THE CANDIDATE COMETH

When Hillary Clinton’s campaign asked to schedule a stop at UPS, the request set off a logistically frantic, legally informative, and mostly fun campus whirlwind.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

9:15 a.m. UPS communications director Gayle McIntosh flips open her ringing cell phone. It’s President Thomas’s assistant, Laura Ficke, asking McIntosh to run (and she does mean run) over to the president’s office. RT is out of town at an alumni event, and Ficke has him on one line and Tom Luce, director of the Executive Council for a Greater Tacoma, on the other. When McIntosh arrives, panting, Ficke cups her hand over the phone and whispers, “Can we host Bill Clinton for a rally on Friday morning?”

That would be the day after tomorrow.

There are only about a million questions to answer in the few minutes that Luce has given the university to respond before he moves on to another location, not the least of which is how in the heck does a little college where the very busy staff isn’t exactly sitting around looking for something to do pull off an event of this magnitude on such short notice? >>
And then there's the university's political activity policy, based on a pretty complex set of rules about how a candidate might be allowed to visit the campus.

McIntosh dashes out to find Sherry Mondou, vice president for finance and administration. For those unfamiliar with higher ed administration, when your public relations officer shows up unannounced in the VP for finance and administration's office, it's generally not good news. McIntosh later says she saw a thousand disaster scenarios flash through Mondou's eyes in the few seconds it took to let her know what was going on. But Mondou is unfazed. Her office soon is crowded with people from facilities, business services, athletics, and security.

10:05 a.m. Ficke calls the executive council director back—we're game, but there are “conditions.”

If Clinton does come to UPS it won't be the first time a U.S. president has taken the stage in the fieldhouse. Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and Richard Nixon all precede Clinton. Herbert Hoover was scheduled to be the speaker at the building's dedication in 1959, but he canceled at the last minute because of illness. It's widely and incorrectly said that John F. Kennedy spoke there. Kennedy was the convocation speaker in 1963 in a joint ceremony with PLU at Cheney Stadium, not the fieldhouse.

Related “president” trivia: Rich Little, the comedian who gained fame impersonating Richard Nixon, played the fieldhouse in 1975, and Seattle's own The Presidents of the United States of America rocked the UPS concert hall a few years ago.

10:06 a.m. McIntosh gets a call on her cell from a woman who only identifies herself as “a campaign organizer.” She's on her way to Tacoma from Seattle, where Hillary Clinton is speaking on Thursday night, to look at the fieldhouse. She expects to be here by noon, along with sound people, event organizers, and … the Secret Service.

10:30 a.m. There's a message on McIntosh's phone from an agent at Remax in Tacoma. The agent tells McIntosh the campaign folks may be a little late. McIntosh has no idea who the agent is, how she got her number, or why a real estate company is involved. Meanwhile, the Tacoma News Tribune and The Seattle Times have posted announcements on their Web sites saying that Bill Clinton is coming to UPS.

TALK ABOUT MEDIA FRENZY  News outlets attending the Clinton “town meeting” included eight TV stations, five radio stations, 20 newspapers or other print, and a couple of big-time Web bloggers.
**11:20 a.m.** Administration VP Sherry Mondou reviews IRS guidelines for political candidate appearances at nonprofit institutions with the university’s legal counsel. The guidelines are six pages long, with barely comprehensible examples like this: “Situation 9: Minister F is the minister of Church O, a section 501c3 organization. The Sunday before the November election, Minister F invites Senate Candidate X to speak to her congregation during worship services. During his remarks, Candidate X states, ‘I am asking not only for your votes, but for your enthusiasm and dedication, for your willingness to go the extra mile to get a very large turnout on Tuesday.’”

Got that?

**Noon** The first big meeting. No one knows which university administrators will be needed to answer the campaign’s questions, so pretty much everyone who makes decisions about the fieldhouse, facilities, security, or media relations is called to show up.

The agent from Remax arrives first. Turns out she’s president of South Sound for Clinton. And a few friends thought it would be cool to form a support group for Clinton in the South Sound. They never in a million years dreamed they’d get a call from the campaign.

Next to enter is a guy from Northwest Sound. Then a location scout from the national campaign arrives, with entourage, talking on her cell phone. Then a bunch of people from Washington U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell’s office. Mondou tells them we’ve done a little research with counsel. We need to structure this event to meet IRS rules, which means no campaign fundraising can take place here. At this, half the entourage exits to check other locations.

A few of the campaign workers remain behind to look over the fieldhouse. Bob Kief, associate vice president for facilities, has experience with presidential debates from his time working at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. He takes the remaining Clinton crew on a logistics tour.

**2 p.m.** The Clinton people want to know if we can do something about the fundraising issue. They’re just not ready to promise that fundraising won’t take place.

**5:15 p.m.** The campaign calling again. Change of plans. Cancel Bill; welcome Hill. Bill Clinton has been dispatched to Maine, and now the candidate herself will be coming to Tacoma.

**5:30 p.m.** Mondou tracks down an attorney based in that other, more easterly Washington who specializes in helping colleges interpret the American Council on Education’s guidelines governing political activity on campuses. There may be a way to do this if we handle it as a facility-use agreement and not a university-hosted event. It’s worth the effort. The event would be a good learning opportunity for students and benefit the community as well.

**6:48 p.m.** McIntosh calls the campaign back and tells them about the use agreement and what our standard fees are. (The fees cover the university’s expenses only; no profit is made nor discount offered.) But the campaign still can’t do any fundraising. Take it or leave it. They say they’ll get back to her in the morning.

News reports have been corrected and now state that Hillary is coming to Tacoma, but that a venue has not yet been named.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7**

**7:30 a.m.** The news media are reporting that both UPS and the Convention Center have fallen through. There is no listing of the Tacoma event on the Clinton Web site.

**10 a.m.** Still no news from the campaign. The time needed to pull the event off is running out fast. McIntosh prepares an e-mail message to administrators saying it’s not going to happen. She is just about to push the “send” button on her computer, when …

**10:04 a.m.** … her phone rings. It’s a woman, and she’s talking really fast. The latest: Hillary is coming, but not for a political rally. This will be a town hall meeting on health care starting at 8 a.m. The campaign is inviting doctors and nurses to participate on the main floor of the UPS fieldhouse and will open up the bleacher seating above the floor on a first-come, first-served basis. There will be no fundraising. And organizers are on their way; they’ll be on campus in less than an hour to sign a facility-use agreement that has not yet been drafted. Mondou and conference services staff get to work.

The campaign asks for the exact address of the fieldhouse. McIntosh provides it, and almost simultaneously the event appears on the Clinton Web site and the Web site of every news organization in the state.

**11:30 a.m.** Realization: We can’t in any way promote the event. That includes communicating with our own campus; it might be construed as intervening in a political campaign. Incredible.

**3:31 p.m.** Campaign organizers have come and gone, but the contract still isn’t signed.

Exit133.com reports that “it has been confirmed that Senator Hillary Clinton will be at the UPS fieldhouse at 10 a.m. on Friday, February 8th.”

**3:45 p.m.** The Tacoma chapter of Students for a Democratic Society posts an online announcement inviting members to a planning meeting to protest Hillary Clinton’s continued participation in the two-party system. “It’d be awesome to have a welcoming committee ready to go!” it says.

**5 p.m. (on the dot)** Mondou receives the signed use agreement from the campaign. It includes a clause that states the facility cannot be used for fundraising.

**5:05 p.m.** Talk about media frenzy, the confirmed list of news outlets attending includes eight TV stations, five radio stations, 20 newspapers or other print, and a couple of big-time Web bloggers.
8 p.m. Facilities staff members begin setting up after basketball practice. They work through most of the night, along with a staging production company and sound engineers, who put in 40 channels of press feed.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

6 a.m. The news media are reporting that Clinton is speaking at PLU. Subsequent news reports say UPS is “near Tacoma.”

7:26 a.m. Sunrise. The day dawns gray and rainy. Confused people are observed circling the campus in cars, stopping students on their way to 8 a.m. classes and asking: “Where’s Memorial Fieldhouse?”

9 a.m. The line waiting to get in the fieldhouse extends down 11th Street and around the corner on Lawrence.

10 a.m. Bomb-sniffing dogs are led around the fieldhouse in a final security sweep.

The nurses and other invited medical workers are allowed in first. They enter jumping and screaming. Someone in the crowd of locals still lined up is overheard saying, “If only I got such enthusiasm at Group Health.”

10:30 a.m. Doors open. The nurses and other invited medical workers are allowed in first. They enter jumping and screaming. Someone in the crowd of locals still lined up is overheard saying, “If only I got such enthusiasm at Group Health.”

10:35 a.m. Finally inside after a long wait in the rain, the crowd is restless. A young voice calls out: “Once a Logger!” To which a thousand students respond: “Always a Logger!” The non-UPS people in attendance look puzzled, some even a little concerned.

10:40 a.m. The event is beginning to take on the feel of a very polite rock concert. An unseen announcer asks the crowd to look around and note the exit closest to them in case of an emergency. The nurses seated on the fieldhouse floor spontaneously and in unison begin mimicking the hand gestures used by flight attendants when giving passengers preflight instructions.

10:45 a.m. A call from the campaign. There is a huge accident at the intersection of I-5 and I-705, causing the Clinton motorcade to divert from its original route to Puget Sound.

Incumbent President of the Logger Nation Ron Thomas gets up to stretch his legs and the students begin a new, very loud cheer: “Ron Thom, 2012! Ron Thom, 2012!”

11 a.m. Still no Hillary. A quick, visual assessment of the crowd: mostly students and the nurses, doctors, and other invited health care types, but also mothers carrying infants and white-haired locals. The Secret Service guys are conspicuous in black trench coats. They actually do talk into their shirt-sleeve cuffs, but they are not all wearing aviator sunglasses.

11:10 a.m. Hand-painted Clinton volunteer signs seen on the balcony wall: “Let’s make herstory,” “Clean house—the White House,” and “I burned my bra to see this day. Go Hillary.”

11:15 a.m. Former Washington Governor Gary Locke and Congressman Jay Inslee take the podium to warm up the crowd. Locke calls into the mike: “Alrighty! Are we excited?!”

11:25 a.m. Senator Cantwell, President of the American Nurses Association Becky Patton, and Hillary enter as “Blue Sky,” Big Head Todd and the Monsters’ ode to the space shuttle, plays on that specially installed PA system. Patton gives a brief talk announcing the ANA’s endorsement.

11:30 a.m. First thing Hillary says is: “I have heard a lot about this university over the years because one of my political science professors became your president. Phil Phibbs was your president for many years. I just saw him outside and thanked him for being such a very tough professor. He taught me back at Wellesley, and I was delighted to see him, and I am thrilled to be on this campus which I have heard so much about for so many years.” With that, the crowd erupts.

Then she makes a not-direct but still less-than-obscure appeal for funds at Hillary.com. Mondou scowls and reaches for the use agreement.

After a 20-minute stump speech focusing on her health care agenda, the floor is opened for questions. First one comes from a UPS OT/PT student.

12:10 p.m. The candidate exits—slowly; it takes her about 45 minutes—shaking hands all the way. Even kisses a couple of babies. Next stop: Spokane, and she’s got just a few hours to get there.

2 p.m. Seen on the blackboard at the student-managed Diversions Café: “Today's special, ‘The Hillary.” It’s a vanilla Americano.

EPILOGUE

We had planned to run this article in the spring edition of Arches, but college lawyers write to tell us: “As a 501c3 [nonprofit organization] we are prohibited from intervening in a political campaign. While Clinton’s campaign is still in progress we cannot give any publicity to the campaign, including an article or photograph referencing Clinton’s appearance. Even benign intentions, such as reporting on an event that occurred on campus, do not exempt us from this restriction.” The article is postponed. Three months later she is still in the race, and we delete this article from the lineup for the summer Arches, too.