



## Analytical Business Report: Revitalizing the Stylus Newspaper

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# Table of Contents\*

<u>Title Page</u> .....	1
<u>Table of Contents</u> .....	2
<u>Executive Summary</u> .....	3
<u>Introduction</u> .....	4
<u>Purpose and Scope</u> .....	4
<u>Assumptions</u> .....	4
<u>Criteria</u> .....	4
<u>Harms of the Disappearing Newspaper</u> .....	5
<u>Community</u> .....	5
<u>Authentic</u> .....	5
<u>Accessible</u> .....	6
<u>Competitive Job Field</u> .....	6
<u>Demand in Higher Education</u> .....	9
<u>Benefits of College/University Newspaper: Student</u> .....	10
<u>General Student Body</u> .....	10
<u>Recognition</u> .....	10
<u>Student Experience</u> .....	11
<u>Benefits of College/University Newspaper: Community</u> .....	12
<u>Brining Divided Communities Together</u> .....	13
<u>Inform Communities</u> .....	13
<u>Solution</u> .....	14
<u>Advertisements</u> .....	14
<u>Distribution</u> .....	15
<u>Merchandise</u> .....	16
<u>Organization of Events</u> .....	16
<u>Conclusion</u> .....	17
<u>References</u> .....	18

\* For digital use: Sections listed above can be clicked on to jump to sections.

## Executive Summary

In order to achieve the benefits that come from a student run newspaper, changes need to be made in a financial aspect. The Stylus Newspaper has been a tradition at Park University long enough that it has created a home in the community. However, after the Spring 2023 semester, the print version of the Stylus Newspaper will be discontinued. It will be switched to all online publications. Its absence will be felt and will deprive students, faculty/staff and the community of this long standing symbol of Park. Currently, the Stylus does not bring in enough money to justify keeping it. This is what is causing the main problem that is facing the Stylus. The lack of funds it generates is leading to the extinction of the print paper. Part of the problem is that the Stylus is not utilizing the tools and power it has to generate the financial support it needs to stay at Park.

Through research and analysis of other free community newspapers, it is clear that simple financial implementations can revitalize the newspaper. The research emphasizes that these implementations come at little to no cost to the university but will bring in the necessary funds to support itself. These implementations are at the disposal of any newspaper but the Stylus is not using them to help support its cost. It is also clear that these changes not only work but are necessary. College newspapers provide a multiple of positive aspects to a diverse population and by ending publication, it will prevent people from feeling the positive influence the paper brings.

Thus, I offer the following recommendations for a solution...

1. Advertisements
  - a. Business Ads
  - b. Classified Job Ads
  - c. Personal Ads
2. Distribution
  - a. Wider range
3. Merchandise
  - a. Coffee Shops
4. Events
  - a. Organizing

## Introduction

The Stylus Newspaper is the student led paper that runs monthly at Park University. It has been around for over a century at Park, serving as a symbol to the University. However, the Stylus is experiencing the downfalls that come from a free community paper.

Since there are no subscriptions with the Stylus, financial support is few and far between. This causes the problem of discontinuing the newspaper due to lack of money.

## Purpose and Scope

From personal experience, while good work is done by students, there is a lack of financially generating space on the paper. Free community papers utilize a large population, advertisements, merchandise and events to create an income. The purpose of this report is to prove the success and necessity of ways to fund the newspaper.

I will be examining how the newspaper affects students, faculty/staff and the community. Different examples of free community newspapers will be included to prove the success of these solutions.

## Assumptions

Recommendations are based on the assumption that there is the possibility to reverse the current decision to eliminate the newspaper. If a change can be taken into consideration, the next assumption is that those in charge of the newspaper understand the changes to be implemented and no training/teaching is needed.

## Criteria

The following criteria has been placed to ensure success of solutions. These must be met to achieve the desired outcome.

- Funding = 60% from the newspaper itself
- Readership = 51% from paper than online
  - 10% (+) increase in readership after change implemented
- Involvement = 20% increase in community/student involvement due to newspaper features, promotion, and/or advertisements

# Harms of the Disappearing Newspaper

Print media is being faced with the harsh reality that readership is quickly declining. The age of technology brings about new ways for media to be shared. Online news is replacing print media and this increase in digital popularity is forcing hundreds of newspapers to stop circulation for good. A Pew Research study conducted August 31 - September 7 2020 found that 86% of adults get their news from an online media source with a phone, computer or tablet. In contrast, the same study reports that only 32% of adults get their news from print sources. Print media is not able to handle the demand that digital media meets with ease. This has equated to a rapid decline in newspapers. In 2000, the average circulation number for a weekly paper was 55.8 million, double the average in 2020 at 24.2 million (Grundy, 2022). Having a regularly run newspaper requires a dedicated staff that does 10 times more work than publishing a digital story. This causes newspapers to be more expensive to run yet do not generate a substantial income. Newspaper revenue in 2002 was \$46.2 billion but in 2020, it barely brought in \$22 billion (Grundy, 2022). It's clear that print media is not maintaining its relevance in a digital world. Thus, newspaper organizations are being forced to shut down. However, this causes significant harm from the lack of print news. There are four main harms that stem from this.

## Community

Newspapers have long been a focal point of communities, bringing people together. Best selling author, Michael Connelly (2010), said that a newspaper is “one of the tent poles of a community” in a way that digital media cannot replace. Getting rid of newspapers, including college level, harms the communities that have come to depend on them. It creates “news deserts” within these areas. Reporter Erin Karter explains these deserts as places that are left stranded, cut off from news because of the elimination of their local paper. Many of these communities have no source of digital access to media so it leads to a desert dry of any information. The United States was built on the fundamental concept that people have a right to information. However, over 70 million residents are being deprived of this right (Karter, 2022). Communities directly suffer from the loss of print media.

## Authentic

Newspapers are more authentic than digital media for two main reasons.

First, information that is presented in a newspaper is more authentic. Newspapers are still credited to be the most reliable form of media. This is because print media tends to have less misinformation than that of digital media. Credible information comes from the lack of pressure digital media faces. Digital media is constantly producing stories, having greater deadline pressure to push out story after story. For reporters/journalists writing for a newspaper, the set distribution dates work to release this pressure. Having less pressure allows more

investigation/collection of information that are credible and reliable to produce the most informative and accurate story for readers (Easy Reader & Peninsula Magazine, n.d.).

Second, connections are made between readers and newspapers. These connections make the paper take on an authentic feel as opposed to digital media. Online news lacks an emotional appeal that draws in the readers to the story they are reading. Rather, it is more about quick facts instead of a personal connection. While digital media may lack this, print media possesses this ability. Newspapers provide information that is more “persuasive and opinionated than other types of media,” (qtd. In Loding, 2015). This gives a more human feel than an impersonal, robotic one with online news.

Taking away newspapers deprives the readers of its authenticity. People deserve to have access to the best information and sources with personal (non biased) feel to it.

## Accessible

As mentioned earlier, communities utilize and rely on print media for their news. Papers are more accessible to them rather than digital media on a phone, computer or tablet. Currently, 42 million Americans have no access to broadband internet (Campisi, 2022). Newspapers, of course, do not use the internet to spread them and have people read their content. Along with this, the layout of newspapers is more understandable to an older audience. The way print papers are organized is to include the most important information in a traditional manner. This allows older audiences who cannot access or understand digital media to still be able to inform themselves. Taking away print media leaves those without the internet and older readers without a source of information.

## Competitive Job Field

One of the main harms that stems from the loss of print media is the amount of jobs that are taken away. Newspaper teams consist of (at minimum) local news reporters and writers for the local section, beat reporters, investigative reporters and editors. Since print media is declining, there have been many layoffs. In 2017, newspaper companies experienced the first round of layoffs, affecting 32% of the industry and a year later, another round of layoffs were seen in 27% of companies (Grieco, 2020). This has left the field with a limited number of standing positions. When looking at 1990 to 2016, there was a 60% decline in jobs going from 458,000 to only 183,000 (Greenslade, 2016). Figure 1 shows the decline of print and the rise of digital. The blue line represents the newspaper employees, the green is internet jobs, red is books, turquoise is film and video production and olive green is magazines.

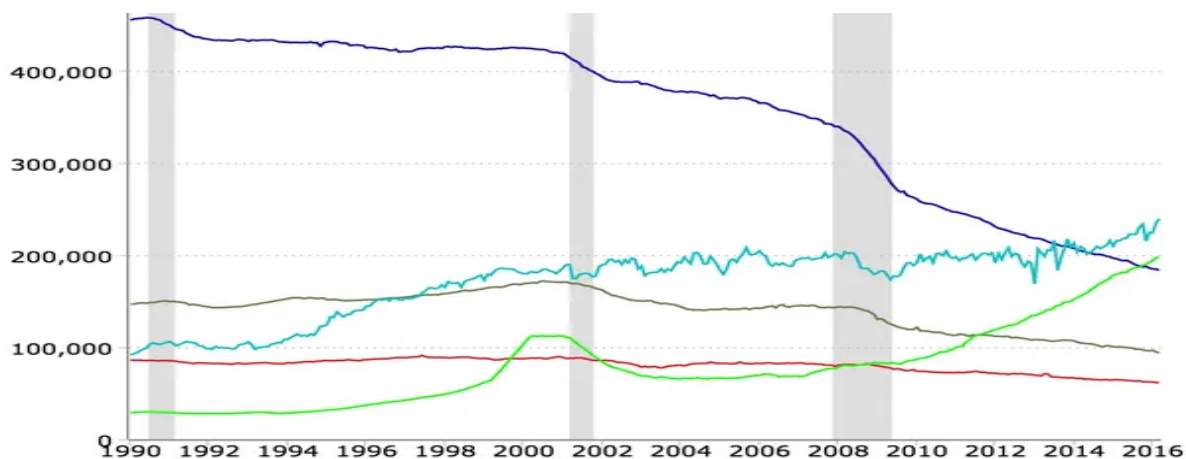


Figure 1. Media Job Trends. (Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics features in Greenslade, 2016)

The trend has only gotten more drastic in recent years. In 2019, there was a 51% drop in jobs from 2008, leaving only 35,000 remaining positions in print media (Grieco, 2020).

While there has been a decrease in the job field, it is still an area of media that will be around for decades to come. The trend of declining positions has created a more competitive field for journalism students coming out of college wanting to go into print. The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services details in a 2021 publication that positions in print media are “highly popular and therefore competitive”. The publication continues by stating that experience is essential in order to gain an upper hand against other applicants. Specifically, a student’s “experience at a student newspaper can be valuable” because it sets you apart from other applicants (Fenwick, 2022). A campus newspaper allows students real world experience before even going out into the real world, translating to an advantage against other applicants. Other types of experience that are beneficial is a campus radio station or publication office. Ross Collins, a professor at North Dakota State University, explains that publishers look specifically for students that have campus newspaper experience and sometimes even overlook students who did not have this experience. Thus, it is essential that journalism students are offered an opportunity to gain this crucial experience before trying to go out and find a job after graduating.

A university’s goal is to properly prepare students for the workforce by providing them with all the education and opportunities necessary to gain the proper skills. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an institutional accreditor that works to help universities find strategies for institutional improvement. These provide criteria that an institution follows that ensures students receive the best education for a competitive job market once they graduate. In the HLC policy, there are three main sections detailed in the “Criteria for Accreditation” that relate to the importance of a campus newspaper for students because of the competitive job field.

First, criteria three is the “Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support” section of the accreditation looking at where the institution is shown to provide quality education. In order

for a university to achieve this criteria, they have to follow the two main points under this section: 3.B. and 3.D. Point 3.B. shows that the institution had programs that engaged students in mastering creative work, communicating information and “developing skills adaptable to changing environments,” (HLC, 2020). A campus newspaper is one main program that allows students to learn communication of information and creative work and develop skills necessary for their job field. Without a campus newspaper, it would deprive students of a way to properly obtain these skills and experience. Point 3.D. looks at the support an institution provides faculty students with the “resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning,” (HLC, 2020). An example of support that a university would need to provide to achieve this would be a campus newspaper. A paper is an essential program that faculty needs to be able to teach the skills that will be required of students in their field. Likewise, a paper is needed for students to properly learn and practice the skills they will encounter once they graduate and look for a job.

Second, criteria four is the “Teaching and Learning: Education and Improvement” section of the accreditation looking at the responsibility an institution has for the quality of programs and effectiveness of learning. To achieve this criteria, an institution has to follow two main points under this section: 4.A. and 4.C. Point 4.A. looks at how an institution ensures quality education by seeing if programs “represent as preparation for advanced study or employment,” (HLC, 2020). Part of the preparation that a university should provide students for employment is a campus newspaper. It is clear that it is what will help students not only get ahead of other applicants but show employers that they have first hand experience in the field before they even graduate. Point 4.C. looks to see if the institution makes improvements to improve the completion and retention of a degree program. Park University is experiencing a period of low retention rates for students, partly because there are other universities out there that offer the necessary programs and tools that students need for their education. In order to maintain relevance against other institutions, having the necessary programs for educational improvement like a campus newspaper is not only essential to retention but also for accreditation.

By following the accreditation guidelines from the HLC will ensure that students receive all their education and tools they need to be a contender in the competitive job field.



## Demand in Higher Education

While the nationwide trend is a downward fall of print media, newspapers at colleges and universities are seeing an opposite result. More and more students are enjoying their school's newspaper, increasing the readership to higher levels. A study conducted by the MORI Media Research and Consulting Firm found that 76% of college students have read a campus paper in the past month. In addition, many are avid and dedicated readers where some are reading every three out of five issues on average (MORI, n.d.). It seems that in the rest of the country where print media is in decline and digital media is dominating news, higher education is the only area where digital media is not taking off. The same MORI study reported that only 18% of students on average are reading the online news from their campus, rather instead, opting for the print version. Figure 2 shows more detailed readership trends in higher education. The brown represents readership in the past 90 days, black represents the past 30 days, yellow represents the past 14 days and green represents the past seven days.

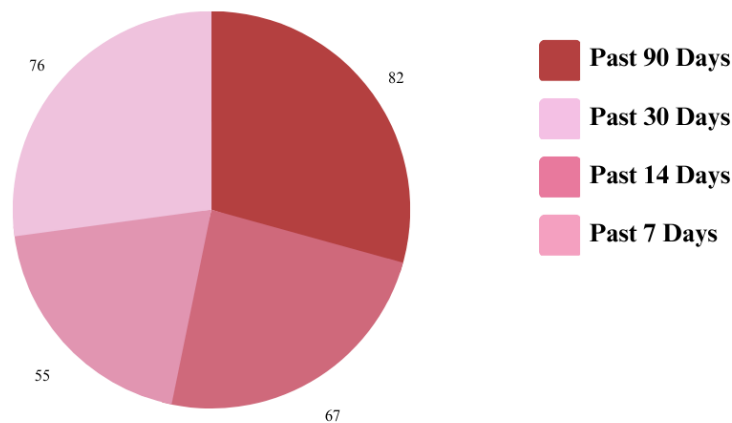


Figure 2. Readership of Campus NewsPaper (Source: MORI, n.d.)

Print media is still the prominent form of news among higher education yet, these trends are seen nowhere else. Maggie Eastland at the University of Notre Dame in 2021 explains why these trends are being seen. She states readership is increased in higher education as compared to other areas because they “have a concentrated audience of active, engaged individuals”. Colleges and universities hold the perfect audience for print media, making readership higher because it is catering to the exact demographic it needs to survive.

Print media may not be able to survive a wide scale market across the whole country in a digital age but it can maintain in a smaller area. Thus, newspapers at a college and universities level should maintain production to ensure that print media survives in the area that needs and wants it the most.

# Benefits of a College/University Newspaper: Students

There are many benefits that come with a campus newspaper. Specifically, three main ones: General student body, recognition and journalism and communication students.

## General Student Body

The overall student body gains many positive aspects from campus newspapers. The primary benefit is being informed about events. Much like mainstream media, digital news can get clustered and be hard to decipher what is most important to be informed about (Loding, 2015). In addition, a problem that occurs with digital news is that it may not even reach students. At Park University, students and faculty/staff are experiencing this issue. University emails with important information are going into the spam folders of everyone's email. This prevents people from being able to be updated with information that is necessary for them to be aware of. This is where newspapers shine. Being print media, there is no chance that a newspaper could end up in a spam folder or be hidden from students. It is in designated news stands that are clearly marked for students to grab and read.

## Recognition

Students are often recognized within campus newspapers. Whether it be for athletics, academics, campus involvement, etc. the newspaper highlights the accomplishments that students have. For Park University's Stylus, it regularly features athletes, games that have been played, and awards students and faculty/staff have won (Honors Convocation). Editor Maria Leontaras for "The Observer" at the University of Notre Dame states that students often pick up more papers for friends and family when they are shown within them. It creates an emotional connection between students and the newspaper because they are able to see themselves be recognized for their hard work in a physical copy that they can then share. Toni Moral, a college student, says how when he is featured in the campus paper for his achievements, he often grabs copies so his mother can cut him out and scrapbook it. He continues saying that it is different from social media or digital news because it doesn't happen as often, having a newspaper feature you. It makes students feel appreciated when the campus paper takes time to interview, research, write and produce a piece that focuses on them. This type of recognition can oftentimes make students then work harder since their efforts are being noticed. A study of 300 people found that recognition does lead to improved work. The study had people work for three hours entering data and randomly, recognition would be given to people after two hours of work. Those who received recognition saw an increased performance rate in correct entries per minute by 1.25 while those who were not acknowledged remained the same (Bradler, et. al., 2016). Eventually though, those who had not been recognized showed increased performance within the hour in hopes of receiving the same acknowledgment that their peers had gotten. This shows a direct correlation between recognition and increased performance. As mentioned, Park University is

experiencing low enrollment and retention rates. Keeping morale high and students feeling appreciated is what will help draw more students in and have current ones wanting to stay. The newspaper offers a way for students to feel seen and appreciated for the things they do. Thus, the campus newspapers are important to continue running to recognize the work that students do, motivating them to continue to do better.

## Student Experience

Of course, journalism and communication students (or any student involved with the newspaper) greatly benefits from a campus newspaper. There are many teaching and learning opportunities that come from having a campus newspaper that digital media does not provide. A campus newspaper offers a more sheltered environment for students to practice their skills without the fear or pressure that might come from learning on the job. Real world business and editorial experience comes from a campus newspaper where students can explore all different aspects of editing, reporting, writing, and photography (Collins, 2009). Campus newspapers also allow students an opportunity to have their work published where peers can read their work and build their portfolio. The College of Charleston Career Center details the importance of students having a portfolio. It works to organize their accomplishments and showcase their best work as a proof of their skills and qualifications. A portfolio also can help to be a method of self-discovery and confidence building by seeing all of their published work in one place. These portfolios from a newspaper help to gain employment in the future. Ross Collins, a professor at North Dakota State University explains that publishers look specifically for students that have campus newspaper experience and sometimes even overlook students who did not have this experience.

Therefore, a campus newspaper for journalism and communication students to work on their skills of writing, reporting, communicating, editing, and photographing is essential. Colleges and universities are meant to prepare students for the real world and provide them with all the experience they need to be able to succeed. If a campus eliminates the newspaper, it would deprive these students of important experience they will need when they look for employment after their time in higher education.

A campus newspaper does not only benefit journalism and communication students, it helps to benefit many different fields of studies. Part of this is business. A campus newspaper includes things such as marketing and finance. Business majors can be involved with the newspaper to get experience interacting with local businesses to sell ad space and attract and work on managing funds for the paper. Business students can find ways to attract new interest in the paper through different marketing and promoting ideas. This offers a simple way to get valuable experience that can then be placed on resumes for work experience. Along with this, graphic design, photography students also benefit from a campus newspaper. A majority of work for a paper is the layout and design of all the pages. Graphic design students can utilize their skills for real world experience designing a paper. Photography and art students can work on pieces that

can be included in the campus paper allowing them to be able to feature their work to add to their portfolio.

A campus newspaper benefits and provides crucial and valuable experience to many different students and majors at a university. Thus, showing it can be an integral part of a students education is properly utilized.

## **Benefits of a College/University Newspaper: Community**

A campus newspaper does not just benefit those who attend the university, it creates a positive impact on the community around it. When a campus paper is distributed in the surrounding area, it not only increases readership but has a lasting, influential effect on the community. It becomes a way to understand what is happening locally that they may not be able to find in digital media. Michael Connelly (2010) states that newspapers are the center of communities and “that’s not going to be replaced by web sites and blogs”.

### **Bringing Divided Communities Together**

Campus newspapers have the same roles as mainstream media where they inform the public, act as a watchdog and express all sides of an issue. Communities can be brought together through the power of a local campus newspaper. These papers shine a light on different issues that may be political or local, providing impartial sides to expose all viewpoints to eliminate political polarization (Mitchell, 2014). Newspapers engage the community through the stories they tell within them that can even come from digital media. Deb Roy, a professor of media arts at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, states that campus newspapers become leaders of “grassroots movement to engage diverse communities and reflect their perspectives, experiences and opinions in ways that reverse the dangerous trends towards toxic polarization”. It is important for local communities to experience the writings and perspectives that are unique to newspapers because they have the power to bring people together.

### **Inform Communities**

As stated earlier, many communities rely on newspapers for their information. Without them, they are left in “news deserts”. When looking at communities like that in Parkville, it is small and the demographic is more older. Newspapers can allow a way for the community to know what is happening in their town and feel a part of it as well. Everyone deserves to feel included in their community and having a local newspaper allows residents to understand what is happening in their community.

## Solution

Currently at Park University, the newspaper is being discontinued after the Spring 2023 semester. There are many issues that arise from this. The main one is that it would be unnecessarily denying the benefits that a campus newspaper brings. While shutting down the newspaper may be the simplest solution, it does not address the root of the issue. It is just eliminating the paper without realizing what is causing the problem in the first place. By using the Toyota method, the ultimate root cause can be shown. The Toyota method is asking “why?” five times to understand the problem (Miller, 2006).

1. Why is the paper being canceled?
  - a. The cost is too much.
2. Why is the cost too much?
  - a. The paper does not generate an income.
3. Why does it not generate an income?
  - a. It is a free community paper with no subscriptions or advertisements.
4. Why does the paper have no advertisements?
  - a. It has not been done before.

While we may not have gotten to five questions, we can see that money is the problem and looking for sources of revenue will help solve the problem. There are four categories for solutions.

## Advertisements

1. Different shops and businesses around the local area can utilize the paper to generate more traffic to increase their sales by using target marketing. Business advertisements would be a small cost to businesses, offering them a cheaper opportunity to showcase their goods to the local community. In return, by running them, the Stylus would generate some income from selling advertisement spaces to businesses.
2. College students could use the paper as a source to find a job. This creates a two fold benefit for the paper. First, it would create more readership with students seeking out the paper to look at the classified job ads. Second, it would generate income by selling the advertisement space for the classified job ads.
3. A column could be dedicated to personal ads that sell services or goods. By having personal ads that showcase such items, the paper would broaden its audience and generate more readership. Selling the ad space would also generate income.

The Stylus is a free community paper that is struggling to survive. However, there are many free community papers across the country that are surviving and thriving. The question is “how?”. The Metro New York is a prime model for a free community paper. It runs every weekday

morning at no charge to the reader. So, how does it maintain itself? It receives all the funding it needs through advertisements. The Metro New York runs ads for business and classified ads at set rates to generate an income. Having this implemented for the Stylus would generate an income and also benefit local businesses.

For the stylus, not only would it bring in an income, it would also increase readership. A study done by MORI Research (2016) found that 44% of students seek out the ads in their campus newspaper. This could either be for the events, businesses or jobs in the area. Along with this, 43% mentioned an ad to their friend who then went and collected their own paper. Ads help to spark and interest and spread the newspaper via word of mouth.

For local businesses, the Stylus provides an opportunity to feature jobs or business promotions. The average ad in a mainstream newspaper costs an average of \$2,700 - \$100,00 (Benitez, 2022). In a small community like Parkville, businesses may not be able to afford expensive ads in a large newspaper. Therefore, a campus newspaper allows a more affordable opportunity to showcase their business to a local clientele. The average cost of a campus ad either is \$1 - \$5 per word (Nationwide Newspaper Advertising, 2020). A more reasonable rate for local businesses to afford to attract customers without spending a fortune. Along with this, ads in a campus paper are effective for bringing in more traffic to local businesses. The MORI study saw that 70% of students who saw a local business advertisement felt motivated to take action after reading about it. In addition, for events or promotions hosted by a business on a certain day, 50% of students reported attending because of an ad that they saw in the campus paper.

Advertisements are an easy way for the Stylus Newspaper to generate revenue to support itself. In the process, local businesses and individuals can utilize this to have an affordable way to generate their own income for their business, etc.

## Distribution

1. Currently, the Stylus is only set out around campus for students and faculty/staff to enjoy. By distributing the Stylus to the surrounding area (Downtown Parkville) it could generate more readership because it is exposed to a wider audience.

Part of why the Metro New York is such a successful free community paper is because of their wide distribution. It is put out all across the city to ensure there is more opportunity for people to read their paper. If the Stylus was to be distributed in the local Downtown Parkville area in the businesses, it would help to increase the readership by having a wider audience. It would also help the community to feel more engaged and connected. The Stylus could work to make the local community feel as if it is a part of the events and triumphs that the university and students have. By reading about them in the campus paper, it can bring them closer together with the university. Along with this, it would also increase the amount of people who would see ads

featured in the paper. The local community would then also be exposed to the local business and personal ads on top of students as well, increasing the effectiveness of them.

## Merchandise

1. There are a couple of coffee houses in Downtown Parkville that are popular places for students to go with friends to hangout or study. When there, students are exposed to a variety of merchandise sold. Likewise, the community is exposed to these as well. By having merchandise that features the Stylus Newspaper, it could generate income from people buying them when they go to these coffee shops. A percentage would go to the business as an incentive to sell the products and the rest would go to funding the newspaper.

When going to the university bookstore or to Parkville coffee house, there are different merchandise items that advertise different things. The Stylus could take such an approach by having its own merchandise. This could range from notebooks, pens, stickers, even apparel. Students, families, friends and the local community like to support the university because it is a part of their community. Having merchandise that people can buy to support the campus newspaper would help to create another source of revenue for the paper.

## Organization of Events

1. The Stylus Newspaper could promote events happening in the surrounding area. The promotion would increase the awareness of the event to more people, increasing attendance rates. The promotion of the event in the paper would be free but a portion of ticket sales, concessions, etc. would go to funding the Stylus Newspaper as compensation.



## Conclusion

The Stylus Newspaper is an essential aspect of Park University. It provides many benefits to students and the community. Like most things, there are issues that arise from it that can and should be fixed. However, the solution is not to just completely end production of the paper. Rather, the recommendation is to utilize the above solutions. These target the root of the problem while maintaining the benefits.

To properly solve the issue, the recommendation is to implement at the least advertising to ensure a revenue stream for the paper. Then, gradually implement the remaining solutions to maximize a positive resolution to the problem.

Students come to Park to further their knowledge with the trust that they are being given every resource to expand it. By simply eliminating such resources, it breaks the trust that students have placed in the university. Thus, the preservation of the Stylus Newspaper is essential and can be done so without ending it.

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- 1