

Media and Social Media Guidelines for Promoting Faculty Work

The current William & Mary Faculty Handbook (Section III.A, p. 19) provides the following guidance in the section entitled Academic Freedom and Personal Ethics:

Faculty members are also entitled to their political rights and should be free from institutional censorship or discipline for exercising them; however, their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As members of a learned profession and officers of an educational institution, when representing that institution they should at all times endeavor to be accurate in their assertions, they should exercise appropriate restraint, they should show respect for the opinions of others, and they should make every effort to indicate that they are not institutional spokespersons.

The guidelines set out below include practical tips for managing interactions with reporters and media outlets related to your scholarship and employment with W&M. Recommended strategies for distinguishing between personal and professional communications can be found in the Personal Communications and Social Media Guidelines, which is also available on the Provost's website.

Guideline 1: Contact with University News & Media

University News & Media maintains a list of experts that news media may contact for commentary on a range of topics. More information on joining this list of experts is located at this [link](#). If you are contacted by the media for commentary, please notify the University News & Media department [Suzanne Clavet, Director of News & Media; suzanne@wm.edu]. They can help support and amplify any media source in which faculty members are quoted.

Guideline 2: Amplifying your Work via the Media

Getting information about your work out into the public can amplify the reach of your research, teaching, and service. In thinking about the impact your work makes in public spheres, consider the following points:

- Come up with a short statement that summarizes what your work means and the public impact of this work. Keep your talking points simple and jargon free. For example, what is exciting about what you have learned in your research that others would benefit from knowing? Why should anyone care about what you have learned? Think of the “hook” in the story of your work, but be careful not to overstate it.
- Practice talking about your work. Take advantage of the media training offered by University News & Media. This one-on-one consultation will give advice on what to expect during an interview, tips on answering difficult questions, and for video events, give you advice on how to dress best for an on-camera interview. Appointments can be scheduled by emailing wmnews@wm.edu or calling 757-221-2650.
- For off-camera interviews, you can still benefit from being recorded to “hear” how you sound when speaking about your topic.
- Writing opinion-editorials can provide another venue for getting your story in the public realm. Again, using jargon-free language and simple messaging about your key points is important. See Guideline 4 below for additional considerations to avoid creating confusion about your position as an individual researcher and statements made on behalf of the university.

- Social media avenues can provide access to larger audiences. Doing podcasts, blogs, short-article postings on topics can provide mechanisms to reach audiences in a variety of ways. We recommend using social media accounts that are focused on your academic and professional life to disseminate your research to wider audiences (see below on the separation of professional and personal accounts).

Guideline 3: Publishing in Open Access Formats

Many journals provide an option for publishing articles in open access formats, which provides readers free access to your article versus readers needing access to the journal via a paid subscription or paid access through the university library. Publishing an open access article typically has a fee associated with it, and some authors are able to use grant funding to support this form of research dissemination. As well, SWEM library at William & Mary hosts ScholarWorks, an online repository for faculty publications. Faculty can create a profile on this site and link their publications here. Understanding what can be posted (e.g., pre-publication proofs, links to the published article) is important. As of 2023, approximately 1 million downloads have occurred across all the manuscripts posted.

Guideline 4: Context of Public Engagement

Faculty expertise is often called upon by the national media or for testimony before legislators. In these situations, faculty members' professional status provides the basis for their expert contributions. Members of the public may not always distinguish when a faculty member is speaking from a personal position versus representing the university. It becomes critical to avoid conflicting messages and not purport that faculty opinions are the position of the university, and to note when a faculty member is speaking on behalf of the institution in an official capacity versus giving their personal opinion. For example, letters to the editor would require a disclaimer that a faculty member is expressing their personal opinion and not the viewpoints of the university. See the Personal Communications and Social Media Guidelines for more information.