

Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

Bowdoin College presents itself to prospective students and other members of the public in a variety of formats and settings. In each setting, the College strives for clarity and accuracy, while presenting a positive view of the student experience at Bowdoin.

The opportunities for public presentation of the College have expanded enormously over the last decade. Electronic communication creates new opportunities and challenges for maintaining accurate, consistent, and current images of Bowdoin. Requests for data about the College continue at a rapid pace and require care and consistency in reporting to ensure accuracy. The more varied the sources of information (offices on campus; individual student, staff, and alumni recruiters; Web pages) the more challenging the task of monitoring the accuracy and consistency of messages.

Publications

The College regularly produces a full range of publications, in both print and electronic form, that describe its programs, expectations, and policies for varied constituents, including students, prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the general public. We are particularly aware of the importance of these publications, including the Web site, in helping prospective students and their families to make informed decisions about the College. The Office of Communications and Public Affairs works with academic and administrative departments throughout the College to ensure that these publications are consistent, complete, and accurate, and that they reflect the mission, obligations, and responsibilities of the College.

Major publications include institutional documents such as the *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, the *Student Handbook*, the *Bowdoin Prospectus* (or “viewbook”), and *Bowdoin Magazine*, as well as numerous sources of information about the College on Bowdoin’s Web site <<http://www.bowdoin.edu>>. These core publications are supplemented by a variety of brochures, print and electronic newsletters, posters, and memoranda that describe, promote, and explain services, procedures, expectations, outcomes, and programs of the College.

Print Publications

Bowdoin’s flagship publication, the *Bowdoin College Catalogue*, provides comprehensive information about the College, including an accurate and explicit statement about its accreditation status. It remains the official record of the College, even though we know that its printed format means it cannot be fully up-to-date, particularly regarding courses that are added to or lost from the curriculum through last-minute changes in faculty staffing. Each edition of the Catalogue includes the college calendar; general information about the College; statements concerning Bowdoin’s mission, employment, and admissions practices, and athletics (including a New England Small College Athletic Association statement regarding alcohol); a historical sketch of the College; detailed information about admission policies and procedures; financial aid information and a list of expenses; and comprehensive information about the academic

program, including requirements, academic standards and regulations, information about special academic services and programs, and a complete listing of course offerings. The Office of Communications and Public Affairs provides editorial and production services for this project. Preparation and review of the Catalogue involves the Office of Student Records as well as the Office of the Dean for Academic Affairs, along with individual departments across the College. Every effort is taken to ensure that information presented in other print and electronic publications is consistent with that provided in the Catalogue.

The *Student Handbook* provides detailed information to current students about the organization of student affairs at the College; a calendar; a statement titled “Values of Our Learning Community”; descriptions of academic and residential life policies and of the Academic Honor Code and Social Code, programs and procedures; information about College governance; and directory information.

The *Bowdoin Prospectus* provides a glimpse into Bowdoin’s academic and residential life programs for prospective students and their families and presents comprehensive information about admission to the College and detail about expenses and financial aid opportunities. Through narrative information and photography, the *Prospectus* offers a view of the campus setting, the characteristics of the student body, and the wide range of services and opportunities available to Bowdoin students.

Bowdoin Magazine, which is currently published three times each year, celebrates the accomplishments of Bowdoin alumni and provides a wealth of information about the life of the College; the achievements of students, faculty, and alumni; and the excellence of Bowdoin’s programs. The magazine is mailed to alumni of the College, parents of current students, faculty and staff, and members of the senior class. It is also published in PDF form on the Bowdoin Web site, making it available to the general public.

Electronic Publications

The Office of Communication and Public Affairs manages electronic communication through an active partnership with staff in Information Technology and several other offices throughout the College. Readers of the *Catalogue*, *Student Handbook*, *Prospectus*, and other print publications are invited to visit Bowdoin’s Web site for additional information about the College. Many of Bowdoin’s printed materials are available electronically, but the College’s Web site also contains a growing amount of information not available in print form. Specific sections of the Web site are organized to provide current information about Bowdoin to a wide audience in a timely manner. Here, constituents of the College and the general public can find current information and statistics about admissions, alumni, enrollment, faculty, graduation and retention rates, library operations, majors, finances, student fees, and technology, among others.

In the last two years, Bowdoin has taken specific steps to improve the organization and presentation of campus news and events, academic research and scholarly activity, and admissions and financial aid information on the Web. Revolving “banner stories” on the

home page provide visitors to our Web site with compelling information about faculty research, student accomplishments, and hallmark programs at the College. The audiences for these pieces are both internal and external.

The College has also moved to direct alumni and parents to the Web site through a monthly e-mail message (*Bowdoin News*) that promotes items of interest available on the site. The addition of audio content—“podcasts”—allows visitors to listen to interviews with faculty, students, and staff on varied topics, as well as to campus lectures, sporting events, and performances. In addition, the College publishes written transcripts on the Web of major addresses and statements by the President in order to make them readily available to alumni, parents, friends of the College, and the general public.

Communications with Brunswick

The College recognizes the importance of strong, cooperative relationships with the Town of Brunswick and our residential and business neighbors, and knows that building and maintaining these relationships requires open and regular communication. The importance of communication has been highlighted over the past decade, as Bowdoin has expanded, built new buildings, renovated old ones, acquired land, and made plans for the future. For example, the College has established regular meetings with town and state leaders, held open sessions with neighbors, and provided a public review of Bowdoin’s planning study for future campus growth. College and town officials work together on such issues as commercial development, the maintenance and improvement of infrastructure, safety and security, event planning, and many others. Currently, the College is playing an integral role in ongoing discussions regarding future uses for land currently occupied by the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

The Association of Bowdoin Friends provides an important link to members of the community and another vehicle for communication about the College. It offers a regular program of activities, including events at the museums and student and faculty presentations. A calendar of events is available on the Web and is also published twice a month in the *Bowdoin Bulletin*—a printed events calendar mailed to members of the Friends and provided to select businesses, the public library, and other organizations. In addition, local residents are regularly informed about the many activities at the College that are open to the public through articles in local newspapers. Bowdoin Breakfasts draw substantial audiences to hear Bowdoin alumni, parents, and friends discuss important issues of the day.

Admissions Presentations to Students and Parents

Each year, approximately 5,000 students and families visit the College and participate in campus tours and information sessions. In addition, admissions staff and alumni volunteers visit over 500 schools and college fairs and talk with more than 5,000 individual students as well as student groups. The challenge is for Bowdoin to provide training and information for all presenters and to monitor their work as a way to achieve

consistency, accuracy, and clarity, while not losing the individual perspectives that they bring to their presentations of the College.

Student tour guides are selected competitively, participate in a four-hour training session, and shadow two tours before leading tours on their own. They receive and study an extensive information book with College statistics, policies, and “FAQ’s.” Once they start leading tours, they meet regularly under the direction of the head tour guides to review the tour process, identify unanswered questions, and share information and ideas.

Bowdoin alumni across America and in several locations around the world are actively involved in student recruitment activities through the Bowdoin Alumni Schools and Interviewing Committee (BASIC) Program. In the past year, the program has trained 1,174 alumni volunteers who represent Bowdoin at college fairs, interview candidates for admission, and contact admitted students. Each volunteer receives a BASIC handbook and updated materials from the College throughout the year. Admissions staff members also conduct three-hour training sessions for volunteers in select cities and meet individually with many volunteers during the year.

Public Reporting of Data

Bowdoin maintains an Institutional Research Web site with current information about the College (<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/index.shtml>). It also contributes data annually to the Common Data Set established by the Higher Education Data Service and posts its copy of the data on the Web at <<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/cds-table.shtml>>. The College also provides data annually to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). As required by law, the College annually submits data to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), posts crime and hate crime data at <www.bowdoin.edu/security/files/CrimeStats.xls>, and posts student graduation and retention rates at <<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/ir/data/retention.shtml/>>.

Third Party Comments

The public and members of the Bowdoin College community were notified of the purpose of the reaccreditation process and the dates of the evaluation team visits. This notification appeared in the student newspaper, *The Orient*; the College’s monthly e-newsletter to parents and alumni; the alumni print newsletter *Whispering Pines*; and in the student and faculty digests on the Web. An advertisement soliciting public comment as part of the reaccreditation process was placed in the *Times-Record*.

Institutional Effectiveness

While the College’s success in admissions, fundraising and other areas does give us some confidence in the quality and accuracy of its communications to varied audiences, the last significant marketing research was conducted in 1999. The Office of Communications and Public Affairs is currently conducting a national search for the position of Associate

Vice President of Communications for Marketing and Publications. A critical responsibility for the person in this position will be to develop and implement the means to periodically measure the effectiveness of Bowdoin's Web site, print collateral, and publications standards. Bowdoin faces challenges shared by other colleges—balancing print and electronic communication, managing Web content, and increasing Bowdoin's visibility in a communication-rich world. The mass of information available on Bowdoin's Web site (now 50,000 pages) grows significantly each year, requiring a greater allocation of human and financial resources to produce, edit, monitor, and update narrative, photographic, and multi-media content. As more and more members of the College community contribute materials to the Web site, the issues of management and consistency become more difficult and the utility of print publications must be reevaluated.

As the Web grows in importance, richness, and accessibility, the College must continue to reevaluate each of its print publications to make sure that it continues to serve an important role for its constituency and the College. Print publications remain institutionally important because they can be readily archived to provide a historic record of the College. Archiving electronic data remains a major challenge that we are resolving in the short term by producing paper copies of essential materials and in the longer term through the planning of a Digital Assets Management group (Standard 7).

The challenge of Web management is to maintain clarity, accuracy, timeliness, and consistency. It is not practical or desirable for a single office or even a team of individuals to monitor and maintain content throughout the Bowdoin Web site. The best way to ensure an accurate, up-to-date, and information-rich Web site is for the College to provide content management solutions and training that permit and encourage individuals and departments to manage sections of the site for which they have responsibility, and to have procedures and personnel in place to edit, revise, and approve content for sections of the site where such oversight is necessary and desirable. The deployment of an effective Content Management System (CMS) in 2006 will increase the capacity of staff and faculty across the College to provide content and monitor the current status of Web pages. Ongoing discussions among senior officers are aimed at developing the systems and authority necessary for proper oversight and careful management of the site.

In the months ahead, Bowdoin will continue to build on its efforts to provide useful information on the Web, including catalogue information that can be made more timely and accurate in electronic form. The College will also be examining the means by which it reaches prospective students and their families, and may issue a significantly redesigned admissions viewbook. The alumni magazine will also be redesigned and may increase from three to four issues annually.

Important to the College's mission and its aspirations is the goal of continuing the creative work of our Communications staff to make Bowdoin better known through national media and through local media in the midwest, west, and south.

