UCLA Strategic Communications

2018–2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

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I. ABOUT US

Our Mission and Purpose

We tell UCLA's unique story — the shared values, opportunities and achievements that make it great.

We are **the stewards of UCLA's image as one multifaceted, dynamic and diverse entity.** We shape and curate stories from the breadth and depth of the university to **paint a holistic picture of UCLA**. We bring the university's mission to life through communications, conversations and experiences that are expertly tailored and delivered to a broad range of audiences. We change attitudes, stir emotions and inspire action.

Who We Are

We are communications experts with diverse skill sets. We are journalists, marketers, editors, producers, designers, programmers, event planners, writers and more, sharing one common goal: to deliver compelling information and experiences that engage audiences and forge meaningful connections.

We are **passionate** about making sure that the work of UCLA's broad community is seen, understood and valued.

We are **optimistic**. We believe we can make things happen.

We are **innovators**. We experiment with new ways to communicate, we test new technology and we strive to constantly improve.

We are **collaborative**. We work together toward shared goals. We educate and empower one another to draw out the best from each member of the team.

We are **problem solvers**. There will always be hurdles, challenges and limitations. They don't stop us. We anticipate trouble spots to avoid them; we get creative to find a way through.

We are **flexible**. We know change happens. While we depend on process to facilitate our smartest work, that same process allows us to adapt to change. It lets us react, reprioritize and shift gears in the face of change.

We are **creative**. We combine words, sounds and images into effective pieces of communications because they combine logic and emotion, information and empathy. We use the wide range of creative tools at our disposal to educate, inform, intrigue and entertain.

Our Values

Everything we do is based on relationships and conversations. Whether it's with collaborators, partners, guests of the university or the audiences we are trying to reach, there is always interplay. To succeed in our work, we value:

Honesty: Establishing trust is critical to success. Honesty is essential in every story we tell and in everything we create.

Respect: We show respect to others in everything we do and, particularly, in the ways we communicate. We want people to feel respected and heard in every interaction.

Inclusion: UCLA is an inclusive community that is committed to equity. The communications we create must reflect that inclusivity with diverse people, stories and points of view.

Relevance: The communications we create must have value to our audience. Whether we are informing, telling a story or inviting someone to explore UCLA, each interaction should feel current, compelling and pertinent.

What We Do

We take information about UCLA, strategically turn it into engaging stories and experiences, and share it in ways that make it accessible and engaging. We also help campus partners by providing communications **expertise and consultation**. In some cases, we provide complete communications services; in others, we guide messaging and strategy, enabling partners across campus to communicate more effectively.

The work of Strategic Communications supports UCLA in two ways:

Primary: Telling the UCLA story

- Define, amplify and protect UCLA's identity and reputation
- Advocate and, where necessary, defend UCLA in the public square
- Translate University Strategic Priorities and Initiatives into messages that are memorable and meaningful to outside audiences
- Strengthen the combined impact of UCLA's many voices by creating a clear, unified voice
- Support and amplify the messages of campus partners in service of campuswide goals

Secondary: Supporting individual campus partners

- Provide communications and marketing agency services to campus partners in support of discrete objectives while realizing maximum benefit from the UCLA umbrella brand
- Share communications and marketing expertise with campus partners to help them communicate effectively and leverage the power of the brand strategically

How We Do It

We create, mold and place messages to effectively reach diverse audiences. We don't just tell stories — we craft them in ways that are both meaningful to the target audience and tailored to the medium that will deliver it. We strategically layer integrated messages across media to ensure they are seen enough times, in enough ways, from enough credible sources to be noticed, understood and remembered.

To do this, we manage and publish content via a range of owned media vehicles; manage hundreds of media relationships; convene forums for the exchange of ideas; direct the work of outside vendors and agencies; and continuously explore and evaluate new technologies and new ways of reaching audiences.

Our work is currently organized into several groups or areas of specialty:

Media Relations communicates via news organizations, relying on their knowledge of the media landscape to shape UCLA's stories in ways that will *earn* news coverage locally, nationally and internationally. The ultimate output is seen in the form of published stories, broadcast stories and across social media platforms. In the course of our work, we plan, write, produce, advise and pitch. Some of what we do on a daily basis:

- Plan and execute a unique media outreach strategy for each communication initiative
- Create and distribute press materials and press releases
- Manage UCLA's online Newsroom as a destination and resource for engaging information
- Provide media training
- Advise chancellor and other administrative leaders in accessing news media and responding to media inquiries
- Advise faculty, students and staff in promoting their own research, opinions and accomplishments
- Manage press relationships
- Operate a broadcast studio linking UCLA leaders, professors and experts with broadcast media
- Partner with Environment, Health and Safety to deliver communications in times of crisis
- Track and share UCLA press coverage

Marketing communicates through a wide range of owned and paid formats, media and experiences. We create content and advertising and manage owned media vehicles like magazines, websites and social media platforms to connect and interact with audiences in relevant ways. We focus on the way UCLA is perceived in total — the UCLA brand. We work to unify UCLA with the power of *one* brand. Some of what we do on a daily basis:

- Lead collaborative effort to unify UCLA voice and brand by articulating brand strategy and standards
- Drive UCLA brand campaigns
- Conduct audience, stakeholder and marketplace research
- Create message strategies and communications plans to direct and organize complex initiatives
- Build, manage and maintain several critical websites, social channels and apps while providing policies, guidelines and templates for others
- Create and manage content for websites (like ucla.edu and ucla.edu/optimists), social channels on Facebook and Instagram, apps and email campaigns
- Create and produce video, print, digital and multimedia pieces that are used as content, advertising or information across the university
- Create, produce and distribute magazines, newsletters and e-newsletters
- Plan, place and buy paid media (advertising)
- Advise units across campus on marketing and communications strategy
- Provide marketing services and/or help amplify messages for campus partners

Special Events and Protocol produces unique events and experiences that create affinity by allowing audiences to directly interact with UCLA. Events showcase UCLA's impact and reputation for excellence and allow us to highlight powerful stories from the breadth and depth of the university. From dignitary visits and campuswide celebrations to intimate gatherings and intellectual conversations, UCLA Special Events and Protocol's collaborative approach sets the standard for events of significance and impact. Here are some of our responsibilities:

- Conceptualize, plan and execute a variety of events/experiences deemed necessary by the Strategic Communications teams in support of universitywide priorities and strategies
- Guide campus units to promote university event standards and campus expectations
- Advise on event-related university policies and procedures
- Provide expertise on academic, social, business and diplomatic protocol
- Manage university efforts supporting and informing on high-level state, national and international delegations
- Oversee the UCLA Medal and Fiat Lux Award processes and event efforts
- Liaise with the UC Regents Office, UC Office of the President and the UCLA Chancellor's Office on UCLA events
- Review and advise on all promotional materials for events involving the Chancellor's Office and the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost's Office

Executive Communications gives voice to the chancellor's vision for UCLA. Through written and spoken communication for the chancellor and the executive vice chancellor, we communicate UCLA's values, insights, accomplishments and long-term plans to a wide range of audiences. What we do on a daily basis:

- Translate the chancellor's long-range plans into communication initiatives
- Assist the chancellor in writing speeches, op-eds and messages for UCLA publications
- Work with other campus units to determine the chancellor's role and participation at events
- Innovate effective ways for the chancellor and the executive vice chancellor and provost to connect with UCLA constituencies
- Create content for the chancellor's and the executive vice chancellor and provost's websites and social media platforms

Public Outreach increases awareness, understanding and support of UCLA's vision, mission and accomplishments among local, national and global audiences. What we do:

- Create outreach and visibility strategies to cultivate increased recognition and support among public and opinion leaders for UCLA's role as an engine for quality of life locally, nationally and globally
- Produce engaging forums that will showcase UCLA's leadership as a convener of discussions that lead to new understanding and ideas
- In Los Angeles, connect with audiences in communities that are geographically, ethnically and economically diverse to better establish UCLA's presence and highlight the ways UCLA can contribute to civic life and the topics communities care about
- Forge relationships between university leadership and the leaders, organizations and representatives of the diverse communities of Southern California
- Nationally and internationally, identify new and meaningful ways for people to engage with UCLA as an expert, an established leader, a convener of important and challenging conversations, and an agent of change
- Form strategic partnerships with media and nonprofit organizations for effective outreach and visibility opportunities for faculty and administrators vis-à-vis the chancellor

II. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Elevate and Differentiate: Continually assert a sharply defined and differentiated image of UCLA as a preeminent leader in higher education

UCLA is a complex organization with many voices speaking to overlapping audiences with competing, and sometimes redundant, communications efforts that ultimately blur UCLA's identity.

The StratComm goal is to coalesce and focus communications around core messages to create the clarity, consistency and threshold volumes needed to elevate UCLA's reputation and sharpen its identity.

Strategies

Frame: Frame communications in the context of UCLA's bigger story by creating clear, sharply defined **Message Strategies** that reinforce UCLA's most important and most differentiating messages. Widely share message strategies and talking points across campus for greater message consistency and campaign integration. In this way, all communications will connect with each other to tell the whole story.

1. **Refine UCLA's positioning** based on competitive analysis to better understand UCLA's differentiated strengths and articulate its unique value proposition.

2. **Umbrella Message Strategies** will be created as the strategic foundation for integrated communications related to all **priority initiatives**, including:

    - **University Strategic Priorities** — Research Innovation, Education Innovation, Civic Engagement (Public Service), Global Outreach and Institutional Effectiveness

    - **Key Cross-Campus Initiatives** — Centennial, Veterans, Grand Challenges, Sustainability, Underrepresented Students, Equity and Inclusion

Focus: Prioritize campus achievements, activities and news that serve as the strongest proof of UCLA's positioning and that support University Strategic Priorities and Key Cross-Campus Initiatives. Prioritization is implemented via:

1. **Curation:** Highlight, filter and aggregate content that can be framed to tell the differentiated story, rather than using content that merely contributes to the "depth and breadth" story.

2. **Resourcing:** Allocate people and financial resources toward strategically important initiatives.

Concentrate: Coordinate content and communications through an integrated **StratComm Content Calendar** to "turn up the volume" on a given focus area at a given point in time. With an integrated communications plan that simultaneously layers channels, vehicles and touchpoints, we increase the chances of a specific message being heard, understood and remembered by audiences.

Create: Leverage creative talents to communicate in ways that are engaging, relevant and actionable. Continually evolve techniques, creative approaches, media and formats to deliver content and information in the ways audiences prefer to consume them.

2. UCLA Brand: Promote brand vitality, effectiveness and the value of acting as one

While UCLA transcends the traditional definition of a "brand," we recognize that the brand still needs to be managed and nurtured. We care what different audiences think and feel when they hear "UCLA." Because the practice and importance of brand management is relatively new to UCLA, we must continue to educate and inspire a cultural shift across campus.

The StratComm goal is to continue the work of unifying UCLA around a single brand that speaks with one voice to create a rich, singular identity and a deep reservoir of brand equity.

UCLA BRAND KEY MESSAGE

UCLA is an engine of opportunity and progress, propelling action and change around the world

Strategies

Steward: Continue to advance StratComm's role as brand steward by listening, guiding and articulating brand DNA, core values and various forms of expression.

Collaborate: Work closely with partners across campus to deepen the understanding and adoption of a branded-house approach. This includes understanding and monitoring campus needs and providing easy-to-use resources.

Empower: Help partners become self-sufficient brand advocates through access to on-brand communications assets; provide frequent updates about tools, protocol and policies; offer continued opportunities for education and information sharing.

Build Equity: Focus on building brand equity through consistent brand application; continually evaluate and update brand expression to stay relevant; run brand advertising as consistently as possible.

Monitor Health: Leverage a range of audience research methods to regularly evaluate brand health, equity and audience attitudes, using insights to adjust marketing as necessary. If possible, coordinate with Athletics, Health and Extension to monitor and understand each unit's impacts on the UCLA brand.

3. Global Reach: Raise UCLA's profile as a leading research institution, uniquely able to help solve the world's greatest challenges

UCLA attracts world-class researchers with diverse talents who tackle some of the world's most pressing issues. UCLA's Grand Challenges lead the nation. Yet UCLA is undervalued as a national and global agent of change. The university's goal is to be recognized for the quality of its work and the value of its achievements, whether it is in Los Angeles, across the United States, or around the world.

The StratComm goal is to raise UCLA's profile on the national/global stage by more strategically bringing attention to its unique capabilities, expertise and problem-solving impacts.

Strategies

Harness: Aggregate, coordinate and help shape the myriad research and "problem-solving" communications activities happening at UCLA to achieve greater visibility. This combines an internal coordination and relationship-building role with communications expertise to build synergy. The tactical implications of this strategy could include adding support to increase conference attendance; creating videos; and helping to merge two events in order to achieve the scale needed to garner national and international press interest.

Frame: Create an umbrella message strategy (likely tied to the Research Innovation Message Strategy) that wraps around "global problem-solving" narratives for consistent positioning.

Personalize: Make research stories relevant "outside the laboratory" by telling them in the language of everyday life around the world.

Target: Manage budget efficiently by targeting a prioritized list of thought-leading national and international markets for marketing and media outreach; customize stories and pitches for those markets.

Meet and Greet: Capitalize on leadership and faculty visits to key markets to pitch high-visibility appearances (e.g., chancellor speeches/meetings with city leadership) and develop long-term relationships with media. This relies on flexibility in the chancellor's schedule and advance coordination.

4. Local Roots: Continue to position UCLA as deeply embedded in the diverse fabric of Los Angeles

UCLA's presence is already felt throughout Los Angeles, though the collective effort across schools and departments is highly fragmented. **StratComm's goal is to create an even deeper emotional connection between UCLA and Angelenos.**

Strategies

Frame: Create an umbrella message strategy to consistently position UCLA's relationship with Los Angeles and tie fragmented efforts together.

Amplify: Show how UCLA supports the community by ensuring that locals recognize UCLA as the source of many helpful services and that they know how to access them. Additionally, promote the ways UCLA supports city leaders with research and ideas that help solve problems and drive public policy.

Participate: Sponsor and participate in community cultural celebrations.

Advocate: Support local nonprofits and encourage advocacy organizations to build relationship equity that can be relied upon for advice and support in challenging times.

Localize:

1. Develop and deliver highly localized, hyper-targeted creative content within Los Angeles to reinforce UCLA's diverse, hometown roots. For example:
   - Admissions pipeline for underrepresented communities
   - Student and alumni stories delivered to the neighborhoods they are from
2. Tap into local ethnic media for reach and authenticity

5. Centennial Celebration: Leverage the Centennial to inspire audience action and build affinity for UCLA

The Centennial Celebration is a unique opportunity to create a positive halo effect for the entire campus. We can illustrate UCLA's impact over the last 100 years and use the momentum to articulate our trajectory for the next 100.

Working with the collective campus community, we will create a yearlong schedule of activities and communications that will be designed to educate, engage and inspire all of our key audiences. **StratComm is playing a foundational role in developing the overarching positioning for the celebration to set the strategic direction and provide a creative launching pad for campuswide efforts.**

Strategies

Conduct research to determine the most relevant and impactful messages to educate and inspire Centennial-year target audiences.

Develop overarching theme and strategic platform to guide all activities and communications throughout the year.

Design and execute major tent-pole events to open and set the tone for the year, and then close the year on an upbeat, inspiring and engaging note.

Create and share marketing/communications assets that enable the campus to embrace the Centennial with minimal effort and maximum consistency.

Develop and deploy an integrated marketing campaign to amplify Centennial messaging beyond the campus.

Measure the effectiveness of the Centennial effort and apply learning to future communications.

6. Crisis Communications: Effectively communicate UCLA's actions and positions in times of crisis

In today's media environment, a crisis can create immediate and lasting harm to a university's reputation, damaging its ability to fulfill its mission for years to come. Managing communications in crisis requires

- a deep well of good will and reputational equity upon which to draw;
- proactive planning enabling a nimble reaction;
- synchronized coordination between departments;
- and a clear understanding of UCLA values and leadership positions.

Yet UCLA's size and decentralized structure make this particularly challenging**. The StratComm goal is to take a leadership role in centralizing strategic planning for Crisis Communications to ensure that the campus is proactive and ready to respond. While others will lead operational and implementation aspects, StratComm will provide the strategic engine behind UCLA's communications response and will coordinate the roles of communicators in collaboration with the Emergency Management Office and Safety Task Force, established by the Executive Vice Chancellor.**

Strategies

Collaborative Strategy: Create baseline **Crisis Message Strategies** for a range of scenarios in collaborative work sessions with the chancellor, the executive vice chancellor, deans, vice chancellors and legal counsel. These regular and ongoing strategy discussions create scaffolding for Crisis Communications planning across campus. The output will:

- Define and prioritize a range of crisis scenarios for additional legal vetting and communications protocol planning.
- Outline the university's high-level response (key messages) for each scenario, reflecting the university's mission, values, responsibilities and growing brand equity. While the response will be finessed to address each unique situation, the big issues will have already been confronted, discussed and legally vetted in advance.

Ongoing Communication: Articulate and broadly share the integrated Crisis Message Strategies and Protocols with key communicators across campus to ensure they know how and when to speak, enabling the campus to speak with one voice in crisis. Hold regular discussions to talk through likely scenarios and encourage teamwork.

Centralized Crisis Command: Establish a single source of information and direction in crisis and a system by which all university communicators, whether directly related or not, receive direction and information about communication from UCLA to the public, as well as feedback from monitoring media and social media coverage.

Centralized Resource: Create *one* digital resource for all current communications policies and guidance for all parts of the university, enabling any communicator or university leader to confirm action steps in crisis.

7. Operations: Improve the efficiency of systems; the ability to share information, content and resources; and the effectiveness of external communications

Few organizations — for-profit or nonprofit — communicate at the scale and volume of UCLA. Efficiency is critical to the StratComm operation. **As budgets allow, we seek the tools that best enable us to manage and orchestrate our process efficiently, to collaborate with our campus partners effectively, and to reach audiences with relevant, meaningful stories.**

Strategies

Story: Use the most effective tools and channels for telling the story. Constantly survey options to more deeply engage the audience and reevaluate the effectiveness of tools in use.

Workflow: Continually evaluate and improve workflow systems and survey new workflow technologies to streamline asset, content and project management and improve efficiency and communication.

- Tools to consider as budget allows: StratComm website for internal audiences, Digital Asset Management System, Content Management System

Audience: Continually evaluate new and existing tools and technologies for reaching audience; leverage learning to refine and improve strategies.

- Tools to consider as budget allows: Database Resolution/Solution, Email Platform, Customer Relationship Management System and policies supporting effective/efficient usage