



## University Communications

In Support of the Cornerstone Strategic Plan

*"The University must... articulate its aspirations and the value of those aspirations forcefully, both to the University community and to the greater public."*

*--University of Virginia Cornerstone Plan*

Draft: Strategic Communications Plan  
FY 2015-2019



**Goals:**

1. Enhance the reputation of the University of Virginia
2. Optimize UVA's institutional brand equity as a national leader in higher education with a rich tradition of leadership, self-governance, honor and overall excellence
3. Support and promote pillars of the Cornerstone strategic plan

**Audiences:**

- Prospective faculty recruits and academic peers
- Targeted prospective students and their families
- Current faculty, staff and students
- Alumni communities: Virginia-based; national
- Philanthropy and donor communities: alumni and non-alumni
- Citizens of Virginia
- Governmental and public policy leaders (state and national level)
- Business leaders (local, state and national level)
- Media: digital, print, broadcast

**Strategies:**

1. Define and communicate how UVA's mission of education, research, health and service benefits those who attend and graduate from the University, and the world at large. Related, underscore UVA's tremendous value to the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. Invest in qualitative and quantitative research to:
  - Establish communications performance benchmarks
  - Better understand current perceptions and barriers among key target audiences
3. Develop a robust network among school and college communicators to coordinate, unify and more effectively manage the University brand and sub-brands as well as strengthen overall collaboration on issues management within the media.
4. Organize a robust and proactive Office of University Communications function to improve institutional branding to all key audiences.
5. Develop brand messaging specific to each University strategic pillar:
  - Extend and strengthen the University's distinctive residential culture;
  - Strengthen the University's capacity to advance knowledge and serve the commonwealth, the nation and the world through research, scholarship, creative arts and innovation;
  - Provide educational experiences that deliver new levels of student engagement;
  - Assemble and support a distinguishing faculty; and
  - Steward the University's resources to promote academic excellence and affordable access.

## Tactics for ALL identified audiences:

1. Develop and formalize overarching brand guidelines and graphic standards for the entire University and its major sub-brands: the College, schools, libraries, athletics.
  - More consistent guidelines regarding colors, fonts, word marks, logos, etc.
  - Clear usage guidelines for web, email, printed material, signage, etc.
  - Develop creative examples for brand look, feel and brand voice
  - Develop and promote online toolkit for all resources and questions about brand usage guidelines
2. Conduct a thorough and wide-ranging communications review that evaluates consistency in messaging and identity:
  - Key University websites
  - Electronic marketing
  - Printed material (brochures, flyers, direct mail, magazines, etc.)
3. Structure Communications staff to meet a wider range of needs:
  - Reorganize existing capacity to aid more robust strategic communications and marketing
  - Supplement with additional staff hires to allow University Communications to be more proactive in satisfying broader institutional needs
  - Key needs:
    - o Strategy development
    - o Brand management
    - o Marketing writing
    - o Multimedia production
    - o Graphic design
    - o Social media
    - o Earned media
4. Develop TV, print, digital, radio and out-of-home institutional brand advertising to raise awareness and improve perceptions of UVA among several key audiences. Messaging may vary by market or by communications objectives for a specific time period.

### *Statewide Advertising*

- Print and digital ads in statewide dailies such as the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, *Roanoke Times*, and others
- Print ads in *Virginia Business Magazine*
- Public radio sponsorships on stations in Richmond, Norfolk/VA Beach, Roanoke, Lynchburg and Harrisonburg

## **Tactics for ALL identified audiences (continued):**

### *Key Market Advertising*

#### Richmond

- TV/radio buy timed for state legislative session
- Richmond International Airport

#### Washington region

- TV/radio buy designed to reach alumni, prospective students as well as national leaders, business leaders and the philanthropic community
- Public radio sponsorship
- Airport display ads at Dulles, Reagan National and BWI

### *National Advertising*

- Print and online ads designed to reach peers in academia, out-of-state alumni, national opinion leaders and prospective students and families
- *Chronicle of Higher Education* and other academic publications and websites that specifically reach an academic audience
- *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* to reach national business and opinion leaders, alumni, etc.

### *International Advertising*

- Online ads designed to reach peers in academia, out-of-country alumni, opinion leaders and prospective students and families

## **Tactics for Faculty Recruiting**

### *Paid Media*

Print and digital advertising placed in:

- *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
- Explore additional academic publications like *Journal of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education* and *Higher Education Quarterly*
- Education issues of *WSJ*, *NY Times* & *Washington Post*

### *Earned Media*

- Editorial Board visits w/ *Washington Post*, *NY Times*, *USA Today*, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*
- Releases and meetings with targeted national academic publications like *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
- Raise awareness in education publications and supplements
- Major faculty hire announcements (nationally)

### *Owned Media*

- New/added content on Virginia.edu with messaging specific to prospective faculty; develop hiring microsite
- Presentations both at UVA and other academic conferences
- Develop new content and messaging for academic UVA publications

### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and institutional awareness

## **Student Recruitment**

### *Assessment*

Conduct quantitative and/or qualitative research among prospective students, their families and guidance counselors. Research objective is to determine perceptions of UVA specific to academic excellence, key attributes, university life, cost, selection, etc.

- Measure awareness and preference among prospective students and families across Virginia and region
  - o Consider other key states or regions to include
- Measure awareness, preference and potential barriers to attend UVA with key audiences
  - o Low socio-economic status students and families
  - o African American students and families
  - o Hispanic students and families
  - o Other under-represented groups
- Measure perceptions of high school guidance counselors in state and region comparing/contrasting perceptions with other leading national universities

### *Paid Media*

- Broad institutional brand messages will raise awareness and support student recruitment efforts
- Statewide print and digital advertising
- Key market TV, radio and digital
- National print and digital advertising

### *Earned Media*

- Develop editorial plan pitching student success stories locally, nationally and internationally
- Give specific attention to efforts to reach and recruit under-represented minority students and students demonstrating financial need

### *Owned Media*

- Additional content (specifically web video) for Virginia.edu
- Evaluate and upgrade existing recruitment publications, brochures and direct mail
- Evaluate and refresh marketing for on Grounds visits and student tours

### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and institutional awareness

## **Current Faculty, Staff, and Students**

### *Assessment*

Brand-level research should be conducted to understand and measure how UVA's internal audiences perceive and define the University. Surveys are not intended to measure faculty or student satisfaction, but instead how they view the University brand, perceptions about the University, attributes and reputation assessment, etc.

### *Paid Media Channels*

- Paid media not included as primary means to reach these audiences
- Faculty, staff and current students will, however, see and hear paid media used to reach other audiences

### *Earned Media Channels*

- Local, state and national public relations/story placement
- Pass along through social media channels
- PSA TV spots during athletics broadcasts

### *Owned Media Channels*

- Intranet (design and messaging within UVA domain)
- Formatted emails
- Virginia.edu (design & content, e.g. web videos)
- On Grounds publications
- On Grounds transportation (busses/shuttles)
- Direct mail
- Athletics programs and in-stadium signage

### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and institutional awareness

## **Alumni Relations**

### *Assessment*

Collaborate with UVA Alumni Association to conduct quantitative and qualitative research with Alumni living within the Commonwealth, across the US and around the globe to measure perceptions about the University brand and how those perceptions change as the strategic plan is implemented.

### *Paid Media Channels*

- State and national level print and digital
- Key market TV, radio, public radio sponsorships
- Key market display/out-of-home advertising

### *Earned Media Channels*

- PSA TV spots during athletics broadcasts
- Local, state and national PR
- Social media channels (University, schools, graduated class pages, etc.)

### *Owned Media Channels*

- Alumni.virginia.edu website
- Email blasts
- UVA Magazine, uvamagazine.edu and e-newsletter
- Direct mail
- President Sullivan and other leadership giving presentations to Alumni groups nationally, internationally
- Encourage Alumni Association to develop first responders program and grass roots advocacy efforts

### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and institutional awareness

## **Philanthropy and Donor Community**

### *Paid Media Channels*

- National print and digital advertising
- Statewide print, digital and public radio advertising
- Key market TV, print, digital and radio ads in Washington region and Richmond



#### *Earned Media Channels*

- Increased and targeted editorial board meetings promoting UVA's strategic plan implementation
- Messaging focused on reputation, value and excellence
- PSA TV spots during athletics broadcasts

#### *Owned Media Channels*

- Coordinate institutional brand messaging with current fundraising efforts
- Email and direct mail
- President Sullivan and other leadership giving presentations to donor groups nationally and internationally

#### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and institutional awareness

### **Citizens and Voters in Virginia**

#### *Assessment*

Recommend that the UVA Alumni Association consider broadening its research portfolio to conduct a recurring statewide survey of residents to determine perceptions about the University of Virginia and the extent that citizens understand or value UVA's mission and return on public investment. Initially a quantitative survey may be conducted annually and in time every other year.

#### *Paid Media Channels*

- National print and digital advertising (specifically ads in *Washington Post* and *NY Times* will reach northern Virginia and educated, affluent residents)
- Statewide print, digital and public radio advertising
- Key market TV, print, digital and radio ads in Washington region and Richmond

#### *Earned Media Channels*

- Increased and targeted editorial board meetings promoting UVA's strategic plan implementation
- Messaging focused on affordable access and value to community
- Social media pass along messages
- PSA TV spots during athletics broadcasts

### *Owned Media Channels*

- President Sullivan, leadership and faculty presentations and public appearances to community groups
- UVA web and other digital properties

### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and awareness

## **Governmental and Public Policy Leaders**

Develop a closer collaboration between Government Relations and University Communications to identify and enhance opportunities to communicate the important activities of the University for the benefit of the people of the Commonwealth and the nation.

### *Paid Media Channels*

- National print and digital advertising
- Statewide print, digital and public radio advertising
- Key market TV, print, digital and radio ads

### *Earned Media Channels*

- Increased and targeted editorial board meetings promoting UVA's strategic plan implementation and UVA value proposition
- Messaging focused on affordable access, value to community, contribution to economic development
- PSA TV spots during athletics broadcasts

### *Owned Media Channels*

- Coordinate institutional brand messaging with state and federal lobbying efforts
- President Sullivan and other leadership presentations and public appearances to leadership groups
- Direct mail campaigns articulating UVA value proposition to elected officials

### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and institutional awareness

## **Business Leaders**

### *Paid Media Channels*

- National print and digital advertising (specifically ads in *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* will reach business leaders)
- Statewide print, digital and public radio advertising
- Key market TV, print, digital and radio ads in Washington region and Richmond

### *Earned Media Channels*

- Increased and targeted editorial board meetings promoting UVA's strategic plan implementation
- Messaging focused on service to community, UVA as an economic development engine and as a resource to the business community
- PSA TV spots during athletics broadcasts

### *Owned Media Channels*

- President Sullivan and other leadership presentations and public appearances to business groups

### *Social Media*

- Leverage relevant University stories on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Vine and other emerging platforms to elevate interest and institutional awareness

Draft: University Communications Priorities  
April 1, 2014-June 30, 2015



## Executive Summary

*University Communications Priorities* is a detailed framework operationalizing the first phase of the five-year University of Virginia Communications Plan. Overarching themes include: elevating our earned media strategy; developing a brand and visual identity program; completing a web domain redesign; awareness campaign; AccessUVA prospective student communications; and faculty recruitment support, among other activities. The plan includes tactics and opportunities to collaborate with partners across the University as well as a number of initiatives spearheaded principally by University Communications.

**Earned media strategy.** Develop and execute an earned media plan on the local, regional, national, and international levels, across content platforms. This initiative will identify key priority content areas and messages, supported by a calendar of releases and media pitches, backed by individual and team-level goals.

**Brand platform campaign.** National universities operate in an extremely competitive environment. They compete for students, faculty and university leadership, research grants and awards, state and federal support, and philanthropic support. The University of Virginia's competitive position is affected by how these key audiences perceive its academic strength and overall reputation. A university's image also plays an important role in reinforcing and building alumni pride and trust in their university.

Working with a marketing and branding agency, and a number of UVA stakeholders, University Communications will develop and execute a plan to articulate the University of Virginia brand and further elevate it through creative, thoughtful promotion that communicates the University's impressive attributes. Areas of emphasis will highlight UVA's academic strength, distinctive residential culture and support broad institutional priorities. It will showcase the University of Virginia as a best-in-class educational institution. Beyond education, UVA makes significant contributions to the Commonwealth including partnering with businesses; advancing research and innovation; enriching health and the environment; building the workforce; supporting the community; and promoting arts, culture and state pride.

This branding work will elevate stories that exemplify the University's standing as a top public university. Efforts will emphasize UVA's value proposition to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Visual identity.** All stakeholders at the University of Virginia want to tell a compelling, forward thinking story that captures the essence of the University of Virginia. While we have many different audiences, both internal and external, we currently lack the tools to guide and inspire how we present the UVA story. In partnership with communicators across the University, we will develop a graphic identity program. This effort will include an audit of our print and digital landscape, the development of standards, online tools and templates, and the establishment of a sub committee of the Communications Cabinet charged with approval of new university marks and logos.

To support the branding effort, we will engage an outside agency to help develop a comprehensive identity framework that offers greater consistency and flexibility to accommodate our main brand and a diverse array of sub-brands.

**University web domain redesign.** Plan and pilot collaboration with one or two schools the development of a new best-in-class web design to transform our web domain. This project will include a complete redesign of the homepage and the development of a number of web templates to improve overall consistency. We are anticipating an improved aesthetic and functional appeal as well as significant technical improvements to make websites we run easier to update, enhance performance, and offer better mobile display.

**AccessUVA.** Partner with Undergraduate Admissions, Financial Aid and Advancement to develop and execute communications in support of AccessUVA. Efforts will include a complete audit of communications to prospective students, coordination with Advancement on fundraising announcements, as well as articulating the scope and commitment of UVA to its highest need students. Potential tactical work could include producing student videos that validate the impact of our financial aid program on student academic success.

**Rotunda restoration.** In early 2014 we began overseeing plans to support Phase 2 Rotunda Restoration communications. Looking ahead we will assist in efforts to message the landmark's two-year closure, offer ongoing documentation of the progress being made, as well implement a media strategy to earn national placement in trade publications specializing in preservation.

**Continuous talent recruitment of faculty and staff.** Identify stories and develop a campaign that spotlights exceptional faculty in support of our plan to extend our legacy of assembling a distinguished world-class faculty. Efforts may include targeted print and digital advertising and development of a comprehensive website to support high-level recruiting done by the Associate Provost for Faculty Recruitment, the Executive Search Group, and University Human Resources. The one-stop destination would showcase the University as well as capture the essence of Charlottesville as one of the best places to live in the nation.

**UVA Today.** The mission of UVA Today is to serve as the primary web-based source of news and information that promotes the University of Virginia. Its purpose is to influence and shape perceptions of the University in a positive way by promoting UVA as an institution of excellence in teaching, research, and service; as a supportive and engaging community; as a unique asset for the Commonwealth, the nation and the world; and as a valuable partner with the civic and business communities.

Efforts will include analyzing UVA Today and the Daily Report email, with an eye toward reinventing the form and function to better serve targeted communications needs for internal and external audiences. The review will include reexamining its purpose and assessing the approach to editorial strategy and content development. In concert begin a complete redesign in line with the new editorial direction. Key objectives are a more modern, best-in-class design, improve readability, and review existing major classifications for improvement.

**Community relations.** Collaborate with the greater community on a range of issues and shared priorities. This includes neighborhood and community meetings to foster better understanding, and positive relations between the University and surrounding community.

**Good Ole app.** Significantly upgrade the out-of-date Virginia app, with plans to more rigorously maintain and improve the app to ensure breakdowns and bugs are more quickly discovered and corrected. Once the new generation is complete we will conduct a re-launch marketing campaign to key audiences.

**Social media content strategy.** Ensure we have a robust, engaging, substantive and entertaining presence on all important social media platforms, and that our daily efforts there showcase the University's vibrant residential culture, student experiential learning and academic achievement, faculty research and accomplishment, University contributions to society, and other information of interest to the UVA community. This includes: identifying platforms for expansion, such as short video on Instagram, Vine and Tumblr; generating programming such as live tweets of major events, media mentions, photos, videos, articles, etc.; and audience building across all platforms

**Social media engagement.** Implement a consolidated management system for tracking mentions across social media platforms, quantifying our efforts, and making sure we respond and repost. This means developing a system to dig deeper into conversations about the University on social media that occur beyond our official channels. This will ensure we're working together to promote our strategic content, find posts by others that fit the University's strategic communications goals, and engage in conversations with and about the University community.

**UVA YouTube channel.** Reimagine our YouTube channel as the destination for top University video content that showcases student life, experiential learning, research accomplishment, and other strategic communications priorities.

**Comprehensive reorganization.** As University Communications more fully embraces its purpose to enhance the University of Virginia's reputation and build equity in our brand, we will development and implement a full re-thinking of how we are organized to assure we are prepared and focused on becoming a best-in-class group of University communicators.

**Communications Cabinet.** Invigorate collaboration among communicators across Grounds, including renewed efforts engaging communications leadership in recurring discussion on topics of shared interest, holding special issues briefings, and offer guidance and support for the creation of central tools and resources including organizing professional development opportunities.

**University Advancement separation.** As we complete programmatic separation, Communications will take responsibility for a number of projects previously coordinated by University Advancement. This includes advertising at the CHO airport, development of the annual Fact book, President's Report, and the University financial report.

**Benchmarking key metrics.** Build a system to measure and quantify department-wide efforts in support of the priorities outlined herein. This includes metrics such as: media mentions; media sentiment; article page views; website visits and traffic; social media followers and engagement; video views; among other metrics. These figures will be consolidated into regular, periodic reports that show our performance over time.

**Local philanthropy.** On behalf of the University of Virginia continue to spearhead efforts to encourage giving, service and administer the annual Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign program.