MEDIA POLICY

Overview

The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy is a highly respected (Center of Excellence) and dynamic academic center with Grand Valley State University. The Johnson Center has a reputation for providing credible, trusted, professional research and services. The Johnson Center enjoys strong relationships with our sector, our colleagues (local, state, and national), our community, and the University.

The news media is frequently interested in Johnson Center’s work, including our thought leadership, research, and capacity services. As part of a public university and a respected voice, we have a responsibility to be open and responsive to information requests, as the media are among the many ways our customers and business partners build their individual perceptions of the Johnson Center and the work we do in the communities we serve.

Purpose

This policy exists to ensure that information disclosed by the Johnson Center is timely, accurate, comprehensive, authoritative, and relevant to all aspects of our work and that of the University. Adherence to this policy is intended to provide an effective and efficient framework to facilitate the timely dissemination of information.

Scope

This media policy covers all external news media, including broadcast, electronic (including sanctioned social media), and print. It applies to all employees, volunteers, and interns of the Johnson Center, as well as members of our advisory board, concurrent with the University Disclosure Policy.

The following guidelines cover three policy areas related to the media: spokesperson, speaking with the media, and seeking media coverage.

Designation of Johnson Center Spokesperson(s)

The director of communications and development (Tory Martin) is the main media contact on behalf of the Johnson Center. The marketing and communications manager will inform the executive director of the media inquiry and determine the best steps for response.

The executive director (Kyle Caldwell) is the official primary media spokesperson for the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and will engage other staff on issues relevant to their particular area of expertise.
Depending on the situation, an individual external to the Johnson Center marketing and communications team may be asked to comment on a particular issue due to their projects, knowledge, experience, and expertise. Marketing and communications will work with that person to prepare them for the media interview as needed. Preparation may include developing talking points, as well as counseling, training, and practicing for the interview.

Guidelines for Talking with the Media (if approached)

If a reporter, producer or other news media may contact you for a number of reasons, for example:

- To get information about the Johnson Center or philanthropy generally.
- To get information or comment about new findings, reports, product launches or an action or event that could impact our sector.
- To get general information on a topical story in our community such as changes in the sector, officials or policies, problems, or issues specific to the community we serve, etc.
- To interview you about your specific expertise.

Please refer all media phone calls, emails, and in-person inquiries from the media for interviews, comments, story ideas or response to the marketing and communications manager. This includes communications personnel from other organizations when it involves a potential media story or use of the Johnson Center for Philanthropy name in any wide reaching way.

Please do not say that you are not allowed to talk to a reporter or have to get permission to do so. Instead, tell the reporter(s): “Our policy is to refer all media inquiries to marketing and communications or our executive director.”

Whenever taking a call from the media, the same courtesy and professionalism with which we approach customers should also be displayed toward the media. Please act quickly when approached by the media so that we can help ensure that the reporter’s deadline is met. This is important because this initial call may be the reporter’s first impression of the Johnson Center, and that first impression may end up in the published article or in a news broadcast.

Please remember to contact marketing and communications staff if and when the media has approached you. Even though you have referred the media, marketing and communications may need your help to prepare a response. Do not let a reporter compel you to answer questions on the spot. It is beneficial to take time to prepare a response so that we can provide accurate and relevant information.

Please use these same guidelines if a partner or client contacts you for a media opportunity.
**Guidelines for Seeking Media Coverage**

In circumstances in which you believe you have a positive news story to share with the public, contact the communications team. It is the only department authorized to distribute Johnson Center news releases, pitch coverage of particular events or hold news conferences.

- Do not call a reporter directly without first consulting and getting the approval of the marketing and communications team or the executive director.
- Marketing and communications will work with you to gather information and determine if and how the news media should be contacted. Similar measures to those used by editors and reporters will be considered to determine if your story is newsworthy.
- Some news items may be more appropriate for internal publicity, through vehicles such as the Huddle, internal University communications, or other forms of employee communications.

**Summary**

The goals of this policy are to maximize and maintain a beneficial relationship between the Johnson Center and the media and other communications personnel, while protecting the interest and privacy of our research and staff. Please adhere to these guidelines when approached by anyone related to the media, when considering an opportunity for media engagement, or a client or partner would like to collaborate on a potential media opportunity.