

Ciara Pearce

Media Briefing
Sandra Block
Personal Finance Reporter
USA Today

Date: September 22, 2010

Time: 9-9:30 a.m.

Location: Lang 212

Briefing Opportunity

To pre-brief Sandra Block, a personal finance reporter for *USA Today*, on Wednesday's announcement by President Ben Allen of the University of Northern Iowa's 100 Million Dollars and Hours Fundraising Campaign.

Key Points to Reinforce with Sandra

- Every class of students that graduates from the University of Northern Iowa leaves a lasting impression and enhances the community as a whole.
- Volunteering represents a core value of the University of Northern Iowa and a donation of time is equally as desired as a donation of money.
- The University of Northern Iowa seeks donations to ensure that future generations of students have a great experience at the university.

Recommended Briefing Approach

Approach the interview with a focus on personal finance and continually try to incorporate the fundraising campaign and provide proof that information about the campaign belongs in the personal finance section of *USA Today*. Block often begins her articles by presenting a hypothetical situation to set the scene in the first paragraph. Come up with an example of the type of person that would benefit from donating to the 100 Million Dollars and Hours Fundraising Campaign and the ways in which donations could impact the university. This will help Block to accurately portray the campaign and its purpose from the very beginning of the article.

Block frequently utilizes bullet points to show readers how to take action. These may be in the form of specific instructional steps or just direct and concise take-aways from the article. Be prepared to provide precise methods of donating to the campaign, specific ways that donations help the university, and benefits to the donator. Think about the quotes that you give in terms of bullet points. Block will most likely want to write the article about donating to universities in general, but the UNI campaign can get great publicity through a quote from an expert in one or more of the bullet points in the article.

Ciara Pearce

Reporter Background

Sandra Block is a veteran reporter for *USA Today*, having been on the staff for over 14 years. She received her undergraduate degree from Bethany College and later earned a certificate for the Knight-Bagehot Fellowship in Business and Economic Journalism from the Columbia Business School at Columbia University. Block has reported on finance, particularly personal finance, since 1989. Thus, she has a thorough understanding of reader preferences and interests when it comes to personal finance.

Summary of Recent Stories/Coverage

Half of the most recent articles written by Sandra Block covered topics relating to college students and/or their parents with regards to personal finance issues. While UNI's 100 Million Dollars and Hours Fundraising Campaign does not represent a typical personal finance subject, it does directly relate to the way that people spend their money or time resources. However, Block does not have a strong history of writing college related articles about specific colleges or universities. The list of the most recent headlines from Block's articles is provided below to give you an idea of her tone and writing style.

Reloadable prepaid cards can be handy but heavy on fees
September 20, 2010

Some tax benefits for college costs expire at end of 2010
September 13, 2010

Credit card use plunges as hard times drag on, debit use rises
September 9, 2010

5 years after Katrina, homeowners insurance costs more
August 25, 2010

A lesson in health insurance for college students
August 19, 2010

College grads with an 'A' in credit history have advantage
August 16, 2010

USA Today Background

USA Today is a daily newspaper that has one of the largest circulations of any newspaper in the United States. It is also distributed in Canada, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Since 1982, *USA Today* has been printing the news in an easy to read format. The paper is only printed during the business week. One advantage to this newspaper is its accessibility to readers, both because of its reasonable price and the writing style.