



## Administrative Procedure

Name/Subject	General Procedures for Responding to the Media
Procedure Number	<b>902.01</b>
Date Adopted	11/26/2024
Date(s) Reviewed/ Revised	

### Overview

The Grays Harbor College President and/or the Public Information Officer (PIO) serve as the official college spokespeople and convey the official college position on issues of general college-wide impact or significance or situations that are of a particularly controversial or sensitive nature. Inquiries from the media about the College position on such issues should be referred to the PIO at [publicrelations@ghc.edu](mailto:publicrelations@ghc.edu).

Members of the faculty and staff are free to respond to requests from the media regarding topics related to their teaching or professional expertise. In such cases, the College requests that the PIO be notified as soon as possible to inform them of the contact. Such notification can be particularly important if follow-up inquiries are made with other college personnel to ensure a coordinated, consistent college response.

Faculty, staff, and students also have a right **not** to speak with the media. Any situations where individuals feel a reporter has abused their rights should be reported to the PIO.

When responding to the media, employees can be seen as representing and speaking for Grays Harbor College. Personal opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such.

Employees will not respond to inquiries from the media concerning matters such as personnel issues, crisis management, emergencies, formal college policies, and fiscal operations on behalf of the College. Instead, such inquiries should be directed to the PIO and/or President who will respond accordingly.

### News & Press Releases

The PIO or a designee will distribute all college news releases, except those discussed below, and review and approve news releases prepared by other college employees. The Director of College Relations will retain and file copies of all news releases distributed by Grays Harbor College and ensure all news releases are posted on the college website.

The **Athletic Director** is responsible for the Athletic Department's news releases regarding athletic events and other department news. The **Bishop Center Manager** is responsible for all Bishop Center news releases regarding Bishop Center Events. The PIO or a designee is responsible for news releases involving personnel and fiscal matters related to these entities.

## Ideas and Suggestions

Since positive media solicitation is an integral element of the college's communications plan, any ideas for articles or pieces that would positively portray the college, its work or its community can be shared via the Media Submission Form or emailed to [publicrelations@ghc.edu](mailto:publicrelations@ghc.edu). In a similar manner, negative occurrences that are likely to rise to the level of a news story should also be emailed to [publicrelations@ghc.edu](mailto:publicrelations@ghc.edu).

## Media Communication Guidelines

The following are general guidelines for communicating with the media:

Obtain the name of the person calling, the media organization and—if available—the anticipated time of release of information in print or broadcast. This information should be included when the PIO is notified.

- The best approach with the media is to be prompt, helpful, and honest. All contacts from the media should be returned as soon as possible, in deference to reporters' deadlines. At the most, a call should be returned within a half-day. If that is not possible, contact the PIO to handle the call.
- Make sure you understand each question from the media before answering. If you cannot answer the question, or are uncomfortable providing a response, take the reporter's number and advise him/her that someone who can provide the information will contact him/her as soon as possible. Then follow-up by emailing [publicrelations@ghc.edu](mailto:publicrelations@ghc.edu).
- Do not offer speculation or gossip.
- Do not answer a reporter's question with "no comment." Instead, you could say "I don't have any information on that" or "let me refer you to our PIO".
- Do not be condescending or underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but make sure the reporter understands your responses.
- Provide your phone number and/or email address for follow-up questions.
- Remember that in responding to the media, employees can be seen as representing and speaking for Grays Harbor College. Personal opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such.
- Issues that should not be discussed with reporters are:
  - legal issues,
  - personnel issues,
  - confidential information or breaking news that the College has yet to share with the public,
  - questions that involve college integrity, such as ethics or issues that may result in harm to others, or
  - a campus crisis or emergency.
- Refer all such inquiries to the PIO.

Any media inquiries that involve information about specific students should be directed to the office of the Vice President of Student Services. Such inquiries will be handled in strict compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This federal law protects the confidentiality of a student's education record. Information that may be given includes information found in a directory: the student's full name, local address and phone number, dates of attendance and degrees, honors and certificates received.

Any media inquiries regarding College faculty or staff should be referred to the Human Resources Department.

## **Public Records Requests**

This procedure does not pertain to Public Records requests as defined in WAC 132B-276 – Public Record Policy.