# Syracuse University

Office of Marketing and Communications

Middle States, Standard II Ethics and Integrity

Criterion 6: "Honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admissions materials and practices, as well as in internal communications."

## Overview

The Office of Marketing and Communications is charged with maintaining the integrity, strength, and promotion of the Syracuse University brand. It is also the primary marketing and communications resource for the University's two main revenue streams: student recruitment and fundraising/alumni relations, and works with the Office of Human Resources on faculty/staff recruitment materials, as well awareness campaigns focused on employee well-being.

In addition to the leadership position it holds in developing and sustaining brand message and identity guidelines, the Office acts as a resource for best practice across the institution, sponsoring multiple retreats and work sessions. It also maintains the content, security and infrastructure of the Syracuse University website, and is responsible for the publication of the Syracuse University Magazine.

To support this work, the Office is organized along four verticals:

- Enrollment Management Marketing and Communications
- Advancement Marketing and Communications
- Digital and Creative Services
- Content Strategy

To ensure a cohesive approach—and maximize content development, implementation, and efficiency—there is significant exchange and collaboration across verticals and between focus areas/disciplines. The Office also works closely with the Division of Public Affairs and School/College/Athletics communications representatives to ensure brand and message consistency and accuracy.

All materials generated by the Office of Marketing and Communications follow an established submission, assessment, and production process (see page 5).

## Strategies and Tactics for Communications Integrity and Consistency

Syracuse University has a more decentralized communications structure than many of its peer institutions, with two central operations (Marketing and Communications and Public Affairs/News Services) and multiple satellite operations in the University's Schools/Colleges/Units. To enhance communications coordination and message consistency (and accuracy), the Office of Marketing and Communications has undertaken a number of measures, including the development of:

- A research-based brand identity system
- A system of University and School/College/Program value propositions that align audience research with University strengths and priorities
- Website and email templates that adhere to industry best practice (including accessibility and security guidelines)

- The Syracuse University Magazine Editorial Board which assesses story submissions for relevance and accuracy
- The Council on University Communications (in partnership with the Division of Public Affairs)
- Sponsored retreats and information sessions for University communicators

Brand Message and Identity System

Given the rapid growth in communications platforms and channels, the emphasis on brand consistency and integrity has increased significantly. To ensure the University maintains a distinct and authentic brand impression, the Office of Marketing and Communications has led a multi-year, collaborative effort (Attachment 1) to establish a comprehensive brand message and identity system.

This work began with audience research (Attachment 2 & 3) conducted by SimpsonScarborough, a firm specializing in higher education, which drew on the opinions of prospective students, prospective parents, current students, faculty, staff, alumni/donors, industry and business leaders, employers and guidance counselors (qualitative n=208, quantitative n=6960).

Following the recommendation of an ad hoc committee comprised of students, alumni representatives, faculty and staff, Syracuse University engaged Pentagram Design and Mercury Public Affairs to partner with the Office of Marketing and Communications in the development of a comprehensive brand message and identity system. This included further research and audience interviews (Attachment 4).

The resulting system—while still awaiting full approval—has leadership endorsement of core elements which have informed the development of the new University website, as well as admissions videos and fundraising materials, among other items. The Brand Message and Identity Standards (Attachment 5)—and proposed rollout schedule (Attachment 6)—has been presented—at various stages—to the Chancellor and Board of Trustees, the Chancellor's Executive Team, and the Academic Deans. It is scheduled to be presented to the Council on University Communications on December 6, 2016.

Value Propositions

To provide messaging alignment and accuracy—especially for communications targeted to prospective students and families—the Office of Marketing and Communications oversees the creation and maintenance of value proposition lists (e.g. Attachment 7) for each school and college, and an overarching list for the entire University.

Designed for internal use, these documents are guided by external resources such as the E-Expectations report (Ruffalo Noel Levitz), as well as internal research, such the Outcomes Report (Attachment 8) generated by Syracuse University Career Services and results (Attachment 9) of the Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ) generated by Syracuse University's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, along with input from School/College representatives.

University Website

The main University website (www.syr.edu) is one of Syracuse University's most powerful communications tools. To ensure that it meets the needs of both internal and external audiences as efficiently as possible, the Office of Marketing and Communications has led multiple content reviews and site updates. The latest redesign effort—initiated in 2016—has embraced the following principles:

- Responsive and accessible design, including observance of load-times (to ensure broad access across multiple platforms)
- Alignment of information with audience needs (based on internally and externally conducted research) along with review system for content accuracy
- Canonical approach to information to eradicate conflicting/duplicate content

In addition to drawing on audience research, the development and rollout of the new site has included multiple internal stakeholder meetings and presentations, as well as the distribution of briefing documents (e.g. Attachment 10). The site is due to go live in January 2017.

Syracuse University Magazine

The Syracuse University Magazine is issued three times a year: Spring, Summer, Fall/Winter. The print run of the Spring and Fall/Winter issues has a circulation of approximately 240,000, while the summer issue has a limited print run (approximately 2000 copies). All issues have an online presence (sumagazine.syr.edu).

While the primary audiences for the magazine are alumni, donors, faculty and staff, the magazine is the flagship publication of the University and is therefore used for a variety of other efforts including student, faculty, and staff recruitment.

In recognition of this, the magazine editorial board includes representatives from Admissions, Alumni Relations, Advancement/Fundraising, and Public Affairs/News Services. The magazine also proactively seeks story submissions from School/College/Unit representatives.

The Council on University Communications (CUC)

The Council on University Communications was formed in 2006 as a joint effort between the Office of Marketing and Communications (then known as the Office of Marketing and Interactive Media) and Public Affairs.

Council membership is comprised of communications professionals from throughout the University. Its goals include:

- Enhancing the identification and communication of student, faculty, alumni, and staff success
- Serving as a two-way channel for advising on institution-level communications strategies and for message coordination
- Providing a forum for communications professionals to share best practices

Over the past decade, CUC activities have primarily been announcements and discussions via a dedicated listserv. The Office of Marketing and Communications has augmented this exchange by sponsoring retreats focused on a range of industry-related subjects including:

- Brand position
- Audience research
- Identity guidelines
- Email communications/best practice
- Social media

Enrollment Management Communications

Undergraduate and graduate admissions materials produced by the Office of Marketing and Communications are guided by the University and School/College/program value propositions, as well the Brand Message and Identity Standards. The Office also works closely with Undergraduate Admissions, University College, SU's Office of Veteran and Military Affairs, the University Registrar, and Financial Aid to ensure the inclusion of legally required statements and deadlines.

Communications/assets produced include the University's undergraduate admissions view book, School/College/SU Abroad program guides, web pages, virtual tours, and videos. The Office also produces content for a range of advertising activities including digital IP targeting and retargeting, real-time online behavioral engagement, broadcast, print, and billboards.

Alumni and Donor Communications

Alumni and donor communications focus on elements that will build pride in and affinity with the University, while also highlighting giving opportunities that align with the SU's mission and vision.

To achieve this, the Office of Marketing and Communications works closely with the Division of Advancement and External Affairs, as well as School/College/Unit representatives to identify University needs and translate them in a way that is meaningful to potential donors. This includes student, faculty, and donor testimonials, as well as evidence provided by employers and other external sources.

In addition to the Syracuse University Magazine, communications include regional e-newsletters (Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, Washington, DC) which are issued three times a year (February, May, and October) and include a mix of alumni or news profiles, local student profiles, coming events, photos of past events, and campus news. Story selection is guided by marketing/communications staff, development officers, club leaders and alumni engagement staff.

A central focus of the Office's advancement work is the generation of the University's Capital Campaign White Paper, which outlines fundraising priorities and will be reviewed by Trustees and other key constituents. The Office is also responsible for the creation of Annual Fund and other Advancement communications, including customizable collateral centered on key fundraising priorities such as the Campus Framework and the Academic Strategic Plan.

Social Media

The Office of Marketing and Communications is responsible for a number of the University's official social media channels. These include the flagship University Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr, and Pinterest accounts, which are managed in collaboration with the Division of Public Affairs.

The Office also oversees the official accounts for Undergraduate Admissions (Facebook, Twitter, SU Blogs, YouTube) and SU Abroad (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest) and collaborates with the Office of Alumni Engagement on alumni-focused channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn).

Content displayed on these accounts is guided by the Brand Message and Identity Standards, Value Propositions, and Marketing and Communications assessment and production protocols.

Project/Story Assessment and Production

All materials produced/published by the Office of Marketing and Communications are geared toward target audiences, but share the following evaluation process:

- Opportunity/Project Evaluation: What are the overarching goals?

- Alignment Assessment: How does the project/story align with University priorities?
  - University Mission and Vision and Academic Strategic Plan
  - Admissions Strategy
  - Advancement/Fundraising Priorities
  - Alumni Relations Strategy
  - Brand Message and Identity Standards (including messaging guidelines based on research with internal and external audiences)

- Editorial Development/Fact Checking/Copy Review and Proofreading (including, as necessary, Legal Review)

- Channel Assessment/Assignment (may be multiple platforms): What platforms should be used and how will be the content be tailored accordingly?
  - Web
  - Video
  - Social Media
  - Print
  - Advertising
  - Peer Alignment/Leverage