# **Public Relations Guide for Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School**

# **Part 1 – Launch**

#

To help ensure a successful launch of *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School*, please find below a brief media outreach overview that you can reference when announcing the program to the public and media and sharing program successes. If you have any questions, the Gale public relations team can help. Please contact Kayla Siefker, public relations director, at kayla.siefker@cengage.com or Kimberly Martin, senior marketing manager, at kimberly.martin@cengage.com.

Press Release

We’ve provided you with a template press release that you can customize by inserting your library’s information in the highlighted areas, including a media contact that reporters can reach directly (no general email addresses). Note that the person you choose to quote in the release should be whoever will be speaking externally to the media on this topic. It’s always best to “localize” your announcement as much as possible, so feel free to customize the release further with additional details. We suggest using U.S. Census Bureau data to gather information on your local community, such as high school–degree attainment level, dropout rates, unemployment rates, etc. Gale can help you locate these data points as well. This information will define the “problem” for media and help them understand the “solution” that the library is providing (*Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School*). Remember, something isn’t news just because you say it is. A press release must define the impact.

**Note:** Please give someone at Gale advance notice of your press release distribution date and share a copy of the final release you plan to distribute. This will help ensure Gale has spokespeople available if local media want further information on the *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School* program and make sure you have the most current, correct information about the program. You can contact any number of Gale team members, including your *Excel Adult High School* customer success manager, sales representative, or marketing or public relations contact.

Media List

You’ll need to research and build a list of relevant contacts from your local media outlets―consider print/online, radio, and television. This information can be gathered by visiting the websites of local media outlets―newspapers; magazines; blogs; radio stations and shows; TV stations, including local network affiliates from CBS, NBC, ABC, FOX, or local news programs―and searching for news related to your announcement. For example, reporters covering education or workforce-development issues will be most interested in *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School*. This search process will also help you gauge whether the media outlet itself is appropriate for your news. Familiarize yourself with the key reporters and their recent articles. You’ll want to gather the outlet name, the first and last name of the reporter or editor you want to contact, and the email address and phone number for the contact (or main newsroom number). Note that it’s not uncommon for small community media outlets to only have one media contact on staff (the editor). Large outlets will have more reporters covering more beats. You can often find additional contact details for a reporter by visiting a media outlet’s “About Us” or “Contact Us” web pages.

Spokespeople

Once you have approval on your press release and your media list is in place, you’ll need to confirm timing and availability with your spokesperson (typically the person quoted in the release). The spokesperson will need to be available (often on very short notice) on the day of the announcement and immediately thereafter. Ensure that the spokesperson is comfortable speaking on *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School* and understands how the program works; is briefed on the two or three key messages you want to get across about the program; and is comfortable speaking on air (radio) or on camera (broadcast). If your spokesperson needs a refresher about the program, reference your library program’s student recruitment website for details.

If possible, it’s great to be able to offer to connect a reporter with a newly enrolled or prospective student. You must first confirm with the student that they would be comfortable speaking with media and sharing their story.

Pitch

Email is typically the fastest and most efficient way to distribute news to media, but a press release emailed with no context will often be deleted. It’s best to draft a short pitch email, personalized to the specific reporter, and paste the press release in the email (attachments may be deleted or caught in spam folders). Reporters get hundreds of emails a day with requests for coverage, so brevity and specificity are key in a pitch email (no more than two to three paragraphs). Reporters have very little time and want to know what the news is and why it’s important for them and their audience. A clever subject line will also help your email stand out. A pitch that looks like it is mass produced and blasted out to hundreds of media contacts will most surely be deleted.

Always clearly include your contact information so the reporters can figure out quickly who they need to contact to learn more.

In the appendix, please find a pitch email template to get you started.

Distribution

You should plan to distribute the press release once all back-end implementation of the *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School* program is complete, and you are ready to accept students. Press releases should be distributed first thing in the morning (8:00 AM or 9:00 AM) so that an interested reporter has enough time to conduct interviews with spokespeople and write an article before an end-of-day deadline. It’s best to send press releases early in the week and to avoid holidays and weekends.

It isn’t necessary, but you can also consider using a paid press release distribution service on the day of your launch. There are several options to choose from, such as PR Newswire, Business Wire, Market Wire News, and PRWeb. These services send press releases directly to newsrooms and online news aggregators and get visibility on search engines like Google, but it’s important to still contact your local media directly with the news.

Don’t forget to use social media to help push out announcements to your followers and also to engage with reporters. Many reporters are active on Twitter and are open to being pitched directly on these platforms.

Tips for Working with Media

* **Tell a Story.** Remember that media don’t want to be “sold a product”; they want to hear and communicate the full story. Avoid using sales language or acronyms—and get to the point. Whenever you can tie into a broader story or trend―like workforce readiness―you’ll have a better chance of garnering coverage.
* **Be professional.** Respect a reporter’s right to decide whether or not they will cover a story. Just because they seem interested in the news doesn’t guarantee they’ll be able to write about it.
* **Be honest, transparent, and quick.** Understand that reporters have limited time. In your discussions, get to the point quickly, but make sure you have all of the facts at your disposal and don’t exaggerate your news.
* **Be responsive.** Reporters work on deadlines, so be sure to be prompt in responding to any follow-up questions.
* **Follow up.** Reporters often want to see that a program has gained traction before they will devote news coverage to it. Understand that you may need to follow up with the reporter again at a later date, when your program reaches a milestone―like when you have a student who is willing to share their story with media, enrollment is almost full, or you have your first graduate.

**Appendix:**

Launch press release template

Pitch email template

#

# **Part 2 – Graduation**

Once the first student completes the *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School* program through the library and “graduates,” you have another opportunity to engage with media. We strongly suggest you take this important program milestone to engage with media and local legislators and community leaders.

**Please keep your Gale contact informed of promotional plans.** If you’re planning to hold a graduation ceremony and/or do media outreach, the Gale team can assist with marketing collateral and material for a graduation ceremony, and can also assist with local media outreach and outreach to local legislators.

Note that media aren’t going to be able to cover every graduate announcement you make―likely the first graduate or graduating “class” is what they’ll be most interested in and able to cover.

Determine promotional plans and evaluate spokespeople

Before planning any media outreach, it’s important to confirm that your graduate would be a positive spokesperson for the program and is willing to share their story with media, including doing potential media interviews. Depending on the number of students enrolled in the program and how close other students are to graduation, it may make sense to wait until you have a few graduates and a quorum for a graduation ceremony.

The graduation ceremony can provide an opportunity to invite local leaders, such as the mayor, to participate. It’s also a great platform for the graduates to share their stories and talk about their future plans now that they’ve earned their diplomas. Broadcast (TV) media, who will be more inclined to cover an actual event where they can capture footage, may also be interested in attending.

Media Outreach

If you aren’t planning a graduation ceremony but would like to issue a news release about a graduate, we’ve enclosed a template news release that you can customize and issue to local media. As with the launch announcement, local education reporters or reporters who cover workforce-development issues will be most interested in *Gale Presents: Excel Adult High School.* Please see the section in Part 1 on media list development for more information.

If you’re planning a graduation ceremony, once the details of the ceremony are confirmed (including on-site spokespeople), we suggest putting together a media alert (who, what, when, where, why format―see the template provided in the appendix), which is used to invite local media to attend and cover the event (separate from any invitation that may go to other community members). Typically, media alerts are emailed directly to reporters about two weeks before an event, allowing enough time to follow up with media before the event. Note that media are often unable to confirm their attendance much in advance, and breaking news will always take precedence. Make sure all spokespeople, including library leaders, local government leaders, and graduates, are comfortable with media attendance and giving on-site interviews.

In addition to reaching out to the reporters you worked with when announcing the program launch, we suggest targeting local broadcast (TV) media. Education reporters, assignment desk editors (who control news crew allocation), and news show producers are the best contacts to target at broadcast news outlets.

**Appendix:**

Graduation press release template

Graduation media alert template