



HUDSON
COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



MEDIA GUIDELINES



Media Guidelines

Developing and maintaining effective media communications is essential to Hudson County Community College's ability to carry out its mission and to engage continued community support. Through effective media relations, the College:

- Broadens visibility and increases awareness of the College;
- Informs the public of the services and programming that the College offers that is beneficial to the community;
- Promotes the College's activities, and events of significance, and the College community's achievements;
- Ensures that accurate information is conveyed to the public, particularly with issues and events that may be sensitive and/or considered controversial, or that could result in being misunderstood.

The Director of Communications serves as the official and primary Hudson County Community College spokesperson, and conveys the official College position to members of the media corps. Inquiries from the media about **all** programming, events and issues – and those that are of a sensitive/controversial nature – should be referred to the Director of Communications.

In the event of a crisis or emergency situation, the Director of Communications or a designee will handle **all** contacts with the media, and will coordinate the information provided from the College to the public. In these situations, **all** campus departments must refer calls from the media to the Director of Communications to ensure accurate and concise information is provided to the media.

Any ideas for articles or pieces that would positively portray the College, its work or its community should also be directed to the Director of Communications. In a similar manner, the Director of Communications should be notified about negative issues or occurrences as soon as one is aware of them.

The College's approach with the media is to be prompt, helpful and honest. Every effort must be made to thoroughly understand any questions posed – and the implications of the questions – prior to providing the media with a response.

Should a member of the media approach a member of the HCCC faculty, staff or administration, the College requests that the person being approached take the reporter's name, affiliation and phone number and advise that the HCCC Communications Office will contact him/her.

Additionally, the College requests that faculty, staff and members of the administration refrain from offering speculation or gossip, and not respond to a reporter's question with, **"No comment."**

Issues that should never be discussed with reporters include:

- 1) Legal issues;
- 2) Personnel issues;
- 3) Questions that involve the College's integrity, such as ethics or issues that may result in harm to others;
- 4) A campus crisis or emergency; and
- 5) Inquiries that involve information about specific students.

All inquiries on matters such as these must be referred to the Director of Communications.

In the event of an emergency or major crisis on campus, an effective communication plan will be developed and put into effect to disseminate timely, accurate information and to ensure that inquiries are routed to the appropriate sources. The Director of Communications' office is responsible for the development and dissemination of all College communications, particularly in the event of a campus emergency or crisis.

This includes internal communications with students, faculty and staff, as well as communications with media.

The HCCC website will be utilized as a primary medium for updating the College community and the public about the details of any emergency situation and actions that are being taken to address all related issues. All information to be posted on the College's website for emergencies is to be provided by the Director of Communications.



Protocol for News and Media Contact

This protocol has been established to set the parameters of interaction with media in the interest of ensuring as much positive and accurate press is disseminated.

In order to continue to maintain and build upon the relationship the College has with the media, the College's Communications Office is the designated portal for all news inquiries. This applies to all inquiries that are directed to the Communications Office or otherwise.

Any member of the faculty, staff or administration who is approached by a reporter or member of the news media should take the reporter's name, affiliation and phone number, and advise that the HCCC Communications Office will contact him/her.

Communications Office Responsibilities

The Communications Office is responsible for all messaging from the College. Additionally, the College employs the services of a consulting firm to assist with Communications matters.

Releasing Hudson County Community College Information

All written information released by the College to the news media will be done through the Communications Office, which will confirm facts and provide final approval for distribution and follow up, as needed.

The Director of Communications serves as the official and primary Hudson County Community College spokesperson, and conveys the official College position to members of the media corps. The College also utilizes a consulting firm that works with the President and the Director of Communications. All communications and statements released by the College are to be made through the College's Communications Office.



Incoming Requests from News Media (phone call/email)

If the news media requests information about HCCC, the following procedure will be followed:

- The Communications Office or a designee will contact all relevant persons to obtain information required for responding to the inquiry.
- Depending on the nature of the inquiry, the Director of Communications will respond.
- If appropriate, another College official may be identified by the Communications Office to respond directly to the inquiry. Responses will be formulated and provided by the Communications Office and its designees and the official identified to respond to the inquiry.

NOTE:

The Communications Office ...

- Will not provide news media with the direct phone line or cell number of employees unless the employees provide permission to do so;
- Will first advise the President and appropriate members of the administration before a response is issued if the query is considered sensitive, or that it may – in any way – adversely impact the College.

If the press or broadcast media request a face-to-face interview with a College employee:

- The College's Director of Communications is to be notified immediately;
- The Communications Office will act as the liaison with the reporter to identify background, theme and direction of the news story and other possible interviewees;
- The Communications Office will determine the reporters' deadlines and when the articles or pieces may appear;
- The Communications Office will determine (if broadcast interview)
 - Program concerned and whether or not it will be a live or recorded interview;
- The Communications Office will coordinate times and places with interviewees and reporters;
- The Communications Office will hold briefing sessions with interviewees, and will identify talking points, and offer suggestions for suitable responses if needed.

Requests for Interviews with the President

Press requests for an interview with the President will be handled in the following manner:

- All press inquiries for the President will be routed to the Director of Communications;
- The Director of Communications will determine whether or not the request requires the President's response;
- The Director of Communications will arrange a mutually agreeable time and place for the interview based upon the President's schedule and availability;
- The Director of Communications or a designee will substitute at interviews at the President's request; and
- Any article or broadcast video or transcript of the President will be obtained for College use.

Student Information/Interviews

By law, it is possible for students to censor some or all public information by requesting a nondisclosure. All requests for information from reporters and representatives of news organizations regarding students must be directed first to the Director of Communications.

In most cases, the following student information is public: Name, address, major/minor, academic awards and honors.

News media interviews with students will be permitted only if student release forms have been obtained and only when approved by the Communications Office in consultation with members of the College's administration. If these officials deem that the interview would be disruptive to the education or operating environment of the College, permission will be denied.

Working with External Press Offices

If a press release is required or desired in relation to collaborative work with HCCC external partners, the Director of Communications will ensure that there is regular communication with that external partner throughout the drafting stage of the release, and the HCCC Director of Communications will be responsible for providing the collaborative partner with final approval prior to the time the press release is disseminated to the media.

In the case of a news release, which has been drafted by a HCCC external partner but includes details on HCCC, the Director of Communications will ensure that all relevant HCCC contacts are sent the drafts for approval prior to release. If appropriate, the Director of Communications will assess the context of the release and decide whether there should be additional HCCC exposure.

Restricted and Unrestricted Areas for News Media

All campus outdoor sidewalks, green spaces, and parking lots are open to the media.

Campus events, such as lectures and forums, to which admission is free and open to the public, are open to the news media. Restrictions may be placed on cameras, lights, flashes and other equipment to minimize any disruption at these events. Advance notice or credentials may be required.

News media must first obtain permission from the Communications Office for access to:

- Faculty, staff, or student offices or laboratories. Permission to enter must be granted by the person or persons who work in that office or laboratory.
- Any class in session. Permission for media access must be granted first by the Director of Communications and the faculty member teaching the class.
- HCCC Library or other areas where quiet study takes place or where collections and equipment may be endangered by media activity or media equipment.
- Inside any venue where admission is being charged.
- Any College facility that is not open to the public, including utility operations, waste facilities, maintenance and repair facilities, and public safety facilities, any marked construction area, crime scene, or hazardous or unsafe location.

To Publicize a College Event through the News Media

The Communications Office is responsible for publicizing all College events through news media contacts. Those who wish to publicize an event should contact the Director of Communications as early prior to the event as possible so that it may be determined whether or not a press release is appropriate and required. If a press release is called for, the Communications Office will draft a release and send the draft back to the appropriate person(s) for comment and approval. The Communications Office will support requests for news media coverage based on the strategic goals of the College.

To discuss and share details of upcoming events or positive news stories about the College, please contact:
Director of Communications – Jennifer Christopher, 201-360-4061; Email: jchristopher@hccc.edu.