Communications Protocol
AS ENDORSED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM AND DEANS' COUNCIL

Communications at the University of Calgary is a *shared responsibility* between the Office of Advancement and communications teams located within – and accountable to – the university's faculties and business units. Communications at the University of Calgary is:

- **PURPOSEFUL**. We communicate in support of clearly defined business goals that are set by local leaders. We define objectives that tie back to those goals.

- **MEASURABLE.** We carefully measure the cost and effort that goes into our communications, as well as the impact realized. We are mindful that a dollar invested in communications is a dollar not invested elsewhere.

- **VALUE-DRIVEN.** We approach our work in an ethical fashion. We value equity, diversity, inclusion, shared governance and collaboration. We take an *entrepreneurial approach* to our activities and weave our university's values into everything that we do.

Faculty and unit communications teams

Subject to certain institution-wide rules (see below), faculty and unit communications teams are organized as faculties and units see fit and their success is measured by the success of their faculty or unit. These communications teams exist to help faculties and units meet their goals, which may include (but are not limited to) increasing:

- Student success and satisfaction
- Program enrolment
- Recruitment and retention

- Research success and publication
- Giving and engagement
- Ancillary revenue

Communications teams assist in progress towards faculty/unit goals through strategic communications planning, marketing, content creation, public relations, internal communications and other communications and marketing tactics.

Common standards and approach

Faculty and unit communications teams are parts in a larger university family of communicators. It is in the interests of the university that these parts are coordinated, interoperable and use resources efficiently. Communications teams are **required** to make use of processes and standards set under this protocol for:

- Calendaring and planning
- Media relations coordination
- Measurement
- Visual identity and brand

Communications teams should, wherever practical, use common templates and checklists for planning, media relations, content creation, marketing and events.

Consistent hiring and classification

A consistent approach to classification and hiring is important for university-wide stability and equity, as well as for providing clear and well-defined opportunities for progression to staff. Faculties and Units must consult with the Office of Advancement on the creation of new communications roles and make use of, where appropriate, common job profiles for communications roles maintained by Human Resources.

Generally, *communications leads in University of Calgary faculties* will have common job descriptions and be classified at the M2 band with the working title of "Director". To ensure a consistent approach to communications classification across the university, faculties will consult with the Office of Advancement when creating job profiles for faculty communications leads.

To support non-communicators in the hiring of communications experts, hiring panels for communications leads in units and faculties will have an appointee chosen by the Office of Advancement. This appointee will have relevant technical expertise and provide assessment on candidates' communications competencies and can be voting or non-voting, at the faculty/unit's option.

Protecting our brand story

The University of Calgary core brand story is a valuable asset shared by all groups at the University and its dilution hurts any group that makes use of it. While its use in communications activity is not mandatory, faculty and unit communications must not explicitly or implicitly contradict the University of Calgary brand story or market position (as of 2021: *Canada's entrepreneurial university*, see below).

Office of Advancement

The work of professional communicators across campus is supported by the Communications Department in the Office of Advancement, which creates and maintains:

- a common core brand for use by the entire university; and
- common systems that support the work of faculty and unit communicators.

University of Calgary brand

The primary responsibility of communicators in the Office of Advancement is the creation and curation of the University's core brand. A strong brand supports the university's market position and public perceptions of the university's value to society. In doing so, it enables faculties and units to meet their goals and objectives more easily.

The Office of Advancement measures progress towards establishing a strong core brand through tracking the percent of the public that perceive the University of Calgary as entrepreneurial (nationally) and as providing value to the city and province (regionally).

Market position: Canada's entrepreneurial university

As of 2021, our institutional market position is to be *Canada's entrepreneurial university*. This market position is supported by the *Start Something* brand campaign.

Entrepreneurial thinking is the common thread of our *Eyes High* vision statement and the *Framework for Growth* strategic plan. Eyes High defines entrepreneurial thinking as having one of four characteristics, which the Office of Advancement uses when assessing whether content is entrepreneurial in nature:

- **Taking initiative.** Doing something nobody asked you to do or starting a new enterprise, whether social or commercial in nature.
- **Exchanging knowledge across disciplines.** A partnership between seemingly dissimilar groups at the University or a partnership between University researchers and a community group/industry.
- **Being resourceful.** Using elements at hand in unexpected ways or using research in ways other than for what it was originally developed; a creative solution to a problem.
- **Learning from experience.** A pivot/change in direction from the original plan or a failure that led to success down the road.

Perception of value to society: "adds value"

An additional part of our brand story is to reinforce the perception of value provided by the University of Calgary. The university aligns the value brand story to the top issues of the day as measured by public opinion polling. As of 2021, the top issues in Alberta were jobs and the economy and value to society is measured by the percent of Calgarians and Albertans who agree that the University of Calgary "adds economic value".

When assessing whether content tells the story of economic value, the Office of Advancement looks for one of five characteristics:

- **Generates economic activity.** The activity in question will spur economic activity (local investment, increases in tourists, etc.)
- **Creates jobs.** More people will be employed as a result of the activity in question.
- **Creates businesses.** A new enterprise has been created.
- **Creates industries.** New industries are created or establish themselves in Calgary.
- **Evolves businesses.** Companies can adapt to changing circumstances as a result of University of Calgary efforts.

Amplification of "on-brand" efforts

In addition to directly marketing the University of Calgary brand, the Office of Advancement tells the story of our University through the resourcing and amplification of communications originating in faculties and units that reinforces the University's core brand. This amplification:

- **assists the Office of Advancement** by propagating narratives that directly speak to our core brand promise as a university; and
- **assists faculty and unit communications teams** by putting extra resources behind communications that allow faculties/units to reach their goals.

To illustrate, the Office of Advancement would, as resources allow, provide public relations and design assistance to recruitment efforts by a faculty if the materials in question emphasize the University as an entrepreneurial university.

While an important part of telling our story, amplification is always subject to resource constraints and at the option of the Office of Advancement. Advancement will prioritize for amplification activities that are: most on-brand; most likely to reach a broad audience; proposed with the most lead time.

Systems and services

The other major responsibility of communicators in the Office of Advancement is the maintenance of common systems and supports for communications teams across campus. The Office of Advancement performs this role to **reduce duplication of efforts** (e.g. multiple units creating event templates), **increase coordination and interoperability** (e.g. a common approach to measuring the success of social media campaigns) and **provide services that would be prohibitively expensive for individual faculties or units to properly support** (e.g. make "surge capacity" and custom market research data available).

The Office of Advancement gauges the success and sustainability of systems and services through measurement of:

- **Client satisfaction.** A regular survey of whether clients across the university are satisfied with the systems and services they are provided.
- **Fiscal accountability.** Whether communications efforts are on budget.
- **Team satisfaction.** A regular survey of whether Office of Advancement staff feel well supported and happy in their roles.

Systems
The Office of Advancement maintains common systems, products, processes and templates for use by communicators across the University. In service of coordination, interoperability and efficiency, the use of such systems by university communicators is mandatory – whether the work is being performed by faculty or unit staff or by a contractor hired by the University. The systems provided by the Office of Advancement are:

- **Policies and processes.** The documentation of mandatory process and established best practice to support a consistent baseline for communications activity. The creation of templates for common use.

- **Measurement.** Standardized measurement of communications inputs (person hours, dollars, etc.) and outputs (volume, message consistency, etc.)
- **Training.** Facilitation of specialty-specific education and expertise across the community of communicators.
- **Brand.** Visual identity standards and other elements of the core brand.
- **Web platforms.** Public-facing web infrastructure that hosts faculty and unit content.
- **Calendaring.** Unified calendar of internal and external events, reporting on the same.
- **Media coordination.** Distribution of news releases and the tracking of media interactions and public relations efforts.

Services

The Office of Advancement also provides communications services to advance our brand story and support the broader university community. Services provided are:

- Communications capacity
- Marketing services
- Design services
- Communications management services
- Media relations
- Issues management
- Social media support
- Event support

Except for design services and communications management services:

- **Services used to amplify "on-brand" messaging** are provided to faculties and units at no cost as part of the incentivization of on-brand content[1]. In such cases, the Office of Advancement directs activity on the components for which they are responsible.

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[1] Determination of "on-brand" and prioritization of support will be based on criteria set within this strategy (prioritization based on: most on-brand, largest audience, longest lead-time).

- **Services used to deliver other faculty and unit messaging** are provided to faculties and units at cost[2]. In such cases, the faculty or unit directs activity.

In both cases, provision of services will be limited by resource constraints. The Office of Advancement will prioritize activity expected to have the highest impact (on-brand, large audience, longest lead time).

Communications management services

In a model of shared responsibility for communications, there are many university communicators who report to non-communicators. It can be difficult for these non-communicators to assess communications outputs or support staff in day-to-day service delivery. Like all specialists, communicators can benefit from support, oversight and direction provided by those who are from their field.

The Office of Advancement provides faculties and units, upon request, managers with technical expertise in communications that can supply advice to non-communications managers and/or oversight and management support (coaching, etc.) to smaller communications teams on behalf of faculties and units. This service is provided at no cost to faculties and units.

Design services

As a strong and coherent visual identity is foundational to branding efforts, and because adherence to visual identity standards is mandatory, the Office of Advancement provides design services to communications teams across the university at no cost for all external-facing products and priority[3] internal-facing products (as capacity allows).

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[2] Hourly rates are published regularly by the Office of Advancement and are calculated by taking total salary for the category of staff and assuming a standard utilization rate. No overhead (management or otherwise) is assigned. In lieu of hourly rates, a project fee may be negotiated.
[3] See note 1.

Contestability of services

The use of Office of Advancement services is at the option of both the unit/faculty and the Office of Advancement, and *non-exclusive and non-guaranteed for either party*. Faculties and units are free to resource communications projects as they see fit, including through the hiring of their own staff and the outsourcing of communications activity to third parties[4].

The Office of Advancement may turn down work requests from communications teams in faculties and units due to lack of capacity (technical or otherwise), but will not otherwise turn down requests for service.

Shared governance

No communications process or standard (SEE: Common standards and approach, Systems and services) will be set by the Office of Advancement before consultation with faculty communications leads has occurred and feedback has been solicited more broadly from communicators across campus.

Implementation and enforcement

This protocol will be implemented and enforced by the relevant unit/faculty leads or designate. Disputes arising from the implementation or interpretation of this protocol will be adjudicated by the Provost or designate.

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[4] Subject to procurement policies and collective agreements. Specifically, such outsourcing by faculties and units cannot result in bargaining unit job losses except under the rules established by the relevant clauses of the collective agreement with the AUPE.