



**In this course, students were paired with a nonprofit organization and asked to develop a strategic communication plan that would help the organization achieve a funding, program or policy goal. Below are student reflections on their experiences.**

## BLOOM FOUNDATION

<https://www.hellobloom.org/>

SMART goal: Establish up to three new partnerships/sponsors with corporations or organizations that cumulatively provide \$10,000 in additional funds for the Bloom Foundation to offer additional programs for girls experiencing bullying by December 2021.

### Katie Clare

Nonprofit Communications was my favorite class I took this past semester, and perhaps my favorite course I have taken at Northeastern thus far in my college career. Entering college last year, I was unsure of what type of career I wanted to pursue and I was very overwhelmed by Northeastern's intense pre-professional focus. While I am still exploring my options, I finally have one future career interest thanks to this class. Not only did I enjoy learning all the aspects of nonprofit communications, I also felt like it came relatively naturally to me unlike many of my other classes. I was challenged in a good way by the service learning dimension of the class because I knew what my group and I were producing actually mattered to Bloom Foundation. The real-world aspect of the project made this course uniquely rewarding.

### Katherine Costa

Participating in service-learning project as a part of this class was such a unique experience to have an extended hands-ons opportunity to engage with the entire process of strategic communications from start to finish. I feel like many of the skills I have strengthened throughout the semester came from this experience specifically. Practical skills including but not limited to strategic thinking, resourcefulness, communication, analytical thinking, creative problem solving, organization, and even some extra confidence!

### Gabi Romero

Some skills that were refined throughout this course was my confidence in my work as well as decisiveness. I initially came into this class with severe imposter syndrome, I asked myself how I, a 19 year old at the time, could be making a plan for established adults and essentially tell them what they should do, despite having no experience. However, to my surprise, I actually felt as if my opinions were valued not only by Bloom, but also within the classroom. I was continually treated as an adult both inside and outside the classroom which is something I really appreciated because it made me more confident in my decision making skills and ultimately in constructing a final product for Bloom. This class was unique in the sense that it didn't feel as if the professor was continually telling us how much we didn't know, but rather you worked with us in a collaborative manner to teach us these skills. I really enjoyed how engaging and relevant this course was because I feel like subject matter such as this could very easily have been very cut and dry. I now have actual tools to bring into the nonprofit world and it was the first time I felt like as if I was doing something meaningful.

## BAY AREA WOMEN'S SPORTS INITIATIVE

<https://bawsi.org/>

SMART goal: Increase BAWSI's social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and twitter by 300%, to be set-up to launch our Got Sports? Campaign on social media in September of 2021 with the goal of increasing donors to BAWSI through sharing of sports impact on female leaders in Silicon Valley by June 2021.

### Elizabeth Anton

As a group I think we successfully created a reasonable plan that BAWSI can use to achieve their SMART goal. Our plan is reachable and achievable within the given time frame. We created such a strong bond with Dana and the BAWSI team and I think that was a very positive, contributing factor to the success we had on this project. As a group, we also were successfully able to coordinate times to meet with BAWSI and as a team that worked for everyone, majority of the time. I am really proud of the presentation we put together and how happy we felt when we finished everything.

### Francesca Cleary

Overall, the process of working with BAWSI in developing a communications plan allowed me to learn the multi-step, thought-provoking process of working through each methodical step of a communications plan. It was an iterative process in which each stage required tweaks to be made based off of organizational feedback and research-backed findings, which further underscored the need to take each element step-by-step so as not to rush into a plan to later understand the misguided nature or missteps of messaging, audience, tactics, etc. I will take this with me into my future careers as it underscored the true importance of fleshing out and comprehensively understanding an organizational goal in order to come up with effective tactics in the end. The process of breaking down each step proved immensely helpful in crafting a fitting, effective communications plan and is highly applicable to maximizing effectiveness in most any role I plan to pursue in the nonprofit sector.

### Colette Maalouf

BAWSI's SMART goal was very audience-heavy so we needed to pay attention to our vision and our ask messaging. We were dealing with re-vamping their social media accounts and utilizing different audiences and sub-audiences within those social media accounts to get different things out of them. LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook all inherently cater to different groups of people, like business professionals, millennials, and parents and grandparents, respectively. It was crucial for our Service-Learning project to do background research on the audiences of those social media platforms, and use those key users to our advantage when targeting different aspects of BAWSI's needs. Being in college, my groupmates and I tend to be pretty social media-savvy. This proved very convenient for us because we were bring to the table something that BAWSI did not have – prior social media knowledge combined with an academic lens.

# OLD WEST CHURCH

<https://www.oldwestchurch.org/>

SMART goal: Secure \$4,000/ month of additional rental income from new building users by September 2021.

## Ad Farmer

This class impressed upon me the importance of relationship building as a central aspect to communications. My experience working with Old West Church provided many examples of how crucial relationship are to creating effective communications. Old West had already had some success at their goal of recruiting groups to rent their space through connections between congregants and groups that needed a space in which to work. In addition, all of the organizations that my group interviewed spoke about how their interest in continuing to use Old West's space was directly linked to their relationship with the church's pastor, Sara, and their desire to continue supporting her work. In our communications plan, my group identified these relationships as one of the church's largest strengths in building their network of space renters, and we decided to draw upon this strength in our plan by making relationship-building with mission-aligned organizations a central part of our plan to build the church's base of renters. We were only able to include this in our plan because of Sara's ability to build partnerships with organizations, and this spoke to how effective communications go beyond simply utilizing certain tactics and must include elements of human connection as well to be truly effective.

## Julia Moore

As a communications and human services combined major, I entered this course feeling like I had a good base understanding of communications. However, I have always been more passionate about the nonprofit world and education than about communications; knowing that while I'm interested in the field it is not something I necessarily want to pursue.

Throughout this course I have found a deep appreciation for the intersection of communications and the nonprofit field. While I have taken many courses that study each of these areas independently, this is the first place where I felt like my interest in communications and passion for nonprofits could actually coexist to form a new personal drive to include both in my future career path.

## Hannah Wodajo

Before taking this course I had a very vague idea as to how non-profits worked, and always connected them solely to their causes (never thinking about their inner-workings as fully-fledged organizations with hired staff and various departments), but after attending lectures and taking part in the S-L project required of this class, my views completely changed. My group worked with Old West Church to help them with a financial/outreach goal they had in regards to their co-working space, and it proved to be much more difficult and complicated than we originally thought. We had assumed that the space would be complete and ready to go upon our first meeting with the pastor at OWC, and that all we would have to take into account would be external outreach, but we quickly found that to not be the case. There were many physical hindrances within the space that we did not expect, including the lack of WiFi and ADA compliance, as well as internal disagreement between staff members. (when meeting with different shareholders we found that some members of OWC's staff held different priorities for the space). With all of this newfound information my group members and I had to get together and weigh our options to figure out our next steps - and this was not an easy task to do. We eventually came up with a game plan, but it took a lot of deliberation and processing time. It was through these first hand experiences as well as our in-class/office hour talks with Kate that I realized how complicated running a non-profit organization could be!

# NORWOOD RESOURCE GROUP

<https://www.yesnrg.org/>

SMART goal: Recruit 15 new women of color with experience in the tech industry to be mentors for the Norwood Resource Group's STEM ENRG Learn to Code program by November 2021.

## Jenna Clark

It is always an interesting experience looking back at what you have learned after a course is over, but I can honestly say that not only did I learn a lot of important information in this class; it totally changed my perception of how nonprofits can utilize and employ strategic communication.

## Kevin Huang

When working on messaging, I learned that each ask and message is also embedded with a set of values, goals, and barriers. When working on tactics, I learned that certain tactics that can apply to one audience, may not work for other audiences. The nuances of each section were unexpected but extremely valuable in drafting a communications plan.

## Amy Jeong

One major lesson I take away from this course is to take the time to gather information and understand the organization and the context in which it exists. With the internal limitations and external threats of our service-learning project partner, we had to get creative about seeking external opportunities and amplifying the internal strengths of the organization. It was worth it to take the time to research internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. What I learned through this course is that our ability to identify the internal strengths in light of the limitations and the threats around reaching our goal, will lead to external opportunities that are not conventional; it is within the bands of weakness and strengths that our creativity flew out in coming up with different strategies to reach the goal. Overall, there is always more time we can spend on the SWOT analysis in order to gather all the information, so we can elevate the way we think and piece together a plan to reach the goal.

## Megan Nibbio

One major skill that I've strengthened this semester is utilizing the Strategic Communications Process in the right order. As we discussed as a class, too often, we think of tactics first before even considering the mission and goals. Jess from our communications panel had first hand experience with this issue. She explained that communications professionals are sometimes asked to create a video or a graphic without doing the first steps first. She recounted how she has to back her coworkers up and discuss mission, goals, etc. in order to determine if the video is really the way to go. My group and I are guilty of falling into this common trap. We were initially drawn to building out NRG's social media--LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook--as a way to spread the word about their open mentor positions. We envisioned flashy posts going out to different talent pools consistently to raise brand awareness on a large scale. As we learned more about NRG's limited staff capacity and funding at this early stage, we had a panic moment. How would we be able to implement and maintain the social media accounts with this in mind? It wasn't until I reached out to Professor Marple in a flurry that I learned the importance of going step by step. We were way ahead of ourselves! By fastforwarding to tactics, we would have missed out on the little niches we found through our audience research.