

## **MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY**

### **I. Purpose**

Effective communications are central to the success of any enterprise, and St. Thomas University is no exception. Whether it is through media relations, brochures, web pages, or other means, the consistent application of strategies to promote and protect the University's brand is of vitally important.

If a University employee is interested in generating media coverage about a program, event, or achievement, please contact the Office of Communications. This University office has access to various media contacts, locally and nationally, to coordinate publicity or visibility for programs, events, or newsworthy issues.

The decentralized University structure creates varying communications needs, often leading to conflicting and inconsistent messages about the University. Successful marketing strategies and communications efforts cannot ensue from isolated or ad hoc tactics. For the University to properly communicate with a consistent voice, it is essential that the communication activities of STU be coordinated through one central office.

### **II. Applicability**

This policy applies to all St. Thomas University faculty, staff, and trustees interacting with news media representatives.

### **III. Key Terms**

**A. News Media** refers to newspapers, magazines, newsletters, online publications, and broadcast outlets such as radio, television, and podcasts.

**B. Social Media** refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, etc.

### **IV. Proactive Media Relations**

The University Calendar is the official repository of all events held on campus. It is important that information is entered in the University Calendar because it:

- It allows us to ensure we are not scheduling conflicting events;
- It provides the Office of Communications with a synopsis of events occurring on campus that may be promoted to news media or on social media;
- It is the means by which we determine which programs we can promote to the wider community, including what events we will include in our LED sign at our entrance; and
- It provides one central source where all events happening on campus can be seen by students, faculty, staff and other interested persons.

The Office of Communications must be notified about noteworthy or negative occurrences involving the University, its employees, students, alumni, parents or donors that are likely to rise to the level of a news story.

## **V. Reactive Media Relations**

University employees WILL NOT respond to inquiries from the media or reach out to the media concerning matters such as personnel issues, crisis management, emergencies, University policies and fiscal operations. Instead, such inquiries should immediately be directed to the Director of Communications, who will respond accordingly.

University employees should politely state the following: *"I am not authorized to speak on behalf of the University, but I am happy to direct you to our Director of Communications at (305) 474-6044 or [mlebish@stu.edu](mailto:mlebish@stu.edu)."*

Immediately upon receiving an inquiry from the media, University employees should report the following information to the Director of Communications:

- Reporter's name
- News media represented by the reporter (station name, newspaper name, etc.)
- Questions they asked
- What was said to the reporter

If an event attracts news media interest, press releases and statements to the news media will be routed through, approved, and disseminated by the Office of Communications.

Under no circumstances should information pertaining to a case that is in litigation be discussed publicly without the prior approval of the Vice President of Administration/Chief Financial Officer or the University Attorney.

### **A. Crisis Communication**

In the event of an emergency, the University will issue a STU Alert through its mass notification system. Following the initial communication, the Director of Communications will work with the University's Crisis Management Team to gather information and coordinate distribution to University faculty, staff, students, and the local community. The Director of Communications will:

- Prepare and issue official statements regarding University operations to the media;
- Compose and distribute email notifications to the University community; and,
- Work with the University Marketing team to provide updates to STU's website, and social media platforms.

In the event of a crisis situation, it is essential that accurate information is disseminated and all inquiries are routed to Office of Communications and/or the Office of the President in collaboration with appropriate units. All official statements, announcements or interviews relating to the emergency will be coordinated through the Office of Communications.

## **B. Media Access the Campus**

St. Thomas University is a closed campus. We reserve the right to not provide news media access to our campus. If the new media requests access, inquires must be submitted to the Office of Communications.

Still or video images of campus features may not be used for commercial or promotional purposes without prior approval from the University's Office of Philanthropy & Communications.

While on University property or upon entering residence halls and other University facilities, news media representatives must be accompanied by an employee of the Office of Communications or a University employee designated by the Office of Communications.

News or press conferences are scheduled and announced only through the Office of Communications.

## **C. Privacy Statement**

St. Thomas University complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding the retention and release of personal and/or educational records of all current employees and students.

It is the responsibility of each college dean/department head to implement procedures to comply with this policy. Failure to comply with this policy will be considered actionable behavior by senior management and could result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension or termination.

## **VI. Related Policies**

- Facility Usage and Event Policy, 6-2.2
- Employee Handbook
- Faculty Handbook
- Social Media Policy, 9-2.0

## **VII. Sunset Review**

This policy shall be reviewed in two years from its effective date to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness. This policy may be reviewed before that time as necessary to reflect substantial organizational, physical, or academic change(s) at STU or any change required by law.

*Responsible Authority: Office of Philanthropy & Communications*