

Agricultural Communications

The purpose of the agricultural communications career development event is to excite and inspire students to develop basic skills relevant to the agricultural communications industry. Students will be equipped with strong communication skills and will have developed the ability to work collaboratively to effectively communicate and advocate for the agriculture industry.

Event Rules

- Teams will consist of four members.
- It is highly recommended that participants wear FFA Official Dress for this event.
- Team members will work together to prepare a written media plan prior to MN Agricultural Communications CDE. The team will also be responsible for presenting the plan at the MN Agricultural Communications event and completing individual practicums and tests.
- During the practicum portion of the event, one team member will be responsible for completing a web design activity, one team member will be responsible for completing a video production activity, one team member will be responsible for completing a journalistic writing activity and one team member will be responsible for completing an opinion writing activity
- Any participant in possession of an electronic device during the quizzes, is subject to disqualification. Recording devices are not allowed during the press conference.

Event Format

Each September, the agricultural communications CDE faculty chair will release event specifications for the next year. The specifications will outline the scenario to be used for the media plan and presentation as well as the specific practicum activities and software. This information can be found on the CDE web page.

Equipment

Needed: Students must provide pens and pencils. For practicums, writers and designers are encouraged to bring laptop or other device for word processing or design.

Provided: Easel, Projector screen, Table

Note: Teams may bring additional equipment for the media plan presentation as long as they are able to set up and tear down equipment in the time allowed for the presentation.

For practicums, members may be provided:

- PC computer
- Printer
- Blank paper
- Digital photographs
- Dummy text
- Logos
- Any other necessary materials

Team Activities

AGRICULTURE-RELATED MEDIA PLAN (200 POINTS/TEAM)

Teams will play the role of communications consultants and will develop a media plan for an assigned scenario. The scenario will identify a client with a communications need and a budget. Please reference the current event specific on the CDE webpage. The team will make a pitch (oral presentation) of the media plan.

Scenarios are based on the ideas of agricultural advocacy. Teams will develop a media plan from the following rotating topics.

Tell a Local FFA Story

- The focus could include one of the following:
- FFA member
- FFA chapter
- FFA advisor
- State FFA Association
- FFA Alumni/supporter

Advocate the Agricultural Industry to Consumers

- The focus could include one of the following:
- Farmer/rancher
- Commodity
- Farmers market
- Community garden
- Farm to table
- Identify a local opportunity for public relations not tied to FFA

A media plan is a written document that describes the following:

- Objectives: What the group wants to accomplish with the media plan.
- Target Audience: Description of who the client is trying to reach, including demographic data.
- Strategic plan and tactics: Ways in which the objectives can be accomplished.
- Timeline: When the objectives will be accomplished.
- Evaluation: How the results will be measured.
- Budget: Teams may not go over a maximum of \$5,000.

Guidelines for media plan

- Eight to 10 typed pages not including cover page, table of contents, references or appendices.
- Double-spaced with 1" margins.
- Paginated (numbered pages not including cover page).
- 12-point Times New Roman font (not including display text or headings).
- Submitted electronically in PDF format.
- Formatted and edited according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) when citing sources.

The media plan must include the following sections (points will be deducted for missing or incomplete sections):

Cover page

- Must include the title of the media plan, CDE name, state, chapter name, team member names and year.
- May include a creative design.

Table of contents

Introduction and Overview

- Two pages maximum.
- Introduction
- A brief background of the issue/topic and a statement of the problem establishing the need for this media plan.
- Overview
- A brief preview of what is contained in the plan and how it will benefit the client.

Audience

- One page maximum.
- Who the client is trying to reach with the media plan.
- The demographic characteristics of the intended audience.
- Note: teams may have a primary and a secondary audience.

Strategic plan

- Three to four pages maximum.
- Key messages or themes to communicate to the audience.
- Explanation of how the objectives will be met.
- Plan to attract media attention.

A social media plan is required addressing the following:

- Social media platforms to be used.
- Plan to gain followers.
- Plan to engage followers.
- General idea for the messages to be posted.
- One page example post must be provided as an appendix (can include Facebook posts, tweets, Instagram photos and others).
- Content of the “About” section of pages.
- Frequency of posts.
- Some plans include occasional posting in the beginning and then very frequent in the end.
- Timeline.
- Evaluation.
- Include three to five examples in the appendices.
- Examples of tactics include but are not limited to:
 - broadcast advertising
 - print advertising
 - press releases
 - fliers
 - brochure
 - web site
 - blogging
 - displays.

Description of how the plan will be executed.

Timeline

- One page maximum.
- Explanation of the duration of the plan and the timing of the media tactics.

Evaluation

- One page maximum.
- Description of proposed methods to determine if the objectives were met.
- What are the key performances? (How will you measure that you are successful?)
- Examples may include number of participants, impressions, likes, shares, retweets, circulation of publications, number of video views.

Budget and Justification

- One page maximum.
- Table of all costs associated with implementing the media plan.
- Explain why you have allocated this amount for each activity.

Conclusion

- One page maximum.
- A final summary of key points related to the strategic plan and a statement persuading the client that the plan is a good solution to the communication problem.
- Not a restatement of the introduction and overview.

References

- Formatted and edited according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).
- Appendices/Examples.
- One page of social media posts.
- Three to five other communication examples.
- Suggestions include mock up or example of website, links to student created video, press releases, blogs, op-eds.

Submission

An electronic copy of the media plan in PDF format (no larger than 20 megabytes) must be sent by March 1. A penalty of 10 percent of available media plan points will be assessed for any late submissions. If the document is not received seven days after the deadline, the team may be subject to disqualification. The members of the team that wins the Agricultural Communications CDE will not be eligible for any team CDEs at the MN FFA Convention that year.

MEDIA PLAN PITCH — PRESENTATION (175 POINTS/TEAM)

- The team should present the media plan as if pitching it to the client identified in the scenario.
- The presentation should follow the structure of the written media plan.
- Teams should bring examples of materials that would be used in the execution of the plan (e.g., social media, broadcast advertising, print advertising, press releases, fliers, brochures, website, blogging and displays).
- Each team member must participate in the presentation.
- Each team will be allowed 15 minutes to present its media plan to a panel of judges, who will play the role of the client. Five points will be deducted for each major fraction of a minute over the 15 minutes allowed for the presentation. Following the presentation, judges will be allowed five minutes to ask questions.

- Teams will have a total of 10 minutes for setting-up and tearing- down equipment (e.g., five minutes to set up and five minutes to tear down).
- Provided equipment includes an easel, projector screen and table.
- In the case of equipment failure, the team may be asked to move forward with the presentation. A back-up plan is recommended.

Note: Teams may bring additional equipment for the presentation as long as they are able to set up and tear down equipment in the time allowed.

Individual Activities

TESTS

EDITING EXERCISE (25 POINTS/INDIVIDUAL; 100 POINTS/ TEAM)

Because editing is a critical skill for all communicators, each team member will complete an editing exercise. They will be given a printed document that contains 25 mistakes. In correcting the mistakes, team members will be required to use correct proofreading marks (see Associated Press Stylebook). Style, grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes will be included. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or a dictionary during this exercise.

COMMUNICATIONS QUIZ (25 POINTS/INDIVIDUAL; 100 POINTS/TEAM)

Each team member will complete a quiz that covers general knowledge of the agricultural communications industry. Questions may come from any section excluding sports guidelines. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or a dictionary during this exercise.

PRACTICUMS (100 POINTS/INDIVIDUAL; 400 POINTS/TEAM)

The practicums will consist of four individual events. Each team must assign a member to one of the following areas prior to arriving at the event:

- Webdesign
- Video production
- Journalistic writing
- Opinion writing

All teams will meet in a central location for an orientation and press conference. Teams will be seated by practicum group. All team members will be given an orientation at the beginning of the practicums to last no more than 10 minutes.

The press conference will be held following the orientation meeting.

Each team member will receive a press packet with background information on the agricultural topic and expert to use during the event. An expert will speak on a current agricultural topic for 20 minutes. Students will be provided with paper to take notes if they wish. After the 20 minute presentation, the non-writers will be dismissed to a different area to complete their assigned practicums.

The writers will then be involved in a 10 minute question and answer period with the expert (speaker). Each writer will stand to be recognized before asking a question. Writers may ask more than one question; however, the expert will attempt to address questions from as many different participants as possible. No electronic devices of any kind, including tape recorders and cell phones, will be allowed during this portion of the event. Upon completion of the 10 minute question and answer session, remaining participants will be dismissed to complete their assigned practicums.

Web design

Each designer will use the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference to develop a WordPress site.

The objective is to communicate the press conference speaker's organization through appropriate design, navigation and use of provided photos and graphics. The designer may use the provided WordPress templates or customize the template. Each participant will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum.

Video producer

Students will be given a selection of video clips and photos and will create a 60-90 second video that promotes the client's product or service. Students will not be recording a voice track.

Participants will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum. Students will need to provide own laptop, software and headphones.

Journalistic Writers

Writers are to write a journalistic piece based on the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference. It should be written for an appropriate audience, have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph) and include a headline. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer and turned in to be scored. Participants will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum.

The activity will rotate annually from the following:

- Press release (2017, 2020)
- News story (2018, 2021)
- Feature story (2019)

Opinion Writers

Writers are to write a piece that takes a position and support it with evidence based on the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference. It should be written for an appropriate audience, have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph) and include a headline. The story will then be word processed by the student on a computer and turned in to be scored. Participants will have 90 minutes to complete the practicum.

The activity will rotate annually from the following:

A blog post (250-300 words) (2017, 2020)

An op-ed (500-750 words) (2018, 2021)

A letter to the editor (300-500 words) (2019)

Scoring

Participants will be ranked in numerical order on the basis of the final score to be determined by each judge without consultation. The judge's ranking of each participant then shall be added, and the winner will be that participant whose total ranking is the lowest. Other placings will be determined in the same manner (low point method of selection). Weighted rank scoring will be implemented to maintain point value emphasis between individual and team events. The criteria and points can be found on the scorecards.

Event	Points
Media Plan — Proposal	200
Media Plan Pitch — Presentation	175
Tests-200 points possible	
Communications Quiz	100 (25 pts/member)
Editing Exercise	100 (25 pts/member)
Practicums- 400 points possible	
Web Design Practicum	100
Video Producer Practicum	100
Journalistic writing practicum 100	
Opinion writing practicum	100
Total individual score possible	200
Total team score possible	975

TIEBREAKERS

Team tiebreakers will be settled:

1. Combined individual practicum rank score
2. Proposal rank
3. Presentation rank
4. Media plan

1. Practicum score

2. Communications quiz score

3. Editing exercise score

Individuals tiebreakers will be settled:

Media Plan – Proposal Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

			Possible Score	Team Score
Plan Includes all Requirements				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover page, titles and names on cover page, table of contents, does not exceed page limit, double spaced, one inch margins, page numbers, required headings (-1 point per missing item) 			10	
Proposal is Relevant to Scenario				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire narrative focuses on addressing client's specific public communication needs. 			10	
Executive Summary				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequately explains the plan without reading the entire document. 			10	
Introduction				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides adequate background of the issue; clearly states the problem and need for plan; describes how the plan will benefit the client. 			15	
Description of Audience				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describes (including demographics) who is targeted with the media plan. 			15	
Detailed Strategic Plan				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly states objectives; explains how objectives will be met; explains why chosen mediums are appropriate to meet objectives; describes how plan will be executed. 			30	
Timeline				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains duration of plan and timing of media tactics. 			10	
Method of Evaluation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposes methods to determine if the objectives were met. 			15	
Budget				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains all costs associated with implementing the media plan. 			20	
Conclusion				
			10	
Appendices				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of communications documents. (Three required) 			30	
Quality of writing				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure. 			25	
TOTAL POINT			200	

Journalistic Writing Practicum Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	High 5–4 points	Middle 3–2 points	Low 1–0 points	Weight	Total Points
Lead/focus				x 3	
Accuracy of information and quotes				x 3	
Clarity and conciseness				X 2	
Correct style (AP)				X 2	
Depth of coverage				X 2	
Header/headline				X 2	
Grammar, spelling, punctuation and word choice				X 2	
Organization and format				X 2	
Accomplishment of purpose				X 2	
TOTAL POINTS (100 POINTS POSSIBLE)					

Opinion Writing Practicum Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

STATE _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Lead/focus	15	
Accuracy of information and quotes	15	
Clarity and conciseness	10	
Correct style (AP)	10	
Takes a position that is supported with evidence	10	
Header/headline	10	
Grammar, spelling, punctuation and word choice	10	
Organization and format	10	
Accomplishment of purpose	10	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

WebPageDesignPracticumScorecard

CHAPTER _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Overall attractiveness of site (color, font choice, readability, font size consistent)	20	
Technical skills specific to activity • Outlined in event specifications	20	
Use of design principles	15	
Neatness and creativity	15	
Choice and placement of photo(s) and graphic(s)	15	
Usability and navigation of site (links work, files named properly, links show up)	15	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

Electronic Media Practicum Promotional Video Scorecard

CHAPTER _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Solid promotional value	20	
Tells a story	20	
Use of provided materials (Used numerous clips, no repeated shots, chose appropriate clips)	15	
Quality of video editing (no black flashes, jump cuts or other erratic movements)	15	
Audio editing (correct volume, no clipping, correct use of natural sound)	15	
Creativity	10	
Stayed within time limit	5	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

WebPageDesignPracticumScorecard

CHAPTER _____

TEAM NUMBER _____

	Possible Score	Member Score
Effective use of medium	20	
Technical skills specific to activity • Outlined in event specifications	20	
Power of expression	15	
Creativity	15	
Clarity of communication (writing)	15	
Organization and format	15	
Accuracy of information	15	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

