

COMMUNICATION PLANNING AND ENGAGED STUDENTS: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN A SOCIAL MEDIA COURSE

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MDST 485 - Background

- MDST 485, Communicating with New Media, has been offered since Spring 2012 (6 semesters and 4 abbreviated summer sessions)
- Students work with a community organization to develop a communication strategy that includes blogging, YouTube videos, Facebook, and Twitter

MDST 485 - Challenges

- Aligning student ability, organization expectations, and the timeframe of a 15-week semester
- Working with students to conceptualize an issue for which they can create media, in the context of a planning process (not ad hoc)
- A large amount of new content for students, some of which is theoretical and perceived as “difficult”
- Engaging with the practical issues confronted by the community organizations and thinking about the connection to course materials

MDST 485 – Making Connections

- Current and former community partners:
 - Casa de Esperanza
 - Centro Guadalupano
 - Citizen Alum program
 - Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES)
 - Dayton's Bluff Community Council
 - Dream of Wild Health
 - East Side Prosperity Campaign
 - Get Up, Stand Up (GUSU)
 - Hmong American Partnership (HAP)
 - Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA)
 - Seven Fires Summit
 - Valhalla Place
 - Voices for Racial Justice (VFRJ)

MDST 485 – Making Connections

- An example: Voices for Racial Justice
- VFRJ has been a partner since Spring 2013 (5 semesters)
- VFRJ's mission: To advance racial, cultural, social, and economic justice in Minnesota through organizer and leadership training, strategic convenings and campaigns, and research and policy tools.
- Their web address is: <http://voicesforracialjustice.org>

MDST 485 – Voices for Racial Justice

- Students often struggle with how to approach a communication strategy for VFRJ
- This is partially due to the scale of the issue, and partially due to nature of the issue itself
- Here's an example of a video students developed for VFRJ: https://youtu.be/B6Xu_Yse9wE *
- To address the challenges inherent in the class I introduce students to a communication strategy planning process

* VFRJ was previously called the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP)

MDST 485

- Discussion questions:
 1. What do you imagine would be the key steps in a strategy planning model?
 2. What ideas do you have for getting students to engage with complex, abstract, large-scale social issues?

MDST 485 – Some of the tools I use

- A planning process called “C-Planning”

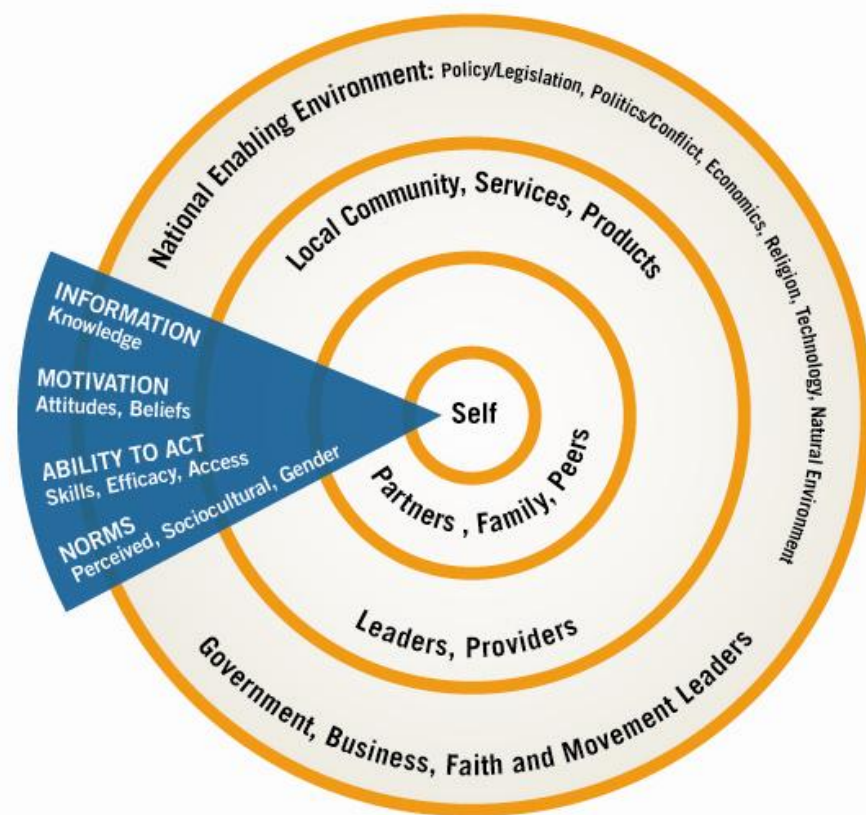


SOURCE: Adapted from Health Communication Partnership, P-Process Brochure, CCP at JHU (2003); McKee, Manoncourt, Chin, Carnegie, ACADA Model (2000); Parker, Dalrymple, and Durden, The Integrated Strategy Wheel (1998); AED, Tool Box for Building Health Communication Capacity (1995); National Cancer Institute: Health Communication Program Cycle (1989).

MDST 485 – Some of the tools I use

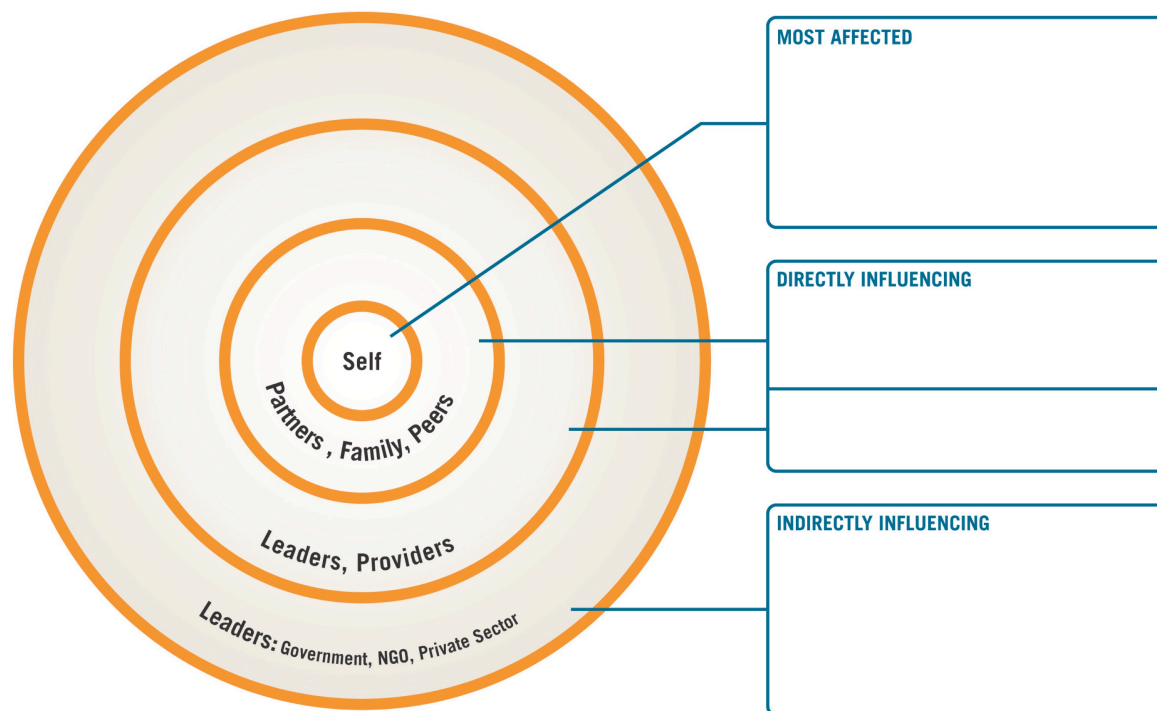
- A theoretical framework called the socio-ecological model
- The model includes theoretical components at multiple levels (self, peers, community, and environment) and is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecology of Human Development

A Socio-Ecological Model for Change



MDST 485 – Some of the tools I use

- Specific pen and paper documents that students use to start to understand the people at the center of the issue
- People analysis



SOURCE: Adapted from McKee, Manoncourt, Chin and Carnegie (2000)

MDST 485 – Some of the tools I use

- Summary of analysis worksheet which students complete as a group

STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

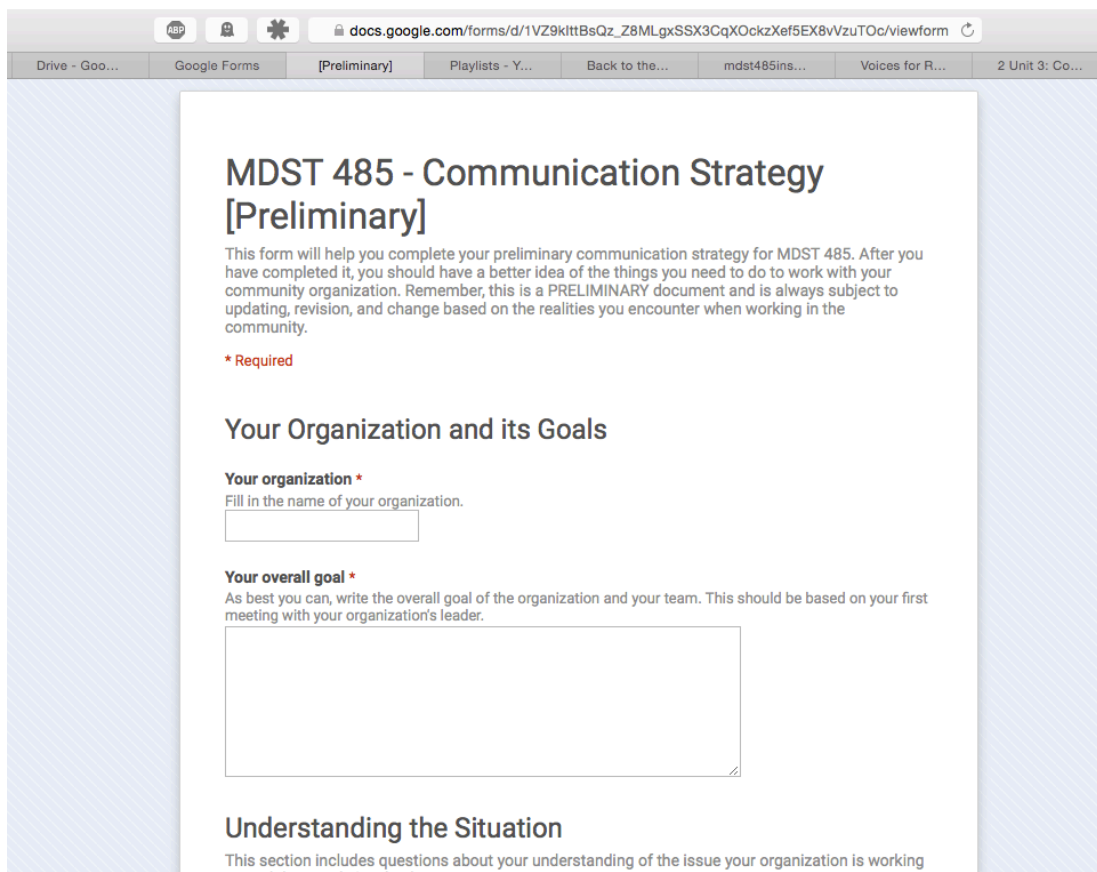
WORKSHEET: Summary of Analysis

Directions: Consider all that came from the analysis so far. Write a concise problem statement, noting whether the statement might require further research. Add a statement about the changes the problem calls for.

Using this formula helps to summarize the situation, people, and context analysis (which usually take up a couple of pages in the strategy's background section) into one paragraph.	
What's happening?	
Where and to whom?	
With what effect?	
Who and what is influencing the situation and with what effect?	
And as a result of what causes?	
Final Problem Statement	
Changes the Problem Calls For (remember to think about the tipping point for change)	
Your Theory of Change (guidance in next pages)	

MDST 485 – Some of the tools I use

- An online communication strategy template form developed in g-docs:



The screenshot shows a Google Forms interface. The browser address bar displays the URL: docs.google.com/forms/d/1VZ9klttBsQz_Z8MLgxSSX3CqXOckzXef5EX8vVzuTOc/viewform. The form title is "MDST 485 - Communication Strategy [Preliminary]". Below the title, there is an introductory paragraph: "This form will help you complete your preliminary communication strategy for MDST 485. After you have completed it, you should have a better idea of the things you need to do to work with your community organization. Remember, this is a PRELIMINARY document and is always subject to updating, revision, and change based on the realities you encounter when working in the community." A red asterisk indicates a required field. The section heading is "Your Organization and its Goals". Under this heading, there are two sub-sections: "Your organization *" with the instruction "Fill in the name of your organization." and a text input field; and "Your overall goal *" with the instruction "As best you can, write the overall goal of the organization and your team. This should be based on your first meeting with your organization's leader." and a large text area. The next section heading is "Understanding the Situation" with the instruction "This section includes questions about your understanding of the issue your organization is working".

- This link should work in the PDF of this PPT:
- https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VZ9klttBsQz_Z8MLgxSSX3CqXOckzXef5EX8vVzuTOc/viewform

Communication Planning and Engaged Students

- Returning to our previous questions:
 2. What ideas do you have for getting students to engage with complex, abstract, large-scale social issues?

Communication Planning and Engaged Students

- I believe that working through a communication planning process helps students to better understand their role in their communities, because they gain a deeper understanding of the issues and how communication can contribute to positive change
- Students leave the class with a high level of engagement in the opportunities and challenges involved in communication about social issues, and with their community organization
- I have found the tools presented here to be of value in helping students through the complicated process of connecting their creative work in the class to the process of strategy design

Communication Planning and Engaged Students

- Thank you!