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ABSTRACT

This monograph contains eight paper that explore the role and value of information officers, focusing on: (1) results of a nationwide survey of educational institutions that examined the percentage of SCDE's represented by public information officers and the type of representation offered; (2) deans' perspectives on the usefulness of information officers; (3) information officers' roles in different institutional levels; (4) information officers' roles during times of crisis or fundraising; and (5) special challenges faced by SCDE's in smaller institutions. The titles of the papers are: "Information Officers: Who Needs Them?" (Bill London); "Surveying the Deans: What's Happening Today?" (Dorothy A. Witter); "In Their Own Words: The Deans' Perspective on Information Officers in Schools of Education" (Robert A. Cobb, Jane Close Conoley, Gary R. Galluzzo, Sylvester Kohut, Jr., Roderick J. McDavis, Bernard Oliver, Rodney Reed, Jerry Robbins, and John Taylor); "The Role of the Information Officer in Building Internal Support" (Ken McConnellogue); "Within the University: Gaining Respect in Your Own Backyard" (Kay M. Hyatt); "Taking Messages to External Audiences" (Leanne South and Phillip West); "In Fund-raising and Crisis Campaigns: When Deans Really Need Information Officers" (Bill London); and "Sigh, No Silver: A Memo from the Lone Information Officer" (Kathryn O'Dell-Thompson). An appendix presents a sample deans' survey. (SM)

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Edited by Bill London

ACADEMY for LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
AACTE

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The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education is a national, voluntary association of colleges and universities with undergraduate or graduate programs to prepare professional educators. The Association supports programs in data gathering, equity, leadership development, networking policy analysis, professional issues, and scholarship.

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Acknowledgments

This monograph was created when Susan Cimburek of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education asked me to write it or, in my capacity as coordinator of InformED (the national network for information officers representing colleges of education), to edit a compilation of chapters from my fellow communication professionals.

Through the generous support of the staff of AACTE, especially Susan Cimburek and Elizabeth Foxwell, and the members of InformED, my valued colleagues who shared a vision for our collective future and reinforced it by volunteering to write a chapter, the book concept became the reality you now hold. My thanks to all of them.

The inspiration for InformED came not from me, although I would like to claim this idea as my own. My dean, Bernard Oliver, conceived this network, recognizing both the need and the purpose for InformED, and allowed me to have the time and funding to make it a reality. It has been much fun, and I thank him for that.

— *Bill London*

Information Officers: Who Needs Them?

Bill London

As you might have guessed, this book is essentially an ad. At the invitation of AACTE, a group of information officers who work in and/or for schools, colleges, or departments of education (SCDEs) have written this advertisement for their profession. The authors of this monograph are members of the national network for those information professionals, InformED (the American Association of Information Officers for Colleges of Education).

Exploring the role and value of the information officer is the theme of this monograph. The first chapter reveals the results of a nationwide survey of educational institutions in an attempt to understand the percentage of SCDEs represented by public information professionals and the type of representation offered. In the second chapter, nine education deans provide their perspective on the usefulness of this position.

The next three chapters (3,4, and 5) focus on the information officer's role in the different institutional levels:

- within the college (helping build the unity and the community that inspires and directs faculty and staff),
- within the university (helping construct the visibility and reputation that lifts education SCDEs from the back benches to the front row of the institution), and
- with the audience external to the institution (helping provide the accountability along with the image).

The role of the information officer during times of crisis or during fund-raising campaigns is the basis of the next chapter. The final chapter summarizes the special challenges faced by SCDEs in smaller institutions where one information professional is shared among all parts of the institution.

One consistent theme surfaces in this monograph: partnership.

One consistent theme surfaces in this monograph: partnership. That's the basis of the best relationship between dean and information officer, a mutual appreciation of skills and perspectives. In addition, information officers facilitate partnering relationships with all constituencies external to the college, providing another way to link the college with the world outside its doors and building the podium from which to share the positive messages that ensure institutional survival into the next millennium.

Two trends seem destined to flourish as the new millennium begins. First, information will remain the most-traded commodity, the coin of the realm, and the source of power. Second, traditional authorities and institutions will continue to be doubted and second-guessed, and will need to both justify their use of resources and do more with less.

Some institutions will separate themselves from that boisterous information marketplace, relying instead on reputation and decades of government-enforced monopoly functions. Those institutions which refuse to play the media game will suffer loss of prestige and loss of resources. And many of them will be SCDEs.

Institutions that prepare teachers are especially vulnerable since Americans care so passionately about their children and their educational system. For decades, Americans have heard

that something is really wrong with their schools, and the educational institutions that don't heed this clarion call, care about reform, or communicate concern will find themselves at risk. Bypassed. Marginalized. Replaced.

On the other hand, educational institutions that publicly share both concern and positive actions to improve education will become a magnet for support: private financial funds, public awareness, and state money.

One difference between these two options is a planned effort to get the message out and sustain it in the public arena, beginning with an administrative commitment and culminating in the continued support for an information officer.

The information officer (aka the public relations director, media relations manager, news and information coordinator, or some similar combination) won't save an inept institution any more than a new coat of paint will hold up a sagging building. But in combination with real efforts for meeting modern educational needs, the information officer can ensure that those "good works" are noticed and appreciated, building an institutional reputation as a participant in the search for solutions to serious societal problems and helping resolve our national crisis of confidence in educational reform.

More information about InformED, the national network for information officers representing SCDEs, is available through the organization's website, <www.vpds.wsu.edu/InformED/>, or from InformED at Washington State University, College of Education, Pullman, WA 99164-2114, TEL: 509/335-7091.

Surveying the Deans: What's Happening Today?

Dorothy A. Witter

Who provides public relations representation for U.S. schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) and how is that representation organized?

Deans, chairs, and directors in SCDEs bring to their positions their own unique perspectives and experiences concerning public relations and communications for their institutions.

In many cases, these deans, chairs, and directors have inherited a public relations or communications program that may or may not be able to be changed. In other cases, colleges and schools have the opportunity to hire a communications person of their own who will report only to that college or department and will be physically housed within that college or school. Others have a person assigned to them by a university-wide public relations or university relations program. For a few programs, individuals other than public relations or communication professionals are responsible for handling communications.

To understand more fully how communication professionals can assist these colleges and schools in attaining their goals, we must first examine some of these perceptions held by the administrators to determine what they perceive as important tasks or skills of these professionals.

To answer those questions and others about the current role of communication officers in U.S. schools, colleges and departments of education, an electronic mail survey was sent in February 1997 to a random sample of deans, chairs, and

directors selected from the *1997 AACTE Directory*. A total of 38 responses representing colleges, schools, and programs across the nation were received. (See the Appendix for a copy of the survey.)

Overall Views of the Dean/Chair/Director

Responses to the survey revealed the diversity of approaches that deans, chairs, and directors have in their relationships with their communication professionals, whether these individuals are on their staff or assigned by a central unit to represent the education program.

More than half of the respondents reported that communication professionals at a central university news bureau handled their communication needs, while about one-third used a communication person on their own staff. Approximately 10 percent of the deans and directors responding reported no access to a communication professional.

The deans saw the "very important" core functions of the communication officer as publicizing faculty achievements and alumni events, creating recruitment publications, organizing special events, and handling crisis communications needs. Regarding access to the dean, half met only when necessary, while most other communication professionals and deans or directors met at regularly scheduled weekly or biweekly meetings. Approximately one-third of the education programs included the communication professionals in strategic planning sessions. Often, the communication officer was not included in planning if that person was assigned to the college or school by the central office of the institution.

The expectations held by deans of what the information officers could and should accomplish varied greatly, reflecting the diversity of programs, strengths, and missions in SCDEs. But at the center of most deans' comments about the role and value of the information officer was a recognition of the importance of telling the college's story to the public.

For example, Ann Candler-Lotven, dean of the College of Education at Oklahoma State University, doesn't think all faculty and administrators fully realize the importance of the

public image, which takes on an even more urgent tone when books such as *ProfScam* are published. "We think about perception being everything, which it is and it isn't. But the public's perception of higher education is based primarily on the public image we portray," she said. "I think it's always important to put yourself forward in the most positive light possible, without criticizing others. Sometimes, presenting one's strengths points out the weaknesses of others. I think we often overlook our strengths."

Another dean mentioned that when the local or state press does not support the public schools or higher education, it just makes it harder for everyone in education.

Job Placement of the Communications Individual for the College or School

12	On the staff of your college
21	On the staff of the university/college public relations staff
4	There is no one doing college public relations work

Twelve of the 38 responding deans/directors had a person on the staff of the college or school who was responsible for communications. Three of these 12 also used a person on the university/college public relations staff. Not counting those who have their own staff person and use the university or college office, an additional 21 respondents said that they rely totally upon the staff of the university/college public relations office. Four respondents indicated that no one was involved in communications for the SCDE.

According to Virginia L. Clark, dean of the College of Human Development & Education at North Dakota State University, a person on her staff works with the university staff, and the university staff does the actual writing and maintains contact with the media.

Allen R. Warner, dean of the College of Education at the University of Houston, said he has no public relations person

as such. "I've asked our development director to assist with some public relations functions such as newsletters and brochures," Warner said. "Media relations and other services such as graphic design are provided by a central location at the university."

Dale Gentry, dean of the College of Education at the University of Idaho, noted that his college has a communications person, but others on his campus also have college communications' roles. "Our person also has many other responsibilities besides college communications," Gentry said.

At the Center for Excellence in Education at Northern Arizona University, the person responsible for all public relations and communication is on the staff of the college, and not in the center, according to Eugene Moan, associate executive director.

According to Sylvester Kohut Jr., dean of the College of Education at Seton Hall University (N.J.), his college shares the services of a communications person who handles all of the colleges.

Only one dean reported factoring public relations and publicity responsibilities into the "faculty equation." According to Mark W. Clark, dean of the College of Education at Northeastern State University (Okla.), his faculty now have the expectation that they have to write about what they are doing. Before the releases are sent to the university's central public information office for dissemination, Clark first edits them. He doesn't expect his faculty to be journalists, but to just get the facts down. Clark is perhaps unique among most education deans in that he possesses a journalistic background from work on high school and college publications, followed by sports writing.

Getting releases out to the public and building the reputation of his college is vital, according to Clark, and news releases are just one part of that process. "I know we're not going to get anything unless people know what we're doing," he said. "It's the role of the dean to monitor that. I know what everybody is doing."

The public's perception of NSU is important, he empha-

sized, because the college is involved in numerous projects with K-12 schools. "It is critical that people have a sense of what is happening," Clark said. "We owe our jobs to taxpayers and to students who are here."

Importance of Job-related Tasks of the Communications Person

Deans and directors were asked to use a Likert Scale that ranged from very important to very unimportant to determine their opinion on 19 job-related items that are associated with the position of communications.

The top five job related items that deans/directors selected as "very important" to them were, in order of importance: news releases on faculty awards/honors, or 70 percent; college alumni events, college-wide brochures for recruitment of students, and producing and/or promoting special events of the college, all tied at 54 percent; and crisis or conflict responses, with 53 percent of the respondents selecting this as "very important."

Top Five Choices Selected as "Very Important"

70 percent	News releases on faculty awards/honors
54 percent	College alumni events
54 percent	College-wide brochures for recruitment of students
54 percent	Producing and/or promoting special events of the college
53 percent	Crisis or conflict responses

When combining the items that received "very important" or "important" marks, the top five, were, in order of importance: news releases on faculty awards/honors, 100 percent; publicity for faculty, 96 percent; news releases on students in the college, 94 percent; producing and/or promoting special events of the college, 87 percent; and college alumni events, with 84 percent.

The five job areas that received the most "very unimpor-

tant" responses from the deans/directors were, in descending order, marketing and promotion of extension classes or workshops, 25 percent; marketing and promotion of regularly-scheduled classes, and participating in strategic planning for the college, tied at 22 percent; producing departmental or other brochures, 19 percent; and producing video or computer-generated productions, 14 percent.

Top Five Choices Selected as "Very Unimportant"

25 percent	Marketing and promotion of extension classes or workshops
22 percent	Marketing and promotion of regularly-scheduled classes
22 percent	Participating in strategic planning for the SCDE
19 percent	Producing departmental or other brochures
14 percent	Producing video or computer-generated productions

The areas where deans/directors chose the most "no opinion" were in the areas of internal college newsletters for faculty and staff, 31 percent; producing video or computer-generated productions, 22 percent; participating in strategic planning for the college, 16 percent; college annual report, and crisis or conflict responses to the media, tied at 14 percent.

Responses on each of the 19 items were:

Importance of News Releases on Students in the College (33 usable responses)

39 percent	very important
55 percent	important
3 percent	no opinion
3 percent	unimportant
0 percent	very unimportant

Importance of News Releases on Faculty Awards/ Honors (37 usable responses)

70 percent	very important
30 percent	important

As Mary Ellen Finch, dean of the School of Education at Maryville University (Mo.), pointed out, news releases on her campus are handled only in the PR office.

Importance of Publicity for Faculty (36 usable responses)

39 percent	very important
58 percent	important
0 percent	no opinion
3 percent	unimportant
0 percent	very unimportant

Importance of Publicity for the Dean (36 usable responses)

25 percent	very important
39 percent	important
11 percent	no opinion
22 percent	unimportant
3 percent	very unimportant

Importance of News Releases on College Fund-raising (35 usable responses)

34 percent	very important
48 percent	important
9 percent	no opinion
9 percent	unimportant
0 percent	very unimportant

These news releases are not always handled on the college level, as noted by Kathryn M. Sullivan, director of the Office of Teacher Education at Pembroke State University (N.C.). At Oklahoma State University, all news releases concerning the capital fund campaign, for example, must be channeled through a specific communications specialist in the Public Information Office.

Importance of Internal College Newsletters for Faculty & Staff (35 usable responses)

17 percent	very important
23 percent	important
31 percent	no opinion
20 percent	unimportant
9 percent	very unimportant

Importance of External College Newsletters for Alumni (37 usable responses)

43 percent	very important
32 percent	important
11 percent	no opinion
6 percent	unimportant
8 percent	very unimportant

Allen R. Warner, dean of the College of Education at the University of Houston, said that at his university, alumni newsletters are "handled centrally, but the college should have input."

Importance of External University Newsletters for Alumni (36 usable responses)

28 percent	very important
42 percent	important
11 percent	no opinion
11 percent	unimportant
8 percent	very unimportant

Importance of College Alumni Events—Homecoming, Teacher Honors, etc. (37 usable responses)

54 percent	very important
30 percent	important
8 percent	no opinion
5 percent	unimportant
3 percent	very unimportant

Importance of Collegewide Brochures for Recruitment of Students (37 usable responses)

54 percent	very important
14 percent	important
11 percent	no opinion
16 percent	unimportant
5 percent	very unimportant

Importance of College Annual Reports (37 usable responses)

32 percent	very important
35 percent	important
14 percent	no opinion
11 percent	unimportant
8 percent	very unimportant

Allen Warner offered some advice: "Since this is such an all-consuming job, it would be worth contracting it out; a communications person could coordinate."

Importance of Photography for the College (36 usable responses)

22 percent	very important
53 percent	important
11 percent	no opinion
8 percent	unimportant
6 percent	very unimportant

Importance of Crisis or Conflict Responses to the Media (36 usable responses)

53 percent	very important
19 percent	important
14 percent	no opinion
6 percent	unimportant
8 percent	very unimportant

Although crisis or conflict responses rated very highly with the deans/directors, one dean took the time to point out that perhaps this area should be handled at the university level. In fact, for major issues, which include bomb threats, fires, and other instances in which students or others could be at risk, most, if not all, colleges and universities have in place and on file plans of action. In some cases, college deans/directors are required to use the university/college relations office.

Importance of Marketing & Promotion of Regularly-Scheduled Classes (36 usable responses)

22 percent	very important
17 percent	important
17 percent	no opinion
22 percent	unimportant
22 percent	very unimportant

Importance of Marketing & Promotion of Extension Classes or Workshops (36 usable responses)

22 percent	very important
28 percent	important
11 percent	no opinion
14 percent	unimportant
25 percent	very unimportant

The low percentages for the two marketing questions might be based upon assumptions that such activities should occur in other areas of the university or college, and not be handled by the communications person assigned to the college or school. Three respondents took the time to note that this type of activity should be "done by another office."

Importance of Producing Departmental or Other Brochures (37 usable responses)

19 percent	very important
27 percent	important
13 percent	no opinion
22 percent	unimportant
19 percent	very unimportant

One dean noted that these brochures "Should be coordinated by communications person, but produced by departments."

Importance of Producing Video or Computer-generated Productions (36 usable responses)

11 percent	very important
36 percent	important
22 percent	no opinion
17 percent	unimportant
14 percent	very unimportant

According to Allen Warner, University of Houston, it would be worthwhile to coordinate these productions in the college's communications office, but they should be "contracted from outside or a central university source."

Importance of Producing and/or Promoting Special Events of the College (37 usable responses)

54 percent	very important
33 percent	important
5 percent	no opinion
5 percent	unimportant
3 percent	very unimportant

Importance of Participating in Strategic Planning for the College (37 usable responses)

37 percent	very important
16 percent	important
16 percent	no opinion
14 percent	unimportant
22 percent	very unimportant

Meeting with the Public Relations Person

Sixteen deans/directors reported that they met regularly with the public relations person on their staff or the one who was assigned to their college/department/division, and 16 reported that they did not meet regularly. One candidly wrote in that he should, and another added "as needed."

Only two listed other people appointed by the dean to meet regularly with the communications person. One of these people was an associate dean, and the other was a development officer.

How often do you think it is necessary to meet with this person?

7 respondents	Once a week
6 respondents	1-2 a month
1 respondent	Monthly
18 respondents	Whenever necessary

Only seven deans/directors expected to meet with the PR person weekly, according to responses on the survey. Six respondents said they met once to twice a month with a PR person on their staff or on the university staff. Only one respondent out of 37 reported meeting on a monthly basis, and two respondents checked "once or twice a month" and "whenever necessary." The majority of respondents, 18, reported

meeting with their PR person or someone attached to the university's PR department only whenever necessary. "Of course, if there's a crisis, hourly could be the right frequency to meet," said Ann Candler-Lotven (Oklahoma State University). Corinne Glesne (University of Vermont) noted, "I wish the publicity person could play a larger role in college news, but she, as a university person, is responsible for other colleges as well."

Collegewide Communication Plans

Thirteen deans/directors reported having a collegewide communication plan in place, with Allen Warner (University of Houston) pointing out that his college did not have a total plan, but one "in process." Not only does Clayton College and State University's teacher education program have a plan, they have one that "improves weekly," according to Janet Towslee, director of School and Neighborhood Partnerships at Clayton College and State University (Ga). Nineteen respondents did not have a communications plan (although Dale Gentry of the University of Idaho said they should have one). Four admitted they "didn't know," and one additional dean pointed out that they "sort of" had a communications plan.

Including the College's PR Person in College Strategic Planning Efforts

Of the 35 usable responses on this question, 14 people said that their college/school included the PR person whenever strategic planning efforts were underway. According to Willis D. Hawley, dean of the College of Education at the University of Maryland-College Park, the college's PR person is included in strategic planning efforts. His college's PR person is a graduate assistant with an appropriate background. "Our structure is that an associate dean has the responsibility. I see him daily and he is in on everything," Hawley said. Jerome T. Murphy, dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Robert Cobb, dean of the College of Education at the University of Maine, both indicated the PR person often was included when it was deemed appropriate. And if he had one,

he would include him or her, Allen R. Warner (University of Houston) noted.

Twenty-one respondents, however, did not include the PR person in the college/school strategic planning. But Joan L. Sattler, dean of the College of Education & Health Sciences at Bradley University, pointed out that her PR person was not on the college level, but on the university level. Since 60 percent of the respondents reported that their PR person was not hired on the college/school level, it is reasonable to assume that the low number of schools/colleges who include the PR person is due to the perception of that person as "outside" of the college.

What Deans/Chair/Directors Expect from a Communications Person

The responses to this question were as varied as the administrators responding, yet presented insight into the tasks, skills, attitudes, and abilities that are expected from someone assigned to represent the college or department. So, what is expected of communications people around the nation? "The position on our campus is one that is combined with several other responsibilities," said Virginia L. Clark (North Dakota State University). "However, the three most important items would probably be coordinating alumni events and communications, coordinating collegewide publications, and coordinating collegewide events (that covers a lot of things, but those are the broad areas)."

"To keep the public and campus informed about college matters; to connect faculty, staff, and dean with state, national, and international issues, events, and media outlets; to oversee the design and preparation of public relations/information materials for the college," said Robert Cobb, dean of University of Maine's College of Education & Human Development.

Guilbert C. Hentschke's list of expectations of a PR person includes someone who has "access to and interest in information about all of the goings-on from faculty, students, alums, et al.; insight and wisdom about what stories best tell the USC School of Education 'story,' and understanding

technical work and ability to explain its practical relevance in simple language."

Keeping the school in the public eye and helping with brochures and news releases are the most important attributes for PR personnel, according to Mary Ellen Finch, dean of the School of Education at Maryville University in Missouri.

Several deans know exactly and succinctly what they look for in PR persons to serve their constituencies. A. G. Rud Jr., associate dean of the School of Education at Purdue University, looks for "accuracy, enthusiasm, and writing ability," while Allen Glenn, dean of the College of Education at the University of Washington, is more interested in "accuracy, timeliness, relevance." But for Guilbert C. Hentschke, dean of the School of Education at the University of Southern California-Los Angeles, the PR person who makes the grade at his institution shows "intelligence, decision-making, and commitment."

Jerome T. Murphy, dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, prefers a person who is a "self-starter" with a "nose for news" and who can follow up on the work he or she does. George J. Fero, dean of Southern Arkansas University's School of Education, joins Murphy as the other respondent looking for a "self-starter," who looks for a person "who will take the initiative to seek out and publish news releases, articles, brochures, etc., for the school." Fero expects this person to be "an effective communicator. . .and the person needs to be considered a member of the leadership team."

Jerome F. Megna, dean of the College of Education & Human Services at Rider University (N.J), looks for the PR person to display "clarity of goals, familiarity with programs (of the college)" and to be "enthusiastic about marketing us."

Because the position of PR person is with the university, and one of his assignments is the college of education, the college doesn't receive extensive coverage, according to John Usera, dean of the College of Education at Black Hills State University (S.D.). "It would be great to have our own publication and communications person. Thus, this person could serve the needs of the college of education in a timely manner and help us have our own newsletter," he said.

The College of Education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale does not have its own PR person, according to Nancy L. Quisenberry, interim dean. "One of the associate deans handles what information needs to originate in the dean's office," she said. What Quisenberry expects from a PR person is to provide information concerning achievements and special faculty honors to the news service; information sent to the provost and president concerning achievements and special honors of the faculty; and interaction with the university's alumni office for use in their publications.

According to Eugene Moan, associate executive director of the Center for Excellence in Education at Northern Arizona University, PR work is actually a university function, with no one at the college level.

The only dean or director who included knowledge of the Internet among his list was Sylvester Kohut Jr., dean of the College of Education and Human Services at Seton Hall University (N.J.), who said he expects a communications person to understand and use new technology. His requirements include: "Coordinate the design and production of all college brochures, newsletters, news releases, videos, and feature stories for the college; create and maintain homepages for the college's undergraduate and graduate programs as well as for administrator and faculty; and in a proactive way, get the college 'positive' press to include feature stories on new and/or innovate programs and personalities (i.e. dean, faculty, successful alumni...) in major newspapers and television."

Furman University (S.C.) has only one office, university relations, to serve the entire campus, reports Lesley Ann Quast, chairperson of the Department of Education. "Furman is a small, liberal arts college, and thus we have a Teacher Education Program vs. School or College of Education," she said. Quast also notes a need for a PR person for the program to be someone who can "seek opportunities for highlighting successful or innovative programs; assist us in presenting ourselves professionally in the media; and network."

Writing skills showed up in several lists, but Allen R. Warner (University of Houston) was the only person to

mention excellent speaking skills, too. Warner also expected the PR person to show "enthusiasm for the college and positive attitude overall," and to possess "creativity and a sense of creating a good college image."

Corrine Glesne, associate dean of the College of Education and Social Services at the University of Vermont, looks for a PR person "to communicate to the university community and the state, the efforts and activities of the college; to publicize teaching, research and service of the college faculty; and to include and involve college expertise in wider debates regarding education and social services."

Only one dean brought up the concept of "training us to work with the media in good and difficult situations." William L. Dandridge, dean of the School of Education at Lesley College (Mass.), also looked for the PR person to help frame the school's message in "language the public will understand," and to identify and promote major activities, events and news of the school."

Guidance was a major factor that Ann Candler-Lotven, dean of the College of Education at Oklahoma State University, looked for in a communications person. "Lots of times I need assistance and guidance in deciding the best thing to do in a media situation, and that's why we hire people who specialize in that, people who have the expertise to offer guidance and do what needs to be done," she said. Publicity for faculty and for students were also major areas expected from a communications person.

Mark W. Clark, dean of the College of Education at Northeastern State University (Okla.), looks for "A nose for news, someone who can communicate, write and translate academese into something that the general community and public can understand, and someone with people skills." He also noted that those people skills included working well with the faculty.

The more traditional work areas are what Dennis D. Cartwright expects. Cartwright, director of teacher education at Northwest Nazarene College (Idaho), said he looks for someone who can prepare news releases and promotion

materials, and review or edit material prepared by people in the college prior to its distribution.

Advice, or keeping the dean informed about potential PR opportunities, and providing news releases concerning the college, are the two most important things expected by Kathleen L. Daly, dean of the College of Education at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Jeffrey C. Barnett, dean of the College of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, chose communicating special college projects and achievements of the college and its personnel to the public, and initiating public relations to benefit the college, as the most important things he expects from the PR person.

The work of PR has taken on added urgency at Clayton College and State University (Ga.), according to Janet Towslee, director of Teacher Education. "At CCSU this position is so important the president of CCSU elevated this office head to vice president for advancement," Towslee said. In fact, the person in this position at this time is the former editor for Gannett Communications in Washington, D.C. Towslee especially appreciates this person to provide advice, format for publications, and publicity, especially concerning the curriculum of the college.

Several deans mentioned having or developing the right media contacts to get the college or school's publicity out. In addition to quality contacts, Joan L. Sattler, dean of the College of Education and Health Sciences at Bradley University, looks for a person who keeps up-to-date on and promotes the news and events in the college, and also works to promote to the media the accomplishments of the faculty.

At the University of New Orleans College of Education, the public relations person "has principal responsibilities in helping raise external funding," said dean Robert K. Wimpelberg. Due to this position requirement, he looks for a communications person who can "connect public relations efforts with funding opportunities, and help the dean with critical contacts in the community."

A 1980 Survey

A 1980 survey of 953 information/news/public relations offices in university and college offices throughout the U.S. by Berry College (Ga.), included a survey of typical duties of the college/university information office. It was found that the top duties, in descending order, were hometown news about students, news and feature photography, general institutional brochure, general institutional periodical, all institutional photography, advertising, alumni publications, on-campus news bulletins, campus events involving the public, admissions literature, individualized departmental brochures, college or university catalog, sports publicity and information, development (fund-raising) publications, calendar of events, radio news releases, and information services for visitors.

The authors of the survey pointed out that the ranking in their list did not indicate the "rightness and wrongness of a project. In some cases projects or functions might be deemed very worthwhile. . .if funds were available. Or projects which are necessary evils. . .are carried out because 'tradition' demands it. The ranking does show, however, reality. For no matter how worthwhile a project might seem. . .if an information office is not given the resources with which to do it. . .then the reality is that it isn't done."

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In Their Own Words: The Deans' Perspective on Information Officers in Schools of Education

This chapter collects short essays from education deans from across the United States. From their own experience and perspective, each dean discusses the role and value of information officers at their college.

Robert A. Cobb
College of Education, University of Maine

The College of Education & Human Development at the University of Maine was perhaps no different than most teacher education schools located within land-grant universities. From a media standpoint, we were relegated to a low-profile existence as an under-staffed public affairs office focused on campuswide stories, central administration initiatives, and selected research projects mostly from the hard sciences, natural resources, and engineering programs. We were doing very good work, but receiving little acknowledgment for it, either on the campus or beyond.

I had been hearing from faculty that what we needed in our college was someone who could help us "market" our programs—someone who could develop the brochures, newsletters, and recruitment materials that told our story. Faculty had neither the expertise nor the inclination to invest their time in developing these tools. To make matters worse, budget cuts had forced repeated reductions in faculty and staff positions and there were fewer people left to do what seemed like even more work.

Finally, two years ago, I was presented with an opportunity. Arguably the most talented staff member within the public affairs office was leaving that office, looking for a position where she could get more deeply involved rather than skimming the surface of stories as had become necessary in her prior position. Cobbling some funding together, I hired her half-time, moved her into the college, met with her continuously, and watched her get a feel for the faculty, staff, programs, and students.

In this individual, we have found a great listener with a nose for good stories and a deep working knowledge of the media. Through her tireless work, she has, to be sure, developed the brochures and marketing tools the faculty were looking for, and she has developed a newsletter that connects us with our students and their parents, as well as our alumni. But she has done so much more.

With her coaxing, faculty have become increasingly willing to be interviewed on the hot issues explored by the media. I am reading with regularity quotes from our faculty in the national press—in places like the *Chronicle for Higher Education, Education Week, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, Boston Globe,* and *Chicago Tribune,* just to name a few. Op-ed articles by our faculty are appearing with increasing frequency in the major in-state newspapers. Television exposure has increased dramatically.

Thanks to her careful crafting of descriptions, the campus receives daily updates on the significant doings of the education faculty on the electronic bulletin board. Recently, the college of education hosted an educational conference on censorship and the place of popular literature in the canon of the secondary schools. Through the efforts of our communications coordinator, news stories appeared in over 400 national and international newspapers, and C-Span broadcasted the keynote address by author Stephen King.

Without question, the College of Education & Human Development at the University of Maine is much more visible and much better known today as a consequence of our employing a communications coordinator. The difference has been so

marked that recently she was moved to a full-time appointment. Having seen the results of her work, faculty applauded the move. The other colleges on campus have also noted the difference and are openly envious. This has been a very good investment of resources. I highly recommend it to others.

Jane Close Conoley
College of Education, Texas A&M University

My first semester as dean of the College of Education at Texas A&M University has been the exciting challenge I had hoped for. I moved to Texas A&M from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where I had been serving as an associate dean. My underlying desire as dean remains the same as it was when I was a faculty member—to make a difference. Our college is larger than the Teachers College at Nebraska—over 3,800 students and over 200 faculty. We have academic programs in five departments and external funding in excess of $4 million. There are exciting and important things happening here.

It seems, however, that all we read about is the poor job our education system is doing in teaching our children. In Texas, K-16 is under careful scrutiny for costs, outcomes, and procedures. I welcome the scrutiny, but it makes telling our story very important to the many constituencies who may be hearing and reading ill-founded criticisms of public education and teaching education.

The Texas A&M College of Education has a communications officer. This person is a vital resource for my college for a number of reasons. Our officer works as a liaison with the university's news office, so not only does she work with them in distributing releases, we stay informed of events and breaking news from that office. I want to see the college develop a proactive media relations program, and it would be difficult to discuss and implement such an effective plan if we had to share an information officer from the university news office who also covers other colleges. A third reason I am glad we have a communications officer in the college is her laser focus on

education. She is dedicated to staying informed about education issues. In our case, she produces a weekly report of newspaper and magazine clippings on current education issues affecting our state and the nation. That is invaluable in helping me stay informed on the political, economic, and ideological context of my work.

The communications officer in our college oversees "the big picture" of the communications function, from media relations to undergraduate and graduate publications to our internal and external newsletters.

A reflective plan aimed at maximizing our production and consumption of information is vital. A dedicated person allows for proactive strategies and thoughtful products. Our communications officer serves an important role in helping the college achieve its mission and reach its goals. She is an invaluable member of our team.

Gary R. Galluzzo
Graduate School of Education, George Mason University (Va.)[1]

It's a different world for schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) today. In today's world, many stories about our involvement in educational reform need to be told. By telling those stories, the information officer in an SCDE is the one who helps the general public understand how the education enterprise functions within the larger social context, and how the SCDE directly contributes to improving practice in education.

The national frustration with the condition of American education has created new pressures that all deans, chairs, and directors of teacher education experience. The general expectation that SCDEs have a role to play in school renewal places greater demands on a faculty that is already being held more accountable for generating student credit hours so their

[1]Galluzzo wrote this at a time when he was dean of education at the University of Northern Colorado.

respective higher education institutions can balance the books. Moreover, the desire of the public policy community to see scholarship and service knitted together more closely adds to an even more heightened public awareness of the possible contributions of SCDE faculty.

Within this context, I detect a series of beliefs in the policy community about school renewal. First, educators can make change happen. Second, SCDE faculty have a great deal to contribute to bringing about that change. Third, SCDEs have the money to invest in their renewal efforts, through assigned/dedicated faculty time, for instance.

In my view, here is where a public information officer in an SCDE enters into the picture. Education, as a field, has a poor track record in self-promotion. I don't mean this, in any sense, to be negative. We tend to be perfectionists, and tend not to trumpet our successes to the public. We do this at a time when many SCDE faculty members have undertaken inventive initiatives that are showing just how large their contributions to school renewal can be. Educators can make change happen and SCDE faculty can be at the center of it, if certain institutional commitments are made.

A public information officer can do what most educators fail to do—tell alums, trustees, local practitioners, and the general community just how much is being accomplished and what those accomplishments are.

The role of a public information officer is to make and have contacts on the faculty who can speak to issues of the day. It is also his/her role to track legislative actions and upcoming news stories in the local media and assist the SCDE leaders and faculty in turning their work into stories that need to be told in these arenas.

In my view, a fundamental flaw in education in the Information Age is that we lack the ability to use "spin." The object of our efforts in this arena is not only to create good "hype" but also to contribute directly to the public discourse on educating all children. This is no longer quiet work done in the recesses of the academy. It is now public work, and the public needs to see what those contributions are.

There are sophisticated and honorable methods for making that happen. Most of us in academe don't know what they are. Creating an open, honest, and friendly relationship with an information officer provides us with access to media outlets, the graduates of our programs, the consumers of our services, and the general public. There is no doubt in my mind that the improved image of our SCDE among these groups is due in no small part to telling our story in those sophisticated and honorable ways.

Sylvester Kohut Jr.
College of Education & Human Services,
Seton Hall University

During a period of austere higher education financing, very few college, schools, or departments of teacher education can afford the luxury of a full-time public relations or information officer. Yet almost daily, deans and chairs are challenged to respond to inaccurate newspaper articles, television feature stories, and negative political rhetoric in public forums. The assaults misrepresent educational issues and often bash teacher education. Occasionally, a dean will write a counterpoint response to a harsh editorial. But there is rarely time for a well-organized proactive public relations agenda.

Teacher education units must seriously consider establishing a position of information officer on a full-time or part-time basis. When budgetary constraints prohibit such action, the dean, assistant deans, departmental chairs, and/or program directors need to share this responsibility.

There is urgency for such action. Whenever AACTE and other national associations sponsor a symposium at a conference on "the dean's role as an information officer" or "public relation strategies," there is usually a standing room crowd in the meeting room. I know, for I've been standing in these rooms as a dean for 14 years.

Over the years, some of the more successful initiatives which have helped to improve the visibility and public image

of the colleges of education where I have worked include the following:

1. Create and distribute to regional television and radio stations, newspapers, and magazines, a *Resource Directory of Teacher Education Faculty* at your institution. A user-friendly desk reference will invite calls.

2. In cooperation with your unit's information officer or the institution's information officer (or designee), visit local newspapers and get acquainted with the education editor or feature writer.

3. Periodically write letters to the editor or submit editorial page features for newspapers and journals. Don't always wait to write a letter in response to a feature article critical of education.

4. Invite newspaper "education" feature writers to your teacher education unit-sponsored forums and special events.

5. Find reasons to award/recognize outstanding school administrators, teachers, and counselors.

6. Subscribe to appropriate online services which will enhance your ability to keep pace with national and regional issues related to teacher education.

7. Get out your office and visit schools with your faculty. As Woody Allen once said, "Ninety-five percent of success is just showing up!" Your public visibility shows others that you are accessible and you care. Get involved in community and civic affairs and encourage your faculty to get involved as well. Joining the local Rotary or Lions club gives you a chance to become friends with the "movers and shakers" in your community.

8. Sponsor or host regional and state meetings on your campus of various education associations/societies.

Roderick J. McDavis
College of Education, University of Florida

"Do you have a faculty member who knows about violence in the schools? Is there someone who can talk to a reporter about literacy rates? What faculty member is an authority on school choice and charter schools? How many books were authored or coauthored by members of your faculty in 1996-97?"

At least once a week, the University of Florida College of Education information officer receives requests (from newspaper reporters and editors, radio, television, and other media) for specialists who can address the foregoing and similar questions.

The college information officer is a valuable asset to the college and the university as a reference point for information and publicity to promote the positive stories associated with the research, teaching, and service activities of the college faculty, staff, and students. Our college information officer serves a two-fold purpose: coordination of media requests and maintenance of information about college faculty, staff, and students.

Although many reporters and editors establish relationships with individual faculty members who can act as sources, the information officer regularly acts as the liaison between the media and the faculty. The importance of this liaison relationship cannot be overemphasized.

Frequently, at the University of Florida and other major research universities, news of national and international interest is generated. Significant research findings and service activities should be reported to the public. Our college information officer provides a meaningful bridge between the media and the faculty, saving time and effort by matching media requests to the best faculty sources. In fact, the college information officer is the "one-stop" location for identifying faculty with expertise on hundreds of topics.

Regular accounting of faculty activities is necessary to meet the legislative reporting requirements at a public institu-

tion like the University of Florida. Databases constructed from individual faculty annual reports—containing accurate summaries of teaching, research, and service efforts—are maintained by our information officer. These databases can be accessed at any time to provide information about publications, research grants, public service to schools and other agencies, as well as involvement in local, state, national, and international professional associations. Our information officer can provide all of this to university leaders, legislators, and accrediting agencies.

Bernard Oliver
School of Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City[2]

Over the past decade, the nation's public schools have taken considerable "heat" from the media and educational critics. This negative attention (including *A Nation At Risk* and other reports) sparked widespread reform of the nation's schools from curriculum and standards to school organization and the preparation of school personnel. Although much of this early criticism focused on the nation's K-12 school system, later reports have blistered schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) for the poor preparation of teachers and administrators entering the public school system.

More recently, a much-needed book on the nation's schools, *The Manufactured Crisis*, challenged the common media assumption that U.S. schools are in such poor condition. Criticism of the media's portrayal of education is further revealed in polls about the impact of media on American society and institutions. A national survey on America's opinion of its media, conducted by the Roper Center (March 1997), indicated that the public has a significant distrust of the media, including 46 percent of the respondents who think the news is too negative; 52 percent who think the news is too biased; and 82 percent who think reporters are insensitive to people's pain when covering disasters.

[2]Oliver wrote this at the time when he was dean of education at Washington State University.

Given this propensity and public perception that the focus of the media is on negative events and the recent criticism of SCDEs, Washington State University College of Education has employed an information officer to provide what Lydia Alkire describes as creating the awareness of opportunities and responsibilities for SCDEs that go hand-in-hand with the interpretation of observed educational practices.

The communications officer position for a SCDE during this turbulent time is essential for informing the public about the nature and quality of the positive educational contributions of higher education. Our information officer does a host of public relations activities that have mediated the regional negative press on education and SCDEs in particular.

For example, on a routine basis, our communications officer:

- writes press releases and complete feature articles on faculty research and its relationship to improving schools;
- arranges interviews for the dean and faculty with local TV, radio, and newspapers;
- publishes and disseminates a monthly newsletter highlighting activities taking place in the college;
- publishes a yearly journal that focuses on significant accomplishments of the college of education;
- serves as a photographer for special events and university-wide publications;
- serves as a college liaison to alumni and donors; and
- plans and creates other opportunities for positive visibility, like our recent media fellowship.

These activities have not eliminated all of the negative press. However, they have provided our college with the opportunity to showcase some of the positive things our faculty and programs are doing to improve the condition of education in the state of Washington, the region, and the nation.

The importance of a communications professional for education and education reform lies in living up to the journalistic oath posited by Roberta Kelly. She explains that power lies in shared knowledge and presenting material in a meaningful manner, that intelligence, objectivity, fairness, and accuracy are necessary for credibility, and that informing the public about the positives of education is like good teaching.

As we head into the 21st century amidst a sea of reform, we believe it is an absolute necessity for SCDEs to both debunk the manufactured media crisis in teacher education and to portray the positive contributions we are making. That's why we all need access to an information officer.

Rodney Reed
College of Education, Pennsylvania State University

The future of a school, college, or department of education (SCDE) is affected directly by the performance, ideas, and values of the individual serving as the college's Information Officer (IO). The publications, public information, and constituent relations of the college are primarily the responsibility of the IO, who offers continuity and provides a central location for these activities. As a result, the IO becomes a keeper of the college's public record and history.

As a critical link in the delicate chain that connects the college to the outside world, the IO must be keenly aware of the college's vision, mission, and goals, its people, its curriculum, its activities and programs, and its organizational structure. In collaboration with faculty, staff, and students, the IO develops media marketing and placement strategies, and serves as a conduit to the public with consistent and positive messages about the college. In addition, the IO serves as an educator/consultant to faculty and staff who are often reluctant, inexperienced, or unsure of their abilities to work effectively with the media. The personal relationships developed by the IO, both within and outside the college, become vital in an environment that is often critical of higher education.

The public's first contact with the college is often through the information prepared and distributed by the IO. Thus, the IO's contact with alumni, donors, and university colleagues must provide consistent, long-term advocacy for the college. The ability to translate academic research and concepts to lay terms becomes a valuable skill when providing information to the general public.

Here in the College of Education at Penn State, our missions of preparing exemplary educators and advancing the profession of education depend heavily on our ability to communicate effectively with alumni, friends, and each other. The IO is charged with the responsibility of portraying these missions through our magazine, newsletters, viewbook, and brochures, on our websites, and in our alumni programming. High-quality public information can ensure a high-quality snapshot of the college to the outside world.

Within this college, the IO is charged with monitoring or handling all public interactions, whether it be with the media, alumni, colleagues, campus community, students, donors, or others at state, national, or international levels. The IO holds in his/her hands the public perception of this college, making this one of the most important positions in our organization.

Jerry Robbins
College of Education, Eastern Michigan University

In an education college where I was formerly dean, we could count on two people who performed various aspects of the information officer role. At my present institution, there is no college information officer, and I have not been able to make the arrangements to have one.

As Sophie Tucker said, "I've been rich and I've been poor. Rich is better." I agree. Rich is better. My work life with information officers was, in many respects, much better. And the college was benefited significantly from regular and professionally-prepared internal and external communications.

At my former institution, the college information officer was responsible for a weekly newsletter for our faculty, staff,

and friends. This newsletter was so well received that I've continued the concept at my present institution, except that—other than the copying, distribution, and posting to our website—I do it all myself. This communications function is, I think, essential. Yet the time involved takes away from other important aspects of deaning.

At my former institution, the college information officer prepared several press releases per week. In my present position—well, there aren't any press releases about things in our college except as originated by the campus public information office every few weeks. And the irony is that the market for education news is much more open in this region. We are undoubtedly missing many opportunities for at least local coverage.

At my former institution, it sometimes seemed that the college information officer prepared promotional or informational brochures about every aspect of our programming—programs, continuing education courses, special features, and items of interest to targeted audiences. To a lesser extent, the information officer prepared media pieces (slide shows, video tapes, etc.) in the same way. At my current institution, these items hardly exist and, when there is a critical need for them, there is a constant dispute over whose job it is to prepare them.

The college information officer at my former institution also prepared a quarterly publication that went to alumni and friends. At my present institution, the comparable publication sometimes appears and sometimes doesn't, depending on what arrangements I can make to secure a writer. And, at my former institution, the college information officer produced a very attractive annual report each year. The comparable publication doesn't exist at my present institution.

At my former institution, the college information officer was constantly available to help everyone make sure that we looked good to external publics. For example, accreditation reports, grant proposals, and the like had attractive covers, well-edited content, and outstanding page layout. When college leaders used media (transparencies, slide shows, etc.) in presentations before large groups, these were carefully designed

and produced with major attention to color, graphics, use of logos and symbols, and an effective layout. In my present position, necessity has forced me—and others—to learn presentation software and, in the absence of human help, the stock formats keep us from making major blunders.

This college needs an information officer. The university and the public believes us to be less effective, less polished, and less involved in solving critical educational problems than we actually are—all because we appear to be so, due to our lack of professional communications assistance.

John Taylor
College of Education, University of Arizona

Never in my professional career have I known colleges of education to be under such scrutiny, if not outright attack, as they are today. Legislators, regents, and the general public seem to have found a ready scapegoat for the ills of public education and tight budgets. In many states, closings of programs and the advocacy of alternative (and cheaper) modes of certification have become an everyday reality. We are being painfully reminded that schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) are creatures of the public will and depend upon that will for our survival.

We can no longer take our role for granted. It is imperative that SCDEs regain public confidence and support.

Our story must be told with accuracy and gusto. The challenges our schools face are well publicized. We must demonstrate clearly and effectively to the public that we are not the problem but a vital part of the solution.

When I joined this college in 1991, I made clear my firm belief that the university's walls must be the community in which we live, the state, the nation, and the world. I took every opportunity to go into that community and encouraged our faculty and students to do the same. Such face-to-face encounters are crucial elements of any communication plan. But we can reach only so many people. The fate of colleges of education today lies in the hands of the decisionmakers—

legislators, regents, boards of trustees, administrators, business leaders, and voters. These groups must recognize our value. For a task of this magnitude, deans of SCDEs would do well to join with a dedicated communications professional.

An information officer, given appropriate skills and motivation, is a valued professional who acts as the eyes, ears, and voice of the SCDE. In touch with every unit of the college, the information officer interacts with faculty, staff, and students and stays abreast of all activities. He or she recognizes the good news to be spread abroad and is sensitive to handling bad news in a positive manner.

The information officer creates publications that reach into schools, homes, businesses, and political offices. He or she maintains close relationships with university public relations people and local press and TV reporters to keep the college in the public eye. This individual helps to coordinate public events that bring college and community together. In our fund-raising, too, we depend upon the information officer to promote the positive and varied image so essential to donor support. These personal relationships—which put a human face on a sometimes remote institution—bring important benefits to the college.

Never underestimate the interconnectedness of your community. People frequently approach me, saying,"Oh, I heard that....." Just recently a local banker came up to me at a meeting and commented on something published in one of our newsletters. I asked him if he was a graduate of our college and he said, "No, but my wife is." Everything you say and do and print has impact in places you'd never dream.

Through all these efforts, it is important to keep in mind the many audiences we are addressing—those inside and outside the institution, business, politicians, parents, teachers, public and private schools, and local commissions and boards. Though needs and perspectives differ, we are all committed to common goals promoting the welfare of children. Articulating the goals and bringing these community groups together in our common purpose is task of the information officer. With this community support, we shall continue to fulfill our mission.

The Role of the Information Officer in Building Internal Support

Ken McConnellogue

There's an old saying—"If you want me there on the landing, include me on the takeoff."

Long before effective communications become airborne in colleges and schools of education, information officers must do extensive pre-flight preparation. External pressures are increasing on higher education in general and at schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) in particular. Legislators want to know if programs are effective and efficient. The media focuses its magnifying glass on education issues almost every day. Prospective students want to know about access and quality. Alumni want to know what's new at the old U.

Successfully telling the stories that will answer questions and concerns from the external audiences is an increasingly important part of teacher education. But before looking outward, information officers must lay the groundwork internally for effective institutional relations. This means getting support from faculty, staff, students, deans, and other administrators for external communications, as well as helping build support from faculty, staff, and students for administrative priorities.

By consistently supporting those priorities, information officers can help their deans rally the troops and get everyone moving in the same direction. It's an understatement that colleges can be political places where turf wars and disparate agendas reign. But presenting a unified face to the public

requires that diverse elements within a school or college rally behind a common vision.

Information officers give voice to the vision that will get faculty, staff, and administrators motivated and moving. By restating consistent themes and showcasing examples of the messages in action, information officers can help build the support required.

There are four steps to success for information officers in building this supportive internal communication system:

1. working with administration to establish priorities;
2. becoming a visible member of the school or college;
3. using the tools that lead to success; and
4. following up.

The more effective the groundwork, the smoother the flight to successful external relations. Here are some strategies for building a foundation that administrators can use in partnership with their communications professionals.

Develop & Disseminate Communications Priorities

Effective communications require a significant commitment from the dean, chair, or director. The administrative vision and priorities need to be clear throughout the SCDE. Information officers can play a key role in outlining that vision. Information officers are able to add vital insights about how priorities can be best communicated and how the process of communication can help unify the SCDE.

Outlining vision and direction seems simple. Most administrators have a clear concept of what they want their SCDE to achieve. However, deans should augment that personal vision with the communications needs of both their internal and external constituencies. Those requirements are the focus of the information officers' experience and expertise.

Most deans understand the need to tell the positive stories from their colleges. For administrators, the increased scrutiny on higher education means that those who ignore their

publics do so at their peril. This does not mean that the direction set for the SCDE should be determined by external constituencies. But those constituencies should be an important voice in the discussion.

It would be difficult logistically to bring those varied groups to the table, so how can they be best involved? It may be instructive to look to the business world for some pointers.

Marketing is a concept that is foreign to most SCDEs. But thinking like a marketer is useful in today's environment. Colleges, too, must identify the markets they want to reach. Those populations are many and varied, but most institutions have several in common: alumni, the K-12 community, the media, current and prospective students and their parents, legislators, the general public, donors, and opinion/business leaders.

Information officers must work with administrators to identify the messages to send to each group and determine the most effective means to send them. Do you want lawmakers to know that the money they give is well spent? Do you want the K-12 community to know that the SCDE is connected to what's happening in classrooms? Should alumni become effective advocates for their alma mater?

Setting clear communications priorities will help people at each level of the SCDE get on the same page. Information officers can disseminate those priorities through a variety of com-munications vehicles, including internal newsletters, memos, face-to-face or department meetings, and electronic means.

The more known about the audiences and their opinions, the better the SCDE will be able to meet their needs. This requires research. Some research comes naturally and informally. What are the common perceptions about the SCDE? This is the kind of information that neighbors talk about over the fence, or that teachers talk about in teachers' lounges, or that alumni share at gatherings.

A word of caution—faculty, staff, and administrators within a SCDE will have clear ideas about who they are and what they are about. While this information is valuable, it also

can have an element of tunnel vision. It is important to find out what the target audiences think. Resist the urge to assume without research.

Formal research can be accomplished with survey mailings. If there is a business school or marketing department on campus, it's likely that they can help develop a questionnaire and analyze the results. Mailing lists can be obtained through the alumni association, state department of education rosters, newspaper directories and lists of registered voters available from the Secretary of State's office.

The advantage of formal research is that it provides a benchmark for communications programs. The information to help develop strategies can also be used down the road to measure the effectiveness of the communications efforts.

Research will help deans set communications goals and develop strategies for meeting those goals. It's likely that the research will reveal some things already known, other things suspected, and still others that surprise the most aware administrator. But it also will provide a direction for effective communications.

If it sounds like a lot of work, that's because it is. But it will provide a clear picture of the opinion of those outside the halls of ivy.

After using research to help formulate communications strategies, administrators must not only clearly define and share their vision and expectations, but must lead by example.

At the University of Northern Colorado, we're fortunate to have a dean who makes public relations a priority and does a weekly commentary on public radio that reaches more than 60,000 listeners. The commentaries are not commercials for the college, but general observations on education and its effect on society. We offer transcripts of the commentaries to editorial page editors across Colorado, and many use them.

But the dean is not a one-person show. He encourages faculty to be expert commentators on their speciality areas. If the dean and the information officer have done a good job outlining the SCDE's key messages and priorities to the

internal audiences, those messages and priorities will be conveyed by the faculty to the external audiences.

Information Officers Must Let Their Constituents Know Who They Are & What They Do.

It sounds basic, but getting to know the faculty, staff, and administrators in the SCDE is a vital task for information officers. Communications professionals also must share what their jobs entail and what they expect from their colleagues. To do their part to get everyone in the SCDE on the same page regarding communications, information officers must make their presence known.

This is another area where a strong commitment from the dean can pave the way. If everyone within the SCDE knows that communications is important, they will respond accordingly.

However, the information officer must still do the legwork. There are at least a half-dozen ways that information officers can get better known. Get on the agenda at department meetings. Talk to professors about their research. Find out from secretaries the important issues that consume their time. Read education publications to keep up with issues, trends, and research. Attend meetings and open forums. Talk to students.

As the information officer finds out what others do, they also must provide insight into the world of the communications office.

While expanding their internal network, they should do a little educating of their own. Information officers are generally savvy about the media and other external constituencies, but it's surprising how little most people in colleges and universities know about that subject. The mass media is like a car—most people use it every day, but few have a clue about its internal workings. It's the job of the information officer to play Chilton's Manual.

The communications officer must explain the news value of service activities, classroom work with students, and re-

search. They have to educate faculty about ways to respond to the media and external constituencies. They must talk about deadlines and localizing news and stories that follow trends. They must educate faculty experts on the stories that continually are a part of the media—test scores, graduation/dropout rates, minority achievement, standards, and charter schools.

In sum, they must sell the value of effective communications with external publics.

At the University of Northern Colorado, we developed a brochure for faculty and staff that outlines four basic points: what the information office does, why it is important, where students fit in, and what is the nature of this strange beast called news. For those who cannot attend training sessions, the brochure gives a good overview of how faculty can help.

Many universities also provide faculty and administrators with information on what to expect when the press comes calling. For some, the experience of facing a reporter is unnerving, and having an idea of what to expect will help. A good strategy is to ask your local education reporter to come talk with faculty about a reporter's work.

By becoming an important part of the SCDE's culture, the information officer can help advance internal and external communications priorities while developing cohesion among people and priorities.

Tools of the Trade

Information officers hold two jobs. They spread the word externally, but their planning and development also enhance internal communications. They have developed a supply of tools to help with both.

Press releases and tip sheets are the traditional ways of getting stories out. But there are other tools that reach out to the external constituents while helping the information officer build internal networks and credibility.

The first is a newsletter. This handy tool can do yeoman's work on several fronts for SCDEs. A newsletter can be reach almost every external audience while also helping the information officer achieve internal networking goals.

At the University of Northern Colorado, we produce our newsletter twice a year. It goes to alumni, select members of Colorado's education community, donors, legislators, and other stakeholders. We have standing features, such as a column from the dean, emeritus faculty reflections, alumni news, and faculty activities. We also focus each issue on a division within the college and explore its practical applications.

For example, a feature on our division of special education highlighted the division's focus, goals, and achievements. Sidebar stories examined faculty views on trends in inclusion, the practice of placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms. Another looked at ways in which inclusion affects alumni working in the field.

At Northern Colorado, the information officer writes about two-thirds of articles, faculty and the dean the remaining third. Writing stories is an excellent way for an information officer to learn more about the inner workings of a SCDE. It also provides faculty with an opportunity to publicize some of the activities that would not ordinarily make the popular press.

Just as the newsletter can reach several target groups outside the SCDE, an internal newsletter can help build community within the building. At Northern Colorado, the dean's office produces *Monday Morning in McKee*, a weekly newsletter that contains information about speakers, deadlines, professional development opportunities, conference presentations, grants awarded, and so on. The format is informal; it is seldom longer than four pages. But this newsletter is an important vehicle for reinforcing the themes and messages that will build internal community.

Another increasingly important source of communications is the World Wide Web. An effective web presence can be a bonus for SCDEs. The web is another way to disseminate information, reach constituents, provide instruction, profile faculty and highlight student achievement.

As with any publication, when using the web, it is important to develop a clear picture of the goals and audience. While web use is on the rise, the audience tends to be seg-

mented. A good way to let target audiences know about your web presence is to send them a postcard with your web address.

While the web can be a powerful tool in a variety of ways, it also can be a drain on time and resources. Many SCDEs have courses or programs in educational technology. Students in this area can be a big help in site design, technical help, and ongoing site maintenance. However, the information officer must have a hand in the editorial content of the site. Like their paper counterparts, electronic publications require accurate information that is well presented.

Another tool that does double duty for the information officer is an experts list. Media are the primary audience. Stories on education abound in the media, and those who cover schools are always looking for experts to provide context, comment, or statistics.

Putting together an experts list, like a newsletter, requires a significant amount of legwork. But the payoff can be worth it. The visibility of the SCDE can increase, and people will see the institution at the forefront of educational issues. Gathering the material will also give the information officer further insight into faculty specialities and research.

Some SCDE websites	
University of Arizona: www.ed.arizona.edu	**University of Northern Colorado:** www.edtech.univnorthco.edu
University of Florida: www.coe.ufl.edu	**University of Northern Iowa:** iscssun.uni.edu/coe/home/depart.html
George Mason University: www.gse.gmu.edu/gse2/gsehome.htm	**Washington State University:** www.educ.wsu.edu
Harvard University: gseweb.harvard.edu	

At the University of Northern Colorado, we produce a 16-page experts list with topics ranging from standards to autism. Faculty are asked each semester to submit a form listing up to three areas of expertise, including research done, books written, or other relevant information. The information is entered into a database (we use FileMaker Pro), which can produce a hard-copy document or searchable electronic list.

Entries are listed alphabetically by topic. The accompanying narrative contains the professor's title, phone and e-mail, and a brief description of their area of expertise.

A hard copy of the finished experts list goes to every education reporter in the state and several at national education publications. It also becomes a searchable database on the college's website. We have an experts list dedicated to education, but also a university-wide list that has education as one of eight sections. That list has broader distribution to a variety of media.

These tools—newsletters, websites, and experts lists—are ways for the information officer to increase their store of knowledge about faculty and to build effective external relations. They also enhance the internal visibility of the information officer as someone who is interested in the faculty and their activities. And by focusing on administrative priorities in all external communications, the information officer both reinforces and manifests those basic themes.

Follow-Up

Internal follow-up is important and relatively easy to do, but it's often neglected. Deans and information officers can spend a lot of time promoting a communications agenda that builds a unified SCDE. It's important to set priorities. It's also important to ensure that those priorities are being met and that those making efforts to meet them are recognized.

Information officers ask faculty to do things that often fall outside the realm of teaching and scholarship. Some faculty are vocal advocates of internal and external communications, others would rather have teeth pulled. But public relations is everyone's job. Inevitably, there are faculty who are

wary of the media and don't understand the value of public relations. It is the role of the information officer to educate them, but also to follow up when they do their part.

A thank-you note or e-mail is an easy way to show appropriate appreciation. Information officers should celebrate successes and share the fruits of their labor with the faculty involved. Information officers should share newspaper clips of stories that included faculty expertise and make tapes of television or radio interviews available. The external newsletter should be sent to each faculty member and department.

Using an e-mail list that sends messages to the entire college is another effective way to share successes or point out especially valuable news articles.

A conversation or note of thanks from the dean to faculty or administrators who advance the communications agenda can go a long way. It helps reinforce the point that communications are important and move the SCDE forward.

And remember the communications goals? Revisit them frequently to assess the college's progress. Examine the tools used to inform all audiences, and determine if they are the best way to meet your objectives.

Success in communications in SCDEs starts inside the building. To be effective, information officers must play an important role in the life of a SCDE. They must be advocates and educators, worker bees as well as part of the team that sets direction.

The information officer can play a valuable role in helping establish the key themes and messages inside the SCDE that will bring cohesion to the organization. They can be an essential part of giving voice to the vision that will get faculty, staff, and administrators motivated and rallying around a consistent theme.

By focusing internally, information officers can chart a course to effective communications, both inside the building and out. Their work can help schools, colleges, and departments of education deal with the changing face of education and build support with important audiences. Enjoy the flight.

Within the University: Gaining Respect in Your Own Backyard

Kay M. Hyatt

Education is both the hotbed of some of society's most controversial issues and the scapegoat for its perceived failures. The nation's public schools simultaneously are a place of refuge and of discard for the best and worst of social progress and ills. As the profession that literally shapes the future of society, the public expectation and examination of education and how it performs are constant and exacting.

Now, more than ever before, this scrutiny and demand for accountability is reaching beyond the schools and into the schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) that prepare the educators. This presents a tremendous opportunity for examining the way we do business, portray and change our image, and highlight the entire institution in the process.

Peers, especially in academe, can be the harshest critics, perpetuating perceptions that have plagued education since it moved from the normal schools to join the arts and sciences on university campuses. Particularly at land-grant and research universities, the old conceptions of education as service rather than scholarship, and attitudes that "anyone can teach" as long as they know their subject, are deeply entrenched.

For years, SCDEs have internally agonized over their second-class status and quietly done outstanding, but mostly unrecognized, teaching, research, and service. But when some noise is made and a college's innovation, resources, and leadership are consistently in the spotlight, when it is proactive and ready to respond to challenges and opportunities, col-

leagues throughout the institution take notice. At the University of Maine, the College of Education & Human Development is shedding its reserve with fanfare.

Bringing about this change takes a commitment to constantly work on developing and delivering the college's messages to a diverse audience in a variety of ways. But first, it takes a farsighted and determined dean, chair, or director who is willing to make some tough decisions to transform images and attitudes. And it takes a strong administrative resolve to invest in bringing an experienced public information/media relations person on staff when funding is crunched and faculty vacancies are going unfilled. Then it takes administrative fortitude to give this person leeway to rattle cages, question everything, prod publicity-shy and reticent faculty, create more work for everyone, and bring a real-world, jargon-free, consumer view to the SCDE's communications.

Mutual understanding and respect between the dean/chair/director and the public information officer is key to determining the priorities and strategies that can make the critical difference in what potential students, policymakers, general public, and campus colleagues know and think about the SCDE, the profession it supports, and the institution it represents.

An Advocate & An Ally

The public information officer must be a fierce advocate for the SCDE but also a promoter of the larger institution, since the reputation of any academic unit hinges on that of the parent institution. The communicator for an individual college or unit is also a representative of the institution and must know the mission, issues, and institutional goals. Whether representing the SCDE at a professional conference or a recruitment open house, it's important to be able to answer a broad range of questions about the university and to follow up with requested additional materials.

The U-Maine College of Education & Human Development often is the only campus unit represented at annual sessions of statewide professional associations simply because it

has a public information person to travel, staff the college's display, and network with important audiences such as principals and guidance counselors. In addition, outstanding education students often are selected to assist us in presenting U-Maine's story and provide a professional development experience for them. Their participation presents the best message of what the university is all about—students and opportunity—and it's one that policy-makers, the public, and parents clearly recognize and enjoy.

The astute SCDE public information officer knows the advantages and limitations of the university's communications strategy, and takes every opportunity to feed into and enhance that system.

For example, when the University of Maine's weekly institutional publication, *Maine Perspective*, cut back to biweekly because of budget reductions, it was supplemented with a daily electronic mail bulletin, *U-Maine Today*. The e-mail bulletin, prepared by the campus public affairs department, is a capsule of noteworthy and useful information to the campus community, such as media interviews and coverage of university events and people, announcements, and significant activities involving faculty, staff, and students. *UMaine Today*, forwarded to subscribers each weekday afternoon, is widely read around the campus. The college of education & human development consistently shows up in this daily bulletin because its public information officer regularly submits news items about the work, leadership, and influence of the college. Much of this information can be rewritten for publication in *Maine Perspective*, giving additional exposure.

The point is that the people charged with university-wide publicity and promotion are extremely busy and compiling information is a time-consuming job. The college of education offers convenience and assistance by providing a constant stream of well-written and pertinent information and, as a result, stands above the other colleges in daily visibility.

Attitudes change and respect grows when campus colleagues and students are consistently reminded that education faculty are serving as resources for statewide and national

media, presenting innovative work, giving keynote addresses at national and international conferences, publishing highly praised books, producing research that is shaping and changing policy, and playing a leading role in educational reform initiatives.

The Advantage of Focus

An institution's central public relations office has the tremendous responsibility of covering a huge and constantly changing beat. Even with the best of intentions, it's extremely difficult for a limited staff who must represent and promote an entire university and handle its crises to become thoroughly familiar with a specific college, its faculty, programs, research, and services.

Seeing the "big picture" and understanding the university's mission are crucial, but it takes trench work in the college—in close and consistent collaboration with the leadership, faculty, and support staff—to ferret out what's going on and to fit that information in a timely way into the needs, interests, and issues driving the local, state, regional and national education scene. Without this in-depth understanding of what a college is—and should be—messages are shallow and lacking in vitality and credibility.

A communications person devoted to advancing one college and its interests has the luxury of focus—sorting out strengths and weaknesses, sniffing out opportunities, raising the red flag, understanding and working around the dynamics and subtleties of politics and personalities, and building relationships. A proactive public information officer, well-acquainted with faculty research and expertise and their level of comfort with print or broadcast media, can immediately respond to reporters' queries, pitch topics, and provide experts for breaking news stories.

For instance, ProfNet, the online resource for journalists seeking academic experts on a broad range of issues, offers a tremendous potential for media exposure. The key is to be quick and concise and to ensure your source is available. A communicator who knows his or her faculty just goes ahead

and makes the pitch, avoiding the time-consuming and frustrating process of first selling the idea to a faculty member. Because of the ability to respond quickly and give solid examples of just what a faculty member can contribute to an interview, U-Maine College of Education faculty have been cited or featured in scores of newspapers and broadcasts nationwide and beyond.

The ability to pitch in advance is another advantage of being tuned in not only to the college but to the scope of educational issues, trends, and upcoming events. Before the issuance of *What Matters Most* by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future which called for reform in teacher preparation, the U-Maine College of Education & Human Development positioned its dean as a highly knowledgeable, qualified, and involved resource who already was leading his college through a major restructuring of its teacher preparation program. The advance notice generated an interview with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and major state media.

Working the freelance market is also time-consuming, but can result in excellent contacts who know how to sell a story. Developing relationships and pitching ideas to freelance writers has also paid off with stories about the college's programs and faculty in the *Boston Globe* and *Education Week*, and more are in the works.

The Paper Chase

The college communicator's office tends to physically reflect the broad scope as well as the intensity of the job. Most university public information staff are former newspaper reporters; they like hard copy and save everything. What might look like clutter to an outside visitor is really a cache of background information, valuable data, news clippings, and work in progress that can quickly be turned into a useful document, such as lobbying material to help the SCDE and university present a stronger case for legislative funding, a comprehensive annual report, or a research-based opinion piece.

For example, with that horde of data and slight prodding by the communicator, the dean wrote an op-ed for the state's largest circulation daily newspaper, noting outstanding accomplishments of Maine students and teachers and the crucial need for continuing community and state investment in education. In the process, he was able to highlight the college's research unit by using its various studies to document his points.

The availability of data and background materials, plus the influence of a news-collecting communicator who keeps issues on the front burner, also enabled the dean to quickly respond to news stories with an op-ed that provided a candid and reflective examination of the public perception and value of the teaching profession. The dean provided a closer look at two news reports: one of a survey suggesting that the SAT scores of many teacher education students in Massachusetts are below the national average and below those of students in other disciplines; and another of an international study revealing that U.S. teachers work longer hours than their non-U.S. colleagues but that their salaries, in relation to the average income within the respective countries, rank near the bottom.

In his article, the dean used U-Maine, state, and national statistics to explain the complexities of standardized test scores and the hazards of making generalizations based on data from students, nearly half of whom will change majors, transfer to another university, or drop out within the first year. But he also acknowledged the need to improve teacher quality and pointed out how the college is restructuring its education programs to meet the highest state and national standards.

In addition to housing materials for ongoing and future news, promotional work, and timely reaction, the communicator's office is a repository where faculty, staff, and the media visit or call hoping to find a copy of that letter, report, or statistics that no one else saved, or to find information for various projects. This was an unintended service, but one that has evolved and become associated with the college of education.

The communicator's office and its fact-filled trove is also the logical command post when crisis looms. As a generalist with a good feel for public opinion and how the media usually

work, the communicator is in the best position to track and keep the college in control of the situation.

A Little Help Goes A Long Way

So what does all this public exposure and preparedness have to do with positioning the college within the university? It demonstrates how the initiative and leadership of one college can work to the advantage of the institution and the difference that an information officer, responsible to that college, can make for the university.

For example, when the college sponsored a major academic conference and enticed best-selling writer and alumnus Stephen King back to campus to give the keynote address, it was the University of Maine, as well as the college of education & human development, that benefited from the ensuing good will and immense publicity. The conference, using the works of King to explore the controversial topics of censorship, student choice, and place of popular literature in high school reading lists, kept the university positively in the national and international media spotlight for three months, including C-Span coverage of King's keynote and a *Boston Globe* editorial praising the university and its faculty for recognizing and talking about these important issues. The college also paid to document the hundreds of news stories stemming from the conference (the university cancelled its clipping service several years ago).

Staging a national conference is a tremendous undertaking that demands exceptional commitment and hard work by sponsors and organizers. But the added capacity of a communicator to do much-needed footwork, keep an eye on the calendar and priorities, and push the promotional aspects can make decisions easier about taking on and following through with new programs and services or big, one-time events.

Ongoing budget cutbacks have diminished the number of resource people on campuses at the same time that growing calls for accountability and an increasingly competitive higher education market have swelled the need for their skills and

services. A dean or chair who not only has invested in an information officer but is willing to share that person's time and talent for the good of the university has a strong playing hand, and it's recognized by colleagues around the table who ask for help. At our university, the college and its information officer have been available to help:

- when a vice president needs a speech to highlight the university's teaching, research and service before a visiting delegation of state legislators;

- when deans or chairs of other colleges need a story written for a newsletter or someone to help pull together and publicize a special series of academic offerings for faculty;

- when a campuswide committee needs a strong writer with a historical institutional perspective to review and weave the university mission into critical reports;

- when someone is needed to compile and document the official report of a regional educational conference;

- when the state department of education needs promotional materials for a new technology project; and

- when the development or chancellor's office needs university-wide or specific background details for a quick response or presentation to major patrons or policymakers.

Each time the dean offers professional assistance to seize a fleeting opportunity or accomplish an essential job that no one else has the time to do, it sends a strong and positive campuswide message about the leadership, collegiality, foresight, and capabilities of the college. With a constant and persistent presence on campus, the U-Maine College of Education & Human Development is impossible to avoid. And no one wants to ignore it anymore.

Taking Messages to External Audiences

Leanne South & Phillip West

Communities want to know how schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) are working with the public schools.

Parents want to read about their sons or daughters winning awards.

Alumni and donors are interested in how their contribution is being used.

High school students considering college and adults deciding to make a career change frequently wonder if they should become teachers—and which SCDE offers the best preparation.

Legislators express concern about accountability at public institutions.

And, of course, universities want to share the positive stories of their research, service, and teaching.

Unfortunately, taking relevant and important messages to those external audiences by publicizing accomplishments and activities often ranks low on a college's list of priorities, dwarfed by meeting the regular needs of its students and by the increasing demands of every day operations. Too frequently at SCDEs, it becomes a good idea that is never implemented.

Contemporary society, however, demands that colleges communicate with their external audiences. Particularly is this true of SCDEs, which have come under repeated attack when lay people indict the public schools and the educators employed in them for their so-called lack of success in educating tomorrow's leaders. As a consequence, critics, many of whom

are legislators, are questioning how well SCDEs are preparing students to teach, whether education professors really know what is happening in the public schools, and why education professors need to conduct research. Increasingly, legislators want to see higher education institutions use their funds to develop efficient partnerships with public schools, so that one knows what the other is doing and that both can do it better together.

The best way to answer the array of questions being posed to SCDEs is to tell external audiences, not once, not twice, but over and over again, what the SCDE is doing, who is doing it, and why and how it will help them.

The Past is Prologue

Once upon an information moment, a press release might suffice to communicate to an institution's external publics. This press release usually emanated from the university news service, but was probably initiated by a professor who had alerted a university reporter to an event in his or her classroom. This information might then travel around the state or country, appearing in a variety of newspapers. It might make the radio circuit and local and/or national TV. Information from deans or department heads about new and retiring faculty generally also found its way to the university news service and often to the hometown newspaper of those featured. Since stories varied, so did results, mainly because overall efforts to publicize lacked formal organization and were attributable to professors rather than journalists or information specialists.

Although some colleges were in the forefront of sharing information with others, particularly the press, the typical SCDE (sharing the credo of public schools that schools should not be sold to their publics) was not prone to advertise its wares. Thus, external communications were directed at the university news service, and internal communications found their way to faculty in the form of the traditional memo. And if and when an information specialist did exist at a college level, that person's role was generally that of a scribe.

From Scribe to Computer Communicator

With the typewriter having gone the way of the Model T and e-mail and the Internet but a touch away on a user-friendly computer, the information specialist at the college level has instant access to education faculty members.

The information specialist's job is, on the one hand, to keep the faculty posted about college and university events and activities that might pique their interest. On the other, it is to facilitate communication exchanges that herald the most recent faculty accomplishments.

With the wide, wide world of the Web, the information specialist, having sifted through and organized information gleaned from faculty, can direct it to sources that might be interested in publicizing it, or to other faculty who might wish to form some collaborative effort.

Through the Internet, state legislators can be kept informed on a continuous basis about all the good things that are occurring within the college. Foundations can be alerted to research efforts they may wish to further through their support. Parents, potential students, potential faculty, and other external audiences can be reached as well. A website or newsletter for all to see easily accomplishes these goals.

In other words, the computer has the capability of significantly expanding and enhancing the role of college information specialists.

From Informing to Online Marketing

The idea of marketing one's wares is in vogue in contemporary society. The student is client and consumer. The parent is most certainly a customer. Parents want their children to succeed in whatever endeavor they decide to pursue. If a student wants to become a teacher, the parent wants that student to obtain the best teacher training available. Since teacher preparation programs and curricula vary from one SCDE to another, parent and student must have a data-rich pool that will allow them to choose the best program.

Typically, a college catalog is about the only tool on hand to facilitate choice. In an electronic age, however, paper trails

are less than satisfying. The customer needs more than to be informed, and a SCDE information specialist need to do more than inform them.

Marketing implies an assessment of needs, individually and on the local, state, or national level. Is the teaching program the student is embarking upon as suitable for schools in Portland, Oregon, as it is for those in Portland, Maine? Are the data available that indicate employment rate and duration of those students enrolled in the teacher preparatory program? For example, once hired, how many students are still teaching after 5, 10, and 20 years? Has any chart comparing SCDEs been developed by the information specialist which can be picked up on the Internet by prospective clients ? Is there an ongoing dialogue on the Internet between prospective client and SCDE under consideration?

Marketing implies some kind of plan, a plan based on available human and fiscal resources. With an easily-remembered theme and logo, on every website immediate recognition should occur.

The marketing plan should highlight the caliber of students attending the scde. For example, how many National Merit Scholarship recipients are currently enrolled or have been enrolled in past years in the college's teacher preparatory program? Faculty specializations, distinctions, awards, scheduled presentations, and recent publications, books, chapters, and articles should be easily accessible on the Internet. Of no less importance is the involvement of faculty members in a speakers' bureau, which sends them into the community and increases their visibility and value among the local citizenry.

Of course, whatever strategy a SCDE uses to fulfill the goals within its plan should undergo continuous evaluation. Electronic or paper surveys can be used to rate the worth of information transmitted to and among faculty, community members, legislators, and the like. An occasional face-to-face interview is equally important.

The information specialist should also initiate opportunities for SCDE faculty to get their names and faces in newspapers and on television, and their voices on radio. The greater

the exposure of the good things that are taking place on campus or in the community because of SCDE initiatives, the greater will be the college's visibility and credibility.

From Reporting to Advertising

While a reporter on a beat covers a story with as much objectivity as possible, the information specialist for a SCDE makes information available to all concerned as inviting or as palatable as possible. This does not mean hiding bits of information under the rug, or making up stories that are untrue. On the contrary, it means showing the college administration, faculty, and students in the best light whenever an opportunity presents itself. Reduced to even a simpler equation, it is like calling a glass half empty or half full.

In the final analysis, it is not the job of the SCDE information specialist to either investigate or expose, but rather to scoop other colleges on the campus and nationally in advertising the merits of its teacher preparation program. This may, at times, transform the information specialist into a film maker with commentary (as in voice over), depicting student learning in an educational technology laboratory, or as an interviewer, querying a professor about a recent research project. As a consequence, the information specialist is in a position to offer an inviting and timely film clip to the local cable or TV channel, or national networks.

Often the radio is overlooked in advertising the college's strengths. However, properly prepared and goal-specific public service announcements (PSAs) can certainly prove to be helpful. Radio stations, as part of their community service, are obliged to make available some free time for public service broadcasting. Radio stations are aimed at various audiences. Some are almost exclusively for the very young; others are directed at more mature populations. There are stations that are aimed at capturing the interest and support of non-English speaking groups. All of the stations present opportunities for public information specialists to advertise their colleges.

Newspapers, daily and weekly, represent other vehicles for advertising a college. The prepared press release is a

commonplace. The carefully-prepared feature article, with photos included to showcase something ongoing in the college curricula, takes considerably more effort. Knowing a paper's interests, deadlines, and preferred format for submissions is extremely important, as is getting reporters into the SCDE on guided tours to see all the great activities. After that exposure on the tour, the reporter with the education beat may very well become the college's best advertiser.

For meeting the needs of specific audiences, like parents or donors, the media, while obviously of great significance in advertising a college's merit, is secondary to a face-to-face contact that an information specialist can arrange with professors. This contact can be fostered with tours or arranged gatherings sponsored the college at graduation or other celebration times, where these external audiences meet with faculty, students, and administrators. In any event, face-to-face coupled with media reinforcement is sure to enhance a college's image in the eyes of its clients.

To Plan Or Not To Plan

Effective communication efforts at both college and university levels generally happen because an information officer has a clear plan or blueprint to guide his or her efforts. Only in this way can any kind of organization of the communication function be attained. Working with external audiences should be an integral part of this plan. The best case scenario is to develop a communication plan that coincides with the college's strategic plan. The strategic plan is the communication plan's driving force. A communication plan's mission should be to help the SCDE achieve its objectives.

There is no such thing as a "best plan." The first obstacle is terminology. There are goals, value statement, mission statements, objectives, operating principles, aims, assumptions, strategies, tactics, and so on. It helps to read about each of these terms to see how others interpret their meaning. However, the terms used in a SCDE's communication plan should reflect the same terminology and meaning the college as a whole uses for planning purposes.

Once a college's strategic plan is in place, the information officer, who generally reports to the dean of the college, should take the initiative to develop the college's communication plan. Some deans are savvy about public relations while others like the idea without really knowing how to use it to their advantage. Communication planning is a worthwhile exercise and can begin the process of developing a dean's awareness of the communication function within the college. It will also give an information officer a clear focus and direction in handling external communications for the college

Planning is based upon reliable information, including feedback from the college's external audiences. That means listening to those audiences. However, being a good listener is not easy. Reporters are trained to listen, but the information specialist may be so busy telling the college story that they hear only what they want to hear, which is, of course, that the college is progressing in its efforts to project the right image.

The information officer must devise a variety of strategies to elicit feedback. An excellent source of feedback is alumni, past graduates of a college of education now working in the field. Presently teachers, they are in an ideal position to convey how well they were prepared to teach in the public and private schools of today. With the assistance of marketing or other students on campus, effective samplings from external audiences can produce reliable data for planning purposes.

Taking the First Step to Planning

The first step is to gather as much background information as possible about the college. That means knowing where a college has been and where it is going. It also means anticipating the result of any effort made or strategy used.

This information could include, but is not restricted to:

- demographics: student enrollment (undergraduate & graduate); number of faculty (tenure & non-tenure track);
- academic programs offered;

- financial aid programs offered by the college;
- administrators/leadership (dean and staff, department and/or division heads, faculty senate representatives, any other leadership roles within the college or university);
- rankings of college, academic program, and faculty;
- college partnerships with public schools:
- program accreditation;
- student organizations (and their faculty sponsors);
- annual schedule of events (this may only be possible on a semester-by-semester basis);
- relevant professional association annual meetings (many faculty present major papers here);
- commencement dates (including the nature and type of student awards released to home town newspapers);
- external funding generated (including dollar amount, types of research or other programs funded, and sources of funding);
- books or refereed journal articles authored or co-authored by faculty; and
- journals, magazines, monographs, and encyclopedias on which faculty serve as editors or as editorial review board members.

When the information officer has these details, confronting the in-depth questions reporters often ask is much easier.

But only responding to reporter queries, without taking some sort of initiative, is reactive rather than proactive. To be proactive, the well-prepared information officer has already developed within the college's communication plan a list of key external audiences along with the strategies or tactics that can be used to reach them.

Audiences & Tactics

While there is an abundance of audiences toward which the college information officer may direct a college's messages, some of the more important include newspaper writers, television reporters, radio news reporters, alumni, citizens residing in the college community and more pointedly those citizen groups that could conceivably influence university outcomes, schools (public and private) served by the university, the students (and, of course, their parents) who may be soon be in attendance there, and legislators, particularly those who have an established record of educational advocacy.

In targeting various external audiences, the college information officer employs different tactics, some more than once to reach the same target, thereby reinforcing not only a message but its importance.

The news release is the most commonly used tactic. Releases can focus on news about faculty or program accomplishments, forthcoming special events and awards ceremonies, or reporting successful events. While communication officers should strive to produce a regular schedule of releases to keep the college in the public's eye, whatever they communication must not simply be an exercise in reporting something, anything. The release can not be just hype. The content is key.

Another popular mode of communicating with external, as well as internal, audiences is the college newsletter. A newsletter gets the college's name before a target audience in an attractive manner and offers to many external audiences information that is of interest and which can be read quickly. The development of desktop publishing has begun moving the layout process out of commercial printing offices into the computer of the college communications officer. The newsletter is a convenient way of communicating with alumni and donor groups, but it can also communicate with other SCDEs. However, the ease of preparing several pages for distribution can be easily dwarfed by the cost of mailing them. Budgeting for a newsletter means carefully considering all costs.

In light of the widespread use of computers in offices and homes and the rapidly increasing accessibility of the Internet,

it should be no surprise that the electronic newsletter is becoming a worthy alternative to traditional paper forms of communication. Easily and economically conveyed by e-mail, the electronic newsletter holds much promise for the future.

Video news releases, or VNRs, are another tool colleges may use in communicating news to target audiences. One problem, however, is the expense, not only in producing but also in distributing them. Moreover, they require considerable knowledge about video production. VNRs are usually created and channeled through an institution's news bureau.

A fact sheet is another way of getting some college information out to external audiences. They contain rudimentary information about the college, specific data to remember when considering the merits of an institution. This fact sheet can be a pocket-sized card that can be carried in billfolds and purses. Fact sheets can also be one- or two-page general information sheets about the college. Reporters sometimes use them when gathering background material when they are writing a story about the college.

Also, external audiences can be directly contacted through information booths. At first glance, the expense of purchasing exhibit space and providing a college of education representative to oversee the exhibit or information booth at a convention or conference might seem exorbitant, but actually this amount can be less than the cost of producing and mailing out a four-color magazine or brochure to the same audience. Having a presence at a big convention allows a college of education representative to interact personally with people that might otherwise not be contacted.

The special event, when colleges of education sponsor annual conferences or lectures that feature prominent experts from education and other fields, can also be very useful in reaching external audiences. At the special event, external groups may not only bring their message to the SCDE, but also take away a message of equal or greater import from the college community, administrators, professors, and students.

Op-ed pieces can be an effective tactic when taking a stance on a specific issue. The editorial is generally penned

under the byline of the college's chief administrator. While it may take several drafts to include all salient points under consideration, the final publishable editorial, given to all targeted media, helps the SCDE communicate with the public and local and state policymakers on key education issues.

The media sourcebook, another tactic for facilitating communication between college and external publics, is merely a listing of faculty interested and willing to talk to the media on specific topics, or areas of expertise. When preparing a source book, a college information officer must be sure to include a way of contacting these experts. Readily available telephone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses make it easy for a reporter to make a desired contact.

Last but not least is the homepage on the Internet which provides a spot for placing products of all the preceding tactics for everyone in the world to see.

Using the Media Effectively

The college of education information officer must work closely with news bureau of the university in which it is housed. However, relying on a university news bureau does not preclude a college information officer from developing a relationship with newspaper and television reporters. An awareness of media interests, submission formats, and deadlines is important to an information officer's success. Getting to know reporters before any negative publicity hits the headlines or flashes across the small screen is even more important, if not critical. Media representatives who have a good understanding of the SCDE's workings are less likely to be as negative as those who have no previous acquaintance with it.

In taking a proactive role, the college information officer also takes the time to follow up on releases sent to the media, but not printed, aired, or televised. Knowing a medium's preferences is certainly going to increase the chances of getting something accepted.

Information officers are increasingly able to communicate with reporters about story ideas through e-mail. Every day an increasing number of newspapers are going online with an

interactive edition that compliments their hard copy. Some of the better interactive newspapers feature a section that allows a user to leave an e-mail message for any of their reporters.

Home Sweet Homepage

A college's homepage can be an exciting communication tool. Any news or publicity material produced in hard copy can be put on the Internet via a college's homepage. This includes a college's news releases, newsletters, and magazines. On its homepage, a college can showcase innovative research or collaborative programs with public schools as well as highlight faculty productivity. Viewed from this perspective, a college's homepage is quickly becoming a valuable marketing tool for recruiting students and faculty.

The benefit of a college's homepage is its tremendous potential for communicating with a worldwide audience. The drawback is the increased workload, along with the problem of figuring out how to handle it adequately. It was earlier believed by many that electronic mail and the Internet would replace traditional communication functions. Now it appears that they are merely additions to existing tools and tactics by which a college may distribute its multiplicity of messages.

Many professional communicators are working overtime to become "web savvy." Indeed, most higher education institutions offer an array of short courses that will prepare personnel for travel on the web. One indication of being savvy is having a homepage that attracts repeated visitors. But HTML, the language used for websites, calls for additional skills, which some have acquired and others have hired. Because of the time involved in compiling a college-wide homepage, a webmaster is quickly becoming a must. Fortunately, as a greater number of software editors are released, communicators are finding it easier to publish electronically. The bottom line is that moving into the world of electronic publishing via the Internet is not something to be taken lightly. To do it well takes planning, training, and a commitment from the college to purchase and update the necessary equipment.

Gauging Success in Reaching External Audiences

The traditional method of evaluating a communication program's outreach is the mailed survey, which, too often, produces an inadequate response to accurately gauge effectiveness. A more effective method is the telephone survey, which in most cases provides a respectable response rate. The best way is the person-to-person approach, but that method requires ample training and much free time. As a result, outside consultants are frequently employed for the job. Of course, this could turn into a project for an education professor who teaches a course in sampling and surveying.

Another common method of evaluation is to gauge the number of articles published in local, state, or national newspapers; measure column inches to determine extent of actual coverage; and determine rate of acceptance of news releases sent out. An attractive album, filled with press clippings, is often a primary accouterment of the typical information officer.

More recently is the calculation of activity that occurs on a SCDE's website. If people keep revisiting the page, then the information officer must be doing something right.

Attendance at college-run events is still another way to determine whether the college's messages are reaching external audiences. The larger the crowd, the more successful has been the communication that attracted that crowd.

Summary

Schools, colleges, and departments of education must take a proactive approach to communicating with external, diverse audiences who may be interested or skeptical about their activities. Those audiences will not know about the good things happening in SCDEs if they are not made constantly aware of them.

However, external awareness cannot be fostered unless effective planning has occurred. Every college information officer needs to have a goal-oriented and value-driven plan. With that plan as a guide, the information officer is able to routinely handle multiple and immediate demands, with the once-extraordinary situation becoming no more than routine.

In Fund-raising & Crisis Campaigns: When Deans Really Need Information Officers

Bill London

A school, college, or department of education (SCDE) can be like a slowly-rolling wagon. Without any obstacles or changes of direction, the ride is pretty comfortable. But the first time the wagon hits a big rock, or the load shifts quickly, there's immediate problems—problems that can't be solved without some preparation and knowledge.

In that comparison, that big rock is a crisis—an internal or external problem so large and so "newsworthy" that the public is going to demand to know what is going on. Reporters will be kibitzing, second-guessing every attempt to move off that rock. They want to understand what happened, and if they are not provided with solid information, will accept the explanations or speculations of others. Suddenly, reputations (of institutions and individuals) will be at stake. Almost any problem or event can become a crisis if mishandled.

The changing directions or shifting loads are the institutional pressures to adjust, major priority shifts born either within the institution itself or entering from outside. Perhaps it's a new restructuring agenda, the pressing need to recruit more students, or a major fund-raising campaign.

In both of these cases, the crisis and the campaign, the need for the information officer is acute. In crisis, the officer's job is to help the media get the truth out quickly. In the campaign, the officer's job is to share the good news. In both

cases, the more experienced, better positioned, and more talented the information officer, the better the results. Last minute additions are less likely to succeed.

To really illustrate the role and value of the information officer in those two cases, let's look at examples:

The Fund-raising Campaign

After a decade of preparation and a half-dozen years of serious fund-raising, Washington State University (in the university's first ever major private funding effort) reached Campaign WSU's goal of $250 million six months early, in December 1996.

I was hired as the college of education's information officer in 1990, and soon learned that one of my primary functions for the next few years was going to be fund-raising support. Working with the college's director of development, I was quickly immersed in donor relations and the preparation of college campaign materials.

Like any other public information effort, my work in support of Campaign WSU meant building communication bridges. To faculty who saw this campaign as another irrelevant innovation pushed onto them by university or college administration, or who viewed any involvement in fund-raising as unclean, my goal was to explain how this source of money could free them to pursue important new activities. To the alumni and other potential donors, my goal was to touch their emotional ties to the institution or their interest in making important changes in the educational system. To the education dean who came to WSU in 1991 with a specific agenda, my goal was to capture that vision and understand those priorities— and then somehow (in a situation that looked very much like square pegs and round holes) fit the faculty expertise and interest into those priorities.

The first objective was to create the case document. This very expensive, shiny color booklet was destined for use by the development officers as a presentation piece, a gift to affluent potential donors. The document's purpose was to state the case for support, the reasons why donors should consider

giving to the education college. It defined the college's campaign goals. In photos and words, I was charged with combining the best examples of faculty involvement in pressing societal problems with the dean's themes of building diversity and establishing partnerships. Our goal was a publication that cited past examples of faculty work with a vision for the future that was primarily brought into the college by the dean.

The first problem was the lack of comprehensive faculty initiatives. Individual faculty were involved in the half-dozen major priority areas that had been identified, both by the dean and by an earlier planning process, as vital to educational restructuring. Those priority areas became the focus of the campaign.

The individual responses to these priorities had never been combined comprehensively. Between departments and branch campuses, and sometimes even within a single department, faculty didn't communicate. For example, the three faculty most focused on working with vulnerable youth had never discussed how their own plans and projects could be combined to form a single broad fundable initiative—and as a matter of fact, they had not even met one another. In those situations, it was my job to identify the ways existing faculty programs could dovetail, bring the faculty together to discuss the ideas and possibilities, and then create a viable program from the pieces.

The second major pothole on the road to completing the case document was the difficulty of overcoming faculty distrust. Many faculty saw the campaign as an unwanted intrusion. One entire department virtually ignored all entreaties to get involved, and was almost entirely written out of the finished document as a result.

Following a series of focus group meetings with prospective donors statewide, the case document was completed in time for the "public" announcement of the campaign (a multiyear "silent" phase at the beginning of the campaign, when the central development officials lined up big corporate and foundation gifts, ended in 1994).

From that point onward, virtually all our newsletters and

news releases contained explicit or implicit references to the campaign. Alumni newsletters included stories about the impact of gifts from individuals and corporations. News releases focused on faculty pursuing campaign priorities and on significant campaign gifts.

Following the completion of the case document, much of my role shifted to donor relations. Working with the development director, I became involved in both donor cultivation (helping bring the prospective donor to a desire to give) and donor stewardship (showing appreciation for giving, and preparing opportunities for future giving).

Like the first-line troops in an invasion, my cultivation responsibilities included traveling to meet alumni identified as prospective donors (but without any history of visits or substantial giving) for interviews and photo sessions. Based upon my evaluation of their emotional tie to the institution and their willingness and ability to give, the development officers followed up appropriately. Often, these cultivation visits continued, as ties of friendship grew and I came to represent, as much as the development officers, the institution to them.

Stewardship visits with donors were designed to discover the appropriate level of public recognition for the gift (and then to try to create the level of recognition desired). Not every gift is news. If the donor's life or personality, or the size of the gift, indicated that public recognition (beyond the institution's various thank-you's) was an option, I would then create news releases or media availabilities focused on the announcement.

The public recognition of a newspaper article about a gift can be appreciation very welcomed by the donor. For example, after a well-attended press conference, one donor told me that her gift, and the public acknowledgment of it, was the fulfillment of her long and scattered life. She has since continued her support of the college with two separate cash gifts.

With the conclusion of Campaign WSU (and the creation of other projects to fill my time), development efforts are less important now. However, donor relations and strategic media efforts are continuing. Fund-raising will remain part of

this job, and will increase with the next campaign.

Part of the legacy of Campaign WSU is the network of college-level information officer positions at WSU created by the needs of the campaign, and retained to continue the institution's search for greater visibility. The impact of the information officers during the campaign was so vital to the success of the fund-raising effort that all those positions are continuing during the post-campaign period. By assuming the multiple roles of communicating between faculty, administration, and donors during the fund-raising effort, the information professionals have shown the importance of their position, campaign or not.

The Crisis

A crisis can happen anytime. A demented graduate student could take a roomful of students hostage. A truckload of dangerous chemicals could slam into the education building. The associate dean could be arrested for soliciting a prostitute.

A crisis will not necessarily become a public relations problem for the institution if the public information aspect is handled well. Institutions must respond as quickly and openly as possible in times of crisis, or risk out-of-control rumors becoming news and creating a reputation for incompetence.

An example of poor crisis communications occurred at the University of Idaho in 1991, when a student from the Middle East hung himself in the university's arboretum. What was a tragic situation became a serious problem in credibility and image within a few hours.

The body was discovered in the late morning. The police called it a hanging and described the victim as a black man. The local afternoon newspaper suggested that an African American male had been killed in a way that dredged up images of historical racist crimes. In a state (Idaho) that was, and is, the base of at least one national racist group and has suffered a serious image problem as a result, it didn't take long before all major media nationwide were on the story.

By late afternoon the same day that the body was discovered, the police had not only uncovered the man's identity, but

had also entered his bedroom and found a suicide note. They knew the victim was not African American and had not been murdered. However, their policy prevented them from making an announcements about the person's identity without first contacting next of kin. That contact was made near midnight that evening.

The next day, after morning newscasts and major dailies had run the lynching story, the police and university authorities held their press conference. But that was too late; the damage was done.

An announcement that previous evening would have stopped the story at the state's borders, but no university representative revealed that this was an international student's suicide. Getting the truth out too late meant a horrible black eye for both the university and the state that donors and alums, as well as prospective faculty and students, still recall.

The University of Idaho violated that first rule of crisis communications: first, confirm the information; second, get the truth out fast; and third, be prepared. Those rules apply to unforeseen crises and critical situations that could be expected to follow a university action—for example, the firing of a well-liked professor in what could be construed as a racist decision.

Handling either kind of crisis is what an information officer should be trained and prepared to do. Understanding the way news is packaged and distributed, as well as knowing the local media representatives, the information officer can take control of the news through a simple five-step system. In crisis, the information professional:

1. confirms the problem,
2. alerts all relevant authorities,
3. assesses the future media needs (eg. setting up a media site nearby and establishing phone contact),
4. immediately prepares and releases factual statements (establishes the spokesperson, sets press conferences, handles access), and
5. continues to reassess and reinform media as often as needed.

Of course, preparing a crisis communication plan before any event is vital to its success.

The institution that responds to a crisis quickly and openly in that manner will likely find itself appreciated and applauded for preparedness and coolness under fire. On the other hand, an institution that bumbles, or worse, refuses to communicate in times of crisis will lose the respect of the public and be remembered for its incompetence.

An example of the successful handling of an unforeseen university crisis happened the same year in Washington. At Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, research animals were released from their pens and one faculty member's office and research data were destroyed in a felonious attack by animal rights activists. Representatives of the Animal Liberation Front claimed credit for an estimated $100,000 in damages.

The response by the college's information officer (Charlie Powell) was immediate. He set up a media command center, got a spokesperson appointed, and released hourly and then later daily announcements. He released information on the number of research animals, the kind of research, the quality of care the animals received, the fact that many of the released animals returned in time for their feedings, and so on. As a result, his college weathered the crisis in good condition, regularly receiving kudos for the even-handed responsiveness.

Unforeseen crises, like the ALF attack, occur only rarely. Much more common are the foreseen crisis events, the actions taken by the institution which could be expected to produce a crisis situation. The same kind of preparation and response is needed in those situations. A good example of that kind of crisis occurred at the University of Maine in March 1996.

William Davis of the University of Maine's College of Education & Human Development published a monograph, *Impact of the New Religious Right on Public Schools* in response to requests by educators for information on the subject. Information officer Kay Hyatt and dean Robert Cobb recognized the likelihood that the book would be controversial, so prior to its statewide release, the college developed a planned

response, prepared spokespersons, and published a fact sheet describing the kinds of research and monographs published by the college.

By April, when the attacks on the university and the college began, the information officer was ready with an accurate, reasoned, and well-coordinated response. Through a series of organized public relations campaigns, some conservative groups and individuals sought to discredit the university for publishing the information. By responding with a fair and consistent message that focused on the university's mission and the number of similar topics already covered in the monograph series, the institution well handled this crisis situation.

Thus, the information officer is not the one moving the rock out of the wagon's path. Instead, the information officer keeps the multitude of observers satisfied and informed, enabling the wagon to continue its journey.

Sigh, No Silver: A Memo from the Lone Information Officer

Kathryn O'Dell-Thompson

To: Chair of the Department of Education

From: A Stretched but Supportive Information Officer

Re: Help Us Help You

We wish we could do it all. We (my assistant, the occasional intern, the overused work-study student, and I) wish we could cover every great story and every fascinating faculty member across our campus—but there's only one information officer available to serve the entire institution. Me.

I must prioritize. I have to choose. Like most information officers at small colleges, I often choose to cover the faculty and the activities of the education department. The reason: the institution gets more "bang" for every "buck" of my time spent on education stories. Spreading the word about the good work of our education department is one of the best ways to bolster our institution's reputation.

You have wonderful faculty doing great work in schools, doing perhaps the most important work of society—educating teachers. Because no other department in the college invests more time in the community, no other department is more important to the institution's reputation. You and your faculty sally forth every day and make our reputation through your contacts with students and teachers throughout the region.

You also make education's reputation when you go out. If our college's reputation doesn't need burnishing, education's image does. The leadership roles and responsibilities of teachers in our society are too little debated and when they are, teachers

of teachers are often not at the podium.

The information officer's job is to encourage and support your reputation-building activity and work to make it known to larger audiences. Many stories within our college deserve telling. Education stories need telling.

What IS the Importance of Good Public Relations?

The case for this need can be made on a purely self-serving basis: each department of a college needs visibility to continue to maintain its enrollment. If this is not enough, the more compelling reason is that individual professors have far less hope of creating and sustaining change than does a united, focused education department aimed at correcting mistakes, overcoming inadequacies, and perfecting the world for our children's children. A small education department focused on change may have greater impact in the area than would a university full of discordant voices.

Many teacher education faculty and department leaders suffer from an underdeveloped academic self-concept. They have little idea of the role they could play in shaping the educational policies of their area. They seem to have little sense of the enormity of their potential to enhance the visibility of their college and to earn the respect and admiration of their communities—and to become a boon for the annual fund.

No other department of a college has the built-in connection with constituencies that the education department has. Mary Daly, vice president for external affairs at Mercyhurst College (Pa.), says, "Education is our oldest department and enjoys an excellent reputation built on long relationships with school superintendents and cooperating teachers. It is the backbone of our college." This long-standing reputation for leadership in education means that she provides what might be termed "maintenance" (as opposed to aggressive, reputation-building public relations support) for that program.

Forget the idea that public relations is merely publicity, self-congratulatory and boastful. Positive relations with your public at its most important level means that you influence their behavior. The "publics" of the education department,

even in the smallest college, are future students, inservice teachers and administrators, politicians, parents, and state education department staff.

As a professional educator, you have already accepted the responsibility to make a difference. Your institution's information officer is trained to help you and knows the tools to use.

Ask About ProfNet

Ask your information officer about electronic mail lists like ProfNet, one of the newest tools in the PR briefcase. ProfNet is an electronic bulletin board used by media throughout the world to query information officers at colleges and universities. Between 40 and 70 requests for information from higher education people are posted daily on the electronic bulletin board that originated at SUNY-Stony Brook.

This bulletin board creates a level playing field for information officers from institutions of any size—large universities and small colleges alike. A small-college expert now has almost the same chance of meeting the exact need of the inquiring journalist as does the mega-versity expert. Before ProfNet, small colleges never saw or heard the question.

Thanks to ProfNet, for example, Ann Comer found opportunities for Wheelock College education professor Diane Levin to talk to the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune* about how toy companies market to children. With ProfNet connections, Trinity College (Vt.) public relations director Kathryn O'Dell-Thompson placed stories featuring her college in *USA Today* on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and later on the subject of financial aid in higher education.

While providing education departments with avenues into major newsmedia, ProfNet also serves as an indicator of the coverage of education issues in the press. Reporters' questions fall into almost every other category (behavior/relationships, business, computers/cyberspace, government/politics, health/medicine, international, law/crime/justice) more often than they fall into the education category. Education is just not covered well—or at least an analysis of ProfNet

questions would indicate that is true.

If anyone in your area is making the case that issues of education in our society do not receive the attention they deserve, this is one source of evidence. Corollary questions may also exist: Are educators leading and sparking the discussion our society needs about education and its goals? Where are the voices of teacher education leaders from our colleges? Your information officer is trained to make those voices heard. You just need to ask for that support.

Getting Support from Your Information Officer

When we're not inaugurating a new president, celebrating the end of a capital campaign, or holding commencement, you can probably expect to receive the following support from your institution's information officer:

1. **Press releases** (short, one- or two-page pieces) for the in-house faculty-staff bulletin, website, hometown papers, academic journals, local, state and national papers and magazines (when appropriate) about:

   - new faculty
   - events sponsored by the department
   - announcements of student graduation to hometown papers as well as academic honors and awards earned
   - professional activities of faculty
   - new programs within the department
   - photo opportunities

2. **Follow-up to the press releases.** Unless we're announcing the first cloned ewe, personal calls that repeat the information sent or faxed to the media outlet are needed. Reporters won't attend a press conference, event, or photo op without this extra cajoling that usually includes resending the releases they already received and mislaid.

3. **Feature story development about new programs and trends.** When the work of your department exemplifies a significant trend—as in portfolio assessment of undergraduates—or highlights a national issue—as in funding for special education—it deserves special attention. This feature story material may be used in the alumni magazine or as a pitch letter to national newspapers, magazines, and journals. While time consuming, feature story development promises the most return to the college from the information officer's investment of time.

4. **Photography.** The information officer is often the person to call to schedule the use of our institution's part-time photographer. When there is a visually appealing event or activity, be sure to notify us. We are always looking for great pictures.

5. **Assistance with publications.** We can usually edit your printed material and often handle the printing process. When our desktop publishing person, who doubles as the PR assistant, is back from maternity leave, we can provide rudimentary design or work with freelance designers to provide a more sophisticated look.

6. **Connections with the media.** Let us know who reporters can (and should) talk to about the inevitable issues hashed out regularly in the media: teacher contracts and labor relations; statewide educational funding; teacher accreditation and certification; special education; assessment and curriculum reforms.

7. **Additional support.** We lone information officers generally agree that if the creek don't rise, we can do most of the tasks listed above. An informal survey of information officers at small colleges turned up services that went above and beyond:

■ We can often serve as a marketing consultant. We can help you translate your strengths into events and public programs. If you aren't constantly articulating your

strengths and matching those to your market's needs, we may ask you to do so.

- Ask us to detail stories about your department for on-campus publications. Too often, once students are off-campus in field placements, the campus community doesn't hear about their activities again. The education department can always use on-campus publicity.

- Mary K. Kenworthy, director of college relations/ webmaster at Graceland College (Iowa) provides give-aways from notepads to T-shirts. She creates and maintains websites for education faculty and teaches Haiku sessions for education department workshops.

- Anita Cirulis, assistant director of university relations and director of publications at George Fox University (Ore.), reports that the director of information, John Fortmeyer, works with a graduate admissions counselor to write stories for school district newsletters that profile a teacher from that district working on a master of education degree.

- Julie Guillebeau, director of public relations and publications at Drury College (Mo.) serves as an adviser to the department's gifted education programs and helps to promote these programs and activities within the school districts and media.

- Naomi L. Bloom of the public relations office at Northwestern College (Minn.) helps produce mailings for the spring appreciation banquet for education faculty, students, and school administrators at student teaching sites.

Helping Us Help You

Brokering the news for an exciting, forward-thinking education department can bankrupt the resources of the most well-intentioned, single-person PR shops. Responsibilities can be shared. And if you help, you will benefit from an increased share of your information officer's time and interest.

Here are some ways education department administrators can help their information officers:

1. **Get real.** Sara Briggs, director of communications at Albion College (Mich.), says, "Be realistic about what is truly interesting to the media." In other words—the media are devoted to headline-breaking news. "Teacher Teaches Student" doesn't cut it, but "Student Teaches Teacher a Lesson" might.

2. **Track trends and news stories.** Help your information officer monitor national trends and keep him/her informed when work in your department or out in the field exemplifies a national, breaking story. Minutes count. If you hear on the radio that nationwide SAT scores for girls in math and science fall below boys' scores, call your information officer to tell him/her of the Eisenhower grant project headed by your faculty that keeps girls involved and scores high in local schools.

Every TV station and newspaper needs a local angle to the national story. Your call can spur the information officer to create the local handle or sidebar story that keeps your local media connected to its community.

If a news story enrages or delights you, tell your information officer. If the emotion is followed by articulate discourse, the media often want to hear. Even if your response is not used in this story, reporters will learn where to get articulate responses to current events.

3. **Get organized about communicating with your information officer.** Schedule formal meetings. In anticipation of the coming semester, schedule time for

your department to meet with the information officer, perhaps for a portion of your regularly scheduled department meeting. Present him/her with a calendar of upcoming events, an introduction to new faculty, a synopsis of new directions, and your best thoughts about media "hot buttons" that may pop up in the near future.

Keep the meeting energy-filled. If it is too much work, chances are that the group is tunneling into issues further than the media will follow. The goal is to establish a pattern of PR thinking so that department work and events are constantly processed through the PR sieve. "Anything here that will catch media attention?" is the question. Keep feeding information to your information officer.

4. **Educate your information officer.** Assume that your information officer has no background in teacher education or history of your work in the institution or the local schools. You may be surprised to find that he/she has both. Nevertheless, put that information officer's name on the distribution list for popular news articles, journal reports, and minutes of education meetings. Keep feeding information to your information officer.

5. **Advocate for your department.** Each year or semester, think of the education story that your information officer could do in the alumni magazine. Big stories divide and multiply in the consciousness of the information professional. The research and conclusions remain and resurface in admissions publications, president's speeches, annual fund letters, hometown newspaper releases, and in-house newsletters. If you are able to entice the information officer to write a story once, you may see it over and over again.

You can also engage the information officer in helping you plan forum that will bring experts from around the state to your campus to discuss issues important to parents and educators in your community.

Make everyone in the department responsible for submitting reports of professional activities to the information officer on a regular basis. Request that extra press releases be sent to faculty directly so that they can send the releases to their alma maters, or ask the information officer to send them.

Give useful photos of all department members to the information officer. Schedule a time when the photographer can take every faculty member's picture, then good group pictures for the department walls.

6. **Be timely.** Give your information officer at least three weeks' notice before an event or new program is announced to position the story with media and write press releases. Weekly community newspapers need the long lead time. Don't forget to coordinate with school administrators, too, if they are involved in the story.

If an event sponsored by your department is visually spectacular or even just interesting, ask the information officer to send the institution's photographer. Even if the event doesn't earn a full feature story in the alumni magazine or the community bulletin, most college publications need outstanding pictures. Then be sure to ask for prints of the photos to give to those involved.

7. **Be understanding.** What you want from your information officer everyone else on campus also wants. Attention. Visibility. Recognition. Support.

Each academic department, and the administrative departments of student life, admissions, and institutional advancement, all want press releases, print communication, photography, writing and editing support, event development and advertising, master calendar maintenance, alumni magazine editing and production, strategic planning, internal newsletter writing and production, website development, and annual fund and capital campaign communications. And even if the organizational chart does not connect the president in a

straight line to the information officer, the president often does. The result is that the demands, hopes, and expectations from throughout the institution seem to be handled on a "who yells the loudest and is bleeding the most" basis.

We're not making a case for beatification, but want only to argue that we're at least as busy as you are and that the road to a visible, credible education department is always two-way — especially when the college can operate only one PR vehicle.

Good public relations is good communication—mostly human communication, person-to-person. Whenever someone in your department tells you something exciting, new, or trend-setting, ask, "who else should know this?" Usually the answer will be the information officer.

Make friends with your communications department. Is there a communications intern who can consult with your information officer to serve your department?

Identify people in your department who understand the importance of good public relations and ask (or assign) them to be your own, in-house communicators. If this feels burdensome, rotate the responsibility. Ask your assignee to communicate one bit of news (in written or verbal form) to the information officer each week.

Take Advantage of Your Size

Those of us working in small colleges as public relations directors and heads of education departments count ourselves lucky. If we don't, we should.

Small college departments and their information officers have the unique advantage of size. Department-wide positions on issues can be developed more easily and consequently communicated effectively.

When television reporters call for interviews, they often want to schedule them within the next hour. The information officer of a small college usually knows exactly the faculty person to call and may have passed him or her earlier in the faculty/staff lounge. If the telephone line is busy or she is in class, then the information officer can run across campus, bang on the office door, or wait outside class and still be able to call

the TV reporter back in 15 minutes to confirm the interview. As disconcerting as these time demands are, they are real and make all the difference in whether your education professor appears before the TV camera—or is replaced by a faculty member from another college.

Doing It Yourself?

Here's a word on communicating directly with the media: don't.

All communication should go through the information officer. As wonderful as your story angle is, the relationship between your communications professional and the media must be honored first.

A television station news director cannot handle three calls on the same day from three different people at a college, all of whom purport to have the college's most important story of the week to share. There is only so much PR wealth that a college has to spend and it must be portioned out.

Working in cooperation with your information officer will benefit you and the college most when there is damage control to be done. Your information professional can ask the hard questions as a point of information: Who do you want to talk to? Can I give them an idea of what questions you will ask? What is the timeline for this? Who are the other people you are informing about this story?

A solid professional relationship between the information officer and the media results in extra time, greater clarity, and a unified voice for the institution and the department during times of crisis—so all media and all college staff should follow a policy that puts all calls through the information office first.

While the information officer will always want to cooperate with the media, time is often needed to gather facts and establish the legal privacy of students and faculty.

Media can learn quickly that the communications office is not an impediment to their story and in fact may be of great assistance. The information officer can find the expert needed immediately for a phone interview, provide home telephone numbers, and often broaden a story for the reporter.

Most often, a media call to the communications office can be directed to education faculty with little more than a one-minute conversation to say hello and determine the reason for the call. When reconnoitering time is needed, the information officer can promise to return the call in 30 minutes, enough time to determine the story's potential direction.

We can't always produce what the media would like, but we can always return calls promptly and not leave reporters dangling. This kind of responsiveness, which respects the reporter's deadline, is often impossible for an education faculty with classes to meet and advising times to cover, and even more impossible when they are off campus. It is precisely this kind of responsiveness that will keep reporters calling back when they need interviews, quotes, and background information.

The information officer knows how to enlarge the story to highlight the education department's strengths, too. For example, a story on K-12 assessment standards can be expanded to include a sidebar on the institution's own portfolio assessment process in its teacher education program. While the reporter discusses the story focus, that communications officer will be constructing the photo opportunity or live footage to offer before the conversation ends.

In Conclusion

The task of your public relations officer is to broker the college's news and expand its reputation and credibility. The teacher education department of the college, its relationships with the community, and the strength of its vision as a vehicle for change can be the major stock in his/her portfolio.

As the leader of the teacher education department, one of your many jobs is to help the information officer understand, in both general and specific terms, the value of the teacher education "stock" to the college and to the community. The information officer's job, in turn, is to invest the strengths of your department wisely with an eye to economies of time and returns on visibility and credibility.

The result is a society in which the leaders in education lead, because their voices are heard and their impact felt.

APPENDIX:
A Sample Dean's Survey

1. Is the person responsible whose role is PR or communications for your college

___ On the staff of your college

___ On the staff of the university/college public relations staff

___ There is no one doing college public relations work

2. On a scale of one to five (with one being very important and five being very unimportant), how do you rank the following items as part of the job of the communications person for your college of education?

1 = very important
2 = important
3 = no opinion
4 = unimportant
5 = very unimportant

___ News releases on students in the college
___ News releases on faculty awards/honors
___ Publicity for faculty
___ Publicity for dean
___ News releases on college fund-raising
___ Internal college newsletters for faculty and staff
___ External college newsletters for alumni
___ College alumni events (Homecoming, Teacher Honors, etc.)

___ Collegewide brochures for recruitment of students
___ College annual reports
___ Photography for the college
___ Crisis or conflict responses to the media
___ Marketing & promotion of regularly-scheduled classes
___ Marketing & promotion of extension classes or workshops
___ Producing departmental or other brochures
___ Producing and/or promoting special events of the college
___ Participating in strategic planning for the college

3. Do you or someone on your staff meet on a regular basis with the PR person?

___ Dean meets regularly
___ Dean does not meet regularly
___ Someone appointed by the dean meets regularly (the title of this contact _____)

4. How often do you think it is necessary to meet with this person?

___ once a week
___ 1-2 a month
___ monthly
___ whenever necessary
___ never

5. Does your college have a collegewide communication plan?

___ yes
___ no
___ I don't know

6. Do you include the college's PR person in your strategic planning efforts?

___ yes
___ no

7. What do you consider the three most important things you expect from a communications person for your college:

If you have encountered a PR "nightmare" as a dean, or if a news release, press conference, brochure or newsletter has helped solve a problem for you, would you be willing to talk with me by phone? If yes, please give me the number you would like me to call, and the best time to reach you.

Tel:
Best times to reach you:

Return to:
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