

# Proposal for the Lerner Box Office

Submitted by the Columbia College Student Council and the Engineering Student Council

The Lerner Box Office could be more effectively utilized by Columbia University. Its current setup could be improved upon, and it could also be inexpensively expanded to provide additional services to the Columbia community.

## I. Current Box Office

### Observation:

Presently, the Lerner Box Office is only used by student groups when they are selling tickets to their upcoming events. Student groups man the Box Office for specific periods of time, and these are the only times that students can buy tickets to particular events, outside of purchasing tickets at the door.

Moreover, the Lerner Box Office does not currently accept Flex dollars for purchasing tickets.

### Argument:

Because the period of time when student groups are selling specific tickets is limited as well as specific to each group, it is difficult for students, who are interested in attending an event, to purchase tickets, unless they happen to pass through the lobby of Lerner while tickets are being sold for that specific event.

In addition, many undergraduate students rarely carry cash when they are on campus, so it would be more convenient for students if the Box Office accepted Flex dollars.

If tickets were sold consistently throughout the day and could be bought by Flex points, the attendance of student-run events would increase, thereby allowing student groups to raise more money and increasing a sense of community and spirit amongst the student body.

### Proposal:

1. The hiring of one or two work-study students to staff the Box Office from 12 – 5 pm on all weekdays. During these hours, the box office will be able to sell tickets to all upcoming on-campus events. One student group at a time will still be able to reserve the box office during work-study hours. During non-work study hours, student groups should still be able to reserve the box office to sell tickets in the same way as they do now.
2. While the work-study students are staffing the Box Office, students should be able to purchase tickets to events using their Flex accounts. The revenue accumulated through Flex sales should go into a “General Box Office Account.” The work-study students

should note the number and price of tickets, which are bought with Flex dollars, for each group's event. After a group's event, the appropriate amount of money can then be transferred into the group's account from the General Box Office Account. In order to reduce risk, tickets may be purchased using Flex dollars only during the work-study hours.

## **II. Expanded Box Office**

### **Observation:**

New York City clearly has a lot to offer students. In order to promote student exploration of the City, many colleges and universities in the New York area, such as NYU, Mount Sinai, and Barnard, have offices through which students can purchase tickets to movies, theatrical performances, concerts, and sporting events. In addition to providing students with discounted tickets and convenience, these offices also help publicize events and activities in New York City.

### **Argument:**

Theaters and arenas have dramatically different ‘student rush tickets’ policies. Consequently, students are frequently deterred from attempting to buy these tickets since they often do not know how to deal with venue administrators. With an office on campus to negotiate with these theaters for them, students would be more willing to explore the city outside Columbia’s gates.

### **Proposal:**

1. The administration of the expanded Box Office would closely follow the model currently in place at NYU. Like NYU, our Box Office would be considered a new department, under business services. In addition to the two work-study students, the office would need a full-time coordinator to order tickets, keep the books, oversee fund transfers, manage general box office operations, and publicize ticket sales.
2. This expanded Lerner Box Office should sell discounted movie passes and tickets to on and off-Broadway shows, operas, concerts, and sporting events. Discount tickets to these events should only be sold during the work-study shifts, because, as previously noted, only the work-study students will be authorized to collect Flex and credit card payments. All of the Flex and credit card revenues generated by ticket sales should be placed into a “General Discount Ticket Account,” as opposed to the “General Box Office Account” detailed in section I, proposal 2.
3. In order to purchase tickets, Columbia should explore NYU’s system, and also contact other venues in order to obtain discounts on events in the New York area.

NYU Ticket Central uses the following methods to obtain movie passes and discounted tickets:

Movie Passes:

Loews Theatres: [www.enjoythereeldeal.com](http://www.enjoythereeldeal.com)

Regal Theatres: [www.regmovies.com](http://www.regmovies.com)

Clearview Theatres: [www.clearviewcinemas.com](http://www.clearviewcinemas.com)

AMC Theatres: [www.amctheatres.com](http://www.amctheatres.com)

Broadway Tickets:

Theatre Direct International: [www.broadway.com](http://www.broadway.com)

Theatre Development Fund: [www.tdf.org](http://www.tdf.org)  
Madison Square Garden Events and the City Center:  
Tickets are bought at group rates.  
City Center contact: Susan Levy

4. In order to help cover costs, the Expanded Lerner Box Office should charge a small handling fee on all Broadway and Madison Square Garden Tickets and a 50-cent fee on all movie passes.

5. With regard to advertising, the Box Office should create a website, an email listserv (both hosted by Columbia), and post information on the Lerner televisions. All of the advertisements should have a list of upcoming events and ticket availability. However, even without a great deal of publicity, the entire undergraduate community at Columbia will quickly take notice of the new cultural and entertainment opportunities made available and affordable to them by the Box Office.

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