



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

**Meeting Minutes**

**Telephone Conference Call**

**March 26, 2019**

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

**Time Convened: 2:00 p.m.**

**Time Adjourned: 2:59 p.m.**

**Committee and Board members present:**

Robert G. Stern (Chair), David L. Brandon, Leonard H. Johnson, Thomas G. Kuntz, Daniel T. O'Keefe, Rahul Patel, Marsha D. Powers, Katie Vogel Anderson and Anita G. Zucker.

**Others present:**

Winfred Phillips, Executive Chief of Staff; 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 Verification of Quorum**

Assistant University Secretary Melissa Orth called the roll and noted those Trustees that were in attendance.

**2.0 Call to Order and Welcome**

Committee Chair Stern welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that this was an informational meeting to prepare for the March 28, 2019 regular meeting, and no action was planned or taken at this preparatory meeting.

**3.0 Discussion Items**

Committee Chair Stern stated that Vice President for Strategic Communications and Marketing Paton will present the Strategic Plan for the Marketing, Public Relations and Strategic Communications Committee that will be presented at the March 29, 2019 meeting. Committee Chair Stern stated he was pleased to present the Communications and Marketing Strategic Plan. He indicated it had been reviewed by the President, Provost and Board Chair and that everyone was on board.

This comprehensive plan will advance our reputation and increase our rankings and stature. The basis for this plan to be successful lies in the alignment to the organizational goals. The plan sets forth a framework that will align to our advancing our aspirations as the premier university that the state, nation and world look to for leadership as expressed in the Decade Ahead Strategic Plan. It also provides a strategic framework for establishing a more integrated, cohesive and

aligned communications organization. It will help us come together as an institution as One UF and provide the momentum and direction to continue to enhance our reputation and rise to five.

Vice President Paton quoted Warren Buffet, “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.” Let’s see how we will do things differently.

Vice President Paton stated that people expect to receive information and engage with each other and companies in a different way. We must look outside of higher education for what and how national brands are innovating in new and impactful ways to connect with their audiences. We are in an Information Age where technology has disrupted our world. Successful companies are leveraging technology and we will need to incorporate these new and innovative platforms into our strategy. In the past, brands have used famous spokespersons to endorse their products. In today’s world, micro-influencers serve that role by garnering the trust of their followers and building brand affinity. Micro-influencers are everyday people who have gained a large following on social media by posting their interests in an authentic way. The telling of our stories of impact in new and engaging ways and reaching our diverse audiences on their preferred channels will create conversations relevant to building these relationships. The optimizing of technology to communicate in real time and across diverse channels is another way to share our messaging.

Vice President Paton stated that the University has brand ambassadors who are uniquely positioned to create partnerships that reach forward to solving grand challenges. Studies have been conducted that show educational institutions and academic experts are trusted sources and we must use this to our advantage in our communication approaches.

In December I shared some key themes from my first 160 days and now I will summarize the collective findings. What came across loud and clear with the importance of One UF that aligns with the recognition, understanding and behavioral embodiment of the efforts across campus to reach the Top 5 Goal.

Several themes emerged:

- Tell the University story nationally

- Integrate relationships with University and decentralized communicators and marketers to build a best-in-class communications organization which will raise the competency of the communications effort

- Use the Gator Nation to advocate as brand ambassadors for research and academics to help accelerate our national brand prominence

- Use technology to reach and engage our multi-faceted audiences

- Expand staff expertise, create effective and efficient processes to leverage collective strength and measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the team of communicators and use key metrics.

So now we will use what has been learned to discuss the future of Strategic Communications and Marketing. In order to communicate effectively with our many audiences, we must deploy demographic-centric communications around their needs for highly personalized and relevant

information. To build the UF brand different messaging should be used to motivate audiences but the brand essence must remain consistent.

Committee Chair Stern indicated the plan centers on 5 critical major goals/strategic imperatives to advance our reputation and rankings to reach our aspiration as the premier university that the state, nation and world look to for leadership:

- 1 Build a distinctive national brand
- 2 Propel UF's thought leadership reputation
- 3 Safeguard the UF brand and reputation
- 4 Transform and innovate through technology
- 5 Establish internal brand strategy

Vice President Paton stated that building a distinctive and differentiated brand position will advance our reputation and rankings. It entails a truthful expression of who we are through our behaviors and values. When we communicate who we are and what we stand for, then we will move in the direction we are seeking.

Vice President Paton indicated that 160over90 conducted research to help UF assess its national image and understand its position within the higher education landscape, particularly in comparison to the Top 5 public universities. In spite of our high name recognition, we also have high levels of "don't know" ratings related to specific areas of expertise-beyond athletics. These findings show we need to create a position that authentically demonstrates the distinctiveness of the breadth, depth and impact of the University of Florida. We will discover who we are, what we do and why it matters from our audiences' point of view. The knowledge gained about our distinctive and differentiated culture will be used in combination with our aspiration and goals to create a powerful positioning platform. This will help guide the institutional communications and marketing strategies.

Strategic Communications and Marketing implemented a communications plan for campus communicators to use when sharing their own news, but can also serve as a means to create a consistent messaging about the University's sweeping achievements. This new tool will be used for future announcements of institutional impact.

With our well-earned and strong reputation as well as respect nationally and internationally, the university has an opportunity to leverage this reputation and raise the University's stature among a wide variety of influential audiences through the creation of a thought leadership strategy.

The reports that access to news outlets has been declining is not true and is indicative of the changing media landscape and changing news consumption patterns. This is an opportunity for us to serve as trusted experts who provided sought-after points of view but also as impact-makers whose work betters society.

To strengthen our audiences' perception of UF as a national thought leader will require the development of a proactive strategy in partnership with representative leaders from across the university. The alumni deepen the bench of our UF thought leaders and represent an opportunity to engage them in a think tank model where we can explore new ideas to communications and

marketing innovation. We will introduce our thought leaders to the new contacts we make in the media and plan media tours with national reporters, editorial boards and other media influencers. The team is tracking current events and capitalizing on opportunities in the news through the use of op-eds, The Conversation and offering leadership and faculty to journalists seeking expert sources for their stories. Sharing our content on more non-traditional channels that include increased use videos and other more dynamic and captivating digital tools will offer depth and breadth to our storytelling efforts, allowing us to meet the needs of national outlets, which are communicating on multi-channel platforms. Our staff will expand and refocus to create a bench of specialists who will deeply understand critical areas of our university and partner with campus communicators and how to tell our stories to broader critical national media outlets.

In today's digital world, news outlets are no longer bound by geographic limits. Their influence can therefore be expanded into other areas. Vice President for Student Affairs David Parrot, wrote an op-ed that was originally placed in the Tampa Bay Times. Through the University's social media sharing efforts, the University of California System's National Center for the National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement located in DC picked it up organically. This is how regional news can instantly become national news and influence our peers. Two stories from the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune are direct results of a partnership with the Provost's office which provided funding to encourage faculty to share their research. This is one of the new and innovative ways that was used to land us on the national stage.

Protecting the University's reputation is as important as advancing it. The paraphrased quote from Warren Buffet earlier in the presentation, all the good will that results from investing in building a brand can be quickly depleted if we don't effectively safeguard it.

To ensure transparent and timely communications, the University must stay ahead of issues which requires constant anticipation, vigilance, preparation and building a strategic organization. We have been advancing several of these strategies such as partnering with the College of Journalism and Communications which is providing space for an emergency response center; building a website for transparent access of university position statements and related communications and establishing an analytics platform to help us understand online conversations.

An analytical platform was used to measure the volume, understand sentiment and see the primary states where conversation around #UF23 took place. This platform simplifies and analyzes a fast moving stream of data. We can learn in real-time the success of communication efforts and learn where there may be future opportunities. This tool will help us understand trends and emerging issues so that we can engage in conversation, when necessary.

Gaining our audiences' attention is a challenge. We don't want to be viewed as just another distraction. Social media should be relevant to all audiences by breaking through the clutter and being a voice that is appreciated, understood and human.

Consumers think about the content and the platform when they think about how they consume information. The ways we tell our stories varies by platform and it is important the way we tell

our story is suitable for the platform on which we are engaging. Content can come from influencers and brands.

We are aiming to lead and seek opportunities in the world of communications while others are finding comfort. Our goal is to inhabit new landscapes presented by technology before our audience arrives to surprise and delight, to craft better stories and to be the voice that is heard amidst the noise.

We want the University of Florida to be regarded as a national leader in social media and not just higher education social media. We must explore and capitalize new apps, like Giphy, so that we remain at the forefront of the industry. Giphy is used for Gifs that loop graphics on Facebook and on Twitter. They are used as a means of expression. UF is the only university to reach 1 billion gif views which puts the university in the mix of national brands. Not higher education, but brands like Nike and Amazon. This is important before it signals engagement and advocacy.

Research has shown the importance of communicating with employees and engaging them in ways that they understand their role in the organization's success. So that the employees can serve as advocates. To bring the faculty, staff, students and alumni into the conversation. It is important to engage with our community to tell our distinctive stories of impact, experience, mission and vision.

We will think about our internal community as brand ambassadors by engaging them within conversations to help achieve our aspirations. Communications is a lever to our university's success. Foundational to the success of our efforts is the opportunity to align our vast community of university communicators through strategic integration.

The success of the strategic communications and marketing plan will only occur if we build a strong infrastructure to drive our efforts. We will create a central organizational structure aligned to support and advance these strategic initiatives by strengthening our acumen, improving how we integrate our communications strategy and measuring the effectiveness and progress on achieving our goals.

We will focus on ensuring that our university community has the tools and messaging they need to serve as organizational ambassadors and we will learn from others receiving inspiration and increasing our knowledge from those closest to us who are making an impact in their own professional realms.

Committee Chair Stern said that critical to ensuring ongoing progress and success of our strategic plan is to measure, track, analyze and optimize our efforts. The environment in which we communicate changes constantly and we must be bold in our efforts to ensure that we are moving to where the puck is going and not to where it is.

We will create a comprehensive dashboard that will provide a rich array of key metrics that will track our progress against our major goals/strategic imperatives. We will present the dashboards at a future committee and full board of trustee's meetings.

Stay tuned!

Committee Chair Stern thanked everyone for a great job! Board Vice Chair Kuntz said it was an amazing piece of work, congratulations. He stated that the KPI was critically important. Trustee Patel agreed that the Plan was excellent. We should make sure we have KPI's that measure current student, prospective students and families so we can understand where we are currently and where we want to go.

Committee Chair Stern indicated he was meeting with Vice President Evans on student commitment and will build into KPI. Vice President Paton stated that research is being done that will help us learn more about students. Students will talk about their experience. Committee Chair Stern said we need to find out how we connect with those students that are not accepted. Trustee Patel wanted to know if there was a way to get data on a set of students that accepted but did not come?

Trustee Brandon indicated there will be a discussion in the Committee on Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs and Experience on the topic of student experience. He had a follow up call with Vice President Evans regarding the campus tours and found out that they are done through Alumni Affairs. Said he had a conversation with Vice President Mitchell, Vice President Paton and Vice President Evans to give his personal feedback about how the tour was significantly less than what other universities around the country do. Committee Chair Stern commented that every Trustee has heard about the tour and they will add it to the Strategic Communications plan. Trustee Brandon indicated that there are group tours every day from 10:00-2:00 for anybody to attend. Trustee Zucker stated that maybe the Trustees should go on a tour and see what it is all about. Vice President Paton said there should be a co-committee collaboration.

Trustee O'Keefe said the presentation was phenomenal and was super encouraging. Trustee Powers commented that it was a phenomenal plan and appreciates all the time have has been put into it. Trustee Zucker said Thank You! Vice President Paton said she is exited. Committee Chair Stern stated the team did a phenomenal job. The plan will help has improve our reputation and make an investment in ourselves. Vice President Paton thanked Committee Chair Stern for his partnership/leadership, personally and professionally. It was a true pleasure to partner with you. She thanked everyone and said she was looking forward to moving forward.

#### **4.0 New Business**

There was no new business to come before the board.

#### **5.0 Adjourn**

Committee Chair Stern adjourned the meeting at 2:59 p.m.