

Earning Credibility: Intersections of Public Relations and Student Affairs

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Purpose of Session

To help you determine strategies to

- 1) understand the parent audience at their institution, and
- 2) gain trust among parents and be seen as experts, and
- 3) form meaningful relationships between parents and their institution for the purpose of supporting student success.

The target audience for this presentation included those new to the field and/or working within programs that are relatively new and in need of establishment as sources of expertise within the institution.

10 Pieces of Advice

- 1) Bring your A-game and Z-game
 - a. A-Game
 - i. The order in which information is learned determines how reliably it will be recalled. Information presented first is more likely to be committed to long-term memory.
 - ii. Orientation and summer programs before student leaves home are key time to communicate important messages to parents and earn their trust
 - b. Z-Game
 - i. Lasting impression
 - ii. Celebrate with parents and accompany them on milestones
- 2) Use your strengths in student programming
 - a. leverage support
 - b. demonstrate expertise
 - c. make efficient use of resources
 - d. Parents as participants in strong student programs when appropriate
 - i. New Student Convocation
 - ii. Acatoberfest during Family Weekend
- 3) Understand demographics of your audience
 - a. Campus partners to help you with this; admissions/recruiters, residence life, faculty, formal assessment
 - b. How does your audience differ from others on campus working with parents?
 - c. Support for special populations
- 4) Look for data in unexpected places
 - a. E.g. Campus Labs “Respond” or polling software

- 5) Diversity the people who deliver the messages
 - a. Campus experts in all areas that institution interacts with students
 - i. Panels, when selected and moderated well
 - ii. Faculty, residence life, commuter programs, student life, advisors
 - iii. “special writers” for newsletters, or interviews with campus experts
 - iv. students – especially with social media
- 6) Use social media analytics to know when parents want to engage
 - a. Facebook trends/topics at certain times of the year
- 7) Persuade campus partners to help
 - a. Invite stakeholders to events/programs where they can interact with parents together
 - i. Parent Chat
- 8) Listen
 - a. Develop empathy within the institutional for more active “listening” from the institution
 - b. Interact with audience in meaningful ways
 - i. E.g. Campus Labs “Respond” or polling software
- 9) Prepare for conflict
 - a. “Yes, and” improv technique
 - b. More information leads to teachable moments with parents
- 10) Transparency is (almost) always appreciated
 - a. Parents (like all of us) are good at “worst possible interpretation” if they don’t have enough information.
 - b. Transparent communication, especially when things go awry, goes a long way in developing trust
 - i. E.g. Parent Chat
 - c. Present facts that shed as much positive light on your institution as possible.

Websites:

www.marquette.edu/parents (Marquette Parent Program)

www.marquette.edu/osd/orientation/index.shtml (New Student and Family Orientation)