

NUS2U

A NEWS SERVICE DESIGNED FOR TODAY'S UA STUDENT BODY

**A grant proposal
from the
UA Office of University Communications**

Submitted by:

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Overview of University Communications

We are the UA's official story tellers. While marketing offices have the task of telling the world who we are through brand management efforts, communicators tell the world what we're doing.

We are 12 professionals (including administrative support staff) who are responsible for the university's overall efforts in worldwide media relations, strategic message management, internal communications, crisis communications and executive communications.

The office is led by Paul Allvin, associate vice president for communications. Prior to his 2004 arrival at the UA, he was communications director and chief speechwriter to former Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano. Prior to that, he was national director of communications and marketing for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America.

Currently, it is organized into two units – media relations, led by Johnny Cruz; and campus communications, led by Pila Martinez.

Its news products include:

- UANews.org, the university home for news
- UANow, the UA's daily e-newswire of top stories we've produced
- UA In The News, a daily digest of global news coverage of the UA
- Lo Que Pasa, the weekly faculty and staff e-newsletter
- PodCats, a weekly audio podcast program that profiles top UA talent

Summary of NWS2U

The University of Arizona continues to use 20th century technology and processes to attempt to inform 21st century students about vital news in their world. As a result, they are coming of age in an information-driven world without thumbtip access to vital news that shapes their daily lives.

NWS2U will change that, by delivering student-produced news to UA students using technology platforms and environments that they use daily for communication, socializing, and education. Our office intends to collaborate with marketing efforts by the Division of Student Affairs to deliver seamless and savvy marketing and communications programming to today's UA students.

There's not a university in the country offering this service to their students, and so the Office of University Communications aims to make The University of Arizona first and best in class for modern student communications.



Why students need NWS2U

The simple answer is, news students need about the UA and the world around them is not offered in ways that match their current lifestyle.

The Arizona Daily Wildcat offers online and print versions of its news content, but it is hit-and-miss on offering content about what readers need to know as UA students. In addition, the Wildcat's print run has dropped in recent years, and newspapers have stayed on the racks throughout the day despite ever-increasing student enrollment. In 1991, the Wildcat printed 21,000 copies for a student body of 34,500, which were on and off news racks by 11 a.m. Today, the Wildcat prints about 18,000 copies for a student body of 38,000, and many copies remain on racks throughout the day.

While more students may be getting their news online from the Wildcat's Web site, they still are required to seek it out and browse through the news, despite carrying handheld technology that meets their expectation that information will be delivered to them.

UANow does push news to students via their university email accounts, and it is popular despite its shortcomings. We sign every student up to receive UANow, and invite a one-click process to unsubscribe if they don't want to continue receiving it. Currently 30,500 students have kept their subscription, a very high number considering that the content is not geared toward them, and not always relevant to them (versus faculty or outside audiences). What's more, a high number of students continue to receive UANow even after they graduate.

Last fall University Communications surveyed all students to ask how they want their news and where they go to get it. We learned that they valued the simple email format of UANow, but they wanted more news relevant to them.

NWS2U – the working title of this initiative – aims to recruit talented students to build this new platform for student news. It will have two essential elements: content production and content delivery. We envision having students drive the direction of both elements, determining much of the content that is produced, and shaping how that content makes its way to students.

Content will come in the form of written, audio and video news stories by and for students. We will recruit student talent to produce this news who possess both a strong backgrounds in writing and visual communications and a strong desire to get relevant, on-the-job training in this arena.

How we deliver this content will be determined by a collaboration with student workers and Student Affairs Marketing, and appropriate platforms will be developed to ensure that *how* we deliver the news is as on-the-mark as *what* we produce.

At the outset, we see **NWS2U** pushing content to students via email, Twitter feeds and Facebook activity – but student feedback could take us in a different direction, and a key



to the success of this initiative will be to build a simple system that nonetheless reflects current student user preferences.

Budget for NWS2U

University Communications already has server capacity to push news content out to the student body. And we can purchase technology to equip students with the simple tools they'll need to gather, assemble and distribute news content. What we need is resources to attract students to this project to help us and to gain valuable career experience. This is where a Parents Association grant would be transformational.

We need one line-item: \$15,000 to provide five students for one year of \$1,500 semester stipends. Understanding that Parents Association grant-making guidelines don't include personnel expenses, we do not propose to hire students (thus require permanent sources of funding). Rather we wish to use stipends as this year's source of student support. Future avenues of support could include internship credit or other incentives to help, but we need to get dedicated students in the door, and their clear preference is to receive stipends over in-kind consideration.

We would engage five qualified students to work for \$1,500 per semester, producing multimedia content of NWS2U. They would be expected to produce a minimum of two stories per week each. In addition, they would evaluate news we produce for our general audiences, as well as video content generated by Student Affairs Marketing and other university sources, to identify additional stories are appropriate to send to students via NWS2U. The goal is to provide students with the richest possible mix of relevant and compelling content.

University Communications will furnish a multimedia editing suite to bring news stories together, both by purchasing an estimated \$2,000 in audio/video and computer equipment, and by collaborating with Student Affairs Marketing on re-tasking existing equipment that both offices current use.

We will also provide professional supervision and mentoring by members of our staff, to ensure they are learning and improving as they go.

Gauging success

Success in a program of this nature is easily defined. Students will vote with their feet (or their thumbs) by either continuing to receive NWS2U content, or by opting out and giving negative feedback on what they are receiving. Also, we will know that we're hitting the mark when we see students refer to NWS2U in online communities, and come to our office to requesting that we include news about them or their projects.

We will measure success by how many students continue to receive NWS2U by year's end, by monitoring online chatter, and by surveying them to identify what they like and don't like about the service.

And we will happily report all of these findings, along with a financial summary, back to the UA Parents Association.

