Sharing your research story: What to publicize, and who can help

What type of research is typically publicized?

The simplest definition of news is telling a good story. What makes a good story is a narrative that gets our attention, keeps our attention, and tells us something interesting or important. News is something that makes us say, “wow” or “hey, take a look at this.”

Campus communication professionals can help determine whether a research discovery is a good candidate for internal or external publicity, so reach out to your PR contacts and use them as a resource.

Here are some general criteria for what’s considered news:

**Timely.** Something that’s happening now, or will soon happen. Are you presenting research at a conference, or publishing a paper or book? The element of timeliness – being able to say “published today in the Journal of ...” – demonstrates that the discovery is fresh.

**Interesting.** Is the discovery surprising? Does it buck conventional wisdom, help explain one of life’s mysteries, or contribute to our understanding of a cultural or societal issue? Try this test: Would my neighbor be interested? The more people you can include in this category, the more newsworthy the story is.

**Impact.** Does it affect peoples’ lives? Will it contribute to understanding or helping to treat a medical condition? Does it qualify as news-you-can use (e.g. improving language-learning skills in young children, understanding standardized test scores, or notifying folks about the environmental impact of development).

**Unique.** Is it groundbreaking? An area of research that has never been explored?

**Trends.** Does your study reveal a trend (e.g. a spike in the number of people with a disease, more debt among middle-class Americans)? If you can explain why this is happening, all the better.

**Connections.** Does your work connect to a news or pop-culture topic? We may be able to use that news hook to promote your work (e.g. We did a story on UI stuttering research when “The King’s Speech” came out, and we’re promoting a book called “Why Iowa?” during the prelude to the Iowa Caucuses.)

What are some ways to share my research story, and whom should I contact?

**Departmental/collegiate publications or websites**

Colleges and departments often feature research news in their publications and websites. Each college has a Director of External Relations who may be interested in covering your discoveries, and your department’s main office should be able to put you in touch with the contact for departmental communications.
Fyi

As the university’s faculty/staff online newsletter, fyi can be a way to share research with the campus community. Fyi may highlight research through a profile, feature, photo package or first-person “campus voices” piece. Contact: Christopher Clair, christopher-clar@uiowa.edu, 319-384-0900.

Hawkeye Caucus

The Hawkeye Caucus is a way to share research news with state legislators. A brief e-mail is sent to legislators daily during the session, and periodically the rest of the year. The Office of Governmental Relations also hosts Hawkeye Caucus days at the state capitol, on campus, and in Washington D.C., and looks for UI researchers to talk with lawmakers about the impact and value of their work. Contacts: Steve Pradarelli, 319-384-0007, stephen-pradarelli@uiowa.edu; Pete Matthes, 319-335-3714, peter-matthes@uiowa.edu.

Outreach and Engagement

Outreach activities – service learning, panel discussions, readings, performances, exhibitions, booths at festivals or fairs – can be excellent ways to share work with a broader audience. Contact: Steve Parrott – steven-parrott@uiowa.edu, 319-384-0037.

Press Releases/Media Pitches

UI News Services and UI Health Care Media Relations have several writer/editors whose roles focus on media relations. These individuals can help determine whether research is likely to attract media attention. They prepare news releases on research that appear in the UI News Digest and at www.news.uiowa.edu, and may be picked up by other UI websites and publications. They may reach out to reporters directly, or post releases on PR websites such as EurekAlert!, Newswise or Big Science. Also, media relations professionals often receive queries from journalists seeking expert sources. If a request for your area of expertise comes up and you're willing to comment, this can also be an opportunity to discuss your research.

Contacts: Winston Barclay (fine and performing arts, writing programs), 319-384-0073, winston-barclay@uiowa.edu; Jennifer Brown and Molly Rossiter (health sciences), jennifer-l-brown@uiowa.edu, 319-356-7124; Molly Rossiter@uiowa.edu, 319-356-7127; Gary Galluzzo (natural and mathematical sciences, engineering), 319-384-0009, gary-galluzzo@uiowa.edu; Lois Gray (College of Education), 319-384-0077; Nicole Riehl (social sciences and humanities, Graduate College), 319-384-0070, nicole-riehl@uiowa.edu; Tom Snee (Colleges of Business, Law), 319-384-0010, tom-snee@uiowa.edu.

Social Media

UI Communication and Marketing is launching a video series entitled “Spotlight on Research,” which will be featured monthly on YouTube and the university’s main Facebook page, which has an audience of more than 25,000. We’re looking for campus researchers to share a layman’s terms summary of their work in a 2- to 3-minute video, which we’ll post on YouTube and the UI Facebook page. We also would like to have the researchers featured in the videos available to interact with the Facebook audience in the comment stream immediately after the video is posted. Contact: Eric Page, eric-a-page@uiowa.edu.

Speaker’s Bureau

The UI Speakers Bureau provides speakers at no cost to service clubs, schools, senior centers, and other groups and communities across the state. Our speakers offer insights on a broad range of topics, local and global, cultural and political, scientific and literary. If you’d like to be part of the bureau, contact Mary Kenyon at 319-384-0011, mary-kenyon@uiowa.edu.
Spectator/UI Alumni Magazine

*Spectator* is a print and electronic publication for alumni and friends of the university. It aims to keep readers in touch with the research, teaching, service, and activities on campus. The print edition is published twice yearly, in November and in May, reaching 225,000 readers; the online edition is published monthly. Contact: Sara Moninger, sara-moninger@uiowa.edu, 319-384-0045.

The *Iowa Alumni Magazine* also features research news, among other topics, for UI graduates. The magazine is the flagship publication of the UI Alumni Association. Members receive six issues per year (five in print and digital, and one digital-only). Contact: Tina Owen, 319-335-3292, tina-owen@uiowa.edu.

Visual (photo, video packages)

Some research stories are best told visually, through a series of photos or a video piece. The UI Center for Media Production produces content for the UI YouTube site and for the Big Ten Network. Photographers and videographers put together packages for UI websites and publications, such as the UI home page, *fyi*, and *Spectator*. Contacts: Lin Larson (University Communication and Marketing), 319-384-0042, lindon-larson@uiowa.edu; Ben Hill, (Center for Media Production), benjamin-hill-1@uiowa.edu, 319-384-3400.

Applied Media Production Services, part of the New Media Division of the University of Iowa Health Care Marketing and Communications department, produces projects targeted at many different audiences – from small, internal presentations to large, national web broadcasts – and specializes in web video programs. Contact: Jim Hollensbe 319-335-8152, jim-hollensbe@uiowa.edu