Fell Hall Call to Action Assignment (Com 110)
The purpose of the Fell Hall Call to Action (the School is in Fell Hall) assignment is to provide a way for COM 110 students to positively affect their community while implementing the lessons already learned and reflecting on this experience later on in the semester while learning about persuasive and group communication. Although this assignment has been employed for several years to support a wide variety of causes, this specific assignment outlines a food and clothing drive to benefit the Salvation Army and Center of Hope outreach programs. The assignment was originally created by Alauna Akins who currently serves as Dual Credit Coordinator for Heartland Community College in Normal, IL.

Objectives

This civic engagement assignment is intended to help students reach the following goals:

- To increase students’ awareness of various needs in their community.
- To increase students’ awareness of their potential positive impact on their community.
- To further develop students’ research skills in terms of finding credible information from a variety of sources.
- To practice the skill of producing messages that are responsive to the concerns and interests of others.
- To sharpen presentation skills, both verbal and nonverbal.
- To practice cooperative group skills (collaboration, compromise, assertiveness,) and conflict management strategies when necessary.

The Fell Hall food and clothing drive consists of six phases (dates are provided based on a fall semester):

1. Planning: The groups will focus on their own parts of the project to prepare for the event (August 31st – September 9th).

2. Priming: The week before the collection, priming efforts will focus on advertising, hanging fliers, and media coverage (e.g., newspapers, TV, & radio, and classroom visits) (September 9th – September 13th).

3. Collecting: Supplies will be collected in COM 110 classes and common drop-off points. Tallies will be taken to keep track of sections’ participation in order to determine the winners of the COM 110 War (September 14th – September 18th.).

4. Advocating: Participate in ISU’s Social Issues Fair and advocate for your cause (September 16th).

5. Delivering: The supplies will be transported from Fell Hall (September 18th).

6. Reflecting: The class will have the opportunity to informally and formally reflect on the overall success of the drive (September 21st).
Groups
The class will be divided into four groups. Each group will be responsible for their share of making this project a success. Each group will have the opportunity to create messages as well as to present to an audience of some kind. Students should choose their group preference based on their skills, interest, and future career choice (since they will be producing pieces that will potentially go into a portfolio for an internship or job interview).

The *Research Group* (6 people) will be responsible for coordinating the pamphlets and materials that will be distributed and presented to the COM 110 classes. This group is also responsible for contacting Reggie the Redbird for a quad appearance at the Social Issues Fair. Additional responsibilities include:

1. Create the comprehensive fliers that will be distributed to COM 110 sections detailing the family we are helping as well as the larger issues at hand. This should be done in black/white for printing purposes, but contain as much information as possible to inform students. The fliers should also be visibly appealing.
   - Date Due: Wednesday, September 9th
   - Point Value: 40
2. Create the certificate for the members of the winning sections. Create a separate, more professional version for the instructor.
   - Date Due: Monday, September 14th
   - Point Value: 10
3. Utilize resources to help spread the word to the student population. This group will also contact Reggie the Redbird and arrange for him to appear on the quad on Sept. 16th. Members of this group will create a flyer that can be distributed to faculty encouraging them to come to the Social Issues Fair as well as PowerPoint slide(s) that can be uploaded on Fell Hall digital displays.
   - Date Due: Wednesday, September 9th
   - Point Value: 10
4. Contact local stores and retailers to solicit donations (gift cards for families). Keep track of all communications with these vendors to get credit for your efforts (you should write down times/dates called; keep copies of emails, etc.)
   - Date Due: Begin contact Monday, August 31st; turn in correspondence Wednesday, September 16th.
   - Point Value: 20
5. Each member of the group will visit COM 110 sections to be peer advocates for the Fell Hall Call to Action during Priming Week. You must visit at least one class. You will coordinate your schedules with the Advocate Group in order to be most efficient. You will bring a feedback form to the class that you will ask the instructor to complete, and turn this form in to your instructor in order to receive credit for visiting the class.
   - Date Due: Turn in feedback forms Wednesday, September 16th
   - Point Value: 20
The *Logistics Group* (6 people) will be responsible for collecting copies of materials from class members as well as take pictures to create a final portfolio. Members of this group will also be in charge of picking out food vendors for winning sections’ parties as well as budget for expenses. Additional responsibilities include:

1. You will create a comprehensive calendar for priming week so that everyone will know who will be doing what. This will help everyone to keep track, and will help you to know where to be in order to take pictures.
   - Date Due: Wednesday, September 9th
   - Point Value: 20

2. You will be in charge of coordinating food vendors for the winning sections’ parties following collection week.
   - Date Due: Wednesday, September 9th
   - Point Value: 10

3. You will be in charge of documenting the experience from beginning to end, through taking pictures, as well as retaining copies of everything created by all of the groups. This will culminate in the production of a professional portfolio. You will turn in an electronic copy of the final portfolio, which I will review and edit, and eventually distribute to each of your classmates for their future use. The items that will need to be in this document include: Title page, copy of research group presentations (or an overview at the very least), copy of the various flyers/posters that were created, the emails that went out to the SoC students and instructors, any articles that appear in newspapers about the Drive, a piece about the radio or television stations that mentioned us, any web announcements, the script for the classroom speakers, the brochure that the Advocate Group creates, and any other document that you feel is worthy to include. You will also be responsible for documenting the process through pictures. You will need to coordinate with your fellow students to capture public appearances, advertising efforts (ex. chalking the quad, writing on white boards, etc.), as well as the collection and delivering of supplies. You will help to tell the entire story of the Drive to your classmates, your school, and any potential future employers.
   - Date Due: Monday, September 21st
   - Point Value: 50

4. Each member of the group will visit COM 110 sections to be peer advocates for the Fell Hall Call to Action during Priming Week. You must visit at least one class. You will coordinate your schedules with the Advocate Group to be most efficient. You will bring a feedback form to the class that you will ask the instructor to complete, and turn this form in to me to receive credit for visiting the class.
   - Date Due: Turn in feedback forms Wednesday, September 16th
   - Point Value: 20
The Media Group (6 people) will be responsible for coordinating contact with media channels as well as what slogans/logos will be used for the campaign. Members of this group will also be in charge of coordinating visual campaign (writing on white boards in classrooms, chalking the quad, etc.). Additional responsibilities include:

1. Design posters and flyers that are professional looking and visually appealing. These will be posted throughout campus, focusing on Fell Hall. There should be several versions in order to appeal to various audiences.
   - Date Due: First Drafts: Wednesday, September 2\textsuperscript{nd}/Final Drafts: Wednesday, September 9\textsuperscript{th}
   - Point Value: 20
2. Create a slogan and logo that will be easily recognizable to outside audiences.
   - Date Due: Wednesday, September 2\textsuperscript{nd}
   - Point Value: 10
3. You will be in charge of coordinating the visual campaign. Ideas include: writing on classroom white boards, put information in instructor mailboxes, chalk the quad, create a Facebook page, etc. You need a comprehensive plan to the Logistics Group no later than Wednesday, September 2\textsuperscript{nd}.
   - Date Due: Wednesday, September 2\textsuperscript{nd}
   - Point Value: 25
4. You will contact various media outlets in order to have word of this effort reach as many people as possible. You will need to keep track of all correspondence to get credit for your efforts. (you should document times/dates of phone calls, keep copies of emails, etc.). Media coverage should happen during Priming Week and possibly Collection Week. Contact ISU Newspaper, ABC affiliate, NBC affiliate, ISU website (school calendar), ISU radio and TV-10, and the Pantagraph.
   - Date Due: Should begin ASAP – Done by Monday, September 7\textsuperscript{th} (turn in correspondence on Wednesday, September 9\textsuperscript{th})
   - Point Value: 25
5. Each member of the group will visit COM 110 sections to be peer advocates for the Fell Hall Call to Action during Priming Week. You must visit at least one class. You will coordinate your schedules with the Advocacy Group in order to be most efficient. You will bring a feedback form to the class that you will ask the instructor to complete, and turn this form in to your instructor to receive credit for visiting the class.
   - Date Due: Turn in feedback forms Wednesday, September 16\textsuperscript{th}
   - Point Value: 20

The Advocacy Group (5 people) will coordinate going to other COM 110 sections so that every member of both the sections will visit at least one other class to get that ‘real-life’ public speaking experience. Members of this group will be in charge of contacting instructors to set up times to ensure that everyone knows where to be and when. Additional responsibilities include:

1. Coordinate schedules of classmates in order to delegate who will visit what section of COM 110. Every student should visit at least one classroom. Decide if you think it would be more effective to have one or two students visit the sections (maximum is 2). You will create a master list to be distributed to your classmates so that everyone knows where they should be and when.
   - Date Due: Emailed to your instructor by Monday, September 7\textsuperscript{th}
   - Point Value: 20
2. Your group will be in charge of contacting instructors to find out what day is most convenient for someone to visit their room. This will need to be extremely professional and courteous. You will need to send out initial emails to coordinate, but also a thank you email following the classroom visit (copy your instructor on every email).
   Date Due: Should begin ASAP – Done by Monday, September 7th
   Point Value: 20

3. Create a script that you and your classmates will use when visiting the classrooms for a consistent message to be given no matter who the speaker is (work with Research Group for information to include). The total speaking time should not exceed three minutes so that there is time for Q&A if needed. Minimum information to cover is: What is the Fell Hall Call to Action? What is the competition? What are the prizes? Where will donations go? What items are needed? Why should they donate?
   Date Due: Emailed to me by Monday, September 7th
   Point Value: 20

4. Create an email campaign that will be distributed to instructors to forward to students. This three-phase campaign should include: a) The drive is coming, b) The drive is going on, and c) Thank you for participating in the drive.
   Date Due: First email should be drafted and sent to your instructor by Wednesday, September 2nd. Second email should be drafted and sent to your instructor by Wednesday, September 9th. Last email should be drafted and sent to your instructor by Monday, September 21st.
   Point Value: 20

5. You will visit at least one section of COM 110. You will bring a feedback form to the class that you will ask the instructor to complete, and turn this form in to your instructor to receive credit for visiting the class.
   Date Due: Turn in feedback forms Wednesday, September 16th
   Point Value: 20

A Final Note: Participation Expectations
While I would like to hope that everyone will share my level of enthusiasm about this project, I know that is not necessarily the case. I cannot make anyone share my passion, but I do have to make one point: In any group assignment, the level of effort that you put forth affects your group—that is why the group evaluations are part of the grade so that each person is held accountable for their participation. With this project, however, the stakes are raised. As in any job, the things that you choose to do or not do have a direct impact on the overall success of the project. That means that your actions will affect your CLASSMATES, the SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION and ISU as a whole since this project will be a reflection on the School, and, most importantly, the community we current live in. Our success is their success. Our failure is their failure.

We cannot afford to have anyone not pull their own weight. We have a lot to do in a little amount of time. Therefore, laziness and a lack of commitment will not be tolerated by your group or by me. As they say in the movies: Failure is not an option. Not because of your grade. Not because of academics in general. It goes beyond that—we each have a responsibility to make the world a better place, and this drive is your chance this semester. Working together, it’s guaranteed that we WILL make a difference. The extent to which we do that is up to all of you. This is not just about one family, this is about our community and making a difference.
Small Group Community Engagement Project (Com 223)

In COM 223 (Small Group Communication), students explore theories and skills related to successful group communication in a variety of educational and professional contexts. The highlight of the course is a comprehensive group project that affords significant community engagement opportunities to students. For this project, students are assigned to work with a non-profit in the Bloomington-Normal area. The project is broken into several components (instructor project assessment, team portfolio, campaign closeout meeting, peer evaluations agendas and minutes for 12 group meetings, project proposal, midterm presentation, and a final application paper). The purpose of these assignments is to emphasize the small group process and to reward consistent, diligent teamwork.

Students are informed that while most non-profits indicate that they primarily need funds, the project does not need to solely focus on fundraising. Teams can log volunteer hours as a part of the project, or complete a long-needed project that the organization might otherwise have to pay for. Groups must determine what they are capable of and how that matches up to what their organization needs.

Project Ground Rules

Needless to say, the expectations for students are high as achieving project goals takes tremendous work and time. Students are informed that cutting corners may be tempting, but there are four simple ground rules that they must follow for the project. Students who violate these rules risk penalties, including point deductions, failure on the project, and potentially failing the course. The ground rules for this project follow:

- Do the work to meet your goal - you may not spend money out of pocket or rely on family donations alone.
- Be honest in your group work - all group work submitted for evaluation must be accurate. All funds collected must be donated to the organization. All receipts for purchases and verification of the final donation and volunteer hours must be submitted to get project credit.
- Represent the University and the non-profit well - the events you host must not reflect poorly on either organization.
- Plan to attend all team meetings and events - communicate problems and conflicts early, and understand that it is your responsibility to be present at whatever events your team schedules. Team meetings must take place in Milner at the scheduled class time.

Project Impact

This class tends to perform very well on this project. In the fall 2010 semester, COM 223 students raised $21,000 and secured local press coverage for the Arthritis Foundation’s Jingle Bell Run. Their work helped to make the Bloomington-Normal Run the 3rd largest in the country ($108,000 total was raised). In the fall 2011 semester, the class was the fourth ranked Jingle Bell Run fundraising team in the country. Students in that class recruited over 100 runners, earned $36,000, and even earned some top run times at the event (including 3rd place in the women’s category). In the fall 2014 semester, COM 223 students raised $22,000 in cash, goods, and volunteer hours for the Boys and Girls Club. In spring 2016, students raised over $20,000 in donations, materials, and volunteer hours for Wishbone Canine Rescue.

In addition to the terrific work COM 223 students perform, this course provides students with the opportunity to network with employers in the community, develop skills to showcase on a resume, and produce tangible outcomes to point to in an interview. Historically, COM 223 students find this course to be incredibly helpful for securing internships and jobs.
PR Campaign Assignment (Com 377)

COM 377 Public Relations Campaigns is one of two required “capstone” courses in the public relations major. The course’s purpose, blending lecture, in-class discussion, and out-of-class work, is to reveal how effective public relations campaigns are created, implemented, and measured. The focal point of the course is conceiving, developing, and proposing a complete public relations campaign plan for a real client during the semester. Students compete in agency teams for the client’s business. Most of these campaigns developed in COM 377 are directed at non-profit organizations in the community.

The purpose of the PR campaign is to give students hands-on experience with “the stuff” of public relations campaigns covered during the first half of the semester, using advanced academic readings, industry publications, and case studies. When working in teams, students act as individual agencies, meet with the client chosen for the semester, analyze problems and opportunities, and ultimately design and propose a public relations campaign to address the client’s needs. Student teams prepare their campaign proposals piecemeal, submitting their work in progress for “no-stakes” feedback on its content and quality as they develop the campaign one section at a time, applying the principles and practices of effective campaigns covered during the first half of the semester. The final product is “high-stakes” graded work.

Each student team prepares a thorough, detailed, evidence-based, yet concise, creative, and compelling proposal for the PR campaign it recommends. The campaign proposal explains a team’s campaign and includes material that the client can immediately put into use. Each team also makes an oral pitch to the client to accept that campaign and obtain its business. A team’s presentation and proposal explain how the campaign is to be implemented and evaluated. The course professor also reserves the right to keep a team from pitching, if its work is not client-ready.

Much public relations work takes place in a team environment; consequently, much of the work for this course is done in self-selected teams. A small amount of in-class time is provided for team activity and team consultations with the professor. Clear guidance about teamwork and a separate procedure for managing teamwork is provided to all students as part of the project. Team members who do not contribute to the team’s work may be fired, in consultation with the professor (and only with the professor’s approval), just as they would be in the real world. Students evaluate their teammates on the campaign at the end of the course, using a performance review questionnaire a given team develops and has approved by the professor, and that evaluation is part of students’ final course grades.

Benefits are definitely obtained by both clients and students. The campaign proposal, presentation, and all ideas and material developed for the client will become the property of the client to be used as the client sees fit without remuneration to any team. Students gain highly valuable knowledge, skills, and experience in campaign design and are entitled to keep a copy of their team’s final campaign material for use in their portfolios.