UNIVERSITY POLICY PA 01.01 – 08/01

TO: University of West Florida Community

FROM: Dr. John C. Cavanaugh, President

SUBJECT: News Media

Policy Purpose: Relations with the News Media

The Director of Communications has primary responsibility for contact between the University and the news media. It is through the media, including print, broadcast, and electronic, that the University maintains contact with its various constituencies within the general public.

Although the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications or designee serves as the primary spokesperson for the University, it is not the University’s intent to censor communication between members of the University faculty, staff, or administration, and the media. University faculty, staff, and administrators are encouraged to communicate with the media as necessary, being mindful that they are representing the University to several constituencies in the general public.

Marketing Communications’ Responsibilities

The Office of Marketing Communications is responsible for marketing and publicizing both on campus and off campus, University policies, programs, research, resources, plans, procedures, events, and personnel-related events.

The Office of Marketing Communications works to present positive aspects of the University community and University life to the University’s constituencies. Accomplishing this in a programmed manner requires coordination of dissemination of information to the media and is best accomplished through the Office of Marketing Communications. The office will ensure that:

1. local media are not inundated with requests for publicity for similar events from different sources;
2. various University departments are not inundated with requests for advertising from different institutions;
3. media are treated fairly in the release of “breaking news stories”;
4. material about the University community is as accurate, journalistic, creative, engaging, and information as possible.
5. University publications advertising and equipment receive optimum value for monies spent.
Information to be disseminated to the media should be provided to the Office of Marketing Communications well in advance of planned events. Material of a topical nature (dealing with upcoming events particularly) should be submitted to the Office of Marketing Communications at least three weeks prior to the upcoming event.

When events worthy of media coverage occur spontaneously, the Office of Marketing Communications should be contacted as quickly as possible and provided all pertinent information.

The Office of Marketing Communications will provide advice and assistance to any University unit seeking to disseminate information to the general public through the media. Such assistance may consist of preparing news releases and/or broadcast materials or may include the development of particular public relations-advertising campaigns, or development of specific media contacts and/or interview assignments.

University units that deal directly with the various media representatives should provide Marketing Communications with copies of information provided to the media along with timetables on when the information was provided, and, as appropriate, information on the media personnel involved. Marketing Communications should be apprized whenever media personnel contact members of the University community for materials or information related to University policies, practices, programs, research, and events. Any member of the University community receiving an inquiry from the press may refer that query to the Office of Marketing Communications for handling.

The Director of Communications also has responsibility for maintaining and enhancing employee communication, most often through a print and/or electronic newsletter distributed periodically, and through meetings with University constituents and/or the facilitation of meetings with various employee groups. These internal devices communicate select information between components of the UWF community and are generally of interest only to those within the UWF community.

Marketing strategy, including advertising, i.e., display advertising for magazines, newspapers, Internet, radio, or TV, is handled through the Office of Marketing Communications.

Press Conferences

All press conferences and scheduling of formal interviews of guest artists or speakers will be arranged and conducted by the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications or his/her appointed representative. Normally such conferences involve notable personages who are the guests of the University. A properly executed press conference insures fair ground rules for the media so that all may participate in the exchange.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are to be regarded as expressions of personal opinion on behalf of the writers. A faculty member may also wish to indicate the highest degree held and his discipline,
following his signature (e.g., Robert O. Smith Ph.d., English), particularly if the content of the letter concerns his field of academic expertise. Letters to the editor must be written on personal stationery rather than University letterhead to avoid suggesting that the opinions expressed are the policy of the institution. The use of University equipment and clerical personnel in producing letters to the editor should be avoided, unless the material is clearly supportive of the University, its mission, programs, policies, research, resources, and events. All letters to the editor from University faculty and staff should be copies to the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications.

Release of Public Information

All public records in University custody shall be open for inspection by any person, at reasonable times and under reasonable conditions. University custodians of public records shall furnish copies of public records. A reasonable charge may be imposed for the cost of duplication and labor.

University records which are exempt from the inspection and duplication requirements of the Public Records Law, and/or which are protected against public disclosure by Federal or State law are called confidential and non-public records and generally include, but are not limited to: Student records; medical/psychological records; certain policy, personnel records, research-related, and direct support organization records; social security numbers in state employment records; and certain information concerning university police, mental health workers and their families. See also University Policy GC-01.00-11/99 - Public Records.

Release of Classroom Produced Materials

Materials produced in classroom projects or for other instructional purposes may be released to the press by faculty. Faculty members should exercise discretion in releasing such materials, taking into account the authenticity, thoroughness, and fairness of the subject matter treated. A faculty member with doubts about the release of information, should bring the matter to the attention of the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications before release commitments are made to the media.

Approved: ______________________________________ Date: _________________________

John C. Cavanaugh, President