



# NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

SEC. VII-UR—COMMUNICATIONS 2.0

## MEDIA RELATIONS

### University Policy

#### I. BACKGROUND

The mission of the Office of University Relations is to protect and manage the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University's (A&T) reputation, strengthen the university's brand image, and increase brand awareness. Media relations, communications, marketing and branding efforts support A&T's mission of exemplary teaching and learning, scholarly and creative research, and effective engagement and public service. University Relations is charged with distinguishing A&T from its competitors and maintaining, preserving, and enhancing a distinct brand image.

A&T is a public, state-supported institution. Its mission, academic programs, achievements and goals are of special interest to university constituents, the public, and news media. The university has a fundamental responsibility to keep the public informed and the news media plays a vital role in communicating information about A&T to the public. It is critical that university news be disseminated to the media and public accurately to protect and enhance the institution's rich legacy. University Relations is the primary strategist for media and public relations. The office communicates on behalf of the university with a wide range of diverse constituencies including students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, news media, community and political leaders, taxpayers, and the public at large.

The purpose of this policy is to establish the lines of responsibility for the university's media and public relations efforts. The policy applies to all areas of the university (i.e. colleges, schools, and administrative units).

The university's decentralized structure of management creates numerous areas with media and public relations needs; however, this diverse environment can lead to inconsistent messages about the university. For the university to properly and successfully communicate with a consistent voice, it is necessary for its media and public relations activities to be coordinated through one central office. Therefore, it is the policy of A&T that the development and application of media and public relations strategies across the university rest with the Office of University Relations.

The Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations manages media and public relations. Only authorized individuals will speak publicly on behalf of A&T. Each college/school/administrative unit of the university should coordinate activities in cooperation with the Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations or his/her designee.

## **II. POLICY STATEMENT**

Media Relations has been designated by the chancellor as the official area to manage the coordination and dissemination of all university news and information throughout the institution. All administrators, faculty, staff and students are responsible for coordinating news and information with Media Relations. The area should be contacted regarding all media inquiries regarding the university. In addition, Media Relations is responsible for the coordination of the institution's interaction with representatives of the news media.

Under the direction of the Chief of Staff, the Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations serves as the Chief Communications Officer and official spokesperson for the university. The Associate Vice Chancellor is responsible for writing and producing external communications for the news media. The Associate Vice Chancellor will work closely with other university officials to issue the university's official statement. If the Associate Vice Chancellor is unavailable, the Director of Media Relations will serve as the spokesperson.

A&T is committed to a culture of transparency and recognizes the importance of providing accurate and timely information to the public and news media. The university maintains a posture of openness, consistent with legal requirements, and cooperation with the media.

### **III. DISTRIBUTION OF OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS TO THE NEWS MEDIA**

All media requests regarding official university information should be directed to Media Relations. All inquiries from the media should be in writing.

### **IV. TIMELINESS**

It is important that the university attempt to meet the media representative's deadlines, which are often short, with accurate and detailed information. Not responding in a timely manner could cause the university to miss out on the opportunity to be featured in a positive story, or to correct inaccurate information. Media Relations will reply within an hour of contact from the media to provide the requested information or an estimate of when it will be provided.

### **V. UNIVERSITY SPOKESPERSON**

There is a difference between representing the university's official position and representing an individual's expertise when speaking with representatives from the media. Media Relations is available to consult with administrators, faculty, staff and students about the most effective ways to work with the media. In all situations, individuals should make it clear to a reporter when they are providing their personal opinions and when they are speaking on behalf of areas over which they have administrative authority. The Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations is the official spokesperson for the university; therefore, administrators, faculty, staff and students are hereby instructed not to respond to inquiries that pertain to establishing the institution's official position on any matter without first contacting Media Relations for approval.

Comments representing A&T's official position should only be given by the Associate Vice Chancellor. For matters concerning academics, the Associate Vice Chancellor will work with the Provost and members of the campus to establish an appropriate spokesperson. The Associate Vice Chancellor will work in coordination with the Chief of Staff, A&T University Police Department and other units regarding matters involving campus crime, public safety and crisis communication, and with the director of intercollegiate athletics regarding matters involving athletics.

### **VI. NEWS RELEASES AND FEATURE STORIES**

All news releases, feature stories and other communications to external media outlets are officially released by Media Relations. Any news release or feature story prepared by a school, college or division should be sent to Media Relations to be reviewed and disseminated. This central coordination of news releases and feature stories ensures that university news is accurate

and is maintained by a single office. There is an exception for the Sports Information Office. The sports office is allowed to send out news releases and feature stories on athletics and its programs except during crisis situations. During crisis situations, news releases are sent out by Media Relations.

## **VII. OP-EDS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITORS**

Op-eds are opinion pieces written by the public that typically are published on the page opposite the newspaper's editorial page. Newspapers, magazines, and other news publications regularly run op-eds to ensure that they present a diversity of opinions on topics of importance to their readers. They are longer than letters to the editor and offer an opportunity for a better-developed argument.

All op-eds and letters to the editor should be coordinated through Media Relations. The Media Relations Director in the Office of University Relations should review all op-eds. He/she can help outline an op-ed, or give additional ideas and approaches in drafting an opinion piece. S/he also can assist in submitting the op-ed or suggest the best outlets for submission.

## **VIII. EVENTS**

Media Relations will assist all schools, colleges and divisions in promoting major events that are open to the public. A public relations plan will be developed that may include the coordination of radio, television and newspaper interviews, in addition to media coverage during the event (although there is no guarantee that the media will cover the event). Individual schools, colleges and units should not execute a public relations plan or contact the media to promote their individual events without working in partnership with the Office of University Relations.

## **IX. INTERVIEWS (FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS)**

When contacted by the media for an interview by phone or in person, please refer the media representative to Media Relations. Media Relations will set up the interview(s), as well as provide assistance or advice. It is important that vice chancellors, deans, and other division heads delegate persons in their area, who are subject matter experts, to talk with the media when they are unavailable.

Media Relations should schedule all media interviews including newspaper, radio, television, magazine, online publications, post-game interviews and, particularly, university sponsored events.

## **X. INTERVIEWS, PHOTO SESSIONS, AND VIDEOTAPING (CHANCELLOR, FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS)**

All requests for interviews, photo sessions and videotaping of the chancellor, faculty, staff and students should be coordinated through Media Relations. The request should be submitted in writing at least three weeks prior to the assignment, if possible.

## **XI. PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOTAPING USAGE**

A&T receives requests from news media and other organizations to film, photograph or videotape events, activities and programs on campus. The images may be used by the university, news media and others in a variety of ways, including but not limited to printed documents and publications, electronic publications, training materials, presentations and broadcast media. In addition, the university reserves the right to use photographs and samples of student work in billboards, publications, press releases, comic strips, PowerPoint presentations, radio and television commercials and websites. All materials submitted become the sole property of A&T. No materials will be returned and remain the property of the university. Participants understand and agree that no monetary compensation will be paid for materials submitted or performed.

## **XII. PRESS CONFERENCES**

Press conferences may be held as appropriate to announce major events, such as a new chancellor, new football coach, renowned speakers, significant community or education-based partnerships and large contributions made to the university. Additionally, they are sometimes held during crisis situations. Press conferences are scheduled and announced by Media Relations. The only other entity on campus that can call a press conference is the Athletics Director; however, that office will notify Media Relations to ensure that there are no conflicts with other scheduled events. When a crisis occurs in athletics, Media Relations and the Athletics Department work in collaboration.

## **XIII. PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST**

All public records requests must be submitted in writing to Media Relations or, for athletics information, to the director of intercollegiate athletics. The university adheres to federal and state law on public records, which defines the parameters of legal access to information by the media and others. Media Relations must operate within the requirements of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Media Relations works closely with the Office of Legal Affairs to ensure that state legal requirements are followed in responding to public record requests.

There is certain employee information, such as name, title, and compensation that is subject to release to the media. The university works closely with the Office of Human Resources and Office of Legal Affairs to provide accurate and appropriate information and is not at liberty to discuss confidential personnel matters.

#### **XIV. MEDIA ACCESS TO CAMPUS AND CAMPUS FACILITIES**

A&T is a public university; therefore, the news media does not need permission to come on campus nor to take outdoor photographs of buildings. Out of courtesy, most media outlets in the Triad will inform Media Relations if they plan to visit the campus. This does not always occur, so we encourage the university community to contact Media Relations if they observe media outlets on campus. Media Relations will assist the representatives.

News media must get permission from Media Relations to visit classrooms, laboratories, faculty and staff offices, libraries, meeting rooms, etc. They should have a member of the Media Relations staff accompanying them at all times. Instructors, researchers, department and administrative offices will be notified in advance prior to their visit.

#### **XV. REQUEST FOR EXPERTS**

Providing experts for the news media can be very beneficial to the university as it gives the university visibility and enhances the image of the university. When contacted by the media, the university community should contact Media Relations. Media Relations will then contact the expert. This allows the university to track its media contacts. In some instances, coordination with Media Relations is not possible prior to the contact; if it's of a positive nature, faculty may conduct the interview and contact Media Relations as soon as possible. The university is in no way trying to hinder its faculty from talking with the media about their scholarly activities, service, or community activities as it relates to A&T.

#### **XVI. PENDING OR CURRENT LITIGATION, LEGAL ISSUES AND INVESTIGATIONS**

Media Relations must be consulted regarding the release of any information to the news media concerning a legal issue, a potential legal issue or an investigation. The university will work closely with the Office of Legal Affairs. The institution does not generally comment publicly on pending litigation and on-going investigations.

Approved by the Board of Trustees

Date policy is effective: Upon approval

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Revised: