

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM  
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM**

**SECTION: General Administration**

**NUMBER: 01.H.02**

**AREA: University Marketing, Communication, and Media Relations**

**SUBJECT: Media Relations**

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**1. PURPOSE**

The University of Houston System (UHS) seeks to ensure that official information is accurately and effectively communicated to the public through news media representatives in a clear, concise and consistent manner.

In addition to the requirements below, for specific procedures and information regarding communication with news media see the News Media Guidelines on each university's Marketing and Communications website, as found in Section 6 below. All university employees are responsible for following current guidelines.

**2. DEPARTMENTAL FUNCTIONS AND DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 UH Division of Marketing and Communications serves all universities within UHS: University of Houston, University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Houston-Downtown and University of Houston-Victoria – as well as the UHS Board of Regents, and provides support to media relations functions in each UHS university.
- 2.2 Media Relations departments at each university cultivate relationships with reporters and editors to improve acceptance of story ideas; facilitate news media's ability to access information; and communicate effectively about the achievements of the university, its faculty, staff and students, externally and internally.
- 2.3 Communication includes, but is not limited to, press releases, statements, event advisories and images. This document distinguishes between communications that represent the interests and views of UHS and its universities, as opposed to communications that represent individual opinion and other speech protected in the UHS Freedom of Expression Policy.
- 2.4 Official information includes policies, procedures, positions and actions of UHS and each of its universities.

### 3. POLICY

- 3.1 Media Inquiries and Outreach: In order to ensure effective communication, all media inquiries or outreach about university events, policies, procedures, official positions, and actions should be channeled through the office that handles Media Relations at the relevant UHS university. (See Section 6 below.) News Media Guidelines to be followed for each university and contact information can be found on the websites listed in Section 6 below.

In particular situations, Media Relations has the discretion to grant authority to the marketing and communications team within a college as the initial point of contact or for outreach. There must be a specific designation of authority for this provision to take effect, and the designation may be modified or withdrawn.

- 3.2 Filming Guidelines: Filming guidelines and information for news-related filming, as well as commercial filming, can be found on the websites relevant to each UHS university as listed in Section 6 below.

3.3 Guidelines for Employees

- a. Communications with news media on behalf of UHS or its universities or in a manner that officially represents or appears to represent UHS and/or its interests shall be conducted by administrators and staff designated through the office that handles Media Relations at each UHS university. For the purpose of this policy, news media refers to any representatives of newspapers, blogs, magazines, newsletters, television, radio, podcasts or any other platforms that post or disseminate information for consumption by secondary audiences.
- b. All inquiries by news media representatives to individuals in their capacities as university employees shall be channeled through the relevant communications office at each UHS university. It is the responsibility of each Media Relations team to manage these interactions with news media including initiating contact with news media and responding to news media requests. However, a faculty member who is directly contacted by a journalist to comment as an expert on topics relating to their area of study or expertise, may, but is not required to, coordinate through Media Relations.
- c. Requests for information from news media under the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA) must be sent to [publicinfo@uh.edu](mailto:publicinfo@uh.edu). Only the Public Information Officer or designee may respond to inquiries under TPIA.
- d. An employee or department that seeks to publicize a program, event or achievement through news media shall contact the Office of University Media Relations on their campus. University Media Relations has access to numerous news media contacts and will work with employees to coordinate publicity or visibility for programs, events or newsworthy issues.

### 3.4 Guidelines for News Media

- a. News media are permitted to access UHS campuses to the same extent as other members of the public. News media must be accompanied by a University Media Relations staff member or University employee designated by the Office of Media Relations in the following situations:
  - 1) To gain access to residence halls.
  - 2) To gain access to private office suites.
  - 3) To gain access to classrooms and conference rooms while being utilized.
  - 4) Other locations on campus where a general expectation of privacy exists.
- b. News media seeking to access and cover University athletic events must be credentialed through the Department of Athletics at the relevant university.
- c. News media seeking to access and cover third-party events on campus shall be credentialed/granted access by the third-party event host.
- d. News media may contact the Office of Media Relations for assistance in coordinating interviews with experienced faculty experts to provide context and clarity to news stories.

### 3.5 General Information

UHS and its universities comply with all applicable federal and state laws, including those regarding the retention and release of personal and/or educational records of all current and former employees and students, and with all privacy and security laws including the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

## 4. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Party: Vice Chancellor for University Marketing and Communications

Review: Review every five years

## 5. APPROVAL

Approved: Lisa Holdeman, Vice Chancellor for University Marketing and Communications

Renu Khator, Chancellor

Date: 7/2/2020

6. REFERENCES AND RELATED STATUTES, POLICIES, OR REQUIREMENTS

**System and University media/marketing/communications websites:**

**UH System:**

[UH Division of Marketing and Communications website](#) (including UH at Katy and UH at Sugar Land)

[UHS Social Media Policy – System Administrative Memorandum \(SAM\) 01.H.01](#)

**UH:**

[UH Office of Media Relations website](#) (including UH at Katy and UH at Sugar Land)

[Filming at UH Guidelines](#)

[UH Department of Athletics Communications website](#)

**UH-Clear Lake:**

[UH-Clear Lake Office of Marketing and Communications website](#)

**UH-Downtown:**

[UH-Downtown Office of University Relations website](#)

**UH-Victoria:**

[UH-Victoria Media Relations Policy website](#)

[UH-Victoria Communications and Marketing Policy website](#)

**Legal References:**

[Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)