Guidelines for Research Stories

Because research is central to CMU's mission, UCM offers additional guidance for shaping and placing research stories across our storytelling platforms, including News, Research & Creativity and Work That Matters.

Research storytelling — aligned with the CMU Brand and News Content writing guidelines, and our use of AP style — highlights timely research and scholarly achievements that elevate CMU's reputation, showcase distinctive strengths, and demonstrate depth and innovation across disciplines. Research content should demonstrate:

1. **Newsworthiness**
   a. The story is timely, relevant and connected to a current partnership, discovery, method, journal publication, high-impact conference or release of a tool or open-source platform.
2. **University-Level Significance**
   a. The research reflects CMU's institutional priorities or distinct disciplinary strengths.
   b. It exemplifies cross-disciplinary collaboration or a unique approach that reinforces CMU's brand.
   c. Stories about funding should meet strong institutional and journalistic thresholds, including:
      - Awards of $1 million or more or equivalent multiyear funding.
      - Supports a new center, major research initiative or interdisciplinary program.
      - Backed by prominent external sponsors (e.g. federal agencies or major corporate/foundation support).
      - Demonstrates high visibility, broad relevance or potential to raise CMU's profile with funders, media and/or the public.
3. **Editorial and Visual Viability**
   a. The story has a clear, compelling angle and communicates potential impact or relevance.
   b. It can be adapted to multiple formats (including social, media pitch, etc.).
   c. The subject matter lends itself to visual storytelling (see guidelines for news images).
      - Portraits for individuals quoted in stories and a feature image are required elements.
4. **Depth or Originality**
   a. The research shows intellectual rigor, novelty or scholarly significance, even if it's still early in its application.

      b. Routine lab work, incremental updates or internal events are unlikely to meet this bar unless tied to a broader milestone.

5. **Accessible Language**
      a. The story avoids technical language and is understandable by an informed general reader, including alumni, peer researchers in other fields and the media.

6. **Strategic, Reputational or Funding Value**
      a. It strengthens CMU's brand, attracts prospective funders or collaborators or showcases research excellence.

Communicating About Animal Research

UCM supports responsible and transparent communication about research conducted at Carnegie Mellon University, including [studies involving animal subjects](). When preparing materials about research that includes animal models, consider the following guidelines:

- **Emphasize the science, not the species.** Whenever possible, describe the research focus and findings without emphasizing the use of animal subjects. Highlighting the scientific objectives, methodologies and impacts can convey the study's significance without centering the discussion on animal involvement.
- **If animals are mentioned, explain why.** Briefly contextualize their role in the research (e.g., disease modeling or therapeutic development) and highlight the scientific or societal goal of the work.
- **Use factual, neutral language.** Avoid sensationalism, misleading or unnecessarily graphic descriptions.
- **Acknowledge oversight.** Affirm CMU's commitment to responsible and humane research (i.e., "This research was conducted in accordance with all federal requirements for working with research animals.").
- **When in doubt, ask for a review.** Some stories may benefit from input or review from UCM's research communications team or the [Office of Research Integrity and Compliance]().

CMU Research News Guidelines

[www.cmu.edu/research-and-creativity]()

The Research & Creativity page is a curated site that showcases CMU's research enterprise, even if it's not fresh or headline-driven.

Primary purpose:
- Elevate CMU's research identity for funders, partners and cross-disciplinary collaborators.
- Demonstrate the depth, breadth and innovation across topics and schools/colleges.
- Act as a living portfolio of CMU's research enterprise.

Key criteria:
- Intellectual rigor or originality, even at an early stage.
- University-level significance.
- Strategic alignment with major themes, initiatives or research priorities.
- Clarity of concept for an educated, general reader.
- Evergreen potential (can live longer than a typical news story).

As a portfolio of research excellence across schools and research themes, stories for cmu.edu/reseach-and-creativity should meet the criteria for news content guidelines plus the following:

1. **Research Significance**
   a. Reflects distinctive strengths, large-scale initiatives, faculty leadership or flagship centers or labs.
   b. Can include older or non-news-tied stories that are still highly relevant to CMU's research initiative.
2. **Cross-Disciplinary Value**
   a. Bridges departments or fields and ideally connects to institutional research themes.
3. **Evergreen Value**
   a. Not necessarily newsy: can include foundational work, methods or research that unfolds over time.
4. **Visual and Contextual Depth**
   a. Ideal stories can be expanded into multimedia, timelines, profiles or research series.

Work That Matters Story Guidelines

www.cmu.edu/work-that-matters

Work That Matters is CMU's research impact campaign, designed to elevate public understanding and support for our research through strategic storytelling and engagement.

Primary purpose:
- Demonstrate societal impact and value research underway at CMU
- Highlight the interdisciplinary nature of CMU research
- Elevate CMU's research identity for funders, partners and cross-disciplinary collaborators

Key criteria:

- Intellectual rigor or originality
- University-level significance
- Strategic alignment with current events, major themes, initiatives or research priorities
- Clarity of concept for an educated, general reader

The Work That Matters campaign website is highly curated; stories must meet *all* the general news story guidelines, plus the following:

1. **Tangible Public Impact**
   a. Does this story show how CMU research helps real people in visible ways now or in the near future?
      - Offers solutions, results or a clear pathway to outcomes.
      - Addresses public benefits: health, jobs, safety, economy, resilience.
2. **Emotional or Narrative Resonance**
   a. Can a skeptical reader see themselves or someone they know in this story?
      - Involves relatable characters, emotional stakes and real-world setting.
      - Offers a strong human, community or public-sector angle.
3. **Societal Relevance**
   a. Is the story about a real issue the public is hearing about or living through right now?
      - Ties to current issues, events or local/national policy debates.
      - Offers a solution, insight or innovation that matters today.
4. **Campaign Suitability**
   a. Does it align with Work That Matters' strategic goals and tone?
      - Illustrates leadership in key research impact themes.
      - Reinforces funding as a smart investment.
      - Offers potential leverage in advancement, federal relations, industry engagement or media relations.

For more information on research impact themes or messaging guidance, please visit the [Work That Matters campaign](link) site on UCM's digital asset management portal.

If you have any questions, need clarification on these guidelines, or are looking for support with your research storytelling efforts, please don't hesitate to contact the UCM research communications team at researchcomms@andrew.cmu.edu.