



COMMISSION<sub>ON</sub>  
DIVERSITY<sub>AND</sub>  
INCLUSION

# Public Affairs Report

Submitted to:  
Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton  
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June 23, 2017

# Recommendations for Publicity/ Communications Strategy

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Washington University in St. Louis continues to make significant strides toward creating and nurturing a more diverse and inclusive community. Over the past few years, communications have played a more central role in supporting these efforts. Through Public Affairs, we have pursued a number of communications opportunities. For example:

- The Record, the e-newsletter for the campus community, has expanded its coverage of the university's diversity and inclusion efforts (e.g. supplier diversity, Chancellor's Graduate Fellows Program, key appointments, Commission updates) in order to share progress within the university community.
- A new diversity website (<http://diversity.wustl.edu>) now serves as an aggregating point for shared goals, values, efforts, initiatives, and stories of our people.
- "Our Guide" does double duty by not only showcasing our diverse community but also the joys of living and working in St. Louis. Demand for the publication is increasing and it is becoming a "go-to" resource for recruiting faculty members and senior staff.
- The Day of Day of Discovery and Dialogue, now a signature event, brings the entire university community together once a year to share perspectives on diversity and inclusion.
- Different units of the university are increasingly taking advantage of sponsorships and award opportunities offered through publications like the St. Louis American and the Who's Who of Diversity in Color. Congratulatory advertisements are typically purchased in conjunction with these events and awards.
- This spring, we explored outlets and channels in which advertising could improve the visibility of the university as an exceptional community that fosters a diverse and welcoming environment in which to work and study.

## RECOMMENDATION #1

While these efforts should continue, there is both need and opportunity. Most efforts are not orchestrated and/or leveraged in any consistent or organized way. Media outlets and other publications (e.g. St. Louis Business Journal, St. Louis American, Chronicle of Higher Education, INSIGHT into Diversity, etc.) seek relationships with multiple units at the university, which diffuses the opportunity for strategic, economically efficient coordination and consistency of message. In addition, the university's diversity successes are not consistently communicated across and beyond our many individual units.

Consequently, the Commission recommends that the university allocate \$75,000 to Public Affairs to create a diversity and inclusion communications plan and develop a budget to support its implementation.

Public Affairs participated in an initial discussion with

the Commission earlier this calendar year to discuss this recommendation and explore some initial objectives for the plan. Some key themes emerged. Specifically, the Commission seeks a plan that will:

- build awareness of and pride for our work in diversity and inclusion among both internal and external stakeholders;
- encourage greater engagement in this work;
- recognize and honor those who have advanced this work;
- position the university as an industry thought leader in the area of diversity and inclusion.

While these goals are on point, more work, however, must be undertaken to more tightly define success, more clearly define audiences and actions, and create compelling messages that will move audiences to act.

## RECOMMENDATION #2

As for how this \$75,000 should be allocated, the Commission recommends these next steps:

1. Secure specialized expertise from a Minority and Women Business communications agency that has relevant experience. The agency will collaborate with Public Affairs and the Commission to hone in on objectives, strategies and tactics. We recommend a focused effort on messaging and identifying opportunities where we can showcase thought leadership externally. This approach will not only contribute fresh, external thinking; but it will also allow Public Affairs to expand its preferred agency program, which could have longer term benefits to the university. In short, we would like to diversify the team of communications professionals contributing to this plan.
2. We recommend initial outreach to individuals who may have an interest in the work or can recommend appropriate partners to us.
3. If a paid media plan is ultimately suggested, and we anticipate it will be, we recommend using a portion of this budget to engage a media buying firm such as locally-based Evolve Digital Labs (<http://evolvedigitalabs.com>) to ensure that we are truly targeting the correct outlets and channels. They can also provide a more accurate budget recommendation for the university to evaluate. Note, working with an outside partner is very typical as most organizations do not have internal expertise in media buying.

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## ADDITIONAL PLANS

It is important that we not sit idle while we complete this plan. Communications work must continue on a parallel path. Specific opportunities currently identified for the coming year include:

- Make Washington University in St. Louis key values more known to current and prospective members of its community. Initial opportunities may include:
  - Experience design of the Summers Welcome Center as new campus entry point for campus visitors and especially prospective students and their families.
  - New employee orientation delivered through HR and supplemented through schools and units;
  - New Human Resources website to be developed;
  - Recruitment language used in job posting.
- Explore paid media and earned media, or media that organically recognizes our efforts, and events in support of the fall launch of the University's Supplier Diversity Initiative, which is tied to the East End Transformation project.
- Update "Our Guide" and create video complements that can be used on the university's diversity website, Human Resources new website, and by schools and units.
- Explore the feasibility of and ideally launch a quarterly e-newsletter to share diversity and inclusion stories and news with internal and external audiences, and drive more traffic to the diversity website.
- Ensure regular communication between Public Affairs and diversity and inclusion administrators in order to identify diversity and inclusion storytelling opportunities as they emerge.

To view the full report click [here](#);  
to view the Executive Summary of the report, click [here](#).