

**COMMUNICATION SUPPORT PLAN #1: Cellphone use should be banned in classrooms at the University of Ottawa.**

**BACKGROUND STATEMENT**

Technology has become an integral part of our everyday lives, and more specifically, our education system. Notebooks have been traded in for laptops and textbooks are found online instead of in the bookstore, but even with all these beneficial advances in the classroom, some technology has been found to be more distracting than helpful. Many institutions have limited or even banned the usage of cellphones from their premises. Cellphones have become an issue at all levels of school because of the distractions they are creating in the classrooms.

The effects of cell phones in the classroom in 2023 have surpassed only being a distraction to the students who are using them. The other students sitting around them and even professors are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain focus on their academics when there are cellphones out and around them. The constant buzzing and notification sounds, people watching videos while others are browsing social media all contribute to the negative effects that cellphones have in the classroom. In some cases, phones have become invasions of privacy in what used to be a safe space for people to learn thanks to their recording ability. Cellphones are also at times used to cheat in the classroom since they are small and discrete, this is a risk to the academic integrity of all institutions that choose to allow them in their classrooms. We must convince the administrative team that removing cellphones from the classrooms at the University of Ottawa would be a positive step toward providing students and professors with the best academic experience while supporting the students and professors in the transition toward a cellphone-free classroom.

## TOP THREE COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

*I. Inform the University of Ottawa administration about the various issues that cellphones are causing for professors, students, and other staff.*

This is an important objective to achieve because it is the University of Ottawa administration that will ultimately make the decision to create the ban on cellphones, therefore the issues must be voiced directly to the decision-makers on behalf of the people affected. The hope is that including the views of the diverse stakeholders who are negatively affected by the usage of cellphones in class, it will show the urgency and magnitude of the problem.

*II. Share the best methods to stay focused and engaged in class to avoid the temptation of checking your phone with students at the University of Ottawa.*

This objective focuses on presenting practical solutions to the student community to help them prepare for a transition toward a cellphone-free classroom. This is important because an abrupt interruption in their daily cellphone usage will likely be difficult for many students to adjust to without any prior preparation.

*III. To make all members of the University of Ottawa community aware of the statistics that link cellphone usage in class to poor academic performance.*

My third objective aims to persuade more people into supporting the ban on cellphones since there will likely be a large group who disagree with the new regulations. Explaining the reasons why this ban is being proposed may lead to less negative reactions and even some additional supporters for the movement.

## TOP THREE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

**I.** *Due to the popularity of cellphones and perceived benefits, we should anticipate some pushback and negative reactions from the student population when sharing our message.*

This is an important consideration when pursuing a ban on cellphones in classrooms because the students are the ones who are being regulated and limiting their freedoms will come with certain disagreement. This should be considered in our communication strategy and by applying our communication objectives effectively we can mitigate this concern.

**II.** *When proposing a ban on cellphones, we must consider special circumstances where students may need to have a cellphone on and beside them during class time.*

The goal of banning cellphones in the classroom is to lower the distractive element of the technology, however, in some exceptional circumstances, cellphones are necessary. When developing a proposal to ban phones we should consider these situations and include an option that would permit students in those circumstances to use their phones during class.

**III.** *The proposed ban on cellphones may raise a discussion with the school about the enforcement of this rule and the potential consequences.*

If a ban is introduced there will of course be a new issue regarding the discipline that one may face when using a cellphone in class and who is responsible for enforcing those rules. Before submitting a proposal for a ban these questions should be addressed as they will be a major concern for all the stakeholders involved in the problem.

## **KEY TARGET AUDIENCE AND KEY SPOKESPERSON**

Key target audience: University of Ottawa administrative committee and board

The most important audience will be the administrative committee and board of the University of Ottawa because they are the ones who will need to be persuaded into creating this ban on cellphones.

Key spokesperson: The University of Ottawa Student Union (UOSU)

The best spokesperson to communicate with the key target audience would be a member or members of the University of Ottawa Student Union because they are a powerful organization with a strong reputation and the message may be more convincing if members of the student community are the ones pushing to ban their own phones.

## **TOP THREE COMMUNICATION MESSAGES**

### *I. Learn now, text later.*

This communication message tells the receiver in a short and simple way that in the classroom it is more important to be learning and gaining knowledge and using their cellphones at a different time. It encourages them to wait to use their phone and focus on their present situation. This message would be most effective when communicating with students.

### *II. Cellphones are distractions, ban them in the classroom to benefit everyone.*

The meaning being sent through this communication message is clear and summarizes the purpose of the communication plan. It states clearly why cellphones should be banned in a single sentence. This message would resonate with not only the key target audience but all stakeholders involved in the issue at hand.

### *III. Banning cellphones is another step toward better education.*

The importance of this communication message is that it targets the key target audience directly.

This message pushes the University of Ottawa to adopt measures to ban cellphones if they wish to provide students with an even greater education from their institution.

**COMMUNICATION SUPPORT PLAN #2: Cellphone use should not be banned in classrooms at the University of Ottawa.**

**BACKGROUND STATEMENT**

The dynamic of classrooms has changed significantly over the course of recent decades. Lecturing, evaluation, and learning methods have all changed thanks to the advancements in technology. During lectures, professors are using microphones to amplify their voices, PowerPoints to support their material, and zoom meetings to reach students remotely. Evaluations are using scantron sheets to instantly correct multiple-choice questions, some use online quizzes to test your knowledge while others use simulations to place you in realistic scenarios without real consequences. Learning strategies have also changed with technology as students are using laptops, tablets, and cellphones to enhance their abilities to take notes, understand new vocabulary, and review recordings when studying.

Banning cellphones in the classrooms at the University of Ottawa would limit the ability of students to utilize the tools available to them. Cellphones have already become an integral part of each classroom with most students being in possession of one and in the academic setting, they allow students to connect with one another, take notes, and translate words. We should encourage the use of this technology in the classroom and push discussions around campus to support the proper use of cellphones. By removing these devices from their hands, the university would effectively be taking a step backward in the advancement of academic technology and banning a tool that could instead be used to create further engagement in the classroom.

## TOP THREE COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

**I.** *Share the benefits of using cellphones in classrooms and encourage professors to utilize them to enhance learning experiences.*

Sharing the benefits of cellphones with the stakeholders who represent the majority of the opposing side to the debate on cellphones may create more support for their use of them in the classroom. It is critical that more professors and educators at the University of Ottawa adopt cellphone technology to embed it even more in our way of learning. Sharing ways to use them properly in the classroom by adding tools like Wooclap and Kahoot to their lectures would be an effective way to accomplish this.

**II.** *Open and encourage discussions around the campus about the importance of technology and specifically cellphones in the classroom and other academic settings.*

By leading positive discussions around cellphones and tying this to other technology used in the classroom we can develop a generally good feeling surrounding these devices and their place at school. It is important to control the discourse as much as possible to try and make it positive and supportive, and creating this general feeling around cellphones will reinforce it and sure that cellphones are here to stay.

**III.** *Inform students how to use their phones in the most effective ways to make use of cellphone technology in the classroom.*

To help support the idea that cellphones are useful tools in the classroom, it will be important to give the students of the University of Ottawa all the information that they need on apps and settings to get the most out of their phones. It is also important that students know how to use them effectively to avoid reinforcing the stereotype that they are distractions.

## TOP THREE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

**I.** *For some people, cellphones are more distracting than helpful when they are using them and when other people are using them.*

Although we are pushing for not banning cellphones in the classroom, it is important to consider that some people naturally find these devices distracting and impair their ability to focus on their surroundings. By keeping this in mind we can try to develop ways to help these students and professors with the reality of cellphones in the classrooms.

**II.** *There could be privacy concerns around the use of cellphones (recording devices) in classrooms.*

Since phones have the ability to record both audio and video, there may be concerns about people using their cellphones to record professors or other students without consent. This must be considered since it can evolve into a privacy issue if these concerns are not dealt with early in the process of introducing more devices to the classrooms.

**III.** *Cellphones could be used to cheat or plagiarize material during lectures or evaluations.*

This is another important legal and privacy-related consideration for the use of cellphones in classrooms. There are many ethical issues to consider when cellphones are involved in the classroom, and this includes cheating and plagiarism. If they are permitted, there may need to be limitations and rules around their usage. There are already regulations around cheating and plagiarism at the University of Ottawa but they may need to be revised if cellphones become a more common occurrence at school.

## **KEY TARGET AUDIENCE AND KEY SPOKESPERSON**

Key target audience: Undergraduate students at the University of Ottawa

I selected the undergraduates at the University of Ottawa because they are the largest population and most frequent users of cellphones on campus. If our messages can resonate with them it can persuade them to use phones effectively and strengthen the base of supporters of the use of cellphones.

Key spokesperson: The University of Ottawa Student Union (UOSU)

This organization can supply a spokesperson as a trustworthy and relatable source of information for students. This spokesperson would also be good at spreading the message to more people as a member of the community that they are speaking to.

## **TOP THREE COMMUNICATION MESSAGES**

### **I. *Call into the future of education.***

This message is a fun word play on cellphones and their calling abilities. It is something memorable and still pushes the positive message that cellphones are here to stay in classrooms and the education field in general. It also reinforces the idea that cellphones are an important player in the future of education.

### **II. *Let's move forward with the integration of technology in the classroom.***

The second communication message is more of a standard message that encourages all receivers of the message to embrace the technology. It has a collective feeling to promote all students and professors alike to use the tools available to them.

### *III. Use them right or lose the right.*

The final communication message promotes the proper use of their devices. It is important that if cellphones are allowed in classrooms that they are used in a way that adds educational value to avoid this discussion coming back and reversing the decision to allow them. Using them right is also an important message to push the legal and ethical use that was discussed in the considerations.