

Guidelines for Media Interviews
Faculty Senate Council, Howard University
April 2018

Events that occur at Howard University are often newsworthy, and when those events involve the faculty, we may be called for comment by reporters covering the story. This provides an opportunity for us, as elected members of the Faculty Senate Council, to serve as a public voice for the faculty constituencies that we serve.

There are several basic principles that we should follow when speaking to reporters about events in our roles as members of the Faculty Senate Council:

1. **Stick to facts.** In other words, provide information that is factually accurate and can be supported with evidence.
2. **Keep your answers to their questions brief and to the point.** This will assure a higher likelihood of accuracy in reporting.
3. **Assume that nothing is “off the record.”** Anything you say to a reporter may end up published, whether broadcast or print. Reporters sometimes grant more leeway on this, but unless you know the reporter well, do not assume you will be granted anonymity in your statements, if they are quoted.
4. **Help the reporter understand governance at Howard.** Make sure to emphasize the difference between “Faculty Council” (the whole Howard full-time faculty) and the “Faculty Senate Council” (the elected body of __#__ members), which is the faculty governing body.
5. **Be prompt in returning reporters’ calls** – they are working with deadlines and need to “source” their stories with our input in time to publish. If you lack time to respond in the timeframe the reporter indicates, ask the Council chairperson or another Council member to contact the reporter.
6. **Observe etiquette when speaking about campus events and politics.** Maintain a respectful tone about the campus community while you are addressing issues at hand.
7. **If you don’t know the answer to a question,** direct the reporter to the chairperson of the Council, or to someone else on the Council who has more information.
8. **Keep a record of the reporters you speak with,** as well as their news organizations.
9. **If a reporter asks you for specific documents, make sure these are documents that we have authority to provide.** Never send working drafts of documents, confidential documents, etc.

10. If you are asked to comment “as a faculty member” outside your role as a Council member, e.g., How have you experienced the boiler crisis? – provide concrete details about your observations and experience.