



Special Committee on University Relations

February 2024

February 9, 2024

8:00 a.m.

West Committee Room, McNamara Alumni Center

CUR - FEB 2024

1. Government Relations Update

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Presentation Materials - 4

2. Overview of Public Relations and Internal Communications at the University

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3. Public Relations and Internal Communications Best Practices in Higher Education

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BOARD OF REGENTS DOCKET ITEM SUMMARY

Special Committee on University Relations

February 9, 2024

AGENDA ITEM: Government Relations Update

Review

Review + Action

Action

Discussion

This is a report required by Board policy.

PRESENTERS: Melisa López Franzen, Executive Director of Government and Community Relations

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS

The purpose of this item is to share an update with the special committee on the strategic work taking place within the Office of Government and Community Relations to advance the University's priorities with the Federal Government and the State of Minnesota. The update will highlight items that have been advanced since the December 2023 meeting.

Federal Relations

Government and Community Relations continues to monitor FY 2024 budget decisions and prepare for FY 2025 appropriations requests. Outreach to federal offices is ongoing and includes visits to the Minnesota delegation.

State Relations

Recent meetings have been held with Minnesota legislative leaders and the state legislative strategy has been finalized. The Government and Community Relations team is prepared to provide Regents, senior leaders, and other University advocates with resources and support as they participate in the 2024 legislative session. This will include engaging students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other members of the University community to become UMN Advocates to support the University's legislative priorities this session.

Government Relations Update

February 2024 | Board of Regents



Government and Community Relations

Govrelations.umn.edu

govrelations@umn.edu



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Driven to Discover®

Government and Community Relations

Leadership



Melisa López Franzen

Executive Director of Government and Community Relations

Federal Relations Update

Staffing

Amy Kircher

Interim Director of Federal
Relations

Government Consulting

Lewis Burke Associates
(6-person team able to cover
Capitol Hill, White House,
and Agencies)

Policy & Appropriation Priorities

- Monitoring FY24 budget decisions; Preparing our FY25 appropriations requests
- Policy effort examples: Providing Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) support to delegates with support from Athletics, Working with Senator Klobuchar's team on Anti-Hazing policy

Federal Relations Update

Strategy

- February 5th Capitol Hill visits
- Seek grant opportunities:
 - Economic Development Administration Tech Hub competition; Minnesota Med Tech 3.0 is one of 31 finalists (Greater MSP lead)



2024 State Legislative Session

Staffing



Christine Kiel

Director of State Relations



Andrew Chelseth

Associate Director of State Relations

2024 State Legislative Session

Policy & Appropriation Priorities

- FY25 supplemental budget
- HEAPR/asset preservation
- Academic health

Strategy

- Meeting with legislative leaders (House & Senate)
- Committee hearings, legislative meetings, and tours





Government and Community Relations

govrelations.umn.edu | govrelations@umn.edu



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Special Committee on University Relations

February 9, 2024

AGENDA ITEM: Overview of Public Relations and Internal Communications at the University

Review

Review + Action

Action

Discussion

This is a report required by Board policy.

PRESENTERS: Chuck Tombarge, Chief Public Relations Officer and Interim Co-Leader of University Relations

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS

The purpose of this item is to provide the special committee with a primer on the public relations and internal communications functions across the University system. Communications teams utilize a variety of structures to achieve their goals. The overview will include discussion of factors that influence these structures, as well as the challenges and opportunities that exist as these teams do their work.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The University has a distributed structure of communications teams that include public relations and internal communications professionals. Such teams may report through a unit or college, to a central campus leader, or through a team with systemwide responsibility. The University's approach is influenced by a variety of factors that contribute to similar communications structures across higher education, including which stakeholders the University engages, specialized expertise, varied methodologies, budget models and resource availability, and multiple levels of goals and accountability.



Overview of Public Relations and Internal Communications at the University



Chuck Tombarge, Chief Public Relations Officer,
Interim Co-Leader of University Relations

Special Committee on University Relations • February 2024



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Structural Influences (University & Higher Ed)

Stakeholders



Varied interests and needs; internal & external

Specialization



Expertise, relationships, goals, requests

Approaches



Tactics from email, web, and social and news media to events and word of mouth

Volume



Media market, public engagement, escalations

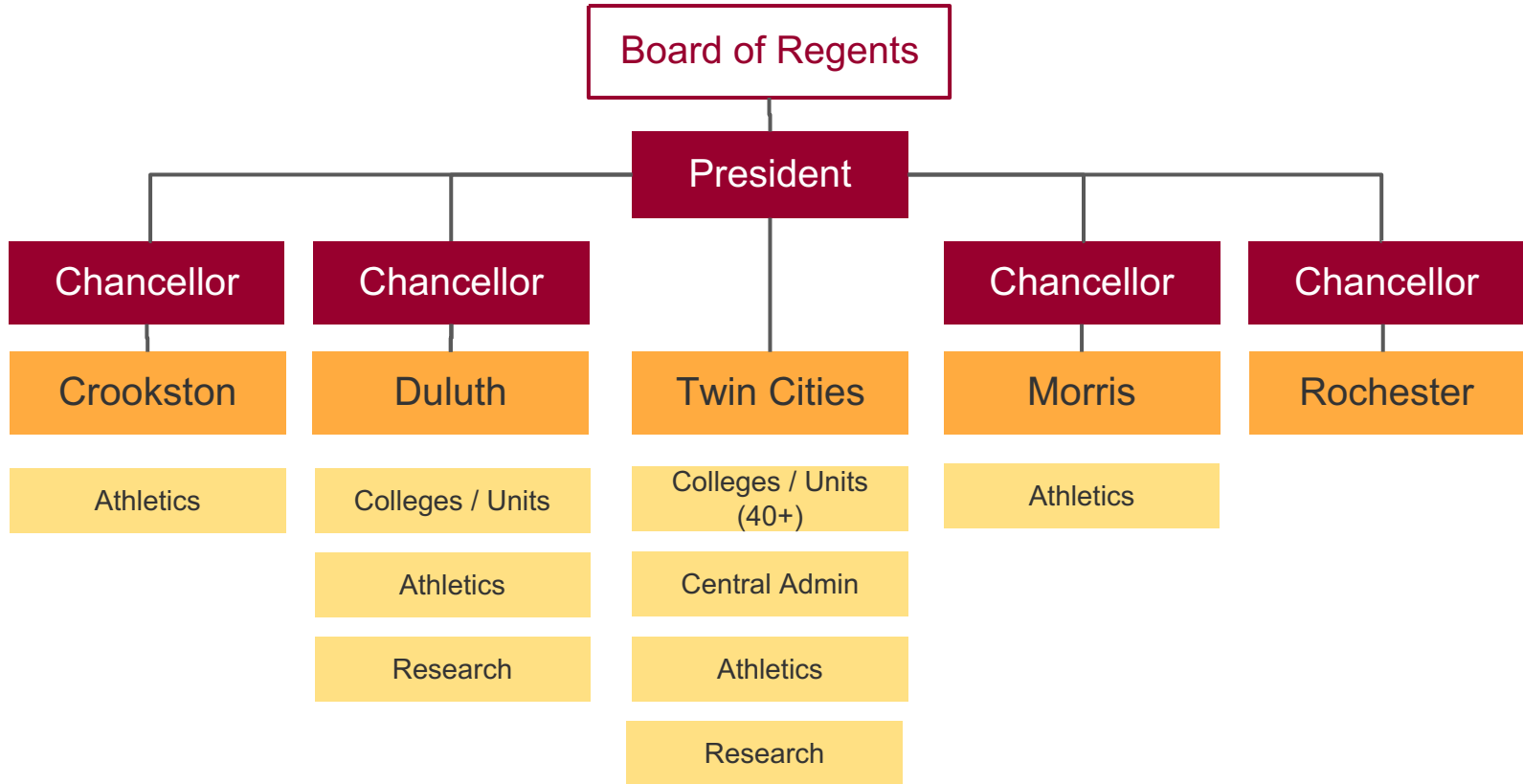
Budget Model



Resources, decision making



Reporting Structure at the U of M



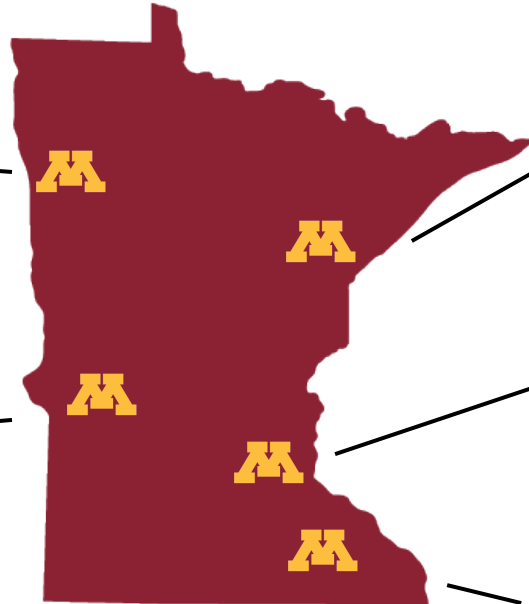
Varied Local Structures

Crookston

- Centralized
- FTE - 0.8
- Emails, social, signage

Morris

- Centralized
- FTE - 0.6 across 2 people
- Social, email/mtgs, alumni pubs



Duluth

- Decentralized
- FTE (in central team) – 0.8 across 2 people
- Social, media, email

Twin Cities

- Decentralized
- FTE (in UR) - 12
- Media, email, newsletters

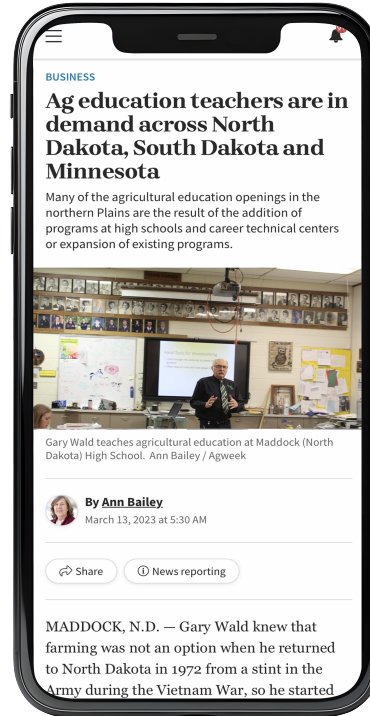
Rochester

- Centralized
- FTE - 1
- Emails, social, digital signs

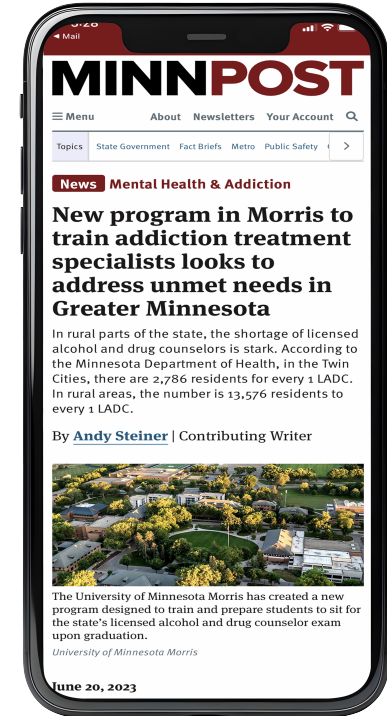
note: FTEs are for PR, internal communications functions



How this plays out locally



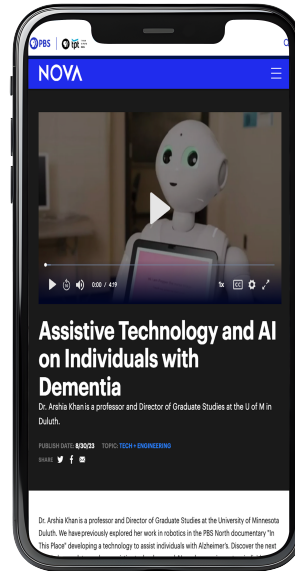
Source: [Informum.com](https://www.informum.com)



Source: [MINNPost.com](https://www.minnpost.com)



How this plays out strategically



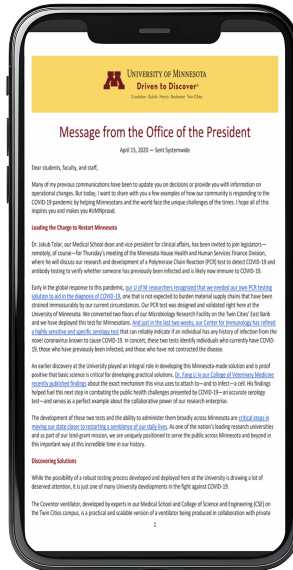
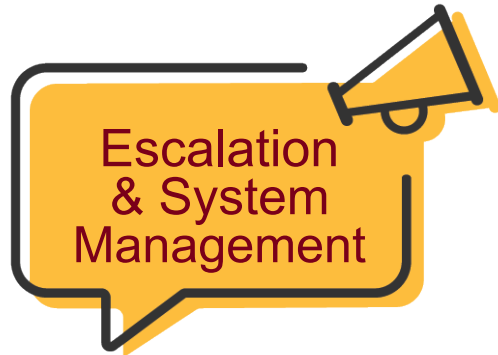
Source: [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org)



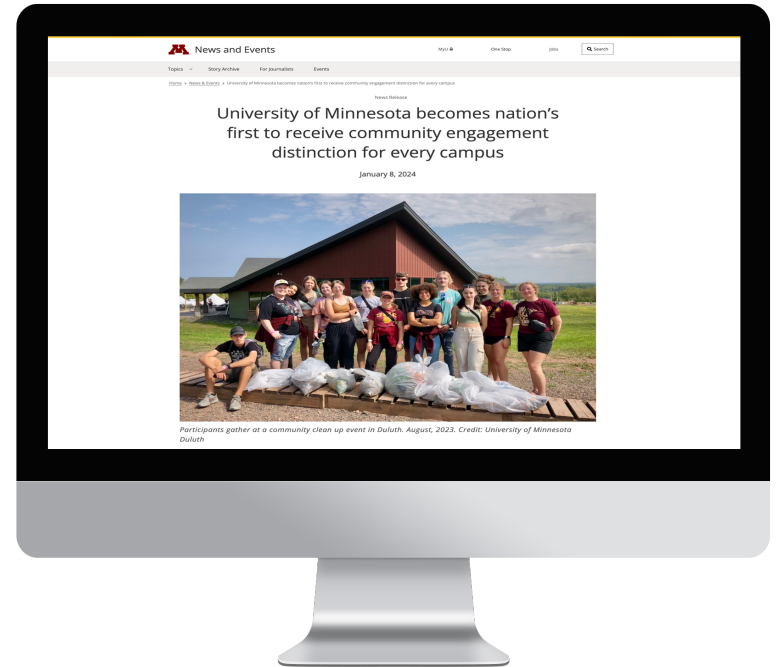
Source: [NYTimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)



How this plays out systematically



Source: [Office of the President](#)



Source: [Twincities.umn](#)



University Relations (located in Twin Cities)

Raise the profile of the University System locally, nationally, and internationally by shining a light on student success, and the great minds and amazing discoveries that solve the big challenges of our state and world.



University Public Relations



University Public Relations Process

Collaborate with colleges, units, and campuses to advance and protect reputation.

Media Relations

- Relationships
- Outreach
- Manage incoming
- Prep
- Staffing

Management

- Issues and crises
- Data Practices Act
- Emergency response
- Leadership PR

Strategic Planning

- PR plans
- Implementation
- Ongoing counsel



University Public Relations Organization



Our Approach Centrally

Lead

- Strategy development
- Institutional issues/crisis response
- Campus/System storytelling
- Leadership messaging
- Counsel and hands-on assistance

Media Relations

- External relationships
- Partnerships across campuses/colleges/units
- Coordinate responses
- Amplify successes



Our Approach Locally

Campus, College, Unit Teams:



University Relations Internal Communications



University Relations Internal Communications Process

Collaborate with leaders and communications professionals to develop messages and channels that share critical news, tell the University story, and promote employee engagement.

Messaging

- Leadership
- Safety
- Systemwide initiatives and special projects

Consulting

- Issues and crises
- Unit-specific requests

Best Practices

- Change management
- Employee engagement
- Planning

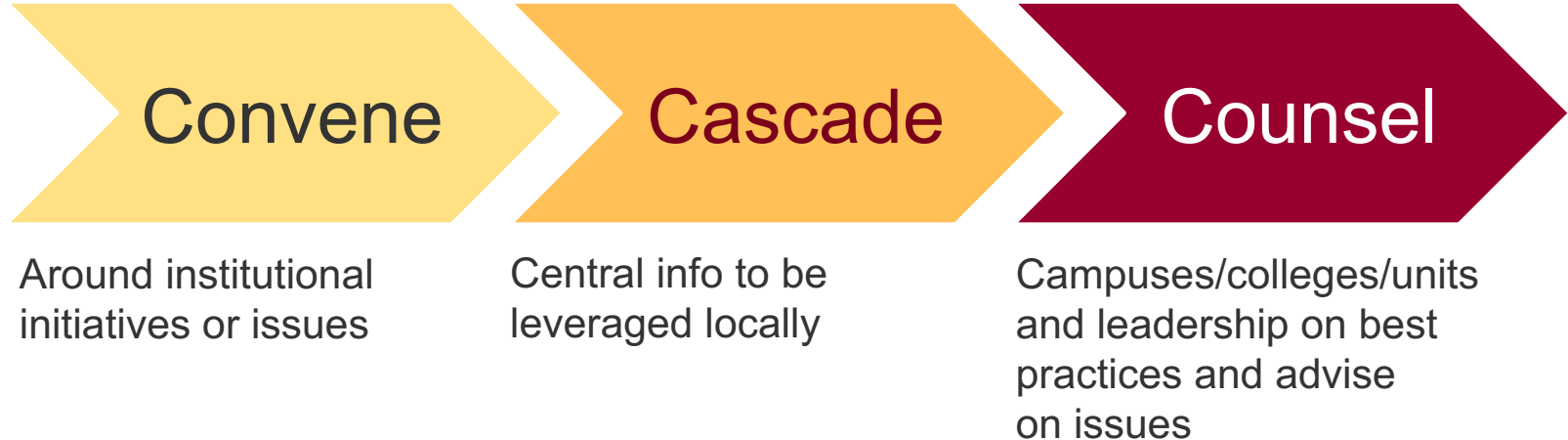


Internal Communications Organization



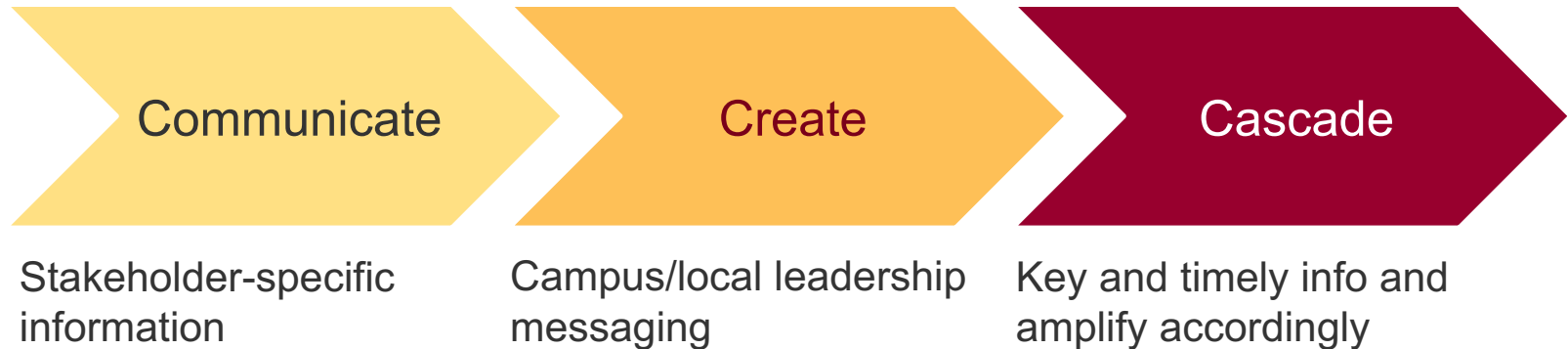
Our Internal Communications Approach

University Relations:



Our Internal Communications Approach

Central Units, Campus Leads, Colleges, and Units:



PEAK Impacts

Focused on Marketing (Digital, Creative Services, Account Management, Measurement & Analytics)

No structural or resource changes to Public Relations and Internal Communications

PEAK Principles

- Thoughtful alignment
- Continuous improvement
- Leverage talent and support development
- Standardize work and technology
- Enhance quality
- Be good stewards of UMN resources



Communication Challenges



Balance among proactive strategies and urgent requests



Consistent oversight, alignment, and communication



“Systemness,” when local and central team objectives differ



Communication noise, sometimes competing with ourselves



Reliance on local awareness and identification of risk

Communication Opportunities



Invest in people, skills, and processes essential to our mission



Optimize operations and set clear expectations to communicate highest priorities and risks



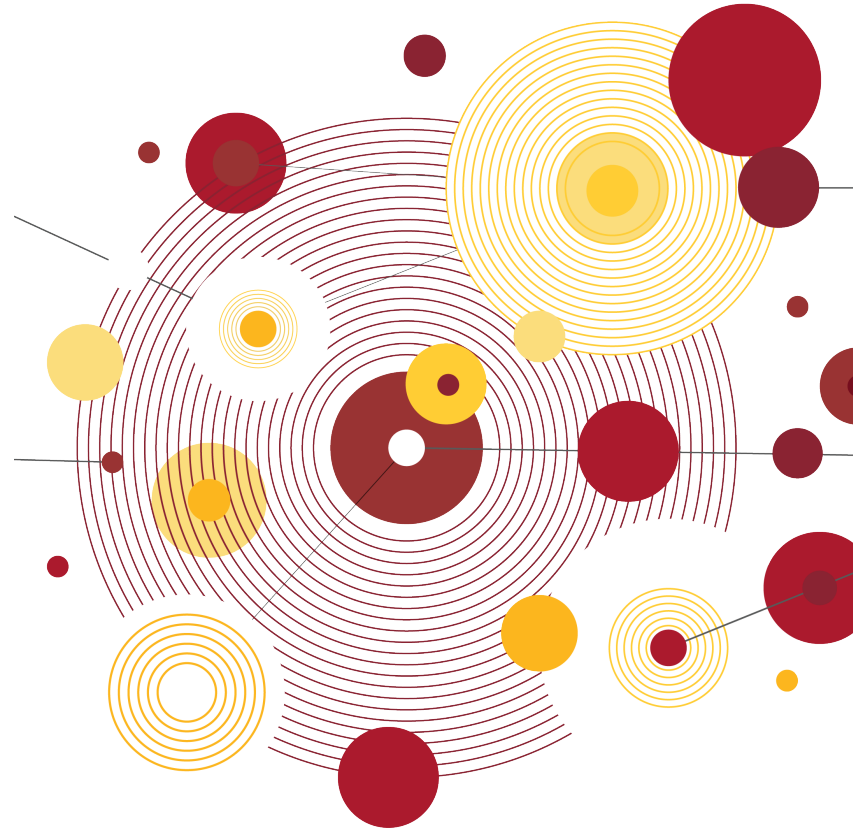
Enhance visibility to support all campuses and reflect System diversity



Increase use of measurement & analytics to maximize successes, stop or adjust approaches

Strategic Questions

1. Does positive news about the University receive an appropriate share of local, state, and national media?
2. In what ways does University storytelling fairly represent the work and value of the University?
3. What areas of the mission do you notice being misinterpreted or overlooked?
4. How does the Board view its role in supporting University communications efforts, both internally and externally?





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Crookston Duluth Morris Rochester Twin Cities



BOARD OF REGENTS DOCKET ITEM SUMMARY

Special Committee on University Relations

February 9, 2024

AGENDA ITEM: Public Relations and Internal Communications Best Practices in Higher Education

Review

Review + Action

Action

Discussion

This is a report required by Board policy.

PRESENTERS: Chuck Tombarge, Chief Public Relations Officer and Interim Co-Leader of University Relations


PURPOSE & KEY POINTS

The purpose of this item is to engage the special committee in a discussion of best practices in public relations and internal communications at a public university. The discussion will include best practices and tools used in communicating effectively to students, faculty, and staff, as well as with the news media. This item will also explore an explanation of research-based best practices that guide the University’s approach to issues and crisis management communications.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As public relations and internal communications teams across the University of Minnesota System approach best practices in their work, they sometimes draw distinctions between campuses, colleges, and units, for good reasons, such as recruiting. In fact, the integrity of the Driven to Discover brand and the University’s value is the sum of all of the University’s campuses and parts. At the same time, the public often views the University as a single entity, which means a localized issue or story can become a University issue or story very quickly.

University Relations, campus leaders, and communicators across the University system implement a variety of best practices and tools to maximize their efforts with internal audiences and the news media alike. Common plans, practices, and close working relationships, among other considerations, become even more important when managing issues or crisis situations – particularly those that may escalate to become a larger story. In such cases, effective management requires local and campus communicators, as well as University Relations, working together to effectively protect the University’s reputation.



Public Relations and Internal Communications Best Practices in Higher Education

Chuck Tombarge, Chief Public Relations Officer,
Interim Co-Leader of University Relations

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Public Higher Education Communication Considerations

Passionate Minnesotans

Social media

Large, diverse campus communities

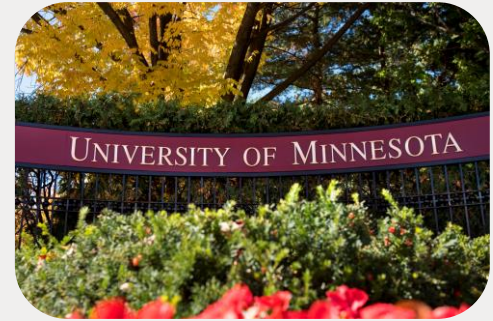
Data laws and transparency

Expansive, distributed organization

**Public understanding
of academic freedom**



The Takeaways



We think:

University consists of 5 distinct campuses, 17 colleges, over 26,000 employees, serving over 68,000 students annually...

The broad public thinks:

The University of Minnesota.
Period.



Why is this important?

- We draw distinctions between campuses, colleges, and units for good reasons
- The integrity of a brand and its value is the sum of its parts
- But in reputation management, the public and media often view us as a single entity
- So, a localized issue can quickly become a University issue, potentially diminishing our brand and reputation



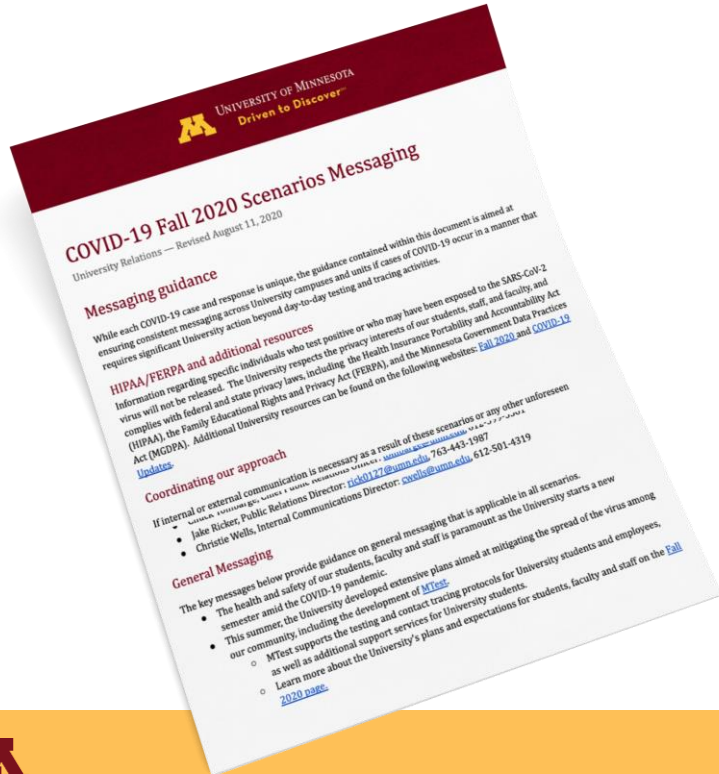
The lesson:

**We all need to help
build reputation capital.**



Best Practices: Internal Communications

COVID-19 pandemic

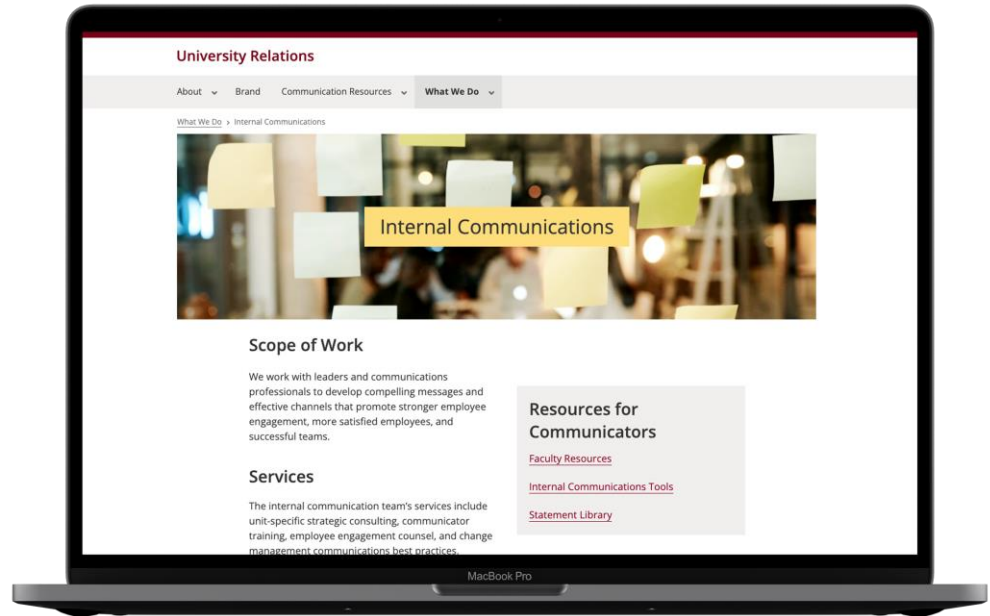


1. Know your audience
2. Deliver needed information
3. Cascade and coordinate
4. Utilize multiple channels
5. Be consistent, constant, and empathetic



Internal Communications Tools

- Statement Library
- University Relations blog
- DEI communications
- Communicating about a death



Best Practices

Public Relations

U of M study suggests humans have impacted how wolves hunt deer

The research indicates human activity in northern Minnesota like logging and building of roads, trails and cabins enables wolves to hunt fawns more efficiently.



University of Minnesota breaks ground on new \$144 million chemistry building

The old building, Fraser Hall, is currently being demolished. University officials are hoping to have the new building ready for students by Fall of 2025.



From Minnesota to Arizona, new research tracks a remarkable, centenarian fish

Don Kraker | Duluth | November 10, 2023 6:00 AM



Veterinarian shortage persists across Minnesota and U.S., leading to calls for action

The pandemic exacerbated workforce shortages in veterinary care, but the University of Minnesota and others are working to tackle the problem.



1. Focus on relationships
2. Be first
3. Embrace transparency when possible
4. Anticipate questions and prepare
5. Be nimble
6. Connect the dots and provide context

Public Relations Tools

To media

News releases, Talking with U of M,
Research Briefs, Expert Alerts

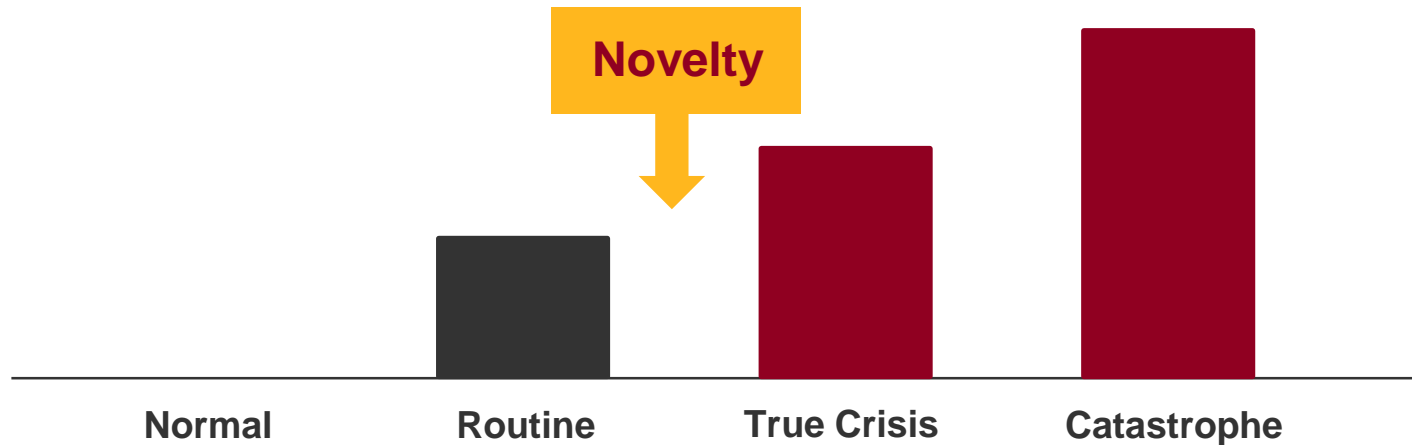
With University Community

Media training, on site staffing,
on-call consultation



Managing Issues

The Issue Spectrum



Based on research by Leonard, H. (Dutch), and Howitt, A., Harvard Kennedy School



Situation-based Approach

Routine issues:

- **Rapid, efficient, successful response**
- Be familiar with existing plans
- Develop a plan if needed and practice it
- Build relationships you will need
- **Other issues:** May involve local response; coordinate with campus, college, and University Relations leaders

Novel crises:

- **Good enough decision, made soon enough to matter, communicated well enough to be understood, carried out well enough to work**
- Focus on capabilities
- Predict system impact and mitigation requirements
- **Other issues:** More likely to require University executive response; rely on expertise of campus, college, and University Relations leaders

Based on research by Leonard, H. (Dutch), and Howitt, A., Harvard Kennedy School



Consider the Potential Story Arc

Raising the temperature

- Photos/videos/first-hand accounts
- Uncertainty & distrust
- Social media
- Online blogs, advocacy orgs.
- Stakeholder engagement
- Policymaker involvement
- News coverage
- Insufficient action

**Rising
action**

Climax

- Adaptive leadership
- Media/social media
- Engage stakeholders
- Monitor impact
- Understand privacy
- Coordinate internally
- Show action - how can you address the underlying problem?
- Investigate
- Manage up
- Consider holding statements
- Gather facts

**Falling
action**

Lowering the temperature

- Empathetic support & humility
- Listening / ID the “real” problem
- Show action early & consistently
- Consistent, timely communication
- Trust and relationships
- Third-party support
- Events elsewhere

Originating event

Return to normal



Best Practices: Managing “Routine” Issues

Chemical spill

1. Connect to values
2. ID problems early; escalate when needed
3. Clarify roles and work across layers
4. Consider: internal is external and vice versa
5. Prepare and practice

Above all, build relationships, trust, and plans before issues arise.



Best Practices: Responding to a “Novel” Crisis

Sewer explosion



1. Focus on safety first
2. Maintain strong working relationships
3. Practice processes and procedures
4. Establish self as trustworthy source
5. Provide constant, consistent, controlled communication

Our Next Steps



- Enhance issues and crisis management capacity, training
- System outreach to improve issue ID capacity
- Continue to focus on relationships and coordination
- Stay connected to colleagues nationally



Key Strategic Questions

1. Where can we continue to employ these and other best practices to bolster our communication efforts as a University?
2. How will PR and Internal Communications be integral in a new administration and strategic plan?
3. What does the Board need to effectively engage with internal and external stakeholders?





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