



USC Rossier Op-Ed Strategy

USC Rossier faculty are experts in the field of education. You all have strong feelings and opinions about how education has made an impact locally, nationally and internationally. Op-eds represent the informed and focused opinion of the writer on an issue of relevance to a targeted audience. If crafted carefully, clearly and persuasively, an op-ed could potentially reach millions of people, change minds and possibly reshape public policy in a matter of a short journal piece. An op-ed strategy has been developed to optimize our experts and share their thoughts and views; ultimately, raising awareness of USC Rossier.

Please keep in mind competition for op-ed space is high. Feel free to reach out to the USC Rossier comms team—Eric Olsen (olsene@rossier.usc.edu) and Ellen Evaristo (evaristo@rossier.usc.edu)—for support and promotion. If you have an op-ed topic that you would like to discuss further, we are happy to connect with you to discuss strategy and media outlet placement. The more advance notice we have provides us time to fully develop a plan.

Elements to keep in mind, when writing an op-ed:

- Brevity: Between 550 to 1,000 words depending on the outlet
- Relevancy: Issues on current events in the news
- Clear and single point: Given limited space, it's best to be concise.
- Why: Why should your readers care?

References:

- [*Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*](#): 800 to 1,000 words
- [*EdWeek*](#): 600 to 1,000 words
- [*Inside Higher Ed*](#): 1,000 to 1,500 words
- [*Los Angeles Times*](#): 750 words
- [*New York Times*](#): 650 words

- [*Washington Post*](#): 750 to 800 words
- [*USA Today*](#): 550 to 750 words

How-to-guide and Best Practices:

Today, opinion pages are one of the best-read sections of newspapers and online publications. The audience is also typically informed and more influential in their field relative to consumers of other comparable communications mediums. A poignant op-ed published in an influential outlet can drive national discussions.

- **Types of Pieces**

- There are two primary styles of opinion pieces that are published in media outlets: an op-ed (or personal essay) and a letter to the editor. Op-eds can range from 400-1,200 words, while letters to the editor are typically shorter snippets of information in the 150-250 word range. Op-eds are typically reserved for subject matter experts while letters to the editor can come from anyone.

- **Odds of Success**

- Your chances of success in publishing an op-ed are highest when the piece is connected to current events and offers a unique and underrepresented perspective. Leveraging your background and the novelty of your experience is also critically important. Your odds of success increase as well relative to the distribution size of the outlet you pitch. Outlets with the largest distribution sizes are the most difficult to publish op-eds in.

- **Traits of a Good Op-Ed**

- The typical structure of a successful op-ed is as follows:
 - Powerful and evocative opening statement that captures an audience's attention and ties the thesis of the piece to current events. This is where the central opinion that governs the piece is stated. Make a single point and do it well.
 - At least body paragraphs that cite evidence and to prove the argument. Put your main points at the beginning of each paragraph. Constantly ask yourself why the reader should care and answer that question throughout the piece.
 - One paragraph that acknowledges the antithetical opinion. Your readers will be thinking it, so you should recognize and respond to the contradictory side of your argument to bolster your credibility.
 - An ending that summarizes the crux of the piece's argument succinctly and in an engaging manner. Use this as an opportunity to offer any final recommendations.
- Keep in mind

- Colorful details>dry facts
 - Always have a real-world example or something engaging that highlights your point rather than relying on dry facts and statistics.
- Use short and punchy sentences and paragraphs.
 - Pithy sentences engage audiences. The shorter and more direct the better.
- Embrace your personal voice
- Draw from your own experiences and do not compromise on your writing style. Be authentically you. Use Active voice
 - Don't say "One would hope that one day..." Instead, say "I hope that..."
- **Submitting the Piece**
 - Please feel free to contact Ellen and Eric to develop a pitching strategy and to receive advice and edits on your piece. They can also offer help with first drafts.
 - Additional resources are available at [The Op-Ed Project's website](#).