

Western's Office of University Communications is here to tell the story of the university through the media.

You can help.

We serve as a professional news bureau, issuing news releases and proposing newsworthy story ideas to media throughout the state and beyond. We can never guarantee a story, but the relationships that we maintain with media allow us to get to know reporters and their interests. We have great success telling Western's story in the local, regional and national media markets.

We also help reporters locate expert sources on campus. We have a *Media Guide* of faculty experts listed by topic updated online (<http://www.wwu.edu/ucomm/mediaguide>), and many faculty serve as sources in a national database for reporters called ProfNet. We also run a Speakers' Bureau consisting of faculty willing to share their knowledge with the community (<http://www.wwu.edu/ucomm/speakers>).

The best way to send us news is to e-mail your ideas to news@wwu.edu, call us at X3350 or send a fax to X6817. You may also submit news by completing an online form at <http://news.wwu.edu>. If you're not sure if it's news, contact us and we'll let you know.

Please remember, news is timely. The more advance notice you give us, the better.

Lynne Masland, Ph.D., Director

February 2005

Telling Western's Story

SHARING NEWS WITH WWU'S OFFICE of UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

What is news?

The six criteria journalists use to judge newsworthiness are:

- ◆ Impact
- ◆ Timeliness
- ◆ Unusualness
- ◆ Prominence
- ◆ Proximity
- ◆ Conflict

We look for stories that have one or more of these news elements.

Each week, we provide story ideas to *The Bellingham Herald* and other media. These stories feature unusual student projects, noteworthy student achievements and awards and exceptional students who perhaps have overcome adversity or who have made a contribution to their campus or community.

We also look for stories about faculty and student research, programs and achievements or happenings on campus that tie in with current events. Achievements of WWU alumni are also newsworthy.

Depending on the news, we may propose a story idea to regional media, such as *The Seattle Times* or Seattle TV, or to national media, such as *The New York Times* or National Public Radio.

We also work with the editors of *FAST* and *The Western Front*, and we produce *Window on Western* (the alumni newsletter) and *Soundings* (a publication sent to families of current Western students).

Planning an event?

If you are planning an event, check the All University Events Calendar first at <http://calendar.wwu.edu> for what else might be happening on the date you have in mind.

Call the parking office to discuss parking availability for that date and event.

Order and know how to operate all necessary audio-visual equipment, including sound systems.

As soon as you have the event and date confirmed, please let us know by using the online "Submit-Your-Event" button to post your event on the calendar. You can always add more details later and advance notice helps you meet more media deadlines. Also, the sooner you post your event on the calendar, the less likely a conflict with another event will occur.

Complete event information should include the date, time, place, topic, parking and cost, if any, as well as a contact person's phone and e-mail address. Update this information as soon as details are firm.

If submitted well in advance to meet deadlines, we'll send your information to local arts and entertainment calendars, such as the *Herald's Take Five*, and if it's a major event, sometimes propose it as a story idea to Seattle and business publications.

FAST also takes events from this calendar, and we work with KUGS radio and *The Western Front*.

On campus, we post calendar listings in a glass-covered, lighted, outdoor bulletin board on the east wall of Wilson Library. Current Western news clips are posted outside Old Main 300.

<http://calendar.wwu.edu>



The Office of University Communications publicizes university news, honors and events.

RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA

Members of the news media often contact university faculty and administrators for expert comment on current issues and events. Our office is here to help you feel prepared for the times when reporters call to request your input or an interview.

Reporters work under intense deadline pressure; it's always important to return their calls promptly.

Please let us know when you receive a call directly from the press — if possible, before you respond. We can help you prepare for the interview. We can also follow up and obtain a copy of the article or tape the resulting coverage on radio or TV. We distribute this information to you and others at WWU.

We can help you find out

- Exactly what information they are looking for and how it will be used
- Who is the best person to address the subject
- Whether they need short comment or an extensive interview
- How much time you have to prepare while still accommodating their deadline needs

When answering questions

- Be prepared. Determine what information you want to get across to help you gain control of the interview.
- Get to the point quickly. Radio and television spots rarely run longer than 90 seconds and feature "sound bites" of 15 seconds or less. Newspaper reporters are under increasing pressure to write short, concise pieces. Summarize the essence of your response to a question in one or two sentences, focusing on the relevance of the information.

- Provide background information to help the reporter put things in context.
- Speak in terms the layperson can understand. Avoid technical jargon; if you must use a specialized term, define it. Use analogies to relate your subject to a situation that's widely understood.
- Speak in your normal, conversational voice. During a television interview, look at the reporter, not the camera.
- Stay within your area of expertise. Offer to call back with information you're not sure of or refer the question to someone else.
- Don't be tempted to talk "off the record."
- Never respond with "no comment." If you are asked a question you're not comfortable answering, explain why you can't answer the question.

When reporters call us looking for someone to comment on an issue, we refer them to individuals we know on campus who are comfortable responding to media calls. In these cases, we provide assistance, such as faxing background information and providing the person interviewed with a news clip or copy of the broadcast tape when possible.

When bad news breaks

Bad things happen. In case of an emergency that threatens health or safety, always first call 911 or campus police (X3555). **Then, call our office as soon as possible so that we can help respond to any media inquiries that may result.**

Finally

As a public institution, we have a special responsibility to be open to members of the press, who serve as representatives of the public. Western has enjoyed an open, positive relationship with the media. With your help, that will continue.

SOURCES OF WWU NEWS ONLINE

WWU Home Page <http://www.wvu.edu>
Office of University Communications <http://www.wvu.edu/ucomm>
All University Events Calendar <http://calendar.wvu.edu>
WWU News Releases <http://news.wvu.edu>
WWU Media Guide <http://www.wvu.edu/ucomm/mediaguide/>
WWU Speakers' Guide <http://www.wvu.edu/ucomm/speakers/>
WWU Alumni Association <http://www.wvu.edu/~alumni>

This publication is available in an alternate format. Call 650-3617.

Telling Western's Story

Sharing News
with WWU's
Office of
University
Communications

The Office of
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Visit Old Main 300
Mail MS-9011
Phone (360) 650-3350
Fax (360) 650-6817
E-mail news@wwu.edu

