Information for assistance, ideally six to eight weeks in advance of desired publicity date. We do not have staff to publicize everything, but will give a good try and inform you about what is possible.

Public Information can discuss with you the details of the event and help establish the threshold information -- whether it has external news value (see below). Many events are suitable for both internal and external publicity. Some may be appropriate for paid advertising and direct mail promotion. We can refer you to our colleagues who handle publications, the Web, and advertising. If appropriate and with your input and approval, the department can issue a press release or media alert and help determine a strategic media list to maximize recognition and coverage.

Determining news value

Reading and answering the questions below will help you and us to gauge potential media interest in your story. You should be able to tell us:

- How is this unique or distinctive? How does it differ from all others?
- Is this a first in the world, country or region?
- Is it timely? Does it relate to something currently in the news (elections, forthcoming legislation, the new core curriculum at Harvard)?
- Are we on the forefront of, or participating in, a national or regional trend?
- Does it have juicy quotes, anecdotes, and little bits of colorful details?
- Does it involve events and/or people of prominence (celebrities) in a particular industry or area of study?
- Is the story unusually entertaining or exciting?
- Is there a human interest angle? Is it a “feel-good” story?
- Do you have a new angle on an old story?
- Does the story hit close to geographical home? If it involves and affects people from the areas surrounding our campuses, local media may be more interested.
- Is there a good visual component? If your event provides a good photo opportunity, such as students gathering for a good cause, or there will be some unique visual component like a work of art or unusual activity, print and TV media outlets may be more interested.

Process

When contacting Public Information, be prepared to answer the additional questions below:

- What is the purpose of your communications outreach? Do you want to attract attendees to an event? Inform the public of recent accomplishments?
- Who is your audience - the Pace University community, external audiences, or both? Are you aiming for an age, ethnic or geographic group?
- What is your message?
- What is the deadline?

You can expect the process go as follows:

- Initial contact with University Relations/Public Information.
- Consultation.
- Writing – We request that all departments desiring publicity draft an initial write-up with necessary details and colorful descriptions. We will help you with and edit. Please include Who (who is initiating and participating as well as who is benefitting), What (event, program, award, presentation), Where, When, Why and How” in your write-up.
- Determining recipients.

- Editing by Public Information.
- Approval of copy by initiating department and deans/supervisors as appropriate.
- Distributing to media contacts.

Not so random notes and expectations:

- Events that are free and open to the public have the potential to be included in external print and Web calendar listings if submitted at least six weeks in advance.
- Students and faculty members promoting events that are open to outside community members may have opportunities to be interviewed by newspaper reporters and/or speak on radio or local TV.
- Events or stories with a human interest angle (touching story such as Pace students helping others in unusual ways or student who overcame odds), or with a unique visual component may attract print or TV reporters.
- Presentations, articles, books, grants and awards may garner blurbs in mainstream newspapers, trade journals, or both. Please provide a list of trade journals specific to your industry if you believe they may be interested.
- Events that benefit another organization may lend themselves to public service announcements on local radio.
- Don't forget the immense appetite on the part of readers and viewers (and media trying to attract them) for celebrities and, to repeat, "juicy quotes and anecdotes and little bits of color."

No media coverage is ever guaranteed. Feature articles in advance of an event are rare. Feature articles promoting a new program or grant are more likely if there is a clear benefit to the general public, such as something that offers a solution to a national or regional issue. Ultimately, reporters and editors decide what to cover and when. We can only present them -- persuasively, we hope -- with interesting information.