

**University of South Carolina**  
**Division of Communications Blueprint**  
**2012-13 Goals**

**A. Executive Summary**

**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 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 and in conjunction with our partners, including our work's impact on 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.

**2012-13 Goal Summary**

The USC Division of Communications has organized its planning activities for the 2012-2013 around objectives:

1. Continue to develop the staffing strategy for the Division in the areas of position description reviews and updates; hiring and alignment; and professional development. Encourage a climate of innovation and discovery, taking risks to further build the reputation of the University.
2. Using research as our guide, write the University's first-ever Integrated Marketing Plan and Strategy. Implement campaigns on the internal, state and regional/national levels.
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. Create and begin implementation of a digital strategy for the university that encompasses the SC.EDU ecosystem of websites, social media, email marketing, mobile applications, offline to online conversions, search engine marketing and web analytics strategies.
5. Align the departmental staff around a shared messaging and creative strategy.

#### **New Resources**

The Division puts forth two funding challenges for addressing the goals of the next fiscal year:

- In Fall 2011 the Division requested of the president, provost and CFO the resources to hire two professionals to staff the task of a Web Redesign for the University. The request is for \$237,000 to support salaries and benefits for a project manager and a user interface designer. This is a two-year nonrecurring funds request. The Division anticipates two vacancies that will occur over that time period that will provide the resources needed in the 2014-2015 fiscal year.
- To support the growing needs of the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Plan and Presidential Initiatives, the plan calls for spending at a rate of \$45,000 per month for paid media. To support this volume, the Division is requesting a recurring addition of \$540,000.

#### **Dashboard**

The Division of Communications was formed in 2010 and is still in the process of building its staff, budget and planning strategies. It is anticipated that 2012-13 will serve as the last of a two-year time period that was needed to enhance all of these areas and to build a clear Integrated Marketing Communications Plan and Strategy that will guide the University's external communications efforts over the next several years. Therefore, several of the goals are not intended as benchmarks against peer and peer aspirant institutions.

When the initial research that is being used to build the IMC was completed, the Division incorporated the findings into Dashboard Exhibit A in the Appendix of this document. We also built reputations measures into a dashboard (Exhibit B). Because much of the work that is conducted through the Division is qualitative, we have created a survey system that will allow us, within current budget constraints, to continually survey our various audiences to ensure that we are making improvements in building the University's reputation. We are also requesting of several of our external relations partners that they build surveying into their planning processes and that we share the data. The suggested schedule:

- Prospective Students: Yearly Surveys conducted through the Division of Student Affairs
- Current Students: yearly through the Division of Communications
- Faculty and Staff: every two years through the Division of Communications
- Alumni Surveys: Survey every three years through the USC Alumni Association
- "Community:" every three years through the Division of Communications
- Donors: Survey every five years through the Division of Alumni and Development

- Elected Officials: random years conducted through the Division of Communications

## Division of Communications 2012-13 Planning Document

1. **Continue to develop the staffing strategy for the Division in the areas of position description reviews and updates; hiring and alignment; and professional development. Encourage a climate of innovation and discovery, taking risks to further build the reputation of the University.**
  - A. All division staff position descriptions completed and reviewed through HR by Aug. 1, 2012.
    - i. Develop a leadership strategy for Creative Services
    - ii. Develop a new leadership approach for Printing Services
  - B. Evaluation system developed and implemented for all Division employees, which includes at least one risk taking goal: Aug. 1, 2012
  - C. Professional development plan in full implementation by Aug. 1, 2012
  - D. Annual Division Retreat to begin to reinforce new roles and strategies as we plan for the full IMC implementation: summers 2012 and 2013
  - E. Departmental retreats to be held in summer after Division retreat for department-level implementation planning.
  - F. Complete hiring for three remaining positions: Director of Strategic and Presidential Communications and Project Manager, Web Communications, Internal Communications Coordinator.
  - G. Use outside consultants to build creative thinking and provide professional development activities: ongoing

### **Additional Resources Requested:**

Request has been made to Ed Walton and Michael Amiridis to support the new Web staffing structure: Adding salary support for the project manager and the User Interface Manager: \$210,000 non-recurring but renewable for two years.

### **Metrics/Indicators:**

All action items for this goal have specific direction and deadlines and each serves as its own success metric. No dashboard designed for this goal.

2. **Using research as our guide, write the University's first-ever Integrated Marketing Plan and Strategy. Implement campaigns on the internal, state and regional/national levels.**

- A. Grow the online system toolbox and add new templates as developed: ongoing
- B. Implement internal plan: Fall 2012
  - i. Create internal strategy and build institutional buy-in through IMC Network: Summer 2012
  - ii. Create and implement internal campaign to create institutional buy-in through brand ambassadors: Summer 2012 - ongoing
  - iii. Train individual areas on integrating brand platform into unit messaging: Summer 2012 - ongoing
  - iv. Integrate brand platform and key messaging through a series of internal communications: ongoing
  - v. Work with various teams to introduce brand messaging to new members of the university community: Fall 2012 – Spring 2013
- C. Develop external communications plan for state/regional and national/international audiences.
  - i. Working with agency, develop communications plan for statewide message dissemination: Summer 2012
  - ii. In coordination with agency develop national/international communications plan that complements statewide plan: Spring 2013
  - iii. Launch plan: Fall 2012
- D. Coordinate approvals and training for the System and through the IMC Executive and Deans' Council, the IMC Implementation Team and the IMC Network: ongoing
  - i. Present plan to IMC Network and hold a series of small group discussions to solicit feedback and ideas: Summer 2012
  - ii. Present plan to IMC Executive Council, IMC Deans Council and IMC Implementation team: ongoing
  - iii. Present brand messaging and platform to Board of Trustees: June 2012
  - iv. Begin individual campus marketing discussions and assist each in creating own and related strategy: Winter 2013
- E. Train and further populate the USC approved marketing vendor list to ensure a workforce ready for full implementation of the plan: ongoing

**Metrics/Indicators:**

No dashboard has been developed for this goal.

- Creative execution conveys objectives of university strategic plan and envelopes brand platform.
- Creative strategy execution completed by August 31, 2012
- Media plan for South Carolina completed by Aug 2012 and implemented during Fall 2012 and Spring 2013
- Media Plan for National and International communications completed Spring 2012

- Initial feedback from key audiences positive and reinforces key messaging
- Seven campuses outside of Columbia begin to implement regionalized versions of the IMC.

**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.**

- A. Using the creative strategy tested and approved in spring 2012, implement new brand creative approach.
- i. Finalize creative for print, electronic and social media components of campaign per an approved communications plan. -- July/August 2012
  - ii. Implement components and launch campaign -- September 2012 and ongoing

*Metrics/Indicators:*

- Communications plan complete and approved by August 2012
- Creative components judged internally to successfully reflect the objectives of the strategic plan and the essence of our brand platform. Elements crafted, approved, and executed by late August 2012.
- Campaign kick-off by September 2012

- B. Concurrently with development of the creative concept for the umbrella campaign, develop an integrated creative approach for undergraduate admissions materials.
- i. Work with our external agency and internal team to develop a creative concept for undergraduate admissions that integrates and complements our umbrella concepts. -- Early summer 2012
  - ii. Work with undergraduate admissions communications staff to fine-tune concept for print materials and integrate creative and informational elements into the enrollment management web presence. -- Early summer 2012
  - iii. Integrate and produce approved concept across all undergraduate recruiting materials. -- Early summer 2012
  - iv. Strategize and schedule next cycle of materials with appropriate brand refinements. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing

*Metrics/Indicators:*

- First series of pieces designed, executed and delivered by mid-July 2012.
- Next cycle of recruitment materials planned and scheduled by November 2012.
- Additional materials produced throughout 2012 and Spring 2013.

- C. Integrate umbrella messaging and creative concepting into other key university areas (Columbia campus).
- i. Develop a priority queue and timetable for working with key administrative and academic areas on the Columbia campus. -- Summer 2012

First Tier:

Undergraduate Admissions  
South Carolina Honors College  
School of Law  
Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management  
Music

## Nursing

### Second Tier:

Development and Alumni Relations  
Student Affairs  
Arts and Sciences  
Education  
Mass Communications and Information Studies  
Medicine (including Greenville)

### Third Tier:

Moore School  
Engineering and Computing  
Pharmacy  
Public Health  
Social Work

- I. Use the priority plan as a guide to meeting with colleges, schools and units to strategize for customized communications plans. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing
- J. Work with vendor network and internal team to integrate and modify umbrella creative to effectively work for units. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing
- K. Create and schedule a series of training programs college, school and area communicators. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing

### *Metrics/Indicators*

- Finalize priority order and queue for the development of individual creative strategies – July 2012
  - First series of unit communications plans created and brand messaging integrated into unit communications — Fall 2012 and ongoing
  - Custom communications training plans planned and implemented. -- — Fall 2012 and ongoing
- C. Work with system campuses to tailor and integrate umbrella messaging and creative concepting into individual campus communications plans.
    - i. Work with communications teams at the 3 senior (comprehensive) campuses to modify/tweak the umbrella message platform and creative approach to meet their communications objectives. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing
    - ii. Work with communications teams at the 4 regional campuses to modify/tweak the umbrella message platform and creative approach to meet their communications objectives. -- Winter 2012 and ongoing
    - iii. Provide assistance to campus communications staff as appropriate to integrate umbrella creative to effectively work for their purposes. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing
    - iv. Create and schedule a series of training programs for campus communicators. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing

*Metrics/Indicators*

- Senior campuses: First series of senior campus communications plans created and brand messaging integrated into campus communications — Fall 2012 and ongoing
- Regional campuses: First series of regional campus communications plans created and brand messaging integrated into campus communications — Winter 2012 and ongoing
- Custom campus communications training plans planned and implemented. -- Fall 2012 and ongoing

**Additional Resources needed:**

We have received a request to consider adding an array of media to our advertising strategy that includes billboards, newspaper and tv/radio broadcast ads and airport advertising. Not originally part of our planning strategy when the Division was built for the first time in Fall 2010, this request would add approximately \$45,000/month to the media buying budget. To accommodate, the Division is asking for an additional \$540,000. The Division is prepared to either return each year to the committee for a budget for media buying or could ask for this to become a recurring budget addition.

**4. Create and begin implementation of a digital strategy for the university that encompasses the SC.EDU ecosystem of websites, social media, email marketing, mobile applications, offline to online conversions, search engine marketing and web analytics strategies.**

- A. Launch the first phase of a new SC.EDU website, built on the University's articulated brand that serves as a more engaging, interactive experience for university's many audiences. The redesign will be concurrent with the implementation of a new, university wide content management system (CMS).
- i. Partnering with the School of Music, create an initial information architecture, navigational schema and visual design that incorporates findings from the College of Nursing research and provides a foundation for other sub-sites. UTS and their vendor will convert the resulting web pages into content managed templates.
  - ii. Launch the School of Music pilot site and conduct usability research.
  - iii. Incorporate findings of usability research from School of Music into design and development for the homepage of SC.EDU and select second level pages.
  - iv. Proceed in this iterative fashion through additional sub-sites beginning with the School of Law and College of Mass Communications and Information Studies.

Metrics/Indicators

- Launch plan for School of Music defined after Discovery phase completed.
- Launch plan for SC.EDU and select subpages defined two weeks after usability findings for School of Music are delivered.

- B. Create a sustainable model to launch and successfully maintain the university's ecosystem of websites.
- i. Build a professional user experience design staff through external hires and intensive skills training for current staff.
  - ii. Define processes for the initiation, production, delivery and measurement of interactive projects.
  - iii. Develop tools to guide ongoing evolution of university websites, including a visual style guide, a browser strategy, guiding design principles and best practices.
  - iv. Develop and communicate an implementation plan relying on in person meetings, blogs and the marketing toolbox to share information.
  - v. Develop a training curriculum to train clients and external partners on best practices for online engagement and user experience

Metrics/Indicators

- Develop web process in parallel with creative process, to be completed in late summer.
- Implementation plan to coincide with launch of School of Music website. Ongoing.

- i. Start formal training in summer.
- C. Create a social media strategy that complements the overall digital strategy, including the desired outcomes of the News & Internal Communications strategy and the Integrated Marketing strategy by building on the proposed social media channel mission statements for Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.
- i. Define baseline metrics for each channel from available analytics.
  - ii. Using the visual design and naming conventions of the SC.EDU redesign, ensure consistent interactions with our brand regardless of channel or touchpoint.
  - iii. Clearly articulate a social media policy and best practices for using social media to the Integrated Marketing Communicators network.

Metrics/Indicators

- Establish baseline and target metrics by August 1, 2012
- Following the launch of SC.EDU, complete mockups of designs for each channel based on the options each present for customization.
- Present an approved social media policies and guidelines workshop in conjunction with the September IMC meeting.

**Additional Resources needed:** Request for staffing noted on Goal #1

**5. Align the departmental staff around a shared messaging and creative strategy.**

- A. Hire a new director and build a presidential communications strategy that advances the president as a leader in higher education and furthers to advancing the University's reputation.
- i. Develop a consistent approach to speech writing.
  - ii. Develop a set of consistent talking points to be used by the president in every speech; every quarter refresh with new evidence-based talking points that reinforce the main messaging.
  - iii. Write a communications plan for the year regarding how, when and around topics the president will communicate internally and externally.

**Additional Resources needed:** None

**Metrics/Indicators:**

- All action items for this goal have specific direction and deadlines and each serves as its own success metric.
- B. Assess magazine approaches, conduct readership surveys and develop missions and targeted outcomes for each.
- i. Conduct readership survey of all magazines (*Carolinian*, *Breakthrough\**, *South Carolina Medicine*, *Moore*, *All Access Pass*, and *ESSAY*) – Summer through Winter
  - ii. With the guidance of an outside consultant, redesign *Carolinian* magazine and incorporate lessons learned into enhancements for remaining portfolio of magazines- new designs begin to emerge in Fall 2012
  - iii. Develop strategy for using multimedia components (video, online photo galleries and infographics) to supplement print publications – Fall 2012
  - iv. Develop and produce first e-zine – spring 2013

**Additional Resources needed:** None

**Metrics/Indicators:**

All action items for this goal have specific direction and deadlines and each serves as its own success metric.

- C. Develop a comprehensive internal communications strategy intended to build a brand ambassador campaign among faculty, staff and students; increase understood significance of the University.
- i. Write an internal communications plan that is focused on the IMC messaging and that extends beyond the current portfolio of publications and includes use of banners, events, etc. that will help the campus celebrate and increase understood significance of USC's significance - Fall 2012

- ii. Convert all internal communications to the new CMS system - Summer 2012
- iii. In conjunction with web communications, design an internal communications website to engage the USC community, support the brand strategy, disseminate faculty/staff news and achievements, and serve a central calendar function for the University - Summer 2012
- iv. Examine the usage, content, and effectiveness of Day Times and USC Times - Summer 2012
- v. Grow number of writers from outside the division who contribute to the various publications and online content - Ongoing
- vi. Develop a social media strategy for internal communications - Summer 2012

**Additional Resources needed:** None

**Metrics/Indicators:**

- Launch website Fall 2012. Manage content contributions from writers throughout the university community and track user interaction.
  - Implement internal communications plan in advance of brand campaign. August 2012.
  - Launch revamped USC Times Fall 2012 and track user feedback.
  - Brand is reflected throughout internal communications and faculty/staff feel engaged in USC.
- D. Under the direction of new leadership, develop a comprehensive strategy for attracting national media attention.
- i. Cultivate media markets in those areas targeted by alumni relations and enrollment, as well as those with top circulation and viewership - Ongoing
  - ii. Broaden media to include use of interactive writers - Ongoing
  - iii. Enhance media relations strategy with video, audio and social media - Ongoing
  - iv. Develop staff skills to allow them to translate stories also to magazine, internal communications and social media campaigns - August 2012
  - v. Develop and implement monthly media relations staff training sessions. (SEO, social media, etc.) - Ongoing
  - vi. Draft an event promotion plan to include both internal and external promotion with the goal of spending less staff time on event releases while still providing appropriate publicity - Ongoing
  - vii. Develop a media training program for faculty and staff - August 2012

**Additional Resources needed:** None

**Metrics/Indicators:**

- Increased engagement with national media writers, editors, bloggers, and producers.
- All press releases and web stories are accompanied by photo/video.

- News and Internal Communications writers are comfortable operating in an interactive digital environment.
- Turnkey event promotion system is in place and operational