



The University of Arizona  
Parents and Family Programs  
Parents & Family Association Grant Proposal

Student Affairs Division  
Communicating to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Students with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tools

Respectfully submitted by  
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## **Overview**

Student Affairs is a division of extraordinary impact and one of the largest, most productive and diverse in the UA community. Our work contributes to student learning and ultimately, to student retention. We employ over 3,000 individuals (more than 2,000 of whom are students), and we operate or occupy over 40 campus facilities. Each year our staff has millions of interactions with students, parents and Tucson community members through hundreds of exemplary and award-winning programs and services.

Student Affairs is sweeping in scope; departments within the division include

- **Enrollment Services** – Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, Recruitment,
- **Student Living, Health and Wellness** – Associated Students of the University of Arizona – ASUA student government), Campus Recreation and Campus Health Services, Residence Life, Arizona Student Unions, Career Services,
- **Student Life** – Dean of Students, Student Media, Military Sciences, Community Center,
- **Student Learning and Academic Partnerships** – Student Learning Center, Transitions Center, Disability Resource Center, Veterans Initiative, Testing Center.

## **Abstract**

Students are increasingly nervous and skeptical about the costs of a college education and are understandably looking to be as efficient and purposeful during their time here at the UA. In Student Affairs (SA) we do everything we can - given current budget constraints and staffing challenges – to get students the information they need to be successful, which we define as graduation.

Adding to this nervousness is the constant messaging students hear about this department being eliminated, that college being merged with another. Will their classes still be available in order for them to fulfill their degree requirements? How do they find a tutor for help in that class where they struggle?

We seek to provide this information – and more – using student voices, reaching and informing the broadest group possible. The avenues through which students receive information now are multi-faceted and media-heavy. Merely putting a website online and expecting students to find it is no longer a productive model. As a division, partnering with other areas across campus, we have experienced great success using this approach.

## **Statement of need**

It's a lofty goal, but we are bold to say that our audience is virtually every student at The University of Arizona, whether they are a "traditional" undergraduate student, an international student, a transfer student, a graduate student, a first

generation student, or a veteran. They will be served by learning answers to the “nuts and bolts” questions they ask every day. We know some of these questions, and they are as varied as:

- How do I find a job on campus – or after I graduate?
- Is tuition going up again? What are the new fees?
- How do I GRO (grade replacement opportunity)?
- How do I transition to off campus housing?
- I’m failing a class; how do I find a tutor in this area?

The University of Arizona is a large campus, and students must learn to navigate the channels and often confusing systems that have been put in place. However, if we speak to them in their language – namely, using students themselves – they are much more likely to learn where they need to go, what they need to do, who they need to see, to facilitate any given process.

We want to provide students with answers to their questions in short, 60-90 second informative multi-media formats. Our objective is that this media is easily attainable, relatively entertaining, clearly understandable – and updated frequently to reflect accuracy. Providing this content is challenging, but is beginning to percolate on campus regardless.

### **Narrative**

Various departments across the Student Affairs division are already using video and audio to promote events and services: the UA BookStores, Campus Recreation, Arizona Student Unions, Student Union Dining Services, Career Services, etc. Unfortunately different types and levels of equipment are being used and no official, sanctioned collaboration is in place, so the approach is understandably disjointed. Without the benefit of an overall communications master plan, we’ve missed opportunities and have become very segmented as a result.

Our staff in Student Affairs marketing has demonstrated an ability to take on – and deliver successfully – just such myriad messaging, when we coordinated a new presentation at New Student Orientation in Summer 2008. What previously had been called the “Student Services” Presentation (because of the diversity of areas represented) morphed into “Becoming a Wildcat.”

“Becoming a Wildcat” incorporated videos of current students explaining how they used the services provided by these units: parking and transportation, dining and meal plans, CatCards, residence halls. Students themselves discussed what campus safety meant to them, as well as academic integrity and campus involvement. The presentation began with an introduction by the student body president, welcoming the students to campus and generating a sense of excitement as they joined their new Wildcat community.

This presentation's success was not limited to physical attendees: since the videos were also posted on iTunes U, YouTube and Facebook, students could view them once they'd left campus and were home again. The student body president video even went "viral", receiving over 14,000 hits (most of the other videos were viewed anywhere from 500 to 2,000 times).

(The orientation electronic checklist, which was shared with students at orientation, features different versions of the video, and may be viewed at: <http://www.becomingawildcat.arizona.edu>)

The success and collaboration of this one endeavor led to extending the "brand" of "Becoming a Wildcat". Two weeks after the beginning of the fall semester, we sent new students an email with a survey embedded within asking them "What Kind of a Wildcat are You?" Their responses led them to a variety of Student Affairs and academic areas – the better to connect them with their new community, and to make them aware of what was available for them.

The rate at which the students opened this email and completed the survey (often several times) remains the highest ever, and was therefore used by Recruiting this spring to send to prospective students, using the name "What Kind of a Wildcat Will You Be?"

In order to produce this orientation presentation, each participating department contributed approximately \$500 to pay a Union staff member and two students to film and produce the videos. Without these resources, this presentation would never have gotten off the ground.

Using this kind of approach, we propose hiring three students a semester and providing them the equipment needed to continue to produce this content. A full time staff member – an assistant director or higher – will coordinate efforts across the division to ensure consistency and appropriateness of messaging. Collaboration with University Communications will also be explored in order to most efficiently use resources and avoid duplication in those cases where certain media can be shared.

An added benefit of web-based media is the ability to track user patterns: Google Analytics enables us to identify quickly which method of delivery is working (email, web site, video), and then approaches can be adjusted accordingly. Because we use students, we know the voice in these messages is authentic, and we can also determine whether the need even exists to produce a piece of media.

We already collaborate and use existing University resources such as the Office for Student Computing Resources (OSCR), checking out video equipment from them when needed. However, we are often competing with film students' needs, and don't want to interrupt their academic projects. If funding is approved, we

also propose collaborating with University Communications, using their state-of-the-art editing suite.

**Itemized budget (for AY 09-10)**

Three students @ \$1,500 per semester \$9,000  
Students are constantly approaching us to participate in projects such as this because of the experience they gain. However, without the ability to compensate them, we are at a decided disadvantage.

13" Macbook pro laptop \$1,500  
Use of the Mac platform is the most user friendly when creating multi media.

Video camera \$2,000

Audio:

Two shotgun microphones (\$200 ea) \$400  
Two boom poles (we now use a broomstick handle) (\$100 ea) \$200  
Two lav microphones (\$75 ea) \$150  
Two hand held microphones (\$75 ea) \$150

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Total: \$13,400