

When a Reporter Calls . . .

Call her back!

Questions to ask the reporter:

What's the reporter's deadline? TV's deadlines are frequently within a matter of hours; deadlines for print can range from hours to days. Meeting the reporter's deadline is key to maintaining a good relationship with them.

What's the general scope of the reporter's topic? Make sure you ask the reporter not only what he or she wants from you, but also the general scope of the story so you can better answer the reporter's questions. Often your part of the story will be to supply only one piece of it. For example, the reporter could be doing a story on the make-up of this year's freshman class. Since you serve the University as vice president of enrollment, the reporter may want to know from you average SAT scores, GPA, etc.

Where will the interview take place? This often depends upon the medium. For print, phone interviews often work well, unless the reporter also wants to arrange for a picture. On the other hand, television will want to conduct the interview someplace visually interesting that will make a nice view for the cameras. Depending on the story that may be your office, laboratory, or a picturesque place on campus.

To make your job easier, it's a good idea to let your supervisor know that a reporter has contacted you and what this reporter wanted to know. He or she may have some valuable information on the topic at hand. It's also possible that the reporter is "calling around." This usually happens when the issue under discussion is controversial and the reporter is trying to get various – sometimes contradictory – comments. Talking with your supervisor under this scenario helps make sure your department talks with one voice.

Before the interview is conducted, contact the Office of Public Information at 419-434-4345. If you feel unsure or uncomfortable about the interview, we'll be glad to work with you to prepare you for the interview.

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