

Media Relations for Colleges

Center for Student Opportunity encourages all partner colleges profiled in the *College Access & Opportunity Guide* to reach out to local media to promote your institution's recognition as a leading college committed to serving and supporting first-generation, low-income and minority students.

Why is reaching out to the media important?

Underrepresented students truly aren't aware of the college opportunity that exists for them, and engaging the media is essential to spread the word about your institution's inclusion in the *College Access & Opportunity Guide*. Media will be an effective way to communicate to first-generation, low-income and minority students and their supporters – parents, families, counselors and mentors – that your institution is committed to college access and retention.

Regard your outreach with the media as a collaborative partnership—you want to reach the public and the media provides a good outlet for such an effort. Journalists like to report compelling stories and you have a good one to tell. They'll be especially interested in learning about the outreach initiatives, financial aid programs and student support services that are unique to your college campus, and the fact that you've recently been highlighted in a national college guidebook for these efforts is also pretty special.

Center for Student Opportunity has provided you with a few documents to help you work with the media:

- **Press Release** – can easily be adapted to meet your institution's needs and reflect the unique programs and initiatives on your campus; you should include a quote from your President and/or Dean of Admissions
- **Explaining the College Profile** – our guidebook profiles speak to first-generation, low-income and minority students very differently; this document also provides an overview of the common programs and best practices in college access, recruitment, and retention that are staples on many college campuses
- **College Access & Opportunity Guide FAQs** – this document helps answer common questions about the *College Access & Opportunity Guide*
- **The Facts: Making the Case for the College Access & Opportunity Guide** – this fact sheet provides an overview of important data on the state of college access and opportunity for first-generation, low-income, and minority students

Making the Pitch

Creative story angles. To earn media coverage, it will be critical to develop creative story ideas, besides simply promoting your inclusion in the *College Access & Opportunity Guide*.

Here are a few examples:

- Identify low-income or minority students on your campus who are working to fulfill their college aspirations, particularly those who are the first in their family to pursue postsecondary education. These 2-3 students can speak about how they've benefited from scholarships, student support services or multicultural organizations on your campus.
- Host an event or make a presentation at a local school or community organization to promote college-going and share the *College Access & Opportunity Guide*. Invite the media to attend. Some colleges have pledged to personally deliver their allotment of Guides for the free distribution program and will be inviting reporters to join them.
- If you cannot host an event or organize a presentation, suggest the reporter check out a community-based organization where your students volunteer with pre-college students. By doing so, you are demonstrating that your campus community is concerned with college access beyond your walls. Make sure these students are ready to speak about how your institution addresses diversity in unique ways.
- If there is a campus administrator or faculty member who is committed to college access and success at your institution, ask that person to explain to reporters about the many programs and scholarships that exist for first-generation students on your campus. (Note: These individuals should be media savvy and well-informed about the *College Access & Opportunity Guide*. Please be sure they're familiar with the FAQs document)
- Encourage your college president to submit a bylined article or an op-ed in regards to your institution's recognition in the *College Access & Opportunity Guide*. This article should discuss ongoing efforts at your institution that help support first-generation, low-income and minority students.
- Always provide hard data on how your institution is successfully serving the traditionally underserved (i.e. investment in dollars your school has made in scholarships and programs, number of students you've served through enrollment and pre-college outreach programs, etc.)