



USU Communications Plan

2021-2023

About

Uniformed Services University

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) is the nation's federal health professions academy — akin to the undergraduate programs of the U.S. military academies at West Point, Annapolis and Colorado Springs. In many respects, our curricula and educational experiences are similar to those of civilian academic health centers, with one crucial difference: our emphasis on military health care, leadership and readiness.

Office of the Vice President of External Affairs

The Office of External Affairs is the single, central portal for incoming and outgoing communication, correspondence, and coordination with all of USU's external audiences and stakeholders. The department serves to advance the university's mission through multiple responsibilities and initiatives, from media outreach to congressional relations.

Overview

Plan

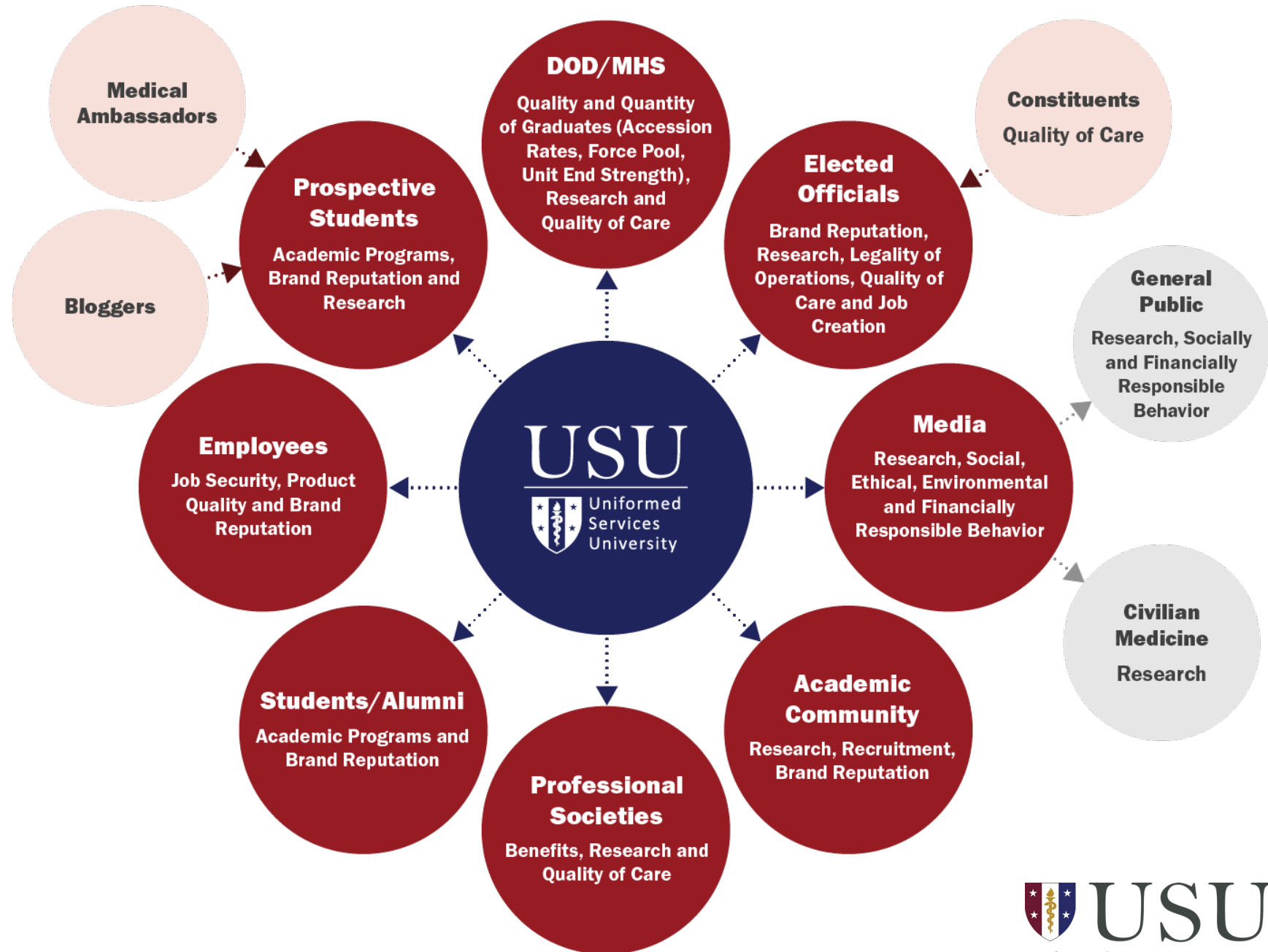
The university has historically concentrated its communications through traditional routes: medical ambassadors, events, annual reports and earned media. Over the next three years, we will expand upon these legacy methods by executing a digital strategy. This expanded approach will allow us to grow our exposure to the military and civilian communities by way of our affiliate network. The digital tools used will also allow for a more efficient line of communication with key stakeholders. In preparation for this, a brand message architecture will be developed. It will ensure we tell a holistic story on how our core pillars of research, education and leadership align with current needs and future goals of the Military Health System, and more broadly the nation's national security and military priorities.

Vision

As we carry out this plan and progress toward our goals, we envision a culture where staff, faculty and researchers play an essential role in elevating the university's stature by being organizational storytellers and thought leaders. What follows is showcasing our value in a more impactful way than ever before, demonstrating how USU ensures the continuity of care, knowledge and leadership essential for military medicine in the 21st century.

Stakeholders

The university's audiences are shown in the daisy wheel diagram on the right. In addition to the eight primary audiences, there are five secondary audiences, shown in grey and pink. The pink are audiences who influence our primary stakeholders. The grey are audiences we reach indirectly through our stakeholders.





GOALS

Goals

Excellence in Communications

Communications is a collaborative endeavor. It requires a shared recognition of its value across the university in order to be carried out effectively, particularly for those who don't have it as their primary responsibility. The growing importance digital tools provide, such as with the intranet, make achieving excellence more challenging as it will demand additional training and skills. The university's communication products must reflect the quality of our contributions, as they are surrogates of the brand. Ultimately, excellence is about continually striving to provide the best experience for our multiple audiences.

Brand Equity Maximized

Brand equity is the amount of prestige the university carries to its products and services. It is the perception of worth by our stakeholders on the university's unique and specific value that no one else can provide. Maximizing brand equity is making sure our value aligns precisely with the understanding and concerns of our stakeholders. Brand equity is produced from our accomplishments, but this is not enough. These achievements need to be translated for audiences who have difficulty comprehending the nuances and complexities of our work and its role within the Military Health System.

Partnerships with Affiliates

The university, as a federal institution serving within the DoD, has access to a vast network of affiliates, from military treatment facilities to the uniformed services. Leveraging these connections to further our content will increase awareness of the university significantly without entailing additional costs or resources. In addition, these partners are where our alumni go on to serve and provide care, and therefore provide tangible examples of our impact and value.

GOAL: EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS



Objectives

- The use of a comprehensive digital content strategy for all channels (paid, earned, owned and shared), which can be molded for different sub-entities within the university and tailored to their goals and resources.
- Collaborative partnerships are established with External Affairs and the university's researchers, departments, colleges, labs and research centers, whereby their accomplishments are fully exploited into communication products.
- All communications initiatives and activities are measured and tracked.
- Best practices in user interface and user experience are adhered to across all platforms and products.
- Brand standards are met across all platforms and products.

GOAL: BRAND EQUITY MAXIMIZED

Objectives

- Consensus is established with all key external stakeholders on the relevance and value of USU's research initiatives and academic programs.
- The university becomes a recognized thought leader on military medicine's relevance to and alignment with national security and military doctrine (i.e. human domain).
- Content articulates a compelling and comprehensive brand message across all owned channels and content.
- The university's blog is a prominent outlet to the public on information, news and stories regarding military medicine, research and innovations.

GOAL: PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFFILIATES



Objectives

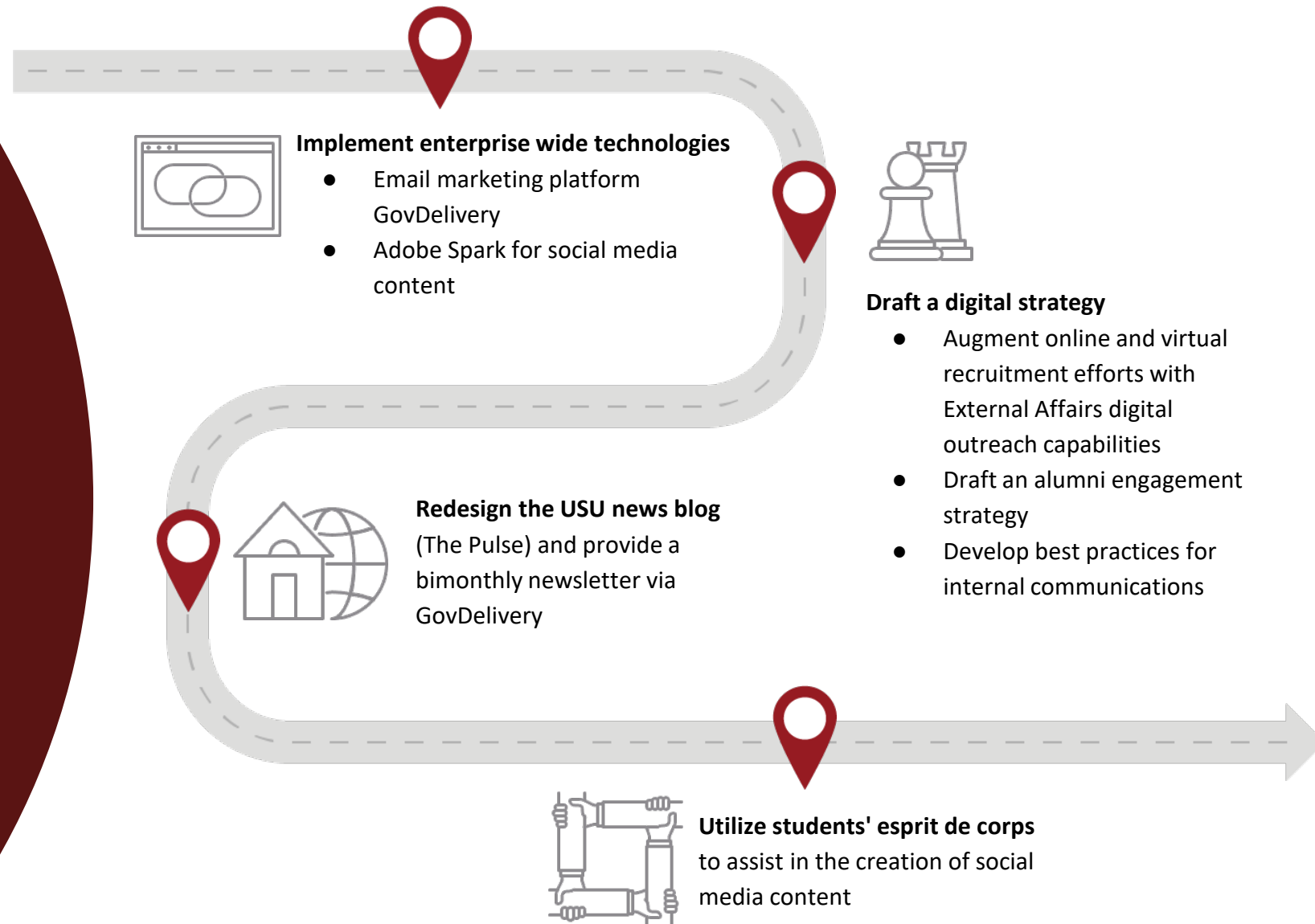
- Partnerships are established with other public affairs teams in MHS, DOD and other research institutions who cross-promote our content to their digital audiences.
- Community outreach strategies are developed for those centers whose target audiences include but not limited to military personnel and their families.



STRATEGIES

STRATEGY: DIGITAL ROADMAP

A digital strategy will plan, coordinate and optimize content across all channels — paid, earned, shared and owned. It will also guide the communication efforts of the sub-entities within the university, which can implement elements of it based on their particular goals and available resources.



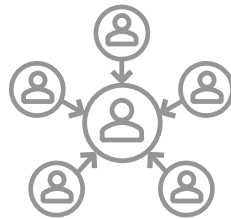
STRATEGY:

LEVERAGE EXPERTISE OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

The university's many sub-entities — schools, departments, labs, centers and programs, have many similar goals (recruitment, highlighting accomplishments and fostering relationships). To ensure consistency in terms of quality and approach, External Affairs will provide consultation and best practices.



Execute a working group to provide communication expertise to the multiple sub-entities of the university, from departments to research centers.



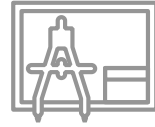
Ensure External Affairs staff is kept abreast of all events, activities, announcements, or any other opportunities, which can be merchandised to promote and highlight the university.



Provide trainings through Panopto and other resources for staff to grow their communication skills and baseline knowledge.

STRATEGY: BRAND STORYTELLING

Storytelling is how brand equity is communicated, positioning the university in a distinct and salient place in our stakeholders' minds. It communicates the university's value and relevance in a quick, engaging and succinct manner, connecting the dots between short-term achievements and long-term contributions. Our stakeholders are not just interested in what we do but also why we do it; therefore, messaging will align with the larger concerns, doctrine and ideas shaping national security and defense policy.



Develop a message architecture
and revise legacy content (website, etc.)



Draft a backgrounder
on the university's role and contributions



Tell stories that capture research and accomplishments
as they unfold instead of testimonials after they happen



Feature articles on the university's blog
by researchers, faculty and deans that communicate
unique perspectives and big ideas



Collaborate with General Ronald H. Griffith Institute
for Military Medical Professionalism to produce thought
leadership on military medicine and the human domain

STRATEGY: PROGRAM FOR EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Carry out a communications initiative specifically for key stakeholders that delivers informative materials, which are measured and tracked for engagement. These documents will serve audiences with different levels of knowledge about military medicine and the university's long-term contributions.



Augment the Annual Report with additional executive level documents and products, such as a backgrounder.



Execute a newsletter(s) for stakeholders that provides an efficient means to receive documents at their discretion.