

Policy Name: **FLCC Spokesperson, Media & Public Statements**

Policy Number: **K-1**

Responsible for Policy: Advancement

Approval Date: March 2011

Most recent review: Fall 2012

Date of most recent revision (*if applicable*): N/A

Policy Statement

Communications to internal and external stakeholders of Finger Lakes Community College will be based on credible, factual information and will reflect the values of the institution. Primary FLCC spokesperson responsibility shall be accorded to the College President or his/her designees. Given circumstances related to an emergency or emerging incident which mandates that the College institute its FLCC Emergency Response Preparedness Plan, the designated spokesperson will be determined in consultation with the appropriate police and/or County officials.

Employees, faculty, staff, and other representatives of Finger Lakes Community College may not issue public statements on behalf of the College unless they have the authority to do so pursuant to this policy.

Written or public statements of personal opinion which are different than the College's official position on an issue should include a clear statement that the expressed views are personal and do not reflect the College's official position. College letterhead and other institutional resources may not be used to communicate personal statements and/or positions.

When issues management situations arise which may have legal ramifications, the appropriate legal representatives will be consulted to safeguard all legal rights and interests of the institution and affiliated parties.

Reason for Policy

Finger Lakes Community College must ensure that its reputation and mission are safeguarded in all institutional communications involving electronic, written, verbal, and social media formats and in response to all media inquiries. Public statements that are attributed to or associated with the College necessarily impact the College's reputation in the community-at-large.

This policy limits the persons authorized to issue public statements in order to protect the interests of the College and to ensure that public statements are consistent with each other and with the College's established position with respect to the underlying issue(s). It also helps safeguard the College from reputational and institutional challenges, which could occur if available information is not shared in a responsive, timely manner with the appropriate officials.

The intent of the policy is not to restrict freedom of speech, but to maintain the integrity of institutional positions and the college's reputation.

Applicability of the Policy

This policy applies to all members of the Finger Lakes College campus community.

Definitions

Public Statement

Any verbal, written or electronic communication of statements relative to College policy, operations or other institutional matters that is publicly accessible, including without limitation any statement made to print or broadcast or online media outlets (in an interview or otherwise), a letter to the editor, or an online posting.

Endorsements, Use of College Logos, Etcetera

Any use of the College's trademarks, service marks, logos and/or symbols must be approved in accordance with the College's Policy on Trademark and Service Mark Use as well as logo guidelines that have been developed by the Marketing office and are posted to the Intranet.

Related Documents

- FLCC Emergency Procedures
- Trademark and Service Mark Use
- Student Right-to-Know & Campus Security Act of 1990
- FLCC Right to Know
- HIPAA
- Academic Freedom

Procedure Name: **FLCC Spokesperson, Media & Public Statements**

Responsible for Procedure: Advancement

Procedure Number: **K-1**

Effective Date: March 2, 2011

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Procedures

The following procedures and standards apply to all College institutional interaction with the media and/or designation of an FLCC spokesperson in response to media and public inquiries and/or events or circumstances, which may affect the College's reputation and/or interests. These procedures also address internal and external communications involving institutional decision-making and the mission of the College.

All College employees, agents and representatives must contact the Vice President of Advancement and/or Community Affairs department designates if and when they:

- 1) Receive inquiries from educational, local, regional or national media seeking interviews, comments, or public statements of College policy or position. Routine media inquiries should be directed to Community Affairs designates.
- 2) Wish to contact media, hold a news conference or otherwise issue a public statement regarding the College. Routine inquiries should be directed to Community Affairs designates.
- 3) Learn of situations within their area of responsibility that are sensitive and could become a crisis or issue, or learn that stories about their department or division will appear in local, regional or national media, or learn of an emerging incident or issue that may be of concern to internal or external stakeholders of the College. The FLCC Cabinet, Campus Security, the FLCC Association, and other institutional representatives who learn of an emerging issue must routinely notify the Vice President of Advancement and/or her designee(s) in Community Affairs upon identification of an emerging issue or incident that may impact the College's reputation or affect key stakeholders of the College.

Issues/Emerging Events

- When an issue or situation occurs within the institution or that may affect the institution's reputation, it is standard operating procedure for the College President and relevant members of the President's Cabinet, including the Vice President of Advancement as the Chief Communications Officer or in this Officer's absence, the designated Community Affairs staff members (to be advised and involved in an expedient manner because of the potential ramifications to the College and its faculty, staff and students.
- When dealing with emerging incidents/events, College employees must inform their supervisor and appropriate judgments must be made to ensure that College administration (College President and/or Cabinet members) receive key information and concerns in an expeditious and timely manner.
- All emerging issues/events, which affect College operations and/or management of the College's reputation, that appear to be non-routine and may be related to an emerging or controversial issue must be communicated to the Vice President of Advancement or Community Affairs designees as soon as possible.

- Action begins with a telephone call that reaches in-person the College President and Advancement VP (no limitation on the time of report and calls should be placed to business, cell and home numbers as necessary) followed up by an e-mail with all facts and conditions pertaining to the incident and/or incident report. Persons identified to assist and handle these inquiries as a back up to the VP of Advancement include the designated Community Affairs staff members.
- A brief written summary of the emerging incident/event will be compiled, including all pertinent facts, timing of events, background information, identification of both internal and external parties involved (including key contact information) and expected/anticipated next steps. Emails or documentation will bear the subject line of "Confidential – Issues Management" and must be considered highly confidential and shared only with designated Cabinet members and/or those staff members who will maintain its confidentiality. Documentation of this confidential nature must not be distributed to others without the prior approval of the appropriate designated College officials.
- When criminal activity is suspected or alleged, the Vice President of Advancement and/or Community Affairs designates will work closely with Campus Security and local law enforcement personnel. Every effort will be made to respect both the legal process and the rights of the accused, balanced by the need to maintain a safe and secure environment for the campus community.
- Appropriate consultation among the College President, Cabinet leadership, designated Community Affairs staff, and other officers and/or administrators of the College must take place when warranted by the circumstances, by FERPA, HIPAA, and Student Code of Conduct standards, and other related statutes or administrative policies of the College.
- Only designated spokespeople may provide statements to the media about emerging events, controversial issues or college decisions. If an employee speaks for himself or herself in a manner contrary to the College's message, the College reserves the right to respond in the following manner in order to clarify for the media:

"The College seeks to foster a healthy exchange of ideas, and we recognize an individual's or group's right to express an opinion. However, College leaders must make decisions based on the best interests of all employees and students, whose opinions and interests may not be reflected in the media or community debate. The institutional message should be conveyed by the designated College spokesperson(s) in order to accurately reflect the College's position and/or statement on a particular issue or matter of interest to the media and/or other key stakeholders."

The Advancement division's Community Affairs team will work closely with campus departments that handle security, emergency response, health services and related issues. Institutional responses will follow the College's emergency response plans and other relevant institutional policies.

Whenever possible, key College stakeholders, especially staff, faculty, board members and students, should learn about pertinent decisions BEFORE the media communicates them in a public forum. Although the timing may occasionally be critical, it is advisable to share information with internal audiences before they are informed by an outside source.

Examples of emerging issues and/or events include, but may not be limited to:

- Health or safety issues
- Environmental hazards

- Emergencies inside the building or on our grounds (in accordance with the College's Emergency Management Plan)
- Allegations of criminal misconduct or impropriety
- Accidents or death related to FLCC in any way
- Community issue of concern to key stakeholders
- Severe weather (in accordance with the College's Emergency Management Plan)
- National, state or local emergencies

The Vice President of Advancement and Community Affairs staff designees will identify messaging that accurately reflects the facts and the situation, interact with the media, handle incoming inquiries from print, television and radio sources, interact with key College staff and the College President's Office, and follow both crisis communications and emergency preparedness procedures relevant to the situation.

Routine Media Protocols

- All routine College-related media inquiries from print, radio, television and online reporters should be routed first through the Advancement division's Community Affairs Office and its designees. Inquiries requiring the individual professional academic expertise of faculty members may be handled at the department level, with a courtesy call made to the Advancement division's Community Affairs department.
- If faculty or staff members receive direct inquiries from reporters that have not been vetted by the Community Affairs team, except when a long-standing relationship based on faculty expertise exists, the call should be redirected to the Community Affairs team prior to addressing a reporter's questions. This is standard operating procedure and can be explained to the reporter with the following guidance:

"FLCC's standard protocol for working with media involves passing your inquiry through our Community Affairs staff first. Let me transfer you to this office (also provide the appropriate names/contact information in case the call is lost.)"

Another option: Tell the reporter that you will share their message with the College's Community Affairs staff immediately (do not delay if you make this statement). Call designated Community Affairs staff to share the reporter's name and affiliation, and request that the reporter's telephone call be returned. Employees can also e-mail the information to Community Affairs staff; however, a telephone call will help to ensure that the information is conveyed expeditiously.

- If a faculty or staff member has a long-standing relationship with a reporter, the Community Affairs team does not want to cause artificial barriers affecting this relationship as long as there is not an institutional public relations issue. Faculty members are asked to keep the Community Affairs media liaison(s) informed of media inquiries involving their expertise to help Community Affairs maintain and monitor important media relationships at FLCC and to be aware of faculty members who may speak to trends and stories of interest to the media.
- Should reporters show up unannounced at any FLCC campus location, calls should be made to notify Community Affairs designees of their arrival. Community Affairs designees should act as the departmental liaisons to reporters. If Community Affairs designees are not available, the Vice President of Advancement should be informed. If media arrive unannounced at campus center location, Community Affairs staff will ask Campus Center Directors to serve as the on-site liaison. Community Affairs designees will work with Campus Security to arrange for convenient and accessible temporary parking for the media. During some circumstances, reporters will be asked

to conduct their work within specific physical parameters established by Community Affairs in consultation with the Cabinet and/or Campus Security.

- Media training for those who work with reporters is available upon request through the Advancement division's Community Affairs team. Media training can help faculty and staff members who interact with the media to feel more comfortable during interviews, whether for television, print or radio. Tips on speaking before the camera, what to do/not to do during an interview, how to be consistent with messaging, and other media-related expertise can be useful for those who interact with reporters.
- It is the institutional role of Community Affairs to evaluate a reporter's needs and story angle to determine the appropriate internal expert and/or spokesperson and to review deadline information.
- If institutional messaging work is required, the Community Affairs team will work with the internal expert(s) to develop the appropriate messaging in advance of scheduling an interview with the reporter. All messaging should be reviewed by the Community Affairs Director and/or Vice President of Advancement and appropriate administrators, depending on the matter/issue.
- The Community Affairs team will identify the relevant internal expert for news stories, and provide coaching, messaging, and media training as needed or required for the selected media forum. In some cases, Community Affairs will simply contact the staff or faculty member (internal expert) to clarify the story angle and deadline, and pass along the reporter's name and contact information.

Media Statements

- Media statements on institutional decisions will be made by an appropriate spokesperson as identified by the Vice President of Advancement or her designees in Community Affairs, in consultation with the College President and/or Cabinet.
- Relevant support, advice and training will be made available to the President's Cabinet and/or institutional spokesperson to enable them to play a proactive role in discussing issues with the media, explaining the institution's role/decision, and managing controversial issues covered by the media.
- The Community Affairs department will draft all press releases and is the conduit for all press announcements made by any person, division or department of the College.
- If department, faculty or staff members have an idea or story related to a publicity opportunity, individuals should consult with the Community Affairs department well in advance. Occasionally, media opportunities will arise unexpectedly based on trends, stories in the news, and other occurrences. The public relations team is committed to working with staff and faculty whenever possible to help manage and maximize publicity efforts.
- The Community Affairs team will develop and maintain a list of internal experts that may be shared with the media. The list will profile the expertise of FLCC faculty and staff who are comfortable talking to the media and providing background on relevant stories, etc. Once the list is developed, the public relations team will develop procedures and conduct media training.
- All official FLCC press releases will be issued by the Community Affairs team in the appropriate format. If a press release quotes a faculty or staff member, the person will have an opportunity to approve their quote before it is disseminated to the media.

- If a media press release is of a particularly sensitive nature, the Community Affairs team will advise appropriate local officials and Board members following approval by the Vice President of Advancement and/or College President.
- All interactions with the media will be conducted based on established ethics and a commitment to transparency and credible information. HIPAA and FERPA standards will be honored at all times.

Interview Protocols

Once a Community Affairs team member has advised a faculty or staff member of an interview opportunity involving their expertise, the following may apply:

- Except when institutional priorities are at stake, faculty and staff may decline media opportunities based on other priorities and time constraints. The Community Affairs team will work closely with faculty and staff to prevent these situations from occurring often and to ensure that they can be managed effectively. Academic needs are the highest priority at FLCC and whenever possible Community Affairs staff will work to balance these needs with media opportunities and deadlines.
- When a staff or faculty member agrees to be available to the media, they should honor the reporter's deadline and work closely with Community Affairs staff, particularly when scheduling changes occur. If necessary, the public relations team will make alternative arrangements to maintain good quality media relations.
- FLCC will not issue "off the record" comments. If a comment is not appropriate for a public arena, it should be left out of conversations with the media.
- "No comment" is not an appropriate response to media inquiries. If a media contact asks questions that an interviewee is not comfortable answering, the Community Affairs team should be alerted and they will share an appropriate response with the reporter.
- Persons speaking with the media on FLCC business should not be pressured to speak "off the record" or to respond to a question that is outside their area of expertise or comfort. It is important to feel in control when talking with a reporter. Employees should not go beyond their institutional role or perspective when they are on the record representing FLCC with the media.
- Unless prior authorization/approval has been received, background information should only be provided to the media via the public relations department. The Community Affairs department is available to assist with preparing backgrounders, organizing briefings, Q&A's, etc.
- At all times, designated FLCC spokesperson(s) must adhere to the interview topic and must not be drawn into giving a personal opinion or comment on FLCC policies or decisions without prior approval from the Advancement Vice President, designated staff in the Community Affairs department, College President and/or President's Cabinet.
- If an FLCC student perspective is requested by the media, Community Affairs staff will work with the Office of Student Life to identify an appropriate student who can speak to the media. A student's academic standing must be checked with the Student Life or Student Code of Conduct officers prior to any media interviews.

Other Conditions

- Media relationships are important to the College and its ability to tell its story to the community. The College strives to have positive, two-way relationships with reporters. However, reporters are there to do a job and they are not necessarily friends of the College. Employees and persons speaking on behalf of the College must keep this in mind. Reporters and members of the media should be treated with respect, courtesy, and professionalism. If a reporter interacts/behaves inappropriately, contact the Community Affairs designees immediately and explain what happened.
- If inaccurate information about FLCC has been reported by the media, notify the Community Affairs designees who will investigate and take appropriate action. They may request that a correction be made by the media outlet or contact the reporter directly.

Institutional Internal/Employee Communications

- Similar to procedures involving external communications, all internal communications which reflect institutional decision-making and/or the mission of the College must be developed in accordance with established College policies and reviewed/approved by the appropriate President's Cabinet member, including the Vice President of Advancement or Community Affairs designees, or the College President's designated representative.

Forms/Online Processes

- FLCC Emergency Response Preparedness templates
- Community Affairs and Advancement templates

Appendix

- Attachment A: Institutional Emergency Contact list
- Attachment C: Contact Information for Advancement Division & Community Affairs department staff

The Vice President of Advancement and/or designated representative shall be contacted for all emerging issues and/or incidents, which may affect College operations and/or the College's reputation. When s/he cannot be reached in-person, designated Community Affairs representatives will address needs of the college pertaining to media relations and/or issues management messaging and communications involving media and/or internal/external stakeholders of the college.