The Media as an Asset to the Social Scientist

By
Chuck Carney, Steve Hinnefeld, Tracy James, and Brian Powell

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Whether by choice or necessity, social scientists are often called upon to relate their research findings to the public. Many of us have had negative experiences doing so, however, or we simply feel uncomfortable trying to translate our research into understandable language for non-experts. This panel on social science and the media will introduce you to strategies that will allow you to make the media an asset. First, attendees will be encouraged to distill their academic work so they can more effectively communicate with non-scientists. Attendees will also learn (1) how to prepare for print and broadcast interviews, (2) how to minimize the possibility of journalist error, and (3) what they can do to prevent journalists from taking advantage of them. Symposium speakers will explain why working with the media is beneficial to their departments, schools, institutions, and an American public that lacks literacy in our various areas of expertise. Lastly, speakers will discuss how IU scholars, with or without public relations assistance, can use social media to more effectively communicate directly with the public.

Chuck Carney, Director of Communications and Media Relations at the IU School of Education, has more than twenty years in journalism as an anchor/reporter in commercial television, a news director for public television, and taught television reporting and journalism, including at IU. He currently advises faculty and staff on media strategy, writes news releases and other informational material, and coordinates School of Education interactions with the media. Steve Hinnefeld is a writer and editor with the IU Office of University Communications. His beat includes SPEA, law, political science, history and several other areas. He spent more than 25 years as a newspaper reporter, primarily with the Bloomington Herald-Times. In December 2009, he traveled to Stockholm to write about and provide media assistance to IU Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom. Tracy James is a writer and editor with the Office of University Communications. Her beat includes sociology, psychological and brain sciences, gender studies, the Kinsey Institute, and HPER. She worked for a daily newspaper for 11 years before coming to IU in 2004 and she also worked for a wire service, weekly newspaper and a string of suburban newspapers. Brian Powell is James H. Rudy Professor of Sociology. He will discuss working with the media from a professor’s point of view, drawing from his experiences talking with a wide range of reporters and more recently, his whirlwind encounter with national media exposure.

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