

# Communications Advisory Committee (CAC) Kick-off Meeting Minutes

October 31, 2019

**Present:** Dorene S. Markel (Committee Chair), Kallie Michels, Vice President for Communications, Lee Doyle (Director of Communications Administration), Dierdra Spencer (SACUA Liaison), Amanda Thatcher (Medical School), Stephanie Preston (LSA-Psychology), Amanda Halbert (Athletics-Development), Chandan Kumar-Sinha (Michigan Medicine), Kalli Federhoffer (LSA - German), John Pasquale (SMTD), Kayla Niemann (LSA), Marieka Kaye (Library).

**Absent:** Gabrielle Hall, Afifa Shamim-Uzzaman

After introductions and a brief discussion of the mission of the committee, Kallie Michels presented a graphic outline of functions within the Office of the Vice President for Communications. This includes the following areas:

- Marketing Communications (lead by Elizabeth Parkinson) – Michigan Creative produces print and web designs and materials, and digital advertising, and monitors the brand and how it is used across campus. This unit also houses Michigan Photography and Michigan Media, offering photography and video services and capturing campus images. They also develop the public service announcements highlighting the university, shown during football and basketball broadcasts.
- HR Communications and Strategic Initiatives (Lead by Dave Reid) is the division's link into communication strategies for central HR, such as labor communications, M-Healthy, benefits and sexual misconduct training messaging, and also handles communications for special initiatives.
- Communications Policy and Administration (lead by Lee Doyle) handles policy, HR matters and the budget for the division, oversees the Freedom of Information Office and the Film Office.
- Michigan Radio (lead by Steve Schram) is the university's NPR news and information station. Although OVPC manages their budget and personnel, their news staff operates with journalistic independence from the institution.
- Michigan News (Lead by Laura Lessnau) develops and places stories worldwide that promote the reputation of the university. They publish *Michigan Today*, and manage a satellite uplink studio. They also perform media training, offered to deans and faculty. They meet annually with deans to explain what is available, and work with communicators across campus to identify faculty who may be interested.
- Executive Communications (John Kepley) develops speeches, presentations videos and other communications for the president.
- Social Media and Public Engagement (lead by Nikki Sunstrum) oversees overall strategy and protocol for the university's social accounts and owns the central accounts. The

Public Engagement work engages faculty, researchers and leaders in national dialogues through storytelling and other outreach.

- Public Affairs and Internal Communications (lead by Rick Fitzgerald), develops strategies, manages public issues and crisis communications and responds to media inquiries. This unit also manages the Internal Communications group that publishes *The University Record*, Heritage Communications that tell stories of university history, and our digital strategy team that manages the U-M Gateway, develops innovative digital strategies and provides advice to campus communicators.

There was discussion of how OVPC interacts with communicators across campus. There are several organized ways that this is done:

- OVPC convenes The Communicators' Forum, with hundreds of members across campus meeting quarterly. There also are subject-matter subgroups that break out to address specific topics.
- M-19, a marketing group of high-level communications leads meets periodically to share advice.
- OVPC pushes out informational e-mails of events and issues as they arise.

Internally, the division interacts fluidly. Examples include a digital strategy team, senior staff weekly meetings or calls, a google doc. of shared project information.

There are several ways that OVPC listens to help them best process and convey information. This Communications Advisory Committee is one way that OVPC internalizes information. The Communicators' Forum and M-19 membership provides input and opinion. OVPC conducts social media tracking and monitoring, for example how the public is reacting to announcements and whether they are understood. OVPC monitors messages received by the president's office, and analyzes numbers of media hits.

When an issue impacts the City of Ann Arbor, or state government, OVPC works closely with Government Relations. Communications to and from Regents also are important.

The recent award of the final presidential debate was touched on. The university won it based on our ability to host large numbers, having the appropriate facilities, and our ability to manage complex event. The major advantage will be to our students, who can be engaged in a large-scale civic activity. It also will provide us the chance to tell stories about the university to an international audience. Planning will be a year-long process. OVPC launched a debate website to provide information as preparations progress, updating the university community and the media. (<https://debate2020.umich.edu>)

Future topics for the CAC were discussed. They included:

- Issues response and how to handle crisis communications
- Media training: how to do a good interview and how to prepare for difficult questions

- FOIA training
- Debate planning, such as handling the array of possible issues:
  - Security
  - Protesters and free speech
  - Traffic congestion
  - Cancelling student classes
  - Mistreatment of and support for politically conservative students
  - Faculty classroom behavior

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Develops communication strategies for U-M priorities and initiatives, manages public issues and crisis communications and responds to media inquiries.

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Publishes the official faculty-staff news source, *The University Record*.

**DIGITAL STRATEGY TEAM**

Manages communications-driven digital properties, develops forward-thinking digital strategies for central communications and provides strategic digital advice to campus communicators. Manages U-M Gateway.

**HERITAGE COMMUNICATIONS**

Maintains the momentum of the bicentennial year by telling compelling stories about U-M's history.

**U-M SOCIAL**

Oversees the strategic direction and development of all university-wide social accounts, best practice implementation, engagement protocol and digital citizenship education efforts.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT**

Engages faculty, researchers and university leadership with the goal of strengthening U-M's ability to participate in national dialogues and policymaking through innovative outreach and storytelling.

**EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

Develops executive speeches, remarks, presentations, letters and videos that express and support the president's vision and goals for U-M.



**MARKETING**

Develops brand strategy, research, positioning, visual identity, messaging and creative execution for presidential and campuswide initiatives.

**MICHIGAN CREATIVE**

Provides a full range of marketing and communications services, including graphic design, web development, digital marketing and project consultation.

**MICHIGAN PHOTOGRAPHY**

Provides a variety of photography services and maintains a database of nearly 250,000 university images.

**MICHIGAN MEDIA**

Offers full-service studio and on-location video production services.

**HR COMMUNICATIONS AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

Oversees communication strategies and outreach for central human resources, university-wide change management efforts and special initiatives.

**CHIEF OF STAFF**

Manages communications policy, staff management and budget operations.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOIA)**

Assists individuals in finding requested documents about the university's business activities. U-M receives more FOIA requests than nearly any other public body in the state.

**FILM OFFICE**

Helps commercial films find the perfect locations at U-M and makes all necessary arrangements.

**MICHIGAN NEWS**

Builds institutional reputation and promotes public awareness about U-M around the globe through media relations, story development and national and international news placements. Publishes *Michigan Today*, an online magazine for Michigan alumni and manages the Michigan News satellite uplink studio.

**MICHIGAN RADIO**

The university's NPR news and information station and the state's most-listened-to public radio service.



**VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN