



June 30, 2011

Educational Support and Administrative Review

University Communications
Five-year Report ending 2011

Mr. Josh Woods
Director

1. Overview of Department

1.1 Brief overview of department/area

The Office of University Communications serves the University of North Alabama community by providing public relations, marketing and advertising services. The six-person staff operates as an in-house ad agency, providing communication strategies and media relations supported by professionally written, photographed and designed print and online pieces.

1.2 Mission statement for the department/area

The mission of the Office of University Communications is to communicate UNA's history – past, present and future – by providing a coherent, cohesive positive image of the university through marketing and media relations.

1.3 Goals and objectives of the department/area

Since October 2008, many of the goals and objectives for the Office of University Communications have centered on building a new program. Prior to that time, the university had no central office for all university marketing and advertising. Instead, it operated an Office of University Relations, which was strictly a media relations office, and an Office of Publications, which handled university publications of all kinds, from business cards and letterhead to the student newspaper. Major goals since then have included:

- The creation of one team from two offices that previously had operated under two different directors and had collaborated on few, if any, projects
- The creation of a new office mission
- The identification of new priorities based on the new office mission – and finding workable solutions for projects that were no longer considered priorities
- The creation of a sophisticated online jobs system like ones used in ad agencies
- The creation of a new marketing-driven university Web site, with consistency throughout all its pages and managed by a full-time Web communications manager
- The elevation of design quality to a level on par with, or exceeding the quality of, design at outside agencies
- The introduction of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media into the university's marketing plan
- Exposure of UNA to the public through national-level news media
- The total rebranding of the university to adopt a brand image more unique and true to the UNA culture and, thereby, more tightly embraced by the university community
- The launch of a full-scale local and regional marketing campaign

1.4 Governance structure of the department/area

The Office of University Communications includes an administrative assistant, a photographer, a Web communications manager, a creative director and a graphic designer, each

reporting to the director of university communications. A videographer will be added to the team this fall, and he or she will also report to the director of university communications.

1.5 Brief description of the national status of the department/area (including emerging issues and trends)

The model upon which the Office of University Communications is based – one that makes it the hub of all university marketing, advertising and public relations – has been a common one nationally since at least the 1990s. Most universities now include an office very similar or identical to ours, and many have even made this office a vice presidential division of the university. Professionals commonly employed in university communications offices include graphic designers, photographers, videographers, copywriters, media relations coordinators, traffic coordinators, Web managers and Web developers.

2. Department/Area Evaluation

2.1 Description of the means of assessment of department/area goals. [Mean of assessing outcomes should be based on typical and/or accepted assessment measures with the department/area.]

The assessment of several of our goals requires only a simple comparison of the structure, mission, operations, and products of our office from its inception in October 2008 to now. Other goals have been assessed through a continuous monitoring of the news media and through careful attention to a marketing plan developed in 2008.

2.2 Summary of the results of the assessment(s):

- The Office of Publications and Office of University Relations successfully merged to create the Office of University Communications and now operates extremely well as a singular team.
- Where the Office of University Relations functioned solely to represent the university through the news media and the Office of Publications functioned to create university print materials of all kinds, the two teams together, as the Office of University Communications, now successfully operates behind the mission of communicating a coherent, cohesive positive image of the university through marketing and media relations.
- With a new office mission, the Office of University Communications evaluated the types of jobs previously done by the offices of publications and university relations and flagged many that did not support our new mission – for example, flyers, banquet programs, and invitation cards and so on. The communications staff worked with departments throughout campus to ensure they found efficient alternative ways of producing these materials.
- Utilizing a student from the Department of Computer Information Systems, we developed an organized system that numbers each job by department code, marks deadlines and progress status on each job, archives completed jobs and deadlines, flags rush jobs, and holds in a cue all jobs without sufficient information from the client to begin production.

In addition to implementing this new online system, we began attaching sign-off sheets to each proof, thereby making clients responsible for each detail of the final product.

- A full-time Web communications manager was hired in March 2008, under the former Office of University Relations, and immediately began redesigning the university Web site. The overhauled university Web site was released in three phases, beginning in September 2008.
- The design quality produced in the Office of University Communications improved dramatically through two key moves: (1) prioritizing jobs according to our new office mission so that designers had more time to spend on the most significant marketing pieces; and (2) creating an office culture in which fun and play are encouraged, thereby generating a greater level of creativity.
- The office created a UNA Facebook group, Twitter account, YouTube channel and RSS feeds in late 2008 and early 2009 and quickly gained thousands of followers among students, prospective students, alumni, and members of the community. The Facebook and Twitter accounts, particularly, are updated daily to keep news from the university in front of these audiences on a continuous basis.
- Through use of a nationally-reputable news services, Vocus, several UNA news stories have gained at least modest national exposure through the *Associated Press*, *USA Today*, and other national media. In summer 2009, we even landed a nationally-televised interview on the Fox News morning show, “Fox & Friends,” regarding an economic study conducted by several students and faculty. However, national exposure of that level has been sporadic at best. This is due to time constraints and the time it takes to strategically contact and gain the attention of these major players among the national media.
- In spring 2008, the Office of University Communications recommended the university hire an ad agency from Atlanta, Mindpower, to conduct a study of the university and, through their findings, help the university find a solid brand image. Six months later, we unveiled the university’s new brand identity and began the process of adapting all university marketing materials to this image.
- In late 2008 and through spring 2009, our office led the university through its strongest marketing push in history. The campaign included a substantial television campaign, paid advertising on Facebook, and full-page color ads in a variety of highly visible local and regional publications. This level of marketing resulted in record applications, a record freshman class, and continuous word-of-mouth praise from alumni and the community. Since then, however, the university has not created an advertising budget to continue such a campaign beyond limited television advertising each fall.

2.3 Recent improvements based on the results of the assessments:

While we are pleased with the success of most of our goals the past few years and are now focused on new goals, we are also taking steps to further increase the university’s exposure through national news media. Most recently, we negotiated a new contract with Vocus that includes free professional training on the system for a second person in our office. This will mean two of us in the office will be able to utilize Vocus to generate news releases, advisories and alerts to local, regional and national media, thereby addressing the issue of time constraints that has inhibited our progress in this area in the past.

2.4 Appropriate documentation to support the assessment of the departmental/area goals

The following Web sites support our accomplishment of the goal for a new marketing-driven university Web site, with consistency throughout all its pages, and the incorporation of social media into the university's marketing plan:

- <http://www.una.edu/>
- <http://www.facebook.com/northalabama>
- http://twitter.com/#!/north_alabama
- <http://www.youtube.com/UNArarlions>

The following documents are being included as e-mail attachments with this report:

- A research review and concept presentation submitted by ad agency, Mindpower, in 2008
- A PowerPoint presentation from 2008 reviewing a proposed marketing plan
- A proposed marketing plan and budget submitted in 2008
- A proposed marketing plan and budget submitted in 2009

2.5 Brief analysis of the areas in need of improvement and an action plan for improvement in these areas:

The primary areas in need of improvement by our office are national-level media relations and the obtainment of a university advertising budget. As mentioned under 2.3, our new contract with Vocus news service includes free professional training for a second member of our communications team, which will enable us to devote more attention to contacting national-level media with news and information from the university. In addition, we plan for our soon-to-be-hired videographer to create video news stories highlighting campus experts on a variety of hot topics, such as the economy, politics, the environment and other issues of regional and national interest. Videos like these tend to grab the media's attention – and are even used as screening tools for television media, such as *CNN* and *Fox News*. Once created, these videos will be easy to distribute to national media through Vocus.

In terms of obtaining a university advertising budget, we are hopeful that, with our upcoming move to the NCAA Division I, university leadership will see the importance of marketing UNA as an institution that, as a whole, is advancing to a higher level. We have recently proposed a concept for such a campaign and are in the process of developing a full-scale marketing plan.

3. Facilities and Resources that address the adequacy of resources and support services to support the goals and objectives of the department/area

3.1 Equipment

Equipment needs for the Office of University Communications have grown since 2008, when we added a Web communications manager, and they will grow even more this fall as we add a videographer. Equipment currently used by this office includes a variety of Mac computers, *Adobe* and *Microsoft Office* software, photo printers, Canon cameras and lenses, and studio

lighting equipment. Upon adding a videographer to our staff this fall, additional equipment will include a professional-grade video camera, a variety of camera microphones and *FinalCut* or comparable editing software.

3.2 Space

The Office of University Communications is located on the ground-floor level of Rogers Hall, which offers adequate space for general office operations. However, we do lack a high-ceiling studio space for professional photo and video shoots. Even a modest 14X14 room would work well for this space, provided it has a 10-foot ceiling or higher, which is a lighting requisite for any professional studio.

3.3 Staff

Current positions in the Office of University Communications include a director, administrative assistant, photographer, Web communications manager, creative director, and a graphic designer. Each of these positions is extremely important, and the videographer being added this fall will be a tremendous asset. Other positions needed for this office to advance with a growing UNA include a Web developer, a media relations coordinator and an additional graphic designer.

3.4 Other

Since its inception in 2008, the Office of University Communications has grown, and continues to grow, with the adoption of a new mission, the addition of a Web communications manager in 2008, and the addition of a videographer this fall. However, this office still operates strictly from the annual budgets provided for the former Office of Publications and Office of University Relations. Those budgets were created on the basis of specific needs unique to those offices simply to sustain them each year. They are grossly inadequate for operating the size and type of office we have developed. As a result, professional development opportunities are rare for us, and the upkeep of cameras, lighting and other non-computer equipment is difficult and often has to be put off for months at a time, making it a challenge for us to deliver at the level expected by our clients. As we add a videographer this fall, which will bring even greater needs, this budget situation will create even more of a challenge.

4. Achievements

The Office of University Communications receives continuous praise from clients throughout campus as well as alumni and members of the community who see our products. While their words are always encouraging to us, the most visible affirmation of our success as a professional communications team came in February 2010, when we received a CASE Award of Excellence. CASE (the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education) is the nation's leading organization for university advancement professionals.

5. Responses to Previous Review Recommendations

N/A

6. Vision and Plans for the Future of the Area

The vision of the Office of University Communications is to become a nationally-recognized and respected team of communications professionals. As we grow and advance toward that vision, we are currently working to accomplish the following goals:

- The addition of video production as one of the professional services offered in our office
- The implementation of a Web content management system to create a more streamlined, efficient approach to updating pages throughout the university Web site
- The development of a variety of Web-based marketing tools, such as iPhone apps, online viewbooks, and so on
- The creation, development and execution of an aggressive, full-scale campaign to market the entire university – from admissions to alumni to academics to athletics to student life – as a culture of continuous building and progress
- The creation of an advertising budget, enabling the university to aggressively market itself locally, regionally, and nationally as a first-choice university

7. Unit Recommendations

7.1

While the success of some of our goals will require actions from the top leadership levels, most of our goals will be accomplished through our current progress.

7.2

- The creation of a university advertising budget, enabling us to aggressively market UNA as a first-choice university
- The addition of a modest studio space for professional photo and video shoots
- The addition of a Web developer, enabling us to create a variety of Web-based marketing tools, such as iPhone apps, online viewbooks, and so on
- The addition of a third graphic designer to pick up the overload of design work currently being absorbed by our two-person design team
- The addition of a media relations coordinator, devoted full-time to enhancing our opportunities for positive exposure through local, regional and national media

UNA Media Plan

2008-09

OBJECTIVE: To saturate the North Alabama and surrounding markets, creating total awareness of the new UNA brand while building student and alumni pride and generating increased interest among prospective students, parents and donors.

Recruitment

Facebook

Facebook is the No. 1 social network among American youth as well as their parents and our alumni. A UNA presence on Facebook would be possible through pay-per-click or pay-per-impression advertising. Ads may be isolated to users between ages 16 and 18 in the state of Alabama, or to UNA alumni living in certain cities or regions. UNA's Facebook ads could be linked either to the UNA Web site or a UNA Facebook fan page. Many universities are paying upward of \$50,000 per month for Facebook advertising.

Proposed annual budget for Facebook: \$60,000

Search Engines

Search engines such as Google and Yahoo are one of students' leading tools in the college search process. An AdWords campaign will help UNA rise to the top of their searches. AL.com could manage this campaign for us on all the major search engines. UNA would be given four different pay-per-click ads – one for each college – with 85 keywords to divide among the four. The ads would be pay-per-click and could be restricted to the state of Alabama or to a determined mile radius from Florence.

Proposed annual budget for search engines: \$15,000

Imaging

Local, State and Regional Print Media

Leading schools and businesses are expected to be seen in certain print media. If UNA is to be regarded as a leading regional university, we need to act like one by appearing prominently in these publications, such as Alabama College Guide, Explore the Shoals magazine, U.S. News' America's Best Colleges (Alabama editions only), etc.

Proposed annual budget for print media: \$40,000

Television

Television would be an ideal medium to hit all audiences with a splash of the new History in the Making campaign. A variety of network as well as cable programming in central and northern Alabama is recommended to ensure penetration among all college-bound and college-educated audiences in UNA's target areas. A peaks-and-valleys approach to the television campaign is recommended for the coming fiscal year. It is also recommended that UNA place television ads through a reputable media buyer from the

Birmingham market – someone who knows the market and buys in large enough quantities to drive down costs considerably.

Proposed annual budget for production of television ads: \$17,600 (four 30-second spots for \$4,400 each); or \$13,200 (\$3,300 per spot) if ads pull from footage shot for the admissions video

Proposed annual budget for television ad space: \$150,000

Cinemas

Movie theatres are still one of the leading forms of entertainment for middle- and middle-upper-income youth and families. Movie-goers are usually the more highly educated or college-bound audiences. Through Screenvision, UNA could place its 30-second television commercials on movie theatre screens one to 10 minutes before movie previews begin. The university could also place UNA-related entertainment trivia on the screens. The cinema campaign would run for 12 weeks during the holiday movie season and 12 weeks during the summer movie season on every screen in 11 theatres, including every theatre in Birmingham, Hoover and Vestavia Hills and three of the most highly trafficked theatres in Huntsville.

Proposed annual budget for cinema advertising: \$70,000

Contingency

While a responsible university should plan its advertising months in advance, as UNA is doing, unexpected opportunities often arise throughout the year. It is recommended that UNA build an advertising contingency of \$35,000 for such opportunities.

UNA Media Plan 2009-10

There's no excuse! People can no longer say they've never heard of the University of North Alabama.

It hasn't been easy to escape the name of the University of North Alabama in 2008-09. We've saturated North and Central Alabama since last fall, inundating the public through a sophisticated marketing campaign. Among the campaign's highlights have been a first-quarter television campaign, a significant presence on Facebook and an impressive series of print ads.

Our television campaign garnered 759 commercial spots featured on four of Alabama's highest-rated television networks. Our Facebook ad campaign, running February-April, put a UNA advertisement in front of more than 125,000 16-19-year-old Alabamians nearly 5 million times. That means that Alabama's average 16-19-year-old Facebook user saw UNA's ad nearly 40 times in the spring semester.

UNA has also published an impressive series of print ads, establishing the University as a historic, well-established institution offering a high-caliber education. These ads have been featured prominently in college guides and other widely read publications throughout the state.

Preparing for Next Year

As we have planned our marketing for 2009-10, the success of the past year has lent itself as an excellent guide. In the coming year, we simply wish to build on the marketing foundation we've now established, using many of the same tools used this past year. In strategy, there is little we wish to change from last year's success. In organization, however, there is much we wish to change.

In 2008-09, UNA took a major step forward in its organization of University marketing efforts by creating the Office of University Communications. This office has served as the hub for the conceptualizing, writing and designing all University advertisements and marketing materials. Having this centralized creative staff has been a key factor to our marketing success.

Meanwhile, as all UNA advertising and marketing is being channeled through this centralized-communications office, budget support for the advertising is coming from multiple sources throughout campus. A couple of years ago, this may not have been a cause for concern because both the advertising and the funding were decentralized. In other words, media account representatives could count on getting the ad and the payment from the same source. This past year, however, the communications office has been the source for all ads, but this office is rarely the source for ad payments. That scenario has created frequent confusion and frustration for media account representative as well as University cost center heads.

Everyone – account reps and cost center heads alike – have agreed that we should offer a one-stop-shop, where media can pick up both the ads and the ad payments. In other words, our advertising budgets should be centralized just as our advertising development has been.

The following pages outline the media plan and budget the UNA communications staff has prepared for the coming year.

Television

From Dec. 26, 2008, through February, UNA ran a \$75,000 television campaign on four prominent Alabama networks, resulting in 759 total commercial spots over a nine-week period. These commercials were placed by Vimardi Media in Birmingham, which increased our buying power by well over 100 percent.

For the coming year, we're proposing a similar campaign, but one that extends over at least a three-month period as opposed to only eight or nine weeks. This would require \$25,000 more than UNA spent on television advertising in the first quarter.

The television campaign budget is provided below in as much detail as possible before Vimardi Media begins negotiations with the network affiliates. Production costs are not included, as those costs have already been allotted for the fourth-quarter campaign.

- Service fee to Vimardi Media — \$8,800
- Advertising fees to four Huntsville and Birmingham networks — \$91,200

Print Ads

In the past year, UNA has placed a number of print ads in local and statewide media for the purposes of imaging and student recruitment. While some of these have been one-time placements, most recur on an annual basis.

The budget below reflects all recurring print ads purchased in the past year, plus a couple we declined but wish to purchase in the coming year. The latter are indicated in italics.

- Birmingham Magazine Education Edition — \$3,050
- Birmingham Magazine Alabama College Guide Edition — \$3,050
- Times Daily Progress Edition — \$2,275
- Times Daily Explore the Shoals Magazine — \$1,500
- Times Daily Graduation tab — \$800
- Times Daily Living Here tab — \$2,418
- NWSCC class schedule (three issues) — \$4,500 (\$1,500 per issue)
- *Mobile Press-Register College Search tab — \$4,506.20*
- *Thicket Magazine College Guide Edition** — \$4,000 (estimated cost)

* Thicket Magazine is a Birmingham-based publication with a circulation of 30,000. Upper-income households new to some of Alabama's largest cities are given complimentary one-year subscriptions to Thicket upon moving to the city. After one year, they are invited to buy a renewed subscription. The magazine is also available in Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million and other popular bookstores in Alabama's largest cities, such as Birmingham, Huntsville and Mobile.

Event Promotions

Throughout the year each year, several departments across campus like to promote UNA events through paid advertising in some of our local media. While the ads are always developed in the communications office, purchasing requests for the ads are submitted by various offices, and advertising reps are usually juggling several UNA PO numbers simultaneously while sending off multiple invoices to multiple UNA cost centers. To simplify this process, we're proposing that UNA, for the coming year, issue only one PO number per each of the primary local media for the purpose of event promotions. As event-promotion ads are placed in each of these media, the media, in turn, would send invoices to one centralized UNA cost center for payment. While this centralized cost center would need to be equipped to cover those costs (see Contingency section), departmental sponsors of the events would be responsible for transferring the cost of the ads into the advertising budget.

The media listed below include the two local newspapers always used for promoting UNA events as well as printing costs for coffee cup sleeves, which have become a popular advertising medium for several programs on campus, and Alabama Public Radio. While UNA has never advertised through an Underwriting Sponsorship with APR, many campus event sponsors have been strongly interested. APR's demographic is the ideal target for many UNA events, such as the Distinguished Events Series, the Summer Theatre Program and Shoals Symphony at UNA concerts.

An \$8,400 Underwriting Sponsorship with APR would garner UNA two 15-second primetime radio spots per day, 365 days per year. The spots would run during "Morning Edition," between 5 and 9 a.m., and during "All Things Considered," between 3 and 5:30 p.m. While these spots would be used generally to promote upcoming events, such as the Distinguished Events Series or the film festival, we could also use a generic script about UNA to substitute during periods when there is not a significant upcoming event to promote.

As with the newspaper advertising, sponsoring departments of the events using promotional time on APR would be responsible for transferring the cost, at a rate of \$23 per day, into the centralized cost center.

- The Times Daily — \$6,400 (This is a special non-profit rate for 20 full-color, quarter-page ads, which is the size we customarily use for promoting our various events.)*
- The Courier Journal — \$2,850 (This is a bulk rate for 200 full-color column inches.)
- Alabama Public Radio — \$8,400
- Coffee cup sleeves — \$2,000

* For better efficiency, a single PO number would be issued for the \$6,400 for event-promotion ads as well as the four student-recruitment ads listed under Print Ads.

Facebook

This past spring, UNA has had a significant presence on Facebook in two ways. First, we have had, as of late May, nearly 3,000 people sign up as members of the UNA Facebook fan club. As members, each of these individuals receives daily news updates, photos, videos and other materials from UNA via their Facebook accounts.

In the coming year, we wish to increase the membership number for our Facebook fan club, as that club has become a very strategic and useful tool for communicating daily news and other information about UNA. To do this, we wish to advertise the fan club through pay-per-click ads on Facebook, targeting Facebook users throughout Alabama plus key areas of Tennessee and Mississippi. These ads would not only drive up the number of people receiving daily news and information about UNA; for those not signing up as members of our Facebook fan club, the campaign, at the very least, would get UNA's name in front of them on a frequent basis, making UNA more top-of-mind.

These ads would cost, on average, between 50 and 70 cents per click. The campaign would be managed to run during specific dates, or to target specific demographics, or to change the ad design and call to action from time to time.

- Facebook advertising — \$3,000

Contingency

While most UNA advertising for 2009-10 is being scheduled in advance, some promotional advertising cannot be planned as easily. Opportunities are occasionally presented unexpectedly, and we must budget for such opportunities. A contingency line item within the advertising budget would prepare us for these occasional unplanned advertising opportunities.

In addition, it would better prepare us to handle event-promotion advertising through this budget, as we would be equipped to pay media without waiting on a budget transfer from the event-sponsoring department.

- \$20,900.80*

* This amount includes the total for event advertising, which would be replaced by department sponsorship each of the advertised events.

	IMAGE AND STUDENT-RECRUITMENT	
Television	Service fee to Vimardi Media	\$8,800
	Advertising fees to four Huntsville and Birmingham networks	\$91,200
Print ads	Birmingham Magazine Education edition	\$3,050
	Birmingham Magazine College Guide edition	\$3,050
	Times Daily Progress edition	\$2,275
	Times Daily Explore the Shoals magazine	\$1,500
	Times Daily Graduation tab	\$800
	Times Daily Living Here tab	\$2,418
	NWSCC class schedule (three issues)	\$1,500
		\$1,500
		\$1,500
	Mobile Press-Register College Search tab	\$4,506.20
	Thicket Magazine College Guide edition	\$4,000
Facebook	Pay-per-click advertising	\$3,000
Total		\$129,099
	CONTINGENCY*	
Event Promotions	Times Daily (20 full-color, quarter-page ads)	\$6,400
	Courier Journal (200 full-color column inches)	\$2,850
	Alabama Public Radio	\$8,400
	Coffee cup sleeves	\$2,000
Additional contingency		\$1,250.80
Total		\$20,901
Total for all advertising		\$150,000

* See Contingency section on page six for rationale behind contingency funding.