



A Union of Professionals

Tips on Working
with the Media
During
Campus Equity Week 2005

Media Tips and Timeline for Campus Equity Week 2005

Now

- Update your media list (if you don't have one, contact AFT Public Affairs for a list of media in your area). Make sure you have the name and other pertinent information for the current education and labor reporters, columnists, television assignment editors, radio news directors, wire services and campus newspaper writers. Find out who covers higher education and who covers labor. (Note: Most television and radio stations won't have a specific reporter assigned to these beats. Ask for the name of the assignment editor or news director).
- Decide on your event or events. Remember: Newsrooms are thinly staffed on weekends, and events late in the day often conflict with deadlines. If you schedule an event for Monday, October 31, be sure to contact the media the week before, and plan on making follow-up calls on October 31.
- Reproduce the fliers and posters you'll need in your union or campus production center, or contract with a union print shop. The AFT higher education department can also supply you with additional posters and stickers in limited quantity. (Please contact us ASAP if you want more copies of any of these materials).
- If you haven't already done so, select a location for your event. Location is very important. Let the location tell part of the story. Hold your event in front of the state Capitol, the administration building, or in a central campus or downtown location. Make sure the site is easily accessible to participants and the media.
- Make logistical arrangements. Arrange for any necessary permits, props, sound equipment, seating, podium, etc.
- Send a local columnist, education, or labor reporter (or all of the above) a pitch note. On a piece of union letterhead or personal stationery write a handwritten note explaining in a few words the part-time faculty issue on your campus, a few details about your event, and suggest that this would be a good story for the writer or reporter. Use the note to invite the journalist to get together for a cup of coffee to discuss the issue or to meet a couple of members with stories to tell. Follow up a couple of days later with a telephone call. Remember that the key to good public relations is good personal relations.

The Week of Your Event

- Fax a media advisory two or three days before your event to your entire press list. Don't forget campus media. A media advisory contains the who, what, when, where (see attached sample media advisory). Be sure that you send a copy to the Associated Press Daybook; the top editors in every newsroom review the Daybook listings. The advisory should be no more than two pages, double-spaced.
- Prepare background packets for the media. Use the fact sheet included in this mailing, a copy of one of the CEW posters and one page of information about part-timers on your campus or in your state. If you place a classified ad in a local paper, enclose a copy.
- Determine who will participate in your event. Who will speak? Do you have enough signs for everyone to carry? Have you invited all your members? Have you invited other labor and higher education groups?

Three or Four Days Before Your Event

- Begin pitch calls. Call the media, ask if they have seen your news advisory and briefly explain your event. Assume reporters don't know much about the part-time issue or unions (see backgrounder). You may want to practice your pitch on a fellow union member before calling the media. Sell them on the story, but don't be pushy; be persuasive. Talk about how the university is changing because of the growth of part-time faculty. Explain how the image of faculty and the reality are very different. Read the text used in the AFT posters and incorporate some of the language in your remarks. Try to localize your pitch by talking about conditions in your state or on your campus.
- Double-check with AP to make sure your advisory was received.

Two Days Before Your Event

- Fax advisory to news media again.
- Make sure everything is set for your event.

The Day of Your Event

- Make early calls to television station assignment editors. Assignments editors work a variety of shifts. The assignment editor you talked to in the afternoon or over the weekend may not be working the day of your event. Speak to that day's editor. Call early. TV stations often decide what they are going to cover by 9 a.m.
- Call radio stations early and offer to do an interview by telephone. Radio stations seldom have staff to cover events but sometimes are eager to do telephone interviews. Your story is a natural for many campus and NPR-affiliated radio stations.
- Make sure to give a background packet to any reporters or photographers who cover your event.