

University at Albany
School of Public Health
Prevention Research Center
A CDC Funded Center for Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health Promotion Research

Strategic Communications Plan

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I Communications Plan

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Prevention Research Center (PRC) at the University at Albany, State University of New York is one of thirty three centers across the United States, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The University at Albany Prevention Research Center was initially funded in 2002 and its focus surrounds the prevention of chronic diseases. Current funding has been awarded for 2004 – 2009. Since the establishment of the first Center in 1986, the number of centers has steadily grown and they have become an important tool in the CDC's effort to lead the way in prevention research.

This center is guided by a Community Advisory Board (CAB), a group consisting of local stakeholders in the health community. In addition, each core project has/had a local community steering committee, focusing on the particular project and community involved.

To date, UAlbany Prevention Research Center faculty has completed three research projects and a fourth one is underway. This new core project, being conducted in conjunction with NY Parks and Trails, is designed to eliminate barriers to regular, sustained physical activity in a rural community by establishing a year round walking program for adults: trail walking in warmer weather and indoor walking in predetermined school buildings in colder weather. It is anticipated that this program design will be implemented in a total of six rural communities: two each year for the next three years.

Not surprising with a Center this young, there is little recognition in the Capital District, outside the SUNY community and Community Advisory Board affiliates, of the existence of this center and the work being done. Furthermore, the establishment of a center identity both within the Capital District and among the national community of PRCs has been hampered by the lack of designated staff to the Center. While the PRC's leadership has remained stable since its inception, an imminent change in leadership at the School of Public Health could also impact the operation of this center.

The UAlbany Prevention Research Center's leadership recognizes that it is less well known than its more longstanding counterparts across the nation. This communications plan identifies ways of increasing awareness both

within the professional community and in the local community, of the work that is being conducted here.

In the long term, positioning the UAlbany Prevention Research Center as a trusted source of prevention related health information serves to solidify not only the continued existence of the Center but also will serve to enhance the reputation of the School of Public Health and that of the University itself.

II Communications Plan

GOALS

The communications plan will support the goals of the center established by the faculty/staff. Support is specifically designed to increase awareness of the center and enhance understanding among targeted audiences of the research and other activities taking place. Within the professional world, this means communicating UAlbany's work to the public health research community throughout the nation and to add to the body of knowledge in the research community about increasing physical activity among a rural population.

Scholars are accustomed a certain language in the description of their work and the research staff at this PRC is fluent in this specialized dialect. In order to impact the behavior and overall health of consumers, however, this work must be translated into a language more accessible to the average person. This communications plan addresses both the professional arena and the media serving the everyday person.

Communications goals of the UAlbany Prevention Research Center for 2005-2009 are:

1. Increase awareness of the work of the UAlbany Prevention Research Center among the other PRCs nationwide
2. Create awareness of the UAlbany Prevention Research Center in the public health community at the local, regional and national level
3. Position the UAlbany Prevention Research Center in the media as a CDC sponsored and trusted source of health related information about the role of physical activity in preventing chronic disease
4. Educate the Community Advisory Board on the work being done in this Prevention Research Center as well as similar projects being done in other PRCs across the country
5. Develop recognition of the center and its work among legislators in order to influence policy at the state level and solidify funding
6. Initiate a program to inform the public about how to prevent chronic diseases and reduce the impact of those diseases

Short -Term Goals

1. Create package of materials that introduce the Prevention Research Center to outside audience(s)
2. Identify audiences and establish links with these groups
3. Connect with local print media and obtain at least one article on the UAlbany Prevention Research Center
4. Enhance the diversity of background and expertise on the Community Advisory Board
5. Establish monthly electronic communication with Community Advisory Board members to increase their understanding of the work of this and other Prevention Research Centers in the nation

III Communications Plan

AUDIENCE

	Primary Audience	Secondary Audience
Core Project	Community Advisory Board	Public Health Professionals-local/state
	Other Prevention Research Centers	Consumers
	Schools of Public Health	
Research Related to Core	Community Advisory Board	Other Prevention Research Centers
Core Project Recruitment	Consumers	Local Public Health Professionals
Consumer Oriented Health Message	Consumers	Media
Sustainability	Elected Officials-local/state	Consumers

IV Communications Plan

STRATEGIES

I Creating an Identity

Capitalizing upon the link with the CDC is an important tool we can use to enhance our reputation as a trusted source of health related information. CDC is a highly recognizable and trusted organization and this center's link to the CDC adds enormous support to the notion that our information is reliable and legitimate. This link should be tied to our center's name and identity. Furthermore, the use of acronyms, while efficient for our internal communication, hampers recognition of our center in the outside world. It is important therefore that we identify ourselves as the Prevention Research Center (not the PRC) in all communications.

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By utilizing this name in our external communications we continue to foster recognition of the importance of the work conducted here.

II Strategic Planning

It is essential that regular meetings be established in which the faculty/staff communicate their work to the communications coordinator. Through communicating in detail the nature and progress of their work, the communications coordinator will be able to tell their story effectively.

Key messages will be crafted by working in collaboration (faculty and staff) to ensure that these messages are consistent with the work being conducted. The messages will be reviewed annually to insure that they remain pertinent and on target. All communications will be in keeping with these messages and designed to enhance these messages.

Draft Key Messages:

- It is possible to reduce barriers to physical activity for people who live in rural settings.

- With properly constructed programs, consumers can incorporate daily physical activity into their lifestyle and this will achieve improved health of participants.
- Incorporating regular physical activity into one's life will result in improved health.

III Media Relations

Communications Coordinator will monitor media stories that reinforce the key messages and bring pertinent ones to the Community Advisory Board. Coordinator will identify available local media outlets (newspapers, in-house publications, radio, TV) in communities in which research is being conducted to promote interest in participating in the established walking programs.

Coordinator will pitch appropriate opinion editorials and feature stories to press as they are developed.

Coordinator will position designated spokespersons as experts and therefore reliable sources to the media.

Media coaching will be provided for spokespersons to boost effectiveness of their message.

Coordinator will draft and send media news releases at strategic points in the project, such as kick-off and completion.

IV Advertising and Marketing

Following the identification of the primary audience, the coordinator will recommend appropriate communication tools for the center—newsletter, e-communication, or monograph.

Coordinator will work with a designer to develop the concept, copy, layout and design for the materials and elicit articles of interest for it from appropriate staff.

Coordinator will oversee the production and dissemination of the materials. Future discussions can be held on the value of a social marketing campaign should funds become available.

V Communications Plan

ACTIVITIES

2005-06 Establish infrastructure of communication (Completed)

- Hire Communication Coordinator
- Enhance diversity of Community Advisory Board
- Establish research focus/plan/evaluation
- Develop communications plan
- Establish monthly communication with Community Advisory Board
- Meet with University press office to coordinate effort

2006-07 Develop an awareness within the professional community of the UAlbany PRC profile and work

- Establish key messages with research group
- Present key messages to University press office to insure messages are consistent with University mission
- Identify key audience(s)
- Develop external communication device—newsletter/e-communication/monograph series
- Focus communications on research and professional practice community
- Attend regular meetings with research team so they can communicate the details of their work to enable communications coordinator to tell their story
- List local print media and become familiar with their print opportunities
- Become familiar with specific community in which core project is taking place—participants, stakeholders, media
- Help community steering committee plan/coordinate recruitment campaign for the core project
- Develop list of other print opportunities—faith based publications, organization newsletters, health and aging organizations

2007-08 Translate research findings and disseminate to a general audience

- Continue to familiarize with specific communities in which research is being conducted in this year

- Work with core research staff to identify opportunities for print exposure
- Prepare press advisories/releases on Prevention Research Center work as projects reach significant milestones
- Build a bank of individual stories that tell their experience in/impact of the research project
- Work with Continuing Education on a topical T2B2 broadcast
- Work to place health messages in health related consumer magazines that are tagged with this Prevention Research Center's name

2008-09 Expand campaign further to general consumer and to local policy makers

- Develop new package of materials that highlight the accomplishments of the Prevention Research Center
- Develop understanding of legislative/policy issues that could be positively impacted by work of Prevention Research Center
- Arrange meetings with local/state legislative staff (health subcommittees) to present package and highlight importance of continued funding
- Strategic positioning of Prevention Research Center's accomplishments in support of legislative agenda