

Communications & PR Plan 50th Commemoration of May 4, 1970

revised 7/23/2018

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Background..... 2

 One Time Opportunity..... 3

 Overall Approach..... 3

 Audiences 3

 Acknowledging Sensitivities 4

 Key Messages 5

 Internal Challenges 5

Building External Awareness 6

 Requirements 6

 Possible Channels for Awareness 6

Coordination with Other Kent State University Events 7

Web Site 8

Social Media 10

External Media Relations 11

Internal Communications 12

Video Needs 13

Committees 14

Introduction

This document is meant to serve as a starting point to identify and discuss the numerous communications needs for the 50th commemoration of May 4, 1970. Working through this document will help everyone to focus and agree upon a course of action for the communications plan.

The 50th commemoration of the events of May 4, 1970, offers an opportunity to attract positive, worldwide visibility for the university and the way it has dealt with the legacy of those events. Potentially, international attention will be focused on the university as the 50th commemoration gets closer and we must be prepared for the challenges and opportunities that come with this event.

It is our goal that this document will help identify the challenges and the opportunities with this event and serve as a starting point for a strong collaborative effort between University Communications and Marketing and the Office of The President.

Background

One Time Opportunity

The 50th commemoration of May 4, 1970, is different than any other event for Kent State University to date. It is both the commemoration of a tragedy and the recognition of a significant milestone in American history that continues to resonate around the world.

We must be thoughtful, focused, and strategic without ever being perceived as exploitative. We must encourage meaningful dialogue and open communication instead of trying to deliver a certain perspective or narrative.

The 50th commemoration of a tragedy or a historic event is unique. In some ways, it will be more important than the next big commemoration (the 75th commemoration) because it will be one of the last major milestone commemorations when survivors or witnesses are still alive.

Overall Approach

Since this event has national, historic significance, long-lasting political and emotional sensitivities, we must approach this event differently than many other university events. Our overall approach will be:

- 18+ month outward bound PR
 - Traditional media outlets;
 - Non-traditional media outlets;
 - Pitch stories to a variety of publications and TV/radio shows;
 - Target new channels that are in line with our audiences & constituents;
 - Selected ad-buying both online and traditional print;
 - Solicit PR and awareness support from celebrities and well-known supporters.
- Target high-level organizations & media personalities for their support;
 - Tie-in to their existing channels and audiences;
 - Garner visible support from national “champions”;
- Heavy social media and targeted online distribution;
- Prepare media kit with key messages and info about 50th;
 - Digital distribution;
 - Physical distribution;
- Pushing of content to create higher levels of awareness (greater frequency the higher significance);
- Coordination with alumni communications; and
- Respond to inward-bound inquires

Audiences

In developing all communications and PR activities we must keep in mind the following audiences:

- **May 4th “Community”**
Remembering the events and honoring those who lost their lives or were wounded are the most important factors to this group.

- **Faculty and Staff**
Will likely view the 50th as a “transition” to the future where past events play a foundation for current initiatives.
- **May 4 Task Force**
Since approximately 1975 this student group has been dedicated to keeping the commemoration and the events of May 4, 1970, alive and remembered within the university.
- **City Residents**
Many differing opinions, some will have concerns about the events. Others will want to make sure that the “story” of the impact on the city is not forgotten.
- **Current Students**
Integrating something relevant to issues in today’s society and/or current famous people will likely bring them to the event.
- **Alumni**
Want to support good causes but looking for something not as “sensitive” as the actual events. They may be more interested in supporting the legacy that grew out of the events.
- **Political Leaders**
Depending on political position, may view commemoration as a way to help define issues or their platform.
- **Survivors**
These were the students that were on campus during the events of May 4, 1970, but were not physically wounded.
- **Current and Potential Donors**
Interested in supporting good causes and the legacy that grew out of the events.
- **Media**
Looking for historical importance, local angle, or a newsworthy story about attendees, “healing”, and a relationship to current issues or “what’s next?”

Acknowledging Sensitivities

Communications surrounding the tragedy of May 4, 1970, are complex. There are many interpretations and points of view about the events. The numerous complexities and sensitivities surrounding May 4th have been explored for years.

People’s feelings and views run deep and the need for a thorough understanding of the events, the aftermath, and the legacy is necessary. While numerous sensitivities must be acknowledged, some of them include:

- Decades of frustration and/or mistrust against the university (but the relationship has been getting better the last several years);
- Frustration of the building of the gym annex (still many people upset about this);
- The use of certain words and phrases such as “Healing,” “Martyr,” “Unity,” etc.;
- Acknowledging the work of the M4TF and volunteers over the years;
- A feeling of “ownership” of the event by certain groups or individuals;
- A desire for ongoing and continuous updates about the plans for the 50th;
- Wide range of political viewpoints that still play into sensitivities about certain topics and speakers in today’s news climate;

- The events that took place here are different than some of the more recent student/school shootings;
- Being mindful that any communications/marketing/PR efforts must not look exploitive; and
- Remembering, that above all, students lost their lives, were wounded and lives were forever changed by the events of May 4, 1970.

Key Messages

As we develop key messages for the commemoration we must always be mindful of the audiences and their sensitivities while striving to communicate our vision for the future. Some of the key messages include:

- Messages relating to the 50th commemoration goals and strategic pillars;
- The impact the events of May 4, 1970, had on American and world history;
- Freedom of expression is one of our core fundamental rights as a citizen in the country;
- We must be tolerant of all points of view;
- The legacy of the events of May 4, 1970, will guide us going forward; and
- The voices of May 4, 1970, will continue to inspire future generations and remind us of the value of meaningful voice.

Internal Challenges

There are numerous internal communications issues we must consider in implementing an event like the 50th commemoration. Some of these include:

- *Decades of numerous views, opinions, controversies, and sensitivities.* The events of 1970 and the aftermath have been debated and challenged for almost five decades. There is no one way to tell the story.
- *Building awareness of the event.* The magnitude and significance of the event will require a well-planned and sustained communications and public relations /outreach campaign for 18+ months. This will ensure that proper exposure and awareness have time to build in the media and public outlets.
- *Content Experts.* We need to ensure that the people involved are well-versed in the history of the events, and the many different views & interpretations of the legacy of May 4, 1970. The history and content of May 4, 1970, is deep and demands resources with a solid knowledge of the events, people, and legacy.

Building External Awareness

This event is unlike anything Kent State University has done in the past. It is also a unique historical event that had a major impact on not only former students, staff, and faculty, but affected people around the world. As such, the historical significance of this event requires a well-planned and sustained external awareness campaign.

We must actively pitch stories and solicit awareness from the media. Our goal is to get national coverage that precedes the 50th commemoration weekend. Coverage after the event is good, but the coverage before the event will help to drive attendance, fundraising, and other key items.

Needs

- Awareness must be continuous and ongoing for at least 18 months before the event;
- The momentum must build over that timeframe with updated communications, press releases, social media postings, interviews, and events;
- We must reach out to non-traditional forms of media as well as traditional;
- We must engage our alumni and encourage them to participate in raising awareness;
- We must work with corporate partners and sponsors to tap into their existing channels and audiences;
- Great models for us would be the recent Selma 50th and MLK 50th; and
- The 50th commemoration will be managed differently than previous May 4 commemorations.

Possible Channels for Awareness

The sustained communications campaign requires that we get placement and media exposure/awareness in the following types of vehicles:

- National TV News;
- Local TV News;
- National magazines (with enough lead time for them to consider “special editions” devoted to the May 4th legacy);
- Specially developed TV shows & TV documentaries (CNN, PBS, etc.);
- Travel magazines and airline magazines;
- Selected print publications;
- Co-ops with our partners and sponsors;
- Major social media push and engagement on various levels;
- Areas outside of Ohio;
- Pitching ideas to specific opinion leaders, journalists, etc.;
- Event listings in publications; and
- Online blogs and opinion-leader websites.

Our goal is to get maximum exposure for this event and that will require a minimum of 18 months to ensure placement and repeated awareness builds with the above listed (and other) media outlets.

Coordination with Other University Events

As with any academic year, there will be numerous other events occurring on the Kent State University campus that require proper attention, thoughtful planning, and considerable resources.

It is important to carefully coordinate activities so events are not competing for the same space and resources so that events can thrive simultaneously.

As part of the coordination process through the Office of the President, we will work to ensure that all events are coordinated and planned to the best of our abilities so that they do not interfere with other major events.

Web Site

Many people will first look for information about the 50th online via a website and through social media. The website for the 50th commemoration should provide a positive, educational and engaging platform for the commemoration. It must also provide an interactive experience that goes beyond just supplying information.

In addition, the website will be a key component of the planned museum project and educational outreach. For the museum project, the website will be connected in real-time to the kiosks and allow for uploading and cataloging of oral histories that could be used as the basis for the “May 4 Virtual Commons” and “May 4 Stanzas” components.

For the educational outreach, it will be the point where middle school and high school teachers can locate May 4 instructional/teaching resources, download them and register for teaching summits.

Additional Requirements

The basic underlying technology of the site should include (at a minimum):

- An open-source, browser-based content management system that will work on both Windows and Mac-based systems (e.g., Drupal or WordPress);
- The content management system will allow:
 - Creation of new pages;
 - Adding, deleting, and editing of content;
 - Adding and deleting images and graphics; and
 - Text formatting (bold, fonts, bullets, etc.)
- A design that easily adapts to a variety of display options (e.g., mobile, tablet, desktop, etc.);
- Multiple levels of users for administrators, approvers, editors, etc.;
- Workflow email notifications, with status and approval levels;
- Content syndication and sharing of content on social media platforms;
- Multiple language options;
- Multiple page layouts;
- Multiple image and file format upload capability (.pdf, .doc, .jpg, .mov, etc.)
- Ability to enter and manage SEO and other metadata;
- Ability to set a unique page name for each page on your website;
- Creation friendly URLs to improve SEO;
- Enter start/end dates can automatically be set to post or remove content from the site;
- Develop custom navigation and menus for all pages;
- Ability to select content items or pages to have them appear on other pages (e.g., “news” or “special updates” etc.);
- Select which pages to index (for search), appear in the RSS feeds, or show up in the site map;
- Make content available for sharing;
- Tag pages or files to create an easy-to-use filter for your users. They will be able to quickly find the products or services they need;
- Integrate easily with social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, and YouTube;

COMMUNICATIONS & PR PLAN

- Version History;
- Oral History Vault for collecting and cataloging audio and video submissions about May 4th, 1970;
 - Visitors must register to submit an oral history;
 - Visitors can submit an oral history either in the form of an audio file, video file, or written file;
 - The system must allow for each file to be categorized and tagged;
 - Submissions will not be visible on the site until they are reviewed;
 - Submission requires CAPTCHA verification;
 - Visitors can view/browse histories using a variety of search tools; and
 - Visitors can also share a story to social media;
- Ability to have a section that will serve as an online reference resource for middle school and high school teachers across the country;
 - Ability to register and download lesson plans on a variety of topics related to May 4, 1970;
 - Teaching materials;
 - Testing materials;
 - Video resources;
 - Suggested reading list;
 - Interactive exercises for students; and
 - A form for teachers to schedule a “Facebook live” session with someone from the May 4 Speakers Bureau and to schedule field trips for a tour of the Visitors Center and submit photos or leave comments about their class instruction.

Note: A detailed requirements document is available for website needs.

Social Media

Social media will play a large part in the coverage and awareness of the 50th commemoration. For these requirements, social media refers to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Social media accounts need to be managed coordinated to ensure consistent messaging across platforms. We anticipate the following activities:

- Regular posts (average of 3 per week) on some social media with updates, historical facts, photos, interviews, etc.;
- Live events (TBD) throughout 2019 - 2020;
- Cross-posting and outreach awareness on appropriate sites/pages/accounts, etc. to drive traffic to social media channels;
- Structured strategy to increase LIKES and build community; and
- Posts targeted to specific audiences (general public, media, past students, etc.).

External Media Relations

During the year of the 50th commemoration (and leading up to it), there will be a significant amount of media interest and interest from film and documentary production companies. We look forward to working with University Communications and Marketing on the vast media opportunities that will arise during the year. Below are thoughts and suggestions regarding external media relations.

News Media

- A record/log of all media inquiries will be kept (containing all pertinent info) and forwarded to the Project Manager for the 50th;
- All media on-site for the commemoration weekend could be credentialed. We want to record all media on-site (for measurement/analysis afterward) and could assign a student ambassador to each media organization;
- There will be scheduled press events throughout the weekend (and possibly the year) available only to credentialed media;
- Copies of requests for interviews will be sent to the Project Manager for input and review; and
- Designated areas will be established for the media for the commemoration events and other scheduled press events.

Documentaries and Film Projects

- All documentary and film companies must submit required paperwork; and
- Requests will be sent to the Project Manager/Office of the President for review and coordination.

Internal Communications

Equally as important as external communications will be internal communications. We must keep faculty, staff, and students up-to-date and informed on progress and events related to the 50th commemoration.

We need our internal audiences to be champions of the event. To do that, they must have a solid understanding of our goals, objectives, and vision for the commemoration. Many of the faculty will be involved in creating programs that will impact students throughout the year-long observance.

We have the following primary internal audiences:

- Faculty and staff;
- Current students;
- Key administration; and
- May 4th key constituents.

Each of the above audiences will have different communications needs that must be addressed through planned and timely updates. Specific messages and timing will be developed as the details for the overall year-long observance are finalized.

Some suggested methods for internal communications:

- Targeted meetings with key groups, committees, and staff;
- Weekly newsletters/president's update messages to the campus community;
- Special email with monthly updates starting in 2019;
- Scheduled meetings; and
- Others TBD.

Video Needs

Video will play an important part in the overall communications of the 50th commemoration. Our goal is to use video as part of the advanced awareness campaign and also for documenting oral histories and commemoration events. Here are some of our video needs:

- Short video segments (about 1-2 minutes) discussing the importance of the 50th commemoration for use on social media;
- Short video segments that focus on, and draw awareness to, different aspects of the commemoration;
- Interviews with key constituents that focus on the 50th, its place in history, and the legacy (not looking for “re-caps” of May 4, 1970);
- Collection of oral histories (perhaps scheduled times to invite public in to discuss/film their stories about 1970); and
- Interviews with current students about the legacy of May 4, 1970, and activism today.

Committees

We must build on the communications of the past and the collective input that has been received leading up to the 50th commemoration. As we move forward with the commemoration planning, we will be introducing messages that need to be discussed and considered carefully to ensure all sensitivities are acknowledged.

There will be a variety of committees developed for the 50th commemoration, to ensure diverse input and feedback in all areas including planning, program development, educational outreach, volunteers, and communications.

We anticipate these committees to begin meeting around the start of the Fall 2018 semester.