

Marketing Your College/University French Program

Jennifer Morrissey

North Park University, Chicago, IL

Nowadays, it's not enough to just teach French. To ensure the future of your French program, you need to make it visible, make it relevant, and attract people to it. For most of us, the prep work for effective teaching (mastering new technology, inventing fun learning activities, creating assessments mindful of various learning styles, grading, reading and re-reading course material) makes it seem impossible to add one more task to the list. On the other hand, none of us want to wind up with more time than we know what to do with!

Here are a few "all brain, no strain" ideas for bringing visibility, relevance and popularity to your French program:

- Do you already have an idea for a great extracurricular program? Wonderful! Spend an hour laying out the steps you will need to take to bring the idea to fruition. I rely on Excel spreadsheets for this.
 - In each column, I write a task and its due date. For example, "reserve auditorium" or "book performer." Don't forget to include "follow ups" several times in your columns!
 - In each row, designate who will perform each task. Some tasks are more sensitive than others. You will probably want to book a performer yourself. But you will certainly want to call a meeting of interested students to assign tasks such as designing or posting flyers. Giving extra credit for the extra work seems a fair incentive!
- Out of ideas? Find out what other people are doing. Spend an hour looking at websites from AATF and Alliance Française chapters from other cities. What works? What would work for your program? Once you decide, create an Excel spreadsheet.
- Next, you'll need to get other people involved. Can you bring in the history teacher? the art teacher? the music teacher? Can you work together to adapt the event to highlight curricular goals? What about collaborating with French teachers from other schools? What about parents? What can students do?
- Will you need fundraising in order to complete your project? Will bake sales be enough? A T-shirt sale? What about a yard sale? A silent auction? A French crêpe night? Would local restaurants and stores chip in on supplies or raffle prizes?

French Advocacy Resource Bank
American Association of Teachers of French

- Once you book the performer, secure the venue, and put into place the funds for the project, you'll need to get the word out. Whom will you invite? Just your school? Parents? What about other schools? You can always contact your school superintendent and send out a mass email, but personal phone calls tend to work best. Expect to make follow up calls.
- On the day of the event, you'll of course want photos. Since you'll be doing much of the meeting and greeting, it'll be a big help to arrange for students or other teachers to take the pictures. You'll want group shots as well as close-ups.
- Lastly, you'll want to post the photos to your French department website along with a story about the event and who attended. Quotes from participants add interest to the story. You'll want to submit an article and photos to your local AATF chapter. You may even want to submit the story to your local newspaper. Now you can relax and be a local celebrity!

The time and effort you put into an event will establish your French program as dynamic and fun in the eyes of your students, their parents, as well as your colleagues and supervisors. With effective marketing and advertising, a single event can be a discussion point for years to come.