



**COMMITTEE ON MARKETING, PUBLIC RELATIONS  
AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Telephone Conference Call**

**October 22, 2019**

**123 Tigert Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL**

**Time Convened: 2:01 p.m.**

**Time Adjourned: 3:02 p.m.**

**Committee and Board members present:**

Robert G. Stern (Chair), David Brandon, Leonard Johnson, Daniel T. O'Keefe, Rahul Patel, Marsha D. Powers, and Anita Zucker

**Others present:**

Nancy Paton, Vice President for Strategic Communications and Marketing, Mark Kaplan, Vice President for Government and Community Relations, and other members of the university community.

**1.0 Roll Call**

Board Staff called the roll and noted those Trustees who were in attendance.

**2.0 Call to Order and Welcome**

Committee Chair Stern welcomed everyone to the meeting. He expressed that advancement on several fronts would be discussed, including an update of the third quarter numbers for the Key Performance Indicators, the Fall Paid Media Campaign and an update of the Issues Management and Crisis Preparedness Strategy. Lastly, a review of the Brand and Positioning strategy was presented.

**3.0 Discussion Items**

**3.1 U.S. Key Performance Indicators- 3rd Quarter Update**

VP Paton thanked Chair Stern and the committee for their continued support, guidance and advocacy of our strategic efforts to advance the university's reputation and rankings.

In reviewing the performance against the second quarter indicators, improvements were made in many areas. VP Paton stated the search volume rose dramatically indicating that the university top-of-mind awareness is likely strengthening.

Earned media share of voice increased and UF is now on the heels of UC Berkeley in terms of performance. The Strategic Communications and Marketing team captured the interest of national and statewide media through their successful media coverage of important scientific/scholarly research. Through an aggressive earned media plan to amplify our rise in rankings, the team generated a great deal of coverage.

- The Conversation data decreased from 633,974 in Q2. On the dashboard from last quarter the data was pulled incorrectly. VP Paton stated the data will be pulled quarterly moving forward to match the other statistics.
- The decrease in social media sentiment was due to an increase in neutral posts/mentions, not an increase in negative posts. The decrease in the earned media sentiment was due to a few articles this quarter with negative, neutral sentiment.
- Increased social media share of voice went up 37.9% from Q2—UF is now No. 3 and on the heels of UC Berkeley —generated by the SCM team’s successful efforts in storytelling and enhancing engagement related to rankings/national exposure opportunities related to the UF/Miami and UF/LSU football games and the appearance of College GameDay on campus.

We are pleased to see an increase in website visitors, which is most likely related to last quarter’s social media initiatives as audiences are linked to ufl.edu. Sessions decreased only compared with this time last year, likely a result of seasonal fluctuations.

VP Paton stated she is proud of our team’s first to market launch of TikTok and its steady growth. A lengthy article on TikTok’s reach and channel importance to the high school and young collegiate market in yesterday’s New York Times demonstrates the importance of our innovative leaps. VP Paton said this article would be emailed to the committee for their review.

### **Earned media performance**

This dashboard monitors key performance indicators related to our media relations efforts

- The reach numbers indicated the high level of influential media in which success is being demonstrated.
- The number of articles, while important on an ongoing basis for team productivity, is not as critical as reach. Top stories for this quarter:
  - FL braces for strengthening Dorian
  - Symptoms of some drugs may imitate dementia
  - Chomp! Shark bite mystery solved 25 years later thanks to DNA
- Media value generated indicated the advertising value of the articles.
- UF is currently in third position in earned media share of voice, within close proximity to UC Berkeley. VP Paton announced the addition of a new media relations team member and will be recruiting additional professionals who will focus on increasing our share of voice.
- The third-place position in the Conversation is important as this media outlet reaches peers through faculty-generated stories of research and scholarship advancement.

## **Social Media Dashboard**

UF continues to lead higher education on both TikTok and Giphy platforms. These are newer social channels, and this dominant presence allows the university to not only remain relevant to a younger audience in a rapidly changing media landscape, but also to remain a leader in the social space both within and outside the higher education sector. UF has 30,000 followers ahead of the closest university competitor (LSU) on Tik Tok. UF has 1.1 billion more GIF views than the closest university competitor (UCLA) on Giphy.

UF's performance on each of the owned social media channels against peers is strong. The university has moved from No. 3 to No. 2 on all fronts: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Web performance—Monitors gauge the performance against the previous performance to determine understanding of markets, how they reach the university and use of the website. VP Paton believes as the university moves forward, these numbers will fluctuate depending on seasonal activity, i.e. related to enrollment periods.

- The website visitors went up by 12.8% in Q3, and sessions are decreasing as these visitors quickly move to conduct their transaction or fulfill their research needs on other pages/sites
- Bounce rates are up this quarter by 4.9%. Most likely due to moving from the homepage to re-enter search to access other areas of the site. Average time on page jumped by 9.5% in Q3.
- Out-of-state users generate 68.4% of the traffic while in-state users generate 31.6%. California is currently above Georgia for a higher usage of out-of-state website traffic.

### **3.2 Fall Paid Media Campaign**

Chair Stern stated VP Paton would update the committee with details of the paid media campaign to amplify the rise in rankings and the upcoming fall campaign. The goal of these efforts is to strengthen awareness, engagement and reputation among US News voters and influencers. Chair Stern acknowledged reputation constitutes 20% of the rankings score.

VP Paton declared with UF's rise in the U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges rankings to No. 7, the team launched a paid media campaign consisting of digital banners and NPR sponsorships in key regions across the state of Florida. The goal was to amplify earned and social media efforts among influencers in the state and around the country.

VP Paton was pleased with the impressions generated for each channel. For the most part, our click-thru-rate was near the top or exceeded the average range.

VP Paton moved on to discuss the Fall Paid Media Campaign Plan Parameters.

- Target Audiences
  - Top 15 Public & Top 15 Private Universities
  - FL Legislators, DC Legislators
- Geography
  - Will align with top public & top private university locations
- Timing
  - October 2019 – December 2019
  - Align with key conferences
    - 11/10 – AMA
    - 11/10 - APLU

## **Plan Placement**

**Mobile geo-fencing** targets peers and builds audiences based on demographic information and past visitation behaviors.

**NPR** delivers podcasts to 16.8 million users a month. Listeners are educated and affluent, and 79% of the podcast audience have acted in response to a sponsorship announcement in an NPR podcast.

**LinkedIn** is the No. 1 social network for professional networking and the platform with the highest average user net worth. Peer influencers consider LinkedIn a trusted channel for consumer content and use it regularly.

**Data-Driven Display** identifies and targets audiences via digital banner ads placed in influential media channels, such as **Wall Street Journal, New York Times, TED, Washington Post, and the LA Times.**

**The American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE)** is the oldest largest engineering society in the U.S. This is a new strategy this year to directly target peer influencers in the engineering and education market. First Bell reaches 37K higher ed engineers every day and is the most well-read pub for this discipline.

### **3.3 Issues Management and Crisis Preparedness Strategy Update**

Chair Stern stated this important strategy aligns directly to safeguarding the UF brand and the reputation of the institution which is one of primary goals of the Strategic Communications and Marketing Plan.

- VP Paton stated that considerable progress on this important phase of the issues and crisis communications preparedness strategy has been made. She shared in terms of progress, the assessment is complete, to all intents and purposes.
- An extensive review of existing issues and crisis preparedness documents has been circulating. Additional secondary research around UF and the top-5 public universities best practices was recently completed.
- The only remaining research piece will be with communications leaders from those peers. These sessions will be occurring in the next couple of weeks.
- Last week, VP Paton reviewed a draft of the findings and recommendations from the assessment.
- Next month, she will share the findings and recommendations for a discussion at the committee's next meeting.

VP Paton shared a slide to demonstrate and discuss how the university is using data to aid in real-time decisions regarding the cadence and level of communications.

- This data is produced from our Brandwatch tool and illustrates the kind of data the team receives before, during, and after events to provide guidance on communications.

### **3.4 Brand and Positioning Strategy Update**

Chair Stern thanked VP Paton and her team for working hard to increase the rankings and reputation of the university. To advance our success in building a national reputation, as the committee is aware, VP Paton and her team engaged in a search for a firm to partner with us. This is a critical contract and relationship as their work with us will strengthen our market position. Chair Stern stated this is the most important project for VP Paton and her team.

VP Paton stated that she and the team are thrilled to begin the brand and positioning strategy development. She discussed with the committee the goal to create a positioning strategy for UF that celebrates the excellence, uniqueness of culture and impact to drive a strengthened reputation. A brand is the sum of all associations that are made with a product or organization –including all the assets and liabilities of those associations.

- The university is embarking on a five-stage strategy development process that will culminate in a brand strategy and positioning approach that will drive efforts to increase reputation over the next several years.

VP Paton reviewed the Project Timeline with the committee.

- Discovery and kick-off: October-November
- Market research: January-February
- Brand Platform and messaging: March-April
- Brand Guidelines: May-June
- Brand Launch Planning: May-July
- Measurement Plan: July

### **3.5 Pre-Meetings in October and November**

Chair Stern reminded the committee of the November Committee Call on November 18 at 3:00 p.m. The Board of Trustee Meeting on December 5-6 in Gainesville. The Pre-Committee Call on December 17 has been canceled.

### **4.0 New Business**

None currently.

### **5.0 Adjourn**

Committee Chair Stern adjourned the meeting at 3:02 p.m.