



**Public Engagement Case Study
Writing an Op-Ed**

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Category/type of activity: Traditional media

Web links related to activity:

<http://www.newsday.com/opinion/commentary/a-cut-in-research-would-wound-u-s-1.13701060>



Luis Martinez

1. Goal for activity:

To get the attention of decision-makers as they negotiate the 2018 budget, in order to strengthen our national commitment to investing in scientific research.

2. Audience for the activity:

Public and decision-makers.

3. Key Messages for the activity:

It is important for the U.S. to invest in scientific research and development. If we don't, more people will suffer and lives will be lost, job creation and economic growth will slow, and we will lose international competitiveness as a technological leader.

4. How did you become involved in this activity?

AAAS encouraged me to provide expert advice on the possible effects of the White House's proposed cuts to the National Institutes of Health 2018 budget in my area of research.

5. Who were key collaborators?

AAAS staff helped in gathering data and editing the text.

6. How did the activity invite and engage in dialogue with the audience?

The article presents facts about how the proposed cuts to the NIH budget will hurt the scientific enterprise.

7. How was the activity evaluated? How was feedback incorporated and any changes to the activity as a result?

Colleagues congratulated me for the piece. However, the UPS delivery man gave me the biggest surprise a few days after publication by telling me, "It was you who wrote that very nice piece in the newspaper!" Priceless!



8. How long did it take to plan and implement this activity?

2-4 hours.

9. What resources did you need to implement this activity?

Computer, data to support your argument, targeted media information, and supporting personnel.

10. What lessons did you learn about public engagement as a result of this activity?

I learned the following tips from AAAS staff:

1. Only pitch to one newspaper at a time.
2. Make sure your op-ed meets the format requirements of the paper (word length, etc.).
3. Use the online form, email, and call to follow-up and pitch it directly to the editors.
 - a. Emphasize why this is "timely."
 - b. The pitch includes the length and length with title and bio notes.
 - c. Always offer to make edits or tweak.

I came up with this one myself:

4. When pitching an op-ed, if you have had any previous involvement (e.g. serving as an expert) with the newspaper, include that information (e.g. title or links of the articles you participated and name of the person you interacted with) in your cover letter. Previous service to the newspaper is taken into consideration by the editors.