

PRIMER: OCMPA EXTERNAL RELATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN FY 2022

Introduction

This document will serve as a primer for developing a strategic plan for staff in the Office of Communications, Marketing, and Public Relations at Baruch College as the College seeks to advance key priorities with external stakeholders, including government officials and agencies at the federal, state, and local level, businesses and corporate partners, nonprofit/community-based organizations, and Baruch alumni.

The document provides an overview of current External Relations activities, identifies unmet communications needs and gaps in strategic planning for these activities, and proposes solutions for meeting them.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

OCMPA continues to cultivate relationships with legislators and other elected officials serving in public office in New York State and New York City. These relationships serve to help Baruch College obtain funding for capital projects and to identify key legislative proposals/priorities impacting public education in general and The City University of New York specifically.

The College has internal processes for pursuing potential sources of capital funding year after year and has built strong relationships with relevant public officials, especially key decisionmakers in the State and City legislative bodies.

The College has also cultivated special relationships with alumni serving in public office at the State and City level, leveraging the Marx School's excellent roster of elected alumni — a roster that has more alums than many peer colleges and universities throughout New York City and New York State.

OCMPA has worked diligently to introduce President S. David Wu to these “legislative alumni” and will continue to arrange meetings until the President has met with all of them. This is a high priority goal for the upcoming Fiscal Year, the current status of which can be found in tracking documents maintained by the previous Director of Government Affairs, Eric Lugo. This document will be updated regularly as meetings are arranged.

Strategic Gaps and Unmet Communications Needs

- Current government relations activities revolve around securing funding for the College's capital projects and, to a certain extent, leveraging Baruch's strong network of “legislative alumni” to place current students in internship positions and to help secure post-graduate positions working for elected officials and government agencies.
- There is a lesser focus on cultivating relationships with elected officials outside of the budget process and these career placement programs. Efforts to leverage these

relationships to further other College goals and initiatives — such as deepening partnerships with community-based organizations, corporate leaders, and businesses operating in New York City — are scattered and lack the necessary strategic planning, staffing plans, and operational guidance.

- There is also a lesser focus on government agencies, their relationship to Baruch, and their role in the regulatory environment in which the College operates.
- OCMPA is currently seeking to fill this strategic gap, and further plans for a more comprehensive approach to government relations are forthcoming.
- On the communications front, there are untold stories about Baruch's government relations activities and its relationship to public officials, and OCMPA has the opportunity to define a narrative encompassing these activities for the first time.

Proposed Action Items

- Review talking points for President S. David Wu's meetings with elected officials. Consider developing additional points that emphasize the College's eagerness to deepen partnerships with businesses and community-based organizations.
 - Develop Baruch News items on the following topics, with associated social media messaging and multimedia elements (including visual/graphic design elements for Baruch's homepage):
 - Baruch's track record producing elected officials.
 - Baruch's work to place students as interns and graduates as employees in public offices and government agencies.
 - Baruch's role in the City's recovery, with a focus on concrete work done by current students and/or alumni.
 - Review currently existing op-ed for President Wu to understand why it failed to gain traction with mainstream outlets. Decide how best to utilize material as is. Consider how to adjust messaging for future efforts.
 - Publicize President Wu's work with the Center for an Urban Future. Consider how to repurpose this messaging, perhaps in an op-ed.
 - Take steps to understand how Advancement/Alumni Relations tracks graduates working at government agencies and in public offices — beyond just those who are elected officials. Seek to understand if internship programs focused on alumni legislators are replicated with government agencies.
 - Further prioritize government relations and opportunities to work with elected officials going forward.
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NONPROFITS AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

OCMPA regularly communicates with community-based organizations to share information about events at Baruch, including infrastructure and capital projects (that may disrupt the neighborhood with noise or traffic pattern changes) that will impact the College's environs.

These groups, including several Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the local Manhattan Community Board Six, are invested in the College's success, given the impact that higher education institutions have on urban environments (as employers, real estate managers, and drivers of infrastructure investment at the hyperlocal level).

Other community-based organizations include nonprofits, advocacy groups, and think tanks. One example of a recent collaboration with such an organization is President Wu's participation in a Center for an Urban Future report describing how New York City will recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

These collaborations benefit the College in multiple ways: community-based organizations tend to be highly trusted sources of community news and information, providing important third-party validation; OCMPPA can reach new audiences to communicate relevant institutional messages. Ultimately, these collaborations enhance Baruch's reputation within the local community and burnish our New York City "mover and shaker" credentials with key stakeholders.

Strategic Gaps and Unmet Communications Needs

- The current relationship between OCMPPA and local community-based organizations is largely one-sided and singular in focus: OCMPPA communicates updates on infrastructure projects and leadership changes in order to take advantage of the organizations' networks and audiences to disseminate news to stakeholders that may be more difficult to reach on our own.
- There may be opportunities to deepen our collaborations with these groups by proactively inviting them to the table to discuss their wants and needs — how can Baruch benefit these groups in a tangible way?
- Deeper collaborations would open the door for further messaging about Baruch's role in shaping the local community and New York City more generally.

Proposed Action Items

- Review local organizations and past work to identify potential future opportunities for deeper, more substantive collaborations.
- Survey current work with community-based organizations — likely students work with these groups all the time, as do faculty and staff. Gain a deeper understanding of Baruch's existing ties to the community.

- Review organizations on distribution lists for weekly newsletters and consider expanding as appropriate.
 - Consider opportunities for media exposure on work with community-based organizations.
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BUSINESSES AND CORPORATE PARTNERS

A key component of President Wu's long-term vision for the future of the College is deeper collaborations with businesses and corporate partners, particularly in New York City.

OCMPA has only begun to fully engage in strategic communications activities on this point, and more work is needed to sketch out any kind of campaign.

However, current resources do exist: Fred Burke, David Shanton, and Janet Rossbach are among those working on strategic partnership initiatives and are potential media spokespeople/VIPs for Baruch News items, social media posts, or multimedia productions related to this messaging.

Furthermore, a "Hire Baruch" campaign is in development, which is meant to emphasize Baruch's standing as an urban university graduating the next generation of leaders in New York City.

Strategic Gaps and Unmet Communications Needs

- OCMPA has yet to define its role in President Wu's larger visions for corporate partnerships for the College but has risen to the challenge and seized opportunities to raise President Wu's profile and communicate the fulfillment of his vision — although ad hoc, the efforts have been well-coordinated and successful.
- OCMPA must be more proactive in these efforts and seek opportunities — including awards and speaking engagements for the President — to distribute institutional messages via press releases, Baruch News items, and social media.
- Putting President Wu into the mix at these types of events will open the door to future collaboration. Consider the President's participation in the upcoming BofA Neighborhood Builders Selection Committee — these opportunities are key moments to distribute institutional messaging on his plans to enmesh Baruch into New York City's business and corporate scene. Securing speaking opportunities at conferences and award events will ensure that Baruch, through the President, is a visible, top-of-mind institution for potential corporate partners.
- OCMPA must also ensure that the institutional messaging around business and corporate partnership is included in communications with other external stakeholders — as noted previously.

Proposed Action Items

- Arrange meetings with Fred Burke, David Shanton, and Janet Rossbach to discuss ongoing efforts to develop strategic partnerships.

- Identify speaking and award opportunities for President Wu.
- Complete a Baruch News item on Alex Lertzman's capstone marketing class as a proof of concept for future messaging.
- Continue to maximally engage with opportunities that present themselves, such as the AABDC dinner and City & State leadership lists.
- Include business and corporate partnership messaging in communications to other key stakeholders, including government officials, alumni, and community leaders.