



## INTERACTION WITH MEDIA

<b>Authority:</b>	Chancellor
<b>History:</b>	Revised April 2018; Established May 7, 2006; replaces policy UR 1.70 Dissemination of University News
<b>Source of Authority:</b>	UNC Code 502
<b>Related Links:</b>	<a href="#">Office of University Relations</a> ; <a href="#">UNCW Policy 02.110 Public Records</a>
<b>Responsible Office:</b>	University Relations

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### I. Purpose

As a North Carolina public agency subject to public records and open meetings laws, the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) has a responsibility to provide accredited news media outlets with access to its campus, employees and public information, while respecting and protecting the privacy and personal information of students, faculty and staff. Interaction with external media outlets on behalf of the university is overseen and coordinated by the Office of University Relations (OUR). UNCW is committed to the principles of academic freedom and free speech, and nothing in this Policy is intended to restrict the freedom of faculty and staff members to engage in their scholarly activities or their personal involvement in community activities, express personal opinions on University or non-University actions and policies, or otherwise engage in free expression protected by the First Amendment.

### II. Scope

This policy regarding interaction with external media applies to all university departments and university employees, including faculty, staff, and student employees. This policy applies to employees when they are acting in their capacity as employees of the University.

### III. Policy

#### A. Spokespersons

1. Only the staff of OUR and other employees who have been designated by the chancellor as spokespersons of the university may make statements on behalf of the university. No faculty or staff member may make official or “off the record” statements

on behalf of the University without consultation with, and express authorization from, the chancellor or designee.

2. Any inquiries from media representatives received by university employees requesting information or comment from them as to the university's statement or position regarding a matter must be directed to the university's chief communications officer or his/her designee, who will, depending on the circumstance:
  - a. Follow up with the reporter to determine topic(s) being covered and information being sought;
  - b. Advise spokespersons designated by the chancellor or their designee about the matter prior to coordinating a response; and/or
  - c. Coordinate and provide a response on behalf of the university.
3. University employees and spokespersons must adhere to relevant UNCW policies as well as all federal, state and local laws and policies regarding the release of information about activities of the university, or its employees, students, volunteers, patients or research subjects, including those that apply to privacy and patient confidentiality such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the North Carolina Personnel Records Act.

#### B. Athletics information

Generally, information relating to student-athletes, coaches and staff in the Department of Athletics is the responsibility of the sports information office and the senior associate athletic director for communications. All publicity for UNCW's athletic teams is coordinated through that office, including interview requests for student-athletes, coaches and staff. The Department of Athletics must provide copies of all media releases to OUR. Information requests and/or disclosures relating to matters other than day-to-day athletics activities and competition must be coordinated with OUR.

#### C. University news releases

Although individual departments may draft their own media releases, all media releases, advisories, outreach, and event/campus invitations must be reviewed, approved in advance, and distributed by OUR. Exceptions are those releases prepared and disseminated by the Department of Athletics. Other colleges, schools, departments, offices or individuals may not independently release information to the news media.

#### D. Partnership news releases that mention UNCW

In the case where a university office is working in partnership with an external entity (such as a foundation or other source of grant funding company, community, government organization or another university) on an event, program or initiative for which the other entity is issuing a press release, the UNCW office must inform OUR with seven (7) business days' notice prior to its intended issuance date to provide an opportunity for OUR to review a draft of the release and related plan for distribution.

#### E. Public Records and Open Meetings

Nothing in this policy is meant to restrict in any way the university's timely compliance with North Carolina or federal laws regarding access to public records, open meetings, or directory information.

#### F. Personal Expression and Subject Matter Expertise

1. UNCW employees and students may choose to speak with representatives of the media to express their personal position or opinion, but they do not have to do so. If they do so, they must clarify and distinguish that it is a personal opinion when doing so and not offer it by virtue of their position at the university. As a courtesy, employees are strongly encouraged to inform OUR when they have been contacted by or spoken with a media representative, but are not under any obligation to do so. Employees can contact the Office of University Relations at [our@uncw.edu](mailto:our@uncw.edu).
2. Individual faculty, administrators and staff experts are encouraged to provide subject-specific commentary based on their scholarship in their academic concentration or their expertise in their professional field.

When offices and/or individuals are contacted for their scholarly or professional expertise, they are encouraged to notify OUR that a media representative has made contact. OUR facilitates accurate, ethical and timely news coverage of significant programs and the achievements of faculty, administrators, staff, students and alumni.

Any questions that fall outside of a faculty member's academic interest or expertise should involve consultation with the University spokesperson, who can be a resource in these instances. Questions also may be referred to the University spokesperson for direct handling. Inquiries seeking an official University comment or position must be directed to the University spokesperson.