



Opportunity Lives Here

Southern Virginia Higher Education Center Policy

Policy # 2101

Policy Title: MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Responsible Oversight Director: Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO)

Date of Current Revision or Creation: March 1, 2014

A. PURPOSE

The Southern Virginia Higher Education Center is committed to working proactively with the press in order to maintain positive, productive relationships with the professionals who report the news via newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the web. Positive relationships with the press are developed and enhanced by providing honest and helpful information to reporters, in a timely manner and in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

B. AUTHORITY

[Virginia Code Section 23-231.24-29](#), as amended, grants authority to the Board of Trustees to establish rules and regulations for the institution. Section VIII (E) of the [Board of Trustees Bylaws](#) grants authority to the Executive Director to implement the policies and procedures of the Board relating to the SVHEC operations.

The policies of the SVHEC fall within the following framework and hierarchy and, therefore, are subject to compliance with laws and regulations instituted by higher levels of authority:

1. Federal laws and regulations
2. State laws and regulations
3. Board of Trustees policies
4. **SVHEC policies**
5. Departmental policies and procedures

In the event of a conflict between different levels in 1 through 5 above, the lower numerical heading shall take precedence over higher numerical heading.

C. DEFINITIONS

D. SCOPE

This SVHEC policy is applicable to all SVHEC employees. Matters pertaining only to the internal procedures of a given department or office are not considered to be within the scope of this policy. The website <http://www.svhec.org/svhec-policies> is the official location of SVHEC policies.

E. POLICY STATEMENT

The SVHEC Communications Manager is officially designated by the SVHEC Executive Director as the Center's liaison with press outlets and is responsible for planning and coordinating the Center's media efforts.

1. **It is SVHEC's desire to maintain an attitude of openness with the press.**
 - a. SVHEC department directors and their designees should feel free to respond to questions posed by the media concerning their departments or areas of expertise. If they are concerned about speaking with the media or with formulating a response, they should contact the Communications Manager for assistance.
 - b. Questions raised by the press about an area other than the one an employee represents or about the SVHEC in general should be referred to the Communications Manager.
 - c. In order to avoid confusion or duplication of effort and to assist the SVHEC in building strong relationships with the press, employees are requested to immediately notify the Communications Manager of contacts with or interviews by media representatives.
2. **The proper procedure to release information to the media is to go through the Communications Manager, the official source of information for media representatives.**

All news releases are issued by the Communications Manager unless a special arrangement has been made.

3. **In crisis and/or emergency situations, the SVHEC Executive Director and the Communications Manager are the designated official agency spokespersons. They will coordinate with the appropriate personnel to delivery timely, accurate information to the media. No staff member or intern should offer comments or serve as a source for the press.**

All official statements, announcements or interviews relating to the emergency will be coordinated with the Communications Manager. Other efforts will be coordinated as the crisis communications plan directs.

4. The Communications Manager makes the final decision regarding the newsworthiness of a potential story. The SVHEC Communications Manager is able to assist other departments with discussion on how to make a story more attractive to the press so that it may obtain the greatest amount of news coverage.
5. When a formal request for information is made of the SVHEC by the press, the Communications Manager will contact members of the SVHEC community to respond to that request.
6. Upon receiving an interview request from the media, the Communications Manager will coordinate with the appropriate departments and their staff.
7. If a member of the media is observed on campus, the Communications Manager should be contacted to assist her/him or bring/direct them to the Front Desk so that Operations staff may contact Communications Manager, and provide somewhere for them to wait.
8. **SVHEC, as an independent state agency has a responsibility to be open and responsive to information requests from the public and the press. The SVHEC is committed to a policy of openness, honesty and cooperation. SVHEC adheres to state regulations on public records, which define the parameters of legal access to information by the media and others.**
 - a. If a public information request by the press is received, contact the Communications Manager as soon as possible in order to begin the process of replying to that request in a timely manner.
 - b. The Communications Manager will work with the Executive Director, Chief Finance & Operating Officer, and Agency's representative in the Assistant Attorney General's Office to ensure state regulations are followed in responding to all public information requests.
9. **The SVHEC encourages departments and programs to develop social media sites in an effort to provide detailed and personalized information. The Communications Manager should be made aware of any sites before they are made public, and should have access to the site to monitor & make posts when necessary.**

- a. No confidential or proprietary information about the SVHEC or current & former students, faculty, or staff shall be posted on a social media site. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.
- b. All applicable laws, regulations and SVHEC policies must be strictly adhered to, including without limitation, those pertaining to copyright and intellectual property rights, employee or student conduct, use of SVHEC resources, information and data, and student privacy.
- c. A permanent link to the official SVHEC website (www.SVHEC.org) must be included on all SVHEC sites.
- d. No single unit's social media site represents the SVHEC as a whole. Consider this when naming pages and accounts and selecting profile pictures or icons such that it clearly specifies the SVHEC unit being represented.
- e. The SVHEC name, logo or tagline may not be used on personal social media pages or sites or to endorse a product or support a cause, political or otherwise.

F. RELATED INFORMATION

N/A

¹Procedures are not a part of the policy document. They are maintained separately.

POLICY HISTORY

Director Policy Review Committee & Policy Responsible Oversight Director - Approval to Proceed:

Patricia M. Nelson
Responsible Oversight Director's Signature

07/01/2013
Date

Executive Director – Provisional Approval of Policy:

Betty H. Akers
Executive Director's Signature

07/01/2013
Date

Date of Presentation to Board of Trustees:

Date of Approval by Board of Trustees:

Default Approval Date (if necessary):

Board of Trustee – Approval of Policy:

Chairman's or Designee's Signature

Date

Policy Revision Dates:

Scheduled Review Date: March 2019