EAB

Who Should Read

Chief Research Officers and their communications staff

Central (university-wide) communications staff

Department or college communications staff

Deans and faculty

Telling the Story of Research

Thirteen Tactics for Communicating the Value of University Research

Four Ways to Use This Publication

- Reevaluate current strategies for communicating the value of university research and identify areas for improvement
- Garner support from university leadership and central communications staff on the importance of research communications, with ideas for how to elevate it
- Engage faculty in broader communications strategies
- Utilize the toolkit to diagnose and implement specific communications tactics

University Research Forum

University Research Forum

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Supporting Members in Best Practice Implementation

Services and Resources Available Within Your Membership

This publication is just one component of our work in assisting members to grow and manage the research enterprise. Recognizing that ideas seldom speak for themselves, our ambition is to work actively with members of the University Research Forum to decide which practices are most relevant for your organization, to accelerate consensus among key constituencies, and to reduce implementation time.

We offer a variety of services to assist you with your mission. For additional information about any of the services detailed below, please contact your organization's relationship manager or visit our website at eab.com. To order additional copies of this publication, please search for it by title on eab.com.

Facilitated On-Site Presentation

Our experts regularly visit campuses to lead half-day sessions focused on highlighting key insights for senior leaders or helping internal project teams select the most relevant practices and determine next steps.

Research Communications Toolkit

Utilize this set of five research communications tools to implement the tactics discussed in this publication. To access the toolkit, please see the appendix of this publication or visit eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

On-Demand Webconferences

Look for archived versions of this material at eab.com/urf or request a private webconference for your team presented by our experts who worked on this publication.

Ask EAB

Send us your institution-specific questions via your relationship manager. Our team will provide you with relevant practices, resources, and next steps. Our experts are also available for follow-up phone conversations.

To access the full range of services available to you, please visit our website at eab.com/urf.

Executive Summary

Three Core Imperatives for Communicating the Value of University Research

Long-term growth of the research enterprise requires effective, strategic communication about the value of university-led research. With federal funding growth stagnating, universities must appeal to a broader set of stakeholders, such as corporate entities and philanthropic donors. These newer and growing sources of funding often have different interests, priorities, and levels of understanding of university research initiatives.

Chief Research Officers (CROs) are often the primary advocate for the research enterprise, and they may find themselves overwhelmed by the marketing and communications challenges. While they recognize the importance of their role in improving research communications, they want and need to have more effective tools and tactics for doing so.

To support and improve research communications, CROs must execute on three core imperatives: (1) build staff capabilities and coordination, (2) cultivate faculty engagement, and (3) optimize communications channels. This publication offers thirteen tactics and five tools (see appendix toolkit) for executing on each imperative.

Building Staff Capabilities and Coordination

Decentralized structures and dispersed communication efforts often hinder the ability of staff to optimize the timing, messaging, content, and consistency of their outcomes. Therefore, an important first step in improving research communications efforts is organizing and training communications staff so that they can better support faculty and the institution. By creating opportunities for communications staff to collaborate across campus, they can more easily source stories and coordinate news releases and communications efforts to reach a wider audience. Appointing communications staff to specific topic areas can also help them build relationships with faculty and readily identify promising stories. Institutions can also provide research communicators with templates and resources to reduce their workloads while also ensuring consistent messaging and promoting the university brand.

Cultivating Faculty Engagement

When faculty are strong communicators, they can be a valuable asset to the research enterprise. However, faculty are not always effective at communicating their research to the general public and may not see the value of engaging in research communications efforts. CROs should articulate the importance and value of faculty research communications in order to boost engagement. CROs and their staff should also provide faculty with interactive training to enhance their communications skills and develop their confidence when speaking with the media. Furthermore, CROs can leverage the particularly skilled communicators to handle more media interactions and to encourage and help train faculty peers.

Optimizing Communication Channels

In addition to supporting staff and cultivating faculty engagement, CROs also should consider how to best optimize the actual research communications the university distributes through various channels. For each communication, it is important to select the appropriate timing, content, and channels that relate to the research communications goals they hope to achieve. Furthermore, research communications should take a two-pronged approach by developing targeted communications campaigns that send specific, key messages to specific audiences at specific times, while also maintaining an ongoing presence through a research website, social media, digital content, and research-related events. CROs and their staff should also measure the outcomes and return on investment of specific communications strategies so that they can adjust their approach and investment accordingly.

The Case for Contemporary Research Communication

INTRODUCTION

Defining Contemporary Communication

Effective research communications today are broad in scope. While it remains critical to optimize all of the traditional ways researchers communicate in academia, increasingly, universities need to focus on expanding their communication efforts in nontraditional ways, as outlined in the far right column in the graphic.

In addition to academics, the audience now includes the public at large, philanthropic donors, legislators, and potential corporate partners. As federal funding stagnates, these entities are potentially lucrative sources for funding.

Similarly, the metrics of success should not only be grant dollars and publications but also should include "altmetrics," such as social media followers and email click-through rates.

Furthermore, the articulation of the potential impact of the research needs to go beyond the research discipline and tie research to broader social and economic issues. It is also critical to communicate concisely and in plain English terms.

Taken together, the goal is not just to convince peers of the value of research but to convince everyone.

Expanding Beyond Traditional Academic Language and Metrics

	Traditionally, we include:	But today, we also need to include:
Audience	Academia	Public at large, corporate partners, philanthropic donors, and lawmakers
Metrics of Success	Publications, grant dollars, citations	Social media followers, email click-through rates, popular media exposure
Impact	Discipline-specific	Economic and social impact, broader implications for humankind
Communication	Academic and technical language	Plain English, concise and compelling language
Goals	Engage peers, obtain federal funding for new discoveries	Engage broad set of stakeholders, obtain funding from diverse sources

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Communication Is Critical to University Research

Contemporary communication is critically important for university research for four main reasons.

First, due to changing research funding patterns, institutions are increasingly turning their attention to attracting a more diverse set of funders, which often means communicating to a non-expert audience.

Second, now it feels especially important to retain public and legislative interest in research. The larger political climate in 2017 has many researchers feeling as though they are under attack.

Third, federal funding is—and will remain for a long time—the foundation of university research funding. The "broader impact" section of grants has grown increasingly important since grants are becoming more and more competitive—this section could potentially be the critical element in award decisions. Yet, this is one of the sections that may receive too little attention.

Fourth, communicating more broadly and outside of traditional journal articles is critical for building name recognition and attracting talent—both students as well as other faculty and research partners.

Making the Case for Contemporary Communication

Attract New Donors

- Need to communicate the value of faculty work to attract funding from nontraditional sources
- New donors likely care more about potential impact over publications

Garner Public and Legislative Interest

- Create public support around work and the tax dollars that support it
- In some cases, requires preemptively defending faculty work to skeptical lawmakers

Secure NSF and NIH Funding

- With funding thresholds rising higher and higher, it is important to strengthen "broader impacts" section in proposals
- It can be crucial to justify needs to further public support of stagnating federal funding

Draw Talent; Build Name Recognition

- Critical to create awareness of university locally and nationally
- Can help retain top faculty and attract research partners and students

"There's a serious problem, **that's getting worse**, as to understanding the excitement, value, and impact of university research, and it's not just [here], **it's all of us** as research universities. We have been in a position where we said, 'Well, you know, here's a university, it's inherently great, and, you know, we've built it so you just come'—and **people aren't buying that anymore**."

David Lampe
Executive Director for Strategic Communications
University of Michigan

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Growing Concern About Public [Dis]Engagement

As expressed in the quote on the prior page, data suggest that the public does not readily recognize the value of university research. On the top part of the graphic to the right are data from Research America, which show that a surprisingly high percentage of Americans cannot name a living scientist, cannot name where science is done, and do not report having confidence in science. The lower graphic contains data from The Pew Research Center which suggest that public opinions are slipping: whereas 83% said science has a mostly positive effect on people's lives in 2009, only 79% said so in 2014.

While survey data can vary depending on the source and precise questions asked, overall, they suggest a concerning lack of public engagement in research.

Data Suggest the Public Is Unengaged in Science…

81%

of public cannot name a living scientist

66%

of public cannot name where science is done

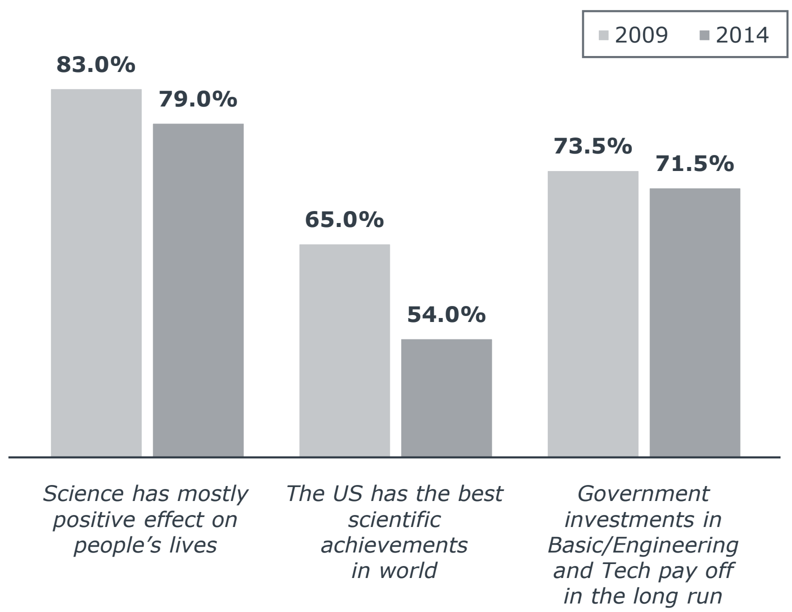
60%

of public do not report having confidence in science

…And There Are Signs That Opinions Are Slipping

Public Opinions About Value of Science

Percentage who Agree, by Year of Survey



Sources: Research America, available at http://www.researchamerica.org/; Pew Research Center, available at http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/29/public-and-scientists-views-on-science-and-society.

Breaking Through the Noise

It can be difficult for universities to understand exactly how to execute on the communications mandate. There are more than 300 research universities across the country and 600 articles published every day. The social media platform, Twitter, has more than 500 million tweets each day. Universities struggle to understand how to get their messages to break through this huge volume of noise and reach intended audiences.

For each communication effort, there are also a number of questions to answer regarding the communication itself: the precise message, the channel, the timing, the audience, and the metrics for evaluation.

There Is a Lot of Noise in the Public Sphere

330+
Research universities

6,000+
Research articles published every day

500M
Tweets per day

And with Each Communication, a Series of Strategic Decisions to Make:

Which **research project** should we feature in our communication?

How do we **frame** the message?

What are the best **channels** to communicate our message?

What is the **best time** to send our communication?

Who is our target **audience**?

How do we **measure** our communication’s success?

Sources: Carnegie Classifications of Higher Education, available at http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/; 21st Century Science Overload, available at http://www.cdnsciencepub.com/blog/21st-century-science-overload.aspx; Twitter Usage Statistics, available at http://www.internetlivestats.com/twitter-statistics.

Faculty Untrained, Raising Questions About Media

In addition to the challenges of public engagement and noise, faculty engagement also can be a significant obstacle in research communications.

Faculty have a lot on their plate already, having to communicate through traditional channels: writing grants, publishing papers, and presenting at conferences. Therefore, universities often do not encumber them with communications training, nor do faculty prioritize it.

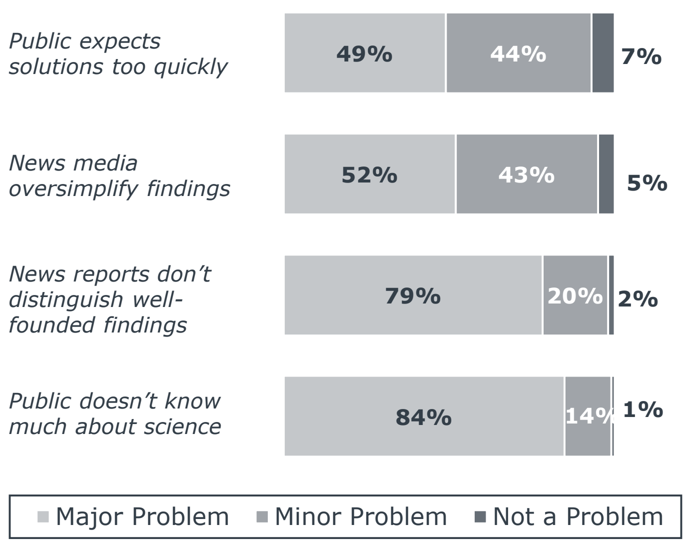
Data also show faculty are concerned about the overall value that engagement will bring. In the lower graphic are data showing the percentage of AAAS[1] scientists saying each issue is a minor or major problem. For example, 95% think that the news media's oversimplification of findings is a problem. And 99% think news reports do not distinguish well-founded findings. These are critical concerns to address in order to successfully engage faculty.

Faculty Inexperienced…

- ✔ Trained for technical communication
- ✖ Untrained in public outreach and other communications strategies
- ✔ Primarily rewarded for communications within expert field
- ✖ Unconvinced of immediate career value of communicating research

And Raising Questions About the Media

Percentage of AAAS Scientists Saying Each Issue Is a ____ Problem for Science in General[2]



1) American Association for the Advancement of Science
2) Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Pew Research Center, available at http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/29/public-and-scientists-views-on-science-and-society.

Facing Obstacles Internally

In addition to facing external challenges, Chief Research Officers (CROs) also experience several obstacles on their own campuses.

First, regardless of institution size or type, research communications are often siloed in some way. Even when a dedicated research communications team is in place, coordination with a central, university communications team is necessary. In other cases, the central communications team may actually be the only resource for communicating research.

At many institutions, there are also college- or department-specific staff tasked with research communications. Given these factors, many universities may struggle to collaborate effectively, and communications strategy is rarely aligned with larger research goals.

Additionally, there is a wealth of research happening across campuses. At any given time, it may be difficult to decide what research to feature and how to do so effectively.

Since research is complex, even understanding and identifying the highest-impact stories can be challenging. Furthermore, faculty and communications staff often have not developed rapport that helps them easily collaborate.

CROs Report Two Key Challenges with Communications

Siloed Research Communications

- Centralized and decentralized staff in separate reporting lines, no effective means to collaborate
- Limited resources and support to coordinate efforts
- Unclear and unaligned strategy for supporting larger research goals

Difficulty Sourcing the Best Stories

- Faculty and communications staff do not have optimal working relationship
- Communications staff unable to identify highest-impact stories
- Staff learn about important stories too late to make greatest impact

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Three Core Imperatives for CROs

To tackle these challenges, CROs must execute on three core imperatives to support and improve research communications.

The first imperative is to build staff capabilities and coordination. This means coordinating with communicators across campus, investing in communications staff, and fostering relationships between communications staff and faculty.

A second imperative is to cultivate faculty engagement. CROs need to engage faculty in the value of communications, train them to communicate their research in a simple and compelling way, and identify and leverage faculty for communications leadership positions.

The third imperative is to optimize communications channels to maximize the value of each communications effort. A key goal is to build followers and engage the unengaged. CROs should invest in focused efforts to convey specific messages at specific times to specific audiences through the appropriate channel. They also need to think about their ongoing communications presence on their websites or on social media platforms. Finally, it is important to measure the effectiveness of communications efforts and use results to guide efforts moving forward.

1 Build Staff Capabilities and Coordination

- Coordinate with communicators across campus
- Invest in communications staff to effectively seek and develop research stories
- Foster relationships between communication staff and faculty

2 Cultivate Faculty Engagement

- Engage faculty regarding value of broad communications
- Train faculty to communicate value of research in plain English, focusing on potential community and societal impact
- Identify and leverage specific faculty for communication leadership

3 Optimize Communications Channels

- Build followers and engage the unengaged
- Invest in focused efforts to convey specific messages to specific audiences through the appropriate channel
- Improve research website, social media presence, and other communications materials to become more compelling
- Systematically evaluate communication efforts to determine effectiveness

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Telling the Story of Research

The following publication provides CROs with 13 tactics they can apply at their own institutions in order to execute on these three imperatives. The tactics include institution profiles and highlight key components that are critical for success.

Some of these tactics might sound like strategies that many institutions are already employing. However, the ones chosen are the best-in-class examples gleaned from in-depth research interviews. These tactics are designed to help CROs take research communications efforts to the next level—and in many cases to improve the basic practices that they are already utilizing. CROs and their team members are encouraged to reevaluate current processes and determine what specific improvements these tactics inspire.

13 Tactics for Communicating the Value of University Research

1 Building Staff Capabilities and Coordination

1. Campaign-Based Templates
2. Purpose-Driven Collaboration Forums
3. Beat Reporting
4. Faculty Feedback Protocols

2 Cultivating Faculty Engagement

5. Faculty Media Spotlight
6. Immersive Training
7. Faculty Leader Fellowship

3 Optimizing Communication Channels

8. Targeted Campaigns
9. Website Enhancement Audit
10. Social Media Improvement Guide
11. Compelling Content Library
12. Community-Connected Events
13. Strategic Scorecard

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Building Staff Capabilities and Coordination

SECTION 1

- Tactic 1: Campaign-Based Templates
- Tactic 2: Purpose-Driven Collaboration Forums
- Tactic 3: Beat Reporting
- Tactic 4: Faculty Feedback Protocols

Facing Challenges, with Varying Control

Bolstering staff capabilities is vital in order to lay a strong foundation for university research communications. The research office plays a critical role in providing communication support services to researchers, but Chief Research Officers (CROs) frequently face a variety of challenges when doing so.

Perhaps the biggest challenge CROs face is the amount of control they actually have over communications. Since communications operations are often decentralized, CROs rarely control all of the various communication channels utilized by different research centers and institutes, departments, or colleges. Due to the massive amount of research taking place across campus, it can also be difficult to source and prioritize the best stories that will have the greatest impact. Furthermore, the number of researchers on campus far outnumbers the number of communications staff, which makes relationship-building challenging.

To overcome these key challenges, CROs should focus on two major priorities, as shown in the graphic: foster working relationships outside of the communications office, and improve competencies of research office staff. The following four tactics offer guidance for addressing these priorities.

Research Communications and CRO Priorities

Key Research Office Challenges:	**CRO Priorities:**
Communications related to research sent from many parts of campus Decentralized communications operations	Foster working relationships to improve communications outside research office Tactic 1: Campaign-Based Templates Tactic 2: Purpose-Driven Collaboration Forums
Difficulty identifying and sourcing research stories Lack of relationships between researchers and communications staff	Improve competencies of research office staff Tactic 3: Beat Reporting Tactic 4: Faculty Feedback Protocols

Communication CROs Control

Research Communications Office

Other Sources of Communication

Departments

Research Centers & Institutes

Deans

Colleges

Individual Faculty

Medical School

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Some Level of Decentralization Is the Status Quo

According to the URF 2017 Research Communications Pulse Check Survey, decentralization is common across universities. In total, 68% of respondents reported that there are communicators located within departments and outside of the CRO's control.

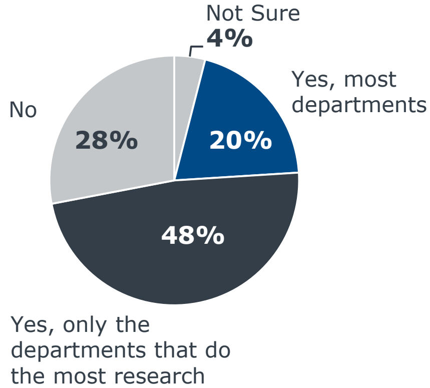
CRO control over nondepartmental communications staff varies across institutions, with nondepartmental staff frequently reporting to either the central communications office, the research office, or both offices. The plurality of respondents (42%) indicated that nondepartmental communications staff reported to *both* the central and communications office, whereas 37% indicated that their nondepartmental communications staff report only to the research office.

Given that CROs cannot control all staff and all types of communications, they should prioritize where to focus their efforts and exercise influence.

Where Do Research Communications Staff Live?

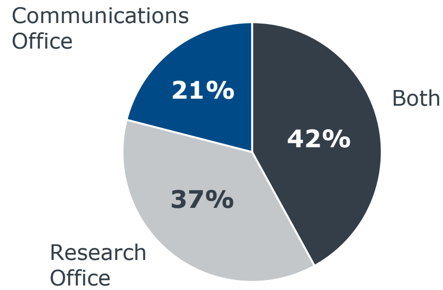
Communicators Outside CRO Control…

Do individual colleges or departments have their own FTEs dedicated to research communication?



…Sometimes Reporting to Multiple Offices

Do (nondepartmental) communications staff report to the central office or the research office?



Communications Pulse Check Survey in Brief

- 25 University Research Forum member institutions participated:
  - 13 from Highest Research Activity universities
  - 7 from Higher Research Activity universities
  - 2 from Moderate Research Activity universities
  - 3 from Master's Colleges and Universities—Larger Programs
- Asked 12 questions on communications strategy, model, and opinions of performance

Download the **results of the Research Communications Pulse Check survey at:** www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

Source: University Research Forum 2017 Research Communications Pulse Check Survey, results available at https://www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

Lack of Public Understanding Created Need to Unify

The University of Minnesota (UMN) opted to devote significant attention to unifying communications efforts across campus in 2006 when they launched the "Driven to Discover" campaign.[1] By unifying communications, UMN could ensure consistent messaging and branding.

The catalyst for this campaign was public perception research showing that only 60% of respondents had an overall positive perception of the university. Additionally, only 26% of respondents perceived that the university was conducting research that improves lives, despite the groundbreaking research focused on organ transplantation, curing cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes, among others.

This public perception data alerted UMN to the importance of developing consistent branding and materials all across campus. Since it was not practical or possible for all research communications to come out of the research communications office, the central office began to devise ways for communicators across campuses to distribute consistent materials.

Templated Resources for Dispersed Communicators Maintains Brand

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠

Public Perception Research Spurs Branding Campaign

60%
Overall positive community perception of UMN in 2005

26%
Community perception of UMN conducting research that improves lives in 2005

Case in Brief: University of Minnesota System

- Public Research University with five campuses in the Twin Cities, Duluth, Crookston, Morris, and Rochester, Minnesota
- $880M+ in research expenditures at the Twin Cities campus in FY2015
- Launched "Driven to Discover" brand and campaign in 2006 to build brand reputation of university
- "Driven to Discover" brand has been embraced and adopted system-wide over the past decade
- Needed to first ensure consistent branding across all university communication output
- Provided all campus communicators with branded templates to produce their own communication materials

1) While the initial perception survey and campaign was launched at the flagship Twin Cities campus, all five system campuses have now adopted the campaign and done excellent work to improve the perception of the University of Minnesota system as an asset to the state and local communities.

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Higher Education Research and Development Survey 2015.

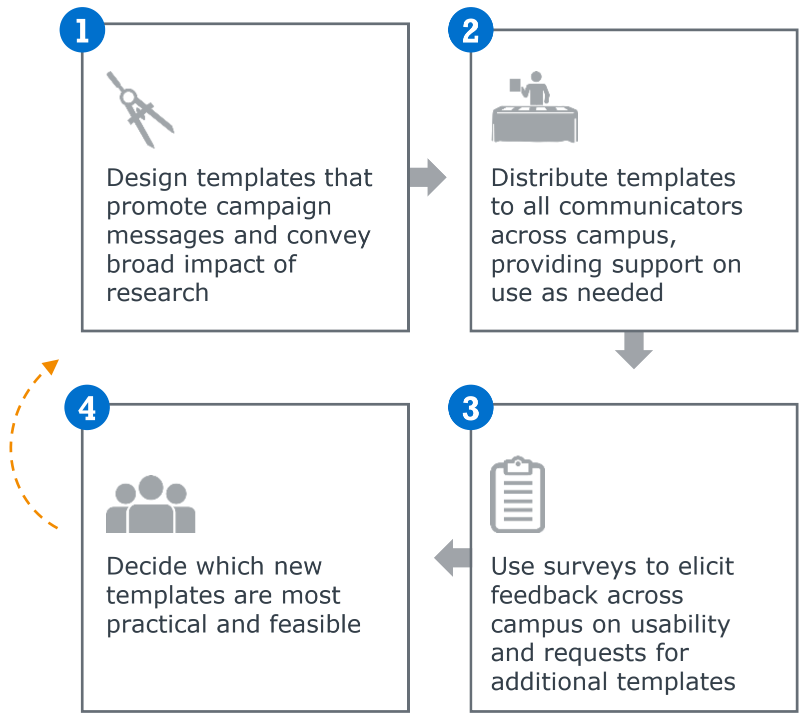
Getting Faculty and Staff to Adopt Templates

In order to ensure consistency and foster widespread use across campus, the University of Minnesota designed easy-to-use templates that faculty and communications staff could use to promote research. As detailed in the graphic, designing these templates entailed four key steps. The final templates incorporated feedback from potential users across campus.

Research communications staff mitigated misuse by having one-on-one conversations with anyone misusing the templates to clarify the campaign's purpose and the need to have consistent branding. They also enlisted peers who had created templated materials to talk with others about the process and results. Additionally, research communications staff made themselves available to help prepare campaign materials for faculty. This was not a significant burden for them due to the ease with which the templates could be used.

Encouraging Early and Continued Use

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠



"What if no one uses them? Or uses them incorrectly?"

The University of Minnesota addressed this by:

- Pointing to administrative policy on use of UMN brand
- Reiterating importance and benefits of brand consistency
- Enlisting peers to champion use of templates
- Offering the option of having research communications staff prepare materials

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Using a Campaign to Tell a Research Story

There were three critical components to each of the templates: (1) a compelling "I am driven" statement declaring faculty member's research focus; (2) short-, medium-, or long-format statements that relayed the impact of that research in plain English to be plugged into various templates; and (3) instructions for how to share the templates via social media, including the appropriate hashtags and language to use. An example for Dr. Carolyn Fairbanks, a pharmaceutics professor, is detailed in the graphic.

These three components allowed faculty and staff to easily customize materials while also helping to unify campus messaging and ensure branding consistency.

Three Core Components Included in Templates

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠

1. Make a Compelling Statement

Example Content

"I am driven…" Statement

"I am driven to create localized painkillers that won't reach the brain."
–Carolyn Fairbanks, Professor,
Department of Pharmaceutics

2. Relay the Impact in Plain English

Example Content

Short Format

We seek to shield the brain from analgesic drugs and pain signals.

Medium Format

We research ways to keep both pain signals and potentially addictive painkilling drugs from the brain. Gene therapy is among the promising approaches.

Long Format

We research ways to keep both pain signals and potentially addictive painkilling drugs from the brain. We have found drugs that work in the spinal cord and peripheral areas. We are also pursuing a gene therapy approach that would erect biochemical "stop signs" for pain signals en route to the brain.

3. Share on Social Media in Consistent Way

Example Content

Tweet on Twitter

@UMN-Pharmacy Prof Carolyn Fairbanks is #UMNdriven to #endaddiction by creating localized #painkillers that never reach the brain.

Post on Facebook

Creating localized painkillers that won't reach the brain.

University of Minnesota professor Carolyn Fairbanks is determined to end addiction by keeping both pain impulses and potentially addictive painkilling drugs away from the brain.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

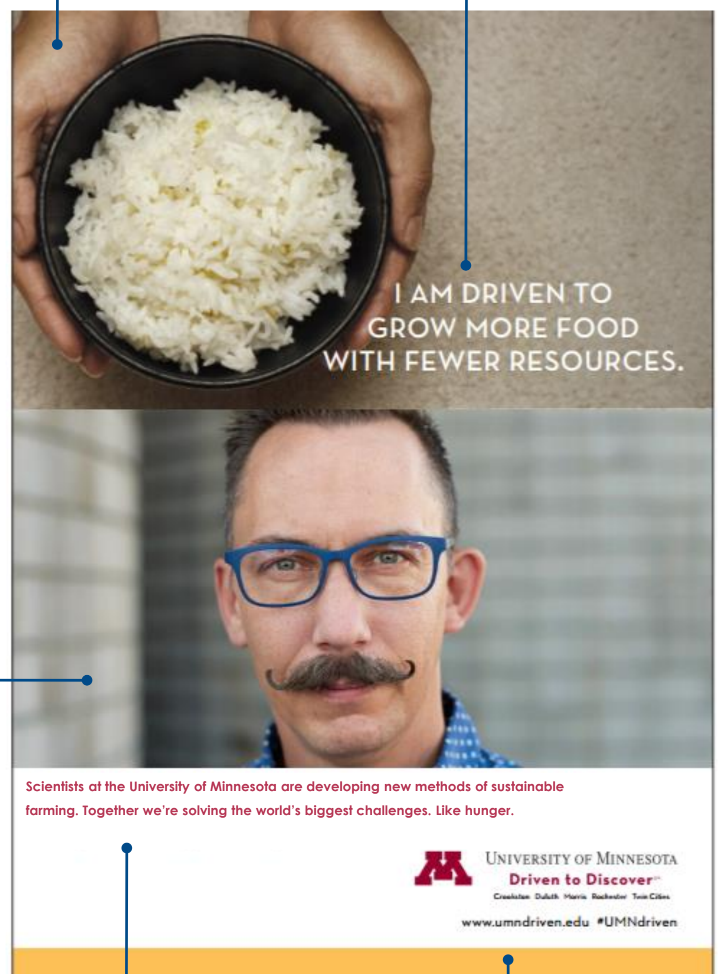
A Plug-and-Play One-Page Resource

One of the "Driven to Discover" poster templates promoted the work of Dr. James Bradeen, Professor of Plant Pathology, as shown in the graphic. The "I am driven" statement is clearly visible at the top of the template, along with a simple image that relates to his work. The bottom half of the template features a candid photo of the researcher, which allows viewers to put a face to the research. Finally, the very bottom of the template features a standard, medium-length impact statement in plain English that describes the research. This is accompanied by a relevant hashtag and URL so that viewers can obtain additional information.

Providing plug-and-play campaign templates, such as the one used to create this poster, encourages adoption and use by faculty and staff since it eases their workload and saves them time.

Ease of Use Fosters Adoption

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Broad Internal Use and External Engagement

The University of Minnesota's "Driven to Discover" campaign has proved successful and popular. An impressive 71% of faculty and staff are aware of the campaign, and more than 50% of students, faculty, and staff felt more favorable toward and knowledgeable about the university as a result of the campaign.[1] Faculty and staff have embraced the campaign, with 15 of 17 colleges integrating the campaign into their communications efforts and with 46 posters created in total. As detailed on the far right, the public has also reported positive perceptions of the campaign's digital media ads.

The University of Minnesota credits the wide adoption of the templates to two factors: (1) the open, feedback-driven process and (2) their ease of use. The templates simply make the job of communicating about research much easier.

Templates Are Broadly Used—and Work

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠

Communicators Embracing the Campaign…

15 of 17

colleges integrated the campaign into their communications efforts within the first year of launch

46+

unique research posters created from January to May of 2016

…And Garnering Public Support for the University

53% *"Inspiring"*

60% *"Progressive"*

54% *"Innovative"*

Percentage of respondents using specific words to describe UMN research after viewing digital media ads

1) For more data on public perception of the University of Minnesota in response to the campaign, see tactic 13 at the end of this publication.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

True Collaboration Can Be Hard to Come By

While templates like those developed at the University of Minnesota can help ensure that decentralized communicators are using unified materials, they do not necessarily spur actual collaboration or contact between communications staff across campus.

In order to effectively articulate the value of university research, CROs and other institutional leaders should build bridges across all campus communications staff. While there are varying levels of collaboration and interaction among communicators at different institutions, ideally CROs and their staff would develop regular, truly collaborative meetings that allow staff to build mutual rapport, share news, and identify opportunities to collaborate with the intention of optimizing their communication efforts.

Just Getting in the Same Room Not Sufficient

Varying Levels of Interaction Among Research, Department, and Central Communicators

No Interaction or Collaboration

- Communications staff across campus don’t know who the other communicators are
- Collaboration relies solely on individuals reaching out to other communications staff one-off, with irregular frequency

Electronic Collaboration

- Collaboration is enabled (through internal newsletters or online announcements) but not necessarily encouraged
- Campus communication remains predominantly siloed

Infrequent, Low-Value Meetings

- Departments that are already linked (by grand challenges or interdisciplinary work) meet regularly on shared initiatives
- Additional shared meetings poorly attended, don’t lead to collaboration

Regular, Truly Collaborative Meetings

- Campus communicators develop mutual rapport
- Staff share news and identify opportunities to optimize their communication efforts through shared learning, resource creation, and joint media efforts

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Creating a Central ‘Council’ for Collaboration

Similar to many other institutions, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Illinois) had many research communicators located across campus, but they were not truly collaborating. Illinois recognized the need to facilitate collaboration and therefore organized a “Research Communications Council.”

This was an informational meeting series that included research communicators across campus (40-50) who met every two months. When Illinois first began this meeting series, it attempted to use a free lunch to incentivize attendance. However, as most institutions quickly realize, this is an insufficient means of promoting true collaboration. Instead, Illinois thought about what they could offer that would truly be valuable for attendees, eventually settling on professional development opportunities as a means of educating staff, encouraging attendance and engagement, and promoting collaboration.

Bringing Research Communications Staff Together

ILLINOIS

Lots of Research Communicators, Little Collaboration

Research Communications Council (RCC)

- All research communicators across campus (including college-level and central office)
- Approximately 35 members
- Meets on monthly basis

Case in Brief: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- Public Research University located in Champaign, Illinois
- University Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $630M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- As a strong interdisciplinary university, needed to facilitate effective collaboration across communications staff
- Organized the “Research Communications Council,” a monthly cross-campus communications staff meeting series using professional development opportunities as a means of educating staff and promoting collaboration

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; HERD, Higher Education Research and Development Survey 2015.

Fostering the Culture Was Critical for Collaboration

The Vice Chancellor of Research (VCR) at Illinois understood that encouraging collaboration served a greater purpose beyond simply connecting staff. At Illinois, interdisciplinary research is common and collaboration is at the core of their culture, which was beneficial when establishing a council of research communicators.

However, the VCR also played a critical role in the success of the Research Communications Council (RCC). As the graphic explains, the VCR provided support in three key areas: (1) financial support, (2) physical attendance and presence, and (3) active promotion across campus.

VCR Buy-In Fostered Broader Support for Research Communications Council

ILLINOIS

Funding the Effort

- Director of Research Communications appealed to the VCR for the creation of a collaborative group meeting
- Early VCR support was critical to get the Council off the ground
- VCR provided dedicated budget to fund meeting lunches

Showing Up

- VCR signals value by attending monthly meetings of the RCC and speaking with communications staff in person
- VCR looks to the RCC to inform strategic decision making

Talking It Up Across Campus

- VCR references and credits the RCC when speaking with deans, faculty, and other administrators
- VCR leverages RCC expertise when making recommendations

"The bigger picture is the spirit in which we're collaborating: seeking ways to enrich the **intellectual vibrancy** and making sure we're **supporting the true research mission** of the university. As communicators we need to reflect the reality of Illinois, which is a **highly interdisciplinary, highly collaborative** place."

Melissa Edwards, Director of Research Communications
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Professional Development as the Jumping-Off Point

Illinois staff deemed RCC meetings valuable, which was in large part due to the professional development they obtained through the signature speakers invited to the meetings. These speakers included the VCR, Director of Research Compliance, and Director of Government Relations. Bringing in high-value guest speakers elevated the importance of the meeting and compelled people to attend since it gave them access to an important campus contact they would otherwise not have.

The meetings were comprised of two parts. The guest speaker presented for the first half and answered attendee questions. In the second half, the research office and other departments shared updates and provided staff with additional information. This then led to identifying areas for potential collaboration, such as pinpointing similar stories that could be linked.

As depicted in the graphic, three key benefits came from these meetings. First, the meetings allowed Illinois to avoid duplicative communications efforts. Second, they created opportunities for communicators to amplify each other's messages. Third, they provided staff with need-to-know information.

How to Build Beneficial Councils

ILLINOIS

Valuable Information Even Better Than a Free Lunch

High-Profile Speaker Ensures Attendance

30 Minutes

- Presentation relevant to communications activities, time for Q&A included
- Popular Guests Include:
  - Vice Chancellor of Research
  - Director of Research Compliance
  - Director of Government Relations

General Research Office & Department Updates Keep Staff Informed

30 Minutes

- Updates from the research office
- Department communications staff share research stories they have in the queue

Collaboration Sets Up Opportunities

10 Minutes

- Identify similar stories or releases that can be linked
- In the moment, schedule follow-up time to collaborate

Observable Benefits of a Communicators Council

Helps Avoid Duplicative Communication

- Staff can repurpose articles from other sources
- Allows staff to partner on similar stories to reduce workload
- Enables staff to identify and coordinate large-scale media releases in tandem

Creates Opportunities to Amplify Messaging

- Staff can promote speakers, articles, and initiatives that they wouldn't have known about otherwise
- Helps staff drive attendance at events that are billed to one department but are actually relevant across campus

Provides Staff with Information They Need

- Shows staff their needs are recognized and validated
- Ensures all communications staff have received the same information

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Who Are You, and Why Are You in My Lab?

Another major challenge is sourcing stories and building relationships with faculty researchers. First, the breadth of research on campus makes it difficult for communications staff to know what is happening in every lab, especially since faculty greatly outnumber research communicators. Second, when faculty have an impactful story to tell they often do not know whom to contact and when. Communications staff and offices may offer valuable services, but they may fail to adequately promote those offerings to researchers. Faculty are also frequently wary about explaining the technical nature of their work to communications staff.

Weak rapport between communications staff and faculty makes the job of research communications even more challenging. And in many cases, faculty have good reason to be concerned about the possibility of their work being misrepresented by communicators or the media. As the bottom graphic shows, there have been several high-profile research communications errors that have reinforced faculty concerns about inaccurate reporting and misrepresentation or misunderstanding of their findings.

Communications Staff Haven't Garnered Sufficient Faculty Trust

Why Don't Faculty and Communication Staff Have a Working Relationship?

So Many Researchers, So Little Time

A single research university might have several thousand researchers on campus and only a dozen communications staff (if they're lucky)

Blurred Lines of Communication

Researchers are not sure whom they should talk to about media interactions

Faculty Not Sold on the Value

It takes time to explain complicated work to the communications staff, so they may not reach out if it feels more like a nuisance than a service

> "I doubt many people even know we have a Media Relations Office now. I didn't know they existed until they questioned me about something I had said to the press. I would have been asking for their help years ago."
>
> *Center Director, Public Research University*

Faculty Worry About Media Misrepresentation

High-profile misrepresentation of research in the media makes faculty concerned about interacting with media outlets

Concerns include:

- Misunderstanding of findings
- Watering down of science
- Drawing conclusions that are not realistic
- Perpetuating myths about their field of research
- Misinforming or scaring the public

Misinformed News Headlines

BAD SCIENCE

The University of Maryland Has a Burgeoning Chocolate-Milk Concussion Scandal on Its Hands

3 Women Lost Their Eyesight After Shady Stem-Cell Treatments

These Shoddy Studies About Sexy Dance Moves Show That Sometimes, It's Good to Shame Researchers

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; New York Magazine, available at http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2016/01/chocolate-milk-concussion-scandal.html, http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2017/02/sometimes-its-good-to-shame-researchers-a-bit.html, http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2017/03/heres-a-really-scary-story-about-stem-cell-quackery.html.

Assigning Communicators to a 'Beat'

To better source stories, the University of Wisconsin-Madison has utilized a "beat reporting" model. Each member of the four-person research communications staff (one director and three writers) is assigned specialization areas by disciplines. The staff then cover these "beats," working with individual departments to source and write stories that are published through campus newsletters, via social media, and in the alumni magazine.

In addition to being assigned central beat areas for which they are responsible, each staff member is also assigned secondary areas as well as a number of oversight and liaison areas, as explained in the graphic. To ensure maximum coverage of beats, staff often have overlapping beats for larger initiatives or more research-intensive departments.

Designated Staff Source and Write Up Stories

Staff Assignments

Some overlap in beat areas and oversight issues ensures nothing is missed

Director of Research Communications
- 5 Beat Areas
- 3 Liaison Areas
- 9 Oversight Issues
- 4 Projects

Science Writer 1
- 6 Beat Areas
- 3 Liaison Areas
- 4 Oversight Issues
- 1 Project

Science Writer 2
- 9 Beat Areas
- 3 Liaison Areas
- 1 Oversight Issue

Science Writer 3
- 8 Beat Areas
- 2 Liaison Areas

Definitions

Beat Areas: Specific **disciplines** for sourcing and knowledge (e.g., neuroscience)

Liaison Areas: Collaborations with department communications staff (e.g., Department of Chemistry staff communications writer)

Oversight Issues: Management of **controversial issues** (e.g., animal research)

Projects: Management of **large-scale** communications efforts (e.g., campus-wide campaigns)

Case in Brief: University of Wisconsin-Madison

- Public Research University located in Madison, Wisconsin
- University Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $1B+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Wanted a better way to connect with researchers and source news
- Assigned specializations to on-campus reporters who collaborate with departments, which includes participating in their events

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

How Beat Reporters Spend Their Time

Beat reporting on a university campus works much the same way as it does in standard journalistic practices. Each reporter devotes much of his or her time to sourcing and writing stories related to individually assigned research areas. They find stories by attending department events and talking with key research-active faculty. They also write press releases for the campus and external media, as well as stay abreast of any sensitive areas of research going on in their beat fields.

While it is important for reporters to know what makes a good research story, it is equally as important for them to be able to determine the right timing for the story. Spending time in their beat areas allows staff to follow research over time and therefore better identify and prioritize stories.

Building Relationships with Faculty

WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Sourcing Stories

Walking the "Beat"

- Walk department hallways studying research posters
- Attend department events (symposiums, colloquiums) to stay up to date on research

Choosing Stories

- Learn about through direct requests from departments and faculty
- Work with departmental communication staff to identify key stories
- Prioritize chancellor research communication requests and time-sensitive issues

Other Responsibilities

Campus Support

- Lead campus-wide organizations and events
- Help administrators source information on key initiatives

Issue Management

- Manage issues relating to controversial subjects, such as a lab that was continuously protested for its treatment of cats in their experiments

Published Work

Articles achieve national and international exposure via:

- UWMadScience webpage
- Social media networks
- Outlets such as www.LabManager.com
- External media such as local paper (e.g., *Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel*)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

An Offensive and Defensive Strategy

Beat reporting offers communications staff a number of benefits. First, it provides them with the opportunity to build rapport with faculty, particularly those who may be more skeptical of communications, and establish themselves as a clear point of contact for communications and media-related questions. By being physically present, reporters demonstrate their dedication to the work and the important service they offer faculty.

Second, beat reporting helps communications staff identify breakthrough stories in complicated, highly technical fields. Spending time in individual departments and speaking with faculty helps staff develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of the content, which allows them to more effectively present the research.

Third, beat reporting can help institutions avoid public relations crises. Since staff are aware of research lab activities, they can identify potentially controversial or difficult-to-communicate research ahead of time, thereby allowing them to prepare for challenges and plan accordingly.

Beat Reporting Serves Multiple Purposes

WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Builds Rapport with Skeptical Faculty

Identify the Key Players

Get to know the top-funded researchers, the young go-getters, and the people who are on the edge of a breakthrough

Become a Clear Point of Contact

Make yourself accessible to researchers who want to communicate

Finds Breakthroughs in Complicated Fields

Pinpoint Breakthrough Moments

Develop an understanding of how basic research contributes to major advancements in developmental and applied research

Know What's Needed in the Field

Anticipate the next great success in the field

Helps Avoid Public Relations Crises

Anticipate Questionable Releases

Keep abreast of what's going on in labs can help institutions stay ahead of public concerns

Learn from Your Peers

Orient yourself to what other institutions are doing in this field and learn from their successes and their mistakes

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

High Faculty Satisfaction with Beat Reporting

The beat reporting model has proved very popular among both communications staff and faculty. As detailed at the top of the graphic, according to an internal survey conducted in 2016, faculty who work with communications staff were extremely satisfied with how their research was presented. As detailed at the bottom, they also appreciated the time that beat reporters devoted to learning about their fields and the content itself since it meant researchers did not have to spend a lot of time explaining the science behind the story. Faculty truly saw these staff as being a service to them rather than a burden.

Relationship Building and High-Quality Reporting

WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Faculty Report That the Final Media Product…

Was Effective	Accurately Reflected My Work	Helped Me Achieve My Goals
93%	95%	90%
Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Agree or Agree

…And That Communications Staff:

Worked Efficiently	Were Courteous and Respectful	Knew the Background and Content
95%	97%	89%
Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Agree or Agree

Sources: University of Wisconsin-Madison Research Communications Faculty and Staff Survey 2016; EAB interviews and analysis.

How to Do Beat Reporting with Limited Resources

This approach, however, may not be practical for universities with more limited resources. Institutions with only one research communications staff member can maximize their effectiveness and impact by identifying priority research areas and allocating disproportionate time to those priority areas.

This might mean using beats only to cover research strength areas or major initiatives. Alternatively, institutions could have one or two staff split their time between beat reporting on priority areas and covering all other fields. Notably, this strategy may also require department-level staff to devote increased attention to research.

A Scaled-Down Version

Identify Priority Research Areas…

- Have you conducted any **cluster hires** or taken on any **grand challenges**?
- What departments and/or colleges are **well-ranked**?
- What research areas are prioritized in the **strategic plan**?
- What areas have you made significant **investments** in?
- What is your institution **uniquely positioned** to study?
- What departments or fields are likely to generate **newsworthy** research?

…And Allocate Beats Accordingly

- Utilize beat reporting to cover research strengths and major initiatives
- Staff prioritize time in major research areas

  Example: 50% of time covering 2-3 key areas and 50% of time covering all other fields
- Department-level communications staff devote increased attention to covering departmental research

  Example: 50% of time covering department research and 50% of time covering all other department news

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Getting the Right Story by Getting the Story Right

Addressing faculty concerns about media misrepresentation and creating opportunities for them to build relationships with communications staff are critical steps for successful research communications efforts. At California State University San Marcos, staff developed a faculty-media communications protocol that standardizes processes across campus and provides clear directions for faculty and staff. This process includes four critical steps, as shown in the graphic.

First, the central communications office coordinates all media interactions between faculty or the university and media members. Second, communications staff meet face-to-face with faculty to develop talking points and practice prior to media interactions. Third, the process guarantees that faculty remain in full control—the communications staff and office simply offer support as needed. Finally, faculty review media articles for accuracy, and communications staff check to ensure that all articles are jargon-free and digestible. This iterative process is a key component of the approach, since it encourages collaboration and helps reduce faculty concerns about misrepresentation.

Cal State San Marcos reports that faculty are virtually always happy to have the process in place and appreciate how communications staff can serve as a bridge to the media.

The University Communications Office Process

California State University SAN MARCOS

The Faculty-Media Communications Protocol

- Central office houses staff of communications experts who work with faculty
- Staff actively reach out to faculty doing hot-topic work and offer 1:1 training
- Staff accompany faculty during media interviews
- Staff tour the university on an annual "road show" to discuss their services and protocol

1. When faculty member or university is contacted by the media, the office handles coordination
2. Office staff meet face-to-face with faculty to develop talking points and practice interviewing
3. Faculty are in full control, with the support of the office as they interact with media
4. Final media articles are reviewed by faculty for accuracy; office staff help adjust language to be reader-friendly and compelling

Case in Brief: California State University San Marcos

- Public University located in San Marcos, California
- Master's Colleges and Universities: Medium Programs
- $6M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Developed press release protocols in 2008 to standardize processes across campus and provide direction to both faculty and staff

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Cultivating Faculty Engagement

SECTION 2

- Tactic 5: Faculty Media Spotlight
- Tactic 6: Immersive Training
- Tactic 7: Faculty Leader Fellowship

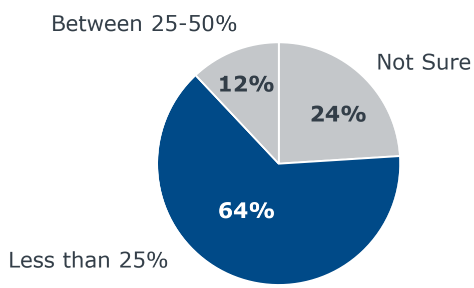
Faculty—a Most Valuable Communications Asset

In addition to improving the capabilities and coordination of communications staff, CROs will ultimately need to cultivate faculty engagement in research communications. As the Pulse Check Survey showed, institutions are underutilizing faculty—the majority report that less than 25% of faculty speak with the media at least twice per year. However, 80% of respondents indicated that improving training for faculty was a priority. This is critical because faculty can be an institution's most valuable communications asset.

Many faculty are skeptical of the value of engaging in research communications efforts and need to be convinced. CROs and communications staff should highlight four possible benefits to boost faculty engagement: it can help them (1) reach new donors, (2) attract talented student and lab staff, (3) better craft the "broader impacts" section of grant proposals, and (4) fulfill a critical advocacy role in a time when research funding feels threatened.

Faculty an Underutilized Fleet of Research Ambassadors

What Percentage of Research-Active Faculty at Your Institution Speak Regularly with the Media?[1]



80% of communications survey respondents would like their institutions to provide formal training to faculty to better communicate their research when approached by the media

The Potential Benefits of Utilizing Faculty

- Messaging is most powerful when delivered by the researcher who made the discovery
- The more researchers who can talk with the media, the further the reach of the university brand
- Many researchers are going to use social media to talk about their work anyway, but communications training can help to send the right message

What's in It for Faculty?

Reach New Donors

Broad communications efforts may attract new philanthropic donors and corporate partners

Attract Talent

Highlighting faculty research in broader forums may draw attention from students, techs, and post-docs

Hone "Broader Impacts" Message

Effective public communication can help faculty craft their "broader impacts" message through intentional consideration of how work matters to public

Helps Faculty Fill Advocacy Role

Communication helps faculty educate the public about their work and promote the importance of research in the public sphere

1) Defined as twice per year.

Sources: University Research Forum 2017 Research Communications Pulse Check Survey; EAB interviews and analysis.

But Not All Faculty Are Successful Communicators

Given varying skill and interest levels, not all faculty members will be successful research communicators. There are generally three types of faculty: those who are engaged and naturally skilled at communications, those who may excel given proper training, and those who likely will never engage nor excel at communications.

While CROs and communications staff should provide all faculty with basic communications training, they should devote special attention to supporting and leveraging the faculty who will produce the biggest return on investment. They can draw on the engaged and skilled faculty communicators to champion research communications and help train other faculty. The interested but untrained faculty are another key group to target for training efforts, since this likely constitutes the largest faculty group. Simply providing some training and encouraging media interactions can produce significant positive results. The following tactics provide guidance for these efforts.

Leverage Faculty Differently Based on Engagement and Skill Level

The Engaged and Skilled

- Refresh on basic training
- Cultivate skills
- Use as champions to engage other faculty

The Interested but Untrained

- Provide basic training
- Encourage media interactions

"I'd rather talk to my cell cultures"

- Provide basic training
- Use for media interactions only when necessary

Tactic 5:
Faculty Media Spotlight

Tactic 6:
Immersive Training

Tactic 7:
Faculty Leader Fellowship

"There are people who are **afraid to come out of their shell** and there are people who are **shameless self promotors**, and then there are those in the middle who **can talk about their research with some preparation and training**. Those are the people you can draw in by offering professional development."

Terry Devitt, Director of Research Communication
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Encouraging Faculty Participation

To engage faculty in research communication and media interactions, CROs should make it clear to them that they value these efforts. However, messages from CROs rarely highlight—or even mention—the importance of research communications. This is a missed opportunity, since recognition of faculty communications efforts can have a variety of benefits, as detailed in the graphic.

CROs can spotlight faculty media interactions and communications efforts in a multitude of ways, as outlined in the lower graphic, ranging from a feature in the research magazine to social media mentions to internal newsletters and even awards. One example from Columbia University's website is shown.

Important Signal Value Comes from Recognizing Faculty Communication Efforts

CRO messages rarely include research communications…

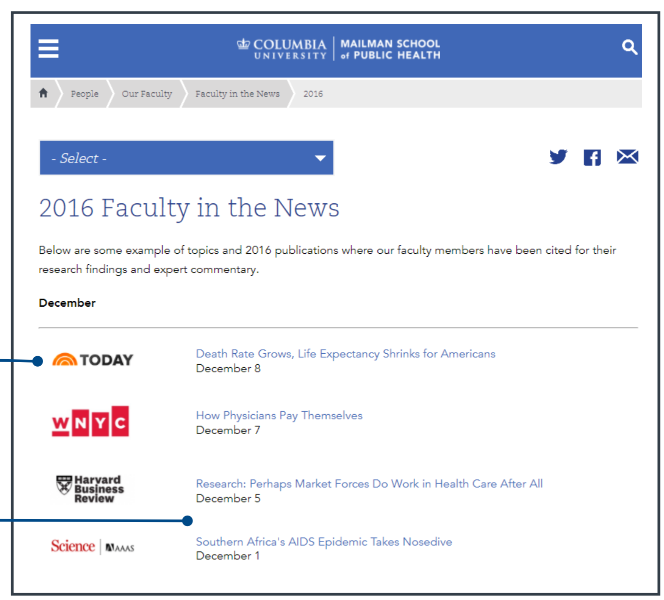
- ✔ Research expenditures
- ✔ Research office services
- ✔ New grants and awards
- ✔ Funding opportunities
- ✖ Research communications

…But recognition of faculty efforts can boost participation

- ✔ Signals that research leaders value faculty communications efforts
- ✔ Exposes faculty to peer involvement in research communications
- ✔ Positively reinforces faculty already committed to research communications
- ✔ Provides faculty with specific ideas for how to communicate (e.g., topics, outlets, messaging)

Four Ways to Recognize and Encourage Faculty Research Communications

1. Incorporate articles into internal research magazine
2. Call out on social media (e.g., retweets, posts)
3. Include media achievements in research newsletters
4. Create monthly or annual awards recognizing successful research communication



Source icon increases reader recognition

Link to specific article so readers can easily access content

Sources: Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, available at https://www.mailman.columbia.edu/people/our-faculty/faculty-news/2016-faculty-news; EAB interviews and analysis.

Taking the Spotlight a Step Further

Spotlighting faculty media interactions is only the first step. It is critical that CROs and their staff then analyze trends in faculty communications and media mentions over time, assessing what types of communications and outlets have proved popular and examining the outcomes of communications efforts. They also should follow up with faculty who have engaged with the media to get a better sense of the long-term outcomes and benefits of the interactions. Furthermore, CROs and their staff can use their analyses to inform future strategies and better support faculty in determining the types of content and different outlets that offer maximum benefits.

Moving from Spotlighting to Analyzing to Following Up

Maximizing the Effectiveness of Faculty Media Spotlights

Spotlight

Signal value by highlighting faculty communication efforts through multiple channels

Analyze

Track and analyze trends in faculty communications and media mentions over time

- What types of communications and topics proved popular in the media?
- What are the most common media outlets featuring faculty research?
- What types of responses and outcomes did communications efforts stimulate?

Follow Up

- Follow up with faculty a few months down the road to determine what came out of their communications efforts and media mentions
- Build relationships with commonly utilized media outlets
- Use analysis to advise faculty, adjust messaging

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Developing Researchers' Communication Skills

In addition to articulating the value of faculty media interactions and communications efforts, CROs and their staff should provide faculty with dedicated communications training. Duke University has developed an immersive training program for faculty. Duke increased faculty attendance, as compared to its previous interdepartmental training seminars, by offering full-day seminars delivered within colleges and departments.

The full-day, interactive training was designed to prepare faculty to effectively utilize visuals and social media to communicate about their research, as well as to communicate in a jargon-free manner.

While a full-day comprehensive training agenda may be an intense effort, it proved highly effective. As the graphic illustrates, didactic sessions were interwoven with interactive portions as well as breaks and meals. By strategically structuring the training agenda in this way, Duke made sure that faculty remained engaged all day.

Teaching Faculty How to Tell the Story of Their Research

Duke University

Training Agenda

9:00 – 10:15	Introductions and SciComm101
10:15 – 11:00	**Elevator Pitches**
11:00 – 11:15	Break
11:15 – 11:45	The Power of Visuals in Science Communication
11:45 – 12:30	Social Media
12:30 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 1:15	Social Media II
1:15 – 2:15	**Improv and SciComm**
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 2:45	Brief Intro to Different Kinds of Interviews You Might Encounter
2:45 – 4:15	**Practice Interviews**
4:15 – 4:30	Wrap-Up/Evaluation Survey

Training Goals

- ✓ Using visuals to communicate research
- ✓ Sharing research on social media
- ✓ Communicating research impact without jargon

Keys to a Successful Day

- ✓ Interactive training interspersed among didactic sessions
- ✓ Practice communication sessions with peers
- ✓ Noninteractive portions of the training broken up with breaks/lunch

Case in Brief: Duke University

- Private Research University located in Durham, North Carolina
- University Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $1B+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Director of Research Communications wanted to provide research communications training that had been highly successful at previous university
- Developed interactive training seminars to teach faculty how to communicate through a variety of media outlets
- Full-day seminars delivered within colleges and departments improved attendance and engagement

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Interactivity Is the Best Training Tool

A distinguishing feature of Duke's training was its interactivity. Several of the sessions gave faculty the opportunity to actually practice communicating with their peers.

The graphic offers details about the three interactive sessions, which included practicing "elevator pitches" or cocktail party small talk, using a gong to identify and eliminate jargon, and practicing interviews via Skype. These exercises help researchers actually practice speaking about their research in understandable and compelling ways for nonacademic audiences.

Participants Practice Communication Skills in Fun and Interactive Ways

Duke UNIVERSITY

Elevator Pitches

"Cocktail party" exercise

- "How do you respond at a party when asked 'So…what do you do?'"
- Researchers take turns practicing how they would answer
- Gives researchers the opportunity to talk about their research in the most casual setting

Improv & SciComm

Playing "The Gong Show" to recognize jargon

- "Can you describe your research using words that anyone can understand?"
- Researchers present the impact of their work and the audience hits a gong when they hear highly technical language
- Offers practice talking about research without using jargon

Practice Interviews

Using Skype to develop presentation awareness

- "When you are interviewed on camera, how do you present yourself?"
- Researchers are mock-interviewed in a separate room and Skyped into an audience of peers. They then get feedback on how they present themselves.
- Increases researchers' awareness of their physical presence when they talk about their work

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Developing Faculty Research Communicators

In addition to simply providing faculty with communication skills, interactive training also offers a number of other benefits for researchers as well as for communicators, reporters, and journalists.

The training helps researchers become more confident in speaking with the media and can be particularly useful for helping young faculty avoid common pitfalls and becoming discouraged. Training also introduces faculty to platforms such as university social media pages, which they previously may not have been familiar with. As a result, faculty obtain a broader and more accurate understanding of the variety of communications opportunities available to them. Similarly, faculty learn about tools and support mechanisms they can utilize to bolster their communications efforts.

A Range of Benefits Gleaned from Training

Builds Confidence for Researchers

Researchers become more comfortable speaking with the media after some practice

Helps Young Faculty Avoid Pitfalls

Without intervention, early-career faculty can become discouraged by unsuccessful media interactions

Promotes Communication Opportunities

Faculty are introduced to platforms (such as university social media pages) they may not have used before

Introduces Tools for Communication Support

Faculty know whom to contact for help when they want to tell a story

Produces More Useful Media Engagement

Reporters and journalists get better stories from trained faculty

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

The Superstars of Research Communications

Besides providing all faculty with immersive communications training, CROs and their staff should leverage the faculty who are already strong communicators by providing them with additional training to cultivate their skills and have them help engage and train other faculty.

Since the University of Denver's top-funded researchers were among the small portion of faculty engaging in research communications efforts, they opted to develop a program focused on identifying candidates for more intensive communications trainings. The resulting Public Impact Fellows Program is an exclusive training program led by top communicators and communication experts that includes monthly discussions and biennial workshops.

Leveraging Skilled Faculty Communicators to Train Others

UNIVERSITY of DENVER

Limited Faculty Communication

11%

Percentage of research-active faculty engaged in communicating broad impact of research

Bringing the Most Funding to Campus

The top 10 funded researchers on campus are among this subset of regular communicators

The Public Impact Fellows Program

Two-Way Selection Process

- Faculty must apply
- Leaders choose participants based on research areas and communication potential

Peer and Expert Facilitation

- Training delivered from successful, top DU communicators and outside communications experts

Monthly Discussion-Based Cohort Meetings

- Fellows share their experiences as they learn and practice their communications strategies

Biennial Campus-Wide Workshops

- Fellows present their experiences and skill development to the larger faculty community and encourage future fellowship participation

Case in Brief: University of Denver

- Private Research University located in Denver, Colorado
- University Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity
- $16M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Wanted to identify the best candidates for more intensive communications training
- Developed proposal for the Public Impact Fellows Program, an exclusive faculty communications training program led by top communicators and communications experts

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Leveraging Confidence from the Top Down

While the Public Impact Fellows Program was initially intended as a pilot program, University of Denver leadership was so impressed with the program proposal that they awarded 30% more funding and commissioned the launch of a full-scale program instead of a simple pilot.

Winning support from key campus leaders was crucial, along with writing a compelling proposal. The University of Denver's proposal for the Public Impact Fellows Program had three key characteristics that made it particularly effective, as shown in the graphic. CROs and/or staff considering proposing similar communications programs can increase the likelihood of success by ensuring that their program proposals include these components.

Endorsement from Leadership Provides Funds and Confidence

Winning Support from Key Campus Leaders

- *Chancellor*
- *VC of Marketing and Communications*
- *VC of Advancement*

~30%

Percentage increase in funding granted for 2-year pilot program to launch full-scale Public Impact Fellows Program

The Keys to a Winning Proposal

1. **Make the Case for Urgency**
   Data on communications ROI is limited, but ties can be made to trends in research communications training, overall funding shifts, and public perception of university research

2. **Demonstrate Current Faculty Support**
   Initial workshop, "Communicating Research: Strategies for Public Engagement," showed strong faculty participation

3. **Have a Clear Assessment Strategy**
   Success of the program will be evaluated based on:
   - Overall citations
   - Funding acquired
   - Media placement rate (compared to both national and University of Denver averages)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

EAB

Optimizing Communications Channels

SECTION 3

- Tactic 8: Targeted Campaigns
- Tactic 9: Website Enhancement Audit
- Tactic 10: Social Media Improvement Guide
- Tactic 11: Compelling Content Library
- Tactic 12: Community-Connected Events
- Tactic 13: Strategic Scorecard

Strong Communication Is a Two-Pronged Effort

Beyond building staff capabilities and coordination and cultivating faculty engagement, there are ways to improve communications channels to maximize impact.

CROs and their staff should take a two-pronged approach. First, they should identify opportunities for investing in specific, targeted campaigns and measure their effectiveness, as covered in Tactics 8 and 13. Second, they should also optimize vehicles that serve as an ongoing communications presence for the university, such as the research website. Ideas for improvement are included in Tactics 9 through 12.

While this publication provides tactics for targeted efforts and maintaining an ongoing presence, it is important to note that the tactics within these two prongs are not mutually exclusive and instead frequently overlap and complement one another.

Maximize Impact by Coupling Specific Campaigns with Maintenance of Communication Channels

1

Targeted Efforts

Goal: Get specific audiences to understand specific messages about research

Tactic 8:
Targeted Campaigns

Tactic 13:
Strategic Scorecard

2

Ongoing Presence

Goal: Engage the unengaged in the overall value of university research

Tactic 9:
Website Enhancement Audit

Tactic 10:
Social Media Improvement Guide

Tactic 11:
Compelling Content Library

Tactic 12:
Community-Connected Events

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Developing a Focused Strategy

Institutions can use targeted campaigns to a achieve specific goals by effectively sending specific messages to key audiences.

After conducting both an internal and external reputational analysis as detailed in the graphic, Washington State University (WSU) administrators launched a targeted campaign in the Seattle area. Despite stakeholder interest in several of the institution's research focus areas and the significant impact WSU research has on the regional economy, stakeholders in that area were unaware of WSU's research efforts and contributions.

Using this reputational analysis, WSU identified the types of stories and messages that resonated with different stakeholder groups and developed a corresponding communications strategy. Specifically, WSU carefully tailored the messaging, channels, and audience.

Reputational Analysis Revealed Need for Regional and Seattle Focus

Internal and External Reputational Analysis

- Qualitative research with 33 opinion leaders
- Quantitative online survey
- Seven focus groups in communities across state
- Student, prospective student/parent, and alumni polls
- Intel from *The Seattle Times*
- Evaluation of congressional priorities

Two Key Findings

1. Regional and Seattle stakeholders were **interested** in certain WSU research focus areas
2. But stakeholders were **unaware** of WSU's research efforts and contributions in other areas, despite the impact on the regional economy and prior communications initiatives

Case in Brief: Washington State University

- Public Research University in Pullman, Washington
- Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $330M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Reputational analysis showed that WSU needed to increase its research reputation and develop partnerships in the region and the Seattle area
- Instituted a targeted campaign carefully choosing messaging, channels, and audience at each point to grow interest in five grand challenge initiatives

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Higher Education Research and Development Survey 2015.

Determining the Who, What, and How

In addition to boosting general awareness and recognition of WSU research in the Seattle area, a Seattle focus would also allow WSU to engage a large alumni population as well as industry, philanthropic, and community partners. With these advantages in mind, WSU created a coordinated, Seattle-focused campaign centered around promoting five of its major research goals from its strategic plan and utilized a variety of mediums (e.g., targeted emails, partnership with local newspaper, lecture series) to selectively connect stakeholder-targeted messaging to key audiences.

Since WSU's campaign was data-driven, communications staff ensured that resources were channeled towards achieving the campaign's strategic goals. Additionally, WSU's campaign was nimble. Based on the data, communications staff could quickly adjust their strategy and approach to respond to what was or was not resonating with key stakeholders.

The targeted communications efforts that WSU orchestrated produced immediate and notable results, ranging from reuse of their materials to increased appreciation for their research from key leaders to increased social media engagement.

Targeted Campaign Process

Washington State University

Seattle Campaign

Overview

Focused on Seattle because of the economic and population boom, lack of WSU research recognition in the area despite large alumni population, and hub for industry, philanthropic, and community partners

Coordinated campaign centered around promoting **five thematic research goals** (grand challenges) from the strategic plan

Developed targeted marketing initiative that selectively pushed events, videos, and newspaper op-eds related to research goals to **key industry contacts, Seattle alumni, and legislators** to capture maximum impact

Communications Channels

Targeted Emails

- Used templated introductory paragraph for all audiences but customized one sentence by specific stakeholder
- Featured uniquely designed html links for three stories that pertain to the targets' interests or goals
- Included photos that link to the stories on the research website
- Measured click-through rates

Partnership with *The Seattle Times* offered regional targeted audience access and communications expertise

Innovators Lecture Series focused on regional issues and featured industry, government, and faculty leaders from Washington state

Immediate Successes

Three Impact Snapshots

Boeing and **The Nature Conservancy** use footage from campaign in their own presentation at an industry conference, **promoting WSU's research to industry leaders**

The **Governor of Washington** writes a **thank-you** letter to WSU researchers after reading an op-ed released through the campaign

Native content in *The Seattle Times* **goes viral with regional public** and increases **retweets and clicks across state congressional offices**

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Implementing Targeted Campaigns

While targeted campaigns offer numerous benefits, it is not possible for CROs and their staff to create a targeted communications campaign every single time they want to share a message about university research. These campaigns are high-cost and they require significant planning and investment in terms of time and money.

As a result, CROs and their staff should be strategic about when and how they choose to use targeted campaigns. The top graphic offers examples of ways CROs can utilize targeted campaigns.

After deciding that it makes sense to invest in a targeted campaign, CROs should consider the key components of a successful campaign. The most successful targeted campaigns align with strategic goals and utilize data to inform and modify strategy. Successful campaigns also tend to utilize multiple mediums to connect with key audiences. Additionally, campaigns should be customized, meaning that staff can adjust wording and/or messaging based on the target audience.

To plan a targeted campaign, CROs and their staff should ask themselves seven questions about their goal(s), audience(s), channel(s), implementation plans, and evaluation metrics in order to ensure they maximize the effectiveness of the campaign (see graphic).

How and When to Use Targeted Campaigns to Maximize Impact

Worthwhile Ways to Use Targeted Campaigns

- To execute goals or initiatives in strategic plan
- To promote and/or justify an area of significant investment (e.g., new center/institute, cluster hire)
- To attract funding and support for a high-priority initiative (e.g., grand challenge)
- To address a potentially controversial topic and/or combat negative media coverage
- To capitalize on a major discovery or achievement

Determining the Right Course of Action

1. What strategic goals do you want this initiative to **help achieve**?
2. Who are the **intended audiences** of this initiative, and how do they help you achieve your goals?
3. What do these audiences **already know and think** about the subject and our research on it, and what new information do we **want them to know**?
4. How do we frame our message based on our understanding of what these audiences **want and need**?
5. What are the **optimal channels** for reaching these audiences, and why?
6. How are we going to **execute** on this campaign—what are the specific messages we are going to send to specific audiences through specific channels at specific times?
7. What are the best **metrics for evaluating** the effectiveness of our campaign?

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

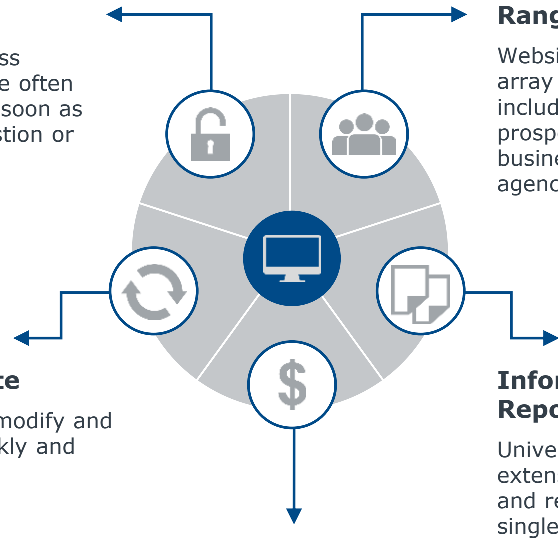
The Gateway to the Research Enterprise

In addition to targeted campaigns designed to send strategic messages to specific audiences at key points in time, institutions should also bolster their ongoing communications presence. One of the key channels for doing so is the research website, which frequently serves as the first introduction to a university's research.

As the graphic shows, research websites offer a variety of potential benefits as a communications channel.

In order to assess how effectively institutions are utilizing their research websites to communicate about research, the University Research Forum conducted an audit of 50 randomly selected[1] research universities' research websites. The audit used a three-click rule and was based on 14 most valuable research website features (see following page)[2].

The Potential Benefits of the Research Website



Accessible

Anyone can access 365/24/7—People often visit websites as soon as they have a question or want information

Range of Audiences

Websites attract diverse array of stakeholders, including faculty, prospective students, businesses, and funding agencies

Easy to Update

Institutions can modify and add content quickly and easily

Information Repository

Universities can store extensive information and resources in a single central location

Cost-Efficient

Updating and maintaining a website can save universities money on print materials

> "The website is really the centerpiece of the communications strategy and platform…getting it right is crucial in establishing the profile and impression that you need to convey."
>
> AJ Cheline, Director of Marketing and Communications
>
> Office of Research, University of California-Davis

URF Website Audit in Brief

- Audited 50 randomly selected research universities
  - 25 with research expenditures exceeding $100M
  - 25 with research expenditures between $10 and $99M
- Developed a list of the 14 most valuable research website features, based on website usability principles and an examination of best-in-class research websites
- In most cases, features had to exist within three clicks of research home page to count

1) All institutions in HERD with research expenditures exceeding $100 million were assigned a number starting at one. Similarly, all institutions in HERD with research expenditures between $10 and 99 million and numbered separately starting at one. Using Google's random number generator, 25 random institutions with expenditures exceeding $100 million were selected and 25 random institutions with expenditures between $10 and 99 million were selected to be assessed in the audit.

2) After generating the sample, the University Research Forum examined each institution's research website based on the 14 most valuable research website features, which were generated from website usability principles and best-in-class websites. This led to the compilation of binary data on whether each site had each desirable feature. Using this data, URF calculated descriptive statistics and conducted t-tests for each website feature to identify statistically significant differences between institutions with higher and lower research expenditures.

Sources: University Research Forum 2017 Research Website Audit; EAB interviews and analysis.

Sizing Up the Current Website Landscape

Despite the many potential benefits of research websites and their importance as a communications channel, the audit showed that institutions are not maximizing their effectiveness.

Notably, not a single institution had a research website with all 14 of the most valuable research website features. In fact, the typical research website had only 5.48 of the 14 features. Furthermore, less than 50% of the institutions had 11 of the 14 most valuable features.

While institutions with higher research expenditures tended to have stronger research websites in terms of the number of most valuable features, the audit showed that there is significant room for improvement across all institution types.[1]

Download the **Research Website Self-Audit** at: www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

Opportunities for Improvement Across the Board

Key Website Audit Findings

0

Not a single institution had a research website with all 14 features

~5 of 14

Average number of most valuable research website features for an institution was 5.48

<50%

Less than half of institutions incorporated 6 or more of the 14 features

Institutions with higher research expenditures had stronger research websites[1]

14 Most Valuable Research Website Features

1. **First Result in Google Search**
   Start at www.google.com. Search "[Institution's full name] research." Is your main research website the first result?
2. **Visible Link on Institutional Home Page**
   Navigate to your institutional home page. Is there a visible "Research" link on the main menu? Make sure viewers can get from the institutional home page to your research site in one click.
3. **Matching Google and Home Page Links**
   Does the link on your institutional home page lead to the same research site that the first Google result did?
4. **Visually Engaging**
   Is your main research website visually engaging? Does it include several videos, photos, and/or infographics?
5. **Research-Specific Social Media Links**
   Does your main research page have the links to research-specific social media accounts?
6. **Embedded Social Media Feed**
   Does your research website have the feed from a research-specific social media account(s) embedded on the page(s)?
7. **Research Enterprise Metrics**
   Does your website have visible metrics on the research enterprise (e.g., funding, awards, centers)?
8. **Highlights Large-Scale Initiatives and/or Expertise**
   Does your website highlight large-scale university research initiatives and priorities? Grand challenges? Areas of specialization and/or expertise?
9. **Compelling and Jargon-Free Research Stories**
   Does your website profile interesting research stories in compelling, plain language terms?
10. **Communicates Broader Impact of Research**
    Does your website articulate the broader impact of research in terms of economic engagement and similar meaningful metrics (e.g., lives saved, jobs created, patents filed)?
11. **Contact Information and/or Instructions for Media**
    Does your website provide contact information and instructions for media?
12. **Information for Multiple Stakeholders**
    Does your website provide clearly distinguished information for multiple audiences (e.g., undergraduates, researchers, corporate partners)? Is this part of the navigation menu?
13. **Research-Specific News Center**
    Does your website have a research-specific news center or page separate from the institution's news center?
14. **Faculty and Scholarship Search Engine**
    Does your research website have a search engine viewers can use to find faculty and research in certain disciplines or topical areas?

1) T-test ($p<0.05$) showed statistically significant difference in the number of website features between institutions with higher (>$100M) and lower ($10-99M) research expenditures.

Source: University Research Forum 2017 Research Website Audit, available at https://www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

Pinpointing the Critical Deficits in Websites

In particular, research websites are lacking in four key areas.

First, most research websites fail to engage their viewers with visuals, which means that visitors may leave research webpages very quickly. Many research websites are predominantly text-based and/or lack visual, multimedia appeal.

Second, research websites are often not stakeholder-friendly. Most visitors are not interested in information that does not relate to them. Yet on their research websites, institutions rarely provide information that is clearly relevant to audiences other than faculty. Providing tailored information and specific links can better engage stakeholders.

Third, the audit showed that research websites often look and sound very similar when describing the research enterprise. CROs and their staff should make their sites distinctive and spotlight the types of research that their institution excels at or that distinguishes their institution from competitors.

Finally, research websites tend to include metrics about publications and grant dollars but rarely include meaningful metrics, even though nonacademic audiences care more about real-life impact on their lives and local communities.

Four Key Areas Where Websites Are Often Lacking

Engaging with Visuals

- Most viewers leave web pages in under 20 seconds
- Viewers are more likely to remain on sites if they are not solely text-based

Targeting Specific Stakeholders

- Viewers are eager to get to information that relates to them
- Institutions can keep viewers engaged longer if they provide navigational links and tailored information for different stakeholders

Highlighting Unique Strengths

- Research websites blur together, so institutions need to make their sites distinctive
- Institutions should publicize how they stand out in key areas

Including Meaningful Metrics

- Nonacademic audiences don't value publications and citations as much as academic audiences
- Potential funders, lawmakers, and the public at large are more compelled by concrete examples of how research relates to their lives and communities

Sources: University Research Forum 2017 Research Website Audit; Nielsen Norman Group, available at https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-long-do-users-stay-on-web-pages.

Using Visuals and Organization to Boost Engagement

In order to increase visitor engagement, CROs and their staff should invest in multiple forms of graphics and optimize navigability by creating a clear menu. Increasing visual appeal and organization is a foundational first step in improving research websites; however, only 38% of audited websites met this criterion. Simply making a few cosmetic updates is a relatively easy way to instantly upgrade a website and improve visitor engagement.

CROs should also prioritize tailoring and organizing the information on their research websites for key audiences—only 30% of websites in the audit did so. Research websites must include a lot of information and resources because they serve so many different stakeholders, which can make organization difficult and often results in visitors becoming overwhelmed and confused while on the webpage. An easy way to improve organization is to create a clear stakeholder navigation menu. Another option is to provide a menu that allows visitors to quickly and easily select what they are interested in and redirects them to the most relevant part of the website.

Website Design Is Key

Creating a Multidimensional Website

Make it multidimensional

Combine different visual elements (videos, photos, *and* infographics) to keep visitors engaged longer

Invest in graphics

Visitors do not read website text word-by-word, so utilize high-quality graphics to communicate

Remove clutter

Create a clear navigation menu with drop-down links and resources so that the rest of the page can be concise and visually engaging

Engaging with Visuals

38% Percentage of institutions with visually engaging websites that included video clips, photos, and/or infographics

Making Your Website Stakeholder-Friendly

Tailor information

Visitors are engaged longer if site provides information tailored specifically to different audiences

Include stakeholders in menu

Creating a navigation menu with options "For students," "For Researchers," "For businesses," and "For media" reduces clutter and improves organization

Provide clear starting point

Including an explicit "I want to…" menu with the most common stakeholder requests provides visitors with quick and easy directions for navigating the site

Targeting Specific Stakeholders

30% Percentage of institutions that provided clearly distinguished information for multiple audiences

Sources: University Research Forum 2017 Research Website Audit; Nielsen Norman Group, available at ttps://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/; EAB interviews and analysis.

Catering Content Based on Strengths and Interests

Since most research websites look and sound similar, CROs and their staff should highlight their research strengths by profiling key research areas that their institution is uniquely positioned to study. However, only 30% of audited websites met this criterion. Highlighting strengths will make institutions stand out from peers and also alert potential collaborators or industry partners to specific areas of research expertise.

To appeal to a broader audience of external stakeholders who care about real-world impact and how research affects their daily lives and community, institutions should use impact terminology and concrete examples (rather than simply relying on traditional academic metrics) on their websites. The audit showed this to be the biggest missed opportunity — only 14% met this criterion. The best research websites focus on the relationship between research and the local community by emphasizing the impact that research has on the institution’s city or state, whether it be in terms of economic growth, jobs or businesses created, or new drugs or cures discovered.

Building Content to Build an Audience

Drawing Attention to Your Distinctive Research

Ensure the university stands out:

Research websites often sound similar, so sites should emphasize what the institution is uniquely positioned to study, using language that no other institution could use

Capitalize on investments:

If the institution is investing in strategic research areas, publicize this information to online audiences—it can build additional support and enhance reputation

Keep it simple:

It can be as easy as identifying the institution’s key research areas and including a brief explanation about the importance of each

Highlighting Unique Research Strengths

30% Percentage of institutions that highlighted large-scale university research initiatives, priorities, and/or expertise on their research websites

Linking Research to Audience Interests

Use impact terminology:

Make sure the site minimizes scientific jargon and instead speaks in terms of impact on the economy and community

Relate research to local community:

Emphasize the impact of research on the institution’s city and/or state

Provide concrete examples:

Explain how research has had a real-world impact (e.g., led to cures or new drugs, changed the way people do everyday tasks, helped children stay safe)

Including Meaningful Metrics

14% Percentage of institutions that effectively communicated broader impact of research in terms of economic engagement and other meaningful metrics (jobs created, businesses founded, patents filed)

Sources: University Research Forum 2017 Research Website Audit; EAB interviews and analysis.

Growing Audience, Growing Importance

Along with the research website, social media is another important channel for communicating the value of research to external audiences. Social media is typically associated with a younger audience, but as the graph and statistics from the Pew Research Center show, people of all ages are now joining social media platforms. Social media thus provides CROs and their staff with access to a much broader, expansive audience than they previously had access to.

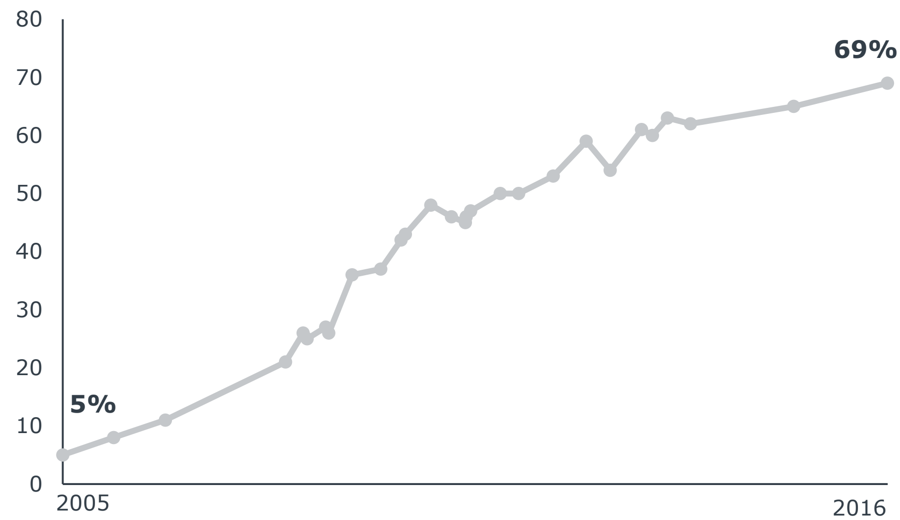
Since the majority of the public now communicates via these platforms, research communicators ought to leverage this to their advantage.

Additionally, social media offers a variety of other benefits for CROs, faculty, and research communicators, such as a vehicle for branding and networking.

Why We Need to Pay Attention to Social Media

Social Media Use Over Time

Percentage of US adults who use at least one social media site

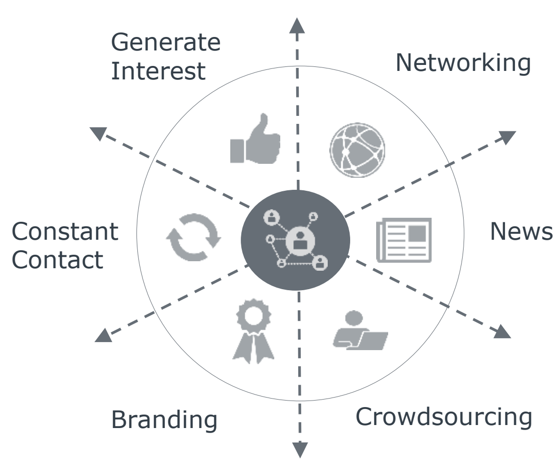


69% Percentage of adults over 18 who use at least one social media site

80% Percentage of adults 30-49 who use at least one social media site

64% Percentage of adults 50-64 who use at least one social media site

Multitude of Benefits



Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Pew Research Center, available at http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media.

Making a Mark on Social Media

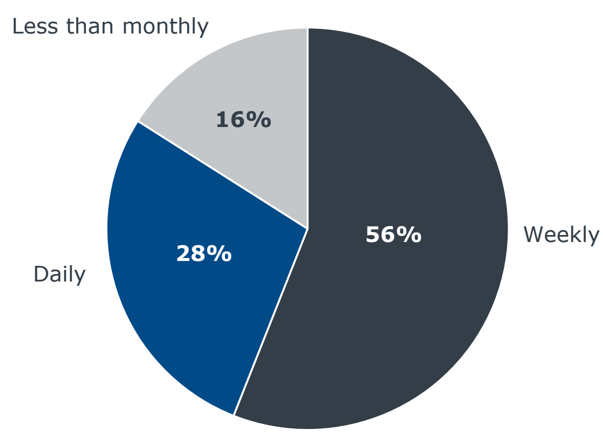
The University Research Forum's 2017 Research Communications Pulse Check Survey showed that most CROs and their staff are using social media for research communications on a weekly basis and that Facebook and Twitter tend to dominate, with 91% of respondents using them.

However, simply having a presence on these platforms does not necessarily guarantee that CROs and their staff are truly engaging with new stakeholders or adding value.

Weekly Use, Twitter and Facebook Dominate

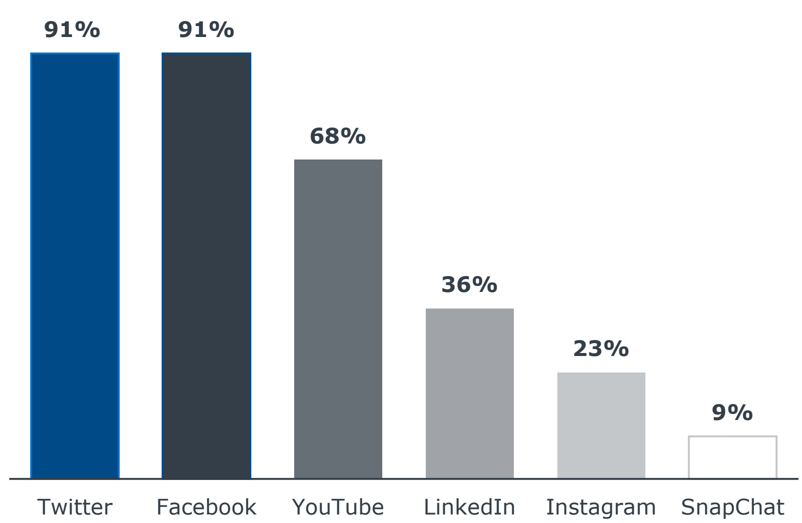
Social Media Usage for Research Communications

Frequency of use of social media to communicate about research



Top Social Media Platforms for Research Communications

Percentage of respondents using each platform



Sources: University Research Forum 2017 Research Communications Pulse Check Survey; EAB interviews and analysis.

Taking Advantage of Different Social Media Platforms

In order to maximize the impact of social media for research communications and to avoid creating more noise, CROs and their staff should develop a clear use strategy for each social media platform.

These platforms differ in terms of their audiences, formats, tools, and strengths. As a result, there are a number of recommendations and strategies that CROs and their staff can utilize to bolster their social media communications efforts. As detailed in the graphic, there are four recommended strategies that CROs and their staff can use to better communicate research through Twitter and three recommended strategies for improving their use of Facebook for research communications.

Download our full guide on **Social Media for Research Communications** at: www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

Communicating Research Through **Twitter**

Key Recommendations

Create a unique research hashtag, such as Oklahoma State University's #OSUResearchMatters—this enhances your brand and creates a library of research-related tweets for your institution

Make sure that research and institutional accounts play nicely together—use @ to loop each other into the conversation and establish a reciprocity of retweets

Build social media relationships with colleges and schools by using @ to give them credit in research posts, and save time and energy by re-tweeting their research-related content

Use topical hashtags to describe research—this contributes to the larger dialogue about the subject and increases "searchability"

Communicating Research Through **Facebook**

Key Recommendations

Keep text-based posts to a minimum (even though there isn't a character limit)

Create and invite users to research events—the Events feature distinguishes Facebook from other platforms

Use Facebook as a hub for all social media activity

- Link to your Twitter account
- Upload videos from YouTube
- Post photos from Instagram
- Direct traffic to your research website

Sources: Social Media for Research Communications, available at https://www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications; EAB interviews and analysis.

Coupling Pop Culture with Research Expertise

The University of Arizona provides an example of how institutions can effectively leverage social media to improve stakeholder engagement. Capitalizing on their research expertise in the areas of space systems engineering, optics, robotics, and psychology, the University of Arizona created a series called "Star Wars Science" that featured stories in which researchers applied real-world science to concepts in the *Star Wars* movie series.

A key component of this campaign's success was its coupling of research expertise with popular culture that appealed to the general public. Another critical component was proper timing—the campaign preceded the release of the latest *Star Wars* film in 2015. Finally, the campaign content was shared through multiple social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Communicators also utilized the hashtag, #StarWarsScience, which quickly gained momentum.

After launching the campaign, the institution saw a massive increase in website views and Twitter impressions. The content that they promoted via Twitter was frequently retweeted and shared by other users including other institutional research offices, research laboratories, and businesses with an interest in the research. The campaign also gained additional public and scholarly attention through news outlets and R&D magazine.

Increasing Engagement Through Social Media

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

231% Percentage of increase in website page views

135K Number of Twitter impressions (increased from 9,885 in previous month)

3 Number of local news stations that picked up the stories

1 Number of articles rewritten (and infographic picked up) by R&D magazine

Case in Brief: University of Arizona

- Public Research University in Tucson, Arizona
- Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $600M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Sought to utilize digital communications to maximize impact, better engage with stakeholder groups, and elevate overall attention to their research
- "Star Wars Science" featured four stories in which Arizona researchers applied real-world science to the highly popular sci-fi *Star Wars* movie series
- Timed to precede a new film release, utilized #StarWarsScience, and promoted through Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn Slide Share

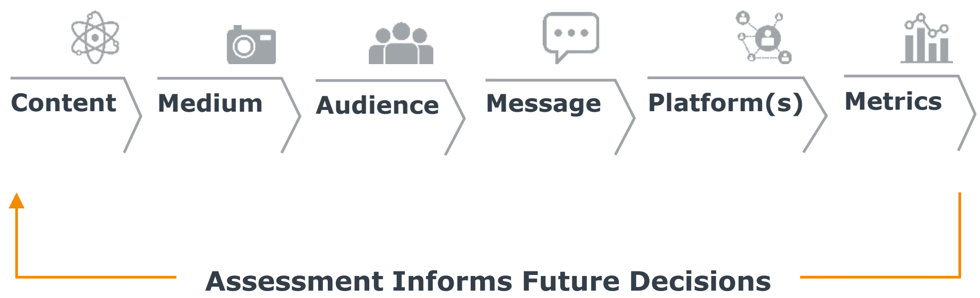
Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Higher Education Research and Development Survey 2015; Twitter, available at https://www.twitter.com/hashtag/StarWarsScience?src=hash.

Using Social Media Strategically

The Star Wars Science social media campaign at the University of Arizona illustrates the importance and potential benefits of using social media strategically.

Research communicators need to make six critical choices to maximize the impact of their social media communications. First, select the right content—choose research stories that are timely, newsworthy, and have the potential to engage multiple audiences. Second, pick the appropriate medium based on the selected content. Third, identify a primary intended audience to receive the message. Fourth, craft the message based on the content, medium, and audience. Fifth, select a platform(s) based on both the chosen medium and audience. Sixth, identify the metrics to track and use to assess value even before sharing via social media. After pushing out the content and tracking the appropriate metrics, communicators can then use that data to inform future decisions about which content to choose, which mediums are popular, which audiences to target, and which platforms to use. Some additional tips for optimizing social media use are included in the bottom half of the graphic.

Key Ways to Maximize Impact for Research Communications



Social Media Tips

- Ensure accounts on different platforms use the same name
- Connect posts to popular media at key times
- Focus on engagement, not quantity of posts
- Collaborate with other institutional accounts (especially central communications)
- Repost or retweet when running low on new content
- Track altmetrics (e.g., likes, shares, retweets)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Effectively Addressing the 'So What' of Research

In order to develop targeted campaigns, improve research websites, and strategically use social media, CROs and their staff need to have compelling content on hand to share with external audiences.

Most external stakeholders do not have the time or interest to sift through long research articles or reports. These stakeholders may not adequately understand academic research and jargon, and they primarily care about the impact of research on the community (as opposed to number of publications or citations). As a result, long, technical, and abstract communications about university research may fail to engage or convince them of the value of the research enterprise.

Instead, research communicators should provide stakeholders with compelling content that is brief, engaging, and straightforward. Furthermore, to be truly compelling, the content must demonstrate the impact of research in a way that is relevant and valuable to the stakeholders.

Engaging Critical Stakeholders on the Impact of Work

Key Stakeholders Need Compelling Content

Boards | Legislators | General Public

Don't have time or interest to sift through long research articles or reports → 1 Short, concise, and engaging

Don't understand academic research and jargon → 2 Simple and straightforward in layman's terms

Care about impact on local and regional community → 3 Demonstrates impact on the community and region

✗ Communications that are long, technical, and abstract fail to impress the audience and lead to disengagement and misunderstanding

✓ Communications that are clear, concise, and impact-focused better engage stakeholders and articulate value

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Making Research Powerful and Pithy

Louisiana State University (LSU) has created compelling content by developing one-page fact sheets that show how LSU is solving key community-relevant problems through its research. These are distributed to legislators when related bills or issues are being discussed.

As described in the graphic, the strategic communications staff at LSU worked in teams to gather the necessary information and statistics for these fact sheets that they then plugged into a premade template, which reduced workloads and ensured consistent branding.

LSU Uses Fact Sheets to Communicate with Legislators and Community

Fact Sheet Creation Process

LSU

Strategic communications team picked topics based on research strengths

↓

Teams (1 writer, 1 photographer, 1 marketer) interviewed faculty

↓

Designer created a fact sheet template

↓

Teams filled in templates with information

↓

Produced one-page fact sheets that communicated issues in Louisiana-specific terms and highlighted how LSU research was helping solve the problems

↓

Brought along and handed out fact sheets to lawmakers when relevant bills or issues discussed

↓

Lawmakers can share fact sheets themselves

Case in Brief: Louisiana State University

- Public Research University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $280M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- Interim Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications wanted to create fact sheets that could be given to legislators to show how LSU was planning to solve key problems

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Higher Education Research and Development Survey 2015.

Talking in Football Fields

For example, LSU developed a fact sheet that focuses on coastal wetlands loss. Notably, the very first sentence on the fact sheet uses relatable metrics that lawmakers and the general public can easily understand and identify with—in this case, football fields. The fact sheet then explains the problem and identifies its implications for the local community. The final section of the fact sheet provides an overview of LSU research related to the problem and a statistic on public engagement with the topic, which is particularly compelling for a lawmaker audience.

By clearly and concisely articulating a problem and LSU's contribution to its solution in a relatable way, LSU can better engage key stakeholders in the value of its research.

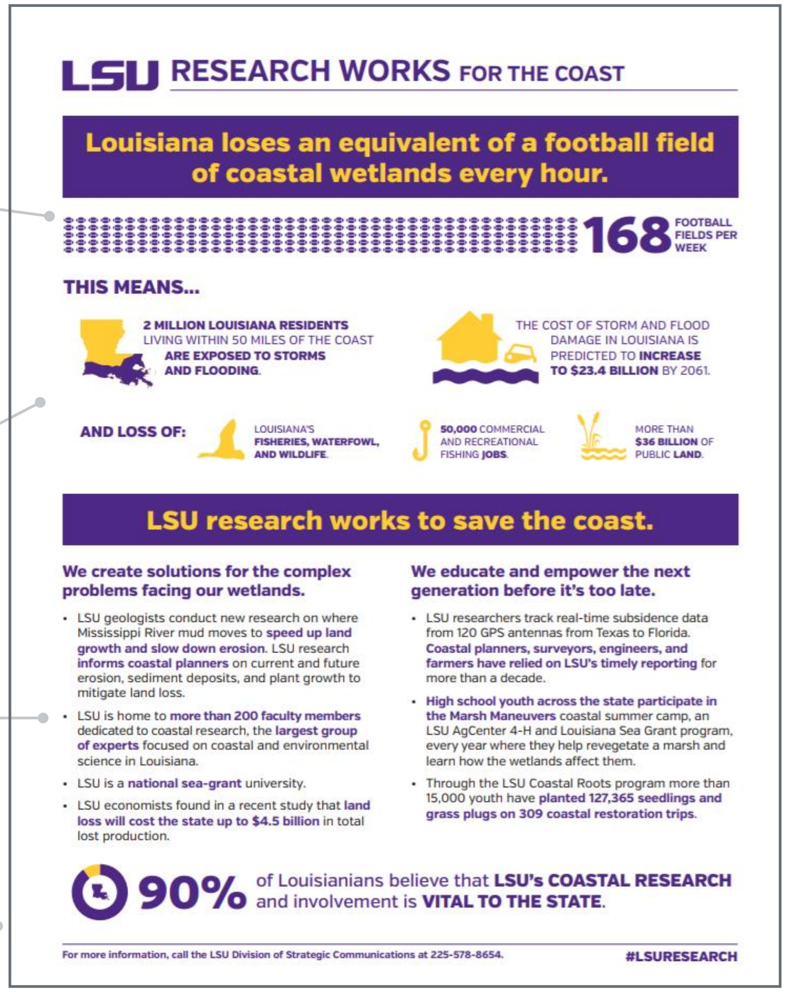
Download our **Research Fact Sheet Template** at: www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

Creative Design Makes Research Accessible and Meaningful to Audience

Uses relatable metrics (football fields) to show impact

Explains degree of problem and what it means for local community

Overview of how LSU research is tackling the problem



LSU RESEARCH WORKS FOR THE COAST

Louisiana loses an equivalent of a football field of coastal wetlands every hour.

168 FOOTBALL FIELDS PER WEEK

THIS MEANS...

2 MILLION LOUISIANA RESIDENTS LIVING WITHIN 50 MILES OF THE COAST **ARE EXPOSED TO STORMS AND FLOODING.**

THE COST OF STORM AND FLOOD DAMAGE IN LOUISIANA IS PREDICTED TO **INCREASE TO $23.4 BILLION** BY 2061.

AND LOSS OF:

LOUISIANA'S **FISHERIES, WATERFOWL, AND WILDLIFE.**

50,000 COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING **JOBS.**

MORE THAN **$36 BILLION** OF PUBLIC **LAND.**

LSU research works to save the coast.

We create solutions for the complex problems facing our wetlands.

- LSU geologists conduct new research on where Mississippi River mud moves to **speed up land growth and slow down erosion.** LSU research **informs coastal planners** on current and future erosion, sediment deposits, and plant growth to mitigate land loss.
- LSU is home to **more than 200 faculty members** dedicated to coastal research, the **largest group of experts** focused on coastal and environmental science in Louisiana.
- LSU is a **national sea-grant** university.
- LSU economists found in a recent study that **land loss will cost the state up to $4.5 billion** in total lost production.

We educate and empower the next generation before it's too late.

- LSU researchers track real-time subsidence data from 120 GPS antennas from Texas to Florida. **Coastal planners, surveyors, engineers, and farmers have relied on LSU's timely reporting** for more than a decade.
- **High school youth across the state participate in the Marsh Maneuvers** coastal summer camp, an LSU AgCenter 4-H and Louisiana Sea Grant program, every year where they help revegetate a marsh and learn how the wetlands affect them.
- Through the LSU Coastal Roots program more than 15,000 youth have **planted 127,365 seedlings and grass plugs on 309 coastal restoration trips.**

90% of Louisianians believe that **LSU's COASTAL RESEARCH** and involvement is **VITAL TO THE STATE.**

For more information, call the LSU Division of Strategic Communications at 225-578-8654.

#LSURESEARCH

Specific statistic stating the degree of public engagement, which is particularly important for a lawmaker audience

All fact sheets are available for download on the LSU Research Works website, which got 1,500+ unique views per month when LSU launched and promoted the campaign

A companion video was presented on the jumbotron at the first LSU football game of the season, which has an average audience of over 100,000 people, and promoted to over 240,000 followers on LSU social media channels

Sources: Research Fact Sheet Template, available at https://www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications; EAB interviews and analysis; LSU, available at http://www.lsu.edu/researchworks/factsheets.php, http://www.lsusports.net/ViewArticle.dbml?ATCLID=177159, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhCiIOxtX90.

Addressing a Communication Mismatch

Similar to LSU, Clemson University has also developed compelling content that engages stakeholders and communicates the value of university research in a concise and digestible way.

Historically, select faculty members had given speeches to the Board of Trustees about their research. However, the Vice President for Research recognized that these presentations were not always effective or compelling. This prompted the research office to develop short, creative videos that clearly presented faculty research and articulated its importance and impact. These videos then replaced the in-person, faculty lectures to the Board.

Along with communicating the value of research in a more compelling way, these reusable videos also reduced the burden on faculty to present their research in person and provided Clemson with digital content that could be shared via other communications channels, such as social media.

Replacing Lengthy Faculty Presentations with Short Research Videos

- Eukaryotic Pathogens Innovation Center
- Research Rock Stars
- Low Dose Radiation

- Reduced faculty burden
- Significantly increased Board support for research
- Thousands of views on Facebook

Case in Brief: Clemson University

- Public Research University in Clemson, South Carolina
- Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $170M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- VPR recognized the ineffectiveness of having faculty deliver lengthy speeches about their research to the Board.
- Director of Research Communications and the university's video production team interviewed professors about research and developed short, creative videos describing faculty research in clear, impact-minded ways. These videos replaced in-person lectures to the Board.

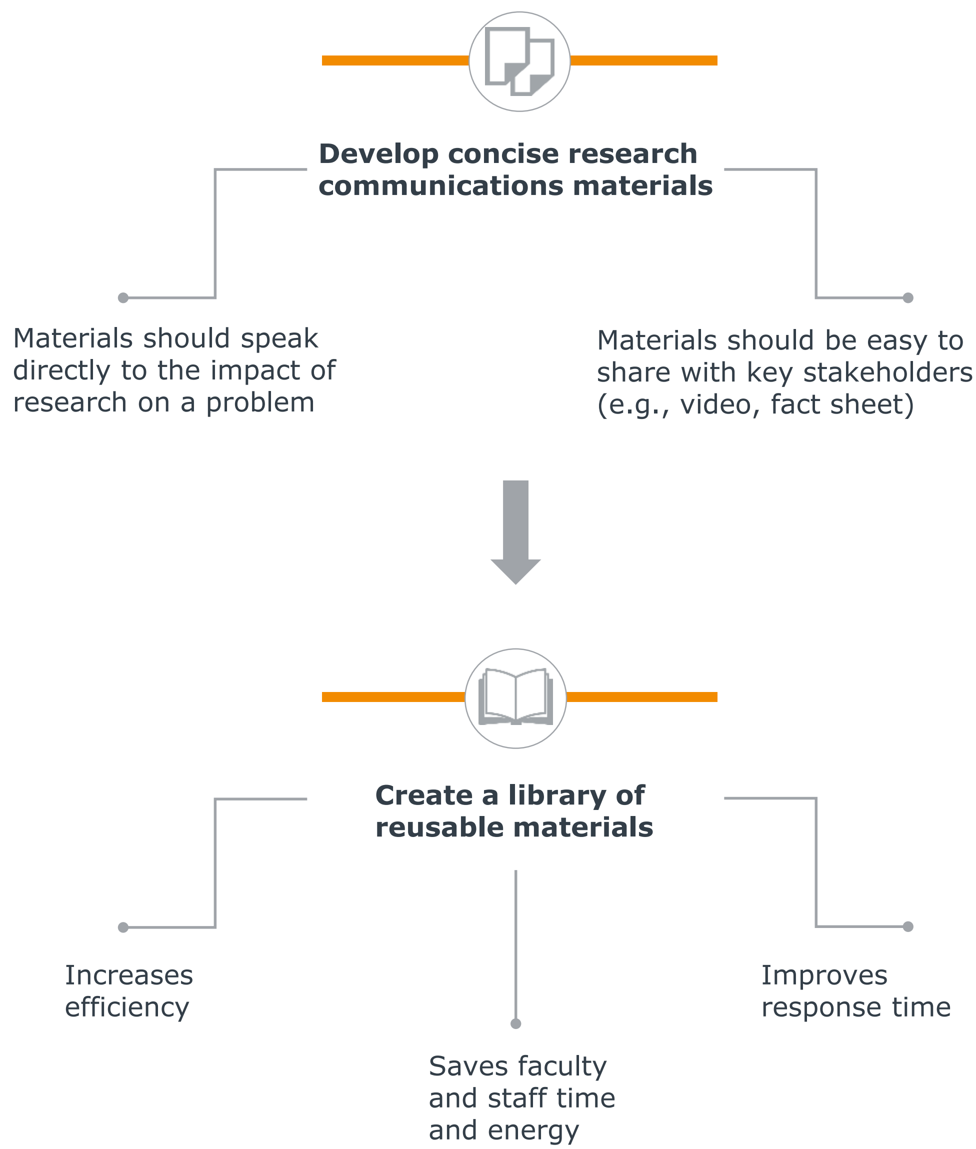
Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Higher Education Research and Development Survey 2015; Clemson University, available at http://tv.clemson.edu/eukaryote/; YouTube, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0y4HXBZwME&feature=youtu.be, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efIcchVL0xg&feature=youtu.be.

Creating a Compelling Content Library

As the LSU and Clemson examples demonstrate, CROs and their staff should develop bite-sized research communications material that speaks directly to the impact of research on a problem and that is easy to share with key stakeholders.

After developing this content, they can then create a library of reusable, compelling materials about university research. By having this content premade and on hand, they can save time and energy for both faculty and staff. Creating reusable content is far more efficient than having to develop new, one-off content for every single communications request or need. Furthermore, having this content prepared and easily accessible allows CROs and their staff to improve their response time to media inquiries. Finally, this content can also be pushed out via other communications channels, such as the research website and social media.

Reusable Materials Save Time and Energy



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Only Engaging the Already Engaged

Besides communicating with external audiences through digital platforms and providing them with digestible media content, it is also critical that CROs, faculty, and staff engage directly with the general public about university research.

Many institutions have attempted to accomplish this by hosting research events for the local community. Yet, in most cases, these events simply cater to those who are already engaged in the given fields and do not appeal to or engage new audiences.

As the graphic shows, there are at least four reasons that explain why institutions have not successfully engaged the disengaged public through these programs. Typically the events are driven by the interests of faculty rather than the general public and local community. Since research-related events are often overly technical or lack broad appeal, they tend to attract the already academically oriented and scientifically interested. They also fail to engage or appeal to the public because they frequently consist of a faculty lecture rather than an interactive session. Furthermore, many institutions host these events in an on-campus, academic setting, which formalizes the event and may discourage some members of the general public from attending.

Institutions Struggle to Attract the Disinterested to Events

What's not working?

Institutions frequently host events to engage the local community in university research, but these efforts often fail to attract and appeal to new audiences.

Common Weaknesses of Research Events

- Research events are not tailored to community interests
- Research events attract the already academically oriented and scientifically interested
- Research events are lecture-based rather than interactive
- Research events are typically hosted on campus in an academic setting

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Making 'Science Cafes' Appeal to Nonscientists

In order to better engage with the local community, Louisiana State University (LSU) adjusted the format and location of its research events. Four years ago, LSU's Office of Research and Economic Development started sponsoring "Science Cafes" on the last Tuesday of every month. While many institutions across the country host such Science Cafes, LSU's have been particularly popular and successful. In particular, there are five components of LSU's planning that have helped boost community interest.

Since these free cafes are advertised to a broad audience within the local community and take place in a familiar and popular local venue, community members are more likely to find them appealing, as compared to traditional campus-based research lectures.

Catering Format and Location to Audience Interests

Advertised Locally

Science Cafes are advertised in the newspaper, via social media, and on Eventbrite so anyone in the Baton Rouge area can find the information

Community Location

Held at a popular music venue located just off campus (the Varsity Theater) that offers food and drinks

Accessible

There is no cost to attend and no tickets are required, although people are encouraged to RSVP via Eventbrite

Incentives

They provide appetizers for attendees and encourage them to network before and after the presentations

Targets Broad Audience

LSU emphasizes that the events are open to people outside the university and of all ages

Case in Brief: Louisiana State University

- Public Research University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $280M+ in research expenditures in FY2015
- To engage the local community in science research, the LSU Office of Research and Economic Development started sponsoring Science Cafes on the last Tuesday of every month four years ago

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Minimize Lecturing; Maximize Interactivity

Along with effective planning, the format and topics of LSU's Science Cafes also lend themselves to a public audience. The presentation portion of the event is short and concise, which allows for the majority of the program to be devoted to Q&A. Unlike traditional lecture events, this gives the audience the opportunity to actually engage and interact with the researcher and the topic.

LSU's Science Cafes also offer compelling content that appeals to a broader community audience. As the sample of previous cafe topics shows, these events are designed to appeal to the interests of local Louisiana residents and members of the general public.

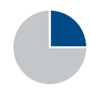
The combination of these clear and concise presentations with compelling content has produced strong results in terms of consistent and broad community engagement. In addition to high monthly attendance regardless of topic, many attendees are not affiliated with the university and are not particularly scientifically inclined, which means that these cafes are attracting and appealing to the previously unengaged. Attendees also frequently stay after the events to socialize and talk with the faculty speakers, which shows how LSU's approach has really piqued the public's interest in research.

LSU Offers Opportunities for Audiences to Engage in the Conversation

Concise Presentations

<10

Presenters are limited to 10 PowerPoint slides, forcing faculty to communicate their research concisely



15-minute presentation followed by 45-minute Q&A

Compelling Content

Previous Science Cafe Topics

- "Saving Your Home from Hurricanes"
- "Pay to Play: Race and the Perils of the College Sports Industry"
- "How to Study Penguins in Antarctica"
- "Celebrating Louisiana: One Dialect at a Time"

Consistent and Broad Engagement

100

Average monthly attendees, regardless of the topic

Many attendees are not affiliated with the university (e.g., families, retirees)

Attendees frequently stay after presentations to talk with speakers and socialize

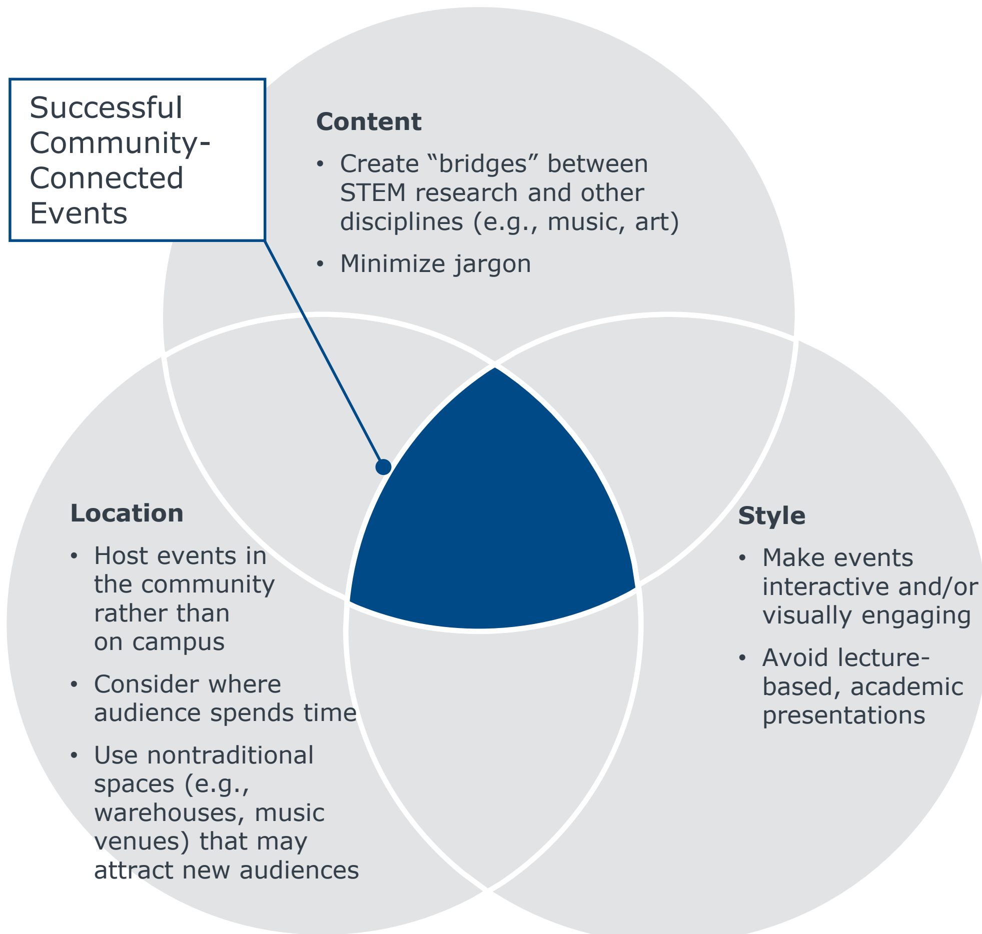
Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Maximizing the Impact of Research Events

Since most institutions' current efforts to connect with the public through research events have not successfully engaged the disengaged, CROs and their staff should take a new approach to connecting with local communities.

As depicted in the graphic, there are three key elements that they should consider in order to plan successful community-connected events. First, they should select event speakers and content based on audience interests. One way to boost public interest is to create bridges between STEM fields and other disciplines that more naturally attract the general public, such as music or art. Since lecture-style, academic presentations are unlikely to appeal to nonacademic audiences, CROs and their staff should make sure that their events are interactive or visually engaging. Finally, by venturing out into the community and utilizing new locations for their events, CROs and their staff can attract new audiences and capture foot traffic that they otherwise would not be able to. As a result, they should think strategically and creatively about venues that would attract the desired audiences.

Strong and Engaging Content Draws a Crowd



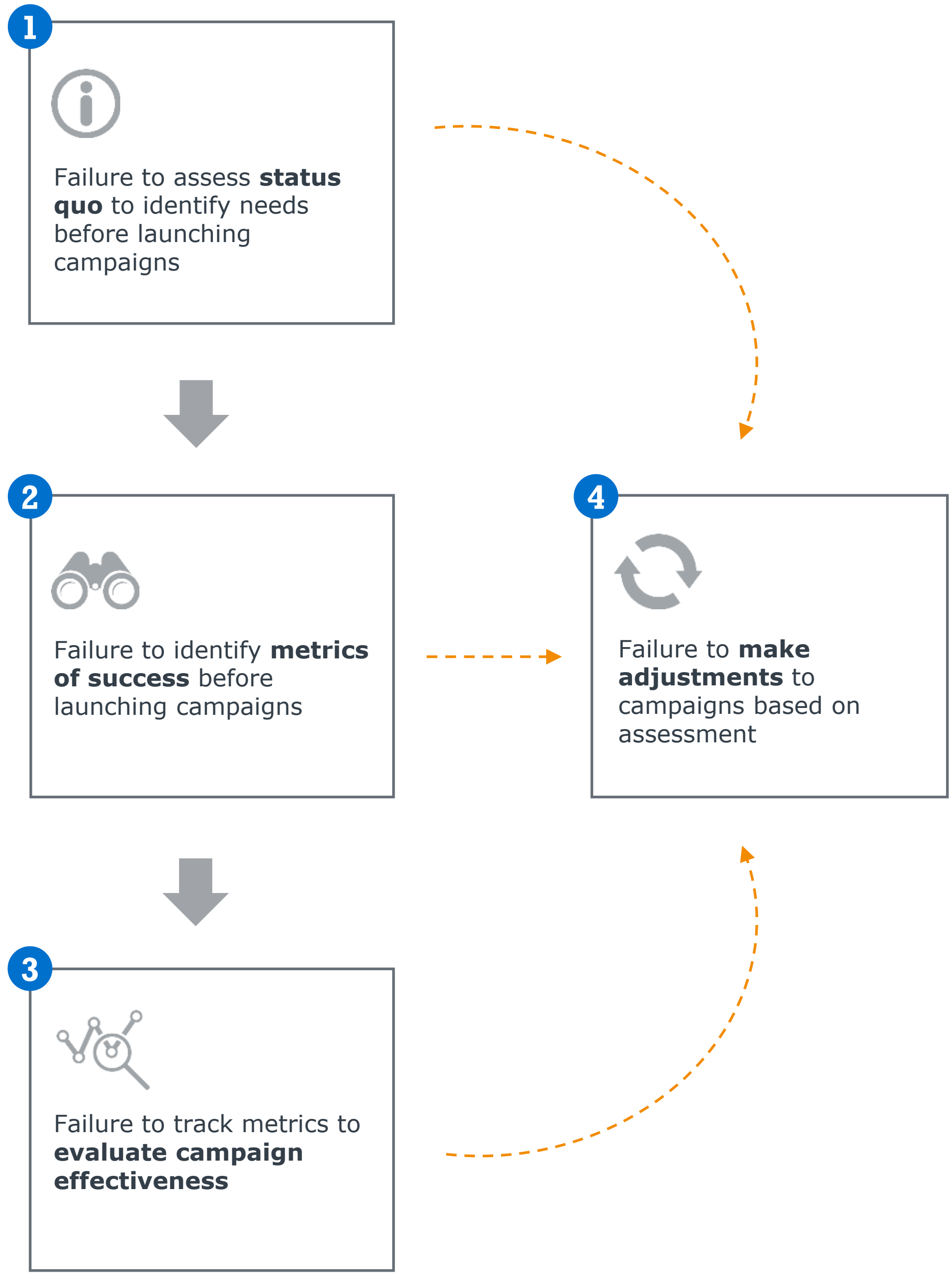
Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

How Effective Are Research Communications?

Optimizing research communications channels requires significant investment of money and time. Yet, far too often CROs and their staff do not know whether their communications efforts are effective. Few institutions have devoted significant attention to tracking and measuring the return on their investment in research communications.

There are four common failure points that CROs and their staff experience in evaluating research communications efforts, which are depicted in the graphic. Failing to assess the status quo before launching communications campaigns means that they lack baseline data by which to inform their efforts and compare their results. Failing to identify metrics of success before launching campaigns can also delay or hinder future assessment. Since tracking metrics and gathering and analyzing data to determine campaign effectiveness takes time and effort, this step frequently gets overlooked or deprioritized. All of these failures contribute to CROs and their staff failing to make adjustments to their communications campaigns based on assessment. Without evaluating the effectiveness and value of research communications efforts, CROs and their staff have no way of knowing which communications strategies are effective and therefore worthwhile investments.

Far Too Often, It Is Not Measured



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

A Research-Informed and -Focused Campaign

The University of Minnesota has avoided these common failure points and instead invested in evaluating the impact of its Driven to Discover campaign.

As the graphic shows, successfully assessing the value of communications efforts requires CROs and their staff to link objectives to actions to metrics. The University of Minnesota's evaluation of Driven to Discover provides a useful real-world example.

Notably, the process of evaluation should not end with linking objectives, actions, and metrics. Instead, CROs and their staff should continually reevaluate communications efforts each year and adjust their objectives or modify their messaging, medium, or channel based on evaluation results. This allows for CROs and their staff to maximize the impact and value of their research communications efforts.

A Framework for Evaluating Communications Campaign Effectiveness

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠

	Objective The desired end goal of your communications campaign	**Action** The medium, channel, and message	**Metric of Success** The way you will qualify or quantify the receipt and perception of the message
Driven to Discover Example	• Improve public perceptions of the university • Improve understanding of research mission	• Communicate research and its impact to local Minnesotans • Develop a multifaceted media campaign: print, social media, TV, and radio	• External online survey (change in perceptions and favorability) • External phone survey (change in perceptions and favorability) • Internal online survey (views of campaign impact)

Reevaluate Each Year

Adjust Approach Based on Results

Case in Brief: University of Minnesota System

- Public Research University with five campuses in the Twin Cities, Duluth, Crookston, Morris, and Rochester, Minnesota
- $880M+ in research expenditures at the Twin Cities campus FY2015
- Flagship campus conducted market research to gauge public perception. By 2005, the research showed they were not clearly communicating its value and impact to the community.
- Developed and launched the Driven to Discover (D2D) campaign in 2006 to improve public awareness and show the community the value of having and supporting a public research university. Much of the campaign was focused on UMN research.
- The campaign was multifaceted and included social media posts, print materials, and media ads. Many of these featured faculty researchers speaking about their work and its impact.

Sources: Driven to Discover, available at http://driven-to-discover.umn.edu/; EAB interviews and analysis.

Assessment, Three Ways

One of the strengths of the University of Minnesota's assessment efforts was the use of multiple metrics of success and consideration of external and internal stakeholder perspectives.

The external phone survey measured the overall public perception of the university and therefore served as an indirect, big-picture measure of the impact of the entire Driven to Discover (D2D) campaign after its launch in 2006.

The external online survey launched in 2016 directly measured the impact of the campaign media materials on perceptions of the institution by measuring base perceptions, real-time reactions to campaign ads, and post-viewing perceptions.

Finally, the internal online survey of faculty researchers and deans who participated in the campaign measured their perceptions of the campaign's value and impact.

By conducting this combination of surveys, the University of Minnesota was able to obtain a nuanced understanding of the impact of its Driven to Discover campaign and could therefore adjust their approach and messaging based on these results.

UMN Uses Multiple Methods and Metrics to Determine Impact

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠

External Phone Survey

N= 300
(2016)

- Conducted annually since 1998 (pre-D2D campaign)
- Measured overall public perception and indirect impact of campaign as a whole

↑

Public perception of the University improved every year the campaign was funded

69.3%

Percentage of respondents who were favorable toward the University in 2016 (up from 66% in 2015)

External Online Survey

N= 841
(2016)

- Conducted in 2016
- Measured direct impact of D2D campaign messages on perceptions
- Included baseline questions, a short TV or digital ad from the D2D campaign with real-time reactions, and follow-up questions

51%

Percentage of respondents who indicated they were initially very unfavorable toward the University but indicated they were somewhat or very favorable toward the University after viewing the campaign ads

Internal Online Survey

N= 16
(2017)

- Conducted in 2017
- Measured internal participants' (researchers, deans) perceptions of the D2D campaign's value and effectiveness

83%

Percentage of respondents indicating there was more awareness of their or their college's work as a result of being featured in the D2D campaign

92%

Percentage of respondents indicating being part of the D2D campaign helped support their efforts (e.g., fundraising, recruitment)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Research Communications Toolkit

APPENDIX

- Tool 1: Research Communications Self-Assessment
- Tool 2: Effective Media Conversations Planning Worksheet
- Tool 3: Research Website Self-Audit
- Tool 4: Research Fact Sheet Template
- Tool 5: Social Media for Research Communications

Telling Your Story: How to Use the Toolkit Resources

This publication has outlined tactics for CROs to prepare and coordinate communications staff, cultivate faculty engagement, and optimize research communications channels. However, CROs are not going to be able to immediately implement every single one of these tactics alone. They should follow the steps in the graphic that draw on the accompanying study toolkit.

First, CROs and their staff should diagnose and identify areas of improvement. Complete the **Research Communications Self-Assessment** and encourage other key stakeholders at their institution to assess performance and uncover priority opportunity areas as well. The **Website Self-Audit** will identify deficits on the research website specifically.

Second, CROs should tap into resources to support faculty and staff and develop content, using the **Effective Media Conversations Planning Worksheet**, the **Research Fact Sheet Template,** and **the Social Media for Research Communications** guide.

Finally, CROs and their teams should tap into University Research Forum experts to guide efforts through an **on-site presentation**, a research **strategic plan review**, and/or by submitting questions to our **Ask EAB** service.

Research Communications Toolkit

1

Diagnose and **identify** areas for improvement

Research Communications Self-Assessment
Use this self-assessment to diagnose the current status of research communications on your campus and identify the most critical areas for improvement

Research Website Self-Audit
Complete this checklist to evaluate how your research website measures up by assessing the presence of the 14 most valuable website features

2

Support staff and faculty and **develop** compelling content

Effective Media Conversations Planning Worksheet
Leverage this tool to prepare faculty for media interactions by helping them think through how to describe their research concisely and in plain English

Research Fact Sheet Template
Utilize this template to develop one-pagers that articulate the value and potential impact of research in a compelling way to key stakeholders

Social Media for Research Communications
Use this guide to determine ways to increase public engagement through your social media communications

3

Inquire and **engage** with our staff experts

Facilitated On-Site Presentations
Have us visit your campus to lead a session highlighting key insights for senior leaders and help internal teams select the most relevant practices and next steps

Research Strategic Plan Review
Receive a personalized evaluation of your strategic plan along with feedback and recommendations

Ask EAB
Send us your institution-specific questions—our team can provide relevant resources and practices, as well as schedule a phone consultation if desired

To download the full toolkit, please visit www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

If you are interested in any of our support services, please contact your relationship manager.

EAB

Who Should Read

Chief Research Officers (CROs) and their communications staff

Departmental and central communications staff

Research Communications Self-Assessment

A Tool for Evaluating Current Efforts and Identifying Areas for Improvement

Three Ways to Use This Tool

- Diagnose current research communications infrastructure to pinpoint opportunities for improvement
- Distribute to colleagues to gather information about perceptions of research communications performance
- Utilize recommended tactics to address critical gaps in research communications efforts and infrastructure

Research Communications Self-Assessment

Changing funding patterns mean that the long-term growth of the research enterprise requires effective, strategic communications about the value of university-led research.

Yet, there is a variety of obstacles that make communicating about research challenging. Institutions need to communicate research to a much broader set of stakeholders who may have different interests, priorities, and levels of understanding. And faculty are not always effective at communicating their research to lay audiences.

How to Use This Tool

CROs and their staff can use this tool to diagnose the current state of research communications on their campus and identify opportunities and tactics for improvement. For each statement on the following page, score your institution using the designated scale. Tabulate your results and compare them with the results from other members of your team to pinpoint items that consistently scored low. Then, identify the corresponding tactic(s) from the University Research Forum's study on *Telling the Story of Research* to assist in making improvements.

For any questions, please email Ramon Barthelemy at Rbarthelemy@eab.com.

Research Communications Self-Assessment

For each statement below, score your institution using the following scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, and 6=strongly agree. After doing so, calculate your total score and use the rubric on the following page to assess your current research communications infrastructure. Then compare results with your colleagues' results to identify lowest scoring statements and corresponding tactics for improvement.

Research Communications Statements		Your Score	Tactics
1	My institution has easy-to-use templated materials that help faculty and departments concisely communicate the value and impact of their research.		1, 11
2	My institution has forums in place that allow communicators across campus (e.g., in the research office, in the central office, and in departments) to coordinate and collaborate with each other.		2
3	My institution has knowledgeable communications staff dedicated to tracking and reporting on developments for key research areas and initiatives.		3
4	My institution has communications staff that provide faculty with the support they need for engaging with the media.		4
5	Research leaders (e.g., CROs, deans, provosts, presidents) actively voice support for faculty research communications (e.g., through a newsletter or monthly emails).		5
6	My institution trains faculty to effectively communicate research to a lay audience (e.g., through seminars or workshops).		6, 7
7	My institution identifies faculty who are successful communicators and leverages them to further our communications goals (e.g., offers them additional training, shares their efforts on social media or in campus newsletters).		7
8	My institution utilizes targeted campaigns to send specific messages to specific audiences with a specific goal in mind (e.g., to the local community to gain research partners for a specific research project/area).		8

Research Communications Self-Assessment Cont.

Research Communications Statements (Cont.)		Your Score	Tactics
9	Our research website is visually engaging and easy for stakeholders to navigate (e.g., multiple photos, videos, infographics).		9
10	Our research website provides information tailored to multiple audiences (e.g., researchers, students, industry partners).		9
11	Our research website highlights our institution's unique research strengths and initiatives.		9
12	Our research website includes meaningful metrics that communicate the broader impact of research on economic development and the local community (e.g., jobs created, lives saved, cures discovered).		9
13	Our social media efforts effectively build followers and grow engagement.		10
14	We track social media metrics (e.g., likes, retweets, shares) and use this data to inform our strategy.		10
15	We create materials that concisely articulate the value and impact of our research in plain English.		11
16	My institution hosts public events that effectively engage the local community with our research.		12
17	My institution assesses the effectiveness of our research communications efforts (e.g., through email open rates, public perception surveys) and uses that data to improve our research communications strategy.		13
	Total Score		

Research Communications Self-Assessment Cont.

Scoring Rubric

Your overall score provides you with a basic diagnosis of the current status of your research communications efforts and infrastructure.

Over 85: You have a strong research communications infrastructure but likely can still improve your efforts by making a few specific changes.

68-85: You have a solid foundation for your research communications infrastructure, but you may need some concentrated improvements.

Under 68: You have just begun to create and sustain your research communications infrastructure, so you need to make broad improvements.

Mapping to Tactics

To prioritize key areas for improvement, identify statements that you and your colleagues scored 3 or below. Each statement corresponds directly to a tactic outlined and explained in the University Research Forum's study on *Telling the Story of Research*. Review and implement the corresponding tactic(s) to strengthen your research communications efforts and infrastructure.

1. Campaign-Based Templates
2. Purpose-Driven Collaboration Forums
3. Beat Reporting
4. Faculty Feedback Protocols
5. Faculty Media Spotlight
6. Immersive Training
7. Faculty Leader Fellowship
8. Targeted Campaigns
9. Website Enhancement Audit
10. Social Media Improvement Guide
11. Compelling Content Library
12. Community-Connected Events
13. Strategic Scorecard

Next Steps

To access the complete research communications toolkit, visit www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.

If you are unsure of what steps to take next or have a unique problem you would like to solve, contact your relationship manager to submit a question to Ask EAB or schedule an expert call with a representative from our team.

Who Should Read

Chief Research Officers (CROs) and their communications staff

Departmental and central communications staff

Research faculty

Effective Media Conversations Planning Worksheet

A Tool for Preparing Faculty to Clearly and Concisely Communicate Their Research to the Media

Three Ways to Use This Tool

- Distribute to faculty before media conversations to boost their confidence by helping them prepare talking points, develop responses to commonly asked questions, and identify potential pitfalls in the conversation
- Utilize the completed worksheet to guide faculty through the preparation process, assess whether faculty are communicating their research in a digestible manner, and pinpoint areas for improvement or clarification
- Ask faculty to convert their written worksheet responses into verbal responses in a trial interview with a research communications staff member

Effective Media Conversations Planning Worksheet

As it becomes increasingly important for faculty to interact with popular media outlets about their research, CROs must find new ways to support their communications endeavors.

Many CROs and Research Communications Directors report that faculty are wary of speaking with the media due to past experiences in which journalists did not accurately portray their research. But if properly trained, faculty can more effectively connect with popular media to encourage informed and favorable coverage of their research. Progressive institutions encourage their faculty to prepare before each media conversation to plan their message and avoid potential pitfalls.

How to Use This Tool

This tool will help communications staff guide conversations with faculty who are preparing to speak about their research with the media.

While faculty might be reluctant to fill out yet another form, completing the Effective Media Conversations Planning Worksheet ahead of conversations with journalists may actually save faculty valuable time. If faculty can effectively describe their research in clear, concise terms, it can shorten the length of their media conversation. In addition, this tool can empower faculty to more effectively promote their research and have greater control over the results of a media conversation.

Part One: Explaining Complex Research in a Bite-Sized Medium

When faculty explain every complex detail of their research to journalists, the most important elements may get lost. Before the conversation, faculty need to develop an overview of the key takeaways a journalist should understand.

The first page of this tool will guide faculty to discuss their research at a high level, which includes its significance in the field and in broader terms. Faculty with little or no media experience may need support in this area to distill their research into messages that are easily understood by a lay or less-specialized audience.

Part Two: Avoiding Potential Conversation Pitfalls

Faculty should think through potential conversation pitfalls related to their research topic before they are faced with difficult questions during an interview:

- Is there background the journalist should have to contextualize the research?
- Is there a controversial aspect to the research?
- What questions might arise around methods, outcomes, or funding?

Determining what pitfalls might occur prior to the conversation will not only better equip faculty to have meaningful discussions with journalists but will also help faculty to clearly envision how the conversation may proceed. Even if faculty do not anticipate every difficult question a journalist could ask, their answers will be better informed by going through this thought exercise.

Effective Media Conversations Plan, Part #1

Use the below template to describe your research and chart your next media conversation.

Name of Researcher:

Title of Media Outlet:

1. Explaining Complex Research in a Bite-Sized Medium
Using minimal field-specific jargon, describe your research in 300 words or less:
What is its importance to the field? (150 words or less)
What is the larger significance (whether theoretical or societal) of your research? (150 words or less)
What's the number-one most exciting thing that has happened with your research, whether in terms of findings or recognition, that has happened recently? (150 words or less)
Why should this **specific** media outlet care? (100 words or less)
What are the three most important ideas, findings, or other takeaways you'd want the **audience** of this **specific** media outlet to know about your research? (100 words or less)
1. 2. 3.

Effective Media Conversations Plan, Part 2

Use the template below to describe your research and chart your next media conversation.

2. Avoiding Potential Conversation Pitfalls
What are the five questions most likely to be asked about this material, and how will you answer those questions? (100 words or less for each answer)
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Take your preparation to the next level.

Practice is critical. Completing a trial interview with a research communications staff member not only helps to work out the kinks in your media conversation plan but also can ease any concerns you have prior to the actual interview.

EAB

Who Should Read

Chief Research Officers (CROs) and their communications staff

Departmental and central communications staff

Webmasters

Research Website Self-Audit

A Tool for Assessing and Enhancing Research Websites to Better Communicate with Key Stakeholders

Three Ways to Use This Tool

- Diagnose the current state of the research website and identify both unique strengths and areas to target improvement efforts
- Use results to assess how the institution's research website stacks up against the average research website
- Leverage the results to justify and advocate for additional investment and attention to research website enhancements

Research Website Self-Audit

In order to grow the research enterprise, institutions need to better communicate the value of university-led research, particularly to external audiences. One key channel for research communications is research websites. After developing a list of the 14 most valuable features, based on website usability principles and exemplary research websites, we conducted an audit of 50 institutions. Our results indicate that institutions are not leveraging their websites to boost the value of their research. See our list below and determine how your site measures up.

How to Use This Tool

This tool will help research offices evaluate the strengths of their research website, as well as the areas where they can target improvements. Log on to your computer and assess whether your site contains each of the 14 items below. If you have questions or need help with your audit, contact Brooke Thayer (bthayer@eab.com).

	Most Valuable Research Website Features	☑	Notes
Navigation	**1. First Result in Google Search** Start at www.google.com. Search "[Institution's full name] research." Is your main research website the first result?		
	2. Visible Link on Institutional Home Page Navigate to your institutional home page. Is there a visible "Research" link on the main menu? Make sure viewers can get from the institutional home page to your research site in one click.		
	3. Matching Google and Home Page Links Does the link on your institutional home page lead to the same research site that the first Google result did?		
Aesthetics	**4. Visually Engaging** Is your main research website visually engaging? Does it include several videos, photos, and/or infographics?		
Social Media	**5. Research-Specific Social Media Links** Does your main research page have the links to research-specific social media accounts?		
	6. Embedded Social Media Feed Does your research website have the feed from a research-specific social media account(s) embedded on the page(s)?		

Research Website Self-Audit (Cont.)

	Most Valuable Research Website Features	☑	Notes
Content	**7. Research Enterprise Metrics** Does your website have visible metrics on the research enterprise (e.g., funding, awards, centers, etc.)?		
Content	**8. Highlights Large-Scale Initiatives and/or Expertise** Does your website highlight large-scale university research initiatives and priorities? Grand challenges? Areas of specialization and/or expertise?		
Content	**9. Compelling and Jargon-Free Research Stories** Does your website profile interesting research stories in compelling, plain language terms?		
Content	**10. Communicates Broader Impact of Research** Does your website articulate the broader impact of research in terms of economic engagement and similar meaningful metrics (e.g., lives saved, jobs created, patents filed, etc.)?		
Content	**11. Contact Information and/or Instructions for Media** Does your website provide contact information and instructions for media?		
Content	**12. Information for Multiple Stakeholders** Does your website provide clearly distinguished information for multiple audiences (e.g., undergraduates, researchers, corporate partners, etc.)? Is this part of the navigation menu?		
Tools	**13. Research-Specific News Center** Does your website have a research-specific news center or page separate from the institution's news center?		
Tools	**14. Faculty and Scholarship Search Engine** Does your research website have a search engine viewers can use to find faculty and research in certain disciplines or topical areas?		
	Total Number of Most Valuable Features		

Who Should Read

Chief Research Officers (CROs) and their communications staff

Departmental and central communications staff

Research faculty

Research Fact Sheet Template

A Guide for Creating a Compelling One-Pager to Communicate the Value of Research

Four Ways to Use This Tool

- Develop one-page fact sheets that concisely communicate the value and impact of university research on the local community
- Provide colleagues with an easy-to-distribute resource to leverage when speaking about the importance of university research to key stakeholders
- Create standardized communications materials to ensure consistent branding across staff
- Compile a content library on university research to use for future communications initiatives

Research Fact Sheets

Given changing funding patterns, institutions need to better articulate the value of university research to a broad group of stakeholders. This includes boards, legislators, and the general public. These stakeholders often do not have the time or interest to sift through long research articles or reports, and they often do not understand research jargon. These audiences care about the practical impact that university research has on local communities.

To better engage these stakeholders, institutions should provide them with materials that are clear, concise, and engaging. Furthermore, this content should demonstrate the impact of research in a way that is understandable, relevant, and valuable to these audiences.

How to Use This Template

Research communications staff can use this Research Fact Sheet Template and accompanying worksheet to identify a research area to profile, gather the necessary data and information, and create a customizable, one-page fact sheet that articulates a community problem and shows the impact of university research on the solution.

This template is based on Louisiana State University's Fact Sheets, which can be found on LSU's Research Works website (www.lsu.edu/researchworks/factsheets.php).

After creating fact sheets, research communicators should distribute them to the appropriate stakeholders, post them on their research website for easy download, and share them via other communication channels, such as social media.

Tool 1: Planning Worksheet

Before completing the Research Fact Sheet Template, you need to complete some pre-planning. This preliminary worksheet guides you through a series of questions that will help you conceptualize and frame the community problem, identify the desired audience(s), pinpoint relevant research that addresses the problem, and articulate the impact of that research in a meaningful way. After completing the worksheet, you will have acquired all of the data and information you need to fill in the template.

Tool 2: Fact Sheet Template

After completing the planning worksheet, you can start incorporating the relevant statistics and content into the template—a customizable PowerPoint version is available for download at www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications. Notably, this template is simply intended as a starting point for developing a one-page resource—you can and should customize as you see fit. We provide some recommendations and strategies for doing so in the following pages.

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Louisiana State University, available at www.lsu.edu/researchworks/factsheets.php.

Planning Worksheet

Use the worksheet below to conceptualize the community problem that the fact sheet will address, identify the goals and audiences for the fact sheet, and pinpoint the relevant institutional research and its impact on the problem.

1. Conceptualizing the Problem
What is a community problem that your institution is uniquely positioned to address? (e.g., flooding, deforestation, diabetes, invasive species)
What data and statistics are available to illustrate the problem and its negative impact on the community? • Think in practical terms (e.g., jobs lost, lives affected, land lost, economic cost) • Think in terms of frequency (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, annually) • Think in terms of acceleration (e.g., Is the problem getting worse? Has the problem intensified?) • Think in terms of what could be lost if the problem is not solved (e.g., loss of revenue, dwindling resources) • Think in terms of whether your community is worse off than others (e.g., higher at-risk rate, poorer performance)
What data and statistics are available to illustrate stakeholder opinions of the problem and its significance? (e.g., public opinion polls, market research, community surveys)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Planning Worksheet (Cont.)

2. Identifying the Goals and Audience(s)

What goals do you want to accomplish by creating a fact sheet on this topic? (e.g., attract additional funding, influence a policy decision, alter public perception)

Based on your goals, who are the desired audiences for a fact sheet on this topic? (e.g., legislators, potential industry partners, nonprofit organizations, city council)

3. Pinpointing Relevant Research and Its Impact

What research has/is the institution conducted/conducting related to this problem and topic?

- What disciplines, departments, centers/institutes are involved?
- What is the scope of the current research?
- Who are the faculty experts on this topic?
- What is unique about research on this topic at this particular institution?

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Planning Worksheet (Cont.)

What have been the results of the institutional research on this topic? (e.g., key findings, major discoveries or advancements)

What evidence is available to show the impact of this research on the problem? (e.g., statistics on lives saved or cures developed, awards, media coverage)

Taking the next step.

After choosing and defining a community-specific problem in meaningful terms, developing goals and identifying an audience, and gathering information and data about institutional research and its impact on the problem, it is time to start incorporating this information into the fact sheet template.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Fact Sheet Template

Guidelines and Strategies for Customization

On the following page, you will find the Research Fact Sheet Template. The template has twelve numbered components. These are intended to serve simply as ideas and a starting point—the content and organization of the fact sheet can and should be customized to fit each institution, fact sheet topic, and audience.

Twelve Suggested Fact Sheet Components

1. **Institutional logo**
2. **Title**
   Examples: "[University Name] Research Solves High School Dropout Rates," "[University Name] Research Drives Change in Education"
3. **Statement illustrating the problem in community-specific terms**
   Example: "High school graduation rates in Chesterfield are the lowest in the state"
4. **Graphical description of the problem**
   Example: Line graph showing high school graduation rates in Chesterfield versus the state average
5. **Key statistics illustrating the problem**
   Example: "Three Chesterfield High School students drop out every single week"
6. **Statement showing how institutional research seeks to address the problem**
   Example: "EAB University helps educators reduce high school drop-out"
7. **Subtitle and examples of research**
   Example: "Researchers in the Center for Educational Effectiveness identified four key factors that predict high school drop-out..."
8. **Evidence of research impact**
   Example: "Participants of ABC University's after-school enrichment program are 46% more likely to graduate from high school"
9. **Statistic showing public views of the topic's value and importance**
   Example: "92% of Chesterfield residents believe that raising the high school graduation rate is important for the community and local economy"
10. **Graphical depiction of the statistic**
    Example: Pie chart depicting 92%
11. **Contact information**
    Example: Office name, email address, phone number
12. **Research hashtag or social media information**
    Example: #EABUniversityResearch

General Design Recommendations

- Create infographic-style charts and visuals
- Use icons to visually reinforce text
- Bold key components of the text
- Increase text size of key statistics and data points
- Keep text to a minimum (e.g. running text should take up ¼ to ½ of the fact sheet)
- Customize text and box colors to match your institutional colors

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

1

[Insert institutional logo]

2

[INSERT TITLE]

3

[Insert statement illustrating the problem in community-specific terms]

4

[Insert graphical depiction of the problem]

5

[Insert key statistics illustrating the problem]

6

[Insert statement showing how institutional research seeks to address the problem]

7

[Insert subtitle]

- [Insert example of research]
- [Insert example of research]
- [Insert example of research]
- [Insert example of research]

8

[Insert evidence of research impact (e.g., photo, graphic depiction of research results, key data or statistics)]

10

[Insert graphic support for the statistic]

9

[Insert statistic showing public views of the topic's value and importance]

11

For more information, contact [Insert institutional office name and contact info]

12

[Insert research hashtag or social media info]

EAB

Who Should Read

Chief Research Officers (CROs) and their communications staff

Departmental and central communications staff

Research faculty

Social Media for Research Communications

A Guide for Leveraging Social Media to Increase Public Engagement

Three Ways to Use This Tool

- Convince institutional partners of the importance and value of social media for research communications
- Educate institutional partners on the uses and capabilities of different social media platforms
- Identify strategies for using social media to grow public engagement with university research

Social Media for Research Communications

Social media provides a direct channel to the general public to communicate the value of research. While the University Research Forum's 2017 Research Communications Pulse Check Survey showed that most CROs and their research communications staff are using social media on a weekly basis, simply having a presence on these platforms does not guarantee true engagement with stakeholders. Often, universities are not fully leveraging social media platforms to grow their base, as measured in number of followers, retweets, shares, etc.

How to Use This Tool

This tool provides CROs, communications staff, and faculty with an overview of why social media is important for research communications, the different social media platforms most commonly utilized for research communications, and strategies for better utilizing those platforms to maximize the impact of a social media presence.

Part One: Overview of the Value of Social Media

Social media usage has grown rapidly over the last decade. While people often assume social media is dominated by younger users, an increasing number of older adults are joining social media platforms. As a result, social media provides research communicators and faculty with access to a growing subset of the general public. Since the majority of the adult public now uses at least one social media site, it is a critical channel to leverage for research communications.

Part Two: Guide to Social Media Platforms

Research communicators have numerous potential platforms to choose from. According to our Pulse Check Survey, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the most commonly used platforms for research communications. But each platform has advantages and disadvantages. Some are better for communicating certain types of content than others, and some are better for communicating with certain audiences than others. Platforms also differ in the types of metrics that users can access and utilize to evaluate effectiveness. Communicators should take advantage of the data social media platforms provide regarding audience (e.g., location, demographics, interests), engagement (e.g., followers, mentions, comments), and popular content (e.g., likes, shares, retweets).

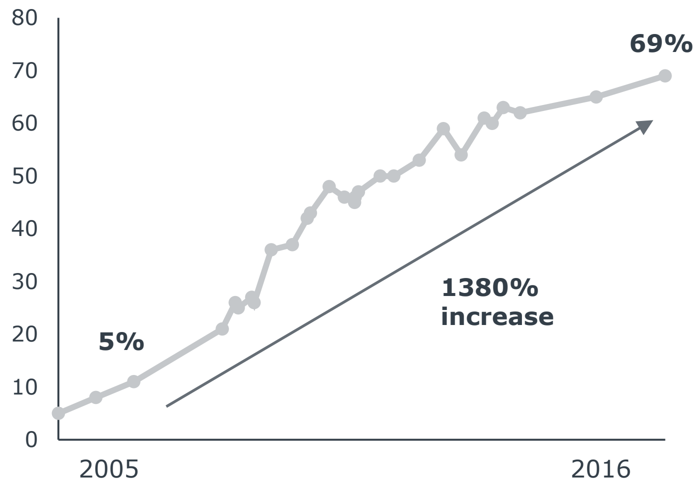
Part Three: Tips for Optimizing Social Media Usage

For each social media platform, there are a number of strategies that communicators can use to enhance their presence and improve their posts. Ultimately, optimizing social media usage requires communicators to strategically select their content, medium, audience, message, platform(s), and metrics. They should then assess the value of the communications and adjust their approach based on these results.

Part One: The Value of Social Media

Social Media Use over Time

Percentage of US adults who use at least one social media site



69%

Percentage of adults over 18 who use at least one social media site

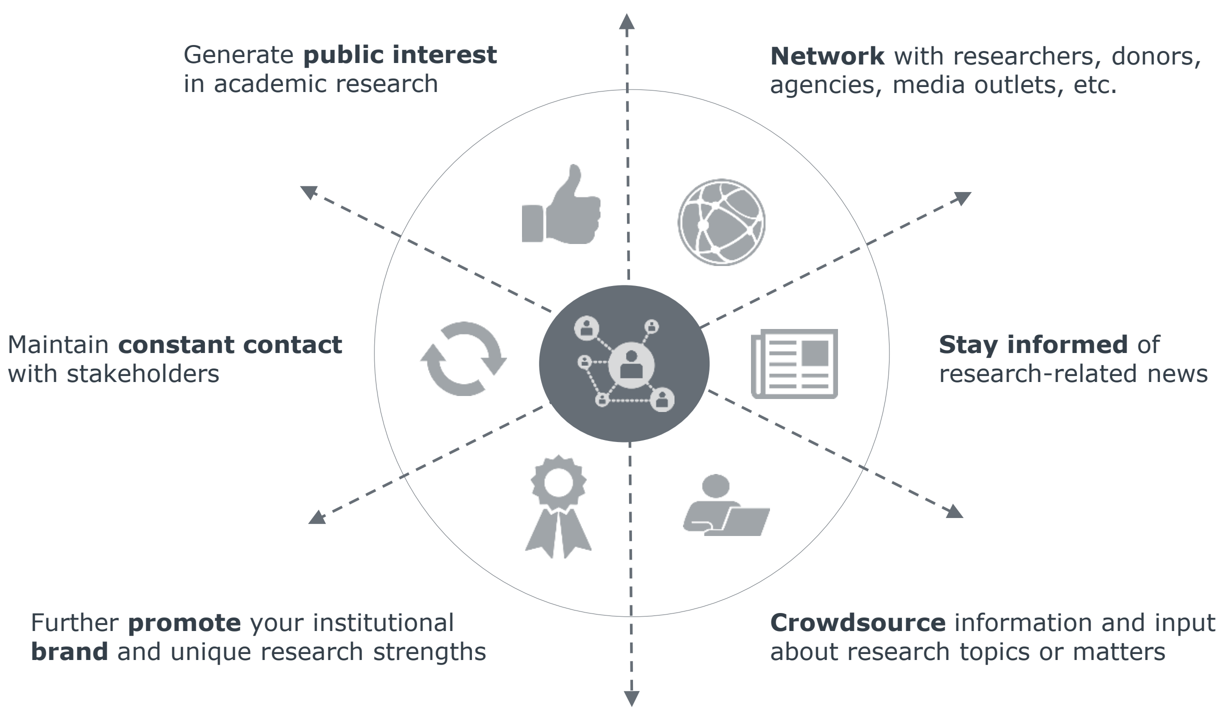
80%

Percentage of adults 30-49 who use at least one social media site

64%

Percentage of adults 50–64 who use at least one social media site

Potential Benefits of Social Media

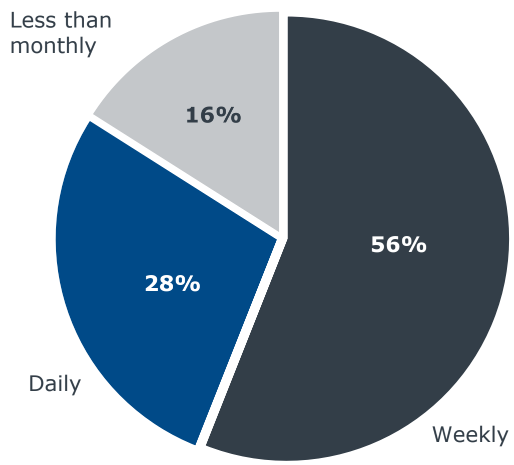


Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Pew Research Center, available at http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media.

Part One: The Value of Social Media (Cont.)

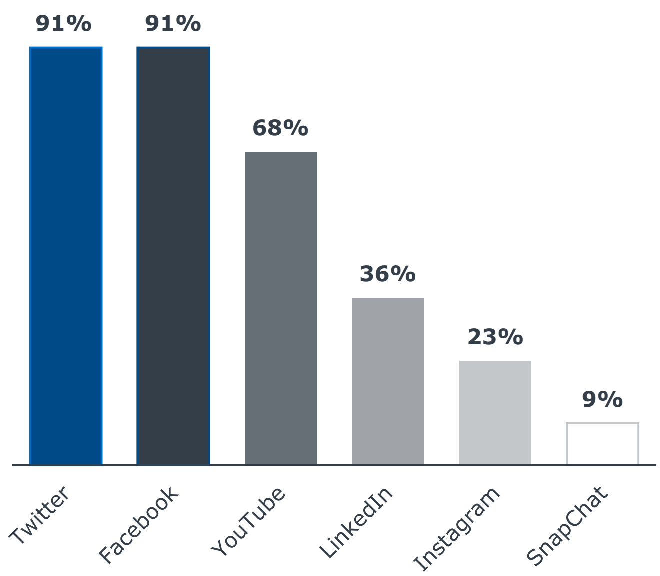
Social Media Usage for Research Communications

Frequency of use of social media to communicate about research



Top Social Media Platforms for Research Communications

Percentage of respondents using each platform



But simply having a presence doesn't guarantee engagement…

Key Goals for Communicating Research via Social Media

- Engage the unengaged
- Grow followers
- Increase retweets, likes, comments, shares
- Articulate the value of research in concise and compelling way
- Attract additional support (from the public, donors, legislators)

Source: University Research Forum 2017 Research Communications Pulse Check Survey.

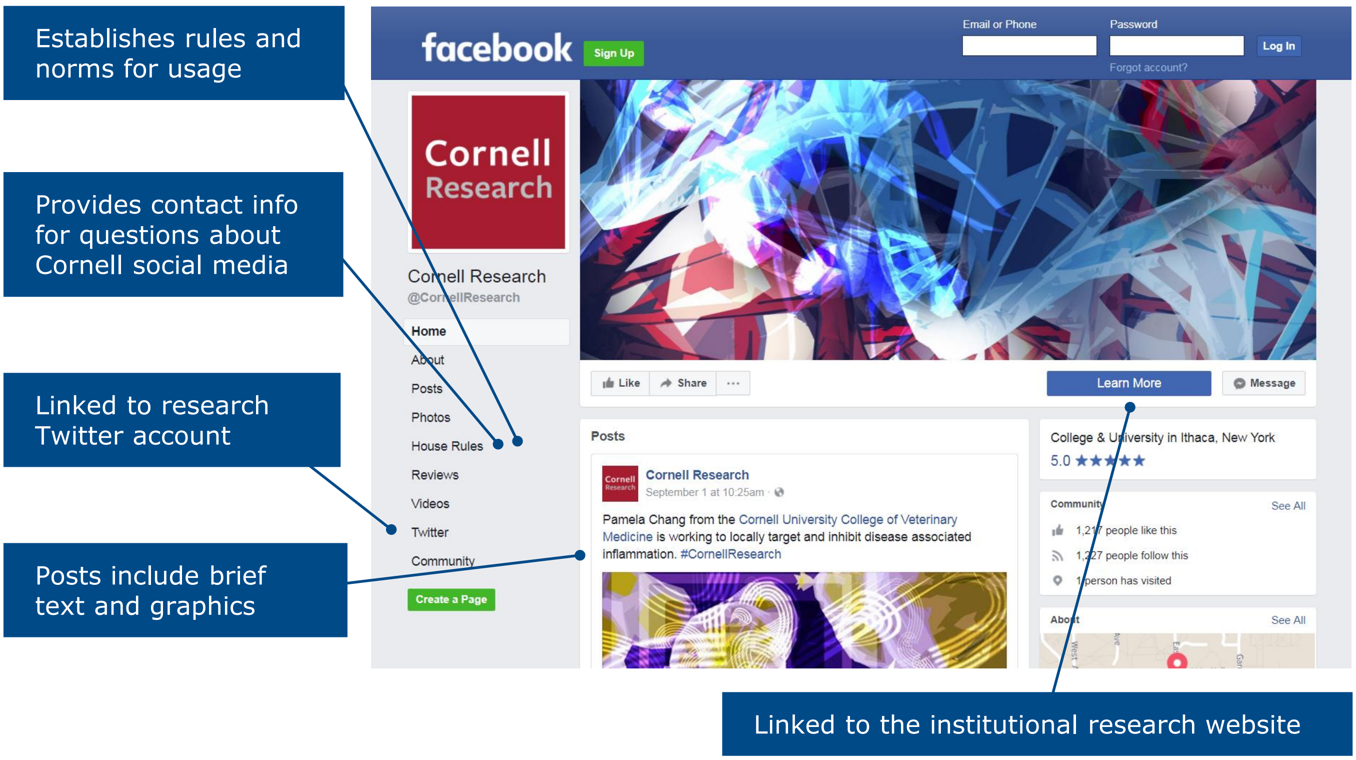
Part Two: Social Media Platforms

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube
Users	• 2B monthly active users • 79% of Internet users utilize • Still popular among young adults, but older adults are joining • Currently the most popular social media platform	• 328M monthly active users • 24% of Internet users utilize • More popular among the highly educated and younger audience	• 176.1M users in United States • 20% of Internet users in United States access multiple times a day
Potential Uses	• Create connections • Establish forum for discussion with a community • Use to drive traffic to events and activities	• Provide real-time updates • Promote events or projects • Prominent platform for science communications	• Capture events and activities in video form • Utilize for interviews • Video contests
Posting Basics	• Can choose from text, photos, videos, and infographics • Not limited in length	• 140 characters • Can include image and link • Can include a hashtag (#) • Can use @ to start a conversation and loop in other accounts	• Can upload videos that show processes, provide evidence, or explain concepts • Not limited in length, but limited by medium
Metrics/ Data	Available via Facebook Insights: • Likes • Shares • Comments • Total organic reach (e.g., total number of unique people who were shown your post through unpaid distribution) • Engaged users (e.g., number of unique viewers who clicked on post) • Click-through metrics	Available via Twitter Analytics: • Top tweets, mentions, and followers • Retweets • Likes • Engagement rate • Detailed information on followers (e.g., location, demographics, interests)	Available via YouTube Analytics: • Views • Subscribers • Shares • Audience retention (e.g., average watch time)

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Duke University, Initiative for Science & Society, “Sharing Science-Socially”; UC San Diego, available at http://ucpa.ucsd.edu/resources/social/social-101, http://ucpa.ucsd.edu/images/uploads/Social_Media_Cheat_Sheet_4_10_15.pdf; AAAS, available at https://www.aaas.org/pes/strategies-social-networking-sites; Statista, available at https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide, https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users.

Part Three: Optimizing Social Media Usage

Communicating Research Through **Facebook**



Three Key Recommendations

Keep text-based posts to a minimum (even though there isn’t a character limit)

Create and invite users to research events—this Events feature distinguishes Facebook from other platforms

Use Facebook as a hub for all social media activity

- Link to your Twitter account
- Upload videos from YouTube
- Post photos from Instagram
- Direct traffic to your research website

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Facebook, available at https://www.facebook.com/CornellResearch/?ref=page_internal.

Part Three: Optimizing Social Media Usage (Cont.)

Communicating Research Through **Twitter**

Four Key Strategies

Strategy 1: Research and institutional accounts should play nicely together. Use @ to loop each other into the conversation and establish a reciprocity of retweets.

Strategy 2: Create a unique research hashtag as OSU did with #OSUResearchMatters. This enhances your brand and creates a library of research-related tweets for your institution.

Strategy 3: Use topical hashtags to describe research. This contributes to the larger dialogue about the subject and increases “searchability.”

Strategy 4: Build social media relationships with colleges and schools by using @ to give them credit in research posts. Also, save time and energy by retweeting their research-related content.

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Twitter, available at https://twitter.com/search?q=%23OSUResearchMatters, https://twitter.com/UNCResearch?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor.

Part Three: Optimizing Social Media Usage (Cont.)

Communicating Research Through **YouTube**

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Four Key Recommendations

Make videos entertaining

- Use videos to tell stories about research and its impact
- Leverage anecdotes and surprising findings

Make videos understandable

- Keep videos short, simple, and jargon-free
- Make sure faculty researchers do not speak to an academic audience

Make videos relatable

- Lead with a strong opening statement that relates the research topic to the average person

Make videos personal

- Put a face to a name by involving faculty researchers
- Have faculty researchers talk about how and why they started studying specific topics

**Case in Brief:
University of Iowa**

- Public Institution in Iowa City, Iowa
- Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $440M+ in research expenditures (2015)
- As part of its "Communicating Ideas" workshop, the Office of Research and Economic Development produces a video series, "Research Minute"
- After receiving training and coaching, faculty record one-minute videos explaining their research in an accessible way
- Videos are posted on the office's website and its YouTube channel
- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences shares the videos on their Twitter account using #ResearchMinuteMonday
- Central communications office also uses the videos when pitching stories to the media

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; YouTube, available at https://www.youtube.com/user/ResearchAtIowa, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB57JrGdFs8oiDWSJ_x7PQQ, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HiJNzdhTKA.

Part Three: Optimizing Social Media Usage (Cont.)

Increasing Engagement Through Social Media

231% — Percentage increase in website page views

135K — Number of Twitter impressions (increase from 9,885 in previous month)

3 — Number of local news stations that picked up the stories

1 — Number of articles rewritten (and infographic picked up) by R&D magazine

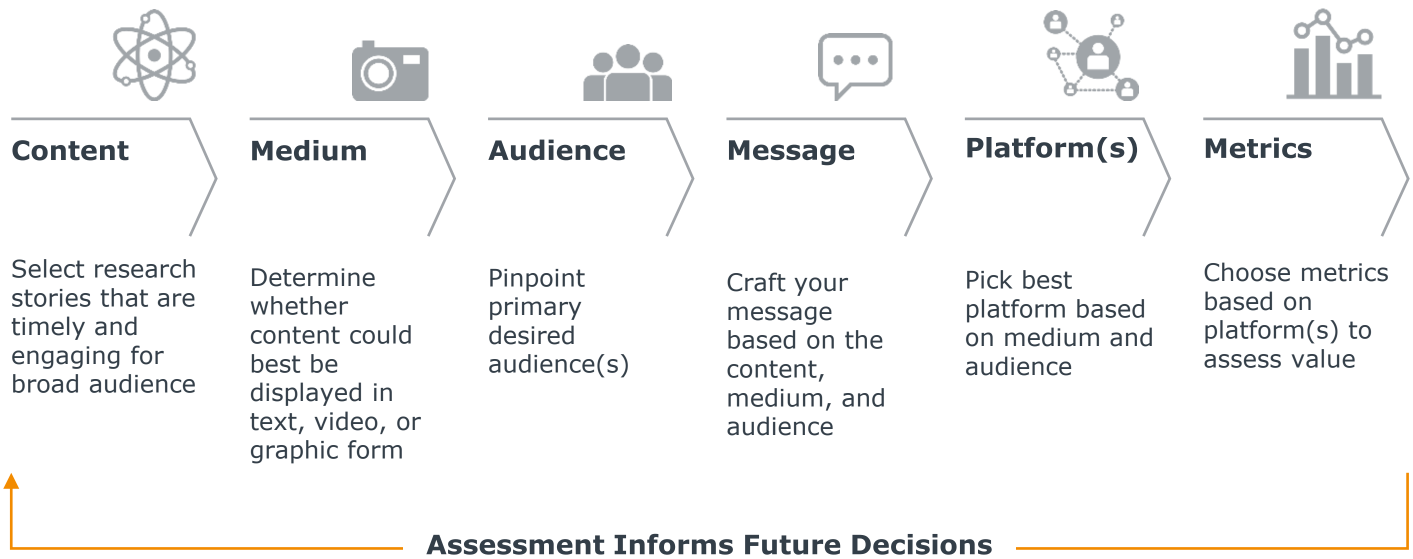
Case in Brief: University of Arizona

- Public Institution in Tucson, Arizona
- Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity
- $600M+ in research expenditures (2015)
- Sought to utilize digital communications to maximize impact, better engage with stakeholder groups, and elevate overall attention to their research
- "Star Wars Science" featured four stories in which Arizona researchers applied real-world science to the highly popular sci-fi *Star Wars* movie series
- Timed to precede a new film release, utilized #StarWarsScience, and promoted the series through Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn Slide Share

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis; Twitter, available at https://www.twitter.com/hashtag/StarWarsScience?src=hash.

Part Three: Optimizing Social Media Usage (Cont.)

Using Social Media Strategically



Social Media Tips

- Accounts on different platforms use the same name
- Connect posts to popular media at key times
- Focus on engagement, not quantity of posts
- Collaborate with other institutional accounts (especially central communications)
- Repost or retweet when running low on new content
- Track altmetrics (e.g., likes, shares, retweets)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.