

## “Planning Your Washington Media Tour”

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**Tools you will need.** You will need the following:

- Washington, D.C. media list (with complete contact information including emails, phone numbers and mailing addresses)
- city and surrounding areas map
- Metro (subway) schedule and map
- Mobile Travel Guide or Frommer’s guide to D.C. restaurants, hotels, sites, etc.
- access to Mapquest or similar Internet travel/directions guidance.

**Timing is everything.** Learn the basics, such as daily working schedules of the media representatives. Learn that *The Chronicle of Higher Education*’s editorial staff is often on deadline on Thursday, and several *USA Today* “LifeStyle” reporters work on Sundays, but are not available on Fridays. (If you don’t know these deadlines, call a D.C. college PR officer and obtain his or her insights. The PR directors at educational associations such as ACE, NAICU, CIC, etc. can also help.)

Avoid attempting to set up meetings with higher ed periodical representatives during an educational conference. That’s when too many college reps will be doing the same thing. Don’t try meeting during summer months when many key reporters, editors and producers will be absent (such as August). On the other hand, if you have a good Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, or other holiday angle, many reporters work through those seasons and may be thrilled to learn of your holiday-related angle.

**Bring along a compelling idea.** This may sound elementary, but it actually is so significant that it deserves repeating. This guide assumes that you are coming to Washington, D.C. with a scientist at your university who has just uncovered a breakthrough in the curing of cancer or has some similar “can’t-miss” idea.

Washington, D.C. is one of the most competitive markets in the world. Please do not visit to share the name of your commencement speaker or the fact that you have just instituted service learning activities. If these are your best ideas, stay home. Do not attempt to set up a D.C. tour with a marginal idea or with experts who may be simply “good to know in case you might need an expert sometime.” You might hit with this pitch occasionally, but save yourself the rejections. There will be many. You need a news hook, a sure-fire reason for a face-to-face meeting, and an expert who is quotable and willing to work.

**Alumni in the Media.** Connect if possible with alumni journalists. Visits with them can often prove valuable if they involve a cultivation purpose. Also, if your school has a large contingent in D.C. make certain the D.C. editors and producers know that fact. They are always looking for ways to appeal to large audiences of their readers or viewers.

If you have the can't-miss idea and the expert in hand, do the following:

1. **Prioritize your list of media targets** for your trip based upon total circulation, prestige or the target audience you desire. Separate them and put them in order of preference. Put your top priorities first (*Washington Post*, *USA Today*, National Public Radio, primary gatekeeper outlets such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *InsideHigherEd.com*, etc.). Place your second priorities next (discipline-oriented magazines, special interests publications, bureaus of national outlets covering education from D.C., etc.) and third priorities last (secondary gatekeeper outlets such as *Science News*, *Prism*, *The Independent*, etc.).
2. **Create a telephone or email script** for your idea. Put your major points and an argument for holding a face-to-face meeting into a 30-second telephone script or a two paragraph email. "Our professor's ability to use a chainsaw for art sculptures of movie stars has earned him an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. The story is even more interesting when you consider that he lost his eyesight as a teen."
3. **Set up appointments as far in advance as possible.** If you possess a truly attractive idea, then you may only need a week, but in most cases, you'll need three to six weeks to coordinate a one- or two-day trip. Check into your target outlets' working schedules and plan calls only when you know the reporter is likely to be around. Avoid leaving call-back messages on voice mail, if possible. These messages force the reporter to consider you a problem, not a solution.

#### SIX TO THREE WEEKS BEFORE YOUR TRIP

4. **Start a day-by-day itinerary** with you and your experts' arrival times and departures (and any other "down" periods to avoid) filled in. Be sure to put in the hotel where you are staying, so you'll know the point of daily departures and returns. List all phone numbers (especially mobiles) and emails for your party.
5. **Begin to set up your most important appointment(s) first.** After securing the time for the first appointment, move to your second and third appointments.
  - A. If you know the reporter's preference for contacts (phone, email or letters), contact him or her that way. They all have preferences, and it's best to record them. If you don't have that information, look in *Bacon's MediaSource*, *RadioPublicity*, *Harrison's Guide to the Top National TV Talk & Interview Shows* or newsletters like *Bulldog Reporter* and *PR Leads* that often have that information. (You're wise at this conference to jot that information down as speakers reveal it. And many will.)
  - B. Good reporters often give you an immediate response. Many will email you right back. Unfortunately, at larger media, they are so busy that they may select silence as their option of choice. If your email does not receive a

response within a week, call and remind the reporter and/or send a second email. It is reasonable to assume that it may take you two weeks to set up the high priority appointments. You should not constantly call to pester the reporter during this time, but instead you must space out your emails and follow up calls. It is unwise to telephone more than once and possibly fatal to telephone more than twice.

- C. For your top priority meeting, you may suggest two or three days from which the reporter may choose a convenient time. As you move to your next priorities, some time slots will be taken, so you should propose a pair of specific time slots that may be convenient for the reporter/editor/producer whom you wish to meet. Ask the reporter to provide another time that is more convenient until a match is made.
  - D. A reporter never wants to think that his or her agreeing to meet with your expert is the sole reason your expert is in town. Likewise, you do not want your expert to appear to be coming to Washington for one appointment. Always have “an alumni gathering,” “meetings with a few donors,” “appointment with a Congressman,” or something similar that the expert is doing in town. If your media appointments fall through, these will come in handy.
  - E. Avoid coordinating your D.C. media calls with calls to be set up by your college’s Development Officer, if possible. Fundraisers’ priorities are different than yours, but are just as compelling. They will sometimes unravel your agenda by scheduling a large donor against a meeting you intended to set with a media giant, since their appointments are most likely to be set up a week or two before yours.
  - F. If you must coordinate with Development, give them the dinner and evening hours only. Turn over breakfast hours too, if you must, but only as a last resort. Just remember that the fundraiser’s job security is as likely to depend upon setting up meaningful appointments as yours is, so try to coordinate closely so that your president is not put in stressful or sensitive situation with too little time to switch message.
6. **Send a confirming email or letter to the reporter immediately after each appointment is set.** This may be the reminder that assures your meeting.
7. **Analyze with maps of D.C. for your geographical distances.** Almost all downtown media locations are easy to get to by cabs and/or Metro (with the exception of *U.S. News*, which is located in Georgetown, and NPR, which is a healthy walk from any Metro stop. Discover where you are setting up meetings in D.C. before you plan too much of your schedule. Remember that the northern Virginia locations of *USA News*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, and the Alexandria office of the *Washington Post* (where its national higher education

reporter works) are at least one hour away from a downtown hotel (in both directions).

8. **Plan your time effectively.** (You may prefer to rent a car to go to *USA Today*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* and the Northern Virginia *Post* bureau.)
9. **As you make each appointment, put into your itinerary the addresses and contact information for each media rep at the appointment.** Also, put in the following information for your expert to review:
  - A. Objective for the meeting, such as “invite him to campus at an upcoming special event,” or “open door for future visits with another college expert on this topic.”
  - B. Background information about the reporter, such as years at the outlet, alma maters and degrees, coverage responsibilities and tenure in current position, possible questions to expect, and names of other reporters who might join the meeting.
  - C. Points to focus on and 3 or 4 key message points to convey to the reporter during the discussion. Note any handouts that you will leave behind at the conclusion of the meeting.
  - D. Include clippings or downloaded articles from the Internet of the reporter’s last 2-3 published stories with dates of their appearance.
10. **Move from one appointment to the next and put in specific meeting details for each appointment.** To the list of information above add, at the end of the first meeting, the driving or walking directions. Almost all in-town appointments are within 30 minutes by either cab or Metro ride, assuming appointments are not during rush hours (7:30-9:30 a.m. and 3:30-7:00 p.m.).
11. **Caution your expert not to equate the length of the meeting with success or failure.** A 10-minute meeting might yield a highly positive story for your institution. A 45-minute meeting might yield nothing or vice versa.
12. **Allow 30 more minutes than required for each appointment.** These extra minutes will reduce your stress level over a stalled elevator, delays in hailing a cab on rainy days, the lobby guard who is too busy to ring the reporter immediately, a reporter who calmly keeps listening, etc. And, in the event you are able to arrive early to the next appointment, you have more time to brush up on your meeting points.
13. **Keep the information for each meeting to less than one page long,** or your expert will likely not have time to review it and the attached clippings.

## TWO WEEKS TO ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR TRIP

14. **By this date, if you do not have a couple of meetings established for the day or days in question, abort the trip** -- or focus on setting up other appointments in the halls of Congress with legislators, trustees, donors or officers of educational associations.

If you choose to continue with your plans, read on:

15. **Gather your handouts and set up duplicate folders for each planned meeting.** Duplicate the materials for you and your expert to have a nearly identical packet of materials. (Yours may have more personal notes about directions, last-minute calls, potential contacts that you'd like to try to meet on the fly, etc.)
16. **At this point, begin to fill in "down times" with your lower priority media targets.** Some of these gatekeeper media will be easier to set up, but if you don't get an appointment, it might prove useful to have a two-hour "down" period. This slot allows you to make last-minute switches in your schedule if a key media rep needs to rearrange his or her meeting. Last-minute juggling **often** occurs. Expect it to happen and keep smiling. Remember: you may need to shuffle times around.

## FINAL DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING

17. **Double check the times, places and confirmations with reporters and experts to ensure that every appointment and everyone involved is on the same page.** It is very easy for misunderstandings to occur and you would rather alter your schedule now than at the last minute. You can most easily reconfirm with reporters by sending ahead a bio of your expert and verifying the time and place.
18. **Sit down with your expert and review the goals, messages and plans for each of your meetings.** You are likely to have some possible appointments that you are still trying to set up, so review the background for those meetings too -- just in case.
19. **If you have not been to Washington, D.C. before, come to the city on the previous work day.** Rehearse your expert's entire agenda to ensure that you've left enough travel time. Remember, you may need Metro to replace cabs, and Metro doesn't always take you door-to-door. Adjust your time plan accordingly. Start at your expert's hotel door, and go to each appointment, gathering insight on which elevators stop at which floors, how much walking time is needed, and which gates will involve rigorous security checks (probably most of them).

## AT THE MEETINGS

20. **Take care of logistics** so that your expert only needs to concentrate on answers to questions and communicating message points.
21. **Stick to previously promised and agreed-to meeting limits** for requested time and topics unless led further by the reporter's intentions. Don't be misled by nice reporters who are simply being courteous.
22. **Take good notes about the discussion for use in follow-up correspondence.**

## SHORTLY AFTER THE MEETINGS

23. **Prepare two sets of follow-up letters per meeting.** One set is for the expert to sign and send and the other is for you. Send yours the day after. The expert's must go out by the end of the first work week.
24. **Both sets of letters should sound like the person who signs them.** Both sets should refer, if possible, to a personal observation or tie-in into a topic (or 2-3 topics) that was brought up at the meeting. This letter is something that you'll want to refer to again later, when you talk later to the reporter – a similar college experience, children's names, vacation plans, etc.
25. **Write the letters for different purposes.** The expert's note should summarize the main points made in the meeting and, if necessary, add additional insights that were missed. The expert's letter could encourage the reporter to call directly and should include the expert's personal contact information. Your note should thank the reporter and seek guidance on whether the interview went as well as he or she had anticipated.
26. **File both your notes and the two sets of letters for reference later in your future dealings with the reporters and experts.**
27. **Thank your expert for the time and effort expended with an email or a memo.** The expert's or president's effort is likely to be considerable and expensive. Ask your expert how he or she felt about the meetings. Discover if you could have made his or her life easier in any way. Record your findings with your own critiques for the next time you are planning a Washington, D.C. media trip. If you are thanking an expert, you may want to send a cc of the thank you to the expert's dean and/or president.

## So, where are the national media stops in DC, anyway?

The following media are organized by nearby Metro stops, and are usually located within walking distance from the Metro stop. Some are close to multiple stops, but we have tried to give you a preference that makes your travel more tightly organized.

Almost all the national media are located within the Northwest Washington sector. You will notice that a few media are in other parts of D.C. or are driving or cab rides from downtown. As for your hotel, for longer stays you might want to stay at a hotel near your appointment destinations.

### Farragut North (Red line)

*ABC News*  
1717 DeSales Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036

*Wall Street Journal*, Washington  
Bureau  
1025 Connecticut Ave. NW #800  
Washington, DC 20036

*Change Magazine*  
1319 Eighteenth St. NW  
Washington, DC 20036

*Science News*  
1719 N Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036

*Washington Post*  
1150 15<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20071

*Newsweek*, Suite 1220  
1750 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Associated Press Broadcast News  
1100 13th St. NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20005-4051

Scripps Howard News Service  
1090 Vermont Ave. NW, Ste 1000  
Washington, DC 20005

*USA Today's* DC Bureau  
1100 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005

*Christian Science Monitor*  
910 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

**Foggy Bottom** (Orange, blue lines)

*U.S. News & World Report*  
1050 Thomas Jefferson St. NW  
Washington, DC 20007-3871

**Foggy Bottom** (Orange, blue lines) or **Dupont Circle** (Red line)

*The Chronicle of Higher Education*  
1255 Twenty-Third Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

*Chronicle of Philanthropy*  
1255 23rd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

**Dupont Circle** (Red line)

*InsideHigherEd*  
1320 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW Fifth Floor  
Washington, DC 20036

*AGB Trusteeship*  
1133 20<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036

CBN NewsWatch, DC Bureau  
1111 19<sup>th</sup> St. NW Suite 950  
Washington, D.C. 200036

**Metro Center** (Red, orange, blue lines)

Bloomberg News Service  
1399 New York Ave. NW 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

*Science Magazine*  
1200 New York Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20005

*Business Week*  
1200 G Street, NW Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20005

**Farragut West (Orange, blue lines)**

*Newsweek*, Suite 1220  
1750 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20006

*Kiplinger's Personal Finance*  
1729 H St. NW  
Washington, DC 20006

*Christian Science Monitor*  
910 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

**Union Station (Red line)**

C-SPAN  
400 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 650  
Washington, DC 20001

CBS  
400 N. Capitol St., NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Cox Newspapers  
400 N. Capitol St., NW  
Washington, DC 20001

CNN, Washington Bureau  
820 First Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002

**Gallery Place-Chinatown (Red, green and yellow lines)**

National Public Radio  
635 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

**Federal Center SW (Orange, blue lines) or L'Enfant Plaza (Orange, green, yellow, blue lines)**

Voice of America  
330 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20237

## **Driving or cab as the preferred option**

*Washington Post*, Virginia Bureau  
526 King Street, Suite 515  
Alexandria, Va. 22314

*USA Today*  
7950 Jones Branch Drive  
McLean, VA 22108

*DIVERSE: Issues in Higher Education*  
10520 Warwick Avenue, #B-8  
Fairfax, VA 22030

NewsHour with Jim Lehrer  
3620 South 27th Street  
Arlington, VA 22206-2304

*Education Week*  
6935 Arlington Road, St. 100  
Bethesda, MD 20814

*Updated June, 2009 in consultation with frequent Washington travelers and DC-based natives. These contributors include: Frank Dobisky, President, Dobisky Associates; Roland King, Vice President of Public Affairs, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; Dick Jones, President, Dick Jones Communications; and Laura Wilcox, Vice President for Communications, Council of Independent Colleges.*