



Missouri S&T  
Brand Symposium

# Protecting Your Brand During Times of Crisis

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Presentation by  
Teresa Valerio Parrot  
TVP Communications

# Our List of Vulnerabilities Keeps Growing

- Questions about our value
- Title IX
- Taxing endowments
- DOJ investigations into admissions
- FOIA requests
- Proliferation of “blogs” covering higher education
- DACA repeal
- Protests on campus
- Controversial speakers
- Sensationalism of our work
- Our own emotions

How we are reacting to a rapidly  
changing world



It is our responsibility to be the voice of reason.

# Do Any of These Leadership Responses Sound Familiar?

- “Let’s issue a statement.”
- “I’m hearing from [fill in the blank audience] that the college/university needs to speak up.”
- “We need to correct the record.”
- “If we don’t say/do something, who will?”

*It is your job to ask “why you, why now?”*

Only weigh in if it ties to your mission, is consistent with your brand, impacts students OR has a direct bearing on the short- or long-term health of your institution or community.

Don't make strategy changes based on limited feedback. Sample size and connection to the institution matter.



# Example of Collaboration

## **AJCU Statement on DACA Rescission**

September 5, 2017

The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) expresses deep dismay over today's decision by the Administration to strip the nation's 800,000 Dreamers of their DACA status. These young, innocent people were brought to the United States by their parents, who sought a better life for their families. Dreamers have planted roots here as students and young professionals, but as a result of today's rescission, they will now be forced to become pawns of political maneuvering in Congress. Dreamers have much to contribute socially and economically to our nation, and have not violated the law in any way.

The nation's 28 Jesuit colleges and universities will make every effort to protect the Dreamers among our students and alumni. On behalf of our member institutions and our network of over 2 million alumni, we ask Congress to protect the status of Dreamers, and their right to stay in the United States, by quickly passing the DREAM Act.

### Takeaways:

- If you can't say it yourself even if you are on brand, can you support others when they take a bold stance?
- How can you take advantage of your membership dues and affiliations?

# Example of Collaboration



Takeaway: Sometimes there is power in numbers because the brand hit is bigger than our institution.

# Example of What Works

The CU Advocates program is the official grassroots network of the University of Colorado.

Anyone can be a CU Advocate. It is a growing network of people who are informed of opportunities and challenges facing CU.

CU Advocates are empowered to influence public perception and policy affecting CU. CU Advocates take the initiative to attend educational programs to become more informed on and engaged with areas important to CU, the state and public higher education. CU Advocates are encouraged to promote CU's value and opportunities.

POST YOUR PRIDE USING  
**#Advocate4CU**

## CU Funding in Focus

Twenty years ago, Colorado students and their families paid one-third of the cost of their college tuition. State funding covered the rest. Today that's reversed, as students and families pay two-thirds of the cost.



## Why Advocate for CU

It is imperative that CU supporters mobilize to advocate on behalf of the university to help influence public policy, shape public opinion, energize support, and secure CU's future.

- Colorado ranks 48th in the nation for state funding per resident college student
- CU boasts five Nobel laureates and 10 MacArthur "genius" fellows
- CU physicians performed the first liver transplant
- CU researchers developed the first shingles vaccine.
- CU has educated 20 astronauts
- CU research has created 182 companies plus 4 FDA-approved drugs

[Read more](#)

## Advocate On The Go

 [Like CU Advocates](#)

 [Follow CU Advocates](#)

 [Link to CU Advocates Group](#)

 [Follow CU Advocates](#)

Takeaway: Even public institutions can advocate for themselves and ready an army.

# Example of Picking Battles Specific to Your Institution

The Washington Post  
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Fact Checker  
A free newsletter. Every Friday.

Grade Point • Opinion

## College president: Schools can't be blue islands in red states

By Raynard Kington December 23, 2018



GRINNELL COLLEGE  
FOUNDED 1844

salon NEWS POLITICS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE INNOVATION & SCIENCE



(Credit: Getty/Stephanie Keith)

## #MeToo is a wakeup call: We need to talk to youth about sexual health and ethics

We Rec

We can't leave it to colleges and workplaces to stop sexual harassment — prevention starts with earlier education

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS OPINION DATA ADVICE JOBS

SECTIONS FEATURED: The Ed-School Menace How a Beauty School Beat the Education Dept. Have Academics Fo

## Make Admissions at Elite Colleges 'Access Aware'



Pat Kinsella for The Chronicle

By Raynard S. Kington | NOVEMBER 24, 2014

# Example of What Worked

The first institution to issue a statement saying they wouldn't hold participation in school walk outs against applicants.

# Example of What Didn't Work

The institution that took too long to agree on language and issued a weak statement filled with adjectives saying they wouldn't hold participation in school walk outs against applicants once it was commonplace and people stopped caring.

# Example of What Works

## Original Post

- [LINK] — Posted Jan. 31 at 8:50 a.m.
  - Timeline:
    - Feb. 5, 5 p.m.: increase of 20 likes and 0 comments
    - Feb. 5, 11:30 a.m.: increase of 11 likes and 2 comments
    - Feb. 5, 9 a.m.: increase of 333 likes 18 comments
    - Feb. 4, 5 p.m.: increase of 242 likes and 12 comments
    - Feb. 3, 12:30 p.m.: increase of 280 likes and 8 comments
    - Feb. 2, 9:30 p.m.: increase of 95 likes and 2 comments
    - Feb. 2, 5 p.m.: increase of 88 likes and 4 comments
    - Feb. 2, 12 p.m.: increase of 165 likes and 10 comments
    - Feb. 2, 7:30 a.m.: increase of 157 likes and 22 comments
    - Feb. 1, 9:30 p.m.: increase of 367 likes and 12 comments
    - Feb. 1, 5 p.m.: increase of 445 likes and 13 comments
    - Feb. 1, 12 p.m.: increase of 400 likes and 20 comments
    - Feb. 1, 7:45 a.m.: increase of 1,360 likes and 67 comments
    - Jan. 31, 9:30 p.m.: increase of 2,829 likes and 103 comments
    - Jan. 31, 5 p.m.: increase of 1,928 likes and 175 comments
    - Jan. 31, 2:30 p.m.: \*First Report\*
    - Total: 10,000 likes, 550 comments
  - 992K followers

## On Facebook

- Comments on various @INSTITUTION Facebook posts
  - Feb. 5, 5 p.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 5, 11:30 a.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 5, 9:00 a.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 4, 5 p.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 3, 12:30 p.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 2, 9:30 p.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 2, 5 p.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 2, 12 p.m.: 0 new posts
  - Feb. 2, 7:30 a.m.: increase of 2 comments
  - Feb. 1, 9:30 p.m.: 5 comments \*First Report\*
- 1 Facebook message from the uncle of a prospective student

increase of 11 comments  
m.: increase of 8 comments  
.m.: increase of 10 comments  
: increase of 1 comment  
.m.: 50 comments \*First Report\*  
th profanity or violence  
ed negative comments as well

# Example of What Always Works

Allowing people to do their jobs.

# Messaging Considerations



# When Deciding if Communications is Necessary

- Comply with all legal and mandated communications and apply a healthy dose of common sense
  - View the situation through the lens of the Clery Act, Title IX, FERPA and insiders' and outsiders' perspectives
- Does the situation run counter to your institution's ethos?
- Can key audiences credibly ask:
  - “What does this mean for me?”
  - “How am I impacted?”

# All Communications and Brand Defense

- Must lead with genuine care, compassion and/or concern
- Need to have an appropriate level of emotion and leadership expressed
  - Sincerity is the ultimate litmus test
  - Can't communicate out of a leadership void
- Should reflect your brand promise, if possible
- Need audience-specific personalization

# The Institution's Responsibilities

## Are:

To be honest, transparent, work with officials

Review/improve protocols and safeguards

To be fair

Keep the best interest of the institution and the students in mind

Think about how this does or doesn't reflect our brand

## Aren't:

To serve as spokespeople for issues outside of our areas of responsibility

To chastise anyone or serve as morality police

To damn anyone

**To take this personally**

# What Do We Say?

- The TRUTH!
- Something that reflects a leadership stance
- Consider the average person's perspective
- Monitor how it is being received and act accordingly

Responding personally to tweets and social media posts about our institutions

# Consider the Bigger Picture

- Here's what matters:
  - Context
  - History
  - Language
  - Emotion
  - Data
  - Image/reputation
- Here's what doesn't:
  - Ego

THANK YOU