



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA

Many Traditions One Alaska

University Relations Team Report

UA Strategic Pathways

January 18, 2017



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Charge

Develop and review options for organizational restructuring including but not limited to further decentralization, consolidation at one campus, or consolidation at SW of functions that support improvements in service and cost effectiveness through outsourcing, automation, intercampus collaboration, process standardization, and other means TBD by the team.

Scope

Public affairs, marketing and communications from the system to the unit level (e.g. communication coordinators in colleges, schools, programs etc.)

Goal

Optimize for the best communications possible while aligning with UA priorities and reducing operating costs.

Key Stakeholders

- ▶ Students
- ▶ Faculty
- ▶ Staff
- ▶ Executive Leadership
- ▶ Community
- ▶ Employers
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Alumni
- ▶ Legislators

Team Members

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Current Situation Overview

University Relations is defined and structured differently at each university and at Statewide. Each university maintains its own brand, which is important in establishing a strong identity in the community and maintaining affinity and engagement among students, alumni and donors. Each university UR team serves its community in different ways, with varying team sizes and functions.

Following is a description of each (also see attached organizational charts):

UA Statewide

- ▶ University Relations includes public affairs, government relations and development and is led by a vice president of university relations.
- ▶ UA Office of Public Affairs is led by an associate vice president of public affairs, who reports to VP/UR and focuses on media/public relations, stakeholder and internal communications, social media, website management and crisis management at the system level. OPA also is charged with supporting the University of Alaska president and Board of Regents (see attached org chart for PA team structure) and developing a strategic communications plan for UA.
- ▶ UA Government Relations is led by an associate vice president, who reports to VP/UR and handles state, federal and community relations including managing legislative needs.
- ▶ UA Development is led by the President of the UA Foundation, who reports to the UA president and VP/UR.

UAF

- ▶ UAF University Relations is led by a director of university relations, who previously reported to the vice chancellor for university and student advancement and now reports directly to the chancellor.
- ▶ University Relations is the public relations, communications and marketing arm of the advancement team, which also includes development, alumni relations and student affairs.
- ▶ UAF University Relations is charged with supporting the overall institution's internal and external communications and marketing, including media relations, social media, website management, brand management, crisis communications, reputation management and chancellor's communications. In addition, UAF UR supports university events, fundraising, alumni and enrollment marketing/recruitment efforts.
- ▶ Units throughout UAF employ staff members who do communication work as all or part of their jobs. Those positions, often referred to as "Public information officers" or "PIOs" report to unit leadership (dean or director) rather than to UAF UR.

UAA

- ▶ UAA University Relations is led by an associate vice chancellor for university relations, who reports to the vice chancellor for advancement.
- ▶ UAA is the marketing/communications arm of the Advancement team, which also includes development and alumni relations.
- ▶ UAA University Relations is charged with supporting the overall institution's internal and external communications and marketing, including media relations, social media, website management, brand management, crisis communications, reputation management and chancellor's communications. In addition, UAA UR supports university events, fundraising, alumni and enrollment marketing efforts.
- ▶ Some units and community campuses employ communications professionals or people who do communications work as a part of their jobs, Those positions do not report to UAA UR.

UAS

- ▶ There is no formal university relations department at UAS. Marketing and public affairs are not formally linked and the public affairs function is an add-on to the duties of the chancellor's executive assistant/PIO.
- ▶ Marketing and communications function is done by specific units at UAS. There is a marketing manager for admissions [student recruitment] and a director who oversees alumni and development functions. The marketing manager reports to the Vice Chancellor of Student Enrollment and is not formally linked to the PIO.
- ▶ The UAS PIO's primary duties focus on supporting the Office of the Chancellor, with the added responsibilities of media relations and stakeholder communications.



Process Overview

The University Relations Team is one of eight teams in Phase 2 of Strategic Pathways. Phase 2 began in early October when the teams met for the first time. During that first meeting, Session 1, there was a thorough orientation to the overall effort, and the charge, scope, and goal were refined. Most teams also identified the first iteration of potential Options. In the weeks between Session 1 and the second meeting, Session 2, the University Relations Team continued to define the options with weekly teleconferences and virtual collaboration. The Pros and Cons for each Option were developed in Session 2 in the first week in November. Since then the University Relations Team has been continually refining the Options, Opportunities, Pros and Cons and writing them into the following document. These Reports served as the main source of information for the Presentations that will be presented to the Summit Team on January 18th.

Option 1 – Hybrid-Decentralized

Narrative Description

This option would assign communications professionals at each university to serve and support specific colleges, institutes or functional areas. Those staff positions would report directly to a central University Relations office at each campus, with a dotted reporting line to the unit(s) they serve. University Relations and the units would share the financial cost of the positions, via an MOU that would be renegotiated yearly. The central University Relations department at each campus would remain as is and continue to work in coordination with University Relations at Statewide, which also would remain as-is.

Key Change Elements

- ▶ Change to Service
 - Guidance and training by the Central UR staff may be provided to the college/department appointed staff as well as to the department heads.
 - Centralized campus UR office would oversee a team of communications specialists who would be assigned to colleges/departments/units across the campus.
 - Student Affairs, Marketing and Recruitment areas would have a direct line of access to Central UR through one or more communications professionals who would be assigned to those beats.
- ▶ Staffing Changes
 - After a needs assessment is complete, staffing will be adjusted.
- ▶ Organizational Structure
 - Communications specialists would report directly to UR, but would have a dotted reporting line to dean, director or other field unit leader.
- ▶ Budget Changes
 - Primary resources for marketing and communications would reside in Central MAU UR; all units would contribute financially to this budget.
- ▶ Community (external)/MAU (internal) Engagement
 - A single point of contact will exist for community and internal groups.
- ▶ Administration
 - Reporting lines, authority and staffing will be adjusted.
- ▶ Access for Students
 - Student groups would now have one point of communication.
- ▶ Use of Facilities/Technology
 - After a needs assessment is complete, technology and facility use may be adjusted.
- ▶ Front-End Investment
 - Cost of assessment would be substantial and would need to be covered at Statewide.

Option 1 continued – Hybrid-Decentralized

- There will be HR time and cost.
- Additional training would be necessary across the system.
- ▶ Enrollment/Recruitment Marketing
 - Student affairs, marketing and recruitment areas would have a direct line of access to Central UR through one or more communications professionals

Pros and Cons

Pros

- ▶ Unified messaging while retaining department level interests
- ▶ Increased opportunity for collaboration between UR and the units for increased mission focus
- ▶ Bigger spending power and strategic allocation of funds
- ▶ Solidifies communication organizational structure
- ▶ Internal communication should improve
- ▶ Single source of communication for a particular department (PIO)
- ▶ Equity in service
- ▶ Increased buy-in and input from the unit level
- ▶ Increased opportunity for collaboration between UR and the units for increased mission focus
- ▶ Increased sharing of information and expertise within an MAU
- ▶ Encourages business decisions based on the mission
- ▶ Improved consistency
- ▶ Potential to capitalize on unique connections between alumni/current donors/potential donors and departments/areas.

Cons

- ▶ Dual reporting lines would cause confusion, competing allegiances, and tension without working MOUs
- ▶ Not necessarily a cost savings
- ▶ Increased number of experts and fewer generalists
- ▶ Larger University brand integrity is difficult to maintain
- ▶ Potential for stakeholders to be overloaded with competing messaging
- ▶ External stakeholders may find it difficult to know which department's UR to contact
- ▶ Unclear lines of reporting could create segmented messaging
- ▶ Opportunity for assignments outside the regular scope of work



Further Analysis Needed

- ▶ None

Option 2 – Centralized at Statewide

Narrative Description

This option would realign the structure of University Relations at UA by consolidating the campus University Relations departments under the Statewide University Relations. As part of that consolidation, communications professionals / public information officers currently embedded in colleges, departments institutes and centers at the three campuses would become a part of, and report directly to the campus UR office. Beats or assignments would be established by the campus UR director who would report to the VP/UR at Statewide. The UR departments on each campus would serve their respective campuses but report directly to Statewide.

Key Change Elements

- ▶ Change to Service and Strategy
 - Solid line of reporting from each MAU’s UR teams to VP of UR at SW with a dotted line of reporting to Chancellor.
 - SW UR develops strategy/campuses PR teams execute operational work.
 - SW UR directs strategy and service levels to campus departments/programs/units.
 - Roll up department PIOs into campus-level UR offices.
 - Strategy and messaging priorities set by SW VP including communication and brand strategy. Structure current brand at each campus to grow enrollment and reputation of each MAU.
- ▶ Staffing Changes
 - Increase staff at SW to centralize creative/service functions and manage campus UR activities.
 - Increase current staffing of campus UR offices to absorb “beat” PIOs.
 - Decrease staffing of PIOs in each unit.
 - Realign UR functions so that they are uniform across all campuses.
 - Decrease creative services [e.g. graphic/web design, photographers, etc.] and PIOs.
 - UR leads at the campus level are at director-level.
- ▶ Facility/Technology Changes
 - Increase office space/technology at SW (Fairbanks and/or Anchorage) to meet the needs of housing centralized creative/service teams.
 - Decrease UR office space on campuses.
- ▶ Access for Students
 - N/A

Option 2 continued – Consolidation at Statewide

- ▶ Administration/Organizational Structure
 - All campus PR directors and SW PR director report to VP for University Relations at SW (peer positions across all MAUs/Statewide).
- ▶ Standardize campus leadership as directors of University Relations. Create standard titles and job descriptions.
 - Campus/SW directors would supervise day-to-day operations of campus communications.
- ▶ Front-End Investment
 - Possible investment for office space and purchase of technology.
 - HR time to assist in reorg and provide sufficient training.
- ▶ Stakeholder Communications (internal and external)
 - Strategy and messaging priorities set by SW VP.
 - Distribution and delivery for internal communications done at campuses.
 - External communications and media strategy done by SW VP office.
- ▶ Budget Changes
 - UR to be an area of strategic investment.
 - Redirect budget from campus departments with PIOs that currently manage any form of communications to campus UR. This would include current outsourced contract work.
 - Redirect would create efficiencies and budget reductions.
 - Increase SW budget to accommodate shift in services from campus to SW.
- ▶ Branding and Messaging Strategy
 - SW to direct communication and brand strategy.
 - Structure current brand at each campus to grow enrollment and reputation of each MAU.
- ▶ Enrollment/Recruitment Marketing
 - Marketing strategy directed by SW in partnership with campus admissions and recruiting. Tactical execution by each MAU.

Option 2 continued – Consolidation at Statewide

Pros and Cons

Pros

- ▶ Unified messaging to external audiences
- ▶ Increased reputation with the legislature – one voice asking for one thing
- ▶ Opportunity to reduce cost
- ▶ Perception of unity within the institution
- ▶ Opportunity for collaboration
- ▶ Positive impact on private fundraising
- ▶ Improved quality of product
- ▶ Standardization would increase transparency (i.e. who is communicating)
- ▶ More effective with proactive communication
- ▶ Better utilization of facilities

Cons

- ▶ Lack of input/autonomy with individual campuses
- ▶ Most difficult option to implement
- ▶ Counter to university culture – this goes against the shared governance model
- ▶ Campus leadership would not be part of communication strategy
- ▶ Decreased affinity among donors, alumni, community, students, prospective students, external stakeholders
- ▶ Dilute brand integrity
- ▶ Prioritizes external over internal
- ▶ Less access to communication counsel for campus leadership
- ▶ Loss of trust with the communication team at the campus level
- ▶ Distances communication function from mission delivery
- ▶ Decreased buy-in from internal
- ▶ Promotes going rogue
- ▶ Slowed crisis response
- ▶ Standardization would decrease trust in what is being communicated
- ▶ Distance between communication function and the community served
- ▶ Less effective reactive communication (celebrating campus successes, reacting to crisis, etc.)
- ▶ Most difficult option to implement
- ▶ Lose brand ambassadors

Further Analysis Needed

- ▶ Would campus leadership (president’s cabinet) be involved in communication strategy or decision making?

Option 3 – Centralized at each university

Narrative Description

This option would create a fully centralized public relations and marketing office at each university with a “beat” structure similar to that found in news and/or public relations and/or marketing/advertising agencies that assigns communications professionals to serve specific units. Communications professionals, including graphic and web design and social media report to central University Relations at each university. UA Public Affairs remains as-is. PR council formalized via new MOU. Each university’s/SW UR leads would report to chancellors/president, respectively.

Key Change Elements

- ▶ Change to Service and Strategy
 - All campus public relations, communications and marketing services, including graphic and web design, social media and public events, provided by a University Relations office at each campus.
 - Eliminate the practice of creating “split positions” where someone has multiple unrelated duties in a single position (communications/grant specialist, communications/fundraising, communications/student advising).
- ▶ Staffing Changes
 - Eliminate unit-based communications positions, as unit-based communications and marketing functions would report to University Relations.
- ▶ Facility/Technology Changes
 - Centralization may result in the need for reallocation of office space, as the central university relations staff would grow and the unit-level staff would decrease.
 - Beat structure may require the use of some decentralized space.
 - More uniform structure and expertise system-wide would offer the opportunity for cost savings and efficiencies via the use of standard tools (such as Vocus or a standard web CMS) system-wide.
- ▶ Access for Students/Prospective Students
 - Student communication strategy for each campus led by campus university relations in collaboration with admissions.
- ▶ Administration/Organizational Structure
 - Create parallel organizational structures at each campus.
 - Standard qualifications and job descriptions for the positions within that structure.
 - Chief communications officers at the campuses/Statewide would report directly to chancellors/president, respectively.

Option 3 continued – Centralized at Each University

- No communicators within the unit-level organizational structure. Those positions and associated budgets are pulled back centrally and then assigned to cover “beats.” Each beat would be one or more units/focus areas.
- Formalized relationship between campus and Statewide University Relations to facilitate two-way communication and a unified approach in relevant areas.
- ▶ Front-End Investment
 - Additional fiscal staff time would be necessary to identify appropriate personnel and expenditure funds for pullback to fund the central University Relations operation, and to execute those budget changes.
 - Additional human resources staff time would be necessary to rewrite job descriptions and to handle the likely need to have people reapply for positions within the new structure.
- ▶ Stakeholder Communications (internal and external)
 - Single unit serves as point-of-contact at each campus and at UA Statewide.
 - Stakeholder communication strategy for each campus led by campus University Relations.
- ▶ Budget Changes
 - Adopt CASE standard for funding of marketing and public relations activities: one to three percent of the University’s operating budget allocated to strategic marketing and public relations expenditures (in addition to staffing budget).
 - Use a central pullback of all unit-level personnel and expenditure budgets related to public relations and marketing to accomplish budget goal while reducing overall university budget.
- ▶ Branding and Messaging Strategy
 - Unified brand (branded house model) at each university, applied consistently throughout each university.
 - Brand strategy managed at campus University Relations office.
 - Messaging strategy managed at campus University Relations office.
 - PR council helps guide overarching UA communications strategy.
- ▶ Enrollment/Recruitment Marketing
 - Marketing strategy and tactical execution led, in partnership with admissions and recruiting, by University Relations.

Option 3 continued – Centralized at Each University

Pros and Cons

Pros

- ▶ Increased strategic allocation of marketing funds
- ▶ Reduces costs by eliminating redundancy and creating efficiencies
- ▶ Standard job descriptions, qualifications and hiring practices
- ▶ Creates coordinated messaging and collaboration
- ▶ Strengthens campus brands and positioning
- ▶ Deeper bench of professionals – cross training
- ▶ Supervision and mentoring by communications professionals
- ▶ Maintains campus leadership involvement and partnership in communication and marketing
- ▶ Supervision and mentoring by communications professionals
- ▶ Career ladder for communications professionals
- ▶ Consistent external messaging and image
- ▶ Reduces confusion for external audiences
- ▶ Maintains unit voice
- ▶ Provides equal communications staffing for all units
- ▶ Creates new opportunities for collaboration
- ▶ Allows for specialization across job functions
- ▶ Increased strategic allocation of marketing funds
- ▶ Improved internal communication, crisis communication and issue management
- ▶ Shared spending power

Cons

- ▶ Need to prioritize strategy and tactics to match staffing levels
- ▶ Could slow response time from the unit
- ▶ Impact on well-functioning units
- ▶ Resistance to change due to reduced control, autonomy and financial resources at the unit level
- ▶ Potential for blame shifting when programs experience difficulty
- ▶ Less support and engagement from unit leaders
- ▶ Units that hired their own UR staff prior to this change may be unhappy if the reorganization results in less attention to their department

Option 3 continued – Centralized at Each University

Pros, continued

- ▶ Shared and decreased outsourcing
- ▶ Increased information sharing among units and the administration
- ▶ This model could be applied to other advancement and recruiting functions (development, recruiters, etc.)
- ▶ Alignment of enrollment marketing, institutional marketing and communications
- ▶ Standard metrics

Further Analysis Needed

- ▶ How do outreach/project specific communication professionals fit into this model?
- ▶ How do we maintain unity with Advancement and increase integration?
- ▶ What do we do with the non-communications workload reallocation created by changing split positions?

Other Opportunities for Change

- ▶ Standard job descriptions for communication officers across the system
- ▶ Joint initiatives for professional development across the system
- ▶ Centralized training and onboarding for all university communicators as well as training for specific leadership levels (e.g. deans etc.)
- ▶ Communications professionals on hiring committees for communications professionals
- ▶ Each university MAU develop (and publish) a list of staff expertise
- ▶ Create core policies at the Statewide level that are administered to all MAUs (maybe control quality?)
- ▶ Strict press release guidelines
- ▶ Mandate that press releases are only issued by centralized office (PR Policy)
- ▶ Tag press releases with student and academic centered messages (include student centered messages in press releases)
- ▶ Any media requests are vetted by a centralized office
- ▶ Post summit team briefings to PR leadership
- ▶ Standard (and preferred) qualifications for every job that involves communication
- ▶ Identify redundancy and eliminate it
- ▶ Pull account codes to find out what we are spending right now
- ▶ Identify what a university of our size should be spending in relation to our peers
- ▶ Measure ROI