CENTER FOR CAMPUS
FREE SPEECH

Free Speech Organizing Toolkit

Introduction

> "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."
> *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District,* 1969.

Not only is this famous quote true of the high school students it was written about in 1969, but it is true to this day about college and university students. In fact, the very nature of the mission of higher education necessitates as few restrictions on speech as possible, so as to allow the marketplace of ideas to flourish and to allow learning and discovery to proceed. Without the give and take, the vetting of ideas and the chance both to independently draw conclusions and to advocate for them, it is hard, if not impossible, for colleges and universities to teach the critical thinking skills that define a higher education. Moreover, the civic values that drive citizens to be active in their community, to vote and involve themselves in politics and to see their role as being a leader in society often come from being involved with politics or community service while on a college campus.

Unfortunately, in simply fulfilling this broad mission and exploring new ideas—from the mundane to offensive—and challenging conclusions, institutions of higher education are among the places in our country where free speech is most likely to come under attack. From the reactions to student outrage in the 1960s, to McCarthy's attacks on faculty members he thought were too sympathetic to communism in the 1950s. to the politically correct speech codes of the 1990s, to the recent efforts from David Horowitz and his allies to restrict the terms of debate on college campuses, those who disagree with views and theories discussed in institutions of higher education have gone to great lengths to pressure institutions of higher education into self -censorship. For example:

- In 2008, media pundits and members of the Virginia House of Delegates put immense pressure on the Board of Visitors of The College of William and Mary to both cancel a student-run event called the "Sex Workers Art Show" and to not renew the contract of University President Gene Nichol. President Nichol had irked these conservative leaders by removing a cross from the chapel building on the public university campus and by refusing to cancel the student-sponsored event. Ultimately, the event continued but President Nichol's contract was not renewed.[1]

- In 2006, Bill O'Reilly started a firestorm of pressure on the University of Oregon to shut down an alternative campus student paper, *The Insurgent.* In response to the now infamous Danish Muhammad cartoons, the Insurgent published a series of articles and cartoons containing among other things a naked depiction of Jesus. The University President refused to shut the student publication down, but many on campus believe its subsequent loss of discounted mailing rates was brought on by the same controversy. [2]

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- In 2008 in the wake of shootings at Northern Illinois University and Virginia Tech, students at several campuses were punished for merely talking about guns and gun ownership. At Lone Star College-Tomball, the Young Conservatives of Texas organization was threatened with de-recognition for distributing a joke flyer called the "Top Ten Gun Safety Tips" as an advertisement for students to join its group. In the same year, a Central Connecticut State University student had the police called on him for discussing his view that students should be able to carry concealed weapons on campus in a class presentation.

- In 2007, politicians and media pundits viciously attacked Columbia University for allowing the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to speak as part of the World Leaders Forum, the University-wide initiative intended to further Columbia's tradition of serving as a major forum for robust debate.[3]

- In 2004, Joe Vogel, a student at Utah Valley University was attacked and ultimately resigned from the student senate for inviting Michael Moore to campus using student activity fee funds to pay for the event. Community leaders and politicians alike argued that the University should only allow speakers that shared what they saw as "communities' values,[4]" rather than allowing students to expose themselves to more controversial views.

- In the wake of the 2008 Presidential campaign, multiple universities have been targeted by both media commentators and legislators for inviting (or not canceling invitations) for Professor Bill Ayers to speak on campus. Ayers, a recognized expert in urban education, came under attack during the campaign for past involvement in the Weather Underground and a loose association with President Obama. Though Millersville University of Pennsylvania went forward with his talk, Boston College, Georgia Southern University and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln canceled speeches.[5]

Whether as a result of this public and political pressure, genuine misunderstanding of the law, or actual desire to restrict speech, too many higher education institutions now restrict more speech than is constitutional or conducive to a higher education. Many campuses now have policies that create limited "free speech zones," punish and prohibit racist or offensive speech, and make it unnecessarily difficult to distribute flyers or to hold an event on campus. Regardless of the intent, policies that restrict speech on a college or university campus hamper the educational mission of the institution, not help it.

This toolkit is not intended as an exhaustive review of First Amendment law or every type of potentially unconstitutional campus policy. Instead, it is a toolkit intended to provide members of the campus community with a basic review of the types of policies that most often restrict student speech on campus and the tools to work with campus leaders to remove those impediments within their campus or university system's process. While certainly, there have been and will continue to be a limited number of cases where students have no choice but to go to the legal system, it is often faster, easier and builds more long term support for an open campus environment to instead convince decision-makers to remove impediments to free speech on their own.

While having a free exchange of ideas on a college campus is fundamental to the mission of higher education, too many campuses restrict more than is constitutional or have restrictions that are so vague as to be unconstitutional. Further, a number of campuses have policies that may be strictly speaking legal, but that are still more onerous than ideal in an educational environment that should be encouraging a free exchange of ideas.

This free speech toolkit is designed to provide the tools needed to convince campus leaders to remove these impediments to the marketplace of ideas. Before discussing those tools and the steps to implementing them, it is useful to first review the ways that free speech is most often restricted on campus and why those restrictions both harm students' First Amendment rights and pose a problem for the mission of higher education.

Free Speech—more than just words

Free speech, whether on campus or off, constitutes more than simply verbal statements. The courts have consistently held that the First Amendment applies to communication—i.e. both verbal statements and actions that communicate some message. For example, in *Cohen v. California* (1971), the U.S. Supreme Court held that the State of California could not punish an anti-war protestor for simply wearing a jacket with the words "f**k the draft" on it. As Justice Harlan put it, "The conviction quite clearly rests upon the asserted offensiveness of the words Cohen used to convey his message to the public. The only 'conduct' which the State sought to punish is the fact of communication. Thus, we deal here with a conviction resting solely upon 'speech.'"

Hence, when we refer to "speech" in this guide, we mean communication—from a panel discussion to posters to armbands worn in silent protest--not just verbal statements. Further, protected speech encompasses far more than just statements about politics. It includes topics as varied as love, politics, religion, sexuality, and emotions. In short, there are very few topics or modes of expression that do not belong on campus.

Restrictions on speech: Vague Policies

Many policies are so vague that it is next to impossible for either a student or an administrator enforcing a policy to understand what is allowed and what is off limits. These policies present two problems for free speech and the marketplace of ideas. First, vague policies invite selective and inconsistent enforcement, often resulting in more controversial speech being stifled. Second, students, not knowing what is off limits, will often self-censor out of fear that their speech will get them in trouble. In either case, the end result is that students' rights are violated and there is less opportunity for the free exchange of ideas so critical to higher education.

For example, at one point the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor had a policy that disciplined people for "any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap or Vietnam-era veteran status…" That policy was found to be unconstitutionally vague by the Eastern District of Michigan in 1989.[6] The Court held that "looking at the plain language of the Policy, it is simply impossible to discern any limitation on its scope or any conceptual distinction between protected and unprotected conduct."

In another more recent example, the University at Buffalo (aka SUNY Buffalo) *Guide to Residence Hall Living* states in its community standards that:

> Students are expected to act with civility. To be civil means to be courteous and polite or, simply put, to be mannerly. Acts of incivility—whether verbal, written, or physical—will not be tolerated by the Residential Life community…Hostile or inappropriate language or gestures, words that penetrate and hurt, words that destroy relationships rather than sustain them, or physical aggression in any form are not welcome in our university or residence hall community.

Again, while there may be additional problems with this policy, the language is vague. What are "words that penetrate" or "words that destroy relationships?" Where is the line between civil and uncivil? Like the University of Michigan example above, this policy presents far too much opportunity for inconsistent enforcement and confusion from students over what they can and cannot say and do.

Restrictions on Speech: Overly-Broad Policies

There is some speech—such as truly obscene speech—that is not protected by the First Amendment. But policies must be narrowly drawn to only restrict speech that is not protected in order to be constitutional. Unfortunately, many policies are overly broad, sweeping into their restrictions additional speech that is protected by the First Amendment. Overly broad policies become particularly problematic in higher education where discussing topics and views that are controversial or even offensive is essential to examining a great many issues.

For example, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin struck down a University of Wisconsin policy that called for a student to be disciplined for

> Racist or discriminatory comments, epithets or other expressive behavior directed at an individual or on separate occasions at different individuals, or for physical conduct, if such comments, epithets or other expressive behavior or physical conduct intentionally: 1. Demean the race, sex, religion, color, creed, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry or age of the individual or individuals; and…

The policy was found by the US District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin to be unconstitutionally over-broad. While prior precedent may have allowed a policy that regulated "speech [which] by its very utterance, tend[s] to incite violent reaction" in the person to whom it is directed, "the [UW] rule regulates discriminatory speech whether or not it is likely to provoke such a response."[7] In essence, the policy regulated speech beyond what is constitutionally permissible.

In a more recent example, at the University of Minnesota-Crookston, a punishable bias incident is defined as:

> expressions of disrespectful bias, hate, harassment or hostility against an individual, group or their property because of the individual or group's actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, gender identification, age, marital status, disability public assistance status, veteran status and/or sexual orientation can be forms of discrimination. Expressions vary, and can be in the form of language, words, signs, symbols, threats, or actions that could potentially cause alarm, anger, fear, or resentment in others, or that endanger the health, safety, and welfare of a member(s) of the University community…

While genuine harassment and threats can be prohibited, this policy bars mere disrespectful or annoying statements that are motivated by someone's bias against someone's group identity. Rather than letting those views be aired and debated, this policy sweeps that discussion under the rug and likely violates students' rights in the process.

Restrictions on the Content of Speech: Classic "Speech Codes"

A number of campuses have policies specifically aimed at eliminating speech that can be seen as racist or otherwise offensive to members of the campus community. Generally these "speech codes" come from laudable goals—avoiding genuine harassment or fostering a learning environment that is comfortable for more sensitive students. Though the goals may have been laudable, the execution is not. These policies usually both restrict quite a bit of protected speech and are fairly vague—making it impossible for someone to discern what speech is and is not allowed. Further, they undermine the core value of higher education—that difficult, uncomfortable and even distasteful ideas should be aired and wrestled with, not hidden, avoided and left unexamined.

Unfortunately many of these policies, along with the problems discussed above, regulate speech entirely because of its content. Worse than simply prohibiting too much speech, these policies attempt to prohibit certain views from being expressed. For example, at Northern Arizona University, harassment is defined as "stereotyping, negative comments or jokes, explicit threats, segregation, and verbal or physical assault when any of these are based upon a person's race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, veteran status or sexual orientation."

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down a similar policy in the City of St. Paul because it banned speech due to its content:

> the remaining, unmodified terms make clear that the ordinance applies only to "fighting words" that insult, or provoke violence, "on the basis of race, color, creed, religion or gender." Displays containing abusive invective, no matter how vicious or severe, are permissible unless they are addressed to one of the specified disfavored topics. Those who wish to use "fighting words" in connection with other ideas - to express hostility, for example, on the basis of political affiliation, union membership, or homosexuality - are not covered. The First Amendment does not permit St. Paul to impose special prohibitions on those speakers who express views on disfavored subjects.[9]

Restrictions on Speech: Prior Review

Many campuses have policies requiring that students reserve space or check to see that a place to post materials is available before using it. Unfortunately, some campuses take those policies a step further and require that the content of a speech, posting or publication be reviewed and approved before students can hold an event or distribute their material. These policies usually constitute prior review and with limited exceptions—namely where there are concrete criteria unrelated to the views students express to base decisions upon—are damaging to the free exchange of ideas on campus.

Though very few of these prior review policies actually call for speech to be restricted because of the views expressed, many can be interpreted to allow exactly that to happen. For example, at James Madison University, "Students or student organizations must obtain written approval from the coordinator of clubs and organizations, before petitioning or surveying students." (J36-101.1) Further, "All events involving off-campus speakers must be registered and approved through the proper university scheduling authority at least two weeks prior to the event." (J15-100) While the policy does not expressly say that speech will be judged and possibly restricted for its content, it certainly is one possible application of this policy.

Worse yet, some policies directly regulate the message students are expressing. The New Jersey Institute of Technology's Campus Center website makes it clear that "student groups need to have the content of their advertisements approved before posting" (emphasis in original). At Bridgewater State College, "the advertisement, posters, flyers, signs or banner must be in good taste and appropriate for [their] intended purpose. The college reserves the right to remove any posting that is obscene, discriminatory, libelous, misleading or offensive in any way."

While it is fairly obvious how these policies infringe on free speech, they allow someone to stop the speech before it is ever posted or uttered, prior review also has a more subtle impact on the marketplace of ideas. Acting as "red tape" for speech, these policies can often be complicated or confusing enough to discourage students from holding events, submitting a publication or guest speaker with a more controversial view or holding a spontaneous event in response to current events. In short, these policies put unnecessary and restrictive red tape between students and the ability to contribute to the marketplace of ideas on campus.

Restrictions on Speech: Over-regulation of time, place or manner of speech

While campuses should generally be places open to as much expression and debate as possible, there are legitimate reasons for some *reasonable* regulations on the time, place and manner of speech. For example, while a rally on the campus quad during the middle of the day should generally be possible, the campus administration is probably well within constitutional limits to stop someone from shouting their views with a megaphone at 3 a.m. next to the freshman dorm. Unfortunately, many campuses place restrictions well beyond what is reasonable and curb the free exchange of ideas in the process.

Similar to city parks or sidewalks, much of the outdoor areas of college and university campuses have long been considered "public forums." In areas like this, the government may place some limits on speech, so long as there is a compelling government interest involved, the regulation is not overly broad (discussed earlier) and there are still ample alternate ways for speech to occur. While some limits may be perfectly acceptable, it is likely that some of the more restrictive "free speech zones," such as a policy that restricts speech to two small zones on a 30,000 person campus, go too far.

For example, at the University of Georgia, the UGA policy on freedom of expression states that "the areas designated as 'Free Expression Areas' for speeches and demonstrations are the Tate Student Center Plaza and the Memorial Hall Plaza." Though the policy later allows for the possibility of reserving another area of campus with 48 hours notice, the practice has been to restrict student assemblies to these two small areas of campus. At McNeese State University, distribution of literature, political campaigning, public demonstrations and public speeches are all restricted to discrete zones on campus. Their policy states that "the following locations shall be deemed Public Demonstration Zones: Zone A, Zone B. Organized groups may demonstrate on campus once during each Fall, Spring, and summer session in the assigned demonstration zone only."

While it is unfortunate that at present many campuses have one or more policies restricting speech and curbing the free exchange of ideas, students and their allies have many options to combat these problems. Often the best approach to eliminating restrictions on free speech is to work with members of the campus community to convince campus leaders to change the policy—essentially to run a campaign for free speech.

Moreover, while it is always good to know when a policy is likely to be unconstitutional, do not hesitate to object to a policy that is simply more restrictive than you think is good for the campus—after all, passing constitutional muster should be more of a floor—the bare minimum a policy must be—than a ceiling. Given the importance of a robust and free exchange of ideas to higher education, it's useful and even necessary to strive for the best policy a campus can have—rather than one that is barely acceptable.

With that in mind, the remainder of this guide will focus not on the policies themselves, but on how to build support for removing a policy that impedes free speech on campus.

Steps to Combating restrictions on speech on your campus

When you find a policy on campus that seems to be infringing on free speech or otherwise preventing the free exchange of ideas on campus, plan first and act second. Below are a set of steps to follow to help assess the problem, determine who can change it and figure out how to convince them it's the best thing to do.

Step 1: Assess the situation.

- **Define the problem.** Why is the policy bad for students or bad for the campus? Who is harmed by it and how? Why will or should others see the policy as a problem?
- **Define the solution.** Does the policy need to be removed entirely? If not, what needs to be done to keep it from restricting speech?
- **Who decides?** What's their name and title? What do they think about the policy now? Who and what influences their decisions?
- **Who are your allies?** Who could and would help if asked?
- **What resources do you have or could you get?**

Step 2:
Make a plan. Define your goal, figure out how you'll achieve that goal and put it into a timeline. (see page 10)

Step 3:
Create a message. Figure out who your audience is, what about the problem and solution will resonate with them, and how to turn that into a compelling message. (see page 13-14)

Step 4:
Recruit the allies and people you need to help. (see page 15-27)

Step 5:
Implement your plan—the skills and tactics to build support for your goals—from working with the media to lobbying a decision-maker. (see page 28-37)

Planning Your Campaign

Having a well thought out plan for how to convince a decision-maker to agree with you and act is critical to success. It forces you to ask tough questions, allows you to know when you are and are not being successful and ensures that the work you are doing is pushing you towards your goal, rather than just being more work.

When planning your campaign, start with the following questions:

- **Define the problem you want to solve.**
  What needs to change? Why is the policy bad—who does it impact and how?

- **Solution.**
  How can the problem be solved? The solution should directly address the specific problem as defined and be something potential supporters can unite around.

- **Goal.**
  The goal is what you specifically want to accomplish. The best goals are tangible and measurable—for example, "remove policy 301 by the end of the semester."

- **Decision-maker.**
  Who has the power to implement the solution? Why would they be inclined or disinclined to do so?

- **Strategy.**
  The strategy is your theory on how to move the decision-maker to achieve the goal. Will it take pressure from students, or will it just take persuading the target that your position is the best one? Will you need more VIP supporters to weigh in? This is your "game-plan."

- **Tactics.**
  Tactics are the specific actions taken to implement the strategies. So, if your strategy is grassroots pressure, your tactic might be phone calls or petitions. If your strategy is to persuade the target, it would be meeting with them and gathering facts that will be compelling to them.

Example Campaign Outline:

- **Problem.** Our campus allows events at only 3 areas which are low traffic. This makes it very difficult to recruit other interested students and to educate students about the issues our group cares about.
- **Solution.** Policies prohibiting speech outside the "free speech zones" should be removed.
- **Goal.** Convince the University administration to remove the "free speech zone" policy in the student handbook.
- **Decision-maker.** Chancellor Smith
- **Strategy.** Chancellor Smith has supported free speech issues before when lots of students spoke out. We will therefore use grassroots pressure from students to show that change is needed and wanted.
- **Tactics.** Petitioning—we'll get petitions from 10% of the students to show there's widespread support. Endorsements—we'll get endorsements from 20 groups.

Why Ongoing Planning is Important

- **Planning allows you to get more done.**
  If you are the coordinator of a student organization, event, campaign, or project of any sort, you are probably responsible for juggling a lot of people and tasks. Planning helps you stay organized, and is the only way to stay on top of everything that you have to do. If you don't plan, inevitably things will fall through the cracks.

- **Planning creates a sense of a shared vision and goals.**
  A shared plan is the only way to ensure that everyone in the organization is on the same page and understands what you are working to accomplish. It also provides a benchmark to know when you've succeeded and can help you analyze why things occurred the way they did.

- **Planning facilitates your ability to recruit new volunteers, delegate tasks, and develop leaders.**
  Having a good plan facilitates plugging new volunteers into specific tasks right away and handing over responsibilities to developing leaders.

How to Plan

- **Figure out what needs to happen to hit the goals.**
  This should come from your campaign plan (problem, solution, goal, strategy, and tactics). For example, when will the decision be made? What support do you need to gather?

- **Make your goals specific.**
  Useful goals are measurable (i.e. gather 500 petitions instead of gather a lot of petitions) and have a definite timeline.

- **Work backwards.**
  For each tactic, work backwards to figure out what needs to be done and when it needs to be done. Consider all the steps required to meet the goal, and then figure out when these things need to happen to stay on schedule. For example, if you need to put up 500 posters during the third week of a campaign, then you need to design the poster, get the design approved by the group, produce the posters, and recruit ten volunteers to hang posters by the end of the second week of your campaign.

- **Put your plan in a timeline.**
  Create a week by week or day by day plan, outlining the key benchmarks of what needs to get done and when.

- **Use the plan to choose priorities.**
  Pick the three things that absolutely must get done and isolate those things as priorities. Spend the bulk of your time working on priorities.

- **Use the plan.**
  Don't throw it away in the desk drawer and ignore it. Consult it regularly.

- **Adjust the plan.**
  The plan will change, they always do. If you're off track, figure out what you have to do to still hit your goals. If necessary, adjust your goals up or down.

Tips on Planning

- **Have an overall plan for the campaign.**
  Never work on a campaign that hasn't been thought through from beginning to end. This plan will focus on the big picture.

- **Have a week by week plan, covering the entire campaign.**
  Create the term plan by placing the goals and tactics from campaign plan into a week by week timeline.

- **Spend time each week planning for the next week.**
  On a weekly basis, plan for the upcoming week, referring back to the semester plan and making adjustments as needed. Do this on Thursday or Friday for the following week. Monday is too late!

- **Share your plan.**
  If people don't know what you have thought of and how you're going to make it happen, then you're plan isn't useful. Use your plane as a tool to get everyone on the same page and invested in the same goals.

One thing that is critical to winning a campaign is having a message that is compelling to your audience. Think about some of the best political or advertising campaigns you've seen—for most of them there probably was one constant theme, repeated over and over (on posters, in speeches, in commercials, etc.) that people really connected with—that's your message.

A good message will connect with the audience where they're at, move them to the action you want them to take, and be memorable and repeated enough that it becomes how they'll think about the issue.

Steps to developing a good message: Define your audience

Who is the primary audience for the campaign you're running? If you are trying to recruit a large number of students or faculty to work with you—generally you'd do this if you needed a lot of grassroots support to win—the faculty or the student body will be your audience.

Once you have the audience defined, you need to answer the following questions: What do they think about the issue now? What do they feel about the issue now? How do you want them to think about it? What do you want them to feel?

Figure out the elements of the story you are telling

You should be able to tell a story around your campaign. Your message will often be much shorter, but you want to know the elements of that story to pull your message from:

- **What is the problem?**
  Why should your audience care about it? How does it directly impact them or the things they already care about?

- **What is your vision?**
  Put in terms the audience can relate to. Your grand plan for this problem—the ideal world if you will.

- **What's the solution?**
  What is the actual thing you're going to change with this campaign?

- **What's the political context?**
  Is your issue on the agenda, on the front burner—and what's the prognosis?

- **Who is the decision-maker?**

- **Who's the bad guy?**
  Did they cause the problem; are they blocking the solution, or both?

- **Who are our allies?**

- **What's the strategy?**
  Both what is our theory of how we win and how can the audience play a role?

Develop your message

Given what you know about where the audience is at and what you want to tell them to get them where they need to be, what's the best message? The message should be something short that you can repeat over and over. If your audience walked away from a class announcement, a quote in a newspaper or a brochure on your campaign, your message is the thing you want them to remember.

Telling a good story

During your campaign, your message will need to be expanded into everything from a letter to the editor to a presentation in front of a likely ally. Basic outline of a story:

- **Problem**
- **Solution**
- **What we're doing**
- **What you, the audience can do**

Why Should You Recruit?

- **Achieve goals.**
  Most campaigns will need a substantial number of volunteers involved in order to accomplish campaign goals. Recruitment provides the raw number of people needed to get the job done.

- **Develop leaders.**
  The best way to make sure that you have campus leaders who are invested in free speech in the future is to recruit people this year to get involved.

- **Visibility.**
  Recruitment campaigns create visibility for the issues you're working on. In order to compel people to join, you will have to get out there and tell people about who you are and what you are doing.

- **Education.**
  Recruitment campaigns are intrinsically valuable because they get the word out about important issues and make people think. Throughout a campaign, you will articulate the campaign vision to large numbers of people on a regular basis.

Principles of Recruitment

- **Reach out to everyone.**
  Don't rely on people who are predisposed to getting involved. Speak to a wide range of classes and organizations. Don't assume that people won't be interested because of the class they're in.

- **Multiple methods of recruitment are important.**
  To effectively reach a broad constituency, use posters, tables, classrooms, leaflets, list serves, media outlets, etc. Consider the things people do on campus, and how to reach all of them in different ways.

- **Have a simple message.**
  Establish a basic, simple message for recruitment and stick to it. See the previous section on developing a message for tips on how.

- **Follow up with new recruits immediately.**
  Remind people of their commitments. Once someone has taken the first step, create new ways to get involved. Get to know new people, and spend the most time with people with the most potential. Find out what motivates them and what experiences they hope to have with the campaign.

- **Ask everyone to do something.**
  Ask everyone to get involved, and follow up to deepen their involvement. For example, once someone has volunteered at a petitioning event, asked that person to train new volunteers to petition.

- **Have materials ready.**
  Posters, leaflets, newsletters, and interest cards are all important and useful recruitment tools.

Recruitment Goals Worksheet

Most successful campaigns will require recruiting new volunteers—there's usually enough work to do that more people are needed. Like the campaign itself, you need to plan out your recruitment effort.

Volunteers Goal: _____

In order to get people to volunteer, you'll need to call and ask a lot of people. Not everyone who wants to help will be able to.

_____ x 2 = _____
Volunteers Goal # who commit to helping

About half of the people who you speak to will agree to volunteer.

_____ x 2 = _____
who commit to volunteering # you will need to contact

About half the people you call to invite will actually pick up the phone when you call.

_____ x 2 = _____
you will need to contact # you will need to call

That number equals the number of interested student names and phone numbers that you will need to collect during your recruitment efforts.

Usually, about 3/4 of the people who sign up to volunteer will include their phone number.

_____ / 3/4 = _____
you need to call # total names

Students interested goal: _____

You will collect these student interest cards and checked volunteer boxes through tabling and class announcements. A good basic rule is that you can get one-third of your names from petitioning and two-thirds from class announcements.

_____ x 1/3 = _____
Interest card goal Interest cards from tabling

_____ x 2/3 = _____
Interest card goal Interest cards from class announcements

Keep good track of your goals for each activity and at each step to make sure that you stay on track to get the number of people involved that you need for your campaign work.

The most effective way to reach a large amount of students at once on a college campus is to speak in their classes. Many professors will allow a short 3-5 minute presentation at the beginning of their class by a representative from your organization. Class announcements allow you to educate students about your organization and campaign, recruit students for volunteer opportunities, and build support among the faculty for your cause.

How to Setup Class Announcements

- **Get a list of faculty contact information.**
  The list should include their office locations, phone numbers, and email addresses. There is often a faculty directory online.

- **Get a course schedule.**
  This will help you figure out which professors teach the largest classes, as well as the classes where students will be most interested in your campaign. It's important to remember to schedule a wide variety of classes to reach a broad audience.

- **Prepare a short rap.**
  Be sure to include who you are, what you want, and how long your announcement will take.

- **Prioritize classes.**
  Target classes by size, previous support, the relationship with the professor, and the issue areas taught in the class. Remember that it is critical to reach a broad cross-section of students.

- **Use a tracking system.**
  Keep records of which professors have been contacted and how they responded. It is important to keep good notes of which professors you have talked to and which presentations you have scheduled. Have a binder with the faculty-calling rap, faculty-calling list, list of prioritized classes, and a class announcement scheduling forms so that it's easy for volunteers to be trained and start calling.

- **Use email in addition to calling.**
  Emailing professors to set up class announcements also works. However, very few professors will respond to an email alone, so it is still important to make sure that you are calling professors as well.

- **Visit during office hours.**
  If you're having trouble contacting a faculty member, sometimes the quickest solution is to visit their office during office hours.

How to Make a Class Announcement

- **Have the presentation memorized so you can concentrate on delivery.**
  Practice the presentation ahead of time so you feel comfortable with it and can remember it without notes. Most people need to practice saying the presentation out loud at least 10 times before getting it down.

- **Your delivery should be dynamic and engaging.**
  Speak slowly so that people can fully digest what you're saying. Speak clearly so that everyone can hear you. Vary your tone and pace for emphasis.

- **Make eye contact as much as possible.**
  This builds trust between you and your audience.

- **Be yourself.**
  You should allow your own personality to come across in your presentation.

- **Arrive at the class a few minutes early.**
  Introduce yourself to the professor and remind him or her that you're there to make an announcement about getting involved with your free speech campaign. Write your organization's name and contact information in the corner of the chalkboard.

- **Bring a new volunteer with you.**
  He or she can pass out cards for volunteers to sign up on while you're speaking and learn how to make an announcement. Make sure at the end of your announcement to ask people to fill out the cards and then pass them to the aisles so that you can pick them up as the professor begins class.

Outline for a Class Announcement

- **Introduction.** Thank professor, introduce yourself and what you are going to cover. (20 sec)
- **Organization.** Describe your organization. (30 sec)
- **Problem.** Describe the problem, why you are working on it. (30 sec)
- **Solution.** What you are going to do about it, what your campaign goal is. (30 sec)
- **Involvement.** Ask people to get involved, describe volunteer opportunities. (30 sec)
- **Personal Appeal.** Why you are involved, why they should get involved. (30 sec)
- **Wrap.** Thank people for their time, collect interest cards. (20 sec)

Sample Faculty Calling Rap

Hi. Is Professor _____ there? This is _____ with the Students for Free Speech at UConn. How are you?

Great. I'm calling to tell you briefly about some of our campaign work this semester and see if we could make a short presentation in a class of yours. Do you have a minute?

Well, as you may have heard, we're working to make sure that events, speeches and petitioning can happen all over campus—not just in the "free speech zones." We think that will make it easier to get involved, make our campus more exciting and give students more ability to make our voices heard.

One of the best ways for us to let other students know about this campaign and how they can help is by making a brief announcement in classes. Can we do a brief 3-5 minute announcement at the start of your class next week?

(Confirm time, place, and number of students.)

Class Announcement Goals Worksheet

About 15% of the people in a class will fill out an interest card, on average.

_____ / .15 = _____
# of cards needed # of people to talk to

Figure out the average class size to determine the estimated number of class announcements that you must do.

_____ / _____= _____ # of class announcements
# of people to talk to average class size

Plan on scheduling four presentations for each hour of calling faculty members.

_____ / 4 = _____
# of class announcements Hours of faculty-calling

You can identify potential volunteers in any of your campaign activities—just ask people who are signing a petition or making a phone call to help out, or ask your coalition partners to pitch their members on helping out. Once you have a good list of potential volunteers, you'll need to get them active—and a phone call is often the best route.

A phone call is often the first personal contact you will have with a potential intern or volunteer. Good recruitment includes calling people right away after they indicate they are interested. The best way to call a large number of people is to do the calling as a group, in a "phonebank." By making calls all in one place, you ensure you reach out to everyone, have quality conversations, and have some fun.

To run a successful phonebank, you need to have great individual calls. For that, you need an organized presentation that includes the person in the conversation.

Tips for Making Phone Calls

- **Have a plan.**
  Have a list of upcoming tasks or events to plug volunteers into.

- **Call people right away.**
  People will be most responsive when their interest is still fresh.

- **Don't leave messages.**
  You can only connect with the person and context the importance of their involvement if you're actually speaking to them.

- **Remind the person how you got his or her name.**

- **Ask whether or not it's a good time to talk.**

- **Ask what people are specifically interested in and why.**
  Involve the person in the conversation and make a personal connection.

- **Describe your immediate goals and lay out a range of tasks.**
  Try to recommend options that will match the person's interest.

- **Get a commitment.**
  Confirm where and when they will volunteer.

- **Keep records of the contacts you make.**
  Note the date and what he or she volunteered to do on the recruitment card or tracking form.

- **Note the most excited people.**
  People who seem especially skilled should be noted so that you can prioritize them later.

Elements of a Successful Phonebank

- **Use your plan.**
  From your goals, figure out the number of volunteer hours you will need on the phone.

- **Line up the phones.**
  Sometimes you will need to borrow phones from other campus organizations, faculty offices, dorms or even people's cell phones (most plans have free minutes on the weekends and many students will be willing to use their phones to call others during the week as well.)

- **Sign up phonebankers and phonebank coordinators.**
  Usually volunteers sign up for two-hour shifts. There should be coordinators for each shift and/or the night overall.

- **Make the phonebank fun.**
  Order pizza or invite other people to come make banners at the same time, for example.

- **Prioritize and organize the names that are being called by volunteers.**
  Call the most recent and most interested contacts first.

- **Coordinators should check in on phonebankers periodically.**
  Listen in and give them feedback and encouragement.

- **Ask people to do more.**
  As volunteers finish their shifts, quickly speak with them about their experience and performance, and ask them to sign up again, and to coordinate a shift next time.

Phonebank Goals Worksheet

Figure out how many people you want to show up at the event that you are phonebanking for. Then double it, because only half of the people who commit will show.

_____ x 2 = _____
Attendance goal Goal for "yes"

On average, you can expect five people per hour of calling to say yes.

_____ / 5 = _____
Goal for "yes" Phonebanking hours

Just like any other event, it is best to schedule double the number of volunteer hours you'll need to hit your goals.

_____ x 2 = _____
Phonebanking Hours Scheduled Hours

Sample Phonebanking Rap

Hi, is _____ there?

Hi, this is _____ from _____ the Free Speech Coalition here at Penn State. How are you?

Great! I'm calling because you checked the volunteer box on our petition and I wanted to tell you a little bit more about what we're working on. Do you have a minute? So, what has you interested in free speech on campus?

As you probably already saw, we're working to make sure that events, speeches and petitioning can happen all over campus—not just in the "free speech zones." We think that will make it easier to get involved, make our campus more exciting and give students more ability to make our voices heard. Of course, to convince Chancellor Smith to do that, we need to build a lot of support around campus—so we're petitioning, holding rallies and getting other student organizations involved.
Is this a campaign that you would be interested in being involved in?

IF YES:
Great. We are going to be gathering petitions tomorrow in the Union. Do you have an hour to come and volunteer with us between 10-2 tomorrow?

> If yes: Great! Our table is going to be at _____ (location). When can you come by? Okay so I will see you at 11 AM, you should ask for _____ and they will get you set up.
>
> If no: No problem. Would you have time some other day this week to help out? Great! We're doing an event on _____from _____ to _____. Do you have an hour to volunteer for that?
>
> - If yes: Great! Our table is going to be at _____ (location). When can you come by?
> - If no: That's fine, I'll give you a call next week to see if you have any more free time.

IF NO:
Well thanks for your time. Can we keep your contact information on our contact list and update you about upcoming events? Thanks and have a great evening.

Large campaigns need as many volunteers as possible, volunteers with the skills to be effective. The more people who understand the objectives of the campaign and have skills to carry out the campaign plan, the more likely it is that you will succeed. Trainings help accomplish these objectives.

Principles of Running a Good Training

- **Keep skill sessions simple.**
  Present a skill as simply as possible. You may have ten good tips on how to table well, but if you tell them to someone all at once, they will be overwhelmed. Keeping it simple builds confidence so volunteers feel comfortable jumping into an activity right away. Feedback should be simple too – only comment on one thing at a time.

- **Give a strong sample.**
  Always demonstrate the skill so people can see the tips in action. People learn just as much, if not more, by observing a trainer perform a skill well than by describing it to them for ten minutes.

- **Practice.**
  People learn best by doing. Role-plays give people experience with the skills right away.

When to Hold Trainings

- **Hold trainings on a regular basis.**
  There will constantly be new volunteers in need of training.

- **Formal training sessions should be organized like events, with advance planning and publicity.**
  More lengthy sessions should be held on the weekend when people have the time to spend an entire morning or afternoon in training. Shorter trainings can happen daily—depending on the needs of your campaign.

- **Informal trainings happen all the time.**
  They happen at a tabling event, when people arrive for a phonebank, etc. Always give someone training before they tackle a new task.

- **Don't hesitate to hold specific training sessions for people taking on responsibility.**
  By training on more advanced skills, you will rapidly increase the depth of expertise within your group.

How to Prepare a Good Training

Trainings are only effective if you put time into preparing them. A good rule is to spend just as long preparing for a training as it takes to actually execute the training. You should consider the answers to the following questions.

- **Who is your audience?**
  What is their skill and experience level? The training will need to be different if it's for campaign coordinators rather than new volunteers.

- **How much time do you have?**
  Sometimes you may only have time to do a 20 minute training, while other times you may set up a training that will last an entire day.

- **What are the goals?**
  Decide what skills people should take away from the training.

- **Who will help you with this training?**
  Recruit other group leaders who are skilled in the activity to come help run the training, particularly the role-plays. Ideally, for role-plays, you will have 1 trainer for every 4 trainees.

Sample Training Agenda

- **Context**. Describe the campaign and context why this skill is important within the campaign
- **Explain the skill.** A good way is with "How-to's" and "Tips" – Keep it simple!
- **Give a sample of the skill.** Make sure your example highlights the tips you just gave.
- **Practice the skill.** Role-plays should take up more than half of the training.
- **Wrap up**. Reiterate your tips to drive them home.

One of the most important elements of a successful campaign is working with other groups, faculty, community members, and campus networks. Coalitions allow groups to pool resources—from money to people to relationships—towards winning a shared goal. Further, building a coalition around free speech issues will help build more long-term supporters for free speech on campus.

Ways to Get Other Groups Involved

- **Endorsement model.**
  This is literally a list of endorsers built to lend credibility and breadth to your effort. The members of the coalition may do little beyond adding their names to the list of supporters.

- **Associate model.**
  With this model, the groups and their leadership are encouraged to play an active role in the campaign (collect signatures, get letters, etc.), but decision-making still rests with you. This coalition is more active. There may be occasional meetings to share information and cultivate a sense of ownership.

- **Partner model.**
  The partner model assumes power sharing as well as active participation. Groups work closely together on a regular basis. Decisions and feedback into the coalition are generally based on resources brought to the table.

Choosing the Best Coalition Model for Your Campaign

- **Decide if the coalition will be worth creating.**
  Sometimes, you won't need a coalition—or will need a very limited one—to win. Ask: Will the decision-makers be influenced by the formation of a coalition? Will the coalition's resources make an impact on the issue? Will help be needed from more groups in order to win?

- **Identify the amount of interest in the issue.**
  Figure out—which of the coalition models is feasible. How much do other groups care about the issue? Which groups care about the issue? Does the issue have support a mile wide and an inch deep, or are a few organizations heavily invested in the success of the effort?

- **Decide the level of urgency in the campaign.**
  This will often influence the level of resources and the timeline needed to develop the coalition.

- **Identify what resources would be available.**
  Consider what other groups can bring to the table. Looking at the range of groups to work with, consider your resources vs. those of other groups. For example, if you are the only group with resources to get the work done, you probably wouldn't use the partner model.

- **Consider how well the groups work together.**
  Is there a history of close cooperation or differences in strategy and personalities? Does the goal require long-term structures or working on an issue-by-issue basis?

- **Look at who the key players on the issue are.**
  Who has ownership over the issue? Who deserves credit? Is this something that you created or are you adding your clout to a campaign that's already underway?

Steps to Building a Coalition

- **Determine which model to use and set goals.**
  Which model will best suit the plan? Once you decide this, consider how a coalition can be helpful.

- **Make a list of organizations to approach.**
  Some organizations will come quickly to mind, but others will require thinking outside the box. Work backwards from who needs to be influenced and what resources are needed to influence them. Analyze all the advantages and disadvantages of potential coalition partners.

- **Prioritize the list.**
  Your strategy might be to get easy groups first to get the ball rolling, or to spend time with only the most influential groups or people.

- **Track the work.**
  Make sure you have a clear tracking system where you keep everyone's contact information and roles and responsibilities in the coalition.

- **Create an email/letter outlining your effort.**
  Having a summary of your campaign is helpful, especially if you are reaching out to a number of groups. If the coalition is to be smaller and focused on key leadership in the community, the materials can be personalized for each target.

- **Contact the target groups.**
  Once they receive the background information, call them within a few days to get their response and pin-down the decision-making process. Do you need to attend any meetings? Do you need to contact another division of the organization? Be prepared to answer questions and provide convincing reasons why the group should endorse the issue or get involved with the campaign-both why the issue is important and why they will benefit from their involvement in your coalition.

- **Get a commitment.**
  This can be time consuming since many groups have more than one step before endorsing or getting involved. Persistence and attention to their schedule pays off. Pay the most attention to priority groups – once you establish a core of support, it becomes easier to get other groups on board. When seeking endorsements, get specific letters of endorsement from each group and get permission to use their name on your endorser list.

- **Maintain structure and communication.**
  How formal will the coalition be? How will decisions be made? How will the members stay informed on developments in the campaign? Will the coalition meet weekly, monthly or never?

Sample Activities for Coalition Partners to Do

- **Generate media attention.** Write or co-sign letters to the editor or opinion editorials, attend an editorial board meeting, attend press events, organize a news conference, or put an article about the campaign in their newsletter or list-serve.
- **Generate grassroots pressure.** Collect signatures, write letters or make phone calls to the target, or turn out members to a district meeting or other events.
- **Expand the coalition.** Identify other groups and get them involved, mail packets out and make follow up calls, or do presentations to potential coalition partners.
- **Help with lobbying the decision-maker for your campaign.**
- **Help identify VIPs.** Set up or attend meetings with power players that can influence your target.
- **Research.** Co-author a report, provide data, or collect surveys.

It is often the case that you'll need to show widespread support from the campus community in order to accomplish your goal. Usually the easiest and most effective method to mobilize students and faculty is by asking them to take a simple grassroots action such as signing a petition to the decision-maker.
One of the best ways to generate grassroots product is organizing a grassroots event (see the section on tabling). With a grassroots event, you can generate a large amount of grassroots product at one time, educate hundreds of people, get media attention, recruit new volunteers, build leadership within your group and engage VIPs.

Basic Grassroots Tactics

- **Petitions and Postcards.**
  These actions are used for many purposes such as stating grievances, showing support for a new policy, or even initiating a change in law. They can be one of the best ways of showing broad support for a campaign and influencing decision-makers. If you ask people to volunteer as you petition, this can also be a recruitment mechanism. Petitioning is the most effective way to reach a large number of people through one-on-one contact.

- **Letter-writing.**
  Letters are a more personal form of communication to decision-makers and require more time and effort on behalf of the participants. A hand-written letter has a bigger impact on decision-makers than a postcard or petition. Letters are also a good forum for telling personal stories and expanding the message.

- **Call-in days.**
  Generating a large number of phone calls in a short amount of time is a good way to ensure that the campaign gets noticed by the target. Phone calls are relatively easy to generate (you can organize a tabling event where people stop by and make short calls on their cell phones), and are an effective way to get many people to deliver one message quickly.

- **E-actions.**
  While it can be a tough tool to use effectively, the internet is obviously one way to generate grassroots actions and signatures. Of course, generating this support requires everything from a good website to an online petition tool to ways to promote the website. There are now multiple services that host websites (Blogspot and Wordpress being some of the simplest to use) for free or little cost and multiple ways to generate attention—from Facebook and Myspace to Twitter.

Tabling is one of the most tried and true organizing methods – it's the simple action of setting up a table and talking to people about your issue. Table to get petition signatures, letters or phone calls, distribute information and educate people and recruit new volunteers. Tabling is also a great way to train and develop new leaders to help lead other parts of the campaign.

Where and When to Table

- Choose high foot-traffic areas like the campus quad, dining halls, and the student union.
- Make sure that it's not too crowded or too fast-paced. You want the table to get noticed and you want people to have the time to stop and talk.
- Table in a variety of places and times so that you reach a diverse mix of people.

What Goes on a Table?

When a table is set up well, it can increase the number of people who stop and take action and can educate people by simply being visible. Be creative and your table will get noticed.

- Banners
- Posters
- Fact sheets
- Books
- Buttons
- Newsletters
- Calendar of events
- Sign-in sheets
- Interest cards
- The bigger the better!

Set Goals for Your Table

The average first-time volunteer will collect 20 petition signatures per hour. If the table is part of a recruitment campaign, volunteers will identify about 6 volunteers per hour.

Tabling Raps

Write a tabling script, or "rap," to use to quickly train people to table effectively. A basic tabling rap includes an intro question to grab passersby's' attention, a description of the problem the campaign addresses and what you're doing about it (see earlier section on how to develop your message), and information on how the person can help. It should always end with a request for a specific commitment, like signing a petition or filling out an interest card — or both!

Tips on Tabling

- **Make sure the table is highly visible and makes a good impression.**
  Professional materials on the table and a large poster or sign help make the table stand out and get people's attention.

- **Use the table as a base, not a barrier to hide behind.**
  Have more confident tablers "float" out into the flow of traffic to reach more people. Approach people, or you won't reach many people.

- **Tabling is a great activity for a first-time volunteer.**
  The best way to train them is to have them learn by doing. Have the person watch an experienced volunteer for a few minutes, then alternate and give simple feedback. Set them up with a partner or table near them so you can continue to give feedback.

- **Have fun.**
  Make the table fun and high-energy and it will attract more people to the campaign.

Sample Tabling Rap

Hi! Do you want free speech on campus?

Great. You can sign this petition to support us! My name is _____ and I'm with the Free Speech Coalition here at Penn State. I'm out here today because we're working to make sure that events, speakers and political discussions can happen all over campus—not just in the "free speech zones." So, sign our petition to Chancellor Smith.

Thanks! Additionally, we are always looking for people to volunteer on this campaign. If you would like more information on how to get involved, please just check the volunteer box, and we'll give you a call and let you know what we're doing this week.

Thanks so much! Have a great day.

In nearly every campaign, you'll want to meet with the person or persons who can change the policy you want changed—the decision-maker. These meetings can be used to persuade, to deliver grassroots support (petitions or personal letters) or to show the support of VIPs the decision-maker respects and will listen to. Regardless, you'll need to set the meeting up, prepare for it, invite the right partners to join you and execute the meeting well.

How to Setup a Lobby Meeting

Setting up a meeting with an administrator, legislator or other decision-maker is simple, requiring only some time and planning. Below are the basic steps.

- **Send in a request, by phone, letter or fax.**
  Your request should introduce who you are, when you would like to meet with the decision-maker, and the purpose of your visit.

- **Make a follow up call.**
  Many decision-makers will have staff that can assist you in scheduling.

- **Confirm the details.**
  You may need to call back several times to settle all of the details. You should always make a confirmation call the day before the meeting is scheduled, as many high-level decision-makers schedules change often.

Sample Lobby Meeting Agenda

- **Introductions.** Introduce yourself and your organization.
- **Thank them for meeting with you.** Thank them if they have been supportive of your issues in the past.
- **Introduce the issue you wish to discuss.** Present the best case for your position.
- **Get their feedback.**
  - If they are supportive – ask them to make a specific commitment.
  - If they are opposed or undecided, ask what would convince them.
- **Ask for their support.**
- **Create a plan to follow up.**
- **Thank them.**

Tips on How to Effectively Advocate for Your Position

- **Be prepared.**
  Be on time, have materials ready and be presentable. Have a pen and paper.

- **Have supporters who the decision-maker will listen to in the meeting, if possible.**
  Whether a constituent or an expert, supporters can lend credibility to your message.

- **Be conversational.**
  It's better not to read facts and arguments straight from fact sheets or notes. If you need to, take time to memorize your points beforehand.

- **Listen.**
  The person you're meeting with has important feedback for you and your issue. Give them time to respond – don't just talk at them.

- **Stay on message.**
  Have a basic message and stick to it.

- **Make a strong ask.**
  Ask them for their support clearly and directly.

- **Be honest.**
  Never lie or make up information. If a decision-maker asks you a question you don't know the answer to, simply say, "I don't know the answer to your question, but I will get back to you with the answer." Then, be sure to follow up and answer their question.

- **Keep it short.**
  The people you're meeting with have full schedules. Take enough time to make your case and ask for support, but don't take too long. Always thank them for their time.

- **Thank them.**
  Always send a thank you note when you meet with someone, have everyone that attended the meeting sign it.

- **Keep track of the results of the meeting.**
  Write down the details of what happened at the meeting to share with others from your coalition and other allies.

Good media coverage educates and influences thousands of people, helping win campaigns. Good media coverage doesn't just happen; it takes time, effort, strategy and, most importantly, building relationships with reporters and editors.

The Importance of Media to Your Campaign

- **Advances your goals.**
  Effective use of the media in a campaign is one of the most important tools you can use to achieve campaign victories.

- **Education.**
  Educates and influences opinion leaders and the public.

- **Builds Support.**
  Media builds support for your position on free speech by getting the issue in front of the public eye.

Principles of Working with the Media

- **Build strong relationships with media.**
  Getting consistently good media coverage depends on building a good relationship with reporters. Personal contact is important. Media outlets receive thousands of releases weekly. A good relationship will make your story stand out. It is one thing to know the names of top newspaper reporters in your area who cover your issues, and something very different to talk with them, get your calls returned frequently and happily, get called by them with tips on happening events, and relied on for the key quote that shows up in their articles.

- **Become a media junkie.**
  Read the campus and local papers whenever they come out, listen to the radio news shows, and watch the TV news when possible. This will provide a sense of what types of news each outlet tends to cover and which reporters cover each type of issue.

- **"Pitch" the story well.**
  An effective pitch – a one to two sentence description of the news item – is critical to getting good coverage. The pitch should quickly deliver the message and stress the elements of the story that the reporter will find newsworthy.

Before the Event, Send a Press Advisory

A press advisory is designed to inform a reporter or editor about an upcoming news conference or media event. The advisory should include the date, time, place and purpose of the event. If there are important speakers or exemplary visuals, the advisory should mention those. The advisory, however, should not tell the whole story. If it does, nobody will bother to come to the event itself.

At the Event, Have a Press Release

A press release is a way to get a clear, concise, standard message across to any and all interested reporters. It is designed to answer their questions before they are asked and to frame the issue as you want it to appear. Prepare a news release in conjunction with your news event. The release will give reporters who do and who don't attend a consistent story about what you're doing. You can also write and distribute a news release when something happens that is not visual enough for a news conference.

Make a Media Pitch Call

Reporters are busy and have a lot of potential stories being sent to them. Making a pitch call makes sure that your story isn't missed.

Sample Media Pitch Call

Hi, is _____ there?

Hi _____ this is Blair with the Free Speech Coalition at Tech.
How are you doing today?

Great! Do you have a minute or are you on deadline? (if so, Okay, what's a better time to give you a call back?).

I wanted to give you a heads up that next Tuesday we will be having a rally on campus to show how detrimental our restrictive free speech zones are to free speech on campus. We're expecting 300 students and will be presenting hundreds of petition signatures to Chancellor Smith.

The event will be on Tuesday at 10:00 am in front of the Student Union. I can send you over more information about the event. Does this sound like something you'd be interested in covering?

(They will likely be noncommittal and ask you to send the advisory/release over.) Great. I'll send you that—let me make sure I have the right email address/fax number...

Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions or want any more information. Look forward to seeing you there.

News conferences are one of the best ways to generate media. To decide if it's appropriate to hold a news conference, consider the following factors: Is your event newsworthy? Are you releasing new information? Are there good visuals (this is especially if you want TV coverage)? Is there a local angle? If you cannot answer "yes" to one of these questions, you might want to think again about having a news conference.

How to Organize a News Conference

- **Figure out the logistics.**
  Timing is critical to a successful event. Know the news deadlines in your city. In general, media events should take place between 9:30 and 11:00am. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and in some places Saturdays, tend to be best. Picking a location is a critical decision. The number one criterion is accessibility to the media. The location should provide good opportunities for photographs or be relevant to the subject of the press conference. Before choosing a location, check it out in person at the time/day of the press conference to check for crowds, noise, parking, availability, etc.

- **Get speakers.**
  It usually takes a few weeks to line up big name speakers. Leave yourself at least two weeks preparation time. Anybody who agrees to speak at the conference needs to know in advance who the other speakers are, what each speaker is going to say, and what questions to expect. Each presentation should be 2-5 minutes, each speaker should have at least one "quotable quote," and each speaker should be prepared to make his or her presentation without reading notes.

- **Prepare materials.**
  Prepare and send out a news advisory three days before the event. The advisory should briefly state the who, why, where and when of the event. Prepare a news release for distribution to members of the media who attend and to send to outlets that don't attend. A news release is essentially the story you would want the reporters to write.

- **Make sure the media turn out.**
  Even the best planned event is a flop if no media show. The only way to ensure good attendance is to follow up with reporters individually. Everyone who receives a news advisory should receive a personal phone call three days ahead, one day before the event, and the morning of the event. Keep good records on whom you call and what they say so you know with whom to follow up.

- **Be prepared at the event.**
  Make sure you arrive early. A greeter should be stationed at the door with a sign-in sheet and a packet for media (include a press release, brochure on your organization, a factsheet on the campaign and statements from speakers). No matter how many or how few people have arrived, do not start the event more than five minutes after the scheduled time. Introduce yourself and the speakers to be sure to keep things moving along. Leave up to 15 minutes for questions and answers. You may need to stick around to do interviews with various reporters.

- **Follow up with reporters.**
  Head back to the office to do radio feeds, answer reporters' questions, and email news releases to key people who did not show up. Call through to the reporters who did attend and find out if they will use the story. Call reporters who did not attend to interest them in the story and give interviews. Thank you notes with clips should go to all speakers. Record TV appearances and clip print stories.

There are two ways to get coverage in the opinion pages of your newspaper—opinion editorials and letters to the editor.

Opinion Editorials

Op-Eds are editorials that newspapers run on the opinion pages. Closely monitor the opinion pages to get a sense of the pieces run by the editor. Pay attention to any pieces on your issues.

How to Get Your Opinion Editorial Printed

The normal process is to submit a typed article (with an average length of 500-800 words) with a cover letter to the Editorial Page Editor. Then, follow up aggressively: Did they get it? Will they print it? Can you adjust it to their specifications? Keep in mind the usual protocol for submitting to sets of papers. If the New York Times runs a piece, other papers will run it. On the other hand, if it is run by a lesser known paper first, the New York Times won't cover it.

Tips on Writing a Good Opinion Editorial

- **Have a hook.**
  You've got to hook the reader – and the editor – in the first couple of paragraphs. Use an interesting anecdote, question, a provocative statement or a colorful quote. Editors often look for creative angles on a topic.

- **Get a co-signer.**
  Getting a coalition partner, VIP or legislator to co-sign can definitely help get coverage.

- **Use examples.**
  Make ample use of anecdotes and quotes; they keep the reader going.

- **Don't overstate.**
  Overstatement creates distrust in the readers' minds.

- **Show, don't tell.**
  Wherever possible, give facts or examples rather than using rhetoric. It's more convincing.

- **Back up assertions with facts.**
  And double check them. Make sure quotations are accurate – both the actual words and the context in which they are used.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are a great way to get easy media coverage for a campaign. LTEs are short (usually under 200 words), easy to write and have a good chance of being printed. Since the letters page is one of the most widely read pages in the newspaper, LTEs gets the message out to many people.

How to Submit a Letter to the Editor

- **Follow the process.**
  Most newspapers state their policies for submitting LTEs in the paper (usually on the opinion page). Make sure to follow their procedures exactly.

- **Follow up.**
  Follow up with the editor of the letters page to be sure he or she received the letter, that it meets their requirements and to ask when they are planning to print it. Make sure to have a strategy for who signs – whether it is a group, group leader, local official or an average student.

- **Have allies and volunteers submit letters too.**
  It is also frequently effective to send in letters from several people on the same issue increasing the chance that the paper will print one of them.

Tips on Writing a Good Letter to the Editor

- **Respond.**
  Respond to stories. Letters in response to stories that ran recently are more likely to be printed. Read the paper and watch for stories that relate to the campaign.

- **Find a hook.**
  As with op-eds, you've got to hook the reader – and the editor – right away. Use an interesting anecdote or question, a provocative statement or a colorful quote.

- **Use personal experience.**
  A good personal angle will make your LTE stand out from others.

- **Show emotion.**
  With LTEs it is fine to express feelings of anger or of frustration – but make sure you avoid overstatement.

- **Keep it short.**
  Short letters are more likely to be printed.

Endnotes

[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/02/12/ST2008021201428.html

[2] http://media.www.dailyemerald.com/media/storage/paper859/news/2006/05/17/News/Uo.Students.Discuss.The.Insurgent.Controversy.On.the.Oreilly.Factor-2011833.shtml?sourcedomain=www.dailyemerald.com&MIIHost=media.collegepublisher.com, http://media.www.dailyemerald.com/media/storage/paper859/news/2006/04/21/News/Uo.Withholds.Copies.Of.Insurgent-1964324.shtml

[3] http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/07/09/ahmadinejad2.html

[4] http://www.amazon.com/Free-Speech-101-Valley-Michael/dp/1886249318

[5] http://articles.lancasteronline.com/local/4/233952, http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/02/13/qt, http://www.omaha.com/index.php?u_page=2798&u_sid=10503884

[6] John Doe v. University of Michigan, 721 F. Supp. 852 (E.D. Mich 1989)

[7] *UWM Post v. Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System,* 774 F. Supp. 1163 (E.D. Wis. 1991)

[8] R.A.V. v. St. Paul, 505 U.S. 377 (1992)

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