Esther’s Tips for Media Interviews

You’ve been contacted by a member of the media to participate in an interview. This is great news! But now what?

1. **If you are not in contact with the CNS communications office, do so.** Let them know about the interview and ask what resources the office can provide. (e.forbes@austin.utexas.edu)
2. **Ask the reporter if they can provide you with a list of potential questions.** Be clear that it doesn’t have to be an exhaustive list and stress that you just want to prepare your facts and figures ahead of the interview so you can give the best quotes and take up as little time as possible. If the reporter will not provide questions, ask them to be very clear about what topics they would like to cover.
3. **Determine your talking points.** Pick three key messages you’d like the reporter, and ultimately their audience, to take away from the interview. Memorize these messages and work them into your answers wherever it makes sense.
4. **If you don’t know, don’t answer.** If you don’t know an answer or don’t feel comfortable answering, just say that. Or if you need to gather information and get back to the reporter via email later, that is fine.
5. **Take a moment to collect your thoughts before answering.** Awkward silences are awkward. And that’s OK. Take as long as you need to organize your thoughts before you answer a question.
6. **Practice the art of the redirect.** If a reporter is straying off topic or isn’t giving you an opening to discuss your messages, redirect. Answer the original question with as few words as possible and redirect by saying, “The real question is…” or “Something to think about here is…” or “What people should really take away from this is…”

**Specific tips for on-camera interviews**

1. Dress nicely from head to toe. You don’t know how much will be filmed.
2. Put powder on your face if you get shiny. A simple compact of translucent pressed powder is all you need.
3. No busy patterns. No solid black or white. No saturated tones, like neon. Pastels look best on camera and all skin tones look good in blue.
4. Speak to the interviewer, not the camera.
5. If the interview is live, treat it like a conversation. Pretend the camera is not there.
6. If the interview is taped “stand-up” style, repeat the question in your answer. Don’t use the interviewer’s name. Pause as long as you need to answer and you can start over if you don’t like the way it sounds. They will use the tape that sounds best.