GOUCHER | college
COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

WHAT THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS CAN DO FOR YOU

and

TIPS ON WRITING FOR GOUCHER COLLEGE

Communication occurs in many different ways on campus; our office has a hand in a lot of them.

We can help you advertise an upcoming event. We can help you publicize an interesting story or a professional accomplishment. We can help you create a succinct, attractive, and effective publication or a website that tells people all about your office, organization, or program. We can help you get involved with social media. We're also here to help you through the process of writing and editing your piece or publication so that it conveys exactly the message you want to get across—and makes you and the college look impressive as a result.

To do all that, we need your help. By considering the guidelines in this document before submitting your project, you can ensure that the process goes smoothly.

WHAT THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS CAN DO FOR YOU

Scheduling

As soon as you know you'll be needing our services, please visit **www.goucher.edu/myproject**, and complete the Office of Communications Project Management Form. With this form, you will supply the details, upload relevant files, and request meetings for your project. Once you have submitted all necessary information, you will receive an e-mail with your job number. A member of the communications team will then contact you to get started on your project.

Please note: The Project Management Form is the only way the Office of Communications will accept work. If it is not submitted online, we cannot take on your project.

The more advance notice we receive, the better we are able to brainstorm about the project and discuss angles you may not have considered or different approaches that could save you time and money. Our strategic communications services don't cost you anything, but publicity, printing, and postage can really add up. When you come to us with a budget, we'll have an immediate idea of the available options, as well as the costs that we can save you.

Be sure to allow plenty of time to get the project approved. Who needs to sign off on it? Your direct supervisor? Your direct supervisor's supervisor? The president?

Although we go to great lengths to ensure that your copy is error-free, you are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the content. We're responsible for the quality of the presentation. You will be required to sign off on each project.

Approximate Turnaround Times

	Writing	Layout/ Design	Proof	Approval	Print/ Release
Brochure (tri-fold #10)	2 weeks	2 weeks	3-5 days	3-5 days	7-10 days
Brochure (16pp custom)	3 weeks	2 weeks	3-5 days	3-5 days	7-10 days
Poster	1 week	1 week	1 day	2 days	2-3 days
Letter	2 weeks	2-3 days	3 days		
Newsletter	2 weeks	1 week	3 days	2 days	7-10 days
E-blast	2 weeks	1 week	3 days	2 days	7-10 days
Website	2 week	1 week	3 days	2 days	7-10 days
Business cards	1 day	1 day	2-3 weeks		
Letterhead	1 week	1 week	1 day	2 days	2-3 days
Press release	2-3 days	2 days	1 day		

SERVICES

Design

At Goucher, we practice effective, attractive design. We give your message room to breathe and make it immediately engaging. We eliminate the extraneous and focus on a central element that will guide the audience through the details. We find an appropriate hierarchy of information so that your message is clear, appropriate, and easy to receive.

Follow these simple rules when bringing us a project:

1. Complete the Project Management Form at www.goucher.edu/myproject.
2. Do not submit documents created in Microsoft Office Publisher.
3. Keep your communication simple and ordered around one key message or theme.
4. Allow plenty of time for printing. (Seven to 10 business days are standard if the project has to go to an outside printer. Even if the project is done by Goucher's in-house printing office, you should not assume it can be printed in a single day. Three to five business days are standard here.)
5. Consider the size of your audience and the best way to reach them. (Do you have a mailing list? An e-mail list?)
6. Determine if you will need envelopes.
7. Provide as many photos as you can, at as high a resolution as possible.
8. Consider other, complementary modes of communication, such as direct e-mail.
9. Come to us with some idea of what you can afford, which will tell us a lot about how we can help you.

Editing/Writing

If you need basic editing services for documents your office has already written or prepared, complete the Project Management Form at www.goucher.edu/myproject. One of the expert writers or editors in our office will discuss with you your goals for the piece and then edit it, marking any grammatical mistakes, noting missing information, or highlighting more complicated problems with the copy. You will receive an edited version to review, and we will work with you until the copy has met your and the college's needs. If design is required, the finished copy will be sent to our designers for layout.

If you contact the Office of Communications for editing services, **please make sure the document you want edited is complete or very nearly complete**. Otherwise, please contact our office for writing services, and we will help you organize your ideas, gather information, and build a strong and effective piece.

For more in-depth writing projects, the process will be much the same, though it will probably be necessary for one or more writers/editors, and possibly a designer, first to meet with you or others from your office/department to discuss the direction and goals of the project.

One important thing to remember: We represent an external viewpoint—which means we try to see things as your eventual audience will. We can catch mistakes, clean up sentences, and fill in the gaps before you send out the finished product. But we aren't mind-readers. We depend on you to know your audience and your area of expertise and to provide us with accurate, timely information.

News and Event Publicity

The Office of Communications can help you publicize events, speakers, and news, and provide you with posters, postcards, programs, and invitations. But we can't do any of it overnight.

Complete the Project Management Form at least **three weeks** before your event—preferably more—providing all necessary information. Once you approve a cost estimate, we will generate copy and design, send you a proof for review, and work with you until the materials meet your and the college's needs. You are responsible for verifying names, dates, locations, sponsors, etc. Once you give final approval, we will send materials to the printer. You will be notified when your materials have been delivered to our office.

Remember: There is hardly ever any really free publicity. Generating interest (and attendance) for almost any event takes a lot of legwork, but it also often involves things such as newspaper ads and radio spots—which, even on public radio, cost money.

Please note: Projects for student clubs require e-mail approval from both the SGA treasurer and the club treasurer. The approval should confirm that there is enough money in the club's account and should give our office permission to remove the money from the account.

The Office of Communications does not provide services for individual student projects for which a grade will be given.

Digital Media

Emerging technologies offer many opportunities to help you get your message across. Web pages, electronic newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs are just a few of the options. The Office of Communications can help you decide which ones are most effective for your purposes. We know all about social media venues and how to put them to work for the college.

Some important questions to ask when considering social media are:
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- Who is your intended audience?
- Is someone available to update and monitor the effort on a regular basis?
- How will you measure your success?

If you are interested in pursuing social media for your office, class, or division, you can fill out our Project Management Form at www.goucher.edu/myproject, and we will help you find your way.

WRITING FOR GOUCHER COLLEGE
Four tips on getting it right

1. Get the facts.
Before you put pen to paper (or fingertips to the keypad), gather your information. Start by finding answers to the fundamental questions of *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how*. For example, who is your audience? What do you want from them, or what do they need to know? Where do you want them to be? When is the event or the deadline? Why is your message important to them? And how can they act?

Going through the WWWWWH process helps clarify what you want to say (content) and gives you a basic template for how to say it (organization). Establishing the basic facts before you start to write will keep you from jumbling your thoughts or straying from your message. Your writing will be concise, accurate, and straightforward. You can worry about style later. (Or you can let us worry about it.)

Gathering this information before you come to us will also cut down on the amount of time we spend hunting down stray details or e-mailing you for clarification. If we know what's important, we can be much more effective and efficient.

2. Get your thoughts in order.
If you keep each point you want to make clear and separate, you'll have a much easier time putting your entire message together.

When compiling a paragraph, for example, think about it as an individual and complete story, with a beginning (an introduction), a middle (an explanation, proving a point), and an end (a conclusion, moving on). Another way to think about this is to tell the reader "what," then tell them "what about it," and, finally, tell them "what's next."

A good rule of thumb is one "big idea" per paragraph. Decide on the main point of the paragraph and stick to it, making sure every statement supports it. Consider the following paragraph (and the accompanying notes):

> *Goucher College has made quite a name for itself lately.[1] We've received 3,587 applications for admission to the Class of 2014—one of our biggest applicant pools ever.[2] The Athenaeum was awarded an LEED "Gold" rating from the U.S. Green Building Council.[3] And our 125th anniversary celebration drew record numbers of alumnae/i from across the country.[4] Accomplishments and milestones of this kind reflect well on all members of the Goucher community, present and past.[5]*

1: Introduction ("what"): Sets the scene
2, 3, 4: Supporting statements ("what about it")
5: Conclusion ("what's next"): Tells why we should care, leads to the next paragraph

The writer has supported the main point and framed a leading statement. It may be a bit broad in scope (and somewhat lacking in emotional weight), but such a paragraph would not be out of place in an appeal for donations to Goucher. Although the part where the writer asks for money does not appear, it flows logically from the paragraph: "We hope you will consider making a gift."

3. Get down to business.

In an era of near-instant communication, your readers immediately want to know why they should be reading your message rather than any of the hundreds of others clamoring for their attention. So, be as direct as you can. This will help in the early going, when you're trying to order your message from beginning to end. You can be subtle and judicious during the phase we here in Communications like to call "editing."

The simplest way to be direct is to take responsibility for your message. Use the active voice and, where possible, speak in the first person. Avoid passive constructions such as *students are advised* and *gifts are truly impactful*. These weaken a sentence from the start by **equating** rather than **demonstrating,** and they tend to distance you, the writer, from your message. Consider the following example:

> *It is with this pride and trust in Goucher's attention to students' needs and the connections it retains with its graduates that we ask you to support the college.*

See how the passive voice begets indirect speech? It almost sounds like the writer is reluctant to ask for money. When we remove the passive voice and speak in the first person, it forces us to make stronger choices and to find a more direct path through the thought. Soon, we have the beginnings of a clear, and hopefully persuasive, argument:

> *We are proud of the way Goucher provides for its students and keeps in touch with its alumnae/i. We think this is worthy of your support.*

4. "Get" your audience.

Don't forget who will be reading what you're writing. Local business leaders, for instance, have different concerns and agendas than prospective students. External audiences have varying degrees of contact and familiarity with Goucher College. Some audiences will need more background. Others will need more supporting statements. And most of them will appreciate a message that is **free from jargon.**

With our numerous academic disciplines and administrative offices—each with its own buzzwords and pet phrases—we in academia should be constantly on the look-out for terms with which our audiences might be unfamiliar. Because we tend to regard our educational programs and practices as intrinsically beneficial, we often overlook the ambiguity our terms sometimes present. Are you using an acronym, for instance, without first defining it? *(ICA for intensive course abroad, CA for community assistant, Gen Ed for general education requirements, and so on.)* Seemingly ubiquitous items such as *service learning, restricted gifts,* and *multidisciplinary* are also often misunderstood. Introducing our terms clearly helps ensure that our writing is **inclusive.**

Finally, when writing to members of the broader Goucher community, remember that our purpose is not merely to inform them or to solicit their assistance, but also, on every occasion, to strengthen the connection that put them on the mailing list in the first place. Sustaining the ongoing, mutually respectful relationship between Goucher and its students, alumnae/i, families, faculty, staff, friends, and associates is paramount.