



MEMORANDUM

FROM: Lamy Davis
Eleanor McManus

TO: Board of Trustees

RE: Action Plan

DATE: February 2, 2012

CC: President Rodney Erickson

Per our discussions, please find below an action plan we recommend the Board implement in stages over the next few months. We first detail “process” items – specific ways in which the Board should manage on-going inquiries from public stakeholders other than investigators. We then outline recommendations to substantively forward the Board’s agenda of improving its transparency and connection with the Penn State community, and of working with President Erickson to accomplish the broader university goals.

We look forward to discussing these recommendations with you. Please feel free to call if you have any further questions.

I. Process Steps

A. Routing of Media Inquiries – Immediately

We recommend that the University and trustees refer all media inquiries for the Board to Eleanor. Currently, many trustees are overwhelmed with media calls, and the University’s communications resources would be better spent on its typical mission – driving positive messages regarding the University. One of the best ways in which the Board can use us is for matters that would otherwise interrupt it and University personnel from working on their core issues.

We can determine which inquiries merit Board attention, which do not, and (in consultation with Board leadership) who on the Board could best address inquiries if necessary. Of course, we would coordinate closely with the University’s communications office to ensure unity of message and effort.



B. Media Training – First Two Weeks of February if Possible

As all of you now know, the ability to communicate one's messages while directly addressing media questions is its own skill, and there are nuances to talking on the radio, doing interviews with print media, or appearing on broadcast outlets. We recommend that Eleanor conduct a formal seminar with those trustees most likely to engage with the media.

C. Updates on Recent Developments – Weekly

In the months ahead, there will be periods when relatively little occurs and those in which much happens. We would like to provide the Board a weekly update of the prior week's activities and developments. Of course, we would update the Board more frequently as events require.

II. **Priority Substantive Steps**

A. Establish Schedule for Listening Tour – Last Week of February

The very first substantive item we must accomplish is evidencing the Board's commitment to its stated desire to have an on-going, two-way dialogue with the Penn State community. There are at least three core constituencies: students; faculty; and alumni. We need to determine which trustees can participate in these sessions, schedule them, and then make that schedule public. We should front-load the schedule with events in the State College area, but then expand to areas in which other campuses are located and in which substantial numbers of alumni reside.

One thing we should explore is whether President Frickson and the admissions office would like trustees to engage with admitted students in some appropriate manner. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported this week, the Sandusky matter has made it more difficult to attract out-of-state admitted students to the University. The Board might be able to help, though we recognize the trustees' time resources are limited and this might be beyond the limit of those resources given our priorities.



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B. Issues Regarding Coach Paterno – First Two Weeks of February

In the next two weeks, the Board should decide on how to address two key issues regarding Coach Paterno: whether to reach out to the Paterno family; and whether to honor Coach Paterno in some way.

As to the first issue, many of you have expressed a desire to reach out to the Paterno family, from both personal and institutional perspectives. While it is unlikely that the Paterno family would receive any outreach warmly, it is important both to try and to establish a record of having tried. We recommend that the Board identify one or two members to contact the family and ask for a private meeting.

As to the second issue, the Board faces a conundrum. On the one hand, it appears possible that the Board and public will learn additional information from the Froeh and Attorney General investigations that would indicate that Coach Paterno's handling of the Sandusky matter was worse than we currently know. On the other hand, such information (if it exists or comes out at all) is unlikely to emerge any time in the near future. At the same time, some University stakeholders are pressuring the University to recognize Coach Paterno formally. It is critical that the Board consider this issue and chart a course of action for the near- to intermediate-future.

C. Website and Social Media – First Two Weeks of February

There are a number of ways to communicate Board messages. The most timely and direct method is through social media and Penn State's own webpage. We recommend the following items.

(1) *Regarding the Board's website:*

- Karen and Keith should provide a statement on the Board's website about their new leadership. This could simply be the remarks both gave on January 20th;
- We should link to the *New York Times* article, with a brief synopsis of the trustees' comments;
- We should link to videos (to the extent they exist) of all press conferences, open meetings, statements, and press releases. Examples include the January 20th Board of Trustees press conference (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpUno7zKRvQ>), the PM session of the January 20th Board meeting (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zyl0p4ApDM>), and the AM session of the January 20th Board meeting (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1G7ydrY5pg4>);



- We should post a Q&A section derived from the *New York Times* and other media interviews. Any future media with similar questions can be directed to this site; and
- We should include a section on Board formation and process - how it is composed, when it holds elections, how people may run for a Board position, etc.

(2) *Facebook*

We recommend creating a separate Facebook page for the Board or using the University's existing Facebook page to deliver some of the core messages above as well as make available some of the same videos and official communications.

(3) *Twitter*

The Board should consider creating a Twitter feed through which the Board can communicate its messages in an incredibly timely manner to a dedicated audience. Students and committed alumni are most likely to subscribe. The chief benefit of doing this is that Twitter would provide an additional direct-to-stakeholder vehicle to communicate our messages to some of our most important constituents. The potential downsides are resource and space limitations.

First, Harvesting Twitter's benefits requires routine postings. Those postings do not have to be particularly important - e.g., they could be a trustee tweeting about a particularly basketball game's atmosphere and fun - but they have to be made somewhat regularly. We could do the actual postings, with content provided by rotating trustees, but this will require scarce trustee time.

Second, this is not a vehicle to deliver anything but headlines and links to communications vehicles that provide greater space. Twitter greatly limits the number of characters one may tweet, so tweets are meant to keep stakeholders engaged and not to persuade them.

D. *Coach O'Brien and the Football Program - End of February*

After he officially leaves his position with the New England Patriots, the University should organize several events with Coach O'Brien in which trustees play an active role. An ideal time could be when trustees are on campus at the end of February. We need to boost support for Coach O'Brien and evidence the Board's continuing commitment to Penn State athletics. Of course, Board members should help boost other sports teams and athletes as well, and we will work with the Athletic Director to identify appropriate opportunities.



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III. February – December Action Items for Board and Purple Strategies

A. Organize University Surrogates

We will work closely with the Board, the office of alumni relations, and the President's office to organize groups of surrogates that could speak to the media about the facts and the propriety of the Board's actions. This includes (a) alumni, (b) former University presidents; (c) victim advocates; (d) law professors; (e) former state attorneys general; and (f) perhaps faculty or student leaders.

B. Author and Publish Op-Eds

There will be milestones during the coming year (such as events in the criminal process) during which the Sandusky matter will flare up and the issue of Coach Paterno's firing will reemerge. During those times, it might help for President Erickson, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board, or others to publish op-eds in local University and State College media, in regional or national media, or on leading Internet sites.

C. Seize Opportunities to Loudly Communicate Positive University Developments

Every year, researchers, academics, and students receive State, national, and global recognition for their achievements. We need to amplify the manner in which the University recognizes these accomplishments on-campus and more broadly. As University academics begin to play a greater role in serving as the University's public face, the Board can help the communications office and the President's and Provost's offices draw attention to these issues.

D. THON weekend – National Media Exposure

THON, the largest student-run philanthropy organization in the world will hold its annual dance marathon from February 17th – February 19th. This is a great opportunity to bring positive national media to Penn State, and augment the efforts of THON. We would work with THON to bring national broadcast media to this event showing the great morale amongst Penn Staters for this event, run by students who have created this culture of philanthropy and "giving back". This is a unique opportunity to capitalize on Penn State media attention, and tell a positive story about Penn State.



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IV. Abuse-Related Initiatives

The initiatives below are those that we have raised with the Board and President Erickson thus far. Together, the Board and President Erickson need to prioritize these initiatives, announce them, and begin implementation. One possible method to announce them is for President Erickson to give a speech at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

A. CLARIFY REPORTING OBLIGATIONS FOR CRIMES ABUSE AND EMPOWER WHISTLEBLOWERS

The University must set clear, broad guidelines on what conduct should be reported to the University police, and it must establish clear protections for those who report potential misconduct. It appears that some University employees might have refrained from reporting their concerns out of fear of losing their jobs. The University should do what it can to reduce this fear.

B. FACULTY-STUDENT DISCIPLINARY BOARD

The goal of this board would be to set a single ethical/moral standard applicable to all, including athletes and staff. Included would be clear mandate to ensure non-discriminatory treatment afforded any PSU student, including athletes, for any infraction and strong statement against any form of sexual harassment or discrimination by President Erickson.

C. NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHILD ABUSE

This conference would be co-sponsored by the University and perhaps the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, and other state and national organizations, including those with which the University is already cooperating regarding the recently announced initiatives. The conference would focus on awareness of signs of child abuse, reporting systems, discipline, ethical and moral issues regarding reporting criteria, etc. This could become an annual national event so that Penn State would become the leader in this effort or a one-time event. It would be critical that the University present this carefully – e.g., not as a way to sweep past this, but as an implicit acknowledgement that the University has an additional responsibility as a result of Sandusky's conduct to improve public knowledge of this issue. The President and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Ernie Allen, has already agreed to appear at or to have the NCMEC co-sponsor this event. Mr. Allen and Craig Weidemann have already spoken on the telephone.



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D. ANNOUNCE A VOLUNTARY TRANSPARENCY/DISCLOSURE POLICY

We recommend the University announce a new policy on disclosure without any inference of abandoning the reasons why PSU should continue to be treated under a separate section (Section 15) of the RTK law, as Pitt, Lincoln and Temple are treated. We can discuss this idea further.

E. HOTLINE FOR CHILD ABUSE, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND OTHER ABUSES

This includes expanding and better publicizing the University "hotline" on discrimination, harassment, and abuse of any kind. This includes an anonymous reporting system, staffed by professionals and experts in the fields of child abuse, bullying (physical or online), as well as other forms of discrimination and harassment. This should be fully integrated and publicized among all the branch campuses.

IV. Rapid Response

In light of the recent events, it is important to have procedures in place, how we proceed and we respond. There will times when specific events will occur needing an immediate response from the Board. Some of these we can plan for such as the release of the Freeh report, and further court proceedings. Other instances we will need to have a plan in place with proper procedures which includes:

- a. Incorporate a system where everyone is aware of the situation in a timely manner
- b. Organize a clear order of decision making – who will respond and when?
- c. Message dissemination – what will be the best way to communicate the Board's message to students, alumni, faculty, and media?

We look forward to working with the Board at Penn State University at this challenging time. This document is subject to change, and can be revised dependent on news at the time. This should be used as a guideline, and a work in progress. We are open to all ideas and suggestions from the Board.