

## Assessment Cycle 2018-2019

### 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 and graphics 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 partially met.

**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was engagement by 100 percent of local media, 60 percent of regional media and 30 percent of national print and online media organizations. Based on the analysis of these results in 2018-2019 personnel targeted press releases to specific markets and observed spikes of interested related to Athletics and Recruiting initiatives. In addition, staff maintained a proactive approach in reaching out to media to “pitch” story ideas to relevant markets.

In 2018-2019, the target was met. Based on the number and frequency of press releases, photos and social media posts and shares, NSU news reached most targeted media outlets.

This goal was met on the local and regional level. There is room to pursue greater exposure on the national level. In 2018-19, NSU News Bureau and Sports Information combined to send out 1,257 press releases with accompanying photos and social media posts related to campus news, sports, events, accomplishments and highlights, which generated 982 media contacts with local, regional, state and national media outlets.

NSU releases an average 105 press releases with accompanying photos per month related to all facets of the university to create exposure for students, student-athletes, news, events and accomplishments, generating an average of 82 media contacts per month.

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**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of 2018-2019 results Public Information & Media Relations will in 2019-2020 work with 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.

As of July 1, 2019, the Sports Information Office will be moved under the Department of Athletics. This will likely result in lower figures for next year's data totals.

### 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 2017-2018 the target was to increase social media engagement by 15 percent. Based on the analysis of these results in 2018-2019 additional resources were placed on media engagement. Personnel changes occurred in early 2019. Josh McDaniel was named interim director of Marketing and Branding and Tyler Ward was hired as assistant with primary duties as videographer. Student workers also help with photography and videography. As a result, in 2018-19 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the results, in 2018-19 additional resources were placed on media engagement. Personnel changes occurred in early 2019. Josh McDaniel was named interim director of Marketing and Branding and Tyler Ward was hired as assistant with primary duties as videographer. Student workers also help with photography and videography.

As a result, from July 2018-June 2019, Facebook fan growth increased by 2,432 users compared to an added 979 the previous year. Total likes is 32,492. Instagram followers increased by 2,639 compared to 932 increase the previous year. In June 2019, Instagram followers exceeded 10,000. Twitter followers increased by 778 compared to 217 the previous year. Current number of followers is 8,006.

Based on the analysis of the results from last year, data indicates that planning social media campaigns in conjunction with campus activities, events and holidays made a positive impact in social media engagement.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of 2018-19 results Marketing and Branding in 2019-2020 will 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.** Public Information/Media Relations 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:** Target met.

**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was to use metrics to measure social media engagement. Engagement stagnated in the fourth quarter of 2017 but has since March 2018 grown 84 percent across platforms. Brand recognition continues to increase in conjunction with sales of "Steel Magnolias Scrapbook" as the city and university mark the 30<sup>th</sup> milestone of the movie. 120 copies were sold in 2018-19 and were featured on televised commemorations of the movie.

Based on the analysis of the results additional resources were placed on media engagement and brand recognition 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-19 units used analytic tools to measure engagement and will continue to market the "Steel Magnolias Scrapbook." The units use Meltwater and social media analytics to measure engagement. Engagement stagnated in the fourth quarter of 2017 but has since March 2018 has grown 84 percent across platforms. Brand recognition continues to increase in conjunction with sales of "Steel Magnolias Scrapbook" as the city and university mark the 30<sup>th</sup> milestone of the movie. 120 copies were sold in 2018-19 and were featured on televised commemorations of the movie.

Spikes in social media/external media engagement tend occur in conjunction with campus events that follow the academic calendar, such as Freshman Connection, Christmas Gala, Commencement, and the first week of each semester.

NSU Publications continues to support units across campus. From July 2018-June 2019, NSU Publications completed 943 jobs for a variety of units and divisions across campus.

The increase in programming and activities on all Northwestern State campuses has led to an increase in workload for those in the units concerned, particularly in regard to Director of Publications.

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In October 2018, a graphic designer, Devonte Lewis, was hired as an assistant to the Director of Publications resulting in an immediate positive impact on the number of graphic design jobs completed in a timely fashion and in a professional manner. Mr. Lewis's work contributes greatly to NSU's visual image, both internally and externally, and has relieved the tremendous workload of the Director of Publications Beth Mann.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of 2018-2019 results, a graphic designer was added to the staff. In 2019-2020 this individual will be trained for at least two academic cycles for the specialized knowledge and skills that the job requires. Upon Mrs. Mann's retirement in 2020, 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 2017-2018 the target was to attend at least one professional development conference per year. Based on the analysis of these results in 2018-2019 Budget Unit heads and assistants attended professional development workshops in February and March 2019. Engaging in professional development increases enthusiasm, team-building and generates ideas for increasing engagement and media relations. As a result, in 2018-2019 the target was met.

**Action** – Based on the analysis of 2018-19 results, in 2019-2020 units will seek professional development opportunities through the University of Louisiana System and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

### **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. Due to time constraints, the units meet frequently, but not with regularity.

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**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was to meet weekly to discuss projects and their progress. Based on the analysis of these results in 2018-2019 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, while improved, in 2018-19 the target was still not met.

**Action** – Based on the analysis of the 2018-19 results, the units will set regular meeting times to share ideas and facilitate projects being completed in a professional manner and a timely fashion for 2019-20.

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

- Personnel targeted press releases to specific markets and observed spikes of interested related to Athletics and Recruiting initiatives. In addition, staff maintained a proactive approach in reaching out to media to “pitch” story ideas to relevant markets.
- New personnel were hired in Marketing/Branding and NSU Publications and as a result we have witnessed a positive impact on unit productivity.
- The units worked together and with other units on campus on strategic initiatives and campaigns to increase social media engagement.
- Unit heads attended two professional development conference and will continue to pursue professional development opportunities.
- 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 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 team will attend at least two professional development workshops/conferences.