

Blum, Alan

From: Blum, Alan
To: DeAnn Crompt
Cc:
Subject: RE: Fwd: [Tobaccointerest] Fwd: Philip Morris at UW luncheon
Attachments:

Sent: Fri 5/4/2007 12:34 AM

Thanks, DeAnn. I in turn am impressed by your own interest in this aspect of tobacco. I've been so disheartened by the utter lack of awareness of, much less an interest in getting involved in exploring, ways in which the tobacco industry has blended in with college campus career activities. Indeed, not only is Philip Morris just another one of the boys (and girls), but in some instances (as on my own campus), it is a favored son.

I have been extremely critical of magical thinking in the anti-smoking movement (now so authoritatively but also authoritarian-ly known as "tobacco control"), such as the belief that if we just yell loud enough to a deaf person (eg, make those warning labels bigger and scarier), then he'll hear you. So it is with the subject of the relationship between universities and the tobacco industry. For now and for the foreseeable future, this is where you want to be a fly on the wall. I on the other hand engaged in my own form of magical thinking last year when I assumed that, as an endowed chair, tenured professor, and international authority on tobacco, I would be able to call attention to the deceptive activities of Philip Morris at my own university and begin the change a way of thinking. To the contrary, considerable adverse pressure was brought to bear. I think we have allies (several people have privately commended me for raising this issue), but they are few and far between. It is very much like the pre-lawsuit, pre-grant money days of the 1980s when even moral support on countering tobacco problems was very hard to come by within academia, and I was told by a higher-up at Baylor that I should get into something more socially acceptable like cocaine (ie, that's where the money was).

All in all, then, as much as I also have criticized this field as an endlessly descriptive one, as opposed to an action-oriented one (ie, counting the number of Marlboro logos on the head of a pin or the number of smokers we can enroll in our quit clinics or the number of citations we can give to store clerks), I think we still need to remain in a descriptive mode in the matter of the university-tobacco connection. I'll forward the brief letter to the editor in a medical journal that came out this week to give you a few references that I think are valuable.

Your role at this etiquette event would best be to take it all in. Some students have taken to making tape recordings of events and to taking photographs wherever possible. Cellphones have been known to be useful. Any and all printed material will be worth archiving (I hope you'll pick up a second set for me). This is not to say that you cannot ask tough or unexpected questions, the most obvious of which would be, "But, with all due respect, your company makes cigarettes, not English muffins. How can cigarettes be a part of any business encounter in today's health-conscious world? And surely cigarettes at a dinner party would be a non-no., etc." Nor do you need to ask this of the PM rep, but of the UW people or of some of the other companies that most people do respect.

The connections are wide and deep, so don't feel obligated to do more than you find curious. Keep in mind that more than half the story is the university itself and not the tobacco company. There are many points of enabling. Keep in mind, too, that this event is a minor one in the larger scheme of things, especially in view of the company not being the sole host. (On the other hand, it's a nice keyhole view of the world of Philip Morris on campus.) It would be worth debriefing yourself immediately following the event (eg, in an email). You also want to pay attention to the other students in attendance, keeping in mind that if you interview them you may be accused, as I was, of doing unauthorized research involving human subjects. You at least have a governor who is supposedly a sworn enemy of the tobacco industry, so that is a comforting luxury I don't have.

I'm personally interested in the extent of data Philip Morris is permitted to gather on UW students that visit a PM-sponsored event or their booth at a job fair, since most will not be working for them. For all we know, the company may be doing market research on attitudes of college students toward Marlboro. But I would be careful not to accuse either the university or the company of any deceptive or unethical conduct unless you have specific evidence of unequivocal misconduct. One man's immorality is another man's ethics when it comes to job-hiring (or to coin a phrase, one man's immorality is another man's mortality when it comes to hiring on to a cigarette company). Check out the student newspaper for any ads or any mentions of the event. If you wish, you can feel them out for editorial interest in questioning the presence of a tobacco company on

campus. But the best that is likely to happen these days at a typically counterintuitive campus newspaper is an offer for you to submit a guest column.

Be sure to dress up for the event, the more formal the better. When you mention you're in the public health arena, you'll soon be ignored or exposed anyway, so you might as well try to fit in as best you can among the business and public relations students who are serious in their quest for a job with these people. This isn't to say you shouldn't pursue an interview if you wish. There are many stages in the hiring process, and it would be good to get as far as you can. Above all, let the PM people do all the talkign about PM. You needn't say much of anything.

Feel free to keep writing. Next week I'll be reachable by email only and possibly also on a cellphone at 205-799-9478. Nice to hear from you.

Alan Blum, MD

From: DeAnn Crompt [mailto:dcrompt@u.washington.edu]
Sent: Thu 5/3/2007 11:19 PM
To: Blum, Alan
Subject: Re: Fwd: [Tobaccointerest] Fwd: Philip Morris at UW luncheon

Hello Dr. Blum,

My name is DeAnn Crompt and I am a graduate student in public health at the University of Washington -- and a recent intern with Roger Valdez at Seattle's public health department's tobacco prevention program. I am one of the concerned students who greatly appreciates your dialogue with Roger about our piqued awareness of Philip Morris influence on our campus.

The Etiquette dinner/grad student recruitment event that initialized this interest will be held next week, and I arranged to sit at the PM hosted table which will be led by a rep. I was hopeful to seek your specific advice on how to get at information -- and also personal demeanor (hopefully that makes sense). Another MPH student will also be there, at the same table. If you have any particular recommendations from your past experience or what you think would be a good way to approach this, please do contact me. Again, we found your reply to be extremely helpful about thinking of the long term.

Thank you,
 DeAnn
 dcrompt@u.washington.edu
 408.396.5522 cell

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 >
 > Begin forwarded message:
 >
 > *From: *"Blum, Alan" <ablum@cchs.ua.edu>
 > *Date: *April 26, 2007 5:16:10 PM PDT
 > *To: *"Valdez, Roger" <Roger.Valdez@METROK.COV>
 > *Cc: * <sarasav@u.washington.edu>
 > *Subject: **RE: [Tobaccointerest] Fwd: Philip Morris at UW luncheon*
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 > Hi, Roger and Sara.
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