STUDENT CONFERENCE MEDIA RELATIONS

The Wharton Communications Office is available to provide media support for student conferences. We provide advice on media promotion and approve all press releases prior to distribution. We do not provide any services related to advertising or sponsorship.

First Step – Planning Ahead
1. Obtain Dean’s Office approval BEFORE inviting speakers to your conference (https://web.wharton.upenn.edu/speaker/)
2. Inform all speakers that reporters may be in attendance at your conference; email a media release form to each speaker/panelist to get their approval (or nonapproval) of media presence. Find a template that you may personalize here:
3. Contact us approximately 6 weeks prior to your conference if you want to discuss how to invite reporters/manage their attendance. Prior to contacting us, review all information below.

Newsworthiness/Media Attendance
- The number of reporters attending Wharton student conferences averages 0-2, depending on newsworthiness. The most likely reporters to attend are based in Philadelphia and work at either a wire outlet such as the AP or a local paper such as the Philadelphia Business Journal. Reporters receive hundreds of solicitations/invitations for events every day. Think realistically about how likely it is that they will want to come hear your speakers at this event before sending invitations.
- You may wish to issue a press release to either drive attendance or make the media aware of your event. However, if your keynote speaker or prominent panelists have informed you (via their responses to your media release form or otherwise) that they do not welcome media coverage, you may not want to issue such a release. Never assume that your speakers won’t care if media are present.

Press Release
- Students are responsible for writing, distributing and paying for any press releases (the cost varies depending on the wire service that is used).
- The release must state that the event is held by “a student run organization of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.”
- Though the format varies, a release is usually a 1-page announcement of the event with the basic who, what, when, and why type of information.
- Press releases should be on the student group’s letterhead. Make sure that your contact information (phone and e-mail) are on the press release and that you will be available to take inquiries following the distribution of your release.
- Ask Wharton Communications for samples of previous student releases if you need additional guidance.

Your final press release must be approved by the Wharton Communications Office. If you send out an unapproved release you will not be able to use the “Wharton” name for your conference. You must give Wharton Communications a minimum of two (2) business days to review your press release.

Media Lists
- When appropriate, the Wharton Communications Office will provide a local media list with e-mails.
- If you plan to invite national/international media, you will need to discuss with the Wharton Communications Office how to create the list. Alternatively, you may choose to pay a fee for the creation of a media list through a website such as www.cision.com.
- Regardless of where your media list comes from, it is likely that several of the contacts will no longer be valid. There is a lot of turnover in the world of journalism and no one can 100% guarantee the accuracy of media lists so don’t be frustrated if you receive returned e-mails.
If a reporter responds that they do not cover the topic of your conference, do NOT continue to e-mail them. Simply cross them off your list and think about whether you want to pursue that outlet further. If so, then contact the Communications Office for advice as to how to proceed.

If you have any personal contacts who are reporters, contact them and ask them who covers the topic of your conference for their publication.

If your list goes beyond local reporters, send Wharton Communications your final media list for approval prior to distributing your press release. In some instances, we may be able to let you know if a particular reporter is an appropriate contact for your conference.

**Distribution**

- **Send press releases out approximately 2-3 weeks in advance of the conference.** Monthly magazines plan months in advance at which point students rarely have all of the finalized information about speakers, so you are better off waiting to send everyone the same release a few weeks prior to the event. Sending a release the day or two prior to a conference will almost never result in any coverage, as that is insufficient notice for busy reporters.

- Make sure that your contact information (phone and e-mail) are on the press release and that you will be available to take inquiries following sending out your release. Never distribute press releases the day before you leave for vacation.

- When e-mailing press releases, copy and paste the text of your release into the body of the e-mail. Do not use attachments or send HTML version of press release, as many reporters have slow internet connections or their publications prohibit them from opening e-mail attachments.

- Send the e-mail to individual reporters or use a mail merge program to make it appear that it is going to an individual. Never copy and paste multiple e-mail addresses into the same e-mail message. That is a sure sign to reporters that it is junk mail.

**Follow-up**

- Do not follow-up with phone calls to local reporters, as these reporters receive numerous press releases from the Wharton School every month and do not want to be called constantly. They will let you know if they want to attend your event.

- Calling reporters from a larger national list is up to your discretion, but it will not likely increase your chances of having the reporter attend, as they are not based in Philadelphia.

- Tell Communications Office if any reporters plan to attend your conference.

**Internal Publications**

- You may wish to invite journalists from internal publications to cover your event such as Knowledge@Wharton, Wharton Journal, Daily Pennsylvanian, and Penn Current. Note that internal as well as external media do NOT normally allow review of speaker comments prior to publication. If any your speakers wish to speak “off the record” you should either not invite the press or inform journalists at the time of your outreach of the imposed limitation(s). Ask the Communications Office for outlet contact info if needed.

- Knowledge@Wharton appreciates notification of your event as early as possible. A simple e-mail to the editor several weeks in advance followed up with the press release (with more detail) is sufficient. E-mail: rkipp@wharton.upenn.edu

For further information, contact:

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