

An Example of an Outreach Model for the Academic Year: Creating Multi-Modal Outreach Packages

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Summary: Here's an example of an outreach model for the academic year which incorporates the web along with campus programming. The counseling staff created a year-long series of monthly multi-modal outreach "packages" composed of campus newspaper articles, web pages, and workshops/groups/campus wide events.

Stage 1: Planning the Packages and Selling the Idea to the Campus Newspaper

After meeting with the counseling center staff to plan the packages (composed of newspaper topics, web pages, and events) the Coordinator for Outreach and Consultation submitted a proposal to our campus newspaper editorial staff to write a monthly column sponsored by the University Counseling Center. The proposal also highlighted the fact that each article would refer readers to check out a corresponding UCC self-help web page as well as to attend a "live" workshop or group scheduled on that topic.

Stage 2: Writing Newspaper Articles and Web Pages

The Coordinator provided written guidelines for counselors on 1) writing newspaper articles and also 2) designing web pages. Over the summer counselors/psychologists each wrote their articles for the campus newspaper, 450-950 words in length. Each staff member also wrote a corresponding web page on her/his topic and planned workshops, groups or programs related to the topic. During the summer and over the academic year the Coordinator converted the staff's text versions of their web pages into HTML for the counseling center's web page before each publication deadline.

Stage 3: Publishing Newspaper Articles and Web Pages, Implementing Programs

The newspaper articles were published once a month during the academic year in a special "Campus Scene" feature of the newspaper, and the articles referred readers to check out our Counseling Center's self-help web page for assessments, exercises, and activities on that topic. The articles and web pages were timed to appear right before the corresponding workshop or program -- so they each served as advertisements for counseling center or campus-wide "live" programs. Links to both the articles and the web pages were included on our center's Current Events section of our web page. They were then housed in the Self Help section of our center's web page as permanent additions.

The Coordinator served as the mediator to make sure that counseling center staff met their publishing deadlines, in addition to soothing hurt feelings or making emergency phone calls as the campus newspaper tried to shuffle our publication dates around. The Coordinator also edited the staff articles and created the HTML documents.

Each month as articles appeared in the campus newspaper, the Coordinator put a newspaper in each staff member's mailbox and posted a copy of the article on our staff bulletin board. The Coordinator made sure to inform the front desk receptionist before each newspaper article was about to appear,

because the published articles usually resulted in increased phone calls from students asking about the up-and-coming programs!

Evaluation: Our efforts paid off in increased campus awareness of what we do, increased attendance for our programs, and additional psychoeducational material plus higher traffic for our web page. The counseling center staff felt inexperienced in writing web pages, so the Coordinator worked with each staff member each month to encourage, make suggestions, and edit their documents. Staff members were also concerned that if articles and web pages indicated the name of the authors, they would then be deluged with requests for services for their "speciality areas." The solution to this concern was not to specify the name of the author and instead to indicate that the articles and web pages were written by the "University Counseling Center." The campus newspaper editor appreciated receiving our articles and the Campus Scene editors often planned a two-page feature spread of other articles that went along with the "theme" of each of our counseling center articles.