



Media & Messaging

What do you say when people say -- at a meeting, an event, tabling, etc -- "What are you doing?" What is the story out there in the world about your organization & your campaign? Use this guide to craft thoughtful, powerful messages about your efforts and maximize your media presence!

What makes a good message?

- **Problem** - conveys URGENCY! Why is this such a critical issue?
- **Solution** - offers a path forward, conveys opportunity & hope.
- **Action & Ask** - why are you even talking to them? What can they do about this? How can they get involved?

Good messages are bite-sized stories.

Remember what makes a good story? -- it's a very similar model, which can be helpful to think about again in creating messages-

- **Challenge:** What are you facing? Why is it challenging?
- **Choice:** What can you do about it? What is the path forward?
- **Outcome:** What can happen if we make this choice? How will that feel?

Creating messaging means crafting the simple, powerful phrases that you can use in all sorts of situations -- as quick "elevator pitches" to respond to the "what are you doing?" question, and as core statements that you expand upon as needed with stories in events, meetings, or media opportunities

Take time to craft messages with your group -- it's a wonderful opportunity to share stories, create campaign messaging that resonates with everyone, and feel prepared and excited about how to connect to people to build your group and campaign.

Example messages

7 of the 10 lowest-paid jobs in the US are in the food system. We want our campus to commit to just working conditions for the folks growing and preparing our food. We're launching a coalition of organizations who support creating a policy for a just & sustainable campus food system. We have our first coalition forum this Wednesday -- will you join us?

Do you have a meal plan? The majority us are required to buy one, but currently we can't decide what kind of food our money buys. We're working to create a student-led committee that will actually get to make decisions about our campus food system, along with dining workers, farmers, and other interested folks. We need our President to sign on to the Campus Commitment to make sure we have university support. Will you sign this letter encouraging him to do so?

BE THE MEDIA!

Media doesn't just happen -- be the media! Build relationships with journalists, or find opportunities to write yourself. **If you don't tell the stories, someone else will, and they might not be the stories you want told.**

Places to tell the powerful stories & urgent messages of your campaign:

Facebook Page - Be active but not annoying --posting about once a day is reasonable. Post photos of important campaign updates, create Facebook events for all group events, and post about any media that you receive.

Blog - If your group can handle it, host a campaign/organizational blog to promote on Facebook. Blogs are only relevant if they are actively updated -- recruit awesome bloggers to your group, and be thoughtful about your capacity to keep it updated!

Campus newspaper - People really read it, even if it doesn't seem like it. - it's usually free. found all over the place, and it's often the way that many staff and administration keep tabs on what students really care about. Invite journalists to your events & actions. Many newspapers have space for student Op-Eds or Letters to the Editor.

Local media - Especially in college towns, local press like to report about cool things happening on-campus, and staff and administration often subscribe to local papers.

Media advisory - Before a large event or action, send a media advisory to all of the media you want to be there. Include a brief, powerful description of the event -- including quotes from organizers or participants is ideal. Include all event info : date, location, contact info.

Be prepared!

- Actually practice messaging before tabling, talking to media, or hosting events. Let everyone practice what you want to say -- pair up, and role-play. It's fun & makes everyone feel much more prepared & excited.

See Research Actions handout for more.

Be real!

- Ask questions, listen well, and actually connect with folks -- it's great if you get petition signatures, it's even better if you really connect and meet new group members!
- Don't use jargon -- Non-students don't always know the nicknames or acronyms that students use for things. Use full names, and say what you mean without buzzwords.

Lead or be led

- Stick to your agenda and core messages, and return the conversation to the agenda if it veers away. Helpful phrases to bring things back on-track:
- That sounds a lot like this ____ that we want to talk about
 - The key thing is ____ / What seems most important is ____
 - That's really related to ____

Follow-up!

- Gather contact info when tabling so you can follow-up with people so they can get more involved
- Follow-up with media to verify quotes, provide more information, and see drafts if possible
- Leave every meeting with a clear next meeting or task -- and follow-up to confirm it.