**Proposed communication strategy for sharing WVU ADA compliance information with the public**

***Background***

As part of their commitment to ADA compliance and responsibility, the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion proposed holding a Town Hall meeting to share information regarding the University’s ADA compliance with the public. DEI sent out internal communication to University administrators asking them to save the date for **Sept. 7, 2016 at 6 p.m.** in the Small Gold Ballroom of the Mountainlair.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide information regarding ADA compliance in good faith to both internal and external stakeholders of the University.

***Challenges***

There is reasonable concern that a town hall format will yield a volatile environment that will not encourage an open exchange of information.

***Proposed strategy by University Relations***

During a meeting between ADA Coordinator Jill Hess and University Relations staff John Bolt, April Kaull and Heather Richardson on Aug. 8, UR proposed structuring the event in an open house or ‘availability sessions’ format, which would provide the following benefits from a communication standpoint:

* Allows for candid feedback from the public in a controlled environment,
* Provides opportunity for more meaningful one-on-one engagement between University ADA experts and internal and external stakeholders,
* Structuring the event as an informal conversation with University employees as opposed to a town hall format encourages more open dialogue from individuals who have concerns but aren’t comfortable speaking publicly or in front of media,
* Mitigates risk of University officials being publicly attacked and those attacks becoming a media event,
* Decreases attraction for media coverage, as there is less appeal of filming of a room with people conversing than a town hall meeting;
* Allows for University officials to directly address questions of all attendees as opposed to only hearing feedback from a few fanatics who historically have a tendency to unproductively command town hall forums,
* Allows for University to learn names and build relationships with those who they engage, creating an opportunity for continuing communication and follow-up with those with concerns that need addressed.

***Audiences***

* ***Primary:*** students, faculty and staff, statewide residents.
* ***Secondary:*** Board of Governors, visiting committees, alumni, donors, statewide media.
* ***Note: WVU is legally required to notify public of event.***

***Recommended communication tactics***

* Developing a fact sheet to share with all attendees as they arrive regarding critical information about the University’s ADA compliance plans,
* Talking points for University officials who will serve as experts during availability sessions,
* Media training for University officials who will serve as ‘experts’ for event to ensure uniform messages,
* Brochure or postcard with overview of ADA mission,
* Comment cards to solicit candid, anonymous feedback from members of the public who attend,
* Sign-in sheet,
* Posterboard with easels set-up around the room with maps, bullet points and critical information that needs shared regarding ADA challenges – and how WVU intends to fix it. (ADA has created a document that details a plan),
* Someone from UR to serve as a greeter at a welcome table who can serve as a friendly face, welcome guests, give them a fact sheet, encourage them to sign-in and get a sense of their specific questions and concerns so that they can connect them with the right expert,
* HTML email to invite University employees, students, local elected officials, etc.,
* Bolt/Kaull to develop tactics for communicating with public to meet public notification requirement.

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