



Communication 101

A toolkit for our grantees



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Introduction

**Beyond high school:
Communicating the importance
of access and success in education**



Introduction

Beyond high school: Communicating the importance of access and success in education

At Lumina Foundation for Education, we believe that postsecondary education is one of the best investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people. To that end, we are committed to increasing student access and success in education beyond high school — a mission that is vital, not only to the lives of millions of individual students, but also to the social and economic future of our nation.

Our global economy increasingly pressures our society for a college-educated workforce that is adaptable and well trained. Simultaneously, our higher education system faces intense pressure to serve huge numbers of students who have traditionally faced the highest barriers to success. Our challenge is great, but we remain committed to doing what is necessary and what is best to serve the needs of our people and our country.

Clearly, you are on the front lines of college access and success. You mentor, guide, direct, counsel and coach students every single day. Your job requires skill, patience and fortitude. It also requires effective communication, which often can challenge the capacity of nonprofit organizations.

This toolkit is designed to help you do a faster, better job of communicating your important work to your various audiences. Within these pages, you'll find everything from a guide to strategic communication planning to tips on how to work with news reporters. In short, we aim to help spread the word about the good work that you do.

Communication matters

The value of postsecondary education is well documented. People with higher levels of educational attainment have significantly greater earning potential and career opportunity than their less-educated neighbors. This economic reality is compounded in the information age and a global economy.

Compared to our peers around the world, however, the United States is slipping in terms of postsecondary attainment among the adult population. To close the widening gap between us and our international counterparts, we will need to dramatically increase the numbers of young adults who earn degrees.

That's a tall order, to be sure. The objective is only attainable if we improve rates of college participation and completion among students from groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education.

In any case, allowing current trends to continue is not an option; it would put the United States in a vulnerable position economically. Moreover, research clearly demonstrates that a well-educated population benefits from better health, enhanced citizenship, more family stability and reduced crime, among other factors.

To make headway, we must address the right things: encouraging information, student preparation, college affordability and support leading to completion. We focus on student access and success because it's the right thing to do for individuals and for the nation. Part of our effort must center around communication so that others in our society can begin to understand the challenges we face when it comes to higher education.

Among the messages we have to convey are these:

- The nation is changing, and our education system must change with it.
- Today, more than 15 million Americans are pursuing higher education, more than ever before.
- The traditional college-going age group (18-24) will increase by 2 million by 2010.
- Ethnic and racial minorities and low-income students are participating in greater numbers than before, but in

proportion to their rising share of the population, attainment gaps are actually widening.

- Attrition rates are staggering among minority and lower-income students, who make up the college-going populations that are growing the fastest.
- People of color — particularly Latinos — will account for the largest share of that increase.
- The adult student population (more than 40 percent of today's enrollment) will remain at high levels of enrollment.
- Yet, the U.S. continues to slip in international rankings of college degree holders in the adult population.
- At four-year colleges, 26 percent of freshmen drop out before their sophomore year; at two-year institutions, the first-year attrition rate is 45 percent.
- By age 25-29, about 34 of every 100 whites earn bachelor's degrees, compared to 17 of every 100 blacks and just 11 of every 100 Latinos.¹
- There is ample evidence that qualified young people from low-income families are far less likely to go to college than their similarly qualified peers from high-income families.²

We all can work to bridge these gaps by continuing current efforts, expanding those that work and continually searching for new and better ways to make higher education more affordable, accessible and attainable. Strategic partnerships between Lumina Foundation and organizations like yours can help ensure that we:

- Help more youth graduate from high school with the necessary preparation and support to be successful in college and in the workplace.
- Help students and families start early and truly prepare for college — academically, financially and socially.
- Inform families about what college really costs and how they can afford it.

¹ Educational Attainment in the United States: 2003 US Census Bureau.

² A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education; 2006 Report by the Secretary of Education's Commission for the Future of Higher Education.

- Strengthen our nation's community college system.
- Expand higher education opportunities for adult learners.
- Give every potential student access to affordable, high-quality, two- and four-year higher education opportunities.
- Expand higher education access and success for traditionally underserved students, especially low-income or minority students, and those who are the first in their family to attend college.
- Increase college success rates so that more students graduate with a degree or other credential.

Read on to find numerous tools and resources that can help communicate these messages. In particular, review the “Resources” section of this toolkit, where you'll find general information and message points to include in your routine communication, as well as details of the KnowHow2GO campaign, jointly sponsored by Lumina Foundation, the American Council on Education and the Ad Council. We at Lumina Foundation hope that you find this to be a useful guide to help you to communicate.



Chapter 1

Communication 101





Communication 101

One way to build support in the community and across the country is to describe exactly what your organization does and why it matters.

Successful communicators get the right message to the right people at the right time. With clear objectives, defined target audiences and compelling, tailored messages, you, too, can cut through the “clutter” of daily chatter and make sure your organization is noticed by the people who matter most.

This toolkit is designed to provide you with strategies, tactics and tools to maximize the effectiveness of your communication. With it, you can build a bigger base of support and advance higher education issues that are important to your organization and the people you serve.

By aligning communication with strategic objectives for your organization, you can effectively:

- Raise visibility in the community for your issues and beneficiaries.
- Call attention to your mission and purpose.
- Pave the way for successful development efforts.
- Ensure the delivery of important services.



Lumina Foundation's take on communication

Since 2000, Lumina Foundation's mission has been to help more students enter and succeed in higher education. Because the problems we seek to solve are too big for us to solve alone, communication has always been a vital part of what we do.

Communication fosters a public understanding about access and success and builds public will for improvement. Through the years, we've used communication as a leveraging force by conveying important information about research, policy and practice, and by the sharing of lessons we learn. That information helps us expand the impact of our work to those we cannot directly help through grants.

So what are we talking about exactly?

Making sure your messages are heard and moving people to act is the bottom line.

Successful communication begins with understanding your purpose and clearly understanding your audiences' needs. That means translating your message to show how it impacts your audience — take it from “we do” to “you get.” It also means effectively using a variety of communication “channels” that will reach your audiences.

Ideas, tips, tactics and techniques are contained in this toolkit to give you both food for thought and tools to use to make communication easier.



**What
communication is
(and is not)**





Chapter 2

Strategy: Don't communicate without it





Strategy: Don't communicate without it

If you want to know where you are going, you need to know where you are right now.

A strategic communication plan helps outline “the state of your world” while simultaneously giving you a road map to follow when integrating the communication elements that exist in each of your organization’s programs, services and advocacy efforts. Without a strategic plan, your communication efforts will lack meaning and worth.

Simply put, a strategic communication plan is a written document that lists your organization’s goals and objectives for its communication. It leads to a step-by-step game plan that explicitly outlines what communication has to make happen and how it will get done.

For organizations with limited time and money, a strategic plan allows staff members to prioritize tasks and focus resources on what’s most important, rather than simply reacting to external events or opportunities as they occur. A strategic plan helps ensure that your communication activities have the greatest potential for success.

To make your communication effective, your strategic plan should do more than state goals such as “raise awareness” or “increase media coverage.” Those are very general, vague goals without measurable endpoints. Instead, your plan should focus on what you want to make happen — What is your communication objective? Whom do you want to reach? What are your key messages? How can you creatively frame and convey those messages? What are the communication vehicles that will best reach your audience? How can you roll out the plan within the budget and timeline available to you? How will you know if you succeed?

Answering those questions will allow you to measure whether you’ve made a difference with each and every effort you employ. Without specific, measurable goals, you cannot know what you want to achieve, how much it will cost or even if you’ve been successful.

Outlined on the following pages are the basics of formulating a strategic plan. Use this as an outline for defining what you want to accomplish with your various publics.



Ten elements of a strategic plan

Developing a strategic communication plan will be less overwhelming if it is viewed as a series of steps. The best strategic communication plans contain all of the following elements:

1. **Situation analysis** that includes organizational background and details on the external or public environment in which your organization operates.
2. **Organizational goals** that outline overall mission/purpose.
3. **Communication objective** that specifically states what communications must make happen.
4. **Well-defined target audiences** (categories of people) who are critical to the success of your organization and reaching the objectives.
5. **Conduits** that will help you carry the messages to key audiences. For example, local news media may carry the message to the local community.

6. **Key messages** that clearly and succinctly state what you want your audiences to know.
7. **Strategies and tactics** that serve as a road map for framing and disseminating your message effectively.
8. **Timeline** for accomplishing objectives with milestones for executing strategies and tactics along the way.
9. **Resource budget** including human and financial capital necessary to carry out the required tasks.
10. **Metrics and evaluation** methods to determine what works and what requires adjustment over time. Whenever possible, show the return on investment in quantifiable terms.



Step 1 — Situation analysis

To develop an effective communication plan, it is critical that you be aware of the environment in which your organization operates. You can best assess your potential strengths and weaknesses by considering the following items:

- a. Organizational history and mission.
- b. Facts about the issue(s).
- c. Services you provide. What do you do better than anyone else?
- d. People who benefit from your services or who will otherwise be on the receiving end of your messages. What do they need or want to know? How can you get their attention, deal with their perceptions and make the desired impression?
- e. Performance indicators. How do you measure success or tell that you have been effective at achieving goals and objectives?
- f. Competitor insight/information. What are their goals? Who are their constituents? What are their key messages? How are they perceived? What works for them?
- g. Potential ally insight/information. Why do/should they care about helping you? What's in it for them?

- h. Public perceptions of your organization and/or the issue(s).
- i. Research results related to the issue(s). Are there surveys or focus group results to guide your communication plan?
- j. Public opinion toward the issue(s). Has someone else measured what people think, or can you?
- k. Opponent identification and threat assessment. Who are your peers, and how are they vying for attention? Whom do they serve? What distinguishes your organization from theirs?

Step 2 — Organizational goals

Listing your organization's overall mission and relevant goals helps ensure that communication efforts support and build on that foundation. This section of your strategic plan should clearly state who you are and why you exist. Consider these items:

- a. Your organization's ultimate goal.
- b. What makes your organization unique.
- c. The way you want your organization and its services to be perceived.
- d. The way you want the issue(s) to be perceived.



Step 3 — Communication objectives

A communication objective can be far-reaching or limited in scope, but it must be specific. The more specific you are, the more likely you are to be successful — and the more on target your strategies and tactics will be. Your communication objectives should tell you (and others):

- a. Why you are communicating in the first place.
- b. What you want people to do, say or think as a result of your efforts.



Evaluating your key messages

Is it memorable?

Is it original and/or bold?

Is it simple?

Will audiences relate it to you?

Does it list a benefit to the end user or consumer?

Is it advancing your cause or mission?



Step 4 — Target audiences

Listing “the general public” isn’t good enough; this is where you identify the specific categories of people you want to reach/influence/motivate to take action. Messages may need to be tailored and delivered differently for each audience group, so identifying all the categories is crucial. Target audiences can include:

- a. People or groups you ultimately want to influence (primary).
- b. People or groups who support your work (secondary).
- c. People who directly influence primary or secondary targets (also secondary).



Step 5 — Key conduits

Although the conduits of your message may not be your intended audience, they may be crucial gatekeeping channels for reaching your intended audiences. Youth workers, coaches, teachers and youth ministers may be the conduits for reaching a youth audience in a personal way. Media such as MTV, iPods and MySpace.com, may also be crucial conduits. Be sure to learn the key conduits for reaching your audience, and tailor messages that they will carry to avoid a communication campaign that misses the mark.

Step 6 — Key messages

A shotgun approach to message delivery will yield poor results. Think about each target audience and craft simple, compelling messages according to their needs and wants. Key messages should include:

- a. Three to five statements that are short and clear – all of which you want your audiences to understand about your organization.
- b. Key phrases or words that resonate with the language of target audiences. Remember to translate messages from “we do” to “you get” statements.
- c. Call to action — be clear about what you want people to do as a result of your message.

Step 7 — Strategies and tactics

The communication strategies and tactics used to reach target audiences will vary from organization to organization. Common strategies and tactics include:

- a. Media relations — press releases, press conferences, media advisories, editorial board meetings, op-ed columns, letters to the editor.
- b. Employee communication — newsletters, staff meetings, intranets.
- c. Stakeholder relations — brochures, annual reports, letters, special events, extranets.
- d. Advertising — radio, television, billboard, print.
- e. Electronic communication — Web site, e-mail, blogs, podcasts.
- f. Personal appeals — direct mail, phone calls, meetings.

Step 8 — Timeline

Timing of activities is as important as the overall timeline for completion of strategies and tactics. In addition to setting a firm date for achieving your objective, consider whether there are natural “hooks” for your communication outreach, such as special events or important public decisions related to your issue(s). With a bit of forethought, you can be prepared to take advantage of well-timed opportunities with a salient message.



Step 9 — Resource budget

Consider how much human capital and how much money your strategies and tactics will consume. If financial resources are limited, adjust your expectations or investigate tactics that deliver the greatest return on investment.

- a. Clearly outline costs and expectations, remembering that royalty fees (for photos, for example) are not included in most budgets.
- b. Be realistic about what things actually cost, but don't base your decisions on cost alone. Sometimes spending money on upfront research can save the wasted expense of a communication strategy based on flawed or incomplete information.



Stretching limited dollars

**You can sometimes do more for less.
Consider these options:**

- **Ask an individual donor to underwrite printing or production costs.**
- **Rely on volunteers to produce marketing materials.**
- **Get professionals to donate their services (pro-bono) to the cause.**
- **Ask a corporate sponsor to help with an in-kind donation.**



- c. Identify specifics about what you are missing (consultants, areas of expertise).
- d. Get everything in writing if you are working with consultants.
- e. Partner with like-minded organizations to maximize your effectiveness.
- f. Know your audience before investing in specific communication vehicles to find out what works best (or might not work at all).
- g. Take advantage of electronic communication tools (Web sites and e-mail “blast” distribution”) that may be more cost-effective than printed materials.
- h. Take paper stock and the number of pages into consideration for printed materials, finding ways to cut costs by using less expensive paper or fewer pages.

Step 10 — Metrics and evaluation

The clearer your objectives, the easier the measurement and evaluation. Build measurement techniques into the plan to assess whether you accomplished what you set out to achieve. Did the phone ring? Did a key partner come on board with support? Did students/parents request information about your program or service? All of these can be indicators of success, depending upon the chosen strategies/tactics. The more you can measure, the more accountable you can be to your stakeholders. And remember: The point of measurement isn't to “cover your bases,” but rather to assess your efforts and find ways to improve, whenever possible, so you can achieve the goals of your organization.



- a. Establish a baseline against which you can track your success — either by surveying key audiences about perceptions or by monitoring current response to outreach activities.
- b. Know your goals — and measure “success” against them. If you want to increase enrollment or participation in a particular program or service, track enrollment increases from the point you start outreach until it's complete.
- c. Measure yourself against peer institutions. One way is to ask the media what they think of you versus your



competitor. Tracking changes over time can be one indicator of success (or need for improvement).

- d. You also can measure story placement by the number of “hits” you achieve in targeted media outlets, or you can track the number of times media pick up your key messages or talking points verbatim.
- e. Communication evaluation generally falls into three categories, and each requires different evaluation methods. Be careful that you choose an evaluation method that aligns with your objectives:
 - **Awareness** — may be measured by exposures to the message.
 - **Understanding** — generally requires survey research to ask audiences about their reaction.
 - **Behavioral change** — requires measuring the behavior you seek to change.

Keys to effective evaluation



- **Set benchmarks in advance.**
- **Establish clearly defined goals.**
- **Segment your audience.**
- **Test along the way.**
- **Be creative in what and how you measure.**
- **Routinely review and adjust your approach.**



Chapter 3

Stakeholder communication





Stakeholder communication

In recent years, the word “stakeholder” has come to mean a person or organization that has a legitimate interest in a project or entity — anyone with an interest or “stake” in what the entity does. This can include students, parents, employees, clients, customers, community members, boards of directors, volunteers, trustees and others.

It’s important to identify and communicate with key stakeholders because they have the power to influence your initiative, either positively or negatively. Knowing your stakeholders allows you to anticipate their influence and develop strategies to get their support and remove obstacles to your success.

Collaboration

When similar organizations with similar communication goals work together to inform audiences about important calls to action, collaboration can enhance the impact of both (or all) involved organizations and build more widespread support for their common objectives — all while avoiding duplication of effort.

When considering stakeholder communication, don’t forget to evaluate who is doing the same sort of work that you are and how your efforts might complement one another. If you can come together to have a greater impact, your common audiences will view your efforts as meaningful, strategic and cost-effective.



To identify your stakeholders:

- Make a list of all the people, groups and institutions that will affect or be affected by your program, service or initiative.
- Identify the key concerns of each group of stakeholders, be they positive or negative.
- List the networks to which each stakeholder group belongs (i.e., community boards, educational committees, parent organizations, etc.)
- Identify the primary methods or vehicles that will consistently and effectively reach each stakeholder group.
- Rank stakeholders based on their perceived level of interest in and influence on your success.
- For the highest-ranking stakeholders, outline tailored approaches to involve them in your organization's process, obtain their support or reduce their objections in general.

Ways to reach stakeholders:

- Personal phone calls by key executives or leaders within your organization to “brief” the stakeholder on topics of your choice.
- Breakfast roundtable discussions where stakeholders are invited guests to hear briefings on subjects of interest and importance to them.
- Printed collateral materials — letters, fliers, postcards and brochures — that outline your position on an issue or your programs and services of benefit to the community. Be sure your materials are consistent in message, look and feel, so that audiences relate them to one another.
- Electronic communication — e-mails, blogs, podcasts and Web sites — that provide background information, as well as useful links to other resources. Background can include position papers, research findings, “fast facts” from reliable sources of information and Q&A documents that answer questions that stakeholders are likely to have.
- Open-house events where stakeholders are invited to tour your facilities and get a behind-the-scenes look at what you do and why it matters.
- Speeches to community groups and organizations, where you tap into existing community networks that are most likely to embrace or endorse your mission, providing “expert” commentary on issues of the day or topics of interest.



Evaluate potential partners

- Are organizational cultures, values and ethics compatible?
- Does the other organization have a clear mission and strategic plan?
- Is the other organization well managed?
- What can that organization and its staff bring to the table?
- Why does what they bring to the table benefit you as a partner?
- Can you do more together than you can alone?
- Does your leadership support the collaboration? Does theirs?
- Who are their other partners?
- Do you have a written agreement that details the objectives and goals of your collaboration?
- Can you get out of the collaboration if necessary?





Chapter 4

Media relations





Media relations

One of the fastest ways to build awareness of your organization, your grant or even a special event is to gain the attention of the media. The primary goal of media relations is to educate, inform and persuade the general public. To do so, you must develop a strong rapport with the media by being media-savvy.

“Earned media” is traditionally defined as free placement of news and feature stories in print, broadcast and electronic media. It’s considered more credible than advertising (which is paid media), but you have less control over the message and delivery.

When planning media relations’ efforts, know your targets and what you want to achieve by reaching out to them. Your goals should be simple and realistic, and you should have key messages that are clearly defined so that your organization gets its points across succinctly and effectively.



A few keys for achieving media relations success:

- **Understand the media.** Familiarize yourself with the topics they cover, know their audiences and think creatively about the potential news angles you can provide to them.
 - **Build relationships by becoming a media consumer** — watch TV news, listen to the radio news stations and browse news Web sites, relevant newspapers and magazines.
 - **Take note of media outlets/reporters who cover issues related to your cause** — most media outlets have a reporter or section dedicated to education, nonprofits or philanthropy/charitable activities.
 - **Locate recent news stories on issues relevant to your organization** — use Google or other news search engines to track content related to your topics of interest.
- **Create a plan.** Develop your message, identify a key spokesperson, create a media list that includes reporters who are interested in your subject and begin telling your story.
- **Monitor the media.** Track and record your stories in the media, as well as other stories of interest to you and/or your stakeholders. Knowing what's being reported can help you prepare to respond or suggest a new or interesting angle on a story that might otherwise be overlooked.
 - **Consider investing in a subscription service such as Factiva or Lexis-Nexis.** Both provide news archive databases that are searchable, even for a per-story fee. Other options include bacons.com or burrellesluce.com, which track print, broadcast and Internet coverage.
- **Celebrate your successes.** When your story makes the media, inform your board and donors, include a link to the story on your Web site, mail a copy of it to your legislators and include a story about the positive publicity you received in your next newsletter.
- **Enhance your media relations by knowing what is and isn't newsworthy.** Remember, not all news items will

generate a story. Sometimes the purpose of your news is to be listed in the event calendars or the announcement section of the newspaper.

- **Know the difference between positioning your organization as a valued news source and labeling your cause as “junk du jour.”** Pitch only stories that are truly newsworthy and a good fit with the media outlet. If you succumb to internal pressure to pitch stories that are not newsworthy, you'll not only be turned down by the media, but also damage your relationship with reporters at the news outlet.

If you think creatively, chances are you can come up with a story idea that could result in better-than-average coverage. For example, announcing your grant is a relatively simple way to get an announcement in the paper. But if you identify a student who can share how the grant has made a difference in his or her life, you may get a more in-depth feature story that does a better job of explaining the role your organization plays in the community and the lives of its residents.

Media relations tips and tricks

- **Respond quickly.** In the news business, timing is everything. Radio reporters work on one-hour or even half-hour deadlines. TV reporters have deadlines about every four hours. Newspaper journalists often need information today for tomorrow's story. The organization that gets quoted the most will be the one that recognizes the realities of newsroom deadlines and delivers research, insight and quotes quickly.
- **Strong writing sets you apart.** Stick to a journalistic style. Limit the hype and hyperbole.
- **Don't issue a news release when a phone call will do.** Rather than write a news release that will eventually be rewritten by even the most junior-level reporter, consider other methods for releasing news. Pick up the phone and call an editor, and tell him or her that you've got a story idea to run by them. Ask the editor for an opinion on whether it's a good story — and if they say “no,” ask what would make it worth covering ... and then try to find a way to work with the editor to make the story appealing to his or her audience. Another option is to issue a tip sheet that summarizes the gist of your pitch and why it's worth covering. You can also send a simple e-mail that outlines your story idea in bullet-point fashion.



- **Keep it short, simple and understandable.** Big words don't work well with reporters and editors. They have limited time and space to explain things and need sources who can communicate in simple terms. People who succeed as media sources know how to simplify complex subject matter.
- **Trends get covered.** Monitoring trends in higher education is important. When national news breaks, you can be prepared to provide the local perspective because you've paid attention to current events.
- **Give them art.** The difference between a story that gets covered and one that doesn't sometimes is the availability of quality photos, slides, charts or graphs. If you have them, your story idea will get more attention.
- **Provide good headlines/leads.** Because an editor's attention span is short, a snappy headline and lead is imperative on everything sent to the media. A weak headline — even on a good story idea — could kill an editor's interest and your story.



Tips for working with the media

1. Before any interview, find out what the general tone will be and who else the reporter is interviewing.
2. Do your homework. Familiarize yourself with the reporter and the media outlet prior to the interview. Check out the news organization's Web site or pick up the most recent issue of the publication for which the reporter writes and read what he or she has written. Note the topic and the tone — is it feature-oriented? Strictly business? Controversial? These are all clues to how you can best prepare for an interview.
3. Think of an interview as a business meeting where you have two or three major points you want to get across, and then be sure you make those points.
4. Use transitions. After answering a question, use a transition such as, "You should also know ...," "Let me add...," or "An example is..." to say something quotable that's on your agenda.

5. Remember, nothing is ever “off the record.” Period.
6. Never say “no comment.” Say, “It’s premature...,” “That’s something our company would like to know...,” or “I’d really like to help you by providing that information, but I just can’t right now. I’ll be glad to let you know as soon as I can.”
7. Never repeat a negative question. It reinforces the negative and provides a sound bite for TV.
8. Stick to what you know. If you’re not sure of something say, “I’m not sure, but I can find out for you,” or “That’s outside my area of expertise.” Never pretend; say you don’t know if you don’t.
9. Don’t speculate.
10. Anticipate negative and positive questions and prepare answers. (Be ready for questions drawn from the news flow of the day.)
11. Use the reporter’s first name to set an informal, comfortable tone.
12. Use anecdotes, analogies and numbers. Be specific.
13. Don’t let silence bother you. Avoid rambling. A classic reporter’s trick is to use silence and/or nodding to get an interview subject to continue talking past the intended answer.
14. Suggest where the interview should take place. If possible, make it your turf or somewhere that you’re comfortable.
15. Don’t be seduced into lowering your guard. For telephone interviews, visualize the reporter so you remember that you’re talking to a reporter in a newsroom. Invite a colleague to sit in with you to take notes, listen, think of points you missed, or stop you from saying something you’ll regret.



Pitching the media

Media outlets routinely post information about their reporters and editors on Web sites or in media databases such as Bacon's or Burrelle's, both of which are available by subscription service online.

To determine the best recipient for your pitch, research which reporter covers your "beat" or which editor is in charge of the topic area that includes your line of service or area of interest/focus.

One of the best ways to get a reporter's or editor's attention is to refer to a relevant recent story and then draw a connection between that story and the one you are suggesting (pitching).

Don't limit yourself to beat reporters or special section editors only. Events or activities can sometimes be listed in community calendars or columns that are authored weekly or monthly.

Deadlines

The devil is in the details, and the media are no exception. Deadlines vary by media outlet, and it's wise to know who does what and when — before you pitch any story.

- **Daily newspapers** prefer to get information at least two weeks in advance for feature stories and one to two days in advance for "hard news," depending on the news value of the story.
- **Weekly newspapers** need three to four weeks' advance notice for features and one to two weeks' notice for news.
- **Monthly magazines** need information three to four months before publication. Most magazines publish editorial calendars on their Web sites, which provide advance notice of special sections, coverage topics and deadlines.
- **Local TV and radio** need three to four weeks' notice on feature stories and one to two days' advance notice on news stories.
- **Radio talk shows** vary by outlet but generally require a month's lead time to schedule guest appearances.



How to pitch the media

- Build a media list that includes the names of reporters/editors at outlets you are targeting, using information available from online resources or printed media directories.
- Use e-mail to contact print reporters and Web site editors.
- Summarize your story idea (pitch) in the subject heading.
- Keep the copy/body of your message short, sweet and to the point.
- Make sure your message emphasizes (in the first paragraph) why the story is important and how it affects the news outlets' readers or viewers.
- Include your contact information (phone, fax and e-mail) and provide details on spokespersons or experts who can serve as resources.
- Consider also sending a fax to TV newsroom assignment editors who may or may not have time to sort through e-mail.
- Follow up on your pitch with a quick phone call, leaving a voice mail if necessary to summarize why you're calling and how you'd like to help facilitate a story.
- Be sure NOT to call on deadline, which varies by reporter/editor — thus the importance of knowing your media outlets (Newspaper deadlines are end-of-day for dailies; Wednesdays (usually) for weeklies, and throughout the day for TV and radio).



Media alerts/advisories

Media alerts and advisories call attention to upcoming events or activities and alert media to opportunities for coverage — be it a story idea or photo opportunity. Advisories should be sent to key media contacts, including beat reporters, assignment editors and photo editors for newspapers, magazines, and TV and radio stations.

Media alerts or advisories should be clearly labeled as such, containing only the pertinent details about the event or activity being promoted. A headline and summary paragraph about the event should include reasons why coverage is merited, as well as what viewers or readers will get from attending or participating.

Advisories and alerts serve as reminders or a “heads-up” for reporters. They should describe the five W’s and H — who, what, when, where, why and how — and be written in a straightforward format on one page that can be faxed or e-mailed to a reporter.

The alert or advisory should also include contact information for the event or activity, as well as details about where to go (Web site or other location) for registration details or more background.



Key messages and talking points

A key message is a short, concise and memorable sentence that we want to convey to our target audience during an interview. A talking point is a fact or figure — a quick nugget of information that we can support with research or data — that supports a key message.

As you approach a media interview, you should have a single overriding message that you want to convey. Be certain that, regardless of what questions the reporter asks, you find an opportunity to make your point. You can, for example, deflect an unimportant question by saying, “I’m not sure about that, but one point I am confident in making is this....”

Developing key messages (and talking points) for your organization, grants and programs can help you succeed in communicating the points you want people to know and remember.

Breaking it down:

What do you want people to know about your organization? When they talk about you, what do you want them to say? Think about the most important points that you want your audiences to understand about you and why you exist. Then consistently make the same points in all of your materials — media and otherwise — so that you reinforce your messages. Key messages should be:

Short — Keep them short enough to remember. For example, if you are interviewed by the media, you need key messages that are short enough so that they can be conveyed within a TV sound bite — 7-10 seconds maximum.

Concise – A key message is not the place for a lot of adjectives and superfluous words. An effective key message is written in concise, easy-to-understand language with as few words as possible to get across your point. A rule of thumb is to make them simple enough for a fifth-grader to understand.

Memorable — Just as your message needs to be short and concise, the message needs to be something that both the

reporter and the audience can remember. If the message is filled with cumbersome language, jargon, numbers, etc., no one — those hearing it and those trying to repeat it — will remember the main point.

Benefit-based — Key messages should be written with the target audience in mind. In other words, you need to craft a message based on what the audience cares most about, how they will benefit and why they need to know. It's easiest to think about this in terms of “you get,” which will capture people's attention much easier than hearing things like, “we're great,” or “we do.”

Press releases

A press release is a tool to help you deliver your message to various members of the media. A well-written release can capture the attention of an editor, resulting in a story and additional publicity for your organization. Remember, a typical media outlet receives hundreds of releases, advisories and letters every day, so your information needs to stand out.

Here are a few tips to help you get your release noticed:

1. **Make it newsworthy.** In the first paragraph of the release, highlight why the reporter or editor (and readers/viewers) should care. For example, tie the release to a related breaking story in the news.
2. **Cover the basics.** Your press release should always include your contact information, a headline, a lead paragraph, supporting information and a summary paragraph about your organization.
3. **Write creatively.** The headline and copy should be catchy to capture the attention of the reader. Use active verbs.
4. **Make it easy.** Scrap the jargon and skip the acronyms. Use words that are easy to read and understand.
5. **Provide useful information.** If there's a new research report or publication related to the topic, or if you can refer readers to an informative Web site for more information, include those details in the release.





Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor are a relatively easy way to get your message in print. Letters are typically written to educate the reader about an issue, respond to an article or offer an opinion about a current news event. They are usually written within one week of a news article or other opinion appearing in print.

Tips to strengthen your letter:

- Keep your letter short — 150 words or less.
- Be timely by issuing a response within two or three days.
- Focus on one position and state it clearly at the beginning of your letter to capture the reader's attention.
- Use facts and figures to support your letter.
- Keep it simple and concise to appeal to the reader.
- Include your contact information along with your letter.

Once your letter is ready for submission, e-mail, fax or mail it to the editor of the editorial page. You may follow up with a phone call to the editor a few days after sending it to inquire whether it was received and if it will be considered for publication.

Op-eds

One of the best ways to gain credible visibility for your organization is to submit an opinion piece (or op-ed) to the newspaper on behalf of your top executive. Op-eds provide the opportunity to communicate important information about your organization, the grant you received or an issue you support.

Tips to strengthen your op-ed:

- Determine your goal in writing the piece in the first place.
- Identify your key target audiences and identify their current perceptions.

- Craft compelling messages.
- Be brief and focus on one issue or idea.
- Have a clear editorial viewpoint.
- Use clear, concise, active language.
- Support your opinion with facts and research.
- Educate the reader by providing insight.
- Reiterate your position at the end.
- Spell out the actions you want people to take.

To be most effective, tie your op-ed topic to a current event or issue or respond to something previously covered in the publication. Send your opinion piece to the editorial page within one to two weeks of when you would like it to appear in the publication.

Once your op-ed is ready for submission, e-mail, fax or mail it to the editor of the editorial page. You may follow up with a phone call to the editor a few days after sending it and inquire whether or not the op-ed was received and will be considered for publication.

To maintain credibility, it's important to send the op-ed to only one publication at a time. Find out from one publication whether the piece will run before submitting it to another publication for consideration.



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Chapter 5

Electronic media





Electronic media

With new tools coming online every day, there's no way to truly stay “ahead of the curve” that is the Internet. But there are everyday tools you can use to enhance your communication efforts, allowing you to at least stay on the same page as your competitors and your stakeholders.

Among these tools are:

- **E-newsletters and e-zines**, which are typically shortened versions of newspaper or magazine articles that contain links to Web sites with more in-depth content.
- **Blogs (short for Web logs)**, which are frequently updated online journals or diaries that are “mini” personal Web sites.
- **E-mail campaigns** that involve sending targeted messages to specific audiences regarding particular issues or topics of importance.
- **Viral marketing**, which is the process of getting individuals to pass on your messages electronically to their friends, family and colleagues.
- **Web sites** that serve as online collateral materials, featuring easy-to-navigate and categorized information for readers to search, read and respond to.
- **RSS (Real Simple Syndication)** is growing in popularity. This new technology distributes your information by syndicating it across the Internet. Consider using it to complement other forms of electronic outreach.

Depending on your organization's level of sophistication and available resources, any one or all of these tools can be used to strengthen communication with target audiences. Some audiences — particularly those younger than 25 — may be more likely to respond favorably to e-communication tools than others. But no one tool can stand alone and effectively serve all of your audiences all of the time.

Your use of e-communication can help you stay in touch with stakeholders and the media and communicate important information quickly. E-tools also allow your stakeholders and the media to respond to your information, providing valuable feedback (and measurement) for future communication outreach.



Tips for using e-tools

- Gather e-mail addresses from your target audiences at every available opportunity, including from your Web site, in collateral materials, at events or during registration drives.
- Include your Web address and e-mail contact information on all printed communications and stationery so that people know where to go to get more information or how to contact you directly.
- In e-newsletters or e-zines, keep the information brief and to the point, providing hyperlinks to more information and graphics-heavy content so that readers can browse your information quickly and with minimal computer glitches.
- Update your e-information regularly so that what you are sending or making available to stakeholders is both fresh and new. The more relevant and up-to-date your content, the more likely readers are to turn to you as a trusted source in the future.

Avoid getting “filtered”

Spam filters are commonplace on almost every e-mail program and corporate or organizational computer server. To make sure your messages get through (instead of getting tagged as “junk” by a spam filter), keep these tips in mind:

- Only send e-mail to people who've requested it or given you permission.
- Accurately display your name and e-mail address on all of your communications.
- Send your e-mails on a regular schedule so they are expected.
- Avoid using “spam themes” in your subject lines or copy. (Bulk-mail advertising concepts or words that prompt blocking include “mortgage rate” or “cheap prescriptions”).
- Investigate and correct all e-mail “bounce-backs” to ensure delivery of your message.

E-mailing reporters

E-mail is the most common method for communicating with new media reporters and editors. But the vast majority of e-mails sent to journalists are never read. Here are tips to ensure your e-mail is opened and read:

- Use the word “news” or information for reporters or “story idea” at the beginning of your e-mail subject line in brackets.
- Include the reporter’s name or the title of his/her column or beat in the subject line.
- Don’t get cute or vague in a subject line; it makes your e-mail sound like spam.
- Make your most newsworthy points at the top of your e-mail message — don’t expect a reporter to scroll down to find the news.
- List your contact information, including cell phone, e-mail address, regular address, fax number and Web site URL at the beginning and end of the e-mail.
- Include a link to your Web site if you have additional information, such as photos, press releases, bios, surveys, etc.
- Don’t include more than a short pitch letter or press release in the body of your e-mail.
- Check for typos and grammatical errors!
- Avoid using attachments unless you know the reporter or he/she has requested them.

Web site basics

Given that more than 75 percent of Americans have Internet access, it’s no wonder that one of the first places most people look for information — on just about anything — is the Internet. If you want your organization’s Web site to be viewed as a useful resource, remember that simple is best.

Research shows that Web users prefer sites that are easy to scan, easy to navigate and easy to search for information they want or need. With that in mind, your Web site can be a valuable marketing tool for your organization if you:

- Update content regularly.
- Write information in clear, concise language.
- Edit and proof content for typos and grammatical errors.
- Organize the site intuitively so it’s easy to navigate.
- Design the site to be visually appealing but not so full of bells and whistles that it detracts from readership or slows down the process of opening and viewing your site.



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Chapter 6

Crisis communication





Crisis communication

If your organization does not already have a crisis communication plan, it should. The negative or adverse media attention surrounding a crisis can threaten the integrity or reputation of your organization. Planning for a potential crisis can prevent you from being caught off guard.

A crisis can happen at any time and anywhere — and the news media are often quick to respond. A good crisis communication plan outlines the steps of how an organization should respond to the media and the general public. A well-written crisis communication plan allows an organization to tell what has happened while depicting the organization in the best light possible, given the circumstances.

Preparing for a crisis

Proper preparation allows you to manage the crisis efficiently and effectively, ultimately minimizing the harm that can be done. Your crisis communication plan needn't be elaborate, but it should include the following elements:

1. Create a crisis communication team.
2. Identify and develop a list of all potential crises.



3. Develop an internal Q&A document that addresses potential scenarios. This will allow your team to share information and quickly identify the weaknesses and strengths of your case.
4. Determine all potential audiences that could be affected by or would need information about a crisis situation.
5. Create a list that includes:
 - Who will handle what responsibilities.
 - Who will communicate with whom.
 - The organization's primary and back-up spokespersons.
 - Procedures to ensure that appropriate people get accurate, and timely information from proper authorities.
 - The people and/or organizations that need to be contacted.
 - What you will do if "normal" communication channels are disrupted.
 - Who can be your partner or collaborator (an outside, expert or third-party ally) when responding to crises.
6. Consider the following "do's" and "don'ts" regarding the dissemination of information to the media:
 - Anticipate questions and be prepared.
 - Don't immediately admit fault or spread blame.
 - Wait for facts to unfold; don't speculate.
 - Show concern/compassion.
 - Notify closely affected parties before they learn the news through the media.
 - Notify media as quickly as possible.
 - Be available for interviews.
 - Follow up after the crisis.
 - Build relationships in advance (know media before you need them).
 - Have media kits updated for quick distribution.
 - Have stock photos and obituaries ready for your key executives.
7. Test your plans and make sure that all staff and volunteers know what to do in a crisis.
8. Update your plan to make sure you have current contact information.

Media interview tips for crisis situations

- Prepare talking points on the main messages you want to share.
- Always tell the truth. Decline to comment beyond what you can say.
- Never say “no comment” or “off the record.” Focus on what you can say.
- If you don’t have information, tell them when you expect to have more details.
- Don’t answer speculative questions or respond to hypothetical situations.
- Don’t repeat loaded questions.
- Speak intelligently, but avoid industry jargon and explain technical details carefully.
- Be enthusiastic, supportive and casual.
- Keep your eyes on the reporter, not the camera.
- Emphasize what’s being done to correct the problem.



Notes



Chapter 7

Media samples



Sample media pitch

E-mail subject line: Can the brain drain be stopped?

If Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels is right, then giving grants to the state's top high school graduates will fill a student aid gap and help keep bright young people from moving away from the Hoosier state.

But with little long-term evidence that such incentives work, the governor's plan is being criticized for ignoring the needs of lower-income families who are in the greatest need of access to higher education.

Will the new Hoosier Hope Scholarship Program really keep Indiana students at Indiana colleges — and working in Indiana after graduation?

Critics say the program targets students who are already planning to go to college. Proponents believe the program will complement existing aid and reach out to a new group of students.

Similar programs in other parts of the country have enjoyed varying degrees of success, but nearly all have proved difficult to measure or manage over time, especially when it comes to tracking whether college graduates stay and work in-state.

College financial aid expert **[insert your expert's name here]** is available to talk about the pros and cons of incentive programs, including whether the programs serve those most in need of help. **[List credentials or special qualifications of your expert to further interest the reporter in his or her perspective on the larger story.]**

Can I help you make arrangements to interview **[expert]** by phone or in person for a local story on financial aid options for college?

I'll call to follow up or you can reach me at **[insert phone number and e-mail address here]**. I look forward to speaking with you.

[Insert signature line]





Sample media advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

CONTACT: [Name]

[Phone number]

[E-mail address]

Conference Aimed at Linking High School Performance to Economic Development

INDIANAPOLIS — The University of Indianapolis' Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning will hold a conference focusing on successful high schools and how they are linked to economic and workforce development. The conference will gather educators, business people and opinion leaders who will learn how to develop high-performance educational systems that combine 21st-century skills.

WHAT: Indiana's Future: Economic Development and the High School Connection

WHEN: Nov. 17 and 18, 2007
7:30 p.m.

WHERE: Adam's Mark Hotel, Indianapolis
2544 Executive Drive

COST: Free

To register online, visit <http://cell.uindy.edu>. Space is limited.

Funding for the conference is provided in part by Lumina Foundation, Lilly Endowment Inc., the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the National Governors Association through Gov. Mitch Daniels' office.

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Sample key messages: The state of higher education

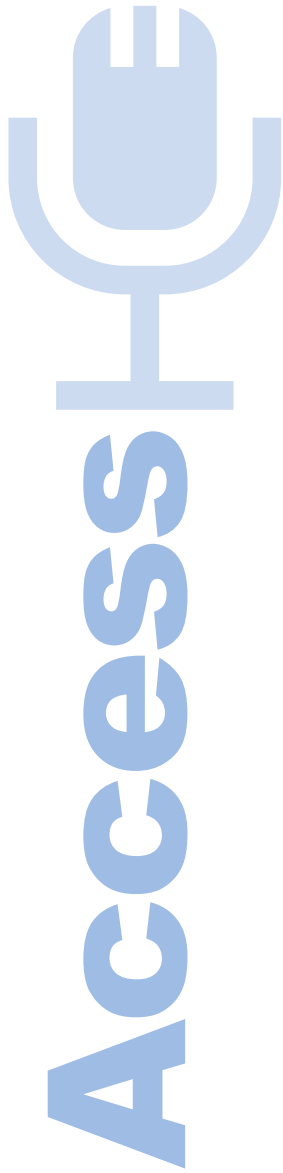


General information

- Our education system must change if the U.S. is to stop slipping in international rankings of college degree holders in the adult population.
- While more than 15 million Americans are pursuing higher education, at least 26 percent of freshmen at four-year colleges drop out before their sophomore year. At two-year colleges, 45 percent drop out in their first year.
- A majority of white students earn a bachelor's degree within six years of entering college, but less than 40 percent of African-American and Latino students do the same.
- As larger numbers of diverse students enroll in college, more support will be essential to ensure their success.

Bridging gaps in the system

- We must make higher education affordable, accessible and attainable to provide individual opportunity and to remain globally competitive and socially stable.
- College students with the best chance for economic stability and career development are those who were prepared in high school for success in college and the workplace.
- Families need our help to start early and prepare for college so they know what it costs and how they can afford it.
- Strengthening our nation's community college system expands higher education opportunities for adult learners.



Sample talking points: access

Information and encouragement

- Low-income students don't receive enough reliable information and encouragement to strive for an education beyond high school.
- Many low-income youth aspire to attend college, but informational barriers keep them from pursuing their dreams.
- What could improve college participation rates among African-American students? A 1997 study suggests improving school conditions, having more engaged teachers and counselors, earlier education about college possibilities and emphasis on cultural awareness.
- College costs and financial aid requirements stump many families and prospective students. We must close gaps in awareness so that more people make smart choices about postsecondary education.

Academic preparation

- A rigorous academic high school program improves a student's chances to succeed in college.
- Student participation in college-preparatory curriculum varies by race, ethnicity and income. College attendance rates also vary by student race, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status.

Financial aid

- The cost of college has increased sharply, and low-income students have been hit hardest.
- In the past decade, average public four-year college tuition fees rose 51 percent, after adjusting for inflation.
- In 2000, the average debt load of a four-year public college graduate was about \$19,300 — more than double the level in 1991.
- The buying power of the federal Pell grant has dropped sharply as college costs have increased, reducing college access for lower-income students.
- Government-funded grant programs aren't keeping pace with increasing college costs for low-income students.
- Distributing resources more efficiently and effectively can promote expanded, equal access to postsecondary education.

Sample talking points: success

Overall

- One-third of all first-year students who enroll at America's postsecondary schools this year will not return to the same institutions next fall.
- Attrition rates range from a low of 5 percent at very selective schools to 50 percent or higher at some open-admission colleges.
- If we support programs and research that boost student persistence, we can reduce barriers to success and help students achieve long-term educational goals.

Academic success

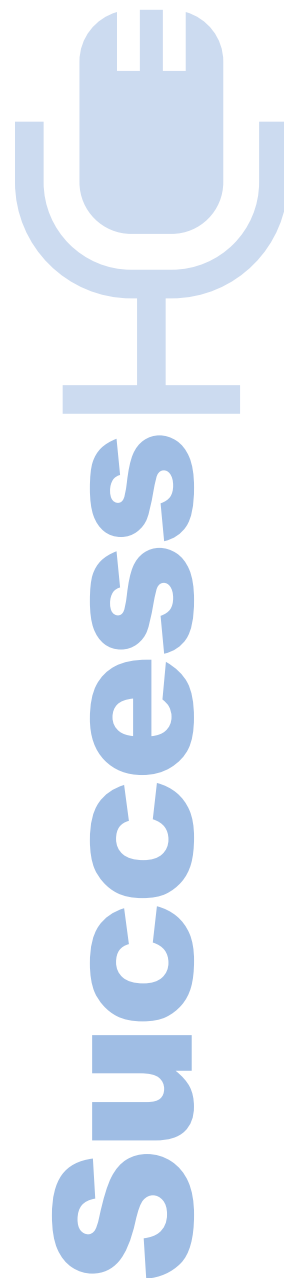
- Many students drop out of college before completing a degree.
- Barely six out of 10 first-time, full-time, degree-seeking college freshmen graduate within six years.
- Graduation rates are particularly low for minority, low-income and first-generation students.
- The first year of college is the most critical to degree completion. Many institutions lose one out of every four students they enroll in the freshman year alone.
- Remedial courses help students succeed. Students who successfully complete remedial courses are more likely to complete degree programs or work in a non-minimum-wage job.

Student support

- Income matters. Low-income students are far less likely to earn a baccalaureate degree than students from the highest socioeconomic level.
- Race matters, too. Educational attainment gaps persist between white and minorities, which threaten this country's social and economic progress.

Institutional factors

- Institutional factors influence student success. Issues ranging from class schedules to child care can make or break a student's college career.



Sample talking points: adult learners

Overall

- Only one in six students fits the mold of the “typical” 18-year-old who enrolls at a residential campus, stays four years and graduates with a baccalaureate degree.
- Adult students (25 years of age and older) are becoming the new majority on campuses across the nation, and many of these students face language barriers and deficiencies in academic preparation.
- To succeed in school, these students need very different services, which we are working to identify and test.

Academic services

- Lifelong learning is an economic necessity. Adult learners have major life responsibilities outside school. They are no longer financially dependent on their parents. They may work full time and may be married or have dependents.
- Adult learners need new skills and knowledge. They turn to postsecondary education to enhance their careers or enter new careers.
- The cost of education can be a barrier for some adult students, many of whom are considered low-income (making less than \$25,000 annually).
- Adult students are less likely than traditional students to attain a postsecondary degree or remain enrolled after five years.

Support services

- Adult learners who receive financial aid are more likely to continue with their education.

Institutional factors

- More than 30 percent of today’s college students are adult learners. Yet many aspects of the higher education system are not designed with these students in mind.
- Higher education must better understand and address the needs of adult students pursuing conventional degrees, earning professional credentials, retooling their skills or earning prerequisites for another level of courses.

Curriculum delivery

- Adult students want quality and convenience. New technology makes it possible for many adults to pursue an education online without leaving home.



For Immediate Release: Dec. 13, 2006

Contact: Shana Kemp, NASSP
703-860-7344

Principals' Association Receives Grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to Poll Middle Level Students

RESTON, Va. — The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has been awarded \$95,000 by Lumina Foundation for Education to conduct a national survey of eighth-grade students. The poll will invite students to reflect on their middle school experience and to share their aspirations and anxieties as they progress to and beyond high school.

The survey will be conducted through collaborative efforts with Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK) and The Gallup Organization, partners in the annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. NASSP, which recently announced its National Center for Middle Level Leadership, expects that the findings from the poll will assist in the development of tools and services that NASSP can provide to middle level school leaders.

"Currently there is no opportunity for middle-level students to express their opinions on issues that affect them daily. While practitioners and policymakers debate the merits of middle-level school reform, few know firsthand what middle school students across the nation are thinking," said NASSP executive director Dr. Gerald N. Tirozzi.

The middle grades represent a fundamental, yet often overlooked, phase in building a solid foundation for a successful postsecondary experience. The Middle Level poll will help inform an upcoming national public service campaign on college access.

"The poll findings will increase principals' awareness of this issue and give NASSP a research-based rationale for developing specific tools and services to help school leaders overcome obstacles to achieving greater college readiness among students," said Martha D. Lamkin, Lumina Foundation president and CEO. "The poll is important because the findings can help these educational leaders see the strategic role they and their teachers can play in making college aspirations a reality."

Dr. William J. Bushaw, executive director of PDK, Int., an association of education professionals, said: "When it comes to education policy, we often hear from educators, politicians, and the business community. This poll is an excellent opportunity for us to inject the voice of the students into the debates over how and what they will be taught."

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Sample letter to the editor

To the editor:

High college costs could leave millions behind, keeping a significant portion of Americans from obtaining a college degree.

If the trend continues, by 2010, 4.4 million low-income students who are qualified to go to college will be unable to enroll in a four-year institution. Nearly half of those will be unable to pay for an education at a two-year institution, according to a 2002 report by the Congressional Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance.

Increased cost affects students at every type of institution. Inflation-adjusted figures from the College Board show that, during the past 10 years, tuition and fees rose 51 percent at public four-year institutions, 32 percent at private four-year colleges and 20 percent at two-year colleges. The trend is not likely to reverse itself anytime soon.

Perhaps most disturbing, though not surprising: These rising costs hit poor families hardest. Most are unable to save the money required to qualify for federal tax breaks, and many students from low-income families don't benefit from merit-based aid programs.

The rising cost of college is one of the most critical issues facing higher education access. College costs have significantly outpaced inflation and families' abilities to pay. Left unchecked, the high cost of college could have far-reaching effects — from diminishing America's ability to compete in the global economy to substantially widening the gap between the country's wealthy and low-income families.

Lumina Foundation for Education has formed partnerships with more than 50 different associations, foundations and other organizations to fund additional research on the topic and provide grants to implement solutions. Some solutions are as simple as having the state entities that set tuition, state appropriations and financial aid align themselves and work together.

Future plans also call for fostering continued collaboration through meetings and workshops, increasing awareness of the issue with communication initiatives, and continuing the effort to build an alliance of effective partners that can take action to reduce the cost of higher education. We should support efforts like these to bring people together to make effective change.

Sincerely,

(Insert author's name, title, affiliation and credentials)

Sample op-ed

From the Seattle Post-Intelligencer



Access to college is an essential goal

By [insert author's name, title, affiliation and credentials]

Poverty can make obtaining a college education look like an impossible goal.

College costs are rising. Income from part-time jobs can be vital, but job and financial pressures can lead working students to leave college. Family support may be scant.

From the societal view, the challenges of bringing the intellectual, economic and social benefits of a four-year degree to more students can look almost as daunting.

As a recent *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* story by Paul Nyhan outlined, it has been 40 years since the 1965 Higher Education Act committed America to opening higher education to students from all backgrounds. Progress is pathetically slow. In 2003, only 8.6 percent of the nation's poorest young adults earned bachelor's degrees by age 24.

But the obstacles can look bigger than they are. Colleges are eager to support students from financially strapped backgrounds. In this state, a strong community college system can make the first two years of study for a bachelor's degree reasonably affordable. There are numerous sources for financial aid, although they often aren't obvious when high schools cut counseling staffs to bare bones. It is vital for high schools, colleges and other institutions to make information more widely available.

Nationally, there are efforts to improve access to college for students from all backgrounds. In September, U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings appointed a Commission on the Future of Higher Education. Indiana-based Lumina Foundation for Education will hold a national summit next month on college affordability. Among some of the ideas urged by various groups are better state support to public colleges, greater use of private colleges' assets, and better preparation of students in elementary and high school years.

The P-I story told how Janae Brown, a top student with medical school aspirations, had assembled college applications and financial aid forms when her family became homeless. The forms ended up in storage as deadlines approached.

But better information, counseling and communication among young people, their families and educators might ease students through such situations. For Brown, for thousands of other students, and for U.S. society as a whole, better access to higher education is vital.

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Resources





Resources

NOTE: The following information resources can provide you with background material to use in your local media-outreach efforts.

KnowHow2GO

We all know that big dreams and good grades aren't enough to get into college. That's why KnowHow2GO exists.

This multi-year, multi-media national public-service campaign is designed to inform young people about the actual steps they need to take to make their college dreams a reality. Targeting eighth- through 10th-graders and their parents, guardians and adult mentors, the campaign aims to help young adults realize their dreams of attending college.

The goal of KnowHow2GO is to encourage and prepare more low-income and first-generation students to actively pursue higher education. We want young people in grades eight to 10 to be prepared to make smart choices today to help prepare them for college.

The campaign includes television, radio, print, outdoor and interactive advertising, all of which speak directly to our target audience. It is sponsored nationally by the American Council on Education, Lumina Foundation for Education and the Ad Council.

The campaign is simple to understand and easy to communicate. It breaks down college preparation into four basic steps that young people should take now:

1. **Be a pain — in a good way.** Find an adult who can help you with the steps to college. Let everyone know you want to go to college. And don't stop until you find the adult who can help.
2. **Push yourself and don't stop.** Colleges require you to take certain classes in high school. Find out which classes and sign up.
3. **Find the right fit.** Think about interests and activities that you enjoy. Explore colleges with programs that suit your interests.
4. **Put your hands on some cash.** There's money out there to help pay for college. Apply for it!

How you can get involved

The KnowHow2GO campaign is national in scope, but success requires effective local participation. You can play a key role in the campaign by involving students and adults in the effort and helping ensure the campaign's PSAs are seen and heard. Use numerous resources to help spread the word, including Web sites, posters, brochures and additional collateral materials that appeal to young people.

Your best next steps for KnowHow2GO

Learn the basics of the campaign. Visit www.KnowHow2GO.org and watch the PSAs, learn about events and customize collateral materials for your community.

Get materials free of charge. Among the tools you can use are TV, radio, outdoor, print and poster PSAs, campaign brochures, postcards, fliers and other creative materials, and template communication documents.

Connect with experts. Check out the affiliates' section of the Web site to find other partner organizations with information, resources and materials. To get real-time help from campaign experts, call 1-888-716-6382 or e-mail partnerhelp@KnowHow2GO.org.

Stay in the loop. Sign up for monthly e-mails that will offer ideas for keeping the campaign moving forward. Check the campaign Web site for tools and tips to use. Share ideas and track your success through Webinars. Participate in a best practices conference.



Contribute ideas, suggestions or concerns through the toll-free hotline or e-mail address.

Other Lumina Foundation resources

Many additional Lumina Foundation resources are available on the Web at www.luminafoundation.org:

- **The New Agenda Series:** 40- to 60-page research monographs, each examining a particular topic affecting access to higher education.
- **Illuminations:** two- to four-page summaries that highlight New Agenda Series monographs and other higher education topics.
- **Student Access & Success News:** a monthly e-newsletter featuring recent higher education initiatives and reports.
- **Lumina Foundation Focus:** an occasional magazine that highlights issues important to higher education access and success.
- **Lumina Foundation Lessons:** an occasional magazine that shares what the Foundation has learned from specific programs it has funded.
- **Research Reports:** in-depth examinations of important issues in education.



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Glossary of terms





Glossary of terms

Blog — a journal or diary that is posted on the Internet.

Crisis communication plan — A document outlining the steps of how an organization should respond to the media and general public when faced with a crisis or disaster.

FAQ sheet (or Q&A) — A one- or two-page document that explains the Frequently Asked Questions (and answers) about the programs and goals of an organization.

Key message — A short, concise and memorable sentence used to convey an important message during an interview.

Letter to the editor — A letter written to the editor of a publication intended to educate the reader about an issue, respond to an article or to offer an opinion about a current news event.

Media advisory — An alert written to inform the media about an event or an announcement.

Media list — A comprehensive list of members in the media, including name, contact information and beats covered.

News release — A written document designed to deliver a message to the media and generate publicity about an organization or program.

Op-ed — Stands for “opposite the editorial page” and is a means to communicate an opinion on an issue, offer solutions and ask for community support.

Spokesperson — A person who speaks on behalf of the organization.

Target audience — The main group an organization is trying to reach.

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How to reach us

Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Through grants for research, innovation, communication and evaluation, as well as policy education and leadership development, Lumina Foundation addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment among all students, particularly underserved student groups, including adult learners. The Foundation bases its mission on the belief that postsecondary education remains one of the most beneficial investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people. For more details on the Foundation, visit our Web site at www.luminafoundation.org.

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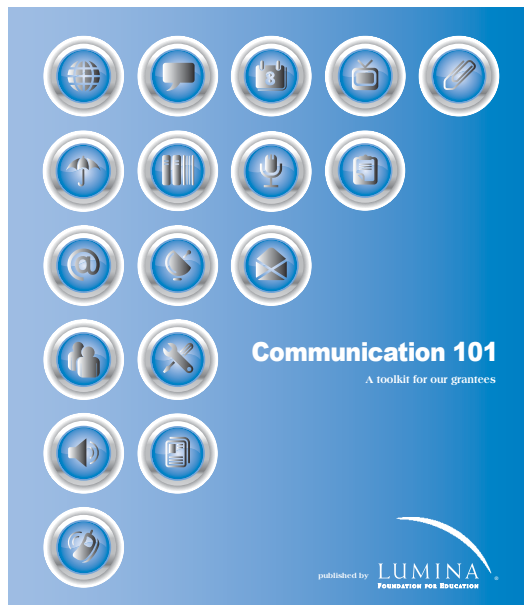
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The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the local context in which a project is implemented. This involves conducting a thorough assessment of the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the community. Only by understanding these factors can a project be designed to be effective and sustainable.

The second part of the paper focuses on the role of community participation in the development process. It argues that communities should not be passive recipients of aid but active participants in their own development. This requires building trust and capacity within the community, as well as ensuring that the project is designed to meet their needs and aspirations.

The third part of the paper discusses the importance of monitoring and evaluation. This involves setting clear objectives and indicators for the project, and regularly assessing progress against these. This allows for adjustments to be made as needed, ensuring that the project remains relevant and effective.

The fourth part of the paper discusses the importance of sustainability. A project should be designed to be self-sustaining, with the community having the capacity and resources to maintain and improve the project over time. This requires building local leadership and capacity, as well as ensuring that the project is financially viable.

The fifth part of the paper discusses the importance of transparency and accountability. This involves ensuring that the project is managed in an open and honest manner, with clear reporting to the community and donors. This helps to build trust and ensures that the project is used for its intended purpose.

The sixth part of the paper discusses the importance of collaboration. This involves working closely with local partners, including government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector. This ensures that the project is aligned with local priorities and has the necessary resources and support to be successful.

The seventh part of the paper discusses the importance of flexibility. A project should be designed to be adaptable to changing circumstances. This requires being open to new ideas and approaches, and being willing to make changes as needed.

The eighth part of the paper discusses the importance of communication. This involves ensuring that the project is well understood by the community and that there is ongoing communication between the project team and the community. This helps to build trust and ensures that the project is meeting its goals.

The ninth part of the paper discusses the importance of documentation. This involves keeping detailed records of the project's progress, challenges, and successes. This helps to learn from the experience and ensures that the project's impact is accurately recorded.

The tenth part of the paper discusses the importance of reflection. This involves taking time to reflect on the project's progress and the lessons learned. This helps to improve the project and ensures that the community's needs are being met.

Helping People Achieve Their Potential®

