



COMMUNIQUE 1:

Engaging Task Force Members

On our first TA call, we discussed the advantages of engaging task force members in the planning and implementation of your College Goal Sunday marketing efforts. Effectively organizing and motivating your task force members can help you to best utilize the limited time and resources that are available to you leading up to your event. This communiqué provides suggestions on how to engage your task members and highlights resources available to you as you plan for a successful College Goal Sunday event.

Assembling Your College Goal Sunday Task Force

If you are recruiting a new task force or additional members, think about who you need to help you with your campaign. A strong task force is composed of a core group of talented and committed individuals. Recruit members with skills and experiences important to the success of your campaign. You should also consider recruiting task force members that currently work on related missions and/or work with the target population (e.g., media, event planning, youth perspective).

You don't want to have so many people on your task force that you can't manage them or keep track of their work. Create working groups from the task force that can focus on specific areas of the task force's work. The chair of a particular working group should sit on the task force and report on the working groups' progress. Working groups may work best with four or five members and will focus on a specific area such as outreach strategies and PR; budget; fundraising; volunteers; site selection, etc. Look to your existing task force members and/or community contacts to recruit members for your task force. Guidance counselors, TRIO, GEAR UP, adult education, financial aid administrators, teachers, parents, students, professionals in fields like PR, and community leaders are all great potential task force members.

How Do You Engage Task Force Members? The Bus Metaphor

Engaging your task force members can be summed up in the "bus metaphor." The bus represents the framework for a well-organized and successful College Goal Sunday campaign. In order to get the most out of your task force, you have to *get the right people on the bus*. Your task force should have diverse areas of expertise – consider bringing on a media expert, local community leaders with great connections, a parent active in school system, and teens in your target audience groups. Members with diversity of talent and experience combined with available time and demonstrated commitment are key to a productive task force. Make sure to include those organizations that work directly with the target population.

Next, *show your task force members that the bus is going in a good direction*. Do this by sharing stories about the purpose of College Goal Sunday (give them a vision). And make it clear that you are implementing and organizing a plan to host a successful event. The best way to

demonstrate this is to use their time wisely. Be conscious of how often you contact them and make it clear what you need from them. Giving your task force members projects they can get excited about can make their work product much better. Also – your task force members should be given tasks they have the ability to complete. Think about their talents and schedules and assign responsibilities accordingly.

And finally, give your task force members *the fuel they need to move the bus*. Be available and quickly respond to questions from your task force. Make sure they know what resources are available to them. Providing this information upfront can make both your jobs easier. And keep up the communications – ask for their feedback along the way. Finally, rewarding your task force members shows them that you recognize their hard work (see ideas below under Challenges).

Challenges

We heard at the summit and on the TA calls that there are several common challenges when it comes to engaging your task force members. Here are the answers!

1. *How do you keep task force members on task?*
Provide a solid work plan with a clear timeline, deadlines and narrowly defined responsibilities. Having these details in place for each working group will help the task force stay on track. Give members tangible assignments. And remember to provide them with contact information to reach you when they need to – and respond to them in a timely manner. Hold a monthly meeting with your task force members face to face rather than relying solely on email or phone communication.
2. *How do you identify when task force members need your help?*
If you have task force members that are overcommitted, not communicating or providing the help you need, you may need to step back and get to the root of the problem. By simply picking up the phone or meeting with someone in person, you can clarify expectations, remedy misunderstandings and remove any other barriers that may exist. Sometimes volunteers who really believe in a mission will over extend so make sure they understand the time commitment.
3. *How do you reward task force members, especially in a large state where all members cannot meet together?*
A hand-written note is a great way to thank your task members for their support and commitment. Also, be sure to do little things that will mean so much to them – invite them to events, introduce them to the students and parents. Thank them for their work on a regular basis and recognize them in newsletters or publications. Send them pictures from the event and if possible, give them College Goal Sunday trinkets (e.g., sweatshirt, bracelets, pin). You might also hold a celebration at your home or a colleague's home after the College Goal Sunday event to honor all your volunteers.

Interested in Learning More? Check Out These Resources

The College Access Marketing Toolkit created by Spitfire and NASFAA for the College Goal Sunday summit provides tips, resources and templates you can use throughout the planning process.

To help recruit members for your task force, look under Tab #5 in the Toolkit:

- Building Youth Advisory Groups – Provides a framework for identifying and recruiting youth to serve on your task forces or advisory groups.

- Reaching Parents – Outlines strategies for reaching parents, a key demographic to include on your task force.

What can you ask the working groups of your task force to take on? In the College Access Marketing Toolkit, look for these resources to share with your task force.

- Sample Messages and Talking Points (Tab #4) – Outlines the process for developing smart messages and provides sample messages for five audience targets.
- Creating a Database (Tab #5) – Provides tips on developing a database of students, parents and partners important to your College Goal Sunday campaign.
- Media Tips (Tab #6) – Highlights tips for pitching media and provides sample media advisories and PSA pitches.
- Hiring PR Counsel (Tab #7) – Includes a sample request for proposals, tips for reviewing PR firms and criteria for determining which firm to work with.

If you don't already have the College Access Marketing Toolkit, visit the College Goal Sunday Web site (www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/support/presentations.asp) to download a copy.

Next week's communique will focus on hiring PR counsel – do you need PR counsel and if so, how does it work?