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CHARLESTON

Parent Listservs Connections or Chaos?



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THE BUFFALO NEWS 4/10/05

What is a listserv?

- A Listserv, or Listserve, is a method of communicating with a group of people via email. You send one email message to the “reflector” email address, and the software sends the email to all of the group’s subscribers.
- There are two different types of electronic mailing lists - one way announcement lists, where only the list owner can send a message or Discussion Groups, where any subscriber can post a message.
- Listserv software manages the subscriptions, handles bounces, and gets the email message out to small groups of 10 people up to very large groups of hundreds of thousands of people.
- Listserv vs. Facebook

Issues to consider

- What would campus leadership think?
- Would your IT area support a listserv?
- Does your campus have a designated parent services office?
- How would you market this to parents?
- Which area has the time to manage this?
- Who will be your air traffic controller?



Campus partners



- Campus leadership and faculty
- IT department
- Admissions
- Marketing
- Orientation (any family programs)
- Student Life
- Academic Support Services
- Any area that serves first year students

Personnel

- Considers parents as partners
- Understanding of multiple areas and services
- Has contacts on campus (faculty and staff)
- Exceptional written communication skills
- Diplomatic, patient, not easily offended
- Knows when to step in and when to let it run its course

Legal implications



- Moderated
- Unmoderated
- Accuracy of information
- Campus legal area
- Listserv agreement
- Ability to review postings or block
- Reserving right to unsubscribe

Marketing

- How will you market this to parents?
 - Campus marketing department
 - Other areas that communicate with parents
 - Departmental websites
 - Direct link to parent website on main page
 - During orientation (any family events)
 - Publications (fliers, family calendar)
 - Email, postcards, mailing
 - Word of mouth (parents will tell other parents)

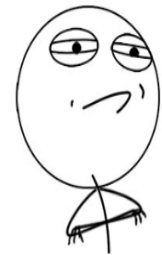
Managing an active parent listserv

- Archives
- Subscriber settings (unsubscribe, digest version)
- Parent email
- Parent webpage
- Keep a file of your best responses
- Find a champion among your parents
- Parent Support Network

Challenges (Chaos)

- Feeding frenzy
- Student privacy (FERPA)
- Delicate topics
- Focus on negatives (complaints)
- Misinformation, change in processes, time sensitive matters
- Parent vs. Parent (responding directly)
- Finding time to manage
 - Real time or digest version?

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED



Connections (Pros)

- Parents feel connected to the College
- Parents share information with their student
- Parents can support each other – been there - done that...
- Parents receive a quick response from administrators – they feel someone listened
- In times of crisis it can have a calming effect
- Minimizes calls from parents that go directly to the President or Department Chair

Summary

- Understand the purpose
- Be sure leadership is supportive
- IT has someone to assist you if technical issues arise
- Consult with your legal area
- Find the right staff to manage (suggest at least two people)
- Determine how you will promote this to parents, faculty, staff, and campus leadership

Helpful Resources

- ✓ <http://www.cofc.edu/families/>
- ✓ <http://www.cofc.edu/families/parentlistserv.php>
- ✓ <http://www.transitionyear.org>
- ✓ <http://www.Grownandflown.com>
- ✓ <http://www.collegeparents.org/>
- ✓ <http://www.collegetipsforparents.org>

Have questions?

You may contact us if you want to talk more about implementing this at your campus, would like to visit the College of Charleston to discuss this in more depth, or would like us to visit your campus to discuss this with you and your colleagues.

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