COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

I. Purpose

Communications plays two critical roles within Weinberg’s departments and programs:

- **To provide key information about the curriculum.** This includes course information, requirements, prerequisites and forms.
- **To promote the department/program.** This may include: attracting majors/minors, prospective students and faculty; improving ranking among peer institutions; encouraging alumni giving; and highlighting achievements by faculty, students and staff.

A range of communications media and channels are available to help you meet these goals. This document identifies the typical communications audiences and needs in each of the two categories above and suggests ways to meet them so that you maximize your return on effort and minimize costs – both in terms of dollars and staff time.

Think ‘Electronic’ First and Print Second

The Web and e-mail offer the *easiest, most economical, and often most effective* way to reach virtually all audiences and to fulfill virtually all communications needs. Print publications should be viewed as a secondary rather than default primary choice.

Because department and program websites are increasingly the first point of contact with external audiences, as well as an instinctive destination for students and others within the University community, it is critical that the information on your website is **up to date, accurate and comprehensive**. Time spent keeping your department/program website up to date can be more than offset by time saved handling routine information requests by phone or e-mail that would otherwise result.

II. Audiences and Key Communications Needs

Typical audiences for communications outreach from departments and programs include the following (note that some audiences may not apply for certain departments/programs):

- Current undergraduate majors/minors and graduate students
- Faculty
- Prospective majors/minors and graduate students
- University and College staff
- Prospective faculty
- Alumni
- Prospective undergraduate students
- High school college counselors and prospective undergraduates’ parents
- Faculty of other institutions conducting peer reviews/rankings
- Members of the media
- Public at large
Typical communications needs are:
• Curricular information (such as courses, prerequisites, requirements and forms)
• News and announcements (faculty and student research and achievements, curriculum changes, new faculty or facilities)
• Upcoming events
• Coverage of past events

III. How to Meet Primary Communications Needs

Curricular Information

Your department/program website should be the primary source for curricular information. Any print vehicles for curricular information should provide a URL to the web page where the information resides.

News and Announcements

Publishing news about your department or program is a key way to highlight it as a dynamic place where interesting and meaningful things are happening. What better way to connect with target audiences and attract majors/minors, graduate students, and talented faculty, or to help encourage alumni to make a gift?

Typical newsworthy items are:
• Faculty and student research, especially groundbreaking or unique studies
• Faculty and student awards and other notable achievements
• Faculty published works, which might include brief excerpts
• New faculty, which might include brief biographies and teaching/research focuses
• Changes to the curriculum
• New or renovated facilities
• Major gifts to the department and how they were used

News items for departments and programs typically have a fairly long “shelf life,” meaning that they still will have relevance and interest for many of your audiences months after the fact. For example, a news item about a student’s undergraduate research grant may be “newsworthy” to other students for only a week or two, but alumni and prospective students are likely to find it notable indefinitely as an indicator of the types of dynamic things going on in your department or program.

Because it does take a certain amount of time and effort to gather and publicize department and program news, a phased approach to publishing news is recommended, starting with least effort:
1. Post the news item to your website, typically on the home page and also the site’s News page, if applicable. Also post the item to any social networking tools your department/program may have. (See the Social Networking section of this document.)
2. On a quarterly basis, gather the most notable of the recently posted items to disseminate to alumni.

3. On a yearly basis, if desired, create a print newsletter that expands on a few of the key news items of the year and also highlights the major events of the past year. It may be appropriate to target the newsletter for early in the summer, so that the newsletter can be tied into Weinberg’s annual fundraising appeal. (See the Alumni Outreach section of this document.)

Creating a Newsletter
Weinberg’s communications team offers guidelines for both hardcopy and online newsletters: http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/web/standards/newsletter-guidelines-2010.pdf

In general, however, there are multiple graphic design options available for departments to choose from in the creation of their newsletters. Some departments have software, design, and technological skills to make and print newsletters in-house. Other departments hire freelance designers or talented work-study students for layout and design and print within their departments, or externally via Quartet Copies or one of the University-recommended printing companies.

Another resource for newsletter design and production is University Relations, which produces a range of newsletters for departments and offices throughout the university: http://www.northwestern.edu/univ-relations/ University Relations custom-tailors newsletters to each specific need and are able to provide as much or as little help as is needed, from design to printing and mailing.

It is advisable to research these options and find the one that is most appropriate for your department/program and your individual project before beginning. It is also important to understand the timeline involved in creating a newsletter. You should start planning for the newsletter three to six months before the intended mailing date. A sample timeline for a very polished, professionally created newsletter is as follows*:

1. Determine what items to include. (1 week)
2. Get quotes from designers, choose designer. (2 weeks)
3. Write and revise copy, find images. (3-4 weeks)
4. Designers create proofs. (2 weeks)
5. Revisions of proofs. (2 weeks)
6. Print newsletters. (1 week)
7. Send newsletters. (1 week)

*Approximate times only. Depending on the scope of the project, these time periods will vary.

Smaller, more simple newsletters will take less time. And after the initial newsletter, when a design ‘template’ has been created for future use, additional savings in time (and cost) is likely.

Upcoming Events
Promote upcoming events via the following:

• PlanIt Purple
• Department/program website (on which an automated feed can display events from your PlanIt Purple calendar; contact web@wcas.northwestern.edu for more information)
• Social networking sites (if applicable)
• Flyer on prominent display in the department/program office, other student-frequented areas

Coverage of Past Events

• Website (a Past Events page can be created for your site that uses an automated PlanIt Purple calendar feed)
• Social networking sites (if applicable)
• Newsletter (if applicable)

IV. Alumni Outreach and Giving

News and Web

Department and program websites and newsletters (print and/or e-mail) can help alumni stay connected. Department websites ideally would have an alumni section that contains relevant news about the department, highlights accomplishments of alumni, promotes upcoming events, and provides an opportunity for giving. E-mail newsletters can be especially effective in connecting with alumni and driving them to the department/program website for additional information. Surveys of our alumni point to a preference for e-mail over print communications and no more than quarterly frequency of contact.

To obtain an up-to-date e-mail/mailing address list of your department/program alumni, please send a request to cdagostino@northwestern.edu, allowing two business weeks’ turnaround time.

Events

Some departments plan specific events for their alumni or identify existing events that can be promoted to alumni. Alumni-focused events are a particularly good idea for departments that have a large number of alumni in the Chicago/north-suburban areas. Surveys of department and program alumni point to strong interest in events that include networking opportunities, a notable speaker keynote or discussion panel, and the chance to talk with current students. See the Special Events section of this handbook for more information on planning events.

Fundraising

Weinberg Alumni Relations and Development staff oversee a fundraising campaign each summer. Departments are asked to align any fundraising efforts with this campaign. Choosing this option means that Weinberg Development staff can provide updated alumni contact information and, in some cases, may be able to provide donation cards and return envelopes to include with a print newsletter or other communications piece.
Contact Weinberg Alumni Relations and Development for the campaign timeline, and plan production of the communications piece accordingly. Generally, Weinberg alumni newsletters are sent out in July, so departments would begin the publication planning process in March.

Contact for Additional Development Information

Catrina Dagostino  
Assistant Director of Development, Weinberg Alumni Relations and Development  
cdagostino@northwestern.edu  
847-491-4583

V. Social Networking

Social networking sites can be useful tools for departments and programs to keep students, alumni and friends apprised of major news and events and, if desired, to initiate discussions on topics of interest.

Best Practices

1. **Start small.** It takes time and persistence to build a social network, so it is best to start with the tool you believe is used by a majority of your target audiences and expand to other social network tools as needed.
2. **“Own” your social network presence.** Although grad students and others may be willing to assist in moderating discussions, adding news bulletins, and answering questions posted on the social networks, it is essential that the department retain full administrative control over each social network presence. Plan to regularly monitor postings by designees you authorize to help maintain a social network to ensure that the postings align with department/program goals and “personality.”
3. **Be friendly but professional.** Remember that social networks have a global audience. When you and your designees post comments on behalf of your department/program, you should speak with its voice. Never post derogatory, inflammatory or speculative comments. Proofread your postings and those of your designees for typos and other errors.
4. **Mind the store.** Post an update at least once a week but check the social network site at least once a day. Answer any posted questions, either on the site (if the question is general and likely to be of interest to others) or “offline” (if the question is specific to the enquirer or is emotionally charged). Take questions offline by posting the department/program e-mail address and/or phone number and ask the inquirer to contact you in that way to continue the discussion.

Primary Social Networking Tools

*Facebook*

Facebook, arguably the most frequently used social network tool across most demographic groups, can allow departments/programs to post news, advertise events, upload links and pictures, and start discussions among the Facebook users in your community – which will likely
include alumni, students, professors, and staff. Multiple Facebook users can be listed as administrators to the page. The department/program assistant/administrator should always be an administrator, as well as the chair/director.

Getting Started
To start a department page, login under your personal account and click “Create a Page” in the lower left column. Be sure to immediately create the additional administrators for the page, including the department chair or program director. Remember, the page will “belong” to the department or program and must remain under its control if the creator of the page moves on to a different position or leaves the University.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is more professionally oriented than Facebook and is more useful for some industries/academic areas than others. LinkedIn groups are ideal for posting news, starting discussions, and posting jobs openings. Multiple parties can be listed as managers and/or moderators, so responsibilities for the group can easily be shared and shifted as necessary. LinkedIn generally requires a more active role from someone in the department in order to start discussions and really make members feel as though they are a part of the group’s community.

Getting Started
To start a department page, go to the rollover the “Groups” tab and click “Create a group.”

Twitter
A small but growing number of university departments and programs across the United States are also on Twitter. Due to the 140-character limit for each Twitter posting (or “tweet”), Twitter is best used as a news engine for departments. If Twitter is the right venue for your department, it is simple to create an account and type in the latest updates, but it is not easy to share management of the Twitter account with multiple parties. Additionally, to gain followers (i.e., subscribers to your Twitter feed), it is often best to follow other universities, departments, or members of the academic and/or research community.

Getting Started
To start a department account, go to http://twitter.com/ and click “Sign up.”

Growing Your Social Network

Advertising
To gain followers on social networking sites, you will need to advertise your presence. This can easily be done on your department’s website, in the departmental newsletter, and by connecting with others through the social networking sites. Virtually every communication sent out by your department/program should highlight your presence on social network, in addition to listing the URL of the department/program website.
**Linking**

It is possible to interlink all three of the above networking sites. This means that an administrator would only have to post something on Facebook, and it would propagate to your Twitter and LinkedIn accounts automatically.

To link Facebook and Twitter, follow the instructions here: [http://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics/topics/112-linking-to-your-blog-or-website/articles/31113-how-to-use-twitter-with-facebook](http://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics/topics/112-linking-to-your-blog-or-website/articles/31113-how-to-use-twitter-with/facebook)

You may also find directions from the Help tab in Twitter > Twitter Basics: View All > “How to use Twitter with Facebook” under “Linking to your blog or website.”

In LinkedIn, after logging into your department’s group, click the Manage tab > Manage News Feeds. Then add your Twitter URL, and LinkedIn will be able to copy all tweets onto the group’s page.

**Photos**

Pictures of major events can be a great way to engage visitors to a Facebook page. It is easy to upload them, and collections of images are typically popular features, both on social network sites and websites in general. Note that signed release forms are needed for certain types of photos; see the Photos section under Other Best Practices below.

**VI. Other Best Practices**

**Photos**

Signed release forms (link below) are sometimes needed before photos can be used on the web or in print. General guidelines are:

1. When photos are used for **news purposes** (e.g., highlighting a past event), photo release forms are not needed; however, student names should **not** be included in captions, in order to protect student privacy.
2. When photos are used for **marketing purposes** (e.g., a brochure or web page specifically promoting the department or program), a signed release form from each person pictured is required, downloadable at the link below, EXCEPT
3. If a photo features five or more people, and none of the people depicted are clearly the focal point of the photo, release forms are probably not required for news or marketing purposes, so long as those in the photo were given opportunity to decline to be photographed. However, it is still most ideal if release forms can be obtained in this circumstance.

If someone depicted in a photo on your website or social network page requests that the photo be removed, the photo should be promptly removed.

Photo release form: [http://www.northwestern.edu/univ-relations/webcomm/policy/Photo_Release.pdf](http://www.northwestern.edu/univ-relations/webcomm/policy/Photo_Release.pdf)
Video

A video highlighting your department or program or chronicling a project, research effort or field trip can be a compelling feature on your website. In the past, some departments have contracted with Weinberg’s MMLC group to create video, while others have leveraged students’ enthusiasm and video know-how. Regardless of how your video is assembled, here are a few helpful guidelines:

1. A good way to showcase a video clip is to embed it directly into a page on your department or program website via Northwestern’s YouTube channel. Contact web@wcas.northwestern.edu to request video upload to that channel.
2. If students are creating your video, be sure that they are aware of Northwestern’s policy regarding copyrights. In short, students should avoid using music, photos or other assets that have restricted use rights, e.g., a track from a pop CD or a photo from Google images. Alternative sources for music and photos are listed at the end of this document.

Weinberg Branding

The Weinberg College logo has two orientations:

The horizontal (left) orientation is preferred. The vertical orientation (right) should be used only in situations where a strong vertical design – like a narrow brochure or invitation card – is needed.

Consistent use of our logo helps reinforce the College’s unity with Northwestern as well as its distinctive identity within the larger University community. From the standpoint of prospective students, a prime benefit of Weinberg is that it offers the personalized experience of a small liberal arts college within the context of a top-tier research university. Northwestern and Weinberg enrich and strengthen each other.

Therefore, the logo should be treated as a single unit; the Northwestern logo should not be separated from the “Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences” text, and the reverse holds true, as well.1 The logo can be provided to departments and programs in a range of file formats, depending on your need. Contact c-handzlik@northwestern.edu to request the logo.

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1 *Exceptions to this usage are Weinberg College (a) letterhead, and (b) business cards, both of which use variations of the logo shown above due to University Relations branding restrictions. Letterhead and business cards ordered through the approved printer, CBC, utilize the approved variations to the Weinberg logo.
Full guidelines for optimal usage of the logo can be found at:

Web

General guidelines and standards for websites can be found on the Weinberg website:
http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/web/standards/

Additional site content ideas are available in the following document (pp. 2-3):
http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/web/standards/newsletter-guidelines-2010.pdf

Sources for Free-Use Images and Music

Photos (most can be freely used for print or web; some require advance permission or credits, so see “Availability” notations for each photo on its download page): http://www.sxc.hu/

Music: http://www.archive.org/