

Rural Guided Pathways Project, Institute 2

Communications Workshop: When, Why, and How to Bring Internal Audiences Into the Conversation

Three Key Takeaways

- 1. Focus on actions, not awareness.**
- 2. Don't seek buy-in; involve people in decision-making.**
- 3. Start with Why.**

For more information about using internal communications to advance change, see *Inside Story*, <https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/insidestory>.

To see examples of colleges addressing central guided pathways issues, see the Voices of Pathways film series. Its five films are useful for starting conversations about pathways work. Each film is about 10 minutes long. <https://www.pathwaysresources.org/voices-of-pathways/>

Team Time Exercise

In this exercise, you will begin to craft a plan for engaging your internal audiences in your pathways work.

Andrea Sussman will be holding office hours in November and December. Please complete this exercise and send it to Andrea (andrea@nextchaptercomms.com) before your office hours. It will be the starting point for that conversation and next steps. (Andrea will send an email about scheduling office hours after the Institute.)

Use the chart on page 4 to develop the key elements of your internal communications plan. The first five columns of this chart are the same as the exercises you did at Institute 1. Build on that work as you complete this chart.

- **Column 1.** Write one or more goals for your pathways work. Use one row for each goal. At least some of your goals may be related to sharing data from this Institute.
- **Column 2.** Identify the audiences you must engage to meet each goal. Be specific. You may find that you expand your audiences as you work through the next few columns. For example, if you begin with “faculty” as an audience, you might find that you want to separate full-time and part-time faculty or make other distinctions. (You also may find it helpful to use one row for each audience. If you do that, simply repeat your goal in Column 1.)
- **Column 3.** Write the actions you want each audience to take. Be specific and revise your list of audiences as needed.
- **Column 4.** Write what your audience needs or wants to happen. What are their biggest priorities? What are their concerns about their role at the college or upcoming changes? You may not be able to address their priorities and concerns, but being aware of them — and acknowledging them when appropriate — can help you engage them in the work.
- **Column 5.** Identify key messages for this audience. Remember that effective messages are the intersection of Column 3 and Column 4.

- **Column 6.** Identify communications strategies, tactics, and tools that can help you engage your audiences.

Examples of Strategies

- Focusing on the Why before the What
- Developing and using feedback loops
- Helping audiences get more comfortable with data
- Making pathways conversations part of ongoing efforts
- Sharing data widely

Examples of Tactics

- Addresses by the president to large groups
- Book clubs
- Brown-bag lunches
- Campus conversations
- Conversations at existing meetings (e.g., department meetings and all-staff meetings)
- Special events held specifically to address pathways

Examples of Tools

- Blogs
- Closed social media groups
- Emails (from the president, the pathways team, and other messengers)
- Podcasts
- Print materials (posters, hand-outs, pocket-sized cards)
- Social media graphics
- Video
- Webinars
- Website

- **Column 7.** Determine who will be responsible for making this work happen and set a deadline. Note that being responsible for the work does not mean doing all of the work. It might mean identifying the right people to do the work, bringing people together, making sure people have time to do the work, reminding others of deadlines, and so on.
- **Column 8.** Determine how you will get feedback from internal audiences on this work as well as how you will share feedback with others, including what you heard and how you are acting on it.