



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Committee on Outreach and Community Affairs

**FROM:** Purple Nations Solutions

**RE:** Short-Term Tactics and Benchmarks

**DATE:** February 23, 2012

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Per the Committee's request, we outline below the key, short-term action items on which we intend to work with the Committee, the full Board of Trustees, and the Administration. These are initiatives we want to begin operating within the next three months. Importantly, please place these tactics in the context of our overall strategy. We have four strategic objectives for this year:

- (1) Set the factual record straight regarding the Board's actions since the Sandusky matter arose, and evidence that the Administration and Board govern Penn State well;
- (2) Evidence that Penn State continues to be one of the country's best educational and research institutions as a result of its students, faculty, and staff;
- (3) Manage the Sandusky-related milestones as effectively as possible with every University stakeholder; and
- (4) Rapidly respond to unexpected developments.

The items we highlight below are some of the tactics we expect to employ within the next three months to help accomplish the strategic objectives. We categorize our action items by issue area.



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## **I. The Board's Decision to Relieve Coach Paterno of His Coaching Duties**

### **A. Op-Ed**

As you know, we have drafted an op-ed explaining the Board's decision. We hope to see the Centre Daily Times initially publish it, with subsequent distribution in published form on all Penn State platforms. Such platforms include all official Penn State list serves, PSU newswire, social media, as well as the "Openness" and Board websites.

**TARGET DATE:** Immediately upon Board approval.

### **B. Comprehensive Explanation**

This document is Stephanie's more detailed explanation. If the Board decides to publish this document, we should limit our own distribution to the Penn State community. This document addresses the decisions regarding the key Administration officers in addition to Coach Paterno as well as other key. Of course, we should expect that the document will receive wider media and other stakeholder attention.

**TARGET DATE:** Immediately upon Board approval.

## **II. Coach Paterno's Contract and Anticipated Agreement with Family**

Based on the last week, it is likely that these issues will draw significant media and other stakeholder scrutiny. We do not yet have sufficient facts on which to base specific recommendations, but we will propose action items on this issue once we have learned the facts.

## **III. Coach O'Brien**

Coach O'Brien has a great story that is crucial as we shape Penn State's new narrative. It is important to showcase the new coach, and show that Penn State University is moving in a new direction regarding athletics. The coach should tell his story, his approach to the team, and his strategy going forward. This needs to be in a controlled environment. Here are our recommendations:

- A. Alumni Magazine and Penn Stater Magazine:** We need to work on a specific time (perhaps in September as football season begins) for the Coach to do interviews in these publications which reach students and alumni.

**WHEN:** September



- B. **ESPN:** we recommend Coach O'Brien do his first sit-down interview with ESPN. We will work with ESPN to ensure this will garner the most exposure, and we will include video of him coaching, in the weight room, talking to students, and his philosophy going forward.  
WHEN: need to discuss with Dave Joyner and Coach O'Brien.
- C. **INTERNAL VIDEO:** We recommend putting together a video produced by Penn State of Coach O'Brien. This would include interviews with him, with students, faculty, as well as video of him coaching and interacting with the players. This would be posted on all Penn State platforms, including the website, and distributed through list-serves and social media to the Penn State community and alumni community.  
WHEN: need to discuss with Dave Joyner and Coach O'Brien.

#### **NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE CONFERENCE:**

We recommend working with the National Center for Missing and Exploited children to put together a National Conference on Child Abuse.

#### **ALUMNI OUTREACH:**

Since there is so much angst by the alumni, we propose a process aimed at creating a greater dialogue with alumni, in addition to an explanation by the Board. The Board must show its commitment to having an on-going, two-way dialogue with the Penn State alumni community. This includes:

- A. Alumni listserve – send out the op-ed and the comprehensive explanation to the alumni listserve as soon as it is made public.  
WHEN: ASAP
- B. Alumni magazine interview with Karen and Keith – talk to Rod Kirsch about offering the next issue of the alumni magazine an interview with the chair and co-chair of the Board. This would be a Q&A session and we would prepare both Karen and Keith for this interview.  
WHEN: in the next issue of the magazine which would be April or May
- C. Alumni magazine interview with Coach O'Brien – we propose Coach O'Brien to do an interview with the Alumni magazine about his new role at PSU and the football team going forward. We will work with Coach O'Brien preparing him for this interview.  
WHEN: We propose to talk with Dave Joyner and Coach O'Brien about an adequate time for this interview.



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#### **STUDENT OUTREACH:**

We have a couple suggestions how the Board can reach out to students in fostering a more open dialogue. After speaking with Peter Khoury and his colleagues the President of the Undergraduate Association and the Graduate Association, it is their understanding that students were most disappointed to have found out the news about President Spanier and Coach Paterno from the media. They have incredible support for President Erickson and Coach O'Brien. We recommend:

- A. **STUDENT LISTENING TOUR:** The students have offered to organize a setting where Board members would be invited to speak with the students. We could have control of this format, and it would have a moderator with Q&A's from the students.  
**WHEN:** We recommend this for APRIL, - after the elections.
- B. **Penn Stater Magazine -** We recommend Board members do an interview with the Penn Stater Magazine as this is a news outlet many students and faculty read.  
**WHEN:** We recommend this for APRIL - discuss with news editor when they would want this.

#### **WEBCAST:**

Rather than participating in a town hall format, we suggest a bi-monthly webcast by certain members of the Board. This would humanize the Board members and also to convey our key initiatives in a clear and upfront manner. The webcast will also center on new themes, messages, etc.

The first webcast would be from Karen and Keith and we recommend this be done in March when both will be on Penn State campus together. We would solicit questions a few days in advance and take the ten best or most focused questions. We would work with University relations or a private company to stage the webcast. This would be on YouTube, the Openness website, the Board website, and we would work with Tom Poole and Bill Mahon in distributing this video to various Penn State groups.

**WHEN:** We recommend putting this together in mid-March when Karen and Keith will both be on campus together.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA - BOARD OF TRUSTEES WEBSITE:**

- A. **WEBSITE:** The website for the Board of Trustees needs to be updated. We recommend our team work with whomever works on the Board's website to "renew" the site. We can re-launch this website with various statements put out by the Board, the Freeh report update provided in January, links to the NY Times article, Karen and Keith's remarks to the Board on January 20<sup>th</sup>, video clips of all open meetings, press conferences, etc.



- B. **BOARD Q&A:** We recommend adding a section to the website that would be a Q&A about the structure of the Board, how it operates, and what it does. This would be similar to the Q&A on the "openness" website. Eleanor has begun work on these questions and can provide them.
- C. **FACEBOOK AND TWITTER** - starting a Board Facebook and Twitter page. This would be linked to the official Penn State Facebook pages, Twitter feeds and LinkedIn sites. We would like to discuss with the Board this platform. On the one hand this is a great way to communicate directly to the community. On the other hand, this opens the door to a number of negative postings, and our survey from the Big Ten Universities, done in collaboration with Bill Mahon, do NOT recommend this for a number of reasons. Since Penn State already has 400 "official" Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and LinkedIn sites, it is also a feasible to use these already created sites to get a message across from the Board. In fact the current Penn State Facebook page has 260,000 friends.
- D. **VIDEO:** We recommend uploading a short message from Karen and Keith to the Board's website which can also be distributed to all constituents about the new themes, messages, Committee structures and initiatives. The video would be short, and simply be a message from Karen and Keith to the community.

**WHEN:** We recommend work begin on this website immediately. We suggest putting together the video from Karen and Keith AFTER elections in April.

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**EXTRA DELIVERABLES:**

This includes additional work outside of the current plan:

**Online reputation management:** There is a firm called Rep Equity that focuses on online reputation management. This can help individual trustees, as well as the University as a whole move negative stories past the first page of Google searches, and move more positive stories to the first page. We recommend using this firm regarding online reputation for individual Board members and the University.

**Opinion Research firm:** the Alumni Association contract with an opinion research firm to conduct focus groups in about four cities, perhaps conducting two groups in each city. While not having the high sample number that a survey would offer, focus



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groups would offer knowledge-baseline testing and enable the Alumni Association to understand how alumni reacted when they learned key facts about Coach Paterno's dismissal, the Trustees' actions, etc.

**Crisis management plan:** We can work with the University to put together a crisis management strategy going forward. This would include process, work chart, likely crisis', basic talking points, training and simulated exercise, etc. This will take significant time and resources, and we can work on putting this together and will quote a specific fee.

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