



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

**Meeting Minutes**

**Telephone Conference Call**

**January 23, 2020**

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

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

**Time Adjourned: 2:56 p.m.**

**Committee and Board members present:**

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

**Others present:**

Nancy Paton, Vice President for Strategic Communications and Marketing, 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 introduced the following agenda items for discussion: Key Performance Indicators for the fourth quarter of 2019; Brand and Positioning Strategy progress review and assessment of the Orange Bowl marketing and communications campaign.

**3.0 Discussion Items**

**3.1 Key Performance Indicators**

Vice President Paton thanked the committee for their continued support, guidance and advocacy of the strategic efforts to advance the university’s reputation and rankings.

She provided a review of the fourth quarter Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) dashboard.

Organic search volume decreased from 1.2M in Q3 to 1.1M in Q4. Vice President Paton stated this is a very minor change and UF still retains its number three, third quarter position. In review, the university’s agency thinks this is most likely a seasonal phenomenon.

Earned media share of voice decreased .9 from Q3 to Q4. UF remains in fourth position. Of note, there was a shuffling of the top four. Michigan saw a decrease from 25.5 to 18.6; UCLA remained steady 22.3 vs. 23.3 and UC Berkeley saw an increase from 18.4 to 23.3.

The Conversation reach decreased 542,111 in Q3 to 457,661 in Q4. This is likely due to seasonal fluctuations resulting from the end of the academic and calendar year.

UF recorded an increase in earned media sentiment due to a higher number of favorable UF stories.

Due to an increase in neutral posts/mentions, not an increase in negative posts, there was a very slight decrease in positive social media sentiment.

Social media share of voice is up 1.1% from Q3. UF retains its 3<sup>rd</sup> place position.

Website visitors increased from Q4 2019. This is due to our paid and earned media efforts.

Vice President Paton stated that she was very pleased with the performance results on the KPI.

She then reviewed the detailed KPI dashboards for earned media, social media and web performance.

Earned media each decreased from 699.6M in Q3 to 558.6M in Q4 due to seasonal fluctuations associated with the level of activity commensurate with the university's academic calendar, i.e. faculty and students having completed the semester.

Top stories for this quarter:

- The end of Florida orange juice? A lethal disease is devastating the state's citrus industry.
  - Researcher helped create meningitis vaccine.
  - Big Mother is watching you.
- 
- Media value generated indicates the advertising value of the articles. In Q4 earned media efforts resulted in a value of \$3M, a very slight 98K decrease from Q3.
  - UF remains in fourth position in earned media share of voice. Earned media share of voice decreased a slight 2.6% from Q3 to Q4.

The Conversation reach decreased slightly from 542.1K to 457.7K. However, UF has moved up to second place among peers.

On social media platforms, UF continues to be a lead higher education. This dominant presence indicates that the university is relevant to younger audiences—significant in a rapidly changing media landscape. UF also remains a leader in the social space outside the higher education sector.

Vice President Paton explained that in the fourth quarter UF institutional channels focused heavily on “Gator spirit” messages to amplify the university's top national rankings for both academic and football programs. For a second year, the Strategic Communications and

Marketing team once again partnered with colleagues in athletics to propel academic and athletic prowess through the opportunity presented by the Orange Bowl appearance.

Performance on each of the owned social media channels against peers is strong. UF remains number two on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Website metrics indicated a visitor decrease of 10.5% in Q4 — a seasonal fluctuation.

The year-over-year session decrease of 4.3% on UFL.EDU was driven primarily by direct traffic, which saw a 6.2% session decrease when compared to the fourth quarter of 2018, as well as Google organic traffic which saw a 19.1% session decrease compared to previous year. Sessions are decreasing as these visitors quickly move to conduct their transaction or fulfill their research needs on other pages/sites. Direct traffic and Google organic traffic drove the most sessions overall in Q4 2019, which relates to the decreases in the overall sessions.

There are two reasons as to why there is a decline in overall traffic:

- Google algorithm updates. Google answers questions directly in the search engine as opposed to sending the user to a content-centric page
- Traffic may be going to other ufl.edu subdomains that aren't included within the dashboard.

Bounce rates are up this quarter by 11%, most likely due to moving from the homepage to search and access other areas of the site.

Average time on page went from 2:23 in Q3 to 2:15 in Q4 — not a large difference. It decreased by 6.2%.

Out-of-state users generate 63.7% of the traffic while in-state users generate 36.3%.

Vice President Paton stated at the March meeting she will review the year-end paid media campaign with the committee.

### **3.2 Brand Positioning Strategy**

Chair Stern thanked Vice President Paton. He stated the team's performance is strengthening on important platforms that amplify our university's awareness, engagement with stakeholders and national recognition.

Chair Stern reinforced the importance of the recently launched brand and positioning strategy. He said the goal of the strategic marketing and communications' plans number one initiative is to strengthen national reputation to advance rankings.

Vice President Paton reviewed progress on the brand and positioning strategy initiative.

Critical to success of the strategy is the engagement of internal stakeholders. As such, two new councils are being formed.

Vice President Paton reviewed with the committee the three primary groups and respective charters.

- University Brand Council
- Brand Strategy Core Team
- Senior Communicators (existing)

These groups will focus on the following:

#### **University Brand Council**

- Reviews engagement analyses, strategic plans/recommendations
- Provides input on brand strategy elements at periodic meetings
- Participates in quantitative/qualitative research studies and positioning/platform development meetings
- Serves as brand strategy advocates

#### **University Brand Core Team**

- Provides counsel on the project deliverables
- Directs and manages the brand strategy engagement initiatives
- Delivers initial input at critical milestones of the engagement
- Will design and lead platform launch

#### **University Senior Communicators (F-16)**

- Regularly provides counsel on strategic communications and marketing efforts
- Receives briefings on progress at established monthly meetings
- Provides input at critical junctures of the brand strategy process
- May be asked to participate in input/feedback sessions
- Will lead and manage day-to-day platform launch

Vice President Paton reviewed the research stage of the strategy development.

To date, there have been individual and small group informational meetings with UF students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Additional discussion sessions with key UF Stakeholders will be conducted throughout the month of January and beginning of February.

When this phase is completed, we will have talked with more than 100 internal stakeholders. The campus immersion meetings to date have yielded consistent key observations:

- Campus stakeholders are supportive of the brand and positioning strategy initiative. There was broad consensus that UF needs a university-wide brand strategy to guide marketing and communications efforts/activities.

- Outside of athletics, the UF brand is largely undefined: There is confusion about the UF brand due to the multitude of marketing/fundraising campaigns, strategic initiatives, and inconsistent messaging.
- UF needs to leverage and amplify its strengths among its peers.
- Internal audiences desire to understand their individual roles in advancing the Top 5 ranking goal for the long-term vision.

Vice President Paton shared with the committee a case study created by the university's partner firm detailing a similar strategy which resulted in institutional success for one of their national university clients.

### **3.3 Orange Bowl Update**

Chair Stern stated last month's Orange Bowl propelled us onto the national stage for a second major bowl appearance in two years. Even more special was that we played in our home state which created an opportunity for us to amplify our university's academic and athletic rankings.

Vice President Paton shared the implemented communications strategy which focused on fan engagement.

The performance of the social media engagement and storytelling campaign demonstrated success. In a little over one day, the story of the university academic ranking and spirit created high levels of reach and engagement:

- Twitter, 1.1M impressions
- Facebook, 678K people reached
- Instagram, 135K video views
- Giphy, 500K GIF views

### **4.0 New Business**

There was no new business to come before the committee.

### **5.0 Adjourn**

Committee Chair Stern adjourned the meeting at 2:56 p.m.