Heidelberg University Media Relations Policy

11.09.26

Summary:

Heidelberg University encourages employees to share their expertise and the University's accomplishments with the public through the news media, subject to this policy. The Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications (a.k.a. Marketing & Communications) has primary responsibility for media relations at Heidelberg.

Purpose:

This policy establishes procedures for engaging with the media to publicize University programs, events, and achievements, and share expertise with the public through the news media. The goal is to ensure accurate, consistent, strategic, and professional communication on behalf of the University.

Scope & Exceptions:

This policy applies to all Heidelberg University employees, including administration, faculty, staff, and student employees.

This policy does not apply to Heidelberg University "experts" among the administration, faculty, and staff, who – as *individuals* representing themselves and their personal views – may offer opinions, perspectives, and expertise to the media upon the media's request or via an interaction with the media initiated by the individual.

Guidelines for Media Inquiries:

As the University's liaison with the media, the Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications – specifically, the Associate Director of Marketing & Communications – has responsibility to respond to media inquiries in a timely manner. The University reserves the right not to comment or respond if the request violates Heidelberg's policies or involves student privacy or legal matters.

The Associate Director has access to news media contacts and works to initiate and coordinate coverage for programs, events, and University news.

The following guidelines provide additional details about how media inquiries are handled to help ensure accuracy, professionalism, efficiency, and consistency in institutional messaging.

- Employees who receive media inquiries about University policies, institutional decisions, personnel matters, finances, student incidents, or other official University business should not respond on behalf of the University and promptly contact the Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications.
- Faculty members should refer to the Heidelberg University Faculty Manual, sections 2.9.1 (Academic Freedom) and 3.7 (Public Speech and Writing) before responding to any media inquiries about their areas of expertise. All faculty should notify the Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications of media inquiries so that support, guidance, and coordinated related coverage can be provided.

- Employees may not present personal opinions as official University positions or issue official statements on behalf of the University unless authorized to do so.
- Media inquiries involving emergencies, safety incidents, litigation, or other sensitive institutional matters must be referred immediately to the Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications and/or the appropriate university administrator.
- Employees and departments seeking news coverage of University programs, research, events, achievements, or announcements should work proactively with the Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications.
- All official Heidelberg University news releases must be coordinated through the Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications for accurate, consistent, and timely delivery.
- If a topic lends itself to the need for an official University statement, the President will respond or designate a member of the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) or another representative. The Office of Branding, Marketing, and Communications may assist with the development of official University responses and communications at the direction of the President or SLT member.
- The University complies with federal and state laws regarding retention and release of personal and/or educational records and with all privacy and security laws, including FERPA.