



School of Journalism and Mass Communication

TO: Brian J. Buchanan, 1 for All coordinator / Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University

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SUBJECT: Report for **1 for All** PR Campaigns grant

Thank you for awarding a 1 for All grant to the Spring 2020 PR Campaign, the capstone course for PR majors, at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. The following provides an overview of the students' efforts and the development for public relations campaigns designed to raise awareness and understanding of First Amendment freedoms among Kent State students. The Spring Campaigns class also partnered with the Media Law Center for Ethics and Access, which is housed in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC) at Kent State University. Please note: campaign execution was scheduled for late March/early April; however, the university transitioned to remote course delivery in mid-March because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PR Campaigns students were divided into groups or "agencies" for the campaign project. Three professional advisors, who were alumni from the public relations program, were assigned to each team to help guide them with the plan development. At the end of the semester, each team shared their research and campaigns to a judging panel comprised of the client and senior public relations professionals. Based on a review of a campaign summary and participation in a virtual Q & A virtual session, the judges selected the Starling Relations team as the team who delivered the most effective recommendations. The Starling Relations' campaign summary supplements this report. The summaries of the other teams are available, if interested.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

The four teams conducted nearly 50 in-depth interviews with Resident Assistants (RA's) and Student Success Leaders, students in marginalized communities, Generation Z experts, Kent State faculty professors, and First Amendment scholars. Each team conducted a focus group; audiences included student leaders, students representing various majors, and students within underrepresented groups. Other primary research included a digital survey among 286 Kent State students representing more than 63 majors, and 100 intercept interviews among Kent State students.

Research themes focused on a lack of awareness and understanding surrounding First Amendment issues and the Media Law Center for Ethics and Access. Obstacles included the complexity of the First Amendment, lack of meaningful conversations about First Amendment rights, lack of education and awareness of First Amendment resources around campus, and a low sense of security related to the protection of those freedoms and the institutions that uphold them.

Some of the key primary research findings included:

Students

- Majority of students felt that the First Amendment is important to them; however, research indicated a lack of understanding about the First Amendment freedoms.

- Students who participated in the research struggled to name all five rights. The rights more likely named included freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of religion.
- Students expressed an interest in learning about their rights, especially if educators are able to explain why each right is important to college students.
- Many students raised concern with hate speech and a need for restriction of offensive speech, but all participants agreed they would not restrict their rights, even to protect themselves from hate speech.
- Underrepresented communities feel more threatened to express First Amendment freedoms than those of the majority population.
- Underrepresented communities showed a potential to use the First Amendment to resolve issues they see in their communities. The First Amendment is a way to express themselves and explain their identities, but they fear retaliation, arguments and hate speech in response.
- Students were unaware about resources Kent State offers to learn more about First Amendment rights or obtain legal advice about utilizing First Amendment rights.

Faculty

- Generation Z experts and professors emphasized the importance of peer-to-peer learning, telling us that sometimes student leaders have high credibility.
- Students prefer interactive, incentive-based work.

Some key secondary research findings included:

- An analysis of previous 1 For All campaigns conducted at other universities provided guidance on best practices, including social media campaigns and videos, for a First Amendment education campaign. The Center's programming is an opportunity to reach students and build brand awareness.
- The Theory of Self Authorship, a higher education theory, suggests that students will approach their peers for new information before consulting university staff.
- The Two-Step Flow communication theory suggests opinion leaders, such as RA's or SSL's, learn and disseminate information to others. This research shows the importance of student influencers in educating the largest population possible about the First Amendment and the Center.
- Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) found that Kent State has policies that infringe upon First Amendment freedoms. FIRE gave Kent State a yellow rating (based on a red to green scale) for flyer policies that make it harder for students and organizations to get information out to campus.
- The Knight Foundation finds Gen Z worries about the protection of hate speech and a general lack of knowledge of their rights.
- Freedom Forum Institute research indicates freedom of speech is the most widely recognized First Amendment freedom.
- Gallup and The Knight Foundation research indicates 70% of college students preferred an open environment for speech rather than free speech zones.
- A 2019 College Pulse study states that 64% of heterosexual students believe hate speech should be protected, while 61% of gay or lesbian students believe it should not be protected.
- The same study states 57% of African American students believe that people should be more careful to avoid offending those with different backgrounds.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Primary audiences in the four campaign plans were

- Student leaders including resident assistants, student success programs, marginalized communities, student media
- Students of marginalized communities (Students for Justice in Palestine, Black United Students [BUS], PRIDE!, and Spanish and Latino Student Association, etc.)
- Students at regional Kent campuses in communications and business management majors
- Kupita/Transiciones members (African American, Latinx, Hispanic, Native American and Multiracial students)

- International students
- Kent State Office of Student Affairs and the Office of the Dean of Students

Secondary audiences included:

- FYE instructors and other targeted faculty members
- First Amendment opinion leaders at Kent State
- Targeted student organizations officers and advisers (Black United Students, Chinese Student Organization, Diversity in Nursing Association, International Student Association, International Student Council, Kent African Student Association, Kent State University Global Ambassadors, Kent Indian Association, Sister Circle, The Society of Global Cultures)
- Undergraduate Student Government (USG)
- Student media and regional media, including FOX 8, Record Courier and Akron Beacon Journal

PLANNING

The four teams developed goals focused on educating audiences about the First Amendment freedoms and available campus resources to learn about these freedoms; motivating students to become First Amendment advocates and engaging students to exercise their rights.

A range of objectives, messaging were recommended to accomplish these goals. The following highlights some strategies:

- Collaborate with Residence Services, Student Success Programs and student media to inform students about the First Amendment and World Press Day.
- Establish partnerships with on-campus organizations and centers that also aim to educate students about their civil rights through face-to-face engagement; include a focus on underrepresented student communities.
- Foster education around basic First Amendment information by using relatable and simple presentations that create curiosity and allow students to further understand their rights and the role of the First Amendment.
- Generate accessible and relatable multimedia content through the Media Law Center that covers First Amendment rights on campus.
- Use digital communication channels to educate student leaders on their freedoms and encourage them to engage with the Media Law Center for Ethics and Access.
- Use face-to-face communication to educate participants about the importance of First Amendment freedoms.
- Provide a platform for students to display positive speech on campus by creating an interactive experience, which will incorporate the practice of the First Amendment.
- Enable students to practice their First Amendment rights by providing a real opportunity to create change on campus.

Unfortunately, the Campaigns teams weren't able to implement tactical recommendations since the university transitioned to remote learning in March. We plan to work with the Kent State Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society (PRSSA) and the Media Law Center for Ethics and Access to implement some of the tactics during the 2020 -21 academic year. Ideas that will be further explored include:

Digital Resources for Media Law Center for Ethics and Access

Create a branding package that will focus on enhancing current components of the Center as well as creating new elements.

- Evergreen talking points to use at events
- Creation of universal resources; such as, infographics to have available at the Center ([Click here to view infographic](#))
- Updates to the website's content ([Click here to view webpage design mockup](#)); include an FAQ about First Amendment freedoms on the website. ([See example.](#))
- Social media posts will be designed to inform audiences about events and resources and engage or answer questions regarding the First Amendment. Engagements and impressions of posts will relay how well social media posts perform. ([See mock-up posts.](#))
- Blog posts will be produced at least once a month on topics concerning the First Amendment freedoms in the Kent State community and around relevant current events topics. This will allow students to have easy access to information, ease the workload on the Center and create an easy process for measuring student interactions. ([Click to review ideas for blog topics.](#))
- A video series will feature professors with scholarly knowledge about the First Amendment and media law to motivate students to study current and historical trends and offer students a quick access FAQ resource. ([See example of a video.](#))

Five-Minute Freedom Videos

Create six five-minute videos. The first five will focus on one of the five freedoms in the First Amendment. Each of these videos will include a basic definition of the freedom and illustrate examples and cases surrounding the freedom. Through our primary research, we learned that students understand the freedoms better when it's connected to an event. The sixth video will be an overview for student leaders that covers all the freedoms. SSL's will play one video a week for the first five weeks of the semester and engage students in a discussion afterwards. RA's will be encouraged to show the videos at a hall event within the first five weeks of the semester. Students who watch the videos will be encourage to share a fact learned in the video and enter a raffle.

[Click here to view a condensed video that could be posted on social media.](#)

Toolkits and Guides

Research showed Gen Z likes incentive-based engagement, which supports the need of marketing materials that will educate and engage students. The creation and distribution of a First Amendment handbook is recommended. ([See draft of handbook](#))

Partnerships and Presentations

Create "First Amendment Ambassadors" among student leaders. The Ambassadors will help promote First Amendment education and engagement through the Center by producing blog posts and giving presentations.

Organize presentations with students of underrepresented communities to increase understanding about First Amendment freedoms and First Amendment educational resources. ([See an example of a handout.](#))

Host brief educational presentations. Gen Z has an average attention span of eight seconds and little to some knowledge of the First Amendment. Five for Five presentation will be designed as a brief introduction to explain the five rights of the First Amendment without overloading students with too much information to the point of losing interest. The presentation will review the five rights, common misconceptions of the First Amendment and First Amendment policies at Kent State. Before and after the presentation, students will be asked to write down the five First Amendment rights on a piece of paper to track retention.

Change My Mind” is an event based on the famous meme to engage students in an interactive presentation of how to properly express each freedom of the First Amendment. Students who approach the table will be asked to debate topics that range from lighthearted to more serious and political. Following the debate, students will be debriefed on ways to express and practice First Amendment freedoms, the available resources on campus and have the chance to share their personal experiences.

Partner with USG and other interested organizations to create events for civic holidays and nationally recognized days, specifically World Press Day 2021. Since World Press Day 2021 is May 3 (the day before May 4 commemoration), the Center can partner with the May 4 Center in collaboration with the commemoration. The Kent State Library also celebrates Constitution Day in September, which is another First Amendment related celebration. During these events, student ambassadors will engage with students with holiday-themed activities and by giving out a free t-shirt, sticker or button promoting existing Media Law Center events and First Amendment resources.

BUDGET

Expenses included costs to conduct research, create communication elements and print and deliver campaigns casebooks.

Photocopy/print/bind	\$945.51
Mailing	\$110.80
Student functions (focus groups)	\$107.94
Total expenses:	\$1,164.25

Remaining grant fund: \$835.75, which will be used to implement some of the tactics during the AY 2020-21.

A supplemental report will be forwarded when these activities are completed.