SUNY Potsdam
Administrative Unit
Assessment Summary Form

Administrative Unit: College Communications   *Unit Contact Name:* Mindy Thompson   *Date:* July 3, 2024

Phone: x3486   *Email Address:* thompsme@potsdam.edu   *Assessment Year:* 2023-2024

PURPOSE
This annual assessment summary form provides the opportunity for units to follow-up on their assessment plans, track progress toward goals, and to highlight actions taken to improve processes and/or efficiencies in functioning that lead to outcomes that benefits students, staff, or the college. These could be process changes or improvements in efficiency, skill level of staff, opportunities for the college, or other aspects over which the unit has a certain amount of control.

SECTION 1: ASSESSMENT PLAN FOLLOW-UP
A key component of the continuous improvement assessment process is regularly following up on your assessment plan. Please review your plan and select one-third of your unit goals, along with related desired outcomes and objectives to report on the progress made. Units should select a goal that has not yet been reported on during the '22-'26 cycle.

Selected Goal
Copy/Paste or enter the goal(s) from your unit plan that you wish to highlight and summarize.

Promote SUNY Potsdam's identity through consistent branding and engaging, high quality and creative designs that will be used through all official communication channels.

Desired Outcomes/Objectives
Copy/Paste or enter the desired outcomes and objectives connected to your selected goal that you will be reporting on.

1A: College Communications will use feature stories and pull quotes highlighting current students and alumni throughout enrollment communication channels.
1B: Identify appropriate media outlets for feature stories and work with editors on writing and photo needs. Evaluate placement by measuring readership and publicity value for earned coverage, aiming for coverage in different media markets and positive news
1C: Maintain consistent visual identity with integrated branding across campus.

Related Targets/Measures
Copy/Paste or enter the target desired outcomes and objectives connected to your selected goal that you will be reporting on.

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1A: Review and track analytics related to feature story development:

- Utilize Google Analytics to evaluate website visits (target: 1000 page views)
- Evaluate in Business Suite (Meta) to review:
o FB post interaction (target: reach of 2000)
o Instagram post interaction (target: 200 likes)
- Slate email open rates (target: 30% percent) for drip campaigns linking to our feature stories about students and alumni

1B:

- Use media monitoring platform Critical Mention (Note: Now using Meltwater, as of 2023-24) to evaluate earned and organic publicity value, including a review of the number and quality of news mentions. Our goal is to achieve continued positive coverage throughout the year (with a goal of exceeding 2,000 mentions annually) and a clear return on investment for positive publicity, in particular reaching an estimated publicity value (advertising equivalency) of $10 million within 12 months, and an overall sentiment analysis pointing to a majority of positive news coverage (51%+) versus neutral or negative coverage.
- Last year, SUNY Potsdam was ranked in the top 20% of press release publishers and student achievement publishers by Merit, our news platform service, having sent 103 releases and 64 student achievements resulting in more than 50,000 pageviews and releases to 792 media outlets in 31 states across the country. Maintain this position by continuing to gather and share positive news about our students, employees, alumni and supporters. Evaluate continued relevancy in part by the open rates on our releases (currently 45%, which is 30 times the education sector PR benchmark click-to open rate of 2%).

1C: Ensure 100% compliance for trademark requests by utilizing BrandManager360, which has built in workflow that allows us to approve, deny or make specific requests on merchandise utilizing our trademarked logos and marks.

Describe the progress made toward the selected goal and the related desired outcomes and objectives. Be sure to include steps taken and any information/data collected and results.

Part 1A: Feature Stories and Pull Quotes

College Communications developed a series of feature stories highlighting the experiences of current students, faculty, staff, and alumni. These stories were disseminated through various channels, including the college website, social media platforms, and admissions recruitment materials.

Content Creation and Deployment:

- **Feature Stories:** 41 feature stories were produced, focusing on diverse experiences within the SUNY Potsdam community. The stories were integrated into the college's digital and print materials, including the website, social media, viewbooks, and outreach emails.
- **Social Media Strategy:** The stories were promoted on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, with some posts receiving boosts to increase visibility and engagement.

Performance Metrics:

1. **Social Media Engagement:**
   o **Organic Post Performance:**
      ▪ *Amazing Places:* 5,174 post impressions, 4,795 reach, 743 engagement

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- - *Liza's Life in Lines:* 9,414 post impressions, 8,724 reach, 1,937 engagement
    - *The Gold Standard:* 4,666 post impressions, 4,068 reach, 749 engagement
  - **Boosted Post Performance:** Boosting of posts began recently, targeting both local audiences and regions relevant to the featured students. As these boosted posts are relatively new, they have not been in circulation long enough to fully evaluate their long-term impact.
    - *Cathartic Brush Strokes:*
      - Organic: 17,304 post impressions, 12,522 reach, 2,727 engagement
      - Boosted: 6,625 reach, 561 engagement
    - *A Deferred Dream Within Reach:*
      - Organic: 24,106 post impressions, 12,146 reach, 3,224 engagement
      - Boosted: 7,601 reach, 708 engagement (362 link clicks)
    - *'The Right Time for Me':*
      - Organic: 14,628 post impressions, 10,824 reach, 311 engagement
      - Boosted: 55,365 reach, 2,110 engagement (2,102 link clicks)
    - *Becoming an Educator:*
      - Organic: 4,613 post impressions, 4,373 reach, 335 engagement
      - Separate Ad: 3,187 reach, 106 link clicks
- 2. **Website Analytics (Google Analytics):** To measure the effectiveness of the feature stories in driving website traffic, Google Analytics data was analyzed, focusing on page views from August 1, 2023, to July 24, 2024.
  - **Organic Page Views:**
    - *Putting it All Together:* 547 views
    - *Forging Her Own Path:* 154 views
    - *Road to Redemption:* 726 views
    - *Realizing His Dreams:* 249 views
  - **Paid Boosts Page Views:** These stories are newer and have been boosted only in recent months, limiting the time available to fully assess their success. Initial results show promise:
    - *Deferred Dream Within Reach:* 714 views
    - *The Right Time for Me:* 1,459 views
    - *Becoming an Educator:* 448 views

The feature stories have been successful in engaging the audience across social media and the college website. The Facebook posts consistently exceeded the target reach of 2,000, and boosted posts significantly amplified this reach. It's important to note that several of these stories have been created and promoted recently, so additional time is needed to achieve the target of 1,000 page views per story on the website. However, there is still a need for improved strategies to further enhance website traffic.

The feature stories have effectively promoted SUNY Potsdam's identity, achieving significant engagement on social media. The introduction of boosted posts shows potential for increased reach and engagement. However, further monitoring and strategy refinement are needed to optimize website traffic and overall impact. As the newer stories continue to gain traction, it is anticipated that their page views will increase, contributing to the overall success of the campaign.

1B: Media Coverage and Publicity Value

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Over the past fiscal year, SUNY Potsdam has sent 91 press releases using our higher education publicity tool, Merit. Our open rate for releases is 51%, remaining above the education sector benchmark of 36%. We rank in the top 20% of press release publishers on the Merit system. We were also in the top 30% of student achievement publishers on Merit, having published 64 student achievements, resulting in 48,376 pageviews, an estimated 14,300 shares on social media, and releases to 663 news outlets in 28 states across the country. The clickthrough rate for students reading Merit achievement emails is well above industry standards, at 79%.

In the same timeframe, according to our Meltwater news monitoring platform, SUNY Potsdam had 6,138 news mentions, up 36% over the previous fiscal year. This coverage had a total potential editorial reach of 7.48 billion people. This estimates the readership of each news source and the full potential reach of each individual news item, so it is duplicative and builds over time. Among our top positive news coverage was coverage of our total solar eclipse celebrations and the related campus events. The editor of Space.com attended our events and even did a live CNN interview from the dorms during his visit. A story about an archaeological study by one of our faculty members was one of the top pieces in terms of social media reach, which thousands of shares and comments which helped to raise the visibility of the story and of the scholarship done on our campus. The total advertising equivalency value for this coverage is $69.3 million—however, it should be strongly noted that not all of that coverage was positive, and not all covered topics we would typically choose to advertise or are only fleeting mentions (perhaps as the alma mater in a story about a graduate, for example)!

At the same time, the average sentiment of news coverage related to the College dropped by 12% compared to the previous year, and sits at 66. This is still net positive overall, but does reflect a fair amount of mixed or negative news coverage. When analyzing this coverage, it includes the coverage of SUNY Potsdam's financial stability plan in detail, as well as follow-up pieces on various stages of the process, and mentions in which Potsdam is listed amount other campuses dealing with similar issues across the higher education sector. We also had a residence hall fire and related coverage of the emergency response, our successful fire safety measures and the arrest of the student charged with arson in the case. Finally, other campus news which wasn't directly related to the financial stability plan often included references to this, when discussing why certain items or positions may or not be funded (e.g., capital project funding being separate from operating support).

With the ongoing challenges of communicating about our financial stability plan and the uncertainty leading up to and immediately following the announcement, the College Communications team has had to strategically time press releases and adjust the targeting for some typical campus news items, to avoid having awkward "mash-ups" in news placement, and to avoid having negative or mixed coverage drown out positive news whenever possible. We deliberately chose to send certain news items about programs slated for discontinuance to a more limited local list, rather than our broader regional list, for example. We also slowed down the typical pace of past releases about concerts at The Crane School of Music at the urging of their leadership, in an effort to emphasize quality over quantity. Now that the future is more clear for this next fiscal year, we will propose to return to a more typical Crane news coverage strategy, as we emphasize continuity and excellence and reinforce our brand in the region. As coverage of the rollout of our financial stability plan and related activism and advocacy has slowed down a bit, we hope to continue a strategy of gaining earned media coverage through our press releases, feature stories and pitches to local and regional outlets, with the hopes of growing our earned media coverage again this year.

1C: Maintain consistent visual identity with integrated branding across campus.
The objective of maintaining a consistent visual identity with integrated branding across SUNY Potsdam's campus involves managing trademark usage, ensuring compliance with branding guidelines, and providing support for internal and external communications.

Compliance and Trademark Management:

1. **BrandManager360 Portal:**
   o **Workflow Management:** The BrandManager360 portal facilitates the approval, denial, or modification of requests involving SUNY Potsdam's trademarked logos and marks. This centralized system ensures that all merchandise aligns with the institution's branding standards.

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- o **Request Handling:** Over the past year, a total of 93 requests were processed through the BrandManager360 portal. All requests were either approved, denied, or returned with requested revisions, demonstrating effective management of trademark usage.
2. **Licensing and Legal Oversight:**
   - o **Licensing Lawyers:** SUNY Potsdam collaborates with licensing lawyers, Learfield, to oversee the legal aspects of trademark usage. This partnership ensures compliance with legal standards and institutional policies.
   - o **Merchandise Compliance:** All merchandise featuring SUNY Potsdam's logos and marks is vetted through the BrandManager360 portal, providing a controlled environment to protect the brand's integrity.

Campus-Wide Branding Support:

1. **Publication Development:**
   - o **Support for Academic Departments and Administrative Units:** The College Communications office assists in creating branded publications and promotional materials for academic departments and administrative units, ensuring adherence to SUNY Potsdam's branding standards.
   - o **Internal Outreach Materials:** The office is responsible for producing outreach materials targeting prospective students, maintaining consistency in messaging and visual identity across all communications.
2. **Brand Guide:**
   - o **Comprehensive Guidelines:** The Brand Guide provides detailed instructions on the use of logos, fonts, imagery, voice, tone, and colors. It serves as a resource for anyone on campus involved in developing internal outreach materials, ensuring uniformity in branding.

Assessment Metrics:

1. **Trademark Compliance:**
   - o **Percentage of Approved Trademark Requests:** The goal is to achieve 100% compliance with branding guidelines. In the past year, all 93 requests processed through BrandManager360 were handled appropriately, with approvals, denials, or revisions as needed.
   - o **Incident Reports:** Monitor and address any cases of unauthorized trademark usage to maintain brand integrity.
2. **Brand Consistency:**
   - o **Quality and Consistency of Publications:** Evaluate the visual and messaging consistency across publications created for academic departments, administrative units, and prospective student outreach.
   - o **Feedback from Stakeholders:** Collect feedback from campus stakeholders regarding the support provided by the College Communications office and the effectiveness of the Brand Guide.

The College Communications office has effectively maintained a consistent and cohesive visual identity for SUNY Potsdam. The management of trademark requests through the BrandManager360 portal, collaboration with licensing experts, and support for campus-wide branding efforts have contributed to the successful execution of this objective. Continued focus on high-quality content creation, effective trademark management, and ongoing education will further enhance SUNY Potsdam's brand consistency and integrity.

Based on the assessment data and information shared above, what planned actions were or will be taken as a result?

Part 1A: Feature Stories and Pull Quotes Recommendations:
- • **Continue Developing High-Quality Content:** Maintain the production of engaging feature stories that highlight diverse experiences within the SUNY Potsdam community.

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- **Enhance Targeted Boosting Strategies:** Leverage the success of boosted posts by refining audience targeting to maximize engagement, especially in regions critical for recruitment.
- **Increase Promotion for Underperforming Content:** Implement additional promotional strategies for feature stories that did not meet the target page views to ensure consistent traffic across all stories.

Part 1B:

- **Return to Earned Media Strategy:** Grow earned media coverage by increasing the number of news releases and media pitches about stories related to SUNY Potsdam. This includes news about new programs, faculty/student research, events and concerts, student/alumni achievements, and philanthropic support.
- **Balance with Paid Placement and Brand Awareness Campaigns:** Echo the themes of ongoing marketing campaigns, including a regional brand elevation campaign emphasizing SUNY Potsdam's long history, academic strengths and continued support for the community, in publications and in publicity. Strategically utilize paid opportunities with partners such as North Country This Week to bolster messaging about strategic priorities, timed with campus news opportunities for continued positive coverage to help balance any ongoing stories about program adjustments or other unpredictable crises.

Part 1C: Maintain consistent visual identity with integrated branding across campus.

The College Communications Office will continue to track the distribution and usage of the Brand Guide among campus members to ensure widespread adherence to branding guidelines.

SECTION 2: DATA INFORMED DECISIONS & UNPLANNED ASSESSMENT (OPTIONAL, BUT VALUABLE)

The experiences of every administrative unit contribute to our collective narrative as a campus. We encourage you to share an example from this past year where you leveraged data or assessment type activities. This could involve planning, taking action, and/or solving a problem. Unlike section 1, there's no need for a formal reporting structure for this section. Instead, focus on a narrative that highlights what was done, the results and the impact of your efforts. Please include any related data and information when available and appropriate.

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