

AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

Public Information & Media Relations, Marketing & Branding

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

External Affairs: External Affairs provides multimedia services to promote a positive image of Northwestern State University through relationships with the local community, the media, our alumni, prospective students, donors and government and civic leaders. These offices units play an important role in showcasing the university and impacting enrollment, fundraising, alumni and community involvement, and other goals. The Division is directly involved in promoting a learning-centered environment, improving retention and graduation rates and maintaining a positive, student-oriented atmosphere. External Affairs includes a diverse segment of the university that includes Athletics, Alumni and Development, Wellness, Recreation and Activities Center (WRAC); The Robert Wilson Recreation Complex; NSU Press/Publications, Marketing and Branding, NSU TV, University Printing, the News Bureau (Office of Communications), Photo Services and Sports Information.

Public Information & Media Relations, Marketing & Branding and Mission: The mission of the three units is to promote the university, its students, faculty, staff, programming, accomplishments and resources to external audiences through a variety of media platforms. These units work collaboratively with each other and with personnel from throughout the campus to highlight activities, events, opportunities and milestones related to all aspects of Northwestern State. The work of the units helps attract and retain students as well as enhances alumni and community engagement.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director;
- (2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met:
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);

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(5) The executive director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

PI&MR / Marketing & Branding

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. PI&MR and Marketing & Branding create broad and positive exposure for Northwestern State on the local, regional and national level by (1) Promotion of programs and opportunities available by (2) promotion of student, faculty and institutional accomplishments and (3) increased engagement both internally and externally.

Measure 1.1.

Public Information & Media Relations issues timely press releases, website updates and accompanying photos with the goal of engagement by 100 percent of local media, 60 percent of regional media and 30 percent of national print and online media organizations.

Finding: Target Met

Analysis: In 2016-2017 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the results additional resources were placed on acquiring media contacts. As a result, in 2017-2018 the number of media contacts made during the year grew from 1,370 to 1,527. This is attributed to targeted news releases in specific markets and spikes in interested related to Athletics. In addition, staff was more proactive in reaching out to media to “pitch” story ideas relevant to specific markets. As a result, the number of media contacts grew, and the stories reached wider audiences.

Based on the analysis of the results from last year which indicated that the unit’s former title (Informational Services) was confusing to both internal and external stakeholders, the unit adopted a new title (Public Information and Media Relations) in January 2018 to better reflect the unit’s role in meeting university’s strategic goals.

This goal was met on the local and regional level. There is room to pursue greater exposure on the national level. In 2017-18, NSU News Bureau and Sports Information combined to send out 1,371 press releases with accompanying photos and social media posts related to campus news, sports, events, accomplishments and highlights, which generated 1,517 media contacts with local, regional, state and national media outlets.

NSU releases an average of more than 114 press releases with accompanying photos per month related to all facets of the university to create exposure for students, student-

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athletes, news, events and accomplishments, generating an average of more than 126 media contacts per month.

Action - Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of 2017-2018 results Public Information & Media Relations will continue to work with Sports Information and other units on campus to maximize publicity for the university's assets, programs, accomplishments and opportunities. The staff should continue to strategically "pitch" stories to specific markets, localize stories when necessary and continue to make new media contacts.

Measure 1.2.

Marketing and Branding's will increase the university's social media engagement by 15 percent per year.

Finding: Target Met.

Analysis: In 2016-2017 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the results additional resources were placed on media engagement. As a result, in 2017-18, NSU's Twitter engagement grew by 60 percent up from 13 percent the previous year. Instagram showed a slight dip, going from a 25 percent increase to a 24 percent increase, but also showed a 5.5 percent average increase of engagement on individual posts. Facebook engagement showed a 92 percent increase compared to last year's 12 percent increase and continues to grow steadily.

Based on the analysis of the results from last year, social media engagement fluctuations can be attributed to changes in personnel. Some accountability is credited to an assistant director of Marketing and Branding (July 2017-February 2018) who was not a good fit for the team. Planning social media campaigns in conjunction with campus activities, events and holidays ceased to increase in the fourth quarter of 2017, due in part to a lack of initiative. However, in March 2018, a new and experienced professional was added to the staff as assistant director of Marketing and Branding who immediately made a positive impact in social media engagement, as well as internal relations with other units.

Action - Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of 2017-2018 results Marketing and Branding will continue to strategically plan social media campaigns in conjunction with activities, events and holidays, in addition to consistent planned posts. Marketing and Branding will continue to explore emerging social media platforms and measure their effectiveness to the university's mission.

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SO 2. Informational Services and Marketing and Branding support the university's internal and external communication efforts to increase brand recognition and impact.

Measure 2.1.

Each unit monitors earned media, growth of network, video views, website hits and other analytics with the goal of a 15 percent annually to demonstrate increased engagement and interest in NSU.

Finding: The units use Meltwater and social media analytics to measure engagement. Engagement stagnated in the fourth quarter of 2017 but has since March 2018 grown 84 percent across platforms. Brand recognition was also increased with improvements to Alumni Columns magazine and the reprinting of the "Steel Magnolias Scrapbook."

Analysis: In 2016-2017 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the results additional resources were placed on media engagement and brand recognition. As a result, in 2017-2018 units used analytic tools to measure engagement and will continue to market the "Steel Magnolias Scrapbook."

NSU Press reissued a fourth edition of Steel Magnolias Scrapbook. Of 1,000 copies printed, more than 400 have been sold to the public and to area retailers since April 2018.

In July 2017, NSU entered into a contract with a new company to print the quarterly Alumni Columns magazine in full color, with better quality paper and an added response envelope to seek donations and input for specific programs. This has resulted in positive feedback on the upgraded design of the magazine.

Spikes in social media/external media engagement tend occur in conjunction with campus events that follow the academic calendar, such as Freshman Connection, Move in Day, Homecoming, Christmas Gala and Commencement.

Increased engagement is also due to the hiring of new personnel. In July 2017, a new director of Photo Services (campus photographer) joined the team following the retirement of the previous campus photographer. The new photographer, Chris Reich, made an immediate impact with all units served under External Affairs and with internal and external engagement. A new assistant director of Marketing and Branding was hired in August 2017. The individual was not a good fit for the unit, engagement stalled and the individual resigned in February 2018. Upon his resignation, a new assistant director, Josh McDaniel, was hired whose goals and work ethic are clearly more aligned with the university. Both Chris Reich and Josh McDaniel were familiar with campus culture and made an immediate and enthusiastic impact with new ideas, increased campus coverage and visibility.

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NSU Publications continues to support units across campus. In 2017-18, NSU Publications completed 1,034 jobs for a variety of units and divisions across campus. In the same time frame of the previous year, NSU Publications completed 1,126 jobs.

The increase in programming and activities on all Northwestern State campuses has also led to an increase in workload for those in the units concerned, particularly in regard to Director of Publications. With no full-time assistant, the Director of Publications, Beth Mann, frequently works extra hours and on weekends to complete jobs. Mrs. Mann plans to retire in 2020.

Action - Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of 2017-2018 results, the units will monitor earned media and social media engagement to better quantify results. In addition to the metrics currently in use, the units will add Critical Mention. It is also recommended that an Assistant Director of Publications be hired. Ideally, this individual would be trained for at least two academic cycles for the specialized knowledge and skills that the job requires. Upon Mrs. Mann's retirement, the satisfactory candidate would apply for the Director of Publications position and a junior staff be sought for the position of Assistant Director of Publications.

SO 3. PI&MR and Marketing and Branding stay current on trends in media and promote an atmosphere of teamwork and collaboration.

Measure 3.1.

Units attend at least one (more when feasible) professional development conference or webinar per year to sustain quality in writing, editing, graphic design photography, videography and other communication arts and to monitor pertinent trends in the industry.

Finding: This goal was met.

Analysis: In 2016-2017 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the results additional resources were placed on professional development. As a result, Budget Unit heads and assistants each attended at least 1 professional development conference in 2017 and 2018 and have plans for more professional development workshops. Engaging in professional development increases enthusiasm, team-building and generates ideas for increasing engagement and media relations.

Action – Based on the analysis of 2017-18 results, the units will continue to seek professional development opportunities. Registration is already underway for CASE-Louisiana in August 2018 and CASE-Regional in February 2019.

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Measure 3.2.

The units will hold weekly meetings to discuss projects and their progress and share information relevant to completing projects in a professional manner and a timely fashion. Success is defined as meeting 100 percent of deadlines and producing quality work with 0 percent errors.

Finding: This goal was not met. The units currently hold informal and irregular meetings.

Analysis: In 2016-2017 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the results in 2017-2018 additional emphasis was placed on information sharing to ensure all projects were completed in a professional manner and in a timely fashion. As a result, informal meetings were held on a routine basis resulting in 80% of projects being completed on time and in a professional manner.

Action – Based on the analysis of the 2017-18 results, the units will set regular meeting times to share ideas and facilitate 100% of projects being completed in a professional manner and a timely fashion for 2018-19.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvement based on analysis of results:

- Public Information & Media Relations” was adopted as the new title of the unit to better reflect its role in meeting university’s strategic goals.
- NSU Press, which has been inactive, reprinted the fourth edition of “Steel Magnolias Scrapbook,” resulting in interest and revenue.
- New personnel had both a positive and negative impact on unit productivity. Going forward, unit heads will conduct more comprehensive interviews before hiring personnel who are not a good fit for the team.
- The units worked together and with other units on campus on strategic initiatives and campaigns to increase social media engagement.
- Unit heads attended at least one professional development conference and have plans to attend two professional development conferences in 2018-19.
- The units held weekly meetings, but they were not formal and should be established on a regular weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Plan of action moving forward.

Public Information & Media Relations and Marketing and Branding work with internal and external stakeholders to promote the image of Northwestern State, viewing their

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roles as critical in vaulting Northwestern State to becoming the nation's premier regional university. Though staffs are small, and resources are limited, each team member exhibits dedication to the quality of their product and to the reputation of the university.

The units will continue to reach out to media to pitch story ideas and continue to target markets with relevant content.

Because technology and media platforms continue to evolve, the team is challenged to stay current and relevant to several different demographics and fluent in technology to utilize traditional and non-traditional media platforms.

The unit will seek an assistant graphic designer.

The team will attend at least two professional development workshops/conferences.