Division of University Communications
Strategic Framework

"We are in the business of change."
– Phil Knight

Introduction

The Division of University Communications supports the University of Oregon's priorities by developing and implementing communications, digital, media, and marketing programs. The Division focuses on both short and long-term measures of success that align with and reflect the University's academic, organizational, and competitive strength including: its standing among national peers; its perception among Oregonians; elevation of the academic and scholarly work of its schools; celebration and promotion of its community and culture; and support for initiatives that underpin its financial, reputational, athletic, and research strength.

To that end, we deploy resources, talent, and focus in applying the professional disciplines represented in our division, in support of the institutional aspirations and goals articulated in the University's Strategic Plan. These include supporting efforts centered on student success, career readiness, cultivating a campus of flourishing, and elevating visibility for scholarship that accelerates impact to society and that differentiate the university. Much of our work in this five-year period will be focused on elevating reputation and reach for the university's academic work and cultivating affinity for the university as a top national research university, a destination of choice for talented students, faculty and staff, and as driver of growth and innovation for the state of Oregon.

Concurrent with this will be the buildout of a leading-state marketing and communications operation capable of accelerating the positive perception, academic standing, business goals, affinity, retention and flourishing of the university of Oregon. We seek to attract and develop talent from within and from the wider industry to build a high-performance team with deep commitment to our craft, to the University of Oregon, and to the vital role of higher education in advancing society and the human condition.

While this framework is focused on the Division's structure and goals, our work requires that we foster deep and mutual beneficial relationships across the organization including schools, advancement, research centers, Athletics, government affairs, enrollment, student life, human resources and others. We seek to add value from the center, building programs and resources that add value to all units at scale, while partnering with areas on specific projects and strategic initiatives.

This framework will inform the creation of annual workplans, each of which will be assessed mid-year. The framework itself will be assessed starting year four, as part of the development of our next framework.

1. Five-Year Goals

What is our purpose? What are we setting out to accomplish?

1. Change the perception of the University of Oregon.
2. Add value to the brand.

What do these mean?

To Change the perception of the U of O means moving the hearts and minds of key audiences to perceive the UO more favorably, with higher engagement, and associate the university more closely with academic quality, innovation, benefit to Oregon and the nation, and research. While we always work to change perception for the better, we uncover ways in which we seek to be perceived by specific audiences.

To Add value to the brand includes any activity, program, initiative, or product that adds measurable or directional value, or reduces loss of value (harm). This can include content products, effective marketing campaigns, revenue from licensed goods and IP, crisis and reputation management, and leadership/executive voice. We seek quantifiable measures of value to understand the drivers of value, to define what success looks like and to understand when we have been successful.

We are organized into five departments, each with a specific and complementary purpose.

Administration and Operations exists to enhance the operational efficiency and effectiveness of University Communications and to cultivate a culture of curiosity, innovation, rugged flexibility, and productivity within the division that can drive continuous improvement and adaptability in response to challenges and opportunities.

Communications exists to support leadership voice in articulating the university's values, priorities, aspirations and initiatives. We inform, influence, and engage employees, providing essential information and expressing UO's brand as a great place to work, teach, and conduct research and connect students with success resources, opportunities, and experiences.

Digital Strategy
We create content and digital products guided by data-driven tactics and strategies. We lay the foundation for intuitive, branded, and focused user experiences that reinforce the University of Oregon's value, impact, and reputation.

Marketing and Brand Strategy develops and deploys marketing strategies, campaigns, programs and creative products. We elevate, activate, and evolve the institution's brand, generate sources of revenue, and engage and delight audiences to advance the institution's mission.

News and Content creates and delivers captivating, compelling, and accessible content about the University of Oregon. Through clear content strategy, and through owned and earned media, we demonstrate UO's societal relevance and impact, elevate our research and academic reputation, illuminate the life of the UO community, and deepen connections with our constituents.

2. Strategies
What approaches will we take to achieve these goals?

A. We will be a leading marketing and communications organization.
We will adopt the practices, standards, behaviors, and capabilities of a leading marketing and communications enterprise, creating the future we wish to see and which the University needs to remain a destination and a leading research university.

Rather than commit to become a leading organization at some point in the future, we will start with the destination in mind and begin in the present moment, acting and producing our work as a leading marketing and communications organization, even as we develop greater competency, skill, and experience. This will require a focus on quality and investment in the appropriate people, tools, partners, and programs that can bring and retain best-in-class capabilities to the Division.

1. **People**. People are the heart of our organization and of what we do to advance our university, which is itself a community. This means we hire carefully and structure efficiently; seeking always to place the right people and right skills into the right roles and right structure. Recognizing that our work requires attention to skill and changes in practice, we value and support professional development, and align meaningful rewards and recognition with our goals.

2. **Programs and Systems.** We use processes and systems to support our efforts, align and measure results and inform business decisions. We proactively and responsibly manage projects and budgets to annual goals, and work with partners in human resources, finance, and procurement to support our needs in accordance with our organization's processes. Finally, we embrace and use key performance indicators (KPIs) as essential tools in defining and understanding drivers of success.

3. **Resources**: We use our resources thoughtfully to accomplish long-term goals efficiently, building for the future. This includes making careful investments in equipment; optimizing our use of current-state software that supports our work; and creating workspaces that are productive, inspiring, and collaborative.

4. **Partners**: We recognize that we do not do this work alone. We are committed to working collaboratively with partners inside and outside the organization. This includes external agencies and vendors who bring best practice and specific skillsets to complement our team; and licensees and retailers who develop, create, and sell merchandise on our behalf. It also includes careful and trusted partnerships with leadership, colleagues, and units across the organization.

How our departments support this strategy:

Admin and Ops
- Invests in the professional development wellbeing, and recognition of division personnel.
- Develops robust and agile systems and processes and policies that build trust, excellence, and resilience.
- Cultivates strategic partnerships and collaborations across departments, divisions, and external stakeholders.

Communications
- Provides guidance, counsel, and communication strategy to university leadership to connect priorities and goals with university activities.
- Anticipates, identifies, and monitors issues that disrupt normal operations; develop accurate, timely, and fact-based information to key audiences.
- Manages internal communication products, channels, processes, procedures, and timing to support strategy and measure employee and student engagement and use data to inform actions.
- Leverages high impact moments and milestones in the lives of employees and current students.

Digital Strategy
- Leads a web community of practice and provide trainings for campus partners to foster collaboration, share knowledge, and promote an inviting, accessible, and cohesive branded experience across the university's website ecosystem.
- Creates and delivers tools that ensure accessibility, consistency, and high-quality experiences across all major UO web properties.
- Creates digital platforms that can swiftly adapt and respond to emerging communications needs while maintaining brand integrity and delivering high-quality, relevant, and engaging user experiences.

Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Fosters a culture of continuous improvement, creative thinking, and efficiency by adopting new technologies and methods to enhance collaboration and engagement with our audience.
- Develops and refines marketing channels to ensure clear and consistent communication of the university's value proposition.
- Builds and uses data analytics dashboards and market research reports to inform and direct marketing strategies and communication executions. Data insights will be used to tailor messages, measure effectiveness, and continuously improve outreach efforts.

News and Content
- Aligns content, digital and distribution strategies to change perception with specific audiences and create effective earned media strategies to achieve a competitive share of voice in key media and to advance reputation.

B. We will develop a winning brand position for the University of Oregon
At the core of our work is the articulation of an authentic, competitive brand position for the University of Oregon. An effective brand positioning should elevate the University relative to other options in the competitive landscape – differentiating it against other universities regionally and nationally. Priorities developed through this positioning should align the unique offerings, capabilities, and strengths of the University with market demand, the interests of donors, and the needs of industry and the state we serve.

Brand positioning will synthesize available research data and will begin with the articulation of the UO's new strategic plan in Fall 2024. This work will then be ongoing. Sources that inform positioning include current beliefs and associations of the UO; preference for UO against other options; marketing and perception research; licensing demand and customer surveys; measurable responses to communications and marketing (analytics); media coverage and sentiment.

How our departments support this strategy:

Admin and Ops
- Proactively identifies and mitigates communications risks to safeguard the reputation and interests of the University of Oregon.

Communications
- Provides guidance, counsel, and communication strategy to university leadership to connect priorities and goals with university activities.
- Anticipates, identifies, and monitors issues that disrupt normal operations.
- Develops accurate, timely, and fact-based information to key audiences.
- Manages internal communication products, channels, processes, procedures, and timing to support strategy.
- Measures employee and student engagement, using data to inform tactics and leverage high impact moments and milestones in the lives of employees and current students.

Digital Strategy
- Provides expertise and leadership that drive the quality, scope, and impact of digital content across all UO web properties.
- Improves awareness and access to digital tools and best practices among campus partners.

Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Conducts market research and analysis to monitor the competition and track industry trends and competitor strategies to adjust and refine the UO brand position.
- Establishes strong relationships and trust with key stakeholders and provide comprehensive training to communications and marketing staff across the

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university, equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge to represent the university effectively.
- Leverages the university's licensing program to amplify the brand and boost its reach, visibility, esteem, and financial success.
- Ensures licensed products and strategies align with consumer behavior and preferences through insights on trends and consumer preference.
- Develops and evolves the UO brand guide platform and assets to ensure consistency in brand representation and development of enterprise-wide assets; and regularly reviews and updates brand policies to safeguard its integrity and reputation.

News and Content
- Demonstrates UO's societal relevance and impact and grow positive perception of UO research and academics.
- Shares timely, evidence-based research to advance knowledge and contribute to public discourse and illuminates life of the UO community to deepen the connection with our constituents.

C. We will reach critical audiences effectively.
Our success, and our measures of performance, will hinge on our ability to 1) identify and reach key audiences consistently 2) understand the gap between their current perception and our desired positioning (see above); and 3) deliver content, programs, products, and messaging that will move these audiences toward closer engagement with and perception of the UO. This means developing approaches and tactics that are audience- and opportunity-responsive and which we can track.

Tactics developed will focus on six approaches:
1. Create compelling content that educates and inspires. This includes content strategy, creative direction and visual storytelling, distribution strategy, earned media strategies, leadership/executive messaging strategy, social media strategy.
2. Promote the University to key audiences for the purpose of driving affinity and action. This includes brand marketing efforts that raise the profile of and preference for the university to Oregonians, alumni, peer institutions, business and legislative audiences, prospective students where alignment with Enrollment creates opportunities, and others.
3. Develop effective proactive and responsive approaches to media and public relations. Execute effective media outreach with specific outlets and publications; identify media relations strategies by geography or subject; and develop full defensive capabilities for crisis and negative press
4. Leverage high visibility moments in which we can reach audiences at scale. examples include Strategic Plan, Sesquicentennial; brand campaigns; new capital campaign; Athletic and Big10 conference opportunities, and others.
5. Use technology to reach audiences and deepen brand relationships at scale. Examples include AI, Marketing Cloud, Drupal, Wrike, media and social monitoring and other key technologies.
6. Expand licensing and grow demand. Identify, develop and market profitable product lines and expand our IP. Establish aligned revenue and growth plans in collaboration with athletics, our licensees, media rights partner, general counsel and retailers.

7. Support development of an employer brand, working with provost, human resources, student life and others to create greater engagement, recruiting and retention of talent and to support a culture of Flourishing.

How our departments support this strategy:

Admin and Ops
- Provides operations support for key distribution platforms and strategies.

Communications
- Manages and aligns leadership and university messaging through talking points, remarks, statements, and other content, and across communication activities.
- Provides consistent, timely, and engaging content to employees to inform employees empower them to do their best work and support their flourishing.
- Provides consistent, timely, and engaging content to students to inform students and support them in their degree progression and support their flourishing.

Digital Strategy
- Aligns content and digital strategies to create positive perception with specific audiences.
- Provide best practices that prioritize a vibrant, consistent, and cohesive narrative of excellence and impact for digital content across the institution.
- Creates data-informed, engaging, useful, and effective digital experiences which align audience perceptions with institutional goals.
- Ensures all web content within our purview complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Doing so will foster inclusivity and expand audience engagement.

Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Ensures that all communications are purposeful and aligned with data-informed insights to enhance relevance and resonance with our audience.
- Uses data analytics to refine audience segmentation and reach and create more personalized marketing strategies.
- Reaches diverse audiences effectively with branded content though multiple channels, leveraging digital, social, and traditional media to maximize impact.
- Creates avenues for feedback and communication, such as surveys, focus groups, and interactive online platforms. Encourage users, listeners, and readers to share their opinions and experiences.

News and Content
- Creates captivating, compelling, and accessible content about UO's research discoveries, academic innovations, and UO life.
- Cultivates relationships with journalists by hosting media forums, responding to media requests, and connecting media with faculty experts.

- Provides leadership, faculty, staff, alumni, students, Oregonians and others with content that reinforces, informs, and builds institutional pride.
- Uses or acquires scalable content systems and platforms, acting as platform publisher for greater total effect.

3. Mindsets and Behaviors

While goals and strategies are important, **our behaviors dictate whether we are successful.** Aligning mindsets and behaviors will allow us to scale individuals and teams and create clarity about how we go about the work of achieving ambitious goals.

1. We invest in people, projects, and programs that set us up for success.
2. We focus on building value at the center, favoring long-term scalable benefit over short-term, single-use tactics.
3. We embrace accountability: for each other, for results, and for our teams.
4. We are unafraid to take appropriate risks on behalf of our projects, teams, and our university.

4. Hardwiring for Sustained Success

An organization's ability to effectuate change and drive success is largely due to how well its day-to-day activities support its long-term goals. This requires us to allocate critical resources – time, talent, and money – strategically.

Designing our operations, systems, structure and processes carefully, with the Division's two goals, three strategies and four mindsets in mind, will create an operating system designed to align our efforts, release productivity, creativity, and shared purpose, and produce results for our university. To that end, we will create both vertical and horizonal team structures that can help bring diverse talents to projects, align efforts, unleash potential and build community.

Over the next five years, we commit our talent, our time and our personal and professional best, for the greater good, and for our Mighty Oregon.

July 1, 2024

What Do We Mean by...?

What's in a word? As it turns out, a lot of power to connect, or confuse. Deliberately assigning specific meanings to words helps us align terminology to support the introduction, adoption, and implementation of our division's work over the next five years. We expect to add to this glossary through our ongoing work, and as we find language on our teams and projects helpful, we will continue to add terms.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Annual Plan: an explicit, written plan the division will produce each fiscal year, with specific input from each department. This plan will define specific goals, strategies, metrics, and outcomes we are committing ourselves to accomplish in the course of that 12-month period.

Brand Positioning: The definition of "where the brand should be 'located' conceptually in the hearts and minds of consumers relative to competitors; [it] sets the boundary and guide[s] the product that is actually created" (Whitler, 2021). Just as needs and offerings change, positioning is an ongoing process, not a single or static achievement. An effective brand positioning should elevate the University relative to other options in the competitive landscape – differentiating it against other universities regionally and nationally. **Priorities and programs that stem from this positioning should align the unique offerings, capabilities, and strengths of the University with market demand, the interests of donors, and the needs of industry and the state we serve.**

Business Case: the rationale, justification, and potential benefits of a particular initiative or project; typically includes an analysis of the market demand, financial projections, potential risks, and anticipated returns on investment. A business case can help university leadership make informed decisions about resource allocation and strategic priorities.

Content Strategy: The curation of content such that content developed and delivered consistently reinforces specific themes, ideas, or points of view that together create the desired positioning for the brand, drive engagement, and ensure relevance with the university's target audiences. Content strategy guides decisions about which stories are developed and told (always a mix) based on the desired effect; it's upstream editing to achieve a specific and strategic mix.

Culture: a collection of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that make up the routine atmosphere of employees in a working environment and their interactions with each other. Culture is agnostic to the goals of the organization – but can either support or work against the stated goals and commitments. Ideally, culture helps to create community and a sense of belonging and purpose that can align with the greater purpose of the work done by the organization.

Employer Brand: Employer branding is the practice of influencing how current employees, prospective employees, and the larger workforce perceive a company's reputation as an employer. While branding in general targets the perception of consumers, employer branding specifically focuses on a company's prospective hires and internal employees. As a result, it is focused on ways that build engagement, help retain high-performing employees, and attract top talent. At UO it also incorporates and builds on the idea of Flourishing, our commitment to a community invested in the wellbeing of all its members.

Digital Ecosystem: the interconnected network of channels, teams, resources, and technologies that interact and collaborate within a digital environment. It encompasses various components such as software, hardware, data, channels, and products. These elements work together to create value and support various activities, ranging from business operations and audience engagement to innovation and development of new products or services. For UO, this would incorporate our websites, YouTube presence, social media, search strategy, digital marketing, and others.

Framework: Our division's guiding document that articulates the division's purpose, goals, strategies, and behaviors over the next five years. Like in a house, it is the foundation and framing onto which we build and create our work.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): specific metrics that demonstrate how effectively we are achieving our strategic objectives and goals. These are set by the leadership team and may change or be removed or added between annual work plans.

"Mix Tape" The idea of creating a core of curated, timely, and well-developed content (see content strategy definition) and from that core, creating products (see product definition) as "mix tapes" - combinations that speak to the interests and needs of different audiences. This allows a focus on core content first, then audience and product, allowing content to be used in multiple ways.

Operating System: the specific behaviors, patterns, business cycles, systems, and workflows that produce a specific result. An operating system is perfectly designed to produce the result that it produces: if we want to change our results, we must redesign the operating system to produce these new results.

Product(s): a specific, usually recurring, communications and/or marketing deliverable unit or output that can be distributed to or received by an audience. We also use "product" to define licensed goods, but for the purpose of this glossary, this word means a specific communications invention designed for consumption. Examples: a podcast, a magazine, a newsletter, a blog, etc.

Purpose: the animating reason or reasons that any organization – and our division – exists.

RACI – Accountable: the person designated as the decision-maker for a project. Often this person has budget authority to approve the use of funds associated with the project, though that is not a requirement. Only one person can be designated as accountable; aka *the owner.*

RACI – Consulted: the person or group of people whose input is sought prior to major elements of a project beginning. Their feedback is critical to the success of the project, but they may not have a specific responsibility to contribute beyond feedback, context, or expertise.

RACI – Informed: the person or group of people who are informed of the project after it is complete or set to launch. They are not sought for feedback but providing them a heads-up is necessary. Those specified as informed of the project are not necessarily the final audience of the project.

RACI – Responsible: the person who does the work. There may be multiple people designated as responsible, but they must each be explicit about which parts of the project are assigned to their responsibility. In Wrike, this role may equate to being "Assigned" to a task or project.

Rugged Flexibility: to be flexible, endurable, and anti-fragile in the face of change. Since change is a constant, this quality is helpful as a principle. (Stulberg, B. 2023).

Share of Voice: the percentage of media "voice" or coverage relative to peers/competitors also seeking attention in the same markets. This is largely used for positive, reputational media (i.e. research, thought leadership, etc.)

"Value at the Center" a focus on opportunities for the Division to add value to the organization centrally, in ways that can scale to all units. This can include enterprise solutions, tools, resources or tools, or products that elevate the work of the whole university, that units can adopt while staying true to the brand. Value can result in increased cohesion and efficiency, reduced cost, greater alignment, or easier and more collaborative processes.

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