

Communication Plan

MELUS Conference 2020

MEET US AT MELUS, CHETZ!

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Executive Summary

The MELUS society is hosting its 34th annual conference April 2-5, 2020 in New Orleans for teachers, students, and artists who study multicultural literature. The purpose of this communication plan is to provide event organizers with strategies which focus on promoting the call for papers and the conference event. Organizers would like to increase the number of quality submissions and conference attendees. This plan addresses a range of audiences: the society's members, professors, students, artists, high school faculty, local and statewide cultural organizations, and press outlets. The promotional activities for the Call for Papers (CFP) and event advertising is limited to a \$2,000 budget and will rely heavily on social media and the conference website for information sharing.

Suggested communication channels for the strategies in this plan include various press (local, university, radio), email, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat), physical letters and flyers, the MELUS website, and a dedicated MELUS 2020 limited run podcast. Costs for some social media or press may vary based on desired complexity or visibility, however many of the channels suggested can be utilized at no cost. The timeline for all activities is June, 2019--March 2020.

In addition to the methods used in prior conferences, Group 1 suggests five (5) new strategies to achieve the organizer's goals:

1. Create a visually engaging and simple theme for conference materials, including several coordinated slogans

2. Send the CFP to untapped, unexpected audiences such as high school faculty
3. Utilize new social media channels like Twitter and Instagram
4. Highlight and promote New Orleans activities and events that occur during the conference
5. Focus efforts on engaging local educators and organizations to educate them about MELUS

Helpful resources are appended to the plan:

- Sample press releases
- Email and letter verbiage
- List of research and photo sources
- Sample social media posts
- Comprehensive list of contact information (including colleges, high schools, cultural organizations, and media)
- Keynote speaker biographies
- Sample radio/podcast advertising script
- MELUS 2020 podcast ideas

Situation Overview

The MELUS society is hosting its 34th annual conference for teachers and students who study multicultural literature. The 2020 conference will take place April 2-5 in New Orleans, Louisiana at Le Meridien Hotel. The project is to develop a communication plan, for event organizers to implement, which focuses on promoting the call for papers and the conference. The audience of the conference historically comprises the society's members as well as professors, students, and artists who contribute to the discussion of multiethnic literature in the U.S. Organizers have indicated a desire to increase the number of quality proposals and increase the number of attendees from across the nation. The promotional activities for the Call for Papers and event advertising is limited to a \$2,000 budget and will rely heavily on social media and the conference website.

Overall Goals

1. Increase the number of *quality* proposals.
2. Increase the attendance of the conference.
3. Increase awareness of MELUS and the conference in the local area.

Audiences

Goal 1	• MELUS Society members • Professors and students of English, history, and interdisciplinary studies, especially programs of cultural significance • High school faculty at local, cultural, and artistic schools • Local and statewide cultural and artistic organizations • Local press and radio listeners
Goal 2	• MELUS Society members • Professors and students of English, history, and interdisciplinary studies, especially programs of cultural significance • High school faculty at local, cultural, and artistic schools • Local and statewide cultural and artistic organizations • Local press and radio listeners
Goal 3	• High school faculty at local, cultural, and artistic schools • Local and statewide cultural and artistic organizations • Local press and radio listeners • Local literature businesses

Communication Channels

- Press--print and digital
 - Local
 - Universities
- Email
- Social media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - Snapchat
- Physical mailings & postings (letters & flyers)
- Radio stations (e.g. WWNO)
- MELUS Website
- MELUS Podcast “American Stories” (tentative title)

Associated Costs

- Facebook/Instagram and Twitter advertisements have a variable cost based on start/end date, as well as daily and/or lifetime budgets
- A Snapchat filter would cost approximately \$136.99 (set from 02 April 0800 – 05 April 2200 to cover the entire block of the Le Meridien)
- Printing costs (hand delivery of printed items will save on postage)
- Advertising rates on local podcasts averages about \$20/1000 listens
- Optional paid advertising (\$100-200, depending on avenue)

Goals 1-3

Strategic Objective:

Create a visually engaging, but simple, theme for the conference materials.

Action steps:

1. Choose a variety of integrated slogans for the conference: “A/Wake in New Orleans,” “We are the stories we tell” and “Meet Us at MELUS, Cher!”
2. Choose a small selection of positive images that bring forth aspects of the CFP (e.g. waterways in Louisiana, representations of New Orleans diversity).
3. Use selected images and slogan in social posts, printed materials, and conference website.
4. Consider engaging the UNO Marketing Department to help with graphic design and promotions.

Activities and materials:

- Image collection and source information (attached)
- Call for papers verbiage
- Flyers (CFP attached)
- Social media channels
- Conference website

Target audience:

Faculty, students, and artists of the literature. MELUS members. Social media audience.

Goal 1: Increase the number of *quality* proposals.**Strategic Objective:**

Extend the reach of the Call for Papers (CFP) to untapped, unexpected audiences in addition to its traditional audience.

Action steps:

1. Email the CFP to list of local area high school, university, and college faculty and local arts and culture organizations.
2. Consider mailing a physical letter to select faculty or institutions.
3. Submit press release to local and university contacts according to timeline.
4. Advertise the CFP in unexpected places, like flyers at local bookstores and college campuses (especially UNO).
5. Air a PSA on public radio or on its website to capture a diverse audience of educated thinkers.
6. Distribute CFP to MELUS members and post on MELUS website.
7. Post information about CFP and MELUS 2020 podcast “American Stories” on MELUS social media channels according to timeline.
8. Consider including the UNO Theater and Film Department in MELUS podcast development and casting.

Activities and materials:

- Contact list (attached)
- Email verbiage/letter (attached)
- CFP press release (attached)
- CFP flyer (attached)
- Sample social media posts (attached)
- Radio script (attached)
- Podcast description and sample schedule (attached)
- Call for papers

Target audience:

Faculty, students, and artists of the literature. MELUS members. Press and social media.

Goal 2: Increase the attendance of the conference.**Strategic Objective:**

Use social media platforms to engage new audiences and share conference details.

Action steps:

1. Create MELUS 2020 website, MELUS 2020 Twitter account, and MELUS Society Instagram account.
2. Designate at least one person to actively monitor and interact with social channels.
3. Advertise about the new website and accounts on current social media (Facebook page and MELUS Society Twitter).
4. Post regularly during the Call for Papers (CFP) to encourage and remind people to send their proposals.
5. Post regularly after the CFP deadline has passed to encourage attendance of the conference itself.
6. Make sure to crosspost (Instagram posts can be shared on Twitter and Facebook at the same time).
7. Make sure to use hashtags and the handles of anyone you want to include in the posts/promote (e.g. keynote speakers)
8. Advertise MELUS podcast on all social media platforms.

9. Mention CFP and conference at least once during each MELUS podcast episode.

Activities and materials:

- MELUS 2020 website
- MELUS 2020 Twitter account
- MELUS Society Instagram account
- MELUS podcast description and sample schedule (attached)
- Regular posts on all channels
- Hashtags (e.g. #MELUS2020, #melusNOLA)
- Advertisements for conference

Target audience:

Faculty, students, and artists of the literature. MELUS members. Social media audiences. Podcast listeners.

Goal 2: Increase the attendance of the conference.

Strategic Objective:

Promote activities and events that occur in New Orleans at the same time as MELUS conference.

Action steps:

1. Post information about local events on the conference website and make social media posts sharing the information.
2. Include highlights of big events in press release.

Activities and materials:

- List of New Orleans events/attractions (attached)
- Social media posts and website
- Event press release (attached)

Target audience:

Visitors to the MELUS site and social media pages. MELUS members. Press.

Goal 3: Increase awareness of MELUS and the conference in the local area.**(subsequently affects Goals 1 & 2)****Strategic Objective:**

Engage local educators and educational organizations in the CFP and educate them about MELUS.

Action steps:

1. See goal 1, above (action steps 1-5).
2. Offer a discounted conference rate to local educators (maybe just high school faculty) who are able to attend only part of the conference during non-school days.
3. Utilize local university resources to spread the word (especially UNO): flyers, student newspaper, graduate newsletters.

Activities and materials:

- Contact list (attached)
- CFP flyer (attached)
- CFP email verbiage (attached)
- Event advertisements

Target audience:

New Orleans-based educators, students, and artists. New MELUS members!

Possible Partnerships

Ogden Museum

University of New Orleans

Neighborhood Story Project

UNO Press

New Orleans Center for Creative Arts

Contemporary Arts Center

Possible Sponsorships/Promotional Venues

Pagoda Cafe

Brigtsen's Restaurant

Maple Leaf Bar

Faulkner House Books

Octavia Books

Garden District Book Shop

Quarter Stitch

Belladonna Spa

Fleurty Girl

Kitchen Witch

Tubby and Co's

Zotz Cafe

Neutral Ground Coffee House

Timeline

Before 01 June 2019	• Launch MELUS 2020 website and post CFP to homepage • Create MELUS Instagram account and link to Facebook page (with a post about it on both FB and MELUS's main Twitter account) • Create MELUS 2020 Twitter account (post about it on FB, IG, and the main MELUS TW page) • Develop and cast MELUS podcast • Secure recording location, equipment, and host sites for podcast
June to July 2019 (summertime)	• Disseminate information about CFP • Send press releases • Email members and new contacts • Mail/deliver physical letters • Post flyers for CFP at local centers/bookstores • Advertise on radio (an ongoing PSA) and podcast • Kick off MELUS podcast on June 1, continue bi-weekly until final episode on April 4 • Post on all social media accounts about the opening of the CFP • Make at least one post per month
August to September 2019	• Post flyers for CFP at local campuses • Post on social media at least once in August and twice in September to remind followers of the CFP deadline • Continue promoting CFP on MELUS podcast
October to December 2019	• Post on social media about highlights of the conference (at least once a month, but more posts generate more traffic on pages and more followers)

	• Keynote speakers, events during April 2-5, landmarks or places to visit (e.g. restaurants or museums), any discounts given (e.g. for teachers who cannot attend the conference on April 2-3), etc.
January to March 2020	• Mid- to late March send out press releases about the conference • Post flyers for the conference • Advertise through radio, podcast, and social media about the conference • Promote final episode of MELUS podcast recorded live on April 4 at conference • Continue social media posts (separate from actual paid advertisements, should be posting even if ads are being generated) • If created, mention Snapchat filters in posts to encourage people to use them

Evaluation Methods

Before the conference event, Goal 1 (increase number of quality proposals) can be assessed by consulting the CFP review team to measure the increase or decrease of submitted papers as well as the number of accepted papers. A quick survey can gauge the review team's judgment on the overall quality of submissions. Goal 3 (increase awareness of MELUS in local area) can partially be assessed at this point by counting how many papers were submitted by Louisiana residents. Goal 2 (increase participants nationwide) will be easily assessed by comparing the attendance number to previous conferences. Assessing the residency of attendees will demonstrate whether the national range of conference participants changed from prior years. A subset evaluation of Louisiana attendees will further assess Goal 3. The effectiveness of MELUS's social media presence can be evaluated by the number of likes any post receives, whether posts are shared, the number of followers (or an increase of followers for current accounts), size of podcast audience, the use of hashtags associated with the event, and the number of clicks on an advertisement.

Appendix