



Spring Forward Event Brief

Prepared for The Department of Communication at Appalachian State University

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Overview

Spring Forward is The Department of Communication's annual alumni and student networking event designed to inspire, connect and prepare students through the knowledge of alumni across various communication industries. Across two days, alumni are invited back to campus virtually and in person to share their personal experiences and insights with students. Sitting on panels, alumni share details of their current career, career journey, college experiences and involvement that prepared them for the professional world, valuable lessons for students and encouragement for the future.

Goals

1. Connect current students with alumni across communication industries
2. Improve department engagement with alumni and students
3. Encourage alumni involvement with current students
4. Provide networking opportunities for students and alumni

Team Roles

A team of student interns plans and executes Spring Forward each year. Roles can be adjusted based on the department's current needs and the event, as well as the interns' skill sets. These roles and role descriptions serve as a framework to establish a successful team of interns interested in planning and executing Spring Forward. Additional roles can be added as needed.

Project Manager/Lead Intern

The Project Manager Intern is responsible for the overall time management of the intern team, including creating to-do lists, establishing deadlines, preparing meeting agendas and coordinating team check-ins. Throughout the planning process, the Project Manager serves as a second set of eyes on all communication and promotional materials, including but not limited to emails, graphics and social media posts. Additionally, as a lead intern, the Project Manager assists the Marketing and Communications Lead with any tasks necessary to ensure the event's successful execution. The Project Manager is responsible for all day-of details, including

coordinating with alumni, arranging classroom space, ensuring the availability of chairs for panelists, organizing catering, purchasing parking passes for alumni and overseeing other day-of-event operations. Planning the happy hour networking event following the conclusion of Spring Forward is also the responsibility of the Project Manager.

Marketing and Communications Lead/Lead Intern

The Marketing and Communications Intern is responsible for planning, writing, sending and responding to all email communications and overall communication needs. Alongside the Project Manager, the Marketing and Communications Intern oversees all promotional content, including video promotions, graphics and social media posts. Additionally, as a lead intern, the Marketing and Communications Intern assists the Project Manager with any tasks necessary to ensure the event's successful execution.

Social Media Manager

The Social Media Manager Intern is responsible for planning, crafting and scheduling all social media communications and content across platforms. This includes monitoring the Instagram and LinkedIn accounts, replying to DMs, responding to comments, connecting with alumni and reposting relevant information. The Social Media Intern is also responsible for creating content to share, including but not limited to graphics, copy and Instagram reels. Additionally, the Social Media Manager Intern will assist other interns with tasks as necessary, such as classroom promotional visits.

Graphic Design Manager

The Graphic Design Manager is responsible for creating branding materials, social media graphics, flyers, promotional materials, and other visual elements as needed. Ideally, this intern has previous experience with graphic design using programs such as Canva, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop or Adobe InDesign. Additionally, the Graphic Design Manager Intern will assist other interns with tasks as necessary, such as classroom promotional visits.

Electronic Media & Broadcast Manager

The Electronic Media & Broadcast Manager Intern is responsible for planning, scheduling and creating all audio and video promotional materials. This intern is also responsible for coordinating with App State student media programs to leverage resources for promoting Spring

Forward. Ideally, this intern is a student in the EMB program with access to the equipment cage and has photography, filming and video editing experience. In the past, EMB projects for Spring Forward have included short promotional videos for social media, a limited-series podcast and a documentary-style recap video. The Electronic Media & Broadcast Manager Intern may brainstorm and pitch new and innovative projects to further promote the event. Additionally, the Electronic Media & Broadcast Manager Intern will assist other interns with tasks as necessary, such as classroom promotional visits.

Event Details

I. Preparation

- Put together the intern team.

- Change the email signature to include all interns and their personal LinkedIn accounts.

- Schedule a consistent time to meet with the team during the spring semester.

- Update account passwords as needed.

- Create save-the-date materials.

- Share save-the-date materials to necessary channels.

- Confirm the available budget for the event.

II. Planning

- Create a social media content calendar.

- Determine anticipated EMB promotional projects.

- Establish an organizational system for Google Drive and the email inbox.

- Establish a master spreadsheet color system.

- Create an alumni invite form.

- Confirm anticipated panel topics and panel titles.

III. Promotion

- Create social media content to promote the event.

- Highlight alumni on the department website.

- Highlight alumni on social media platforms.

- Have the department send out promotional emails to faculty, staff and students.

Hang flyers around campus.

Post panels on social media.

IV. Virtual Event Day

Ideally, have no more than four panelists for each panel.

Panels should last approximately one hour.

Panels start in line with the Tuesday/Thursday class schedule (e.g., 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., etc.).

Create and test all Zoom links in advance.

Share Zoom links on Social Media and through emails in advance.

Send out a day-of details reminder email in the morning.

During panels, have some form of attendance (previously used Google Forms).

V. In-Person Event Day

Ideally, have no more than four panelists for each panel.

Panels should last approximately 50 minutes.

Panels start in line with the Monday/Wednesday/Friday class schedule (e.g., 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., etc.).

Send out a day-of details reminder email in the morning.

Provide space in the department for alumni to work and network with each other throughout the day when they are not on panels.

Have alumni goodie bags available, previously provided by the Alumni Association on campus.

Provide a catered breakfast, previously from Stick Boy Bread Co.

Provide water for panelists, volunteers and interns.

Have nametags for alumni, interns and volunteers.

During panels, have some form of attendance (previously used Google Forms).

VI. Happy Hour Reception

The reception is held immediately after the last panel concludes during the in-person event day, previously from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

One drink per person is included with RSVP, provided with a drink ticket.

Typically, food includes a grazing table.

VII. Post-Event Evaluation and Organization

Send Thank You emails to alumni, faculty, volunteers and students.

Share feedback forms with alumni, students, faculty, volunteers and the intern team.

Hold a follow-up meeting with the intern team to discuss feedback and final steps.

Evaluate feedback from alumni, students, faculty, volunteers and the intern team.

Upload all materials to the appropriate Google Drive folder, clearly labeled and organized for future reference.

Change any nearly expired passwords.

Prepare any necessary documentation for future intern teams.

Timeline

Fall Semester

- Complete all preparation details.

January

- Complete all planning details.
- Send out alumni invitations.
- Begin consistent social media content.
- Explore fundraising opportunities.
 - El Tacorriendo, Sweet Frog, Come Back Shack, etc.
- Determine the available classroom space and which professors may offer their classrooms for panels.
- Reach out for a happy hour event space.

February

- Confirm the happy hour event space.
- Begin the process of establishing panel times and spaces with available alumni.
- Confirm fundraiser location, date and time.
- Request to visit classrooms to promote the event.

March

- Confirm all virtual day details are complete.
- Confirm all in-person day details are complete.
- Confirm all happy hour reception details are complete.
- Finalize event schedule, including panel times and locations.
- Share the finalized event schedule with alumni, faculty, students and any other necessary people.
- Create panel flyers for both virtual and in-person event days.
- Create Zoom links and test ahead of time.
- Send the day of information to the panelists.
- Run Spring Forward!
- Enjoy the event and the reception, all of the hard work is worth it!
- Take a breather!!

April

- Complete all post-event evaluation and organization details.

Milestones

I. Budget Confirmation

Confirm with the Communication Department what the available budget amount is to cover the happy hour reception, breakfast catering, parking passes and any other expenses related to the event.

II. Website + Social Media Content

Establish a consistent plan for social media content and a plan for what information will be shared on the department website. Confirm how that information will be communicated to the department and when updates will be made throughout the semester.

III. Alumni Invitations

Send out invitations to alumni who previously attended or recently graduated and who are faculty-recommended and alumni-recommended. This is a big step in the process!

IV. Venue for Happy Hour Reception Confirmation

Confirm the location of the happy hour reception and the associated cost. This confirmation will allow you to share more details about the event with alumni, possibly enticing more alumni to join in person for Spring Forward.

V. Alumni Confirmation

Confirming which alumni will attend in person is a vital step in the process. Once the alumni have confirmed, placing alumni into panels that fit in their time availability is the next big step in the planning process.

VI. Panelist Placements

Creating a panel schedule that aligns with alumni availability is key to a smooth event. Place alumni based on experience, interest, expressed knowledge, degree and university involvement.

VII. Panel Schedule Confirmation

Confirm with alumni that their assigned panel works with their knowledge base and schedule. Once a majority of the panelists have confirmed this schedule, the next step is to announce the event schedule with panels.

VIII. Announce Event Schedule

Providing faculty, staff and students with the event schedule for both virtual and in-person event days increases excitement. It allows professors to speak more in-depth with their classes about panels that may interest their students.

IX. Catering Ordered

Determine which breakfast items to order based on the number of in-person alumni and budget availability. In 2025, for approximately 40 people, the following was ordered with leftovers:

- One regular coffee
- One decaf coffee
- One mini scones tray
- One bagels with spread tray
- One pastry tray
- One fruit tray

X. Day-of Event Plans

Creating a detailed day-of event run-of-show is vital for a smooth event. This allows team members to have a document to reference and a schedule to follow, and it will enable the Project Manager to have a reference document throughout the event when things get hectic.

XI. Event Set-Up

Set up tables for check-in and catered breakfast in the necessary areas, unlock and set up classroom spaces with any materials needed, place decorations around the building and ensure team members are prepared and have any documents they need for success, such as day-of event plans.

XII. Event Completion

Once all panels are complete and the event space is cleaned up, congratulations! The most significant part of Spring Forward is complete.

XIII. Happy Hour Reception

After all the panels conclude, the happy hour reception takes place. This is a great time for networking among alumni, senior-level students and faculty.

XIV. Thank You Materials Shared

Share thank you materials (graphics, videos, emails, etc.) to alumni, faculty and students through various channels.

XV. Feedback Evaluated

Read through feedback forms from alumni, faculty and students and determine any relevant feedback for the future. Compile this feedback into a separate document for future reference.

XVI. Drive Organized

Ensure all materials are located in the Google Drive and organized in a manner that is clear and understandable. Clearly label any materials that may need to be referenced in the future.

Communication Details

Below are descriptions of all emails sent in 2025, along with a link to the referenced email. For a rough schedule of when these emails were sent, see [here](#).

Invite for Returning Alumni

Include warm greetings and express excitement to bring alumni back again. Introduce Spring Forward and its set date(s), followed by the happy hour reception. Invite them to participate by filling out the form by the set deadline, and offer options to decline or recommend fellow alumni. Close the email with links to social media accounts to stay updated. (see [email](#) for example)

Invite for Faculty Recommended Alumni

Include warm greetings and mention that a faculty member recommended the alum. Introduce Spring Forward and its set date(s), followed by the happy hour reception. Invite them to participate by filling out the form by the set deadline, and offer options to decline or recommend fellow alumni. Close the email with links to social media accounts to stay updated. (see [email](#) for example)

Invite for New Alumni

Include warm greetings and express excitement to reconnect. Introduce Spring Forward and its set date(s), followed by the happy hour reception. Invite them to participate by filling out the form by the set deadline, and offer options to decline or recommend fellow alumni. Close the email with links to social media accounts to stay updated. (see [email](#) for example)

Reminder for Alumni

Include a friendly reminder for alumni to fill out the form. Re-introduce Spring Forward and its set date(s), followed by the happy hour reception. Restate the set deadline to fill out the form, along with all links to social media accounts to stay updated. (see [email](#) for example)

Last Call for Alumni

Include a friendly reminder that it is the last call to fill out the form to participate in Spring Forward. Re-introduce all Spring Forward information, along with links to all social media accounts to stay updated. (see [email](#) for example)

Confirmation for Alumni

Include warm greetings and gratitude for their participation in Spring Forward. Confirm they are placed to be a panelist on the set date(s). State that you will be in touch soon with more details. (see [email](#) for example)

Weekend Events for Alumni

Include warm greetings and excitement towards Spring Forward. State any campus event details that alumni are welcome to attend (if applicable). Remind any alumni who haven't yet filled out the form to confirm their participation. (see [email](#) for example)

Local Hotel Recommendations for Alumni

Include warm greetings and restate excitement and gratitude for alumni participation in Spring Forward. State the recommendation to look at hotels for the weekend. Include that you are unable to confirm prices. Attach a document to the hotel recommendations and approximate rates. (see [email](#) for example)

RSVP to Happy Hour Reception for Alumni

Include warm greetings, and restate excitement and gratitude for alumni participation in Spring Forward. Introduce the happy hour location and time. Invite them to participate by filling out the form by a set deadline. Close the email with links to the happy hour location and form. (see [email](#) for example)

Personalized Request for Missing Information to Alumni

Include warm greetings and excitement for alumni participation. Request personally for any missing information they need to provide to feature them on the COM Department website properly. (see [email](#) for example)

Zoom Day-of Information for Alumni

Include gratitude towards alumni participating on Zoom. Include the Zoom link, date, panel time, and duration of each panel, along with day-of expectations for alumni. (see [email](#) for example)

In-Person Day-of Information for Alumni

Include gratitude towards alumni participating in person. State all parking information (parking pass details, and interactive campus map). Include event location details, and breakfast/check-in process. Close the email with the phone numbers of the Lead Interns. (see [email](#) for example)

Thank You to Alumni

Include warm greetings and special gratitude to all alumni for participating in Spring Forward. Include all links to social media with encouragement to posts and a link to all day-of photos. Close email with a request for all alumni feedback with a link to the survey. (see [email](#) for example)

Classroom Informational Visit Request to Faculty

Include warm greetings and information on the importance of students being informed about Spring Forward. Kindly request that the faculty email the Spring Forward account to set up dates for class visits. Close the email with gratitude for faculty support. (see [email](#) for example)

Classroom Space Use Request to Faculty

Include warm greetings and kindly request to use the faculties classroom during set time. Restate the importance of Spring Forward for all students. Close the email thanking the faculty member for their consideration and support towards Spring Forward. (see [email](#) for example)

Classroom Space Confirmation to Faculty

Include personalized confirmation of classroom space utilization towards faculty members. Close the email with sincere gratitude towards faculty for their generosity. (see [email](#) for example)

RSVP to Happy Hour Reception for Faculty

Include brief invitation to the happy hour reception. State all event details such as location, date, and time. Request for faculty to RSVP through form link. (see [email](#) for example)

Panel Details for Faculty

Include warm greetings, and announcement that the panels are live! Provide links to all social media platforms and department website with information about the panels. Kindly request for all faculty to spread the word of Spring Forward to their students, and restate the event's importance for students. (see [email](#) for example)

Thank You to Faculty

Express detailed gratitude towards faculty for their support during Spring Forward. Kindly ask for them to share their experiences on their social medias, along with links to the photos from the in-person event. Include a link a feedback form, and request for all faculty to complete. Close the email with more gratitude and excitement for next year. (see [email](#) for example)

Announcement to Students

Include an exciting statement to students about Spring Forward (what is it, and when?). State all panel details. Include a paragraph to senior students to keep an eye on their email for an exclusive opportunity. Close the email with links to all Spring Forward social media platforms. (see [email](#) for example)

RSVP to Happy Hour Reception for Senior Level Students

Include exciting announcement to senior students inviting them to the exclusive networking opportunity. State all happy hour details such as, location, date, and time. Include a small paragraph stating what the opportunity brings forth for students. Close the email with the RSVP form link. (see [email](#) for example)

Happy Hour Reception Confirmation for Senior-Level Students

Include excitement towards students participation in the happy hour event. State all detailed information for the event (location, time, food and refreshment details). Close the email with excitement to see the students there. (see [email](#) for example)

Thank You to Students

Include gratitude to students for participating in Spring Forward. Kindly request if they make any social media posts to tag our accounts. Additionally include the link to our feedback form. (see [email](#) for example)

Volunteer Interest Response to Moderators

Include gratitude for moderating interest. Provide link for students to give their panel preferences. State that you will be back in touch soon with further information. (see [email](#) for example)

Scripts for Moderators

Express gratitude towards students for their willingness to participate. Include script document with moderator questions. (see [email](#) for example)

Future Considerations and Recommendations

Improved Alumni Interest Form

Allow alumni to select the panels they want to participate in by listing the panel title. Ensure they know the team cannot guarantee they will be on all the panels they select due to their availability during the day.

Provide Materials to Promote Panels

Panelists expressed interest in being able to share information about and personally promote the panel(s) they were participating in. Potentially providing materials to them for social media; specifically LinkedIn, could allow alumni to promote their engagement personally. This could potentially reach more alumni for future invitations.

Share Panel Details Earlier

In 2025, panel information and details were sent to participating alumni a week in advance and announced to students the week of the event. Providing these details earlier may be beneficial to increase awareness and participation.

Potentially Offer Portfolio Review Sessions

In addition to panels and guest speakers, provide a time and space for students to have their portfolios evaluated by alumni. This could happen in person or virtually with the advanced interest of alumni involvement.

Change Happy Hour Reception Location

Previously, the happy hour reception was held at Venture Chocolate and Wine Co. on King Street. However, several people have expressed that the noise level makes it difficult to hold networking conversations. Therefore, the reception could be moved to a location on campus, such as the McKinney Alumni Center or the [Grandview Ballroom](#) in the North End Zone.

Better Direction Day-Of

Have a stronger welcome team in the Walker Hall lobby and individuals outside of the panel rooms to direct students into desired panels. This could include signage outside of Walker Hall to signal the event location.

Improved Moderator Preparation/Training

Provide further instructions on expectations and requirements. Expand on the instructions laid out in their script. Potentially hold a training session beforehand to ensure any questions or concerns are addressed in advance.

Important Contacts

Elisabeth Borowicz

Administrative Support Associate, Department of Communication

[REDACTED]

Sara Harkey

Associate Director: Communications and Services, Alumni Association

[REDACTED]

Philip "PJ" Wirchansky

Communications Director, College of Fine and Applied Arts

[REDACTED]

Accounts

Email

Username: springforward@appstate.edu

Password: [REDACTED]

Instagram

Username: appstatespringforward

Password: [REDACTED]

Link: www.instagram.com/appstatespringforward/

LinkedIn

Username: Spring Forward

Password: [REDACTED]

Link: www.linkedin.com/in/spring-forward-appstate

YouTube

Username: [REDACTED]

Password: [REDACTED]

Link: www.youtube.com/@springforward2514

Spotify

Username: [REDACTED]

Password: [REDACTED]