

## **News Media Relations Policy The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**

Effective management of Southern Seminary's relationship with representatives of both secular and religious news agencies is in the best interest of the Seminary. As the flagship seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention and with leading intellectuals who can assist news media, Southern Seminary has a unique opportunity to help shape the way news media report on a wide variety of matters. With a proven record as a communicator of evangelical convictions, the president is the official spokesman of the Seminary. The president, in turn, has assigned primary responsibility for coordination of media relations to the Seminary's Director of Media Relations in the Office of Communications in ongoing and close consultation with his office.

Therefore, when employees, including secretarial, faculty and leadership staff, receive calls or email from reporters requesting information about the Seminary or comments on issues or events, the inquiry should be forwarded to Communications. In response, the Director of Media Relations will take the following actions:

- contact the reporter to ascertain the nature of the request and deadline,
- confer with Seminary leadership to discuss the most appropriate and timely response, and
- coordinate response and follow-up.

On occasion, Seminary representatives may be approached by reporters while in the field following sermons, addresses, meetings or in other circumstances when it is not practicable to refer the inquiry to Communications. Immediate response to appropriate questions related to non-controversial issues and within the expertise of the representative may provide beneficial opportunities to tell the Southern Seminary story. However, staff should never feel compelled to talk with a news media representative without consultation with the Director of Media Relations. And, when news media contact of this nature occurs, the Seminary representative should inform Communications as soon as possible.

Staff should notify the Director of Media Relations as soon as possible when potentially embarrassing or controversial issues may become public. Adequate preparation is essential for proper response.

Staff with information, events or ministries that may be of interest to reporters, should contact the Director of Media Relations for assistance in generating appropriate and timely coverage. The news media is interested in what is new, important, unusual or exciting to a great number of their readers, listeners, or viewers, if it is timely. The more advance notice afforded the Director of Media Relations, the greater likelihood that coverage will be given.

Exceptions to these guidelines for specific programs, events, personnel or consultants may be made from time-to-time by the president. Questions about implementation may be directed to the president or Communications.

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