

Dear university officials,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing on behalf of the Editorial Board and staff of The Orion to address a recurring issue that has significantly affected our ability to produce timely, informative and accurate news stories. Specifically, we have encountered a pattern of delayed responses and, more concerning, have regularly been met with hostile and demeaning responses from certain members of University Communications. The instances vary from a refusal to comment on common, non-controversial stories, to other instances in which the information provided is insufficient for the purpose of developing comprehensive news coverage.

As an independent, student-run newspaper, our primary responsibility is to keep the university community informed. However, when communications are delayed or only offer a bare minimum of details delivered in a dismissive manner, it becomes exceedingly difficult to deliver the quality of journalism our readers deserve. Since University Communications began demanding centralized university communications during the Hutchinson presidency, and specifically in several recent instances, U Comms responses have often failed to provide essential context, details, or the full scope of information needed for thorough, well-rounded reporting. This not only denies our audience the information they deserve, but is a mistreatment of student journalists who don't receive the respect that they in turn offer the university's communications employees.

We understand that the university has a broad range of priorities and that responding to inquiries can be demanding. However, as a public institution, the university has a duty to respond to public requests for a broad range of information, including responding to student journalists. It also has a duty to respond to inquiries in a timely manner, which becomes ever more difficult when University Communications requires many of the university's units to refer press inquiries back to University Communications. In some instances, this centralization of information increases any reasonable journalist to suspect that the university wants many of its messages either muted or "spun." That can create a culture of distrust, and in pivotal recent instances, has done just that. Withholding key information or providing responses that lack depth and basic respect undermines the university's ability to effectively engage with the student body. This leaves critical questions unanswered, leaving us no choice but to seek out answers elsewhere—and in doing so, University Communications chastises members of our staff, ultimately for what are its own shortcomings.

The latest posted message from President Perez states, "As we plan for Chico State's future, we want strong alignment around what makes us extraordinary, what makes us unique, and what makes us strong."

Chico State boasts a historically outstanding and [award-winning journalism program](#). As one of only two programs in the CSU system awarded the [Pacemaker 100](#), we think it is part of what makes this school extraordinary, unique and strong. We urge you to align around us so we can continue to build upon this tradition of excellence.

We view The Orion as an imperative part of our learning process as we prepare to represent Chico State in the journalism industry. We hope that moving forward, the discussion regarding the prioritization of public relations policies includes the recognition that we are paying for this education.

We respectfully urge you to ensure that responses to our inquiries are more complete, timely and respectful moving forward. Specifically, we would greatly appreciate receiving comprehensive, clear, and relevant information that allows us to craft stories that are both accurate and reflective of the university's position on important matters. And we will ensure that our conduct continues to be held to the same high standard in the context of doing responsible journalism.

We are confident that by improving communication in this regard, we can continue to strengthen the relationship between the university administration and the student press, ultimately benefiting the entire campus community. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and explore ways to improve the flow of information between our publication and the administration.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and a more productive working relationship moving forward. Ultimately, we're here to work with you, together, for the greater good of our campus community.

Sincerely,
Ellie Marty
Editor-in-Chief, The Orion