



Earning Media Coverage for Campus Events

Getting your events covered:

1. Develop a **Press List** that includes both on-campus and off-campus TV, radio and print news outlets.
2. **3 days before** the event send a **press advisory** to your sources and follow up with a **pitch call** to make sure they notice the advisory and to answer any questions.
3. **1 day before** the event send the advisory and follow-up again with any reporters you didn't reach initially.
4. **Morning of** the event, call all your outlets and make sure they have the necessary info including directions and contact information.
5. **At the event**, give all press who show up your **press release** and any other relevant background information in the form of a press packet.
6. **After the event**, send the release and photos to any reporters who didn't show up and call to encourage them to run the story.

Press List

Keep a database of all your local media outlets including information for news editors, features editors and key reporters including those who cover the environment, energy, higher education or other relevant issues.

The database should include:

- Name
- Phone Numbers
- E-mail Address
- Relevant information about them or what they cover
- Notes on your relationship with them or if they've covered you before

Pitch Calls

Pitching is about sharing your story to reporters and editors. By pitching them good stories you're helping them do their job!

To do a good pitch call you want to think about what the reporter is interested in and what makes your event newsworthy.

What makes a story newsworthy?

- local focus/affecting people at home
- human interest/drama
- strange bedfellows – i.e. Fraternities and environmentalists
- anniversaries

- big or strange visuals or large crowds
- something new happening/fresh angle
- conflict
- current events/hot issues

How to do a pitch call:

1. Introduce yourself/your group
2. Ask if they have a minute
3. Ask if they received the press advisory (be specific, they get a lot of these: remind them what the issue/event is and what your e-mail subject line said)
4. Pitch the story concisely including what your doing and why it's interesting
5. Ask if they are planning to cover event/story
6. Ask if they have any more questions
7. Thank them for their time (regardless if they're interested in attending)

Press Advisory

A press advisory (or news advisory) is the document sent out to reporters prior to an event to inform them and invite them to come. The format is similar to that of a press release, but simpler, with a specific statement of the who, what, when, and where of the event. The idea is to get them to send a reporter and cover the event. See the template below.

Press Release

The press release is the story you would want to have published, with all important information—as if the reporter could simply copy and paste it into the newspaper (which occasionally happens). Because of this, however, the press release must be realistic, and up to journalistic standards. It must include contact information, a striking and intriguing headline and quotes from people supporting your campaign. See the template below.

TEMPLATE PRESS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE

Contact: Student Name, Phone, E-mail

Headline (no longer than one line)

Paragraphs 1-4: General info about the event and some context - no more than half a page.

What: The title and general gist of the event

Who: who is hosting/participating

Where: address of the event

When: date and time

Visuals: explain what visuals there will be for photographers

(NOTES: Ensure the whole advisory is no longer than one page and can be as short as half a page. The advisory is meant to let the press know an event is happening beforehand so they'll show up. Send your advisory one week before, 2 days before and the morning of your event followed by pitch phone calls to the reporters to make sure they're coming.)

TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE

Contact: Student #1 Name, Phone #, E-mail
Student #2 Name, Phone, E-mail (one of these should be someone quoted below, both should be prepared to talk to the press)

Headline (simple, clear, catchy - no more than 9 words/1 line)

Sub-head (more info, no more than one line)

Paragraph #1: All the basic info including who, what, where, when and why. All paragraphs should be no more than 60 words in 1-2 sentences.

Paragraph #2: Context. Gives some more context, information about the campaign/event such as “this event is part of X Club’s effort to retire our university’s dirty, polluting coal plant and move to 100% clean energy.”

Paragraph #3: Quote! This should be a quote by one of the student leaders explaining why this issue/event/campaign is important to students, why they care, etc. You want this quote to help make the story personal and relevant to your audience and explain the purpose of the event. Your first quote should be no later than the 3rd paragraph.

Paragraph #4: Background. This is your chance to give additional background info about your group, the campaign and/or coal issues in general.

Paragraph #5: Quote #2. This should further back up/explain the overall message of the campaign or event and be from a different student than the first one.

Paragraph #6: Any other relevant info about the event/organization/campaign including that it’s part of the national Campuses Beyond Coal campaign led by the Sierra Student Coalition aimed at moving all our nation’s universities beyond coal to clean energy solutions.

For more information: your website

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(The ### marks the end of the release and goes centered at the bottom of the page. Your release should be about the same length as the story you would want to run, but doesn’t have to be longer than 1 page.)

(NOTES: The press release should be ready to give to reporters at an event or to send to reporters who didn’t show up. When sending it to press who missed an event be sure to include high resolution photos they can use. Make sure your release reads like a news story because sometimes, especially at small papers, editors will simply reprint press releases verbatim.)

****SAMPLE VIRGINIA TECH 100 ACTIONS PRESS RELEASE****

October 2, 2011

Contact: Kim Teplitzky, 267-307-4707, kim.teplitzky@sierraclub.org

Virginia Students Take Action to Retire VT Campus Coal Plant

*Rally at Virginia Power Shift Kicks-off National Month of Action Demanding Schools
Switch to 100% Clean Energy*

Blacksburg, Va – Students from across the state converged at Virginia Tech over the weekend for Virginia Power Shift, a summit and rally where students networked, attended trainings and participated in an action demanding that Virginia Tech and other universities across the state transition to 100% clean energy starting now.

The action kicked-off a national month of creative actions focused on moving America's campus' beyond coal and dirty energy. The effort, *100% Clean: 100 Actions for Clean Energy*, is a joint project of Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, and Energy Action Coalition. It aims to unite local grassroots campaigns into a nationwide movement to retire university coal plants, cut university ties with the coal industry and move universities to clean energy solutions.

"We have students on our campus who are getting sick from breathing coal dust coming from the campus coal plant. This is unacceptable. We want Virginia Tech and universities nationwide to be leading the way towards an innovative, healthy and clean energy future, not stuck in the past relying on dirty coal," said Kara Dodson, a senior at Virginia Tech and Coordinator of Virginia Power Shift.

The rally featured students wearing surgical masks to represent the air pollution hazard of burning coal marching through an 8-foot-tall mock coal plant and then to 6-foot-tall mock wind turbines where they traded their face masks for green hard hats while calling on leaders to invest in clean energy such as geothermal, wind and energy efficiency that will create jobs in Virginia and improve public health.

Speakers included a student who lived in Thomas Hall, a dorm next door to the Virginia Tech coal plant, showing off a black soot covered towel she used to wipe down her window sill. Other students keep air filters in their windows to keep the coal dust out of their homes, but still struggle with the light and noise from the plant on a daily basis that can make it difficult to sleep or study.

Ralliers called on the Virginia Tech administration to live up to their motto, "Invent the Future" by retiring the dirty, dangerous campus coal plant that poses a health hazard to students and instead invest in innovative, clean energy sources for the school.

"Every year a new group of students are subject to the air, light and noise pollution from this plant and others like it on campuses across the country. It's time for our universities to step up and lead the way to move our nation beyond coal to real clean energy solutions," said Madeline Rigatti a sophomore at Virginia Tech and former Thomas Hall resident. "Students like me have

had to live with being sick because we had the bad luck of living near this plant and it's simply wrong."

"Now is the time to speak with fellow students and help inform of them about what we're learning here. Students need to work with our administrators and collaborate to start increasing clean energy on campuses across the state," said Alex Kosnett, President of the Environmental Coalition at Virginia Tech.

Over the next four weeks students across the country will be hosting flash mobs, camp outs, rallies, art builds, call-in days and more to call attention the public health risk of depending on dirty energy in their campuses and communities. Many of the actions will feature surgical masks as a symbol of the negative health impacts of dirty energy. At the end of the month student leaders will bring the stories and photos from these events to Washington, D.C. to deliver to the EPA and President Obama demanding further action to protect public health.

For more information on Virginia Power Shift: vapowershift.org

For more information on 100% Clean: 100 Actions for Clean Energy:
wearepowershift.org/100actions

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****SAMPLE NATIONAL 100 ACTIONS PRESS RELEASE****

October 3, 2011

Contact: Kim Teplitzky, 267-307-4707, kim.teplitzky@sierraclub.org

Students Take Action Nationwide to Move Campuses Beyond Coal
Over 100 Actions Planned Demanding Schools Switch to 100% Clean Energy

Washington, DC – This weekend students at Virginia Tech, Purdue University, Bates College in Maine and the University of Illinois kicked off a nationwide month of creative actions focused on moving America's campus' beyond coal. The coordinated effort called *100% Clean: 100 Actions for Clean Energy* aims to unite local efforts into a nationwide movement to retire university coal plants, cut university ties with the coal industry and move the nation's institutions of higher education to clean energy solutions.

"We have students on our campus who are getting sick from breathing coal dust coming from the campus coal plant across the street from their dorm. This is unacceptable. We want Virginia Tech and universities nation-wide to be leading the way towards an innovative, healthy and clean energy future, not stuck in the past relying on dirty coal," said Kara Dodson, a senior at Virginia Tech and Coordinator of the Campuses Beyond Coal campaign on campus.

Since the Sierra Club launched the national Campuses Beyond Coal campaign 16 schools have already committed to retiring their coal-fired plants on campus. Pollution from these plants is responsible for dangerous pollution including mercury, carbon dioxide, arsenic and lead and can lead to more severe asthma attacks, bronchial infections and cancer.

More than 150 students from across Virginia rallied at Virginia Tech wearing face masks and green hard hats at the Virginia Power Shift summit on Sunday. They called on the university administration to live up to their motto, "Invent the Future" by retiring the campus coal plant that poses a health hazard to students.

Speakers included a student who lived in Thomas Hall, a dorm next door to the Virginia Tech coal plant, showing off a black soot covered towel she used to wipe down her window sill. Other students keep air filters in their windows to keep the coal dust out of their homes, but still struggle with the light and noise from the plant on a daily basis that can make it difficult to sleep or study.

"Every year a new group of students are subject to the pollution from this plant and others like it on campuses across the country. It's time for our universities to step up and lead the way to moving our nation beyond coal and dirty energy to real clean energy solutions," said Madeline Rigatti a sophomore at Virginia Tech and former Thomas Hall resident. "Students like me have had to live with being sick because we had the bad luck of living near this plant and it's simply wrong."

"Students are leading the way pushing their universities to invest in innovative clean energy solutions. This month of action demonstrates the growing momentum on college campuses to

move our nation off dirty, 19th century, fuels that are making people sick. Coal, and the soot, smog and other pollution that comes from it impacts Americans across the country. We think that students can help reinvent the American economy by pressuring our administrations to invest in clean, safe and reliable energy on campuses from California to Connecticut” said Kim Teplitzky, Campuses Beyond Coal Campaign Coordinator for the Sierra Club.

Over the next four weeks students will be hosting flash mobs, 60’s dance parties, camp outs, rallies, art builds, call-in days and more to call attention the public health risk of depending on dirty energy in their campuses and communities. At the end of the month student leaders will bring the stories and photos from these events to Washington, D.C. to deliver to the Obama Administration demanding further action to protect public health.

For more information visit wearepowershift.org/100actions

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