

Say No! To The Flu @ WCU!

Target Audience-

Although the Influenza virus more commonly known as “The flu” affects everyone, for this Public Relations campaign, we are going to focus on distinct sections of the population here at WCU. During this PR campaign, I have decided to focus my efforts into attracting the following population groups within the Western Carolina University community;

Who We’re Targeting-

- Lower-classmen students who live on campus
- Facility management staff
- Teaching Faculty

Why These Population Sects?-

I chose to focus on these parts of the WCU community because they would be deemed to be at the most risk for contracting the flu virus. This is because the individuals within these portions of the WCU population are constantly within close proximity of one another. Because the flu virus is mainly spread through contact, this would leave those who remain in close proximity of one another at an increased risk of contracting the flu virus, which is why a flu shot would be a necessary thing for these individuals to consider receiving.

Info About The Target Audience(s)-

Lower-Classmen Living On Campus- This portion of the WCU community is probably the most at risk of contracting the flu virus than the other two portions of the community that I have selected to target during this PR campaign, if not the most at risk out of the WCU population in general. This is because these students are living in small dormitories where there is not much personal space at all. Especially in Scott and Walker dorms. This would put them in very close contact with their roommate, and if their roommate were to contract the flu virus, the chances are they will contract the flu virus as well. This goes for any type of small living space that multiple individuals share for long periods of time.

Facility Management Staff- This portion of the population within the WCU community is also at a high risk of contracting the flu virus. This is due to their jobs that cause them to be in close proximity of the student living quarters, some of which may be infected with the flu virus. Because they have to clean these facilities, this increases their risk of contracting the flu virus and bringing it home to their families. Which is why it would be ideal to target them to receive a flu vaccination to prevent them from contracting the flu virus and bringing it to their families.

Teaching Faculty- I chose to target this portion of the WCU community because their job puts them in a position to be at a high risk of infecting the flu virus. This is because since it is a teachers duty to show up to class and teach their students, this puts them in a small room within a close proximity of students who are possibly infected for an extended period of time. This leaves the possibility for a student infect with the flu virus to attend class and unknowingly spread it around the room. Because of this, it puts the teaching faculty and other students in the room at a high risk of becoming infected with the flu virus. If the teacher were to contract the flu virus, they would bring it home to their families causing them to become infected as well. This is why I believe that this portion of the WCU population would also be an excellent target audience for this PR campaign to convince people to get a flu vaccination.

Background on the flu virus-

Before we can go onto discussing the goals and objectives of our campaign, I am going to provide some background information about the flu virus as well as the public opinion on the flu to help better shape our goals and objectives.

The first recorded case of the influenza virus was back in 1580 when it decimated the populations of Europe and Africa. The flu has been the most devastating reoccurring seasonal virus throughout civilizations. One of the most notable outbreaks of the influenza virus was the 1918 ‘Spanish Flu.’ The Spanish Flu took a heavy toll on the population of the world in 1918 with an estimated 20-50 million lives claimed by the Spanish flu. Many historians contribute the massive spread of the virus to the troops returning home after fighting in WWI. Once the Spanish Flu reached American shores, it wreaked havoc throughout the country, claiming the lives of 675,000 Americans (History, 2010).

So what exactly is the flu? The influenza virus is a respiratory illness that can result in hospitalization or death. Depending on the infected individual and their medical history

can determine whether or not the flu could affect them in either a mild or severe way (CDC, 2017).

Characteristics of the influenza virus-

One of the most commonly asked questions about the flu is; so what are the symptoms and characteristics of the flu? Well, the influenza virus is tricky when it comes to identifying the particular symptoms due to them being so similar to many different kinds of illnesses. The influenza virus shares many similar symptoms with the common cold; this is why it is tricky to identify all the symptoms of the flu positively.

Some of the primary characteristics/symptoms of the flu virus are;

- Fever/ Feverish chills
- A cough
- A sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Vomiting and diarrhea (based on the infected individual, more common in children than adults)

How it is transmitted-

The influenza virus can be transmitted through several different means. It can be transmitted through (CDC,2017);

- Person-to-Person contact
- Touching
- Sneezing
- Sometimes even talking.
- And less likely, through touching surfaces.

The 2017-2018 influenza season-

- This year alone there were 97 deaths as a direct result of the influenza virus.
 - There was a total of 21,297 accounts of hospitalization due to the flu virus.
 - This year 2,393 adults were hospitalized with the flu having underlying medical conditions affected by the flu.
 - Among those 2,393 adults, 1,634 had at least one reported underlying medical condition; most commonly cardiovascular disease.
 - 223 children hospitalized with the flu had information on underlying medical conditions.
 - Among those 223 children, 108 of them had at least one underlying medical condition; most commonly asthma.
 - 177 women of childbearing age were hospitalized with the flu (Ages 15-44) with information about their pregnancy status.
 - Among those 177 women, 44 of them were hospitalized while pregnant.
- (CDC,2017)

Living conditions-

Living conditions also play a significant role in whether or not the flu virus can infect an individual. For example, someone who lives in a very unsanitary household is more likely to contract the flu virus, whereas a person who lives in a clean and sanitary household is less likely to get infected with the flu virus.

Public opinion on the flu-

It is no secret that people are not too keen on talking about the flu, Americans especially. Public opinion on the flu virus is, for the most part, split down the middle. Let alone think about getting a flu vaccination. As far as America's opinion on the flu shot there are generally two types of people; there are the people who are all for getting a flu vaccination to help prevent the flu altogether, or help combat it at the very least. Then there are the people who do not even consider the flu vaccine as an option; these people tend to believe that receiving a flu vaccine does nothing to prevent or combat the flu virus, but rather it increases the likeliness of contracting the flu virus.

Facts About Flu Vaccines-

Now that we discussed some of the basics on the flu, let's talk about how you can prepare yourself for it, there are several ways to take preventative measures, but for this, we will focus on the flu vaccine itself.

- Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop within two weeks to help boost the immune system to prevent the influenza virus.
- There are a few kinds of flu vaccines, but the CDC recommends injectable influenza vaccines for quicker access to the bloodstream and immune system.
- It is recommended that everyone at the age of 6 months and older consider receiving the flu vaccine every season.
- The CDC recommends that everyone get a flu vaccination as soon as he or she can to better their chances of not contracting the virus by giving their immune system more time to become adapted to that season's strain of the flu (CDC, 2017).

Popular myths about the flu vaccine-

Below are some of the famous myths about the influenza vaccine;

- **“Flu shots cause the flu”** Though this myth is widely believed it has been proven as untrue. The flu vaccine is made with an inactive form of the virus that is unable to transmit the disease.
- **“You don't have to get the flu shot yearly”** This is untrue because the flu virus mutates into different strains each season.
- **“Flu shots don't work”** The CDC has conducted studies showing that the flu vaccine decreases the risk of being infected by the flu virus by 40% to 60%
- **“Pregnant women shouldn't be vaccinated”** This has been proven to be false, the CDC recommends that pregnant women get vaccinated since their immune system is already weakened due to the pregnancy (Publishing H.H., 2017).

Now that we have gone over the background information on the flu virus, how it's spread, and the symptoms of the flu virus, as well as many of the popular myths about vaccines. We can go on to discussing our goals and objectives for this PR campaign. Within this phase of the assignment, we will go over what the primary goals and objectives are that we hope to achieve with the use of this campaign to help the WCU community combat the flu virus.

Campaign Goals And Objectives-

For this PR campaign, Our number one goal is to convince our target audiences that Western Carolina University cares about their health and wellbeing. This will help appeal to the target audiences sense of being part of a community that cares about them. It will also help to make WCU look like a caring school that is genuinely concerned for its students, faculty, and staff. In doing so will lead to a happier and healthier population of students, staff, and faculty here at Western Carolina University.

Goals-

- **Reputation Management-** One of our primary goals for this PR campaign is to help give WCU a positive image by appealing to the target audience that their school and workplace cares about their health and wellbeing. This will help bolster WCU's good image amongst the community.
- **Relationship Management-** Another one of our gals for this PR campaign, is to help create as well as maintaining good connections with the students and staff of WCU. This will be beneficial to us because it will form a mutually beneficial bond between the students, staff, and faculty and WCU. This will help to leave the door open for us to use more effective PR campaigns with this targeted portion of the WCU population in the future.
- **Task Management-** What we hope to accomplish with this PR campaign is to convince our targeted population of WCU to receive a flu vaccination for the upcoming flu season. This is part of a larger goal to help decrease the amount of people who contract the flu virus here on the WCU campus, making everyone have a happier and healthier experience here at WCU.

Objectives-

- **Awareness-** One of our main objectives is to spread the awareness about the flu virus and how our target audiences are at a higher risk of contracting the flu virus based on the situations they're in, whether it be living in a small dorm room, to teaching a class full of children, we want to show that WCU cares about its students, staff, and faculty's health.
- **Acceptance-** As you may already know, many people are not too keen on receiving the flu vaccination. This is because many of these people believe the myths that receiving the flu vaccination will cause you to contract the flu virus.

One of the things we hope to accomplish with this PR campaign is to help debunk this myth and help our targeted audiences of the population accept that the flu shot will help them, not harm them.

- **Action-** For this PR campaign, we hope to convince our targeted audiences of the students, staff, and faculty to take action and receive a flu vaccination to help prevent them from contracting the flu virus in the upcoming flu season.

Tactics- Now that we've discussed what some of our goals and objectives for this PR campaign are, let's discuss how we're going to execute them. Below are the ways we are going to execute this PR campaign;

- **How we're going to reach the students-** In order to reach this portion of our targeted audiences, we have to take several various factors into consideration. First off you have to consider the financial status of most college students, primarily lower-classmen can't afford to spend money on many things, and I doubt that they would rather spend it on other things than a flu vaccination. So what do we do to remedy this? Simple we offer to provide free flu vaccinations to our students, as well as allowing the students who receive their injection with the remainder of the school day off.
- **How we're going to reach the facility management staff-** To reach this portion of our targeted audiences, we're not just going to offer them a free flu vaccination, we're going to do more than that. Though a free flu vaccination is a perk, we're going to offer a free lunch voucher to chili's for receiving a free flu vaccine. I find that this will be a good incentive for the facility management staff to receive a flu vaccination from health services here at WCU.
- **How we're going to reach the teaching faculty-** To reach this portion of our target audience, not only are we going to offer them a free flu vaccination, we're also going to make it so any teacher who receives a flu vaccination from health services, will have the rest of that day off. This will give the teaching faculty incentive to receive a flu vaccination from health

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services, ensuring that they can have a relaxing day off for the price of a measly flu vaccine.

Now that we have discussed the course of action we shall take, I shall write a press release below, this will be our official statement that we will release to the WCU community in order to inform them of our upcoming PR campaign to help combat the flu virus this flu season.

GET YOUR FREE FLU VACCINATION!

Health Services to be giving out free flu vaccinations

(Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N.C.) The health services department at WCU has announced that starting on the first of September.

Director of Health Services for Western Carolina University Pamela Buchanan made the following official statement; “In order to help our community here at Western Carolina University combat this flu season, the health services staff and myself have decided that it would be best to provide our university students as well as maintenance staff and faculty with free flu injections. We here at the Health Services department feel that this offer will give our university students and staff a good incentive to receive a flu vaccination. We hope that this will greatly impact how our community at Western Carolina University helps combat the flu virus this flu season”.

Located at 1 Bird Bldg Ln, Cullowhee, NC 28723, the Health Services department offers medical care to all of the students and staff here at Western Carolina University. The WCU Health Services’ primary goal is to ensure the health and wellbeing of the whole community here at Western Carolina University.

“We sincerely hope that the students, staff, and faculty will be encouraged to receive a flu vaccination to help prevent the spread of the flu virus for this upcoming flu season. We wish everyone the best and to remind them that we at WCU Health Services care about your health and wellbeing”.

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-Pamela Buchanan, Director of Health Services