The Collegiate Readership Program Overview

USA TODAY’s Collegiate Readership Program is designed to promote civic engagement, global awareness, and media literacy on campus by exposing students to the news in their living, learning, and community spaces. USA TODAY’s Collegiate Readership Program is a national initiative started by the President of Pennsylvania State University in 1997; to date over 500 colleges and universities utilize the program. The program provides students a selection of newspapers, available Monday through Friday, at various distribution points throughout campus. This allows for easy access and integration of the news into a student’s typical day.

Potential benefits to students includes preparing students to live and work in a global economy, promoting a sharing of ideas related to responsible citizenship, encouraging students to examine diverse viewpoints and multiple perspectives, enabling students to relate personal experiences and classroom knowledge to real world situations and empowering students to seek knowledge outside of the classroom and sets them on a path towards lifelong learning.

Independent research conducted by Educational Benchmarking Inc. and Penn State University supports the relationship between newspaper readership and developing cognitive skills; increasing one's awareness, understanding and ability to articulate views on current issues, and developing civic mindedness. In addition there was a strong correlation between newspaper readership and student engagement both on campus and in the community. In addition, USA TODAY has conducted several studies on this program, with students on campuses that have the program reporting overwhelmingly (96%) that they would like to see the program continue on their campus the following year.

Program Components:

As part of the program, the UA campus will receive:

- Daily delivery of selected newspapers to the locations of your choosing
- All displays and customized signage to meet program and University specifications. To include ID card reader displays at all “public” campus locations.
- Recycling program customized for your campus. USA TODAY will work with the campus Facilities Management team to ensure program meets our needs.
- Online resources to support academic integration and campus programming
- Support for marketing of the program at the start of each school year

Resources and Programming:

USA TODAY has developed a number of complimentary resources to enhance the value of the program. Because the program is not an amenity, but rather a vehicle to promote critical thinking, active learning and civic responsibility through increased knowledge of current events, these academic resources help to support newspapers in the college classroom. These resources can be found at www.usatodaycollege.com. Some examples are:

- **Curriculum Resources** – focused on Business, Education, First Year Experience, Health & Science, and Political Science.
- **Case Studies** - in-depth research of issues developed with professors and USA TODAY (updated monthly).
- **Issue-based Discussion and Programming Section** designed to engage students in various social and political issues.
- **Campus Coverage Email Digest** for faculty and administrators highlighting higher-ed related news from USA TODAY (sent weekly).
- **The Roundtable Email Forum** for students highlighting news from the Collegiate Readership Program, sustainability news, and events happening on other campuses (sent monthly).
**Pilot Program Overview**

A four-week free trial of the Readership Program was conducted at the University of Arizona from Tuesday, January 20, 2009 through Friday, February 14, 2009.

Newspapers were distributed at 24 locations around campus: Student Union Memorial Center (3 locations), Park Student Union, McLellan, Law, Harvill, Cesar Chavez, Engineering, Communication, Social Sciences, Education, Modern Languages, Psychology, Student Recreation Center, Main Library (2 locations), ILC, Science Library, Old Chemistry, Nursing, Pharmacy-Pulido Center, and AHSC (2 locations)

The publications offered were USA TODAY and Arizona Daily Star.

**Pilot Program Consumption**

Newspapers in the program were delivered each weekday for access by students. Each delivery day the newspapers left on the display were counted and the number was recorded to understand how many newspapers are actually picked up.

University of Arizona students picked up an average of **2,309 newspapers per day** in the final week of the pilot, a 24% increase over the first week.

- 1,154 copies of USA TODAY
- 1,155 copies of Arizona Daily Star

Based on 38,057 enrolled students, this is 6% daily readership. Actual readership is likely to be two to three times higher, based on Audit Bureau of Circulation estimates which state that two to three people typically utilize every one newspaper in a campus setting.

**Note:** From the pilot surveys, **88% of students say they would pick up newspapers at least once a week if The Collegiate Readership Program were available on campus.**

61% reported that they would pick up a newspaper 3-5 times a week.

**Pilot Program Survey Results**

Students were surveyed on campus during the final week of the pilot program. A summary of those results is below:

550 students completed a survey:
16% Freshman  21% Junior  19% Other (Graduate Students)
18% Sophomore  25% Senior

Out of the 550 students surveyed:
- 91% say newspapers are extremely important, very important, or important to their education.
- 81% say that increased knowledge of national and international news is a benefit of reading newspapers and 74% say that increased knowledge of local events is also a benefit.
- 83% read a newspaper at least once per week during the past month (not including the campus newspaper)

- Students surveyed selected USA TODAY and the Arizona Daily Star as their top two choices when asked which newspapers they would read if they were available on campus (not including the campus newspaper)

Students ranked the following factors as having an influence on their decision to pick up a newspaper:

1. On-campus Availability
2. Proximity of pick-up
3. Cost of newspapers
4. Selection of newspapers

Students had the opportunity to enter comments at the end of the survey. The following is a sampling:

- "I love having newspapers available every day."
- "Making students more aware of current events is a good idea."
- "Great way to stay informed for a busy student."
- "I miss this program from my old school (transfer student)."
- "Great idea!"

88% of students surveyed said they would pick up newspapers at least once a week if newspapers were available on campus.

- 87% of students said the Readership Program was worth $2 - $7 per semester
- 76% said that they would be willing to pay for the program.

** Survey reliability: With a sample size of 550, out of 38,057 students, the margin of error is 4.15% with a minimum 95% confidence level.
Program Support

USA TODAY acts as the sole point of contact for the program, coordinating and representing all publications involved. The responsibilities of security, delivery, recycling, and billing are USA TODAY’s. All carriers are bonded agents of USA TODAY. This enables you to get to know your assigned account manager, whom you can call with any questions or concerns about the program at any time.

To ensure continued success of the program, we encourage you to assemble a volunteer task force comprised of administration, staff, student government and faculty to work with USA TODAY and to provide ongoing suggestions for program development and improvement.

Newspaper displays

USA TODAY provides the newspaper displays, recycling bins and marketing activities to promote the program. Secure displays are self-contained and are programmed to open using a student’s identification card. The student identification card is used as a mechanism to open the display (the card is not debited and no information is recorded). If a campus recycling program is in place, USA TODAY will work with university staff to incorporate this program.

Sample Pilot Program Display

Sample Paid Program Display

Marketing Support

USA TODAY can help ASUA with Program marketing and awareness tools (i.e. campus maps, signage, flyers, contests, etc.)
**Cost Analysis and Billing Information**

The Collegiate Readership Program is cost-effective and convenient. At the time of pick-up, there is no charge to the student.

- The rate for both the Arizona Daily Star and the USA TODAY is $.40 for the 2009-2010 academic year. Note that this reflects a 60% discount off the cover price of USA TODAY, and a 47% discount off the cover price for the Arizona Daily Star.
- The school is only charged for the papers used and is billed once per month based on the past month’s usage.
- Bills will provide detailed information on each display location and publication.
- Based on an estimated consumption of 2309 newspapers per day, the cost of the program on an annual basis would be approximately $138,500
- At an estimated enrollment of 38,507 students, USA Today recommends a fee of $2 per registered student per semester to cover the full cost of the program

**Participating Institutions**

Below are a few examples of currently participating universities with campus-wide programs from USA TODAY’s list of over 500:

- University of Kansas
- Kansas State University
- University of Utah
- Indiana University
- The Pennsylvania State University
- Duke University
- Cornell University
- University of Notre Dame
- University of Florida
- University of Nebraska

**Recycling**

In some cases, we are able to put into place innovative recycling programs that will find a second life for your newspapers. At Penn State, for example, the school resells the newspaper to the agriculture school that then turns the newsprint into bedding for the farm animals. We can work with you to see if there are any similar opportunities in your area.

**The Wildcat**

USA TODAY understands that there has been some resistance from the student newspaper, The Wildcat. The following are some ideas we have for working with the Wildcat, including some opportunities from the Arizona Daily Star.

- USA TODAY and/or the Arizona Daily Star can utilize their network/expertise to help the Wildcat potentially identify lower-cost printing and distribution options
- USA TODAY can offer a scholarship for Wildcat staffers
- Arizona Daily Star already has a pick-up advertising rate for advertisers to extend their advertising into the Wildcat. This hasn’t been used in a while, but is something that could be promoted again
- Arizona Daily Star could conduct advertising sales training
- Arizona Daily Star could conduct “How to Find a Job” workshops
- USA TODAY can feature a Wildcat article in its Roundtable email that goes to 23,000 students on hundreds of college campuses, providing national visibility for the paper and student journalists.