

University Communications Strategic Plan

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LETTER FROM TOM KATZENMEYER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

By all measures, Ohio State's stature and quality have grown tremendously during the past several years. Believing that the University's communications strategies must reflect, support, and build upon that increasing strength, senior members of the Office of University Communications undertook in 2009 a thorough process of assessment and planning to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for 2009-2011. The resulting plan includes not only central communications work, but also the many and varied communications efforts occurring in the University's departments and units.

Underpinning all of our initiatives is an integrated "One University, One Voice: approach. From that stem several strategies to develop the structures, mechanisms, and consensus necessary to move the institution's communications work forward aggressively and effectively. This report highlights those initiatives.

One of our largest initiatives is the establishment of a new University Communications Council, comprised of approximately 45 senior communications staff from across campus. To date, I have convened two meetings with the full group, which includes representatives from central University Communications, the Medical Center, the regional campuses, University Development, the Alumni Association, and the colleges and schools.

The purpose of the Communications Council is to enhance campus-wide alignment around core University messages. Equally important is the desire to provide school- or department-based communicators with new tools and increased opportunities for skills-development and networking. As a supporting structure to effect these changes, dotted line relationships are being established between my office and members of the Communications Council.

To help advance the University's high-performance culture, we are developing new recognition and rewards programs that will foster innovation, celebrate exceptional performance, and provide greater incentive for collaboration. We are beginning with the creation of programs for both mentorship and career-development. Although these initiatives will first focus solely on University Communications staff members, we are mindful of the greater need for these programs among the larger set of University communicators and are approaching our process as a pilot for potentially large-scale implementation.

As with any planning document, ours is a guidepost that provides the broad framework for how we approach our work. With the inevitable emergence of new issues and new opportunities, we will make minor adjustments in tactics.

Introduction to the Strategic Plan

In order to most effectively tell the University's compelling stories of excellence in teaching, research, and service, we must communicate clearly and with a unified voice. To do so, we must ensure that: core messages reach targeted audiences, University communicators act in concert with one another, we take advantage of emerging social media, and all opportunities for partnership are used to maximum effect.

The following document is the product of a multifaceted effort that included statewide and national market research of perceptions about the University among its various constituents, as well as an internal assessment of needs and opportunities. The market research—conducted by two leading professional firms and done in conjunction with the Alumni Association and University Development—took place during 2009.

Results of that research informed our internal planning work, which began with the small group of senior University Communications staff. The group's draft strategic plan was presented to the full staff of University Communications for discussion and refinement in late 2009. During that brainstorming session, consensus was reached on a few key tactics under each initiative. All staff members were subsequently encouraged to join working groups to implement those tactics. The process is moving forward, and working groups have begun to meet.

Mission:

University Communications will assist Ohio State in creating meaningful, positive, consistent, and unique perceptions of the University, perceptions that help attract the resources and talent to maximize the University's impact on Ohio and the world. We will accomplish these objectives by setting clear strategy and direction, focusing on core messages, forging strong and productive partnerships, and deploying the best and most efficient communications tools.

Vision

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Values

- We are committed to
 - Excellence
 - Collaborating as One University
 - Acting with Integrity and Personal Accountability
 - Openness and Trust
 - Diversity in People and Ideas
 - Change and Innovation
 - Simplicity in our Work

Context

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1. Goal: One University: We will adopt a “One University” perspective in all decision making to create a culture where everyone is driven by a shared common vision and supports trans-institutional execution.

1.1 Objective: Optimize the organizational structure, processes, and infrastructure for pursuit of common goals.

1.1.A College/unit strategy: Instill an integrated “One Voice, One University” approach to Ohio State’s communications.

Primary University strategy cross-reference:1.12

Secondary University cross reference:6.2.1

Strategy Description

We are beginning to focus on core messages for consistency in order to achieve significant reach and frequency to persuade and motivate our key audiences.

1.1.A.1 College/unit initiative: Define dotted line relationships with campus communicators.

Primary University cross reference:1.1.2

Secondary University cross-reference:6.2.1

Initiative Description

We have established a core University Communications Council that is comprised of top university senior communicators (by invitation only). This is an opportunity to join forces to advance the University’s goals. Having a fully-integrated group will allow us to demonstrate our expertise.

1.1.A.2 College/unit initiative: Complete phase one of a comprehensive market research review and analysis.

Primary University cross reference:1.2.2

Secondary University cross-reference:1.2.1

Initiative Description

As a result of the research, we are formulating key messages allowing us to: create structures, mechanisms, and processes to constantly capture and monitor feedback that will further refine and define messages and approaches; identify where we are currently spending our efforts and resources; define criteria for engaging our resources; be “opportunistic” in identifying where to put our efforts.

1.1.A.3 College/unit initiative: Partner with the Medical Center, The James, and other key University allies on joint national/international strategies, extending our reach and stretching our marketing resources.

Primary University cross reference:1.2.2

Secondary University cross-reference:5.1.1

Initiative Description

Develop a framework and partnership for international strategies in targeted international (China, India, Brazil) and national (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, DC) markets using existing resources.

1.1.A.4 College/unit initiative: Move ahead with centralized space initiative by relocating Kinnear Road staff to the Gateway.

Primary University cross reference:1.3.1

Initiative Description

By improving the physical work environment for a substantial subset of University Communications staff members, we are facilitating greater internal collaboration. By positioning University Communications staff members at the Gateway location, we anticipate developing closer working relationships with other University entities also housed in the area (Outreach and Engagement, Human Resources, among others).

Metrics, Milestones and Resources

Metrics:

- Number of times group meets
- Findings presented to all constituencies
- Will base on number of placements, new relationships
- Keep project on task for move in

Milestones:

- Dotted reporting line implemented by end of 2010
- Findings presented by summer 2010
- President Gee's trip to China this summer will be test pilot for future collaborations
- All staff to be moved by end of September 2010

Resources:

- Approval and endorsement from President Gee
- University Communications' is using cash to fund China trip; will need additional funding from central administration for future trips
- One-time and permanent funding has been requested through the FY11 budget process

3. Faculty and Staff Talent and Culture: We will further develop our highly diverse faculty, staff talent and create a high performance culture driven by common principles of excellence in accountability and achievement.

3.1 Objective: Instill high performance culture

3.1.A College/unit strategy: Optimize University Communications' talent and expertise.

Primary University strategy cross-reference:3.1.1

Secondary University cross reference:6.2.1

Strategy Description

Build a stronger team by evaluating talent and expertise of current staff and aligning them to their strengths. Provide high level of feedback and coaching.

3.1.A.1 College/unit initiative: Participate in hiring processes for communicator positions across the campus (as they become available).

Primary University cross reference:3.1.1

Secondary University cross-reference:1.2

Initiative Description

Developing trust and positive working relationships with university communicators and their dean/vice president will enable us to reach out when vacancies occur, and become part of the hiring process.

3.1.A.2 College/unit initiative: Initiate a "career ladder concept" that creates more opportunities for personal and professional growth among University communicators.

Primary University cross reference:3.1.1

Secondary University cross-reference:1.2.2

Initiative Description

Assist individuals with developing their career potential allowing for flexibility and movement in career progression.

3.1.A.3 College/unit initiative: Enhance University Communications' diversity goals.

Primary University cross reference:3.2.1

Initiative Description

Ensuring that all talents are used to maximum effect is both a practical imperative and a moral one. By incorporating greater diversity of perspectives in our communications

teams, we will reach out more effectively to a wider range of audiences. As a land-grant university, our founding principle is one of broad inclusion; to make good on that ideal, we must form a more diverse staff.

Metrics, Milestones and Resources

Metrics:

- Number of open searches for communicators we are invited to participate in
- Creation of mentorship program
- Completion of database of underrepresented groups for networking when recruiting staff

Milestones:

- Establish mentorship program by fall 2010
- Creation and implementation of database by fall 2010

Resources:

- Creation of mentorship program and professional development opportunities will be funded by pooling money currently allocated to University Communications
- All diversity efforts will be handled with existing staff

4. Research Prominence: We will achieve world class research prominence by supporting innovative, cutting edge, within and across discipline research that will be the basis for achieving excellence in all that we do.

4.1 Objective: Foster preeminence in research

4.1.A College/unit strategy: Contribute to distinguishing Ohio State as a flagship public research university.

Primary University strategy cross-reference:4.1

Secondary University cross reference:1.2.2

Strategy Description

INFORMATION TO COME

4.1.A.1 College/unit initiative: Create "issues-oriented" communications teams around key issues and topics.

Primary University cross reference:4.2.3

Secondary University cross-reference:1.2.2

Initiative Description

Initially, teams will focus on: energy and environment; health (including infectious disease, personalized medicine and Project One); cancer; economic development; arts/creativity/innovation; public affairs.

4.1.A.2 College/unit initiative: Develop a thought leadership plan for President Gee and other University leaders.

Primary University cross reference:5.3.1

Secondary University cross-reference:1.1.1

Initiative Description

Identify topics and areas to focus on. Develop specific points of view/opinions for President Gee and other senior leaders to carry nationally and internationally.

4.1.A.3 College/unit initiative: Support and sustain national/international research efforts.

Primary University cross reference:6.1.1

Secondary University cross-reference: 5.3.2

Initiative Description

Retain counsel to advise on strategy; target communications to constituents most influential in funding and reputational decision-making.

4.1.A.4 College/unit initiative: Evaluate earlier brand study to reassess strategic differentiation and distinction of the University.

Primary University cross reference:1.1.1

Secondary University cross-reference:1.2.1

Initiative Description

A cross-institutional Branding Work Group has been formed to revisit prior study and develop a current, "one Ohio State" plan for branding the university. The group will also advocate for policies, procedures, and resources required to impose more institutional integration of messaging and products.

Metrics, Milestones and Resources

Metrics:

- Number of opportunities for teams to be created
- Number of topics determined and talking points developed
- Once firm is secured and constituents are identified
- Development of plan will provide policies and procedures required

Milestones:

- Initial topics determined by end of 2010
- Firm secured by early 2011
- Branding study reviewed and revised by fall 2010; implementation to begin spring 2011

Resources:

Existing staff and funding will be used
Funding for reputational counsel will be requested during FY12 budget process
Funding for branding initiative will be requested during FY12 or FY13 budget process

5. Outreach & Collaboration: We will increase outreach and collaboration through public and public-private partnerships that will enhance our impact on the quality of life for citizens of the state, country, and world.

5.1 Objective: Expand the University’s global/international outreach and service.

5.1.A College/unit strategy: Strengthen and extend national/international recognition of the University’s impact.

Primary University strategy cross-reference:1.2.1

Secondary University cross reference: 1.1.1

Strategy Description--*INFORMATION TO COME*

5.1.A.1 College/unit initiative: Ensure core messages are imparted to “brand ambassadors who can and will be a voice for Ohio State when empowered with the right information.

Primary University cross reference:1.1.1

Secondary University cross-reference: 6.2.1

Initiative Description--*INFORMATION TO COME*

5.1.A.2 College/unit initiative: Demonstrate a commitment to community and create a better understanding of Ohio State’s role as an economic engine.

Primary University cross reference:5.3.2

Secondary University cross-reference: 4.2.2

Initiative Description

Capitalize on opportunities and team up with external resources, from the Ohio Board of Regents to the Inter-University Council and business partners such as Battelle, P&G, Scott's.

5.1.A.3 College/unit initiative: Move ahead in building relationships of influence with deans and senior administrators.

Primary University cross reference:1.2.2

Secondary University cross-reference: 1.1.1

Initiative Description

University Communications' leadership will undertake ongoing communications activities and develop strong partnerships with key University areas.

5.1.A.4 College/unit initiative: Build and reinforce social media strategies across the University.

Primary University cross reference:1.2.2

Secondary University cross-reference: 6.2.2

Initiative Description

As digital media evolves, so too do their uses. Media that once were used for primarily social purposes are now becoming important strategic communications tools. The University must be on the leading edge of using social media to support its communications efforts with both internal and external audiences. Doing so will not only distinguish the University as a leader, but also will ensure that young alumni and friends are most effectively engaged.

Metrics, Milestones and Resources

Metrics:

- Determine who our brand ambassadors should be
- Number of partnerships formed with business, community, and educational community
- Number of activities, meetings, or contact made
- Opportunities in which social media utilized in promoting Ohio State

Milestones:

- Brand ambassadors identified by fall 2010
- Relationships with deans and senior administrators will be on an ongoing basis
- MORE INFO TO COME

Resources:

- Existing staff will be used
- Will determine costs associated with initiative 5.1.A.4

6. Operating & Financial Soundness & Simplicity We will establish operational and financial soundness along with simplicity in processes to ultimately be known for our robust financial position using transparent, simple, and flexible systems.

6.1 Objective: Improve our operating efficiency

6.1.A College/unit strategy: Optimize University Communications' human and financial assets.

Primary University strategy cross-reference: 1.2.1

Secondary University cross reference: 6.2.1

Strategy Description

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6.1.A.1 College/unit initiative: Conduct a comprehensive communications audit that analyzes existing vehicles, audiences, budgets and results, and evaluates the University Communications' organization and structure.

Primary University cross reference: 1.2.1

Secondary University cross-reference: 6.2.1

Initiative Description

As we begin efforts to centralize key messaging through the new Communications Council and other means, we must ensure that our staff resources are used to best effect and that compensation is appropriate across campus. We will look not only at position descriptions and compensation within the University, but also at peer institutions.

6.1.A.2 College/unit initiative: Review University Communications' earnings model and propose recommendations for change.

Primary University cross reference: _____

Secondary University cross-reference: _____

Initiative Description

Our current earnings structure does not allow us advance the goals of the University as we should be doing. We will look into the best way to restructure our budgets.

Metrics, Milestones and Resources

Metrics:

- Where we place among our benchmarks
- Reduce current 14FTE attached to earnings by XX% within five years

Milestones:

- Audit expected to be complete by early 2011

- Proposal submitted to SVP by early 2011

Resources:

- Current staff are teaming up to complete all of the above initiatives
- Will ask for funding in FY12, FY13, and FY14 to fund positions
- Any vacant positions that happen will be evaluated with possible funding going toward earnings salaries.

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