

ACTION PLAN FOR ALUMNI/MEDIA OUTREACH

The Communication Department of Buffalo State College

(Adopted April 2005)

The Communication Department of Buffalo State College is committed to a continuing relationship with former students, with members of the Western New York media professions, with donors, and with others who would potentially be involve in and supportive of the work of the department.

To this purpose, we identify five goals for the department:

Goal 1 – Organizational Infrastructure

Strategy 1.1 – Alumni Organization

Priority Action Step – Friends of Buffalo State / Communication

Action Step – Friends Advisory Committee

Action Step – Personal Networking

Strategy 1.2 – Recognition of Achievement

Action Step – Congratulations Cards

Action Step – Website

Action Step – Hall of Fame

Strategy 3.1 – Recognition of Involvement

Action Step – Documentation

Action Step – Certificate of Appreciation

Action Step – Graduation Card

Goal 2 – Personal Involvement

Strategy 2.1 – Departmental Assistance

Priority Action Step – Visitors

Action Step – Media Day

Action Step – Portfolio Review

Strategy 2.2 – Student Assistance

Action Step – Career Mentoring

Action Step – Internship Support

Goal 3 – On-Going Communication

Strategy 3.1 – Website

Priority Action Step – Web-Based Communication

Action Step – Website Evaluation

Action Step – Web Updates

Strategy 3.2 – Direct Mail

Action Step – Feasibility Study

Action Step – Mailing List

Action Step – Professional Resources

Action Step – Annual Report

Goal 4 – Financial Support

Strategy 4.1 – Donations for Students

Action Step – Scholarships

Strategy 4.2 – Donations for the Department

Action Step – On-Line Donations

Action Step – Directed Giving

Goal 5 – Assessment of Action Plan

Strategy 5.1 – Annual Report

Action Step – Faculty Report

Action Step – Committee Report

Action Step – Chair's Report and Evaluation

Definitions and Assumptions

- Though “alumni” and related terms are often considered synonymous with “graduate,” the Communication Department takes a broader and more literal view and counts as alumni any former students who have been in majors within the department.
- The term “media” is used in the broadest possible context. It involves the print media of daily, community, alternative and specialized newspapers; the broadcast media of television and radio; and cable and internet media; as well as public relations and advertising venues. Also included in the term are professional organizations related to these areas.
- We define as our geographic focus the Western New York media market, including primarily Erie and Niagara Counties, with a secondary focus of the neighboring New York counties of Orleans, Genesee, Wyoming and Cattaraugus as well as Southern Ontario.

Past Achievements and Current Status

- The Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication is encouraging the department to develop a stronger relationship with former students.
- The Dean of Arts and Humanities has asked the department to work toward a goal of expanding its contacts with both former students and media professionals.
- The Buffalo State College Alumni Association has contact information for approximately 2,900 graduates of the Communication Department and its predecessor, Journalism/Broadcasting/Speech.
- The department developed the Communication Hall of Fame in 1999 with a group of three inductees. Since that time, 10 men and women have been inducted, with two more women scheduled for induction in Spring 2005. These inductees, who have distinguished themselves in communication careers, are graduates of Buffalo State though not necessarily of the Communication Department, since their time at Buffalo State may have predated the department.
- In the early 1990s, the department abandoned its long-time practice of sponsoring an annual Media Day as an opportunity to provide educational and career-oriented programs for students.
- The department website currently features a dedicated section for alumni and friends, with profiles, honorees of the Hall of Fame, and donor solicitation.

Alumni/Media Outreach Goal 1 – Organizational Infrastructure

The Communication Department will foster an ongoing relationship with key groups such as former students, media professionals, donors, parents, and others who are interested in the department's welfare and performance.

Strategy 1.1 – Alumni Organization

The department will create an organizational infrastructure to support the ongoing involvement of alumni and media professionals in advancing the interests of the department. The purpose of this organization will be to provide the department with guidance, support and a professional sounding board.

Priority Action Step – Friends of Buffalo State/Communication

The department will engage a core group of alumni for the purpose of establishing a body for the ongoing involvement of alumni and media professionals in advancing the interests of the department. Specific purposes of this group will be:

- To support and advance the mission of the department
- To provide counsel to the department on its goals, objectives and strategies
- To provide assistant to the department in implementing strategies and achieving goals
- To assist in recruiting and fundraising
- To provide a bridge between the department and the professional and/or alumni communities

Membership for this organization will be drawn from former students of the department, media professionals, families of current and past students, and others with a connection or interest in the department. The initial goal is an active membership of 10 percent of known alumni.

Action Step – Friends Advisory Committee

The department will create a leadership group within the Friends of Buffalo State/Communication. Eventually, this group should be semi-autonomous and self-directed. The board will be constituted as a group of no more than 25 persons serving staggered three-year terms.

Action Step – Personal Networking

The department chair will see that direct and personal contact is made on a periodic basis with various former students, media professionals, significant donors, and other individuals who are identified as key to the department.

Strategy 1.2 – Recognition of Achievement

The department will recognize the professional achievement of former students and Western New York media practitioners.

Action Step – Congratulations Cards

With the help of the Friends Advisory Committee, the department will send congratulatory cards to former students who obtain new jobs, receive promotions, receive awards, or otherwise make progress in their careers.

Action Step – Website

The department will highlight such achievements at the alumni/friends section of the website.

Action Step – Hall of Fame

The department will continue its Hall of Fame, generally on an every-other-year basis. Former students and media professionals will be invited to identify nominees.

Strategy 1.3 – Recognition of Involvement

The department will recognize the contributions of former students, media professionals, donors, visitors, and other persons who have assisted the department in various ways.

Action Step – Documentation

The department will add a section to the annual faculty report for information about involvement of and with alumni and media professionals. Included in this report will be names of guest lecturers, workshop presenters, and other departmental visitors.

Action Step – Certificate of Appreciation

The department will develop a Certificate of Appreciation as the mechanism for recognition of service to the Communication Department and its students. The certificate will be provided at the end of each month to guest lecturers, presenters, and other visitors who interacted with faculty or students. Similarly, it will be provided at the end of each academic year to donors, members of Friends of Buffalo State/Communication, and other appropriate recipients.

Action Step – Graduation Card

Graduating seniors will be asked to provide names and addresses of parents and spouses. At the beginning of finals week each semester, the department will send a graduation card to parents and spouses, thanking them for assisting the students in successfully completing their degree program. The department will archive these names and addresses and use the data for subsequent mailings associated with Friends of Buffalo State/Communication.

Alumni/Media Outreach Goal 2 – Personal Involvement

The Communication Department will foster the personal involvement of former students, media professionals, and other supports in the work of the department.

Strategy 2.1 – Departmental Assistance

The department will include alumni and media professionals in various ways in support of faculty and the department as a whole.

Priority Action Step – Visitors

The department will invite alumni and other supporters to volunteer or to recommend others who might be invited to campus for workshops, seminars, guest lectures, panels, and other opportunities to engage faculty and/or students. The initial goal will be to create at least 10 such visits each semester.

Action Step – Media Day

The department will re-establish the practice of Media Day at least once a year, seeking to feature at least one presenter from among the alumni.

Action Step – Portfolio Review

The department will invite both former students and media professionals as members of the review teams that will help assess student portfolios.

Strategy 2.2 – Student Assistance

The department will include alumni and media professionals in direct contact and support for students.

Action Step – Career Mentoring

Alumni and media professionals will be asked to serve as career-guidance contacts and mentors for current students.

Action Step – Internship Support

Alumni and media professionals will be asked to serve as internship contacts and/or supervisors for current students.

Alumni/Media Outreach Goal 3 – On-Going Communication

The Communication Department will regularly communicate with former students, media professionals, donors and other potential supporters.

Strategy 3.1 – Website

The department will enhance its website as a vehicle for providing information of interest and value to supporters.

Priority Action Step – Web-Based Communication

The department will enhance its website to serve as a primary vehicle of communication for former students.

Action Step – Website Evaluation

The department will track hits to the alumni section of the website. The Friends Advisory Committee (of until its establishment, an informal group of former students) will be asked to monitor the website, assess its impact, and suggest changes. At least once every two years, the department will research faculty, students, alumni and others to assess the effectiveness of the website.

Action Step – Web Updates

The Friends Advisory Committee will be asked to take on the responsibility of updating information at the Alumni section of the department website.

Strategy 3.2 – Direct Mail

The department will develop a direct-mail program to complement its web-based communication with former students, media professionals, and others.

Action Step – Feasibility Study

The Friends Advisory Committee will assess the potential for a newsletter or some other print piece and recommend to the department the relative value of print communication versus web-based communication.

Action Step – Mailing List

The department will expand its current mailing list of postal addresses and build a parallel and/or supplemental list of e-mail contacts.

Action Step – Professional Resources

The department will maintain contact with former students, media professionals, parents, and other potential supporters by providing academic research and position/background papers on issues dealing with media ethics, communication technology, careers, and so on

Action Step – Annual Report

At the beginning of the Fall semester each year, the department will prepare an annual report to the Friends of Buffalo State/Communication. An abbreviated form for this report will be sent as a direct-mail piece, aimed at driving traffic to the department website, where the complete report will be featured.

Alumni/Media Outreach Goal 4 – Financial Support

Because private support can enhance the quality of education in the Communication Department, the department will solicit financial support for its programs and services from former students, media professionals, parents and other supporters.

Strategy 4.1 – Donations for Students

The department will invite donor support for various scholarships and other forms of student assistance.

Action Step – Scholarships

Department will use continuous tactics to solicit financial contributions for student scholarships, textbook allowance, travel to Buffalo by exchange students, and similar support for students.

Strategy – Donations to Department

The department will invite donor support for various departmental and faculty-oriented activities.

Action Step – On-Line Donations

The department website will provide direct links to the College Foundation for on-line giving.

Action Step – Directed Giving

The department will invite private contributions toward specific projects, such as expanding broadcasting and computer facilities, offering scholarships and student awards, assisting with travel to professional and academic conferences, and increasing department outreach to potential students.

Alumni/Media Outreach Goal 5 – Assessment of Action Plan

The Communication Department will continually monitor and assess its progress on this action plan.

Strategy 5.1 – Annual Report

The department will formally report on progress toward implementation of this action plan.

Action Step – Faculty Report

Faculty members will be asked to submit information reporting their role in implementing the action plan as individual members of the faculty.

Action Step – Committee Report

Chair of various department committees will submit information reporting their committee's role in implementing the action plan.

Action Step – Chair's Report and Evaluation

The department chair will report to the department on overall progress toward implementing the action plan. As appropriate, s/he will make recommendations or invite faculty discussion on modifying the plan to more effectively address contemporary issues before the department. The chair also will report to the dean on overall progress toward implementing the action plan.