

Eight Tips for Raising the Profile of Your Office (and you!) on Campus

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1. You work in higher education first, athletics second.

Whether you truly feel this way or not, taking this approach when interacting with virtually anyone outside of the athletic department is sure to pay dividends. Do you know your school's mission statement? Do you have an idea how your work can help achieve that mission? Working those and similar concepts into conversations with your school's president or other senior staff members is sure to impress.

2. No one knows what you do because you've never told them.

Think about it. If you think your colleagues - who you interact with every day - in the athletic department have only a partial understanding of your job, its purpose, and its value, why would a faculty member, someone working in the school's development office, an admissions officer, or perhaps even the president have any idea? As you begin to interact with more people on campus, don't be shy about talking about your job and what value your position and you, personally, add to the school. But, remember ...

3. There are likely a large number of faculty and staff on campus who feel just as overworked as you do.

Notice the word "feel." Whether or not they actually ARE as overworked as you is of little consequence. Making it a contest won't win you any friends. Take an empathetic approach - offer to help out with other campus events or projects in those (admittedly rare) cases when time allows and you may find some folks who are happy to return the favor.

4. Get involved!

This can mean a lot of things. Some large scale ideas include serving on your school's staff council or staff senate or serving as an advisor for an active student club. I've met far more people across campus in my two years on staff council than in the nine years prior. If you're looking for a shorter-term commitment, let your Human Resources department know that you are ready and willing to serve as a staff representative on a senior staff position search committee. Thanks to my time on a search committee, I began a good relationship with our new Dean of the College before she was even offered the job.

Even if you cannot commit to things in the long term, you can volunteer to assist at commencement or other events as mentioned above and - I'd strongly advise everyone to do this - attend any open campus forums or any open sessions with presidential or senior staff candidates your school brings to campus.

5. Brag, with tact.

It's becoming cliché, but it's still true - the only people Athletic Communications professionals are bad at promoting are themselves. Did you receive an award from CoSIDA or your conference? Let people know - that may belong in a school newsletter, e-mail blast, alumni magazine, etc. Fortunate enough to receive a glowing e-mail from a parent, alum, student, prospective student, or fan? Don't just copy your

athletic director on your response - include someone outside of athletics as well - the president (or someone in his or her office), the vice president of communications, the admissions director, alumni director, etc., depending on the circumstance.

Brag about your staff, too! Whether that's full-time assistants or interns or even your student workers, nominate them for awards and promote their success. Our school began a "student employee of the year" program this year and one of my student workers was named as a finalist for the award. Their achievements reflect on you.

6. Meet as many people on campus as possible, face-to-face, at least once.

How many non-athletics staff and faculty members on your campus do you know by name only - via e-mail or phone call? Now, how many of them have you actually met? In most cases, nothing boosts a professional relationship more than going from "that guy who sends out e-mails about the sports teams" or "that gal who is always needing a new computer" to an actual, living, breathing person. As a side benefit, you may also make some friends who don't wear polo shirts every day. Imagine that!

7. Take a campus tour - both virtual and physical.

This one may sound like it's intended only for people starting at a new institution. It isn't. How well do you really know your campus and school? Take a self-guided tour on a nice summer day - or, heck, if you've made friends with an admissions counselor from your face-to-face meetings, see if he or she will give you one. Of course, your school is more than its buildings. Learn about it - and keep the knowledge fresh. It's easy to click delete on those mass campus e-mails, but some of them contain some fairly significant information. Being familiar with your campus and at least somewhat familiar with each area of your institution (admissions, development, academics, etc.) will enable you to be a more active participant in cross-campus discussion.

8. Utilize your new connections.

It's probably not hard to visualize how an improved relationship with your school's alumni office, admissions department, student affairs staff, faculty, and others can benefit both your Athletic Communications office and your athletic department as a whole. This is especially true for smaller communications and athletic departments who don't have anyone within their own shop as skilled in a certain area as someone else on campus, but it can also help larger departments develop some cross-campus (CoSIDA buzzword alert) synergy.

For your own personal, professional development, there are a host of ways to benefit from building relationships across campus. From pushing for an assistant to seeking a promotion to considering a career move across campus - in all of those cases, a good reputation for yourself and for the value of your work will come in handy. Even if you're applying for a job at another school, imagine how your resumé will stand out with a school president, vice president, or other key non-athletics reference listed on it?