



Why Communicate with The Public?

- Communication lets you advocate for your specific area of research and recruit students to your research.
- Many public policy decisions are guided by expert and scientific knowledge (or lack thereof). The ability to clearly communicate scholarly work and research is vital to develop informed citizens and voters.
- Build public support and interest in your work.
- Ensure public support for research funding.
- Inspire the next generation of scholars.
- Make connections to scholars, donors and policymakers.

Communicating at WSU and beyond

The WSU marketing and communications teams (central and in each school/college) work with faculty and staff to raise the stature of the university through proactive media relations and communications with WSU's various stakeholders, both internal and external. The communications staff identifies, develops and distributes stories that reflect the university's goals of teaching, research and community service.

To accomplish this, the communications team:

- Develops and pitches news stories and features for print, web news outlets, radio and television.
- Connects media with faculty experts for interviews.
- Maintains an active database of faculty experts for media consultation.

A sample communications plan:

1. Identify the news: Did you win an award? Make a research breakthrough? What is the story?



2. Contact your communicators to begin the editorial process: Initial interview and writing, photo shoot if necessary.
3. Time to share the news: Web, social media, distribute to the press.
4. WSU Research communications distributes your press release on research news wires such as Eureka Alert.
5. Media interviews if applicable.

Internal publications at WSU: College and department news feeds, Today@Wayne, Get Involved, the Wayne State Alumni Magazine, department newsletters.

Facebook is your friend. Social media can be a great way to promote your research to an interested audience.

- » The catch? It's a time commitment.

Important Communication Strategies

- **So, what?** Don't just talk about what you've done. What does this research mean for the greater good? What is the eventual impact on your audience? What is cool about it? Hook your reader early by clearly communicating the point.
- **Show, don't tell:** Don't say your research is interesting, but demonstrate that it is interesting through your writing. For example, don't say *"Research on water pollution has generated much interest in the research community."*, but say *"What would you do, if you could not use the water from your tap to drink or cook with? For residents of Flint, this is a reality..."*



RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS 101

- **Know your audience!** This is one of the most important steps in communicating research. You wouldn't explain your work to a group of third graders the same way you would explain it to other researchers.
- **Jargon** can stop even the most exciting research story dead in its tracks. Simplify your technical terms. Use *virus* or *bacteria* instead of *pathogen*.
- If a term cannot be simplified, use an "em dash" to breakdown its meaning. *Example: Her research focuses on using cancer cells' need for a large amount of thiamine — also known as vitamin B1 — as a way to deliver anti-cancer drugs into the desired cells.*
- **Stay focused.** Don't over explain or go into dense detail. If you would like to encourage your audience to reach out with questions, you can always link to your faculty profile or research page with contact information.
- **Tell a good story.** When you write about your research, craft it like a story. Make sure your writing flows, has “drama” and generates interest and excitement about your work.
- Don't be afraid to show off a little! If this is the "first-ever" study of its kind, say it.

Useful Links

- Guide to communicating science (Forbes): bit.ly/clas-commguide
- Simple tips to communicating science (NatGeo): bit.ly/clas-scicomm
- Check the grade level of your writing: bit.ly/clas-gradewriting

Just for fun:

- » Which famous writer do you write like? jwl.me
- » Bad writing contest: bit.ly/clas-badwriting



Additional Resources

- **Media training with WSU PR:** WSU's PR team offers free, interactive and informative media training for faculty, staff and students. Participants receive an overview of the university's media and public relations policies, tips for interacting with the media, and one-on-one coaching in the form of mock interviews. Email WSU's Communications Director Matt Lockwood (mlockwood@wayne.edu) or Jessica Archer (jarcher@wayne.edu) to get started.

Interested in using social media to promote your research or lab? Here are a few links to get you started:

- How Are Scientists Using Social Media in the Workplace? bit.ly/clas-scisocialwork
- A Scientist's Guide To Social Media bit.ly/clas-scisocial
- "How I Use Social Media as a Scientist" bit.ly/clas-socialscientist

CLAS Market Resources Guide

Provides story samples, tips and tricks for posting to the web as well as visual aids for your content. clas.wayne.edu/mr

Books on writing

- W. Strunk and E.B. White: "The elements of style" – *a classic on good writing – everybody should read this at least once.*
- William Zinsser: "On writing well" – *excellent book on non-fiction writing.*
- Joshua Schimel: "Writing Science" – *excellent guide for scientists.*
- Paul Silvia: "How to write a lot" – *strategies of how to find the time to write.*
- Steven Pinker: "The sense of style" – *in-depth discussion of good writing style.*