

The Power of University-Community Storytelling

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University-community partnerships fit the public mission of a university.

- Show public mission in action
- Address challenges facing communities
- Create relationships in communities
- Learn from the community's expertise
- Share and create new knowledge
- Increase positive perceptions of the university

Impact

CU Boulder faculty, staff and students serve nearly **500,000 Coloradans** each year through **260+ programs** that partner with communities.



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Office for Outreach and Engagement

- Started in 2001
- Campuswide resource
- Funding
- Program development
- Network building
- Lectures
- Program database
- Strategic communications



These partnerships and programs can shape public discourse.

- Create community dialogue
- Shape feelings and values
- Lead to social change or legislative action
- Build connections with new stakeholders

Why do we tell stories?

A photograph of students in a chemistry laboratory. In the foreground, a student with dark hair is writing in a blue notebook. To their right, a student with brown hair is wearing large green safety goggles and looking down. In the background, another student is visible. The lab benches have various pieces of equipment, including faucets and bottles.

- Share the “good news” of your work
- Share value of higher ed to public
- Draw people, donors to events or a cause
- Connect with campus and community partners
- Connect with general public

Communicators can help frame stories.

- Describe research and outreach impact
- Describe mutual benefit
- Include the community partner's knowledge
- Discuss the value of the partnership



Elements of a compelling story

- Call to action
- Targeted audiences
- Newsworthy
- Timely (it's news, not "olds")
- Relevant stats
- Start with a protagonist (show, don't tell)
- Strong visuals



How we put it all together

- Strategic communication planning
- Communicator expertise
- Timing
- Collaboration



Communications Tools

- Owned
- Social
- Paid
- Earned



Measuring Communications Impact

Qualitative

- Did it lead to some action?
- Did it strengthen relationship?
- Did it create new partnerships?

Quantitative

- Open and click rates
- Impressions and views
- Donations

Communications Case Studies



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Teacher Shortage Crisis



Rocky Mountain National Park Exhibits



Homelessness Partnership



Group activity

Discuss the following questions with a partner. (10 mins)

- What are some possible stories?
- What are some timing considerations?
- Who are your partners?
- Who's your audience?
- What are the tools you can use?

Share ideas with the group. (10 mins)

Connect with us!

CU Boulder program website: outreach.colorado.edu/programs

Office website: colorado.edu/outreach/ooe

School of Education website: colorado.edu/education



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