Guidelines for Compass Story Submissions
How to get your story told to the Ohio University community (and beyond)

I. About Compass
Compass (www.ohio.edu/compass) is the official news and information source for Ohio University. Operating on the philosophy that “an informed campus is an inspired campus,” Compass publishes news and information relevant and of interest to the University community. Students; faculty; staff; parents; board members; alumni; emeritus faculty; potential, current and past donors; and prospective students and employees, and many others all have access to and read Compass regularly.

The mission of Compass is to provide need-to-know information to the University community and informative articles that can improve Ohio University’s prominence and reputation with internal and external audiences. Compass also serves as the University’s public “communication of record.”

Compass is one of several ways that Ohio University's leadership reaches out to inform the students, faculty, staff, and other interested parties.

Compass is published by the Internal Communications Team, Ohio University Communications and Marketing. Compass measures its success using the yardsticks of accuracy, timeliness, fulfillment of strategic communications objectives, and readership.

II. Six steps to getting your story told in Compass
Remember, the more you self-serve, the more you get.

Step 1. Consult and coordinate with your organization or department's communications representative
Always consult and coordinate with your organization’s communications representative. In accordance with Ohio University’s Media Relations Policy and, as a general rule, colleges, schools, and administrative department communicators are responsible for day-to-day communications tasks. These tasks include the preparation of content across varieties of media (text, photos, video, social media, etc.) intended to be published to audiences inside or outside the college, school, or department and the reviews and approvals of that content.

Before submitting your news story or news lead to the Internal Communications Team, contact your department's communications representative, or communicator.

In general, content submitted by Ohio University faculty and staff to UCM that has not been reviewed by the appropriate campus communicator will be returned to that campus communicator.

Once your news lead, story, or release is in the hands of your communicator, they will liaise with the Internal Communications Team to take the appropriate action.

Step 2. Determine if Compass is the right place for your story.
Compass may or may not be the right place for your story. The story should be applicable and of interest to larger campus community and have a “news hook.”

A “news hook” is a timely event the makes the story more relevant to readers’ interests. It must be an active story.
A good rule of thumb is to search out stories that have a "first, best, only" aspect to them. This means that they highlight something that OHIO is either the first to do, the best to do, or the only University to do.

By that, we mean that the formation or meeting of a committee is not a story. It will not be read, nor will it effectively share your message. Once the committee takes action, there is a story.

**Timeline of a committee**
- Committee formed
  - Not a story
  - Will be reviewed as background in subsequent articles
- Committee meets
  - Not a story
  - If open to the public, submit an announcement
- Committee issues recommendations
  - Only a story is the recommendations effect the entire campus
  - Cross-campus issue relevance
- Recommendations planned to be/ are put into action
  - This is a story for Compass
  - It is active
  - It is timely
  - People across campus are affected by it

School and department-specific stories are best handled at the school and department level. It there is an appointment below the level of dean, director, or department head, submit an announcement to spread the news.

Anything above that level, typically communications will be handled on an executive level. Consult with your supervisory report (president, provost, VPFA) to see how they would like the news to be reported before addressing UCM.

Alumni stories should go to Alumni Association magazine, *Ohio Today*. If the Alumni Association feels the story has import to the greater University, they will relay that to UCM.

The story should have “need to know” information for the larger campus community or the story should highlight achievement or strengths of Ohio University.

The story should be timely. *Compass* will rarely publicize an event more than two weeks prior. Most event previews run between one and two weeks prior to the event. If it is a post story, it should not run more than one week after the event.

The best submissions support at least one of the following goals, which are:

- Recruit and retain talented and diverse students, faculty, and staff
- Strengthen undergraduate education
- Enhance graduate and professional education and research
- Enrich the environment for students, faculty, staff, and the region
- Fortify and align infrastructure to enhance the academic missions of instruction, research, and service
- Enhance prominence within Ohio, the nation, and the world
Step 3: Determine what kind of story you have

Types of content published in Compass

Announcement – An event that is open to the public or deadline-based informational issue
  • Ex: a speaker from within the faculty, a reception, a film viewing, a workshop
  • Ex: an award or registration deadline
  • Length between 100-300 words
  • Submit these on Compass website, http://www.ohio.edu/outlook/announcements/form.cfm

Accolades – Any professional recognition given to faculty, staff or students
  • Includes international, national, state, and local awards and honors
  • Length between 200-325 words
  • Submit these on Compass website, http://www.ohio.edu/outlook/professional/form.cfm

News brief – an article informing the University about a specific event or information issue that merits explanation
  • Must be timely
  • Should run a week before the event, or within a week after it
  • Length between 200-325 words
  • Images should be provided by the communicator with photographer credit and a caption
  • Stories should be submitted to a designated Compass staff member

Feature – an article with University-wide appeal
  • Provides necessary information to faculty, staff, students, and community members (at least 2 of these groups)
  • If about an event, should run a week before the event, or within a week after it
  • Length between 450-600 words
  • Images should be provided by the communicator with photographer credit and a caption
  • Stories should be submitted to a designated Compass staff member

Compass content areas and categories
  • News from OHIO’s Campuses
  • Faculty and Staff
  • Students
  • Research
  • Health
  • Athletics
  • Arts

Strategic content

Appalachia Rising - This special Compass series features the programs and initiatives through which Ohio University students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends are realizing their promise as they elevate lives across the region.

  • Example: From coal mines to the classroom, OHIO grounds technician receives gift of literacy at 53: http://www.ohio.edu/compass/stories/10-11/2/literacy-center-2011.cfm
• Length: Between 700 and 900 words
• Regional focus is a requirement
• Stories should be submitted to Monica Chapman for consideration

**Vision in Action** - This special *Compass* series features the programs and initiatives through which Ohio University faculty are living out the University's vision in their day-to-day lives.

• Example: New disability standards raise bar for state institutions:
• Length: Between 700 and 900 words
• Stories focused on faculty and/or regional campuses are preferred
• Stories should be submitted to Monica Chapman for consideration

**Diversity and Inclusiveness** – (info to come from GM)

**Executive messaging**
If you would like to send an all-campus email you must follow the parameters set forth in the Broadcast Electronic Communications Guidelines. They can be [found here](#).

**Step 4: Draft the content**

*Tips for Web Writing:*

• Think of 4 ways of telling every story (texts, audio, image, video)
• Keep a 600-word limit on stories (if possible)
• Use headers for any story more than 300 words
• Use bolding on any stories under 300 words
• Links add context and depth without adding to the word count
• Write tight
• Don’t repeat yourself
• Keep paragraphs around 100-words
• Be obvious with titles/headers

**Photos:**

*Slideshow Image:* A photo to be featured in the Compass Top Stories slideshow. Photos should be 615X415 pixels.

*Compass Feature Image:* A photo to be featured in a news section of the *Compass* front door (Example: Campuses, Faculty & Staff, etc.). Photos should be 100X100 pixels.

*Story Image:* A photo to be featured to the left of the story. Up to three story images can be included with each *Compass* story. Photos should be 255 pixels wide. Height is variable, but under 200 pixels is suggested. Portraits should run 192X125 pixels. Photo credits and captions are required.

**Video:** Frame size for all video should be 435X268. (Other guidelines to come from Dave?)

**Related links:** Up to three hyperlinks can be included with each story. Links should be relevant to the story and provide readers with additional information on subject matter. Whenever possible, links to the Ohio University website are encouraged (example: department websites, etc.).

**Sidebars:** Up to three sidebars can be included with each story. Sidebars should provide insights on subjects related to story content. Suggested length: 100 – 300 words.
**Proofread and fact-check:** It is assumed that all stories received by Compass editorial staff have gone through an initial editing process, which includes:

a) **Content edit**
   Edit so the story reads smoothly, flows well, and has an active lede

b) **Copy edit**
   Edit for grammar, punctuation, AP and UCM style

c) **Fact check**
   Facts should be checked to ensure the story’s accuracy

d) **Proofread**
   Close editing for grammar and polishing the story

e) **Source check**
   Often times, sources or departments will request to view/edit an article before it is published in Compass. Approvals need to be done prior to submitting a story and should be communicated to Compass staff.

**Step 5. Obtain reviews and approvals**

When a story is submitted to Compass from writers outside of UCM, it should have undergone all of the necessary approvals. UCM at times will also seek additional approvals if it is deemed necessary.

**Step 6. Submit to Compass**

UCM reserves the right to edit for AP and house style – Compass uses the AP stylebook as a primary guide for text, but it does have some style exceptions.

UCM reserves the right to hold for and obtain additional edits – Compass will always try to ensure that each story is accurate, well written, and satisfactory to the subjects of the story.

Format for submissions – Compass asks that stories are submitted via e-mail in Microsoft Word if possible.

Announcements, Accolades, Events – Compass encourages submissions for these three news items using the forms provided on Compass. If you click the titles on the left column of Compass, a submission form will be available.

Registering pages in CommonSpot – Web pages that exist on Ohio University sites other than Compass can be registered in CommonSpot by Compass editors or PIOs who are authorized to register pages. The permission process can be sought by contacting Todd Stone in UCM. Posting directly through CommonSpot – PIOs who wish to post stories directly to CommonSpot can be trained to do so by one of the UCM Internal Team staff members.

Submitting MS Word documents – Stories being submitted to Compass should be in Microsoft Word and e-mailed to the appropriate member of the UCM Internal Team.

Submitting photos and video – Photos and video that accompany submitted stories should be e-mailed if possible.
III. Getting help from UCM
Editing – UCM will always provide a final edit to all Compass text. Submitters should always perform their own edits.

Training – UCM will provide CommonSpot training for PIOs who request it. The training will teach PIOs how to "register external pages" or "build pages in CommonSpot."

Photography and Video – By special request, UCM’s expert staff will train PIOs on how to take better pictures and video for use in Compass and other promotional materials.

IV. Compass is just one part of your plan
While Compass readership is exceptionally high, make sure the communications plan for your event or story includes more than Compass.

- School, college, and department websites. Your story should feature prominently in the “news” section (or equivalent) of your school’s or department’s website.
- Targeted e-mails. Broadcast e-mails of a general nature—such as those highlighting an event—generally have very low readership. In accordance with the University’s Broadcast Electronic Communications Guidelines, all-student/all-faculty, and all-staff e-mails also require time-consuming executive review. Instead, target your e-mails to a select audience who you know will have an interest.
- Posters. For events, posters in the college or department area can help increase awareness and attendance. Baker center also provides poster space and the Baker University Center monitors are available at very low per-week pricing.
- Flyers. While you should print responsibly, a few copies of flyers in strategic locations can help improve awareness and attendance at events.
- Social media. Facebook and Twitter are outstanding ways to reach students. Ohio University’s Facebook group has over 25,000 members. Social media should be a key element in your communications plan.

V. Points of Contact
- UCM. Contact Todd Stone, Senior Manager, Internal Communications
  - stonet1@ohio.edu
  - x73213
- Campus Communicators (list)

VI. Frequently asked questions
Q: “Does anyone really read Compass?”
A: About 38% of staff and 40% of faculty regularly open their Compass e-mail. Most click through the links to at least one story. Over 60% of parents who have provided contact information read Compass, as do most board members. Compass is just one of several ways we deliver information to the campus community.

Q: “I want to send a broadcast e-mail to all students, first those in the college and then all across campus, telling them about my new course. Can I?”
A: Deans are responsible for communications within their colleges. Your college communicator can help with formatting and so on. The dean of students as the representative of the VPSA has approval authority to release the “all students” list and to review all-student e-mails. However,
Compass all-campus e-mails go out twice a week, enjoy strong open rates, and your message only requires the approval of your dean/director.

Q: "We have this great new academic program (lecture/event/other) we’d like to publicize. Can you write it up for us?"
A: In Ohio University’s distributed communications model, academic unit communicators are responsible for the day-to-day work of generating content.

Q: "I submitted a press release about my research and Compass didn’t publish everything I submitted. My grant is pretty specific on what must be published."
A: Your grant may have specifics on what must be included in the press release when you send it out, but it certainly will not have directives on what must be published, because neither the grant originators nor your college nor UCM control what outside publications decide to publish. For Compass, we target 600 words for long articles, as our experience tells us that’s about the limit for online reading. Your college website may certainly publish the longer version in its news section, however.

Q: "I attended this great conference where members of my department, and other departments, exhibited their work. Why didn’t Compass cover that?"
A: University Communications and Marketing and the Compass staff are neither resourced to be able to attend off-campus events, nor are they charged with doing so unless specifically directed by the president or provost. Coverage of such events is the responsibility of your department or college campus communicator.

Notes
Faculty and staff are encouraged to submit news by e-mail or campus mail to Compass. The following guidelines will help readers decide which news items are appropriate for submission:

• Accolades
  o Professional activities and accomplishments by faculty, staff, or students. These include awards, honors, research, publications, etc.
• Major, unique, or international professional activities and accomplishments by faculty, staff, or students.
  o Submit these to your department communicator
  o The communicator will send it to your UCM contact to determine if it is right for Compass
• University-related events that are open to the public. These include lectures, arts events, academic conferences, presentations, award ceremonies, etc.
  o If there is an event that is not open to the public but where members of the executive staff or Board of Trustees are present, a post-story may be appropriate.
  o Submit these to your department communicator
  o The communicator will send it to your UCM contact to determine if it is right for Compass
• Annual awards given by the University. These include research, service, teaching, and advising awards.
• News of deaths of current faculty, staff, students, and donors.
• Need-to-know information for the campus community. These include parking and traffic updates, registration or grade submission deadlines, and changes to employee benefits.

Editorial tips for Compass submissions:

• Has a word count of approximately 600 words or less

• When possible, submissions should contain art or multimedia links (pictures, video, sound, etc.)

• Should contain active hyperlinks where appropriate to guide readers to more information

• In general, Compass stories should be written according to the rules of The Associated Press Stylebook