How to Increase Awareness and Understanding of Your Work

USC Dornsife Office of Communication

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USC Dornsife Office of Communication

Overview

The USC Dornsife Office of Communication helps the College build a strong and lasting reputation by promoting the expertise of its faculty and the achievements of professors, students and alumni. The department is composed of writers, editors, media relations and social media experts, designers and videographers who tell engaging stories about the College and its constituents — and who help faculty tell their own stories.

This document describes various ways in which you can work with the Office of Communication to tell your story to a wider audience. If you have questions about any of the information, please send an email to communication@dornsife.usc.edu.

New for the 2018–19 academic year: The department will offer workshops for faculty and staff focused on topics that include media training, op-ed writing, social media, writing for The Conversation, and use of graphics. The workshops are designed to help our faculty become even more successful in sharing their expertise — or the expertise of their program, center or institute — with the public.

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QUICK GUIDE: Top 6 Ways to Share Your Expertise

1. Create or update your profile page in the USC Experts Directory (pressroom.usc.edu). Send Director of Media Relations Jim Key (jameskey@dornsife.usc.edu) the link when the profile is live.

2. Give us permission to feature you in our weekly #FacultyFriday social media series showcasing USC Dornsife faculty members. Faculty briefly answer three questions about themselves, which touch on their academic and personal interests. Email Michelle Boston at msboston@dornsife.usc.edu to participate.

3. Follow USC Dornsife on social media and tag us using @USCDornsife in your work-related social media posts so we can like and/or share them.

4. Write an article for The Conversation a news service that distributes and publishes articles written exclusively by academics. Or record a radio spot for the Academic Minute, reaching millions of listeners around the country with information about your latest research. We’re happy to brainstorm ideas and support you in the process. Contact us at dornsife.usc.edu/communication-contact.

5. Write an opinion article or submit an idea for one to the USC Dornsife Office of Communication at dornsife.usc.edu/write-an-op-ed. Each month we will choose one idea that we think has the greatest potential to be published and assign it to a professional opinion writer to work with you. (This will increase to two articles per month if resources allow.)

6. Attend at least one of the workshops offered by the USC Dornsife Office of Communication this year.
Guide to Research Communication at USC Dornsife

Contact: Emily Gersema, Associate Director of Communication, gersema@usc.edu

USC Dornsife Office of Communication can help you promote your research to the news media. You may ask yourself: Why would I want to speak to a reporter or write an op-ed? Some of the benefits of research communication are:

- Enhances your reputation as an expert and the impact of research;
- Additional funding opportunities may come your way; and
- Raises institution’s reputation and aids in fundraising.

Not only do we promote your timely and relevant discoveries to specific audiences, but we promote you as an expert in your field.

Start working with us!

Step 1: Alert USC Dornsife Office of Communication in advance of your paper/study being accepted into a journal or conference program.

- We work under embargo with publications and abide by the journal’s media guidelines so that the journal’s publication is not preempted.
- We may share the study with trusted reporters under embargo so they have an incentive to cover your work – and so they have time to write an accurate article.
- Provide any financial disclosures (including sources of grants, as per the Stevens Act).

Step 2: Communication team assesses the research. What makes a study appealing for journalists?

- A paper or presentation that is original research
- You are the lead and/or corresponding author
- The topic has broad consumer appeal and it is timely and relevant to a lay audience!

Step 3: If your research is selected for outreach, we ask that you:

1. Provide the latest manuscript proof;
2. Discuss the findings in person or over the phone so we understand the details and newsworthiness (The media team determines a course of action. This may involve a communications representative drafting a press release that will require a back-and-forth editing process with you and other editors that ultimately will help you connect with a broad audience.);
3. Provide high-resolution photos or graphics to attract attention;
4. Identify any preferred media in addition to outlets that we recommend;
5. Provide us your cell phone number for the day of release; and
6. Share with us the times that work best for interviews.

Step 4: The interview(s)

- Prep 3 to 4 key messages that distill the findings and why they matter.
- Speak in sound bites/headlines. Broadcast reporters want seconds of colorful quotes.
- Do not oversell your research.
- Attend a media training workshop if you’d like to learn more.
How to Create a USC Experts Directory Profile

Help the media (and staff) find you!

Reporters, producers and USC communication staff search the Experts Directory of USC’s website when looking for faculty who have specific expertise to contribute to news stories. Having a profile page in the directory is essential to their ability to find you.

It’s simple and doesn’t take long to create your profile page.

1. Go to: pressroom.usc.edu

2. On the right side of the page — above the “featured experts” row — click on “Join the directory or update your profile.”

3. Sign into the USC network.

4. Complete all the fields on the form.
   a. **Contact information:** Reporters are frequently on deadline, so you’re more likely to be quoted in stories if you include the fastest way for them to get a response from you.
   b. **School:** Please specify your full affiliation: USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.
   c. **Expertise:** This is where you list terms related to your expertise that reporters would be most likely to use when searching for an expert. So include short, simple and commonly used terms associated with your research.

      For instance, if you’ve studied the public’s trust in the media, you’d probably want to use the term “fake news.” If you’ve got expertise on the issue of sex discrimination and abuse, you’d probably want to include the term “#MeToo.”

   d. **Photo:** Upload a recent, high-resolution head shot of yourself.

5. Within about a week, someone from the USC University Communications team will create your profile page and share it with you for approval.

6. Let the USC Dornsife Office of Communication know you’ve got a new profile page. Please send an email with the hyperlink to Jim Key, director of media relations, at jameskey@dornsife.usc.edu.
The Conversation FAQ

What is The Conversation?

The Conversation (https://theconversation.com/us) offers a unique opportunity for you to share your expertise on a timely topic through a news article you’ve written that has the potential to be read by people around the world.

The Conversation is a nonprofit, independent source of news and views written exclusively by the academic and research community. All the articles it publishes online are also distributed via Associated Press to media outlets around the globe, which have the option to re-publish them exactly as they’ve been written. In 2017, articles published by The Conversation were read more than 76 million times.

What does The Conversation publish?

The Conversation features commentary and analysis — though not opinion — authored by academics and edited by journalists for the general public. The Conversation focuses on three priority areas:

- Timely, evidence-based analysis of issues making the news
- Articles explaining new research and its significance for a non-expert audience
- Timeless, plain English “explainers” of complex issues.

The word count for an article is typically 800 to 1,000 words.

Why should I write for The Conversation?

Publishing an article with your byline about your research allows you to share your work with a large audience well beyond USC. Your stories will not only be published on the The Conversation’s web site but they may well be picked up there for republication in mainstream media outlets, including by The Washington Post, CBS News, Newsweek, Associated Press, Smithsonian Magazine, PBS, Time, New Republic, and more. Articles published by The Conversation are free for anyone to read and will never go behind a paywall.

Who is eligible to write articles for The Conversation?

All USC Dornsife professors, postdoctoral scholars and Ph.D. candidates are eligible to write articles.

How involved will I be in the editorial process?

No previous news-writing experience is necessary. The Conversation has an experienced team of editors who will guide and support you through a collaborative and rigorous editing process. At least two editors who are seasoned journalists read every piece to ensure that they are both authoritative and accessible to the average reader. Ultimately, authors have final approval over the finished product, including headlines and photos. Also, authors fill out a disclosure form that lists any funding or affiliation (advocacy organization, think tank, fellowship) that is relevant to the subject that they are writing about in order to fulfill the publication’s commitment to transparency.

Can I track the web traffic to my articles?

Yes. As an author for The Conversation, you will be provided access to a digital dashboard where you can track how many people are reading your article, where those readers are and the news outlets that have republished it.
How do I get started?

The editors prefer to consider a story idea before it’s written. Craft a brief pitch that outlines the story you intend to write. Those that are timely — related to topics in the news — are most likely to be accepted, as are topics related to new research. We can brainstorm with you ways in which to relate your expertise to timely topics. Send story ideas to Jim Key, director of media relations, at jameskey@usc.edu, and he will work with you to pitch your story to The Conversation’s editors.

You can also submit pitches directly at http://theconversation.com/us/pitches, where you can find more information about what the editors are looking for in a pitch.


More questions?

Contact Jim Key at jameskey@usc.edu.
Opinion Articles

The USC Dornsife Office of Communication website provides tips for how to write and pitch compelling opinion articles to the media. But remember, opinion articles written in response to fast breaking news usually have to be written and submitted within 24 hours — or even the same day the news breaks.

If you have an idea for an opinion article that addresses a longer-lived topic but don’t have time to write it yourself, we invite you to submit it to the Communication Office web site at dornsife.usc.edu/write-an-op-ed. The department will select one idea per month and will assign it to a professional opinion writer who can work with you to develop and submit the article.

How to Pitch a Story Idea to the USC Dornsife Office of Communication

A convenient and helpful online form is available to submit story suggestions or pitches for the USC Dornsife news at dornsife.usc.edu/story-pitch.

PRO TIP:

When submitting a story suggestion or pitch for the USC Dornsife news, consider what audience(s) you hope to reach and why this story would matter to them. What would compel them to read it? Does it meet any of the following criteria?

1) It contains compelling story elements, such as interesting people facing a difficult challenge or conflict.
2) It centers on a research finding that would appeal to the general public.
3) It is timely and has relevance to current events.
4) It is related to the dean’s, provost’s and/or president’s areas of focus.

The story need not meet all of these criteria, but the more it meets, the better the story.

If you have questions or difficulty with the form, please contact communication@dornsife.usc.edu.
#FacultyFriday Feature Submission

USC Dornsife faculty members are invited to participate in a fun weekly feature on the USC Dornsife social media channels called #FacultyFriday. On Fridays we share a brief profile of a faculty member by having them answer three questions about themselves to showcase not only their expertise but their personal interests. Our goal is to show how multifaceted, dynamic and, quite frankly, amazing our faculty are.

The profiles are published or linked to on the USC Dornsife Instagram, Twitter and Facebook page.

View examples of previous posts:

https://www.instagram.com/p/BetNAudBpS4/
https://www.instagram.com/p/BqjhsXgFXLw/
https://www.instagram.com/p/BehYxIxRZX0/
https://www.instagram.com/p/BoRhOnwlVp2/

If you are interested in participating, here are three easy steps to follow:

1. **Please tell us:**
   - What is the preferred spelling of your full name?
   - Describe your area of research/expertise and what you do at USC Dornsife in 1-2 sentences.

2. **Pick three of the following questions to answer.** Answers should be 1-3 sentences.
   - What are your hobbies outside of academia? How long have you been doing them and what do you enjoy about them?
   - Tell us about an interesting job you’ve had outside of academia and why it was so remarkable for you (or wasn’t).
   - What is the last book you read? Would you recommend it and why?
   - If you could meet anyone living or deceased, who would they be an why? What would you ask them or invite them to do?
   - Write your memoir in six words.
   - What inspired you to pursue the field you’re in now?
   - Tell us one surprising thing about yourself.
   - What are some of the most interesting places you’ve traveled? What did you do there and what did you like about those locations?
   - What is your favorite thing about Los Angeles? This could be anything: a place, a food or how you feel about the city itself.
   - What is your favorite class to teach at USC Dornsife and why?
   - What is one thing you would like people to know about your academic field?
   - Is there something else you would like to share?

3. **Send high-res photos:**
   - Please send one recent photo of yourself (it can be a selfie) and up to 5 more photos that illustrate your answers. These could be recent photos or photos from the past, which are really fun to see. Other suggestions for photos: photos from the field, your office desk, the books on your nightstand, photos from a trip abroad, a photo of you when you were in college, a photo with your students (with their permission), a picture of your pet, a screenshot of your music playlist or the podcast you’re listening to now – be as creative as you like!

Please email your responses and high-res photo files to Michelle Boston at mshboston@dornsife.usc.edu.

Once your #FacultyFriday posts are published, you will receive the links to share, like, etc. If you have any questions at all, please don’t hesitate to ask.
How to Submit an Event to the USC Dornsife Event Calendar

Step 1: Select “Event Calendar” from the “News & Events” pull-down menu on the USC Dornsife homepage or go directly to dornsife.usc.edu/events.

Step 2: Click on the “Submit a New Event” button just above the small calendar on the right.
**Step 3:** Click the gray “Login with School ID” button.

**Step 4:** Sign in with your username and Shibboleth password (same as your email password).
Step 5: Complete the form.

Be sure to select your department from the pull-down menu under “FILTERS” so the event appears on the USC Dornsife Calendar of Events. If your department doesn’t appear, select “Dornsife Office of Communication.”
CALENDAR PRO TIPS:

A little extra time and effort could help ensure higher attendance for your event. Here are three “pro tips” using the following event as an example:

As part of its Global Issues Lecture Series, the Agriculture Club is sponsoring a lecture featuring noted cattle breeding expert and Michigan State University Professor of Bovine Studies Jillian Grazer who will discuss how to ensure all cows give birth to two or more calves, a key strategy for addressing increasing demands for beef and dairy products.

Pro Tip 1: “Event Name” — Give a brief but enticing title.

Weak Title: Global Issues Lecture: Jillian Grazer Discusses Cattle Breeding
Better Title: How to Ensure Multiple-Calf Births to Help Feed the World

Pro Tip 2: Make your description compelling. Lead with what would make a person want to attend. Next, give more details that might further entice the reader. Leave the least compelling details for the end.

Weak Description: As part of its Global Issues Lecture Series, the USC Dornsife Agriculture Club is hosting Jillian Grazer, professor of bovine studies at Michigan State University, who will discuss cattle breeding practices that may produce more beef and dairy.

Better Description: It may be possible to ensure that all cows give birth to more than one calf, presenting a possible solution to growing global demands for beef and dairy products. Cattle breeding expert Jillian Grazer will discuss the latest techniques aimed at ensuring multiple-calf births. Grazer will cover nutrition, husbandry and genetic assessment. Grazer is a professor of bovine studies at Michigan State University. This event is hosted by the USC Dornsife Agriculture Club as part of its Global Issues Lecture Series.

Pro Tip 3: Always include a photo. If at all possible, use one that has clear relevance to the event.

Weak Choice: Portrait of Professor Grazer with no indication of who she is.
Better Choice: A photo of two calves, or perhaps a photo of Professor Grazer feeding a cow or calf.
Websites

Homepage: dornsife.usc.edu
Work with us: dornsife.usc.edu/communication-contact
Social media: dornsife.usc.edu/social-media-directory
Facebook.com/USCDornsife
Twitter.com/USCDornsife
Instagram.com/USCDornsife
YouTube.com/USCDornsife

USC Experts Directory: pressroom.usc.edu
Write an op-ed: dornsife.usc.edu/write-an-op-ed
Viewpoint expert series: dornsife.usc.edu/viewpoint
Story pitch form: dornsife.usc.edu/story-pitch