Strategic Marketing and Communications Content: Goals, Channels and Coordination

Goals

Strategic Marketing and Communications (SMC) is responsible for ensuring that important information and messages about the University reach key external and internal audiences. It does so through a variety of platforms and publications, each with its own unique reach and mission. However, certain overall goals can be applied to almost all SMC communications — especially those that are outward facing. Those goals can be boiled down to a matrix of four factors. Communications efforts should bolster:

- **Recruitment** (by demonstrating to potential students the unique benefits of attending SF State)
- **Awareness** (by reaching a broad external audience with a positive message about the University)
- **Reputation** (by illustrating the high quality and impact of SF State's academics and commitment to service and positive social change)
- **Engagement** (by highlighting the University in a way that appeals to a variety of key internal and external audiences, including community leaders, donors, alumni and students)

It's not necessary for every project to address every goal. In fact, few could. But as long as a project would clearly address one, it could be deemed appropriate for SMC channels. (A fifth goal for communications work is mostly functional: SMC informs the campus community of important developments such as COVID-19 restrictions, air-quality advisories, Commencement details, etc. Because these communications are informational and largely internal rather than strategic and outward-facing, to some degree they fall outside the Recruitment/Awareness/Reputation/Engagement rubric — though, of course, making sure that the campus community feels informed and connected can have an impact on reputation and engagement.)

SMC employs a number of criteria to evaluate which potential projects would best address the goals above. Before spotlighting a University program or course with an article on the SF State News website, for instance, the editorial team would ask:

Is it unique?
Do other universities do the same thing? If so, is our version special in some way?

Is it impactful?
Has there been a substantive positive result? Could there be?

Is it interesting?
Will the target audience be intrigued? Can the information or messaging be imparted in a way that grabs and holds people's attention?

Is it timely?
Could an article be linked to something of interest at the time, such as Black History Month, a special event, a national news story or the recent publication of a study? Would any course or program related to the article still be active at the time of publication?

Is it inspiring?
Could coverage show how the University (or its alumni, faculty or staff) are making the world a better place? Would it depict SF State as a vital source of innovative ideas, leadership on important issues and social mobility? Would there be a way to include student voices so that current and potential students can see themselves in the story?

And most important of all: Is it strategic?
Would coverage bolster one or more of the four pillars at the base of University marketing and branding efforts: Inclusivity (campus life), Discovery (academics), Empowerment (services) and Access (location)? Could the storytelling match our brand voice, with a tone that's energetic, empowering, resolute and legit? *Would it help with the two priorities that are critical to the University's future: recruitment and retention?*

The more these questions can be answered with "yes," the more likely coverage will be.

SMC has launched an online form for story submissions so that ideas can be tracked and reviewed. (If you think your story idea might be of interest to the media, there's a helpful page for assessing that, and further guidance on press releases and pitching is available from SMC Media Relations Specialist Kent Bravo.) Requests for other types of communication projects, such as brochures and pamphlets, can be submitted via SMC's online Project Request Brief.

Channels

SMC controls or has access to an array of communications channels. Though every one is unique, with a particular audience and purpose, all address one or more of SMC's goals: Recruitment, Awareness, Reputation, Engagement and Information. All also involve collaboration and coordination with other University offices. Content generated by SMC rarely appears in one channel alone, and coordinated cross-pollination should always be the goal.

Below are some of the SMC channels with the widest reach and the greatest potential for cross-department collaboration and coordinated marketing and branding.

Channel	Audience	Goals	Collaborators
www.sfsu.edu (University homepage), including the News box and hero image	The SF State community (students, faculty, staff, alumni), potential students and their parents, the community at large	Recruitment Awareness Reputation Engagement Information (as with campus closings and alerts)	The Office of the President, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
SF State Magazine	Mostly internal (alumni, donors, students, faculty, staff) but useful for some external audiences (community leaders, the media, the community at large)	Recruitment Awareness Reputation Engagement	Alumni Relations, Development, all colleges, specific programs on an ad hoc basis
SF State News (news.sfsu.edu)	The SF State community (students, faculty, staff, alumni), potential students and their parents, the community at large	Recruitment Awareness Reputation Engagement Information	All colleges, other programs and offices on an ad hoc basis
Social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)	Internal (faculty and staff, students, alumni) and external (potential students, the community at large)	Recruitment Awareness Reputation Engagement Information	All colleges, other programs and offices on an ad hoc basis
Email/Blackboard Connect	Internal (faculty and staff, students, alumni)	Engagement Information	The Office of the President
Future Students (future.sfsu.edu)	External (potential students)	Recruitment Engagement Information	Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
Alumni website (alumni.sfsu.edu)	Internal and external	Recruitment Awareness Reputation Engagement	Alumni Relations
CampusMemo	Internal (faculty and staff)	Engagement Information	All University colleges and offices on an ad hoc basis
Media outreach and news releases	The community at large, including potential students and their parents	Recruitment Awareness Reputation Engagement	All University colleges and offices on an ad hoc basis
SF State facts webpage	Primarily external	Recruitment Information	A variety of University offices, including Institutional Research, Human Resources, the Bursar's Office and Budget Administration and Operations
SF State app/Spotlight	Internal (students, faculty, staff)	Engagement Information	All University colleges and certain offices/programs on an ad hoc basis
Campus digital display monitors	Internal (students, faculty, staff)	Engagement Information	All University colleges and certain offices/programs on an ad hoc basis