University of South Carolina
Division of Communications

A. <u>Executive Summary</u>

Vision Statement
The Division of Communications is a member of a highly collaborative external relations team dedicated to enhancing the University of South Carolina reputation nationally and internationally. We will be recognized for the passion we bring to honoring and promoting the University – its faculty, staff, students and alumni – through innovative communications strategies.

Assessment
The Division was formed in fall 2010 and as a new unit and is building its staff, skills through professional development and goals with this vision in mind.

Mission Statement
The University of South Carolina Division of Communications serves as the communications interface between the University and its various publics. Our work helps our audiences better navigate through the organization. By creating credible, timely, authentic and confident communications opportunities that foster conversations and inspire engagement, we heighten awareness and appreciation of USC's distinctiveness and value. Comprised of the Departments of News & Internal Communications, Strategic Marketing, University Creative Services, University Magazine Group, Government and Community Relations, Strategic and Presidential Communications and Web Communications, each unit is focused on building relationships and advancing USC's brand and reputation through development of communications strategies that marry fact-based decision making, innovative practices and superior creativity. We measure success through a variety of metrics, including the quality and diversity of our students, staff and faculty; USC's reputation of distinction in defined signature areas; support from alumni, donors and elected officials; pride in the institution from our various audiences; and the sense of community we foster on our campuses.

Values Statement
(NOTE: while not asked for as part of this exercise, the Division, because it is new and is developing a culture, drafted a values statement that will unite us as we strive to achieve the goals outlined.)

The USC Division of Communications values the authentic, confident, achieving, collaborative culture of the University and strives to support a similar culture also punctuated by creativity, pride, integrity and balance. Each member of the Division team makes contributions in individual and team environments and is encouraged to work across departmental lines to share talent and ideas that will enhance the work of the Division and best advance the University's reputation. Our contributions will remain flexible in a changing environment with an emphasis on quality, timeliness and responsiveness to the needs of our clients and audiences. Our work honors the scholarship, service and other accomplishments of USC faculty, students, staff and alumni. We focus on meeting their needs to form connections with a wide range of individuals and organizations. We value and encourage diverse opinions, open brainstorming and out-of-the-box thinking that will continue our tradition of innovative and dynamic creativity.

2011-12 Goals

1. Build a Division with staff who are prepared to push the frontiers of their disciplines and use innovative strategies and approaches to advance the reputation of the University of South Carolina.
2. Collaboratively, with USC leadership and input from faculty, staff, students, prospective students and their families, alumni, business leaders and elected officials, develop, share and implement the University's first Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) plan and strategy.
3. Build a creative brand overlay that will be shared and valued and that will unite the University community in a proud and assertive strategy that builds USC's national and international reputation.
4. Launch a new USC Web site and social media strategy that is built on the University's articulated brand and that serves as a more engaging, interactive front door to the University for its many publics.
5. Build the foundation for a well-rounded communications strategy that articulates USC's contemporary relevance through planned media and government relations, internal and presidential communications, and external collateral activities.

B. **Goals, Initiatives and Action Plans**

1. **Build a Division with staff who are prepared to push the frontiers of their disciplines and use innovative strategies and approaches to advance the reputation of the University of South Carolina.**

Summary
The newly formed Division has its first-ever Vice President dedicated to communications. The departments, over the years, have reported to as many as four different areas and while many staff have served the University for some time, they have not been united by a shared unit or by any strategic planning. The very first step in achieving a Division dedicated to enhancing the USC reputation nationally and internationally is to finalize a staffing plan and train staff to reach new standards of performance. The Division has not consistently engaged in goal reviews in the past and in many cases, did not have performance reviews. To create a united and innovative team, staffing, training and a series of small successes attained through team building and shared victories, will enhance the climate and push staff to reach new milestones.

Initiative A
Develop a staffing plan that includes reorganization of existing staff into new units focused on specific goals to advance the University's reputation. The plan includes the addition of several new positions and a projection of new staffing that will be needed over the next three years.

Action Plan
1. Reorganize Division into units that best support the needs of the USC community.
   i. Change name of Publications to Creative Services; create new units in interactive media and project management
   ii. Build a Department of Strategic Marketing
   iii. Change name and broaden functions of Media Relations to Department of News and Internal Communications
   iv. Build a Department of Strategic and Presidential Communications
   v. Assess Department of Web Communications
   vi. Build a new Magazine Group that supports print and electronic periodicals
   vii. Assess Department of Government and Community Relations
2. Build, search and fill positions for key leadership and writing positions.
   i. Hire new leadership in the areas of Strategic Marketing, News and Internal Communications, Web Communications, Presidential and Strategic Communications and other areas
   ii. Develop and hire talent in marketing writing, marketing research, social media/Web writing, science writing
   iii. Develop three-year staffing plan

Indicators/Metrics

The Division will measure success for this goal through:

1. Completion of searches for noted positions. (December 2011)
2. Alignment of departments and their corresponding budgets, redeveloped mission statements and goals including strategies for professional development/training (January 2012)
3. Written three-year staffing plan (January 2012)

Initiative B

Define and seek out professional development opportunities. Cross train staff to reduce dependence on single individuals for certain tasks.

Action Plan

1. Review and update as necessary, all position descriptions within the Division.
2. Establish individual goal review systems that tie into the Division's greater plan.
3. Assess gaps between current knowledge and needs of new duties and responsibilities.
4. Seek out training opportunities.
5. Identify staff responsibilities that require cross-training and develop a staffing strategy for shared responsibilities.
6. Develop more cross-functional, problem-solving teams that build camaraderie and expose staff to diverse thinking.

Indicators/Metrics

1. Review of all positions descriptions in the division with appropriate updates (January 2012)
2. Establish goal review systems (December 2011)
3. Professional development skills and training (ongoing)

2. **With USC leadership and input from faculty, staff, students, prospective students and their families, alumni, business leaders and elected officials, the Division will develop, share and implement the University's first Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) plan and strategy.**

Summary:
To achieve a more recognizable brand, the University of South Carolina will engage in a process that will help us agree on our key messages and how we will communicate with our main audiences through the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Plan and Strategy. Not only will we reach agreement on how we will talk about the University and its core strengths and problems it addresses through its academic and research missions, but through that process we will learn to work together as a Division and as a University toward a consistent marketing plan. Strategy will be developed first for the Columbia Campus and in winter, the platform will be expanded for regional use by the USC comprehensive and regional campuses.

Initiative A
Using the support of an outside agency and based on research generated from our key target audiences, develop and test with our identified audiences, a message platform that will serve as the foundation for the IMC and branding efforts at USC.

Action Plan
1. Analyze research and develop a platform that defines the University's strategic direction, benefits, value and personality.
2. Seek input from key leadership groups to ensure buy-in for test messages and authenticity.
3. Test platform with noted audiences to ensure resonance and improve language.
4. After testing, finalize the platform and begin to share with leadership, internal audiences, boards and others who will be responsible for implementing the brand strategy.

Indicators/Metrics
1. Build test platform and share selectively with internal leadership in spring 2011.
2. Test with external audiences through August/September 2011.
3. Introduce platform to leadership groups and users – September/October 2011

Initiative B
Begin the process of creating institutional buy-in for the branding platform. Meet with colleges and schools, key boards and external partners to ensure the authenticity and acceptance of the brand and begin conversations about how to use the platform.

Action Plan
1. Introduce final draft platform to IMC Network and encourage individual meetings and conversations with those who have concerns or who express willingness to enhance the brand messaging.
2. Present to administrative leadership, Council of Deans, Executive Council and ensure that all USC campuses are exposed to the platform. Solicit final feedback.

3. Roll out platform to the Council of Trustees, boards and related volunteer leadership for final feedback.

Indicators/Metrics
1. Finalize all review and feedback sessions by October 2011.
2. Incorporate feedback and finalize platform by November 2011.

Initiative C
Train the campus and system community on how to use the message platform.

Action Plan
Visit every college, school and campus to explain the platform and how it can be used within the units, including how to make the platform "personalized" to the unit and its needs. Share the target audience message structure to be provided by Chernoff Newman and demonstrate how it can be used at the different levels. Develop regionalized platforms for seven comprehensive and regional campuses.

Metrics/Indicators
1. Along with the Director of Strategic Marketing, meet with the deans and communications professionals of all 14 colleges and schools – November and December 2011.
2. Along with Director of Strategic Marketing, meet with seven regional and comprehensive campuses to begin conversations about adapting the branding plan to their regional strategies – December 2011– April 2012.
3. Meet with key university leaders including trustees, alumni board members, student government and others to explain how to use the platform in their own conversations with others about USC – December – February 2012.

Initiative D
Train and begin explicit use of platform in all aspects of the Division's work. The brand messaging will be considered simultaneously with the development of the creative campaign.

Action Plan
1. Each department will develop strategies to reinforce messaging in all communications activities and outlets.
2. Cross-functional teams will be established to assure consistency across media and projects.
3. Messaging will be incorporated into new admissions materials.
4. National media relations plan will be developed using messaging opportunities.
5. Local, state and federal government relations will develop strategies to reinforce messaging with elected officials.

Metrics/Indicators

1. Use of message platform will require planning and practice while members of the Division are also engaged in developing the creative campaign. Director of Strategic Marketing will lead the messaging strategy while the Director of Creative Services leads the creative collateral project.
2. Brand strategy will be fully complete by March 2012.
3. Memory guides and prompts will be developed to help Division and University remember shared direction in all planning activities.

3. **Build a creative brand overlay that will be shared and valued and that will unite the University community in a proud and assertive strategy that builds USC's national and international reputation.**

Summary
Once the brand platform and messaging for our audiences are determined, the Division will write goals for the creative strategy that will be used to execute the IMC. From these goals the creative elements will be born, including the implementation strategies in print and interactive media, media relations, social media and other areas of external promotion.

Initiative A
Using the final brand platform and messaging strategies for our various target audiences, develop a creative overlay that will advance the articulated goals of the IMC.

Action Plan
Using our internal leadership team, articulate the goals for the creative execution - the clever and innovative approaches to our brand. Assess the media that can be used to influence each of these audiences and articulated goals. Write/determine the metrics by which we will measure success in each of the chosen media.

Metrics/Indicators
It is not possible to list these metrics at this time. Goals will be based on the findings of the IMC plan developed with Chernoff Newman and will address the ways we need to change perceptions; increase understanding; seek out and build new audiences; and other related goals. Individual metrics for success will be used for each audience group addressed.

Initiative B
Using our internal Creative Services team, develop the creative elements that include, but are not limited to: themes, colors, media, channels of distribution, execution strategies.

Action Plan and Indicators
1. Complete graphic identity system by October 2012.
2. Develop the creative approach and test with small segments of our audiences – December 2011- February 2012.
3. Launch Campaign fully in March 2012.

Metrics/Indicators
TBD

4. Launch a new USC Web site and social media strategy that is built on the University's articulated brand and that serves as a more engaging, interactive front door to the University for its many publics.

Summary
The University has considered the launch of a new Web design and strategy for several years. An outside vendor has been contracted to initiate the first stage of this process – developing the back-end Content Management System which is being managed through University Technology Services. Once the CMS is determined, a new design concept will be introduced and over the course of the next several years, the University's main pages will be rolled into the new design. Timing of this process is dependent on resources – not only of UTS and the Division of Communications – but within the individual colleges, schools, administrative departments and related functions.

Initiative A
The Division will serve as a member of the Steering Committee that is overseeing the development of the Content Management System (CMS). This process is being overseen by UTS which is establishing deadlines and milestones.

Action Plan
Assist, learn and provide input into the CMS process to ensure it meets the greater needs of the University community. Begin to convert some existing and new sites to the new system.

Metrics/Indicators
Launch the new CMS using two selected colleges/ schools that will serve as first-round test sites for both the CMS and the new design. The process will provide milestones and metrics as we make the conversions and test the new system and design with key audiences. UTS goal: completion by end of summer 2011.

Initiative B
Develop flexible, branded templates that tell the USC story in a consistent, contemporary way.

Action Plan
Develop several templates and conduct usability testing; use feedback to further develop design and architecture types.

Metrics/Indicators
Test templates over the summer and work with two schools/colleges to implement the new template strategy through September 2011. Use the knowledge gained to inform the process and structures for homepage and for subsequent secondary page implementations.

Initiative C
Develop and test the new homepage with key audiences, most notably prospective students.

Action Plan

Partner with enrollment management to test usability, design preferences and ease of use with prospective and current students. Use expertise in Division of Student Affairs to further enhance site.

Metrics/Indicators

Launch homepage in spring 2012.

Initiative D

Develop a segmented social media strategy that matches outlets with audiences and incorporates brand platform.

Action Plan

New Directors of Strategic Marketing and Web Communications and social and interactive media writer will develop plan in winter 2011. Plan will complement Web redesign goals and IMC.

Metrics/Indicators

Stratified social media to begin in spring 2012. Training of staff, beat and outlet assignments completed in early spring 2012.

5. **Build the foundation for a well-rounded communications strategy that articulates USC's contemporary relevance through planned media and government relations, internal and presidential communications, and external collateral activities.**

Summary

In our first year, the Division is focused on staffing, planning, marketing/branding development and basic elements of developing a brand. The major goals outlined above will be the Division's focus, but each department is charged with, for the first time, developing their own comprehensive strategies that will harness the talent and resources each brings to bear in a way that advances the University's reputation and builds understanding of the newly developed brand.

Initiative A: News and Internal Communications

Action Plan
1. Develop a national media strategy that focuses on the I-95 corridor running from Boston through Florida and determined by the geography where prospective students and alumni live.
2. Incorporate use of interactive media into efforts by adding video and photography to enhance traditional media relations.
3. Determine social media strategy that will reach defined bloggers and online media who write about USC's focus areas.
4. Develop a comprehensive broadcast strategy with the goal of attracting larger broadcast entities to campus to frequently cover stories on students and faculty.
5. Create a student hometown publicity campaign.
6. Write the first comprehensive internal communications plan that is grounded in a new plan to use a daily online newsletter and redefined Times. Include the Director of Strategic Marketing in this planning to include use of banners and other internal tactics. Goal is to create a stronger sense of community on campus and to build appreciation for the diverse faculty, staff and students who live, work, study and teach at USC.

Metrics/Indicators
1. Monitor coverage to ensure penetration in key markets.
2. Measure hits and use by media of interactive elements.
3. Track followers in social media outlets.
4. Survey internal audiences after new communications plan is introduced to set baseline for improving internal efforts.

Initiative B: Government and Community Relations

Action Plan
1. Assess staffing to ensure skilled and adequate coverage of local and state community and government relations.

2. Proactively plan key issues to advance for the year.
3. Update legislative data sheets and assess effectiveness.
4. Develop a plan for events and for use of president in state relations.

Metrics/Indicators

While government relations by its very nature is often reactive, depending on the ebb and flow of the General Assembly, the department will be more proactive in planning for stronger relationships with key legislators and community leaders. Metrics will include the good will of the General Assembly and feedback about their increased understanding of the University and its place in their individual districts.

Initiative C – Presidential Communications

Action Plan
1. Continue current model of a part-time director and graduate student writers; assess process in fall 2011.
2. Work with the president's staff to develop a more comprehensive communications strategy that helps guide the president on where to speak and the messages he will deliver consistently.
3. Continue to assess president's calendar making more time for Campaign visits and key government relations visits.
4. Develop a plan for annual report and key milestones during which the president will send e-blasts to defined audience groups.

Resources

Because the Division is new, a budget plan has been submitted to the President and CFO and will be presented before the full budget board. Copies will be provided upon request.

Space

The Division is currently seeking new space opportunities and is working closely with the CFO. New space closer to campus is sought to allow staff to move from the Hampton Street Building. Approximately 25 staff need new space in the plan.

Closing

The Blueprint submitted this year reflects the main goals of establishing the University's first-ever Division of Communications. After the IMC is developed, the Division will tie its goals to the greater University's goals. Metrics will include:
- Working with Enrollment Management to attract students in defined demographics.
- Advancing the Capital Campaign goals with Development.
- Encouraging more alumni engagement through the Alumni Association.
- Advancing the goals of Athletics in telling the story of student athletes more broadly.

Developing a brand is a core and important part of the Division, but in time advancing the University's reputation will mean ensuring that our efforts are in full support of the goals of our external partners.