



## RUTGERS POLICY

**Section:** 80.1.6

**Section Title:** University Communications and Marketing

**Policy Name:** Communication and Relations with the News Media

**Formerly Book:** N/A

**Approval Authority:** President

**Responsible Executive:** Vice President for University Communications and Marketing

**Responsible Office:** Office of Media Relations

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**Errors or changes?** Office of the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing: 848-932-1769 or [vpforur@rutgers.edu](mailto:vpforur@rutgers.edu)

### 1. **Policy Statement**

As a public institution, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has a fundamental responsibility to inform the public about the University's mission, initiatives and accomplishments. Rutgers is committed to openness and accuracy as it disseminates information about its programs and activities to the public through the news media.

The president has delegated responsibility for the dissemination of all official University news to the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing – who, in turn, has delegated that day-to-day responsibility to the Office of Media Relations (OMR) under the supervision of the senior director.

Nothing in this policy is intended to affect the responsibilities of faculty members for their scholarly activities and personal involvement in community activities, nor is it intended to affect individual employees' rights to express personal views about the University or non-University issues as long as they make it clear that they do so as individuals and do not represent the official position of the University either directly or indirectly.

### 2. **Reason for Policy**

This policy has three primary objectives:

- A. to assure consistency and coordination in communications with the news media from all units at the University;
- B. to help maintain the high level of credibility the University enjoys in its dealings with the media; and
- C. to preserve and advance the mission of the University.

### 3. **Who Should Read This Policy**

All members of the Rutgers community, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and members of governing boards. Corporate and educational partners, donors, representatives of granting agencies, vendors and consultants hired by the University or its units.

#### 4. **Related Documents**

- a. University Policies available on the University Policy Library website:  
[http://policies.rutgers.edu/contents\\_index.shtml](http://policies.rutgers.edu/contents_index.shtml)
  - 80.1.1 Permission for Outside Vendors to Film, Videotape, and Photograph on Campus
  - 80.1.2 Trademark Licensing Policy
  - 80.1.3 Purchase of External Advertising
  - 80.1.4 Endorsements, Sponsorships, and Advertising in and on University Assets and Communication Materials
  - 80.1.5 University Visual Identity
  - 50.3.9 Safeguarding Personal Information; Identity Theft Compliance Policy
  - 20.1.9 Facilities Use and Scheduling
  - 100.1.1 Uses and Disclosures of Health Information With and Without an Authorization
  - 100.1.9 Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information
- b. Office of Media Relations Resources:
  - Office of Media Relations website: <http://ucm.rutgers.edu/about/media-relations>
  - Rutgers Faculty Experts website:  
<http://ur.rutgers.edu/experts/index.php?a=search&f=experts&s=topic>
- c. Other University Resources:
  - Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Research Policies:  
<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/policies.php>
  - Open Public Records Act (OPRA) Requests <http://records.rutgers.edu/>
  - Rutgers Cleary Act Information: <http://publicsafety.rutgers.edu/rupd/aboutsafe.shtml>
  - Rutgers Copyright Information: <http://ruweb.rutgers.edu/copyright.shtml>
  - Rutgers Editorial Style Guide: <http://ur.rutgers.edu/styleguide/> should be consulted for style guidance as well as exceptions for materials prepared for the news media
  - Rutgers Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Information:  
<http://compliance.rutgers.edu/ferpa>
  - Speaking on Behalf of Rutgers website: <http://speakup.rutgers.edu/>

#### 5. **Contacts**

Rutgers Office of Media Relations: 848-932-0559

#### 6. **The Policy**

##### **80.1.6 COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONS WITH THE NEWS MEDIA**

###### **I. Introduction**

All Rutgers units and employees are expected to assist the University administration in its efforts to provide information to the public through the news media in a timely, accurate and thorough manner. For the purposes of this policy, news media shall refer to representatives of media entities, including but not limited to newspapers, magazines, newsletters, online publications, social media, television and radio.

Media coverage is essential to the public's understanding of the mission of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and the value the institution delivers to the state and nation as a comprehensive public research University, which includes medical and health sciences education. Rutgers strives to be open and responsive to the media.

This policy details how information about the University is announced to the public, the role of the Office of Media Relations, the role of communications staff on all Rutgers campuses and each employee's responsibility in the release of official information about the University.

Guidelines and departmental policies developed by individual units of the University must comply with this policy. All units of the University are expected to follow this policy.

## II. **Accuracy and Openness**

The University is an honest provider of information to the public. Failure to provide accurate information to the public and the news media can damage the credibility of the University and diminish the effectiveness of its relationships with stakeholders, the public and with the news media.

University employees must adhere to relevant Rutgers policies as well as all federal, state and county and local laws and policies, including those that apply to privacy and patient confidentiality such as HIPAA and FERPA.

## III. **General Authority and Coordination**

The President has delegated responsibility for the dissemination of all official University news to the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing – who, in turn, has delegated that day-to-day responsibility to the Office of Media Relations (OMR) under the direction of the Senior Director.

The Office of Media Relations has the central responsibility for the coordination and dissemination of news and information from throughout the University. OMR is also the office responsible for the central University administration's official interaction with representatives of the news media. OMR should be consulted regarding all significant issues that have the potential to reflect upon the University. OMR also has responsibility for the New Brunswick Campus and works directly with its leadership on matters of communications and relations with the news media.

OMR works closely internally with:

- i. The Office of Communications-Camden the Office of Communications-Newark and the Office of Communications – Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS), which serve as primary spokespersons and crisis communicators for their chancellors and are primarily responsible for writing and producing external communications for the news media about activities and programs within those individual campuses and units.
- ii. Rutgers Athletic Communications on matters concerning the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics in New Brunswick
- iii. Rutgers Public Safety departments and units on matters involving campus crime, public safety and crisis communication.
- iv. Other individual schools, centers, institutes and units of the University, which may have their own communications staff. These staff should consult with OMR, and, if appropriate, the chancellor communications office in Camden, Newark or, on external communications for the news media involving their individual unit.

All employees and units of the University are responsible for coordinating with OMR and, if appropriate, the Chancellor Communications Office in Camden, Newark or RBHS, on external communications for the news media involving their individual unit, including when managing an incident or issue which could have Universitywide implications. Rutgers Public Safety departments and units and other University units may communicate with the media on many routine and/or day-to-day operational matters such as information on police incident sheets, medical transport information and bus schedules.

## IV. **Timeliness**

Media representatives typically work on defined, and often short, deadlines. All units and individuals within the University community are expected to respond in a timely manner and with accurate and thorough information to inquiries from OMR. The Senior Director of OMR determines the propriety of information to be released after consulting with the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing and other appropriate members of the University community.

V. **Distribution of Official University Information and Documents to the News Media**

All media inquiries requesting official University information must be directed to OMR or to the Chancellor Communications Offices in Camden, Newark, or RBHS as appropriate. These offices will coordinate the University response with appropriate members of the University community. To avoid release of contradictory or out-of-date information, individual offices should not field media calls independently.

OMR is responsible for the distribution of all official external communications to the news media from the University's central administration. In these matters, the Senior Director is responsible for final editing and review of official University communications prepared for release to the media.

Official data about the University from the central administration including, but not limited to, official reports and documents, campus building renderings and other construction schematics should be distributed to the news media only by or through the Office of Media Relations (OMR), except with the approval of OMR or the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing.

This does not affect the responsibilities of faculty members for their scholarly activities and personal involvement in community activities, nor is it intended to affect individual employees' rights to express personal views about the University or non-University issues as long as they make it clear that they do so as individuals and do not represent the official position of the University either directly or indirectly.

VI. **University Spokespersons**

It is important to make the distinction between representing the University's official position, and representing an individual's expertise when speaking with representatives of the media. OMR representatives are available at all times to consult with administrators, faculty and staff about the most effective ways to work with the media. Administrators, faculty and staff may choose whether or not to respond to a reporter on any topic. In all situations individuals should make clear to a reporter when they are volunteering personal opinions and when they are speaking on behalf of units over which they have administrative authority.

A. **Designated University Spokesperson for Representing the University's Official Position**

1. Administrators, faculty and staff are advised not to respond to inquiries that pertain to establishing the University's official position on any matter without first consulting with OMR.
2. Comments representing the University's official position should be given only by a designated University spokesperson. The Senior Director of OMR or the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing will be the University's official spokesperson or will work with members of the University community to establish an appropriate spokesperson. This includes coordination with the Chancellors regarding matters involving Camden, Newark, New Brunswick and RBHS; coordination with Rutgers Public Safety departments and units regarding matters involving campus crime, public safety and crisis communication; and coordination with the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics regarding matters involving athletics on the New Brunswick campus.

B. **Requests for Faculty or Administrator Experts**

1. Administrators, faculty and staff are encouraged to work with OMR and/or their respective Chancellor Communications Office at Camden, Newark and RBHS to respond to media inquiries on topics about which they have expertise or about matters over which they have administrative authority. The knowledge and insight of University representatives can prove especially valuable to the news media. The visibility of Rutgers faculty experts in regional and national news enhances the image and reputation of the University.

2. Officials of the University, faculty and staff should contact OMR or their Chancellor Communications Office in Camden, Newark and RBHS in advance of speaking with the media. In rare instances when coordination is not possible prior to the contact, they should notify OMR and/or the appropriate Communications Office after their contact. This is not intended to inhibit the ability of faculty members to speak with representatives of the media about their scholarly activities, service, involvement in community activities, or personal views.

C. Requests for Patient Interviews or Access

1. Occasionally, media will request an opportunity to interview patients at Rutgers' clinical facilities or to discuss their medical condition with their healthcare providers. Before granting the media access in these circumstances, OMR will obtain from the patients a signed HIPAA-compliant consent form stipulating that the patient consents to his/her identity and health information being used in the media. Similarly, before patient identities and health information can be used in a press release, the patient must sign a consent form.

VII. **News Releases**

OMR is responsible for centrally compiling all University news releases and other communications to external media outlets. Any news release prepared by a unit or individual outside of OMR should be shared with OMR before it is released to the external media for purposes of archiving and coordination of information. Electronic versions should be submitted 24 hours prior to release by emailing to: external@ur.rutgers.edu. This central coordination ensures that University news is accurate and is maintained by a single Rutgers office.

Schools and units also will provide news releases in advance to the appropriate Chancellor's Office of Communications to ensure that they are aware of the item being promoted and to provide an opportunity for input.

VIII. **News Conferences**

Special circumstances, high-visibility initiatives or high-profile speakers may merit a news conference on campus. News conferences should be scheduled and announced only through OMR and/or the appropriate Chancellor Communications Office in Camden, Newark or RBHS. The Office of Athletic Communications may schedule news conferences to communicate information about intercollegiate sports programs on the New Brunswick campus. Each of these offices should notify OMR in advance of scheduling news conferences. This enables the University to minimize conflicts with other scheduled events.

IX. **Media Access to Campuses and Campus Facilities**

Rutgers is a public University and welcomes media to its campuses subject to the following guidelines. Deviations to these guidelines may be required in the interest of public safety and security which is always the University's highest priority.

- A. **Outdoor access** – In general, media representatives do not need permission to be on public campus grounds or adjacent public streets. Nor do they require permission to take outdoor photographs of campus or building exteriors. However, media are asked to notify OMR when they are on the New Brunswick Campus, the Office of Communications–Camden when on the Camden Campus, and the Office of Communications–Newark when on the Newark Campus and the Office of Communications RBHS when on the RBHS grounds.

- B. **Access to non-residential facilities** – In general, representatives of the news media should have access to public areas inside non-residential facilities – such as foyers, hallways, lobbies and receiving areas. However, media representatives must receive permission from OMR or the appropriate campus Communications Offices to enter Rutgers classrooms, laboratories, clinical facilities, faculty and staff offices, libraries, sports facilities, training areas and meeting rooms. OMR will work with the appropriate instructor, researcher, department or administrative unit to handle such requests. The Division of Intercollegiate Athletics must approve access to their athletic facilities on the New Brunswick campus.
- C. **Access to residential facilities** – Media representatives must obtain permission from OMR or the appropriate Chancellor Communications Offices to enter all areas of residential buildings.
- D. **Access to clinical facilities**  
A communications staff member from OMR or appropriate Chancellor Communications Office in Camden, Newark or RBHS must accompany all media representatives at all times during their visits to Rutgers clinical facilities.

X. **Media Relations Policy on Specific Issues**

A. **Campus Closures and/or Class Cancellations Due to Inclement Weather**

Announcements to the news media regarding campus closures and/or class cancellations due to inclement weather will be made on a Chancellor basis and with the approval of the appropriate University Officers. OMR will handle announcements that are Universitywide or for the New Brunswick Campus. The Office of Communications-Camden, the Office of Communications-Newark and the Office of Communications-RBHS will handle announcements to the news media about their individual campuses.

B. **Campus Visits by Legislators and Other Dignitaries**

Individuals who have invited prominent guests to the Rutgers campuses should notify OMR and/or the appropriate communications office in Camden, Newark or RBHS well in advance of their visits to discuss whether arrangements should be made for media representatives. The Department of Public Affairs and Rutgers Public Safety should also be notified.

C. **Corporate and Licensing Partnerships**

Corporate, educational and licensing partners of Rutgers University must consult with OMR to determine mutually agreeable terms of an announcement before considering any promotion of their association with the University. All parties must agree before generating any media releases regarding the partnership.

D. **Events**

Sponsors of University events are encouraged to contact OMR and/or the appropriate Chancellor Communications Office in Camden, Newark or RBHS to discuss news coverage. Plans for managing the media should be developed well in advance of the event. There are a significant number of events at Rutgers and not all events can be promoted through the media. The Senior Director of OMR, as well as his/her counterparts in the Camden, Newark and RBHS Communications Offices, will assign priority to major events that are open to news coverage.

E. **Gifts and Donations**

Public announcement of a gift must be approved in advance by the President of the Rutgers University Foundation or a designee and by the donor(s). No announcement will be made without the consent of the aforementioned. Any news release regarding the awarding of money to students, such as fellowships or scholarships must be cleared by OMR through the Rutgers University Foundation before it can be distributed to external media.

**F. Grants**

The University may announce major research grants only when both the granting organization and the grant recipient approve the public announcement of the grant. There is a significant amount of research activity at Rutgers and not all grants can be promoted through the media. The Senior Director of OMR, as well as his/her counterparts in the Camden, Newark and RBHS Communications Offices, will assign priority to a grant that is likely to attract media interest because of its size, nature or circumstances; or because the grant funds innovative research programs or facilities that may in themselves be newsworthy.

**G. Open Public Records Requests (OPRA)**

Media representatives may also request documents under the Open Public Records Act. In these instances, the policies and practices for the release of materials are governed by New Jersey law. All formal open records requests are handled by the University Custodian of Records. Consult the following website for open records procedures: <http://records.rutgers.edu/>.

**H. Pending or Current Litigation, Legal Issues and Investigations**

OMR must be consulted regarding the release of any information to news media concerning a legal issue, a potential legal issue or an investigation. OMR will consult with the Office of the Senior Vice President and General Counsel and, if appropriate, the Department of Risk Management and Insurance. Generally, the University does not comment publicly on pending litigation and on-going investigations.

**I. Personnel Matters**

Rutgers is a public University. Therefore, certain employee information, including name, title and compensation, are subject to release to the media. OMR will work with the Office of the Senior Vice President and General Counsel and University Human Resources to ensure that information is accurate and appropriate for release. The University does not comment publicly on confidential personnel matters.

OMR will oversee announcements to the news media regarding the appointments of members of the President's Cabinet and the Deans of schools and colleges.

**J. Matters Affecting Public Safety**

Rutgers University reports to the public significant campus crimes that threaten or affect its students and University community. The University also reports arrests, including arrests of students, for serious criminal offenses that may affect the University. These may include arrests made by the Rutgers University Police Department or by other law enforcement agencies.

Rutgers Public Safety departments and units will collaborate with OMR and/or the appropriate Chancellor Communications Office in Camden, Newark or RBHS to coordinate the release of information to the news media when a significant campus crime, serious arrest, or matter of public safety occurs. These units will also coordinate all information to be released, subject to applicable county, state and federal laws and policies, during an emergency, major accident or natural disaster affecting all or parts of the campuses. Rutgers Public Safety departments and units in consultation with relevant units within the University must authorize the release of any information regarding an active police investigation within its jurisdiction.

**K. Student Records**

Requests from media organizations for information about Rutgers students should be directed to OMR. OMR will work with the Office of the Registrar, Rutgers Student Affairs and Rutgers Public Safety departments and units to ensure that information released about any student complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well as other applicable laws and

policies. Typically, the University will share public directory information with the media and will confirm an individual's status as a Rutgers student.

**L. Universitywide Issues, Crises, and Incidents**

In these cases, as well as for major controversies involving the University, its faculty, staff or students, the fielding of media calls and the proactive release of information to the public always should be managed by OMR and/or the Office of the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing in collaboration with appropriate University units.

**M. Vendor Contracts**

Outside vendors under contract with the University for goods, services or sponsorships including, but not limited to trademark licensing, may not share information with news media regarding the contract or goods supplied without the knowledge and consent of the University. Vendors must contact OMR directly before considering any promotion of their association with the University.

**N. Patient Information**

Inquiries from the media regarding patient information will be referred to the Office of Media Relations which will consult with the appropriate Rutgers authorities. Rutgers will release only authorized information in conformance with state and federal regulations and applicable best practices.