



University Communications and Public Affairs
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www.csudh.edu

Press Release Guidelines

These are general guidelines. Press release dissemination should be channeled through the Public Affairs office to ensure consistency in university communications to outside audiences. Contact the Public Affairs office to coordinate your press release and have as much of this information ready as possible.

A press release, also known as a *news release*, is simply a written statement distributed to the media. They can announce a range of news items: scheduled events, staff promotions, awards, new services, accomplishments, etc.

They can also be used in generating a feature story. Reporters are more likely to consider a story idea if they first receive a release. Follow these tips to craft a powerful press release and reach all the right audiences.

- **Choose the most appropriate media outlets for your news.**
 - Which media outlets best reach the audiences I am targeting?
 - Which editorial desks (such as events or education) are most relevant?
 - Which industry trade outlets are most appropriate?
- **Make it an effective news release by using photos, videos, multimedia and other elements whenever possible.** Reporters and consumers tell us and our research supports it: Visuals increase interest in your news.
- **Headline and subhead.** Do not waste time writing the headline until the release is completed. At the start, you do not know yet exactly what you - or those you interview, will say. When you have finished a draft of the release, you may decide to revise your lead sentence/paragraph – or not. Then and only then think about the headline.

The headline should be brief, clear and to the point. Treat press release headlines and sub-heads as the ultra-compact version of your entire press release content.

- **Write the lead.** The first sentence should grab the reader and say who, what, when, where, why, and how. Then fill in the next 1-2 sentences which expand the lead. A first paragraph must actually sum up the press release and the further content must elaborate it. You should also include the university name in the headline, any subhead, and in the body of the first paragraph for better visibility via search engines and for news-editorial professionals and other readers.
- **Write the body copy.** The press release should be written as you want it to appear in a news story. Start with the date and city for which the press release is originated. The body copy should be compact. Avoid using very long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid repetition and over use of grammar, fancy language and jargon.



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Deal with actual facts – events, people, service, plans, projects. Consider the points below:

- What is the actual news?
- Why this is news?
- The people, events, accomplishments, dates and other things related with the news
- The purpose behind the news
- The university - the source of this news

Include a "call to action" in your release. This is information on what you want the public to do with the information that you are releasing. For example, do you want them to enroll in fall classes? Include information on how to do that. Do you want them to visit your Web site to learn more about a program? Include the Web address or a phone number.

The more newsworthy you make the press release copy, the better the chances of it being selected by a journalist or reporting. Find out what "newsworthy" means and use it to hook your reader.

- **Include information about CSU Dominguez Hills.** The text must describe the university, its core mission and service. Provide a link to the website.
- **Add contact information.** If your press release is really newsworthy, journalists would like more information or would like to interview key people associated with the story. Otherwise, you must provide contact information for the Public Affairs office.

Include up-to-date phone numbers and email addresses. It's vital for editorial follow-up. If you have a blog, or profiles on social networking sites, consider adding those as well when appropriate. Don't include contact details for communication tools you do not monitor regularly.

- **Signal the end** of the press release with three # symbols, centered directly underneath the last line of the release. This is a journalistic standard.

Additional Tips

- The timing of the press release is very important. It must be relevant and recent news, not too old and not too distant.
- A follow-up call or email can help develop a press release into a full story.