



You Have a Story Idea: Now What?

Questions to get started with the news gathering and promotion process

Answers to these questions will help University Communications & Marketing determine whether your idea can be used for university news (Web, *American Magazine*) and/or external news media (newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, online news).

1) The Basic Facts

- a. What is the gist of the story (details & context) and who (people/orgs) is involved?
- b. Who do you hope to reach with this story (audience/s), and what kind of actionable outcome/s do you anticipate?

2) Tell us what you are doing to promote this story to your target audience.

3) How does it reinforce the Brand Messaging?

Active Citizenship, Learning From Leaders, Connecting to Pinnacle Institutions (NSF, NIH, Smithsonian, etc), Tackling the World's Most Pressing Issues (big themes such as Human Rights, Healthcare, The Environment, International Security, The Economy, Latin America, Social Change).

4) How does it advance the Strategic Plan?

Include specifics about how and why this will resonate with target audiences.

5) Help us determine the newsworthiness of your idea.

- a. Conflict/Controversy – What are the viewpoints being expressed?
 - *Ex: A science communication professor says Al Gore and scientists need to do more to promote public understanding of climate change.*
- b. Impact – How does this affect the general public?
 - *Ex: New parents – want your babies to be smarter? A public policy professor's study says breast feed them.*
- c. Prominence – What is noteworthy about the story and those involved?
 - *Ex: Vice President Biden's chief economist Jared Bernstein comes to campus to talk to economics students about the stimulus package and middle class Americans.*
- d. Human interest/emotion – has someone overcome a major challenge?
 - *Ex: A student raises funds to build a new park to honor the memory of her father, who lost a long battle with cancer.*
- e. Timeliness – How is the story relevant today?
 - *Ex: A business professor's students develop communication plans to help Metro improve its image following the deadly accident of June 2009. The students present their plans to Metro officials.*
- f. Uniqueness – What is unusual about this? Is this the first, last, biggest?
 - *Ex: A psychology professor determines the curve of a curve ball is an optical illusion.*
- g. Backstory – Name an extraordinary factoid about this story.
 - *Ex: On the heels of a research journey to the Middle East to discover how Muslims view Americans, a professor – himself a Muslim – leads a group of college students across the U.S. to find out how Americans view Muslims.*