

Western Society for Kinesiology and Wellness  
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## **A NEWSLETTER TO CONNECT ALUMNI TO KINESIOLOGY MAJOR STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

The newsletter began with a simple conversation about needs. Approval from faculty was solicited, alumni and current student emails amassed, two co-editors selected, and format and procedure established. Together, the newsletter staff designed what would soon be known as The Cougar Movement Newsletter. Once the design was established, the key was to recruit at least one faculty to require a writing project for the newsletter in a Kinesiology major's class. These stories were collected by the newsletter staff, proof read, and selected for content in one of the multiple categories targeted. Stories deemed professional and interesting were added to the newsletter. A faculty member was interviewed by the staff and photographed for a lead story about the current Kinesiology area at the university. It was soon after that the first newsletter was successfully published and distributed by email.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Alumni and students sometimes ignore each other. The goal of The Cougar Movement Newsletter staff was to connect the two – this was almost like marketing our young students, who need mentors, to our more experienced alumni (Halligan, 2006).

The relationship was planned as a symbiotic one. Students and alumni connections help students make decisions (Akosi, 2011). Students would be able to understand what the future holds for the profession. Alumni would be in touch with current happenings at the university while helping to make the future possible for each of the students using internship opportunities and reference letters.

The Washington State University (WSU) Kinesiology program would benefit from alumni input acquired through the newsletter. Benefits for alumni included alumni activities, alumni ideas, and potential for mentorship (Arizona State University, circa 2012). The newsletter also was created to help alumni fondly remember the time spent at WSU.

## PROJECT

The purpose of the newsletter was to connect alumni and students. Questionnaires were included in the newsletter to encourage responses from Alumni (Blackbird, 2008). The purpose of the questionnaires was to gain information about the profession and to positively encourage students in the profession (Sanderson, 2000). Connection between students and alumni was the goal (see Figure 1).

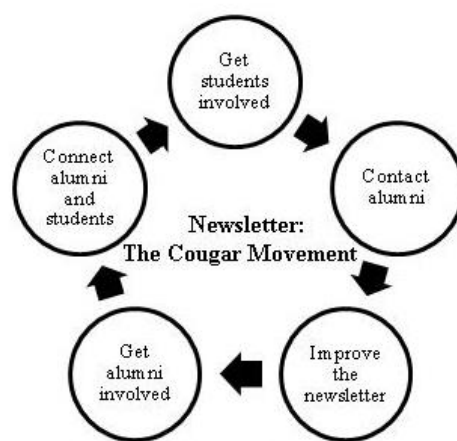


Figure 1. The goal of the newsletter was to create a connection between current students and alumni.

The newsletter began as a simple conversation between a faculty member and two students. Soon after, ideas to accomplish a newsletter were discussed. Within two weeks the idea was presented to the Kinesiology faculty, Kinesiology student support was solicited, lists of alumni contacts were collected, and guidelines were established.

Faculty approved the idea as representative of our discipline (San Jose State University, 2012; Arizona State University, circa 2012; Lipscomb University, 2011). Immediate student involvement occurred in one beginning level course. The professor was convinced by the editors of the newsletter to require story writing as a class project for the newsletter.

A competition in classes and in the student professional organization to name the newsletter increased student interest and involvement in the process (out of eight entries, The Cougar Movement proposed by Ivy Gwost was selected). The masthead for the Newsletter was generated by Rachel Harris, (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The masthead was designed by a student to represent the student professional organization – PEK.

The last four years of students enrolled in the Kinesiology major became the target of the first organized newsletter digital mail out. Eight hundred email addresses and phone numbers comprised this population. The student professional organization (WSU-NWSPN/PEK) proposed sending the newsletter bi-annually to current students and alumni.

### MEANS

Format was discussed between the student professional organization and the editing team. The first principle for ‘format’ was to ensure unity in content and style for minimal required editing. The newsletter format included short, 4-5 sentence paragraphs describing 1) academics, 2) professional activities, 3) special awards, 4) sport team results, 5) special occurrences in the department – student conferences..., 6) student activities, and 7) other business deemed appropriate.

By the end of the first semester two hundred stories were submitted and ready for editing and selection. A suggestion by a Kinesiology faculty, Dr. Ulrich-French, indicated that a good collection site for reports of news might include ‘Facebook.’ Future collection may move in this direction. For now an email address was chosen as the device for ease of use by alumni, faculty and students ([WSUKinesiology@gmail.com](mailto:WSUKinesiology@gmail.com)). A faculty member was interviewed by the newsletter staff and photographed for a lead story about the current Kinesiology area at the university to add to the stories submitted by the students.

The strategy was to keep email and story entries short and to the point. To accomplish this strategy a list of instructions were developed (see Table 1).

Table 1. Newsletter – Short Entry Instructions

<b>Newsletter – Short Entry Instructions</b>	
1.	Each submission needs an all cap, one line title.
2.	Each submission should be no longer than 4 sentences of about 15-20 words each.
3.	At the end of the story, enter your by-line and year of graduation and major specialty.
4.	Focus story on one of seven categories:
a.	Class activities
b.	Professional Activities
c.	Special awards
d.	Intramural team results
e.	Special occurrences in the department – student conferences...
f.	Reports on teams or student activities
g.	Other
5.	Maintain professional language that is appropriate and positive.
6.	Editors reserve the right to adjust word choices and structure to adhere to professional quality and newsletter format.

The editors also spent time to establish a procedure that could be communicated to future editors in training. Since students matriculate every four years and usually do not become heavily committed to a professional project as large as the newsletter until late in the student career, a straight forward process was needed to increase the likelihood of continuity in the newsletter editing team. This was accomplished by focusing on 1) required submission, 2) editing from the newsletter staff, 3) review from the faculty advisor, 4) and a last reread process prior to publication and dissemination (see Figure 3).

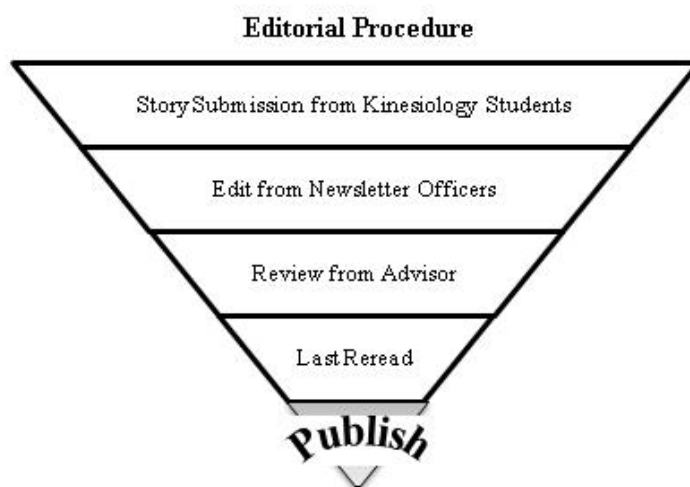


Figure 3. The process for the newsletter editor team included several steps leading to publication.

Over the first preparation cycle, and after establishing an editorial procedure, other goals were included. The primary goal remained, to connect students and alumni. Other goals included an entries per

newsletter goal, minimum submission goal for the newsletter each semester, expansion of the alumni list, and inclusion of alumni news in the newsletter (see Table 2; Blackbird, 2008).

Together, alumni and students created a first edition of an interactive Newsletter that kept alumni updated on experiences of students (similar to personal college experiences). Also the newsletter kept students updated through alumni on what life outside of classroom (in the profession) was like.

### OUTCOMES

The newsletter was received with mixed reviews. The alumni sent positive reviews about the idea of a newsletter and praised that it was accomplished. A few were critical of the content. "Content should be more in depth," was the suggestion. But, alumni that responded understood the benefit that the newsletter could offer by encouraging its continuation.

Faculty were more reticent to participate. With increase in class sizes and load requirements, the impression was that "Someone else working on it was a good thing!" Essentially, faculty did not respond to anything dealing with the newsletter unless specifically asked.

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