

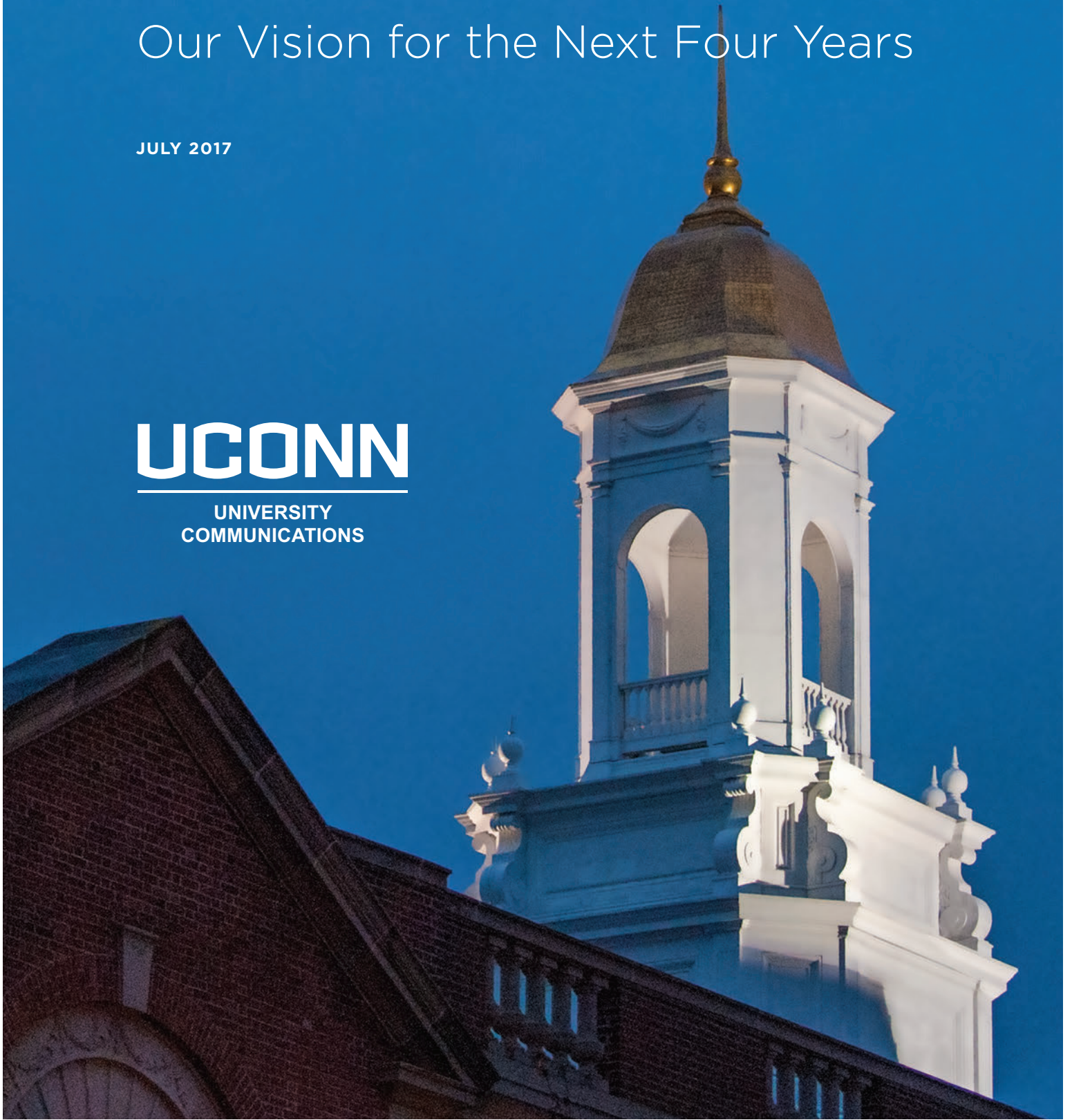
# Communications 2020

Our Vision for the Next Four Years

JULY 2017

# UConn

UNIVERSITY  
COMMUNICATIONS



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## Introduction by the Vice President for Communications

It has been four years since I arrived at UConn. Time certainly does fly when you're having fun.

Amidst the fun, and sometimes as a direct result of it, we have done some amazing things together. Things that would not be remotely possible without each of you. Your energy, creativity, professionalism, collaborative spirit, and passion for the university have made this office one of the shining examples of quality, production, efficiency, and boundless imagination at UConn — and really, all of higher education.

As a result, I take tremendous pride in your collective work. I've often said that this is the best team with which I've been associated in my career. The resolve in that statement only has solidified these last few years as the accomplishments and accolades have steadily piled up, and as I've met with so many of you recently to talk about what we've done and where we're headed.

A brand overhaul. UConn Today. New responsibility for UConn Health marketing. Strategic communication planning for athletics, medicine, and research. A rejuvenated *UConn Magazine* and brand-new *UConn Health Journal*. Science Salons. In-house production of video commercial spots. Brilliant multimedia imagery and production. Countless intuitive high-traffic web sites. VideoLink connectivity. Compelling ads with international exposure. To say nothing of the daily churn of media management, business services, and so many other functions crucial to keep us running.

We've accomplished these things and so much more against the backdrop of challenges that I know wear on your enthusiasm and morale at times, just as they do my own.

Significant budget cuts the last few years. Reductions in staffing. Procedural delays in hiring and procurement. Contractual uncertainty. No raises. And, of course, the occasional tensions between colleagues that is natural in a diverse environment of creative minds.

These obstacles, unfortunately, are not uncommon in our line of work throughout the country. Yet despite these hurdles, we never should lose sight of how fortunate we are to work at such a vibrant place, with offerings not found in virtually any other line of work. The ability to further your formal education, to expand your horizons through the arts, to interact with some of the greatest minds and innovators of our time, to cheer on some of the world's best student-athletes who are part of our incredible community.

It's my hope, as the unit administrator, that we are providing you the flexibility to partake in these benefits. That's not only a counterbalance to the aforementioned challenges, it's a way to keep the mind sharp, the passion fueled, and the operation functioning at the highest possible level.

That said, I have been reminded by many of you lately in much appreciated feedback that I can do a better job of keeping you apprised of the direction our ship is sailing amidst sometimes stormy seas. I couldn't agree more. While sharing your accomplishments and accolades is something I relish, sometimes it's easy to forget that staff want reminders of their purpose, or even just a peek into the inner workings of the machine that is University Communications.

It is for that reason that I put together this document.

This is not intended to be a long-term strategic plan. Ten-year strategic communication plans have become relics, rendered irrelevant by 24-hour news cycles, fast changing media, and lean fiscal times. Such plans collect dust. We need to stay true to our unwavering core values and vision, but be nimble and flexible to overcome the challenges and vigorously harness the opportunities that arise on any given day. We can chart a course, but must rely on our instincts and experience to make frequent course corrections as needed and as opportunities arise.

Nor is this intended to be a detail-laden tactical guide to our day-to-day work. My style, as I hope you've experienced, is not to micromanage, but to let the fantastic and creative people within our midst develop the best approaches to achieve our goals, large and small. You've proven time and again to be more than up to that challenge, allowing me to be your advocate, troubleshooter, and provider of the tools, counsel, and leadership voice needed to be successful.

Instead, I want to offer a reminder of our vision, an overview our standing strategic priorities as I see them from here at the midpoint of 2017, and an outline of our current state of operations. Budgets and people have changed over these last four years, and will continue to change, but our fundamental purpose remains the same, even as we've functioned in a manner that often feels responsive and perhaps at times even isolated in impact.

In providing this, hopefully you will have more of a transparent view of the future and your place in it, and how your efforts — now and in the months and years ahead — actually are not haphazard and of limited scope. Your daily labor advances our priorities as a great American public research university and does, in fact, make a huge difference.

Thank you again for all you contribute each and every day to University Communications and this outstanding institution. I'm energized by your talents and excited for what the future holds.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tysen Kendig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Tysen Kendig





## Guiding Principles and People

## Shaping a Vision for Communications at UConn

For decades, the University of Connecticut had been built on the backs of undergraduate students, having been known as a fine public school primarily serving residents seeking a broad-based education in more fields than offered by any other in-state institution. It served that mission well.

But complacency is the enemy of progress. In a world changing at a faster pace than ever before, UConn, too, must continue to shape itself not just as an outstanding teaching academy and a high-quality patient care delivery system, but also as a research powerhouse and economic driver that is better positioned to positively influence the fortunes of Connecticut and a global community than any other entity in the region.

We in University Communications have the opportunity to create and reinforce a new definition of UConn for Connecticut's next generation. How we seize this moment will have a profound impact on the state of Connecticut for decades to come, as we carry the responsibility to guide the state toward a knowledge-based economy so critical to our future vitality and competitiveness.

How we convey UConn's story, realize our institutional potential, and fulfill our state-wide leadership role is the most important thing we do. It's one thing to say that we're a national flagship research university and leader in academic medicine; it's another thing to demonstrate it and immerse our myriad of constituents in it.

Given the level of competition and rapidly changing media that has completely re-shaped consumer expectations, it likely never has been more urgent or critical for the university to more aggressively, consistently, and successfully position itself as one of America's elite comprehensive research universities serving Connecticut and the world.

Within our means, University Communications must find imaginative solutions to become a leader in innovative, proactive communication that directly engages our audiences. We must reach them. We must shape and deliver compelling content that in equal parts informs, intrigues, and inspires people. We must repeat, and continue repeating, the quality of the institution's faculty, students, and programs as being among the nation's very best.

Perhaps most importantly, we must be clear, consistent, and bold in doing all of the above. Challenge conventional thinking and process. Unleash creativity. Push the envelope. Stand out and be different. Anything less relegates us to the margin, lost amidst the white noise of cluttered media and a competitive marketplace.

## University Communications Vision

The University of Connecticut is a model for innovation in proactive, transparent communication that builds relationships and broadly depicts a great American public research university on the rise through content that informs, intrigues, and inspires.

## University Communications Mission Statement

Through proactive approaches to coordinated, multimedia communication, the University of Connecticut seeks to be the primary source of information and imagery pertaining to or affecting the institution, directly engaging stakeholders and targeted audiences in a professional and creative manner that accurately conveys, supports, and develops a quality brand image and top national public research university profile for UConn.



## Our Organizational Values

### INTEGRITY

We practice all aspects of communication and outreach with the highest degree of accuracy and consistency, and the relationships we have with students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, media and other members of the community are conducted with honesty, responsibility, and professionalism.

### INNOVATION

We strive to lead the harnessing of innovations in communications and outreach to achieve our mission, and encourage collaboration, exploration, and experimentation to challenge the status quo and make available new ways to reach our diverse constituency directly, efficiently, and quickly.

### INFORMATION

Informing our varied audiences is at the very heart of our purpose, and all of our work is carried out with the intention of providing the most thorough details available in order to inform and educate our community, our state, and the world in a timely and proactive manner.

### INTRIGUE

In reaching our audiences more directly, our communication and outreach services not only inform, but also captivate people through creative approaches that touch on the humanity and impact of the university and its people. In doing so, we build lasting relationships with our constituents.

### INSPIRATION

We aspire to develop feelings and inspire active participation among our audiences that serve to advance the university's overarching mission, and further position the institution as a leader in scholarly and creative endeavor through teaching, research, and service to our state and the world.



## What We Do

The following lists provides an overview of our three main organizational areas and major efforts supported, along with accomplishments led in whole or substantially by University Communications over the past several years. Most of these initiatives are complete, some are substantially in progress, and still others are multi-faceted and will be complete in phases or are ongoing over the short-term or in perpetuity.

What is not listed here is the countless content — in the form of written stories, video productions, photography, design work, social media, and individual copy — that is churned out by staff on a daily basis to feed many of these larger projects and initiatives. Without content — the very core of our operation — so much of this important work is rendered without impact.

### STRATEGIC MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

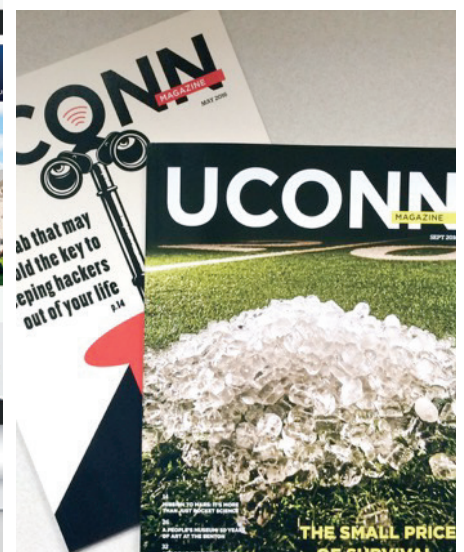
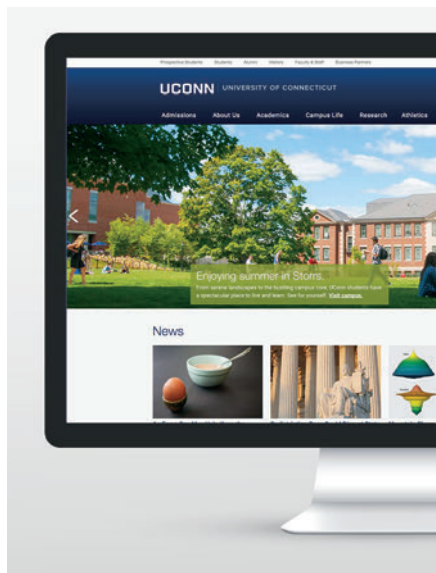
Strategic marketing is a primary function of University Communications. We serve as UConn's brand experts, creating materials and websites that promote the university through standout design and stellar copy. We ensure that all pieces that come through our office are consistent both visually and in messaging, shaping UConn's look, tone, and voice.

Since 2013, accomplishments in this area include, but are not limited to:

- Creation of a new brand platform, visual identity, and usage standards
- Launch of brand.uconn.edu
- Development of branded campus pride signage and lamp post banners
- Production of institutional video public service announcements annually
- Production of first UConn ads to appear in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.
- Support of the faculty hiring initiative (focused on ads in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*)



- Development and execution of multimedia “Unleashed” campaign (focused on *The Chronicle*)
- Development and execution of multimedia “We Get It” campaign
- Development and execution of targeted multimedia “The 6th Borough” campaign in New York
- Spearheading of state- and campus-wide signage and wayfinding initiative
- Maintenance of advertising presence at Bradley International Airport
- Collaborative leadership of first strategic marketing plan for athletics with SME Brands, Inc.
- Spearheading of initiatives geared toward formation of an engaged UConn Nation
- Creation, leadership, and promotion of UConn Spirit Awards employee recognition program
- *UConn Magazine* overhaul (print and online)
- Overhaul of uconn.edu and high-level page templates
- Update of web site for the provost’s office
- Update of all regional campus web sites
- Coordination of a variety of institutional social media channels
- Formation of university-wide Social Media Summit
- Formation of the university-wide Communications and Marketing Council
- Implementation of mobile communication standards and application development
- Creation of a research communication unit geared toward elevating science and research
- Conceptualization and management of Science Salons
- Management and promotion of UConn’s first comprehensive economic impact study
- Creation of annual holiday video message
- Production of president’s annual State of the University in original and new town hall format
- Assumption of presidential speechwriting responsibilities
- UConn Dairy Bar facility and brand redesign
- Promotional support in a variety of channels of *U.S. News & World Report* top 20 ranking



- Promotional support of the Sandy Hook Memorial Fund
- Marketing support for the Geno Auriemma UConn Leadership Conference
- Support of UConn Reads program
- Direct management of the UConn Alumni Association and subsequent dissolution
- Development of national presidential outreach series

In addition, our creative team has provided exclusive support for all undergraduate admissions marketing needs, including:

- Production of all printed undergraduate recruitment materials for the main campus in Storrs
  - Annual viewbook series, sometimes multiple books in a year
  - Undergraduate admission packet
  - Honors and STEM student yield pieces
  - High-achieving PSAT student yield pieces
- Regional campus viewbooks, yield pieces, and fact sheets
- Production of multiple marketing videos for admissions, orientation, and Lodewick Visitor Center
- Overhaul (twice) of the admissions web site
- Support materials for orientation
- Design assistance for Lodewick Visitor Center facility décor
- Redesign of UConn Avery Point welcome center

## NEWS AND MEDIA RELATIONS

University Communications' news and editorial team is the hub for external communications for the university, working with the media to elevate UConn's reputation on a national level. We develop written and multimedia content that primarily appears on UConn's news website, UConn Today. Further, our office holds primary responsibility for external media relations and story pitching, emergency communications management, and organizing news events and press conferences.

Since 2013, accomplishments in this area include, but are not limited to:

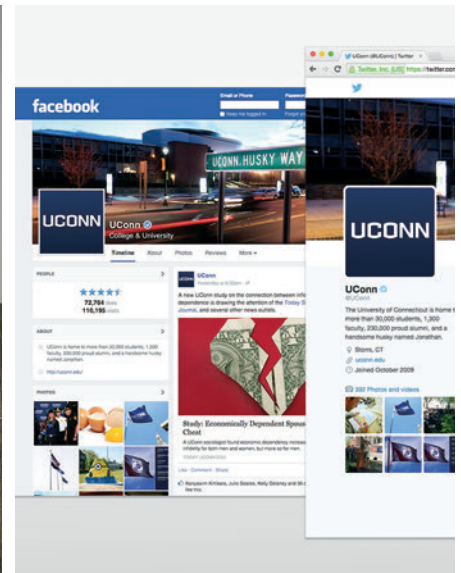
- Launch (and later upgrade) of UConn Today news site and customized multi-channel news feeds
- Development of comprehensive emergency communications protocol and training manual
- Creation and management of an internal media training program
- Procurement and management of VideoLink fiber optic broadcast studio for media interviews
- Partnership with *The Conversation* and *The Associated Press* to develop and disseminate fact-based journalism generated by UConn experts
- Assumption of oversight of Freedom of Information Act compliance and 300+ annual requests
- Development and management of an open records and FOI-request tracking web site
- Assistance with UConn Day at the Capitol legislative advocacy programming
- Creation and periodical publishing of *Mansfield Community Newsletter*
- Creation of a University policy on communications with external media



- Publishing of *UConn Forward* legislative newsletter
- Coordination of the UConn Poll in conjunction with the *Hartford Courant*
- Hosting of the Connecticut gubernatorial and senatorial debates in conjunction with the *Courant*

In addition, our media relations professionals have managed a plethora of major institutional issues that have drawn mainstream media attention since 2013, including:

- Budget and tuition positioning
- Administrative salary issues
- Next Generation Connecticut
- Multiple national championships in athletics
- NCAA sanctions for men's basketball
- Miller sexual misconduct investigation
- Title IX/OCR complaints
- Greek Life hazing allegations and various issues
- Buildup to opening of UConn Hartford and related real estate and relocation issues
- Closure of the UConn Torrington campus
- Development of housing at UConn Stamford
- United Technologies partnership
- Fusco Lecture promotional support, including high-profile visit by Hillary Clinton
- Bill Clinton campus visit
- UConn Foundation transparency issues and legislative inquiries
- School of Engineering data breach
- Ebola scare at UConn Health
- Racial incident at Spirit Rock
- Unionization of graduate students
- Student death at UConn firehouse
- Big 12 Conference expansion preparation and follow-up
- Collective bargaining process
- Scholars House learning community



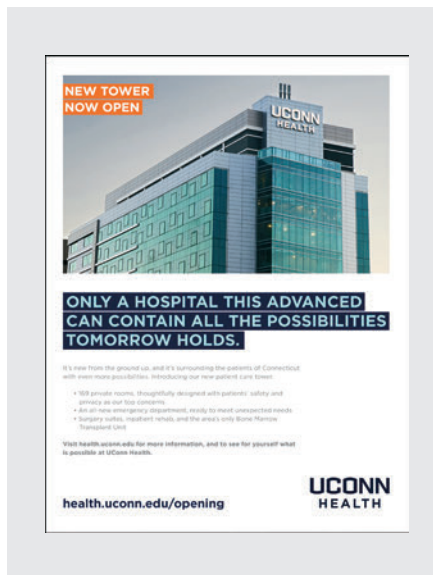
- Transferability of college credits to UConn
- Support for CT FastTrak
- Dissolution of the UConn Co-Op and integration of Barnes & Noble for bookstore management
- Aftermath of U.S. presidential election on campus

## HEALTH MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

University Communications supports the goals of UConn Health through a multitude of channels. We work to champion the institutional brand and reputation, keeping people informed as UConn Health undergoes changes — a rebranding, rapid expansion — and continues to innovate clinical care and blaze the trail in research areas such as genomics.

Since 2014, accomplishments in this area include, but are not limited to:

- Merger of UConn Health marketing communications into University Communications
- Creation of a new brand platform, visual identity, and usage standards
- Development and execution of multimedia “Power of Possible” campaign
- Integration of WebMD into marketing strategy
- Creation of the *UConn Health Journal*
- Conversion of web domain from uchc.edu to health.uconn.edu
- Launch of UConn Health Lifeline and UConn Health Pulse for internal communication
- Update of more than 200 UConn Health websites into Aurora web development platform
- Overhaul of front-line health.uconn.edu web presence
- Overhaul of web site for the School of Medicine
- Overhaul of web site for the School of Dental Medicine
- Support of opening a new hospital
- Led wayfinding and overall signage improvement





An aerial, high-angle photograph of a modern university building complex. The buildings are multi-story with a grid of windows. A central courtyard area is visible, featuring a paved walkway, some greenery, and a group of people walking. The overall scene is captured in a slightly desaturated, light grey tone, with the text 'Strategic Priorities' overlaid in a bold blue font.

**Strategic Priorities**

## The UConn Mission and Brand

University Communications supports the broader strategic vision of the University of Connecticut. Everything we do is grounded in that basic premise. Our areas of emphasis in our endeavors always should align with institutional priorities and initiatives as set by the president and senior leadership.

In essence, we strive to enhance UConn's brand image and reputation throughout the state, nation, and world. We work to position the university as one of the country's premier public research and academic institutions on par with its peers that currently are included among the Association of American Universities.

Our ability to better reach and engage our audiences directly using traditional and emerging communication tools should help the university more effectively convey the strategic scope of student success, teaching and research potency, and creative excellence that collectively serve Connecticut and a global community. Such efforts only serve to enhance the university's overall brand through consistency and absorption of message.

But what is that message? While short-term priorities may vary based on circumstance and opportunity, we look to the university's mission and other aspirational positioning statements to serve as a good long-term guidepost for the specific types of content we should focus on promoting. As such, it may be helpful to review some of these guiding institutional principles.

The university's overarching mission statement is as follows:

*The University of Connecticut is dedicated to excellence demonstrated through national and international recognition. As Connecticut's public research university, through freedom of academic inquiry and expression, we create and disseminate knowledge by means of scholarly and creative achievements, graduate and professional education, and outreach. Through our focus on teaching and learning, the University helps every student grow intellectually and become a contributing member of the state, national, and world communities. Through research, teaching, service, and outreach, we embrace diversity and cultivate leadership, integrity, and engaged citizenship in our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. As our state's flagship public university, and as a land and sea grant institution, we promote the health and well-being of Connecticut's citizens through enhancing the social, economic, cultural and natural environments of the state and beyond.*

Our more recently adopted Academic Vision ([academicvision.uconn.edu](http://academicvision.uconn.edu)) underscores that mission, citing our shared focus on solving the most significant societal problems and our commitment to excellence, ethical action, and inclusiveness — all grounded in core values of innovation, leadership, global engagement, and diversity:

*The University of Connecticut is dedicated to excellence demonstrated through national and international recognition. Through freedom of academic inquiry and expression, we create and disseminate knowledge by means of scholarly and creative achievements, graduate and professional education, and outreach. With our focus on teaching and learning, the university helps every student grow intellectually and become a contributing member of the state, national, and world communities. Through research, teaching, service, and outreach, we embrace diversity and cultivate leadership, integrity, and engaged citizenship in our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. As our state's flagship public university, and as a land and sea grant institution, we promote the health and well-being of citizens by enhancing the social, economic, cultural, and natural environments of the state and beyond.*

These statements guide more targeted arenas of university activity as well. Regarding research — a key focal point of University Communications activity now and into the future — we have articulated the following message platform:

*UConn is a premier research university with scholars leading their fields and significant technology commercialization activity including venture development. With sustained commitment and investment in this arena, we are poised to expand its impact by collaborating with investors, startups, entrepreneurs, and tech business both locally and nationally. UConn has a broad range of programs, funding models, faculty entrepreneurs, and a collaborative culture that are desired by industry and we are committed to successful long-term engagements. We are committed to the growth and success of technology commercialization because it is good for business, good for faculty researchers, good for investors, and good for the state's economic development. Positive impact results from successful collaboration and partnerships.*

These positioning statements all contribute to the essence of the UConn brand we strive to elevate every day. That brand, put in its simplest terms, is that as an institution of higher education, UConn is complex and multi-faceted. The university, while grounded in proud historical tradition, is dynamic and evolving. At this particular time in our history, select attributes and personality traits have been identified to help articulate our brand identity. Broadly speaking, these essential characteristics help define who we are as an institution:

*We are optimistic.  
We are inquisitive.  
We are driven.  
We are smart.  
We are trusted.  
We have winning spirit.*

## Project and Content Messaging Buckets

In terms of focusing work in University Communications, the aforementioned attributes substantiate the following four fundamental “buckets” into which our content development and related initiatives should fall (in no particular order of importance). Work that doesn’t support or fall into one of these four broad areas of focus should be reconsidered as to whether or not they are a priority within our workflow:

### **FOCUSING ON EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT SUCCESS AND FACULTY DISTINCTION**

*Reinforce the University of Connecticut’s renewed commitment to being a distinguished research university focused on student success and outcomes, emphasizing higher-quality student-centered educational experiences, expanded access, and preservation of affordability, all while studying under and working alongside a world-class cadre of educators and innovators.*

### **IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH RESEARCH, CLINICAL SERVICES, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

*Aggressively promote the University of Connecticut’s vast research enterprise and innovation in the biosciences, technology, physical, and liberal arts and sciences, along with its outreach initiatives and clinical excellence that collectively contribute to better lives for those in the statewide and global community.*

### **BUILDING AN ACTIVE AND ENGAGED UCONN NATION**

*Instill a passion to be part of UConn Nation in everyone who connects with the institution, weaving the concept of this community throughout the lives of students, faculty, alumni, donors, parents, fans, and all those touched by the University of Connecticut.*

### **IMPACTING A STATEWIDE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY WITH UNPARALLELED SCOPE**

*Relentlessly demonstrate the significance of the University of Connecticut’s positive economic and social impact on the state of Connecticut, illustrating the university’s return on investment and unequalled positive fiscal and societal influence reaching every corner of the state.*





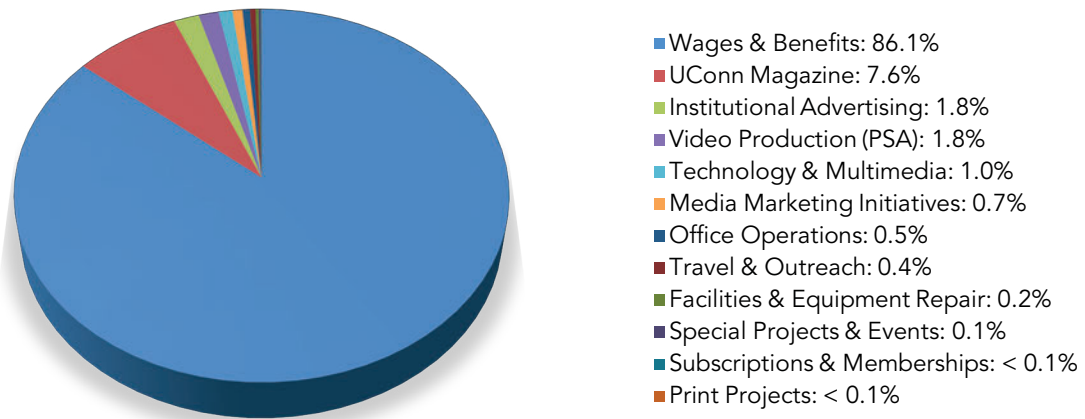
## The Near-Term Outlook



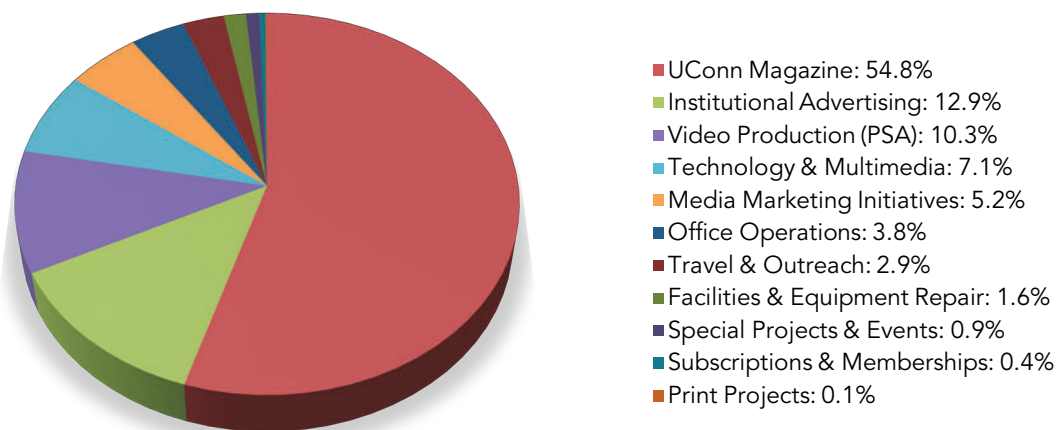
## University Communications Budget Overview: Storrs

To provide a more immediate sense of our resource allocations to achieve our vision and goals, for fiscal 2018 University Communications has budgeted revenues of \$6,963,676.00 coming from three sources: permanent funds; partial UConn Health monies outlined in an annual memorandum of understanding (MOU) and used to pay health marketing staff salaries; and specific funds allocated to pay state salaries of two alumni relations staff assigned to the UConn Foundation.

### FISCAL 2018 UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS EXPENDITURES



### FISCAL 2018 UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS EXPENDITURES (MINUS WAGES AND BENEFITS)



The most obvious story told by the budget picture is that University Communications increasingly has become a people-intensive operation. Our 40 full-time, division-funded staff in Storrs in fiscal 2018 account for more than 86 percent of the total divisional budget — an imbalanced percentage, to be sure. This leaves a balance of \$970,430.47 for “discretionary” operations. Of that balance, three major deliverables that University Communications is annually charged with producing — *UConn Magazine*, a modicum of institutional advertising, and television commercial (PSA) spot production — are estimated based upon previous costs and volume to consume \$756,826.58 in fiscal 2018.

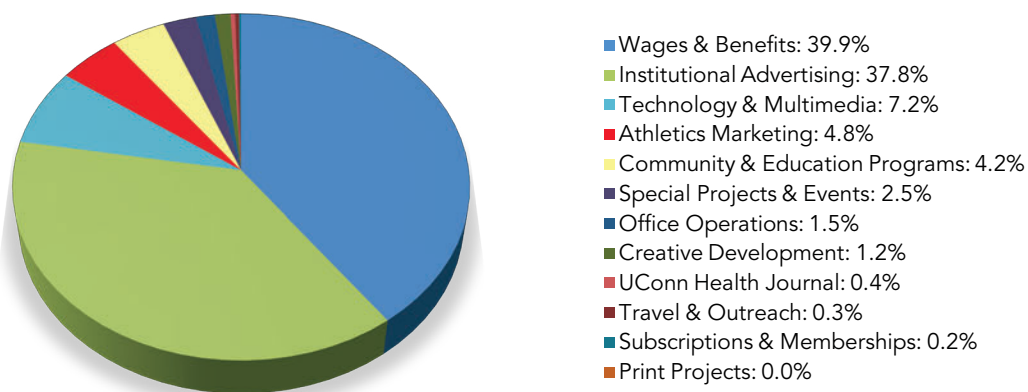
This leaves \$213,603.89 in funds for the basic costs of doing business, such as office supplies, information technology, equipment repairs, facility support, travel, professional development, media and special events, subscriptions, targeted institutional marketing initiatives, and the like.

## University Communications Budget Overview: Farmington

As previously noted, while UConn Health has been fully integrated into our organizational and operational functions in University Communications for more than two years, its funding model remains largely separated from our central budget. Funding to manage UConn Health marketing communications based in Farmington comes to University Communications entirely via an aforementioned MOU with UConn Health — which, for those who are unaware, is a separate state agency from the University of Connecticut — and is funded by a combination of state and clinical revenue dollars as determined by UConn Health’s chief financial officer.

Health marketing communications also is funded partially from within UConn Health to support specific areas such as internal communications, multimedia production, and practice relations. The sum of this funding and the aforementioned MOU are reflected herein.

### FISCAL 2018 UCONN HEALTH MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS EXPENDITURES



For fiscal 2018, University Communications has budgeted UConn Health MOU revenue of \$4,211,258.00. While there may be some slight variation to this number based on any carry-forward balance from fiscal 2017 and pending purchase orders, this is our baseline for budget planning.

Combined with additional funding of \$1,963,178.00 that stays within the UConn Health financial system, the total budget for health marketing communications is \$6,174,436.00.

As the preceding graphic demonstrates, the UConn Health communications budget is not as nearly tied into human resources as the Storrs-based University Communications budget. In fact, less than 40 percent of the UConn Health-focused marketing budget supports salaries and benefits — although other communications positions outside of the MOU with University Communications do exist within UConn Health and report up to the chief communications officer.

Obviously, a significant sum of budgetary expenses — \$2,334,088.00, or more than one-third — is dedicated toward advertising. This is a more typical budget for a marketing communications shop, and is consistent with the need to continue to build UConn Health brand awareness and reputation, which really was a non-existent effort in an aggressive, outward-facing manner until mid-2016.

Of particular note, outsourced creative work in fiscal 2018 is projected to not exceed \$74,000, or less than two percent of the total UConn Health marketing communications budget. This is a dramatic example of how merging our operations between Storrs and Farmington has yielded greater efficiency. Three years ago, expenditures for outsourced marketing work at UConn Health was approximately \$1 million — dollars that have since been reallocated into mass market exposure and saturation. Since that time, existing resources in Storrs have been leveraged to save money and produce marketing deliverables in-house.

## University Communications Priorities

### FORMALLY ALIGN UNIVERSITY-WIDE MARKETING COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

The marketing needs at UConn can be organized into six mission-central spectra: academics, undergraduate admissions, athletics, health, institutional, and research. Presently, University Communications directly manages three of those six areas: admissions, health, and institutional. The remaining three are either decentralized and often completely unmoored to centrally managed messaging strategy and execution — if not ignored entirely.

As we enter fiscal 2018 and face more significant financial challenges than at any point in recent history, an opportunity exists to dramatically change how the university works to present more of those areas to their myriad audiences in a more coordinated, efficient manner.

UConn is not unlike the vast majority of universities in that it has a central office guided by a vice president for communications, which deals with institutional branding, news and media relations, and other broad services, as well as some levels of targeted creative support for non-administrative functions. But UConn also has many individual academic schools and some administrative offices that employ writers, designers, video producers, etc. and that allocate budgets for marketing activities specific to that unit.

This decentralized approach, while addressing local and often internal communication needs, invariably results in redundancies, inconsistency of message and lack of quality control — all of which threaten the broader institutional brand identity. Depending on the communications priorities of the dean or administrator, work strategies and tactics in these units also wildly vary, and may or may not be grounded in effective marketing practices. Moreover, this decentralization perpetuates a system where schools/campuses with greater access to resources are able to invest more in building up duplicative communication infrastructure and external media buys, while other schools/campuses are left with little to no support for marketing-based activities — creating an imbalance of “haves” and “have nots.”

Today, we know that there are more communications professionals employed at UConn who are not ultimately accountable to University Communications than those who are administratively housed within the central unit. We also know that advertising expenditures across decentralized units totals in the millions of dollars.

Together, these activities constitute as much as \$7 million annually (based only what we know), on top of the centralized funding for branding activities on behalf of UConn and UConn Health. Clearly, this model is neither tenable in today’s environment, nor is it an appropriate way to manage precious marketing resources and a valuable and important institutional brand.

As this major initiative is just now developing, more details will emerge in the weeks and months ahead. Working in concert with the president, provost, and individual deans, the university will begin to analyze human and fiscal resources invested in marketing communications across the board, and identify potential efficiencies and quality improvements through more formal alignment with and support from University Communications.

While models to guide such a significant culture change vary, and given the complexity of varied levels of investment and sophistication in place across the enterprise, the university will proceed carefully to ensure the outcome is thoughtful, efficient, and of better service to the institution as a whole.

**MAINTAIN THE EXCELLENCE AND REACH OF UCONN MAGAZINE**

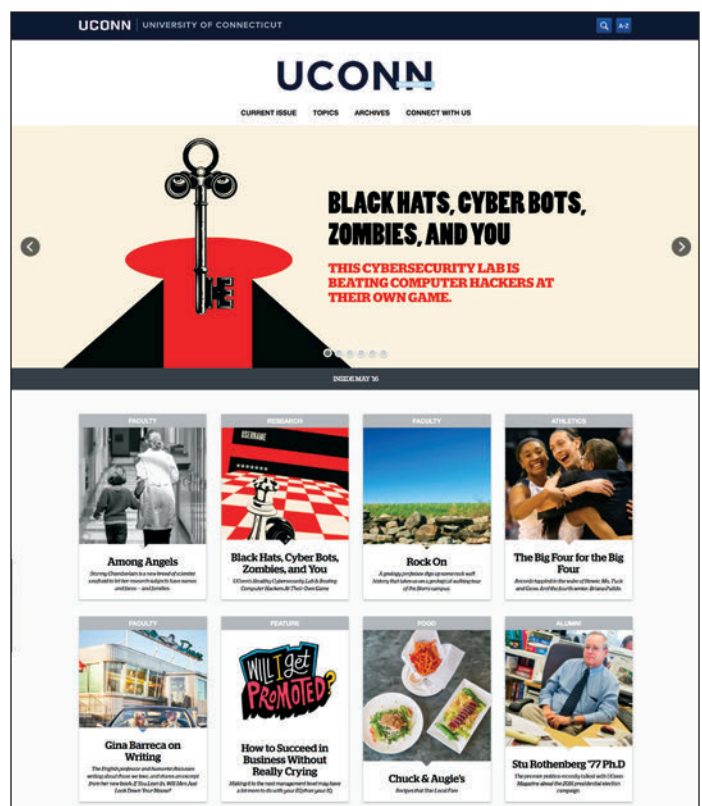
Putting UConn Health aside as its own separate budgetary entity focused exclusively on the health marketing enterprise, clearly *UConn Magazine* is our most-substantial non-wage expenditure, comprising more than half of University Communications non-wages operating budget. Producing a full-color 56-page publication, on high-quality stock, and mailing it to some 200,000 addressable living alumni, donors, and others is not an inexpensive undertaking. Yet even in the multimedia age, alumni at institutions around the country still rank their alumni magazine as the way they best stay connected with their alma mater.

Unlike most universities, however, production of the alumni magazine — including the entire cost and workload burden of writing, designing, producing, printing, and distributing it — has been the exclusive responsibility of University Communications.

At many institutions, such publications typically are housed in whole or in part within alumni relations, and even those which share our organizational model usually benefit from some alumni or private support stream to fund the publication given that alumni (and to a lesser degree, donors) are the primary audience. That is not the case at UConn — though perhaps it should be.

Still, it is our belief that a top-tier research university needs to have a periodical issued three to six times per year to showcase outstanding content, news, translatable research stories, alumni profiles, class notes, letters to the editor (a forthcoming addition), philanthropic inspirations, and other features typically found in such publications. With a first-rate editor and lead designer having elevated *UConn Magazine* among the best of its kind nationally, we are well positioned into the future to provide an intriguing medium that touches alumni more frequently and substantively than ever before. We've quickly developed momentum.

Simultaneously, University Communications leadership not only must continue seeking ways to more efficiently produce this publication, we also must partner with the UConn Foundation and central administration to generate new subsidies for the production of this key publication.





## CONTINUE TO DEVELOP MULTIMEDIA CONTENT WITH INCREASED VOLUME AND QUALITY

This priority sits at the very heart of what we do as a communications shop. Producing content — be it written stories, video vignettes, photo packages, web pages, publications, video spots, ad development, social media content, and the like — on behalf of UConn is a responsibility that requires creative and skilled people under our own roof, living and breathing the university on a daily basis, to make those things happen.

We need to be doing more of this, not less, and at that same time strive to enhance the quality of our work not just to keep pace with our competitors, but serve as the model they are chasing. Much of this work is core to success in the continually burgeoning social media space. As such, we simply are not in a position to further reduce staffing levels en masse, and in fact need to bolster certain key areas, namely in the areas of written content, video production, and emerging media.

With our current staffing plan, we will endeavor to evolve UConn Today, build upon the successful launch of *UConn Magazine*, bolster our social media efforts, support key marketing initiatives and creative development on behalf of UConn Health and intercollegiate athletics, continue all manner of student recruitment support for undergraduate admissions, and develop and overhaul high profile institutional web sites, among other things.

In doing all of this, we also need to have the manpower to remain adaptable and nimble, ready to take on the more ad hoc projects and challenges that arise as well as new and unforeseen opportunities to elevate the UConn brand and share our story to a myriad of audiences.

## REBUILD THE INSTITUTIONAL ADVERTISING BUDGET

Any effective effort geared toward advancing an institution or organization is grounded in the time-trusted three-prong formula for successful marketing: market research, creative platform development, and execution via paid media. Such an approach is critical to attracting students, inspiring alumni pride and giving, recruiting faculty, impacting rankings and institutional awareness, and reinforcing a footprint of influence, among other desired outcomes.

At UConn, paid media has been very random and not sustained: an ad in *The New York Times*, a billboard, a rail car campaign to push a very specific message, and a handful of placements in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to promote faculty, to cite recent examples.



But these efforts don't elevate our brand in a sustained way that moves the needle — the exception being at UConn Health, where far more robust funding to drive patient traffic has been allocated in recent years.

This is a high-dollar proposition to be sure. Many peer and lesser quality institutions annually budget upwards of one million dollars or more just to maintain paid media visibility for reputational awareness or to address a specific need like those mentioned earlier. Many of these peers also leverage agencies of record to do work that we are fortunate to assume in-house.

At UConn in fiscal 2018, we have allocated \$124,631.58 for paid media — a mere 1.8 percent of our communications operating budget (still less than 13 percent when factoring out wages). This is woefully inadequate to keep pace with even many smaller schools in Connecticut who are aggressively working to chip into our market share — to say nothing of peers and aspirants who compete at a national level. Such a funding level does not permit any large-scale sustained paid media presence, and moreover does not even allow for us to be fully nimble in a substantive way when smaller scale opportunities (economic impact, Final Four, the “6th Borough”) arise.

Understanding the state budget climate and optics associated with such an investment, we do not reasonably anticipate a seven-figure allocation for such efforts — even though it is more than warranted as a minimum investment for a top-20 public institution.

Even within UConn, we are spending millions of dollars in a decentralized manner on fragmented paid media efforts while abdicating institution-wide opportunities with relatively miniscule funding. This is a lopsided approach to branding.

We need to avoid reducing this critical funding line whenever possible. We simply do not have other options, and our brand reputation, perhaps our most valued asset as a research university, stands to suffer. We cannot stay silent in our mass media positioning.



## **GROW THE CLINICAL REVENUE AND BRAND IDENTITY OF UCONN HEALTH**

The 2016 launch of ‘The Power of Possible’ campaign represents an important leap in a multi-year journey to support clinical revenue growth in the university’s health enterprise, while continuing to enhance the organizational reputation in three distinct mission areas: research, teaching, and patient care.

To accomplish this, acknowledging that name and brand recognition is low, we began with a broad, bold, and widespread campaign. Healthcare marketing is similar to institutional marketing in terms of its focus on high-level objectives, but also involves significantly more focus on transactional business.

The consumer adoption model details three preliminary steps that are marketing’s role in growing a healthcare — or any — business: awareness, followed by interest, culminating in trial. Brand advertising addresses the first and second steps, but crossing the threshold to trial requires different tactics, skills, and systems to attract potential customer use in a highly competitive environment.

Our redesign to consumer friendly websites began this process. In the coming years, we must embrace the full spectrum of business-building tactics that are simple, progressive, and centered upon the customer experience. Continuing to evolve the web presence while implementing direct-to-consumer tactics are different and active steps that invite new customers to try UConn Health. Initiatives with WebMD, a new mover program geared toward individuals and family who recently relocated to our service area, and a forthcoming healthcare customer relationship management (CRM) partnership all illustrate this philosophy in action.

Understanding that not all transactions are self-directed, our work also must support referral development and continue to lead improvement in areas where customers might have a bad experience that negates our acquisition efforts. Campus wayfinding enhancements led by University Communications are an example of this work.

At its core, a strong UConn Health brand supports all of the aforementioned objectives and must continue to be consistent and creative both in terms of message and target audiences. Moving forward, we will seek to have a more balanced approach to mass media marketing combined with additional targeted opportunities designed to support measurable growth and allow for a rare opportunity to prove clear financial return on investment for our work.

## CRITICAL HIRES

In recent years, University Communications has been careful to evaluate every position line that goes vacant, ensuring that any hire addresses an area of current and long-term strategic importance. In some cases, we have eliminated positions that no longer serve a critical role, allocating those salary lines instead toward programmatic priorities and deficit mitigation.

As a result, University Communications is as lean as ever, and we also understand the fiscal realities that inhibit any staffing growth for new initiatives. We struggle mightily with previously cited issues of balancing quality versus quantity, and volume versus creativity as a result. As we continue to take on new areas of responsibility in whole or part (healthcare marketing and athletics, to cite two significant examples from the past two years), this simply is not sustainable.

We've recently addressed a few areas of longstanding need that have either been held vacant (research communications) or unfunded in the wake of the 2014 reorganization of UConn Health marketing communications (health marketing copywriter). We also received an unanticipated infusion of new money from the president's office to bolster social and emerging media efforts on behalf of the university — a highly visible area that has never benefitted from a full-time professional managing our efforts, a gross deficiency when compared with our peers and competitors.

Looking beyond these three hires already on the books, it's difficult to gauge where our hiring priorities will lie, especially not knowing how our finances or normal staff turnover will evolve.

Certainly, consistent with the strategic priorities outlined earlier in this document, content development will remain a staple of our operation, as we always will need good storytellers to mine compelling material and convey our messages in multi-media form. The university has more than enough good stories to keep an army of writers, video producers, and photographers to tell, and we've developed outstanding channels — *UConn Today*, *UConn Magazine*, *UConn Health Journal*, and various social media outlets — that require new material regularly. Balancing production volume with fiscal realities will remain a forefront challenge.

Staying on the subject of social media, management of these highly visible media platforms will require more than a single full-time staff member. While we're on solid footing through the efforts of many through the years, it has been an uphill challenge to fully utilize, monitor, and engage audiences on "traditional" platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and almost impossible to fully harness emerging tools such as Tumblr, Snapchat, livestreaming, and interactive virtual reality video — to say nothing of tomorrow's trend among our targeted demographic. It is conceivable we'd seek opportunities to grow in this area, beyond the standard student support we employ.

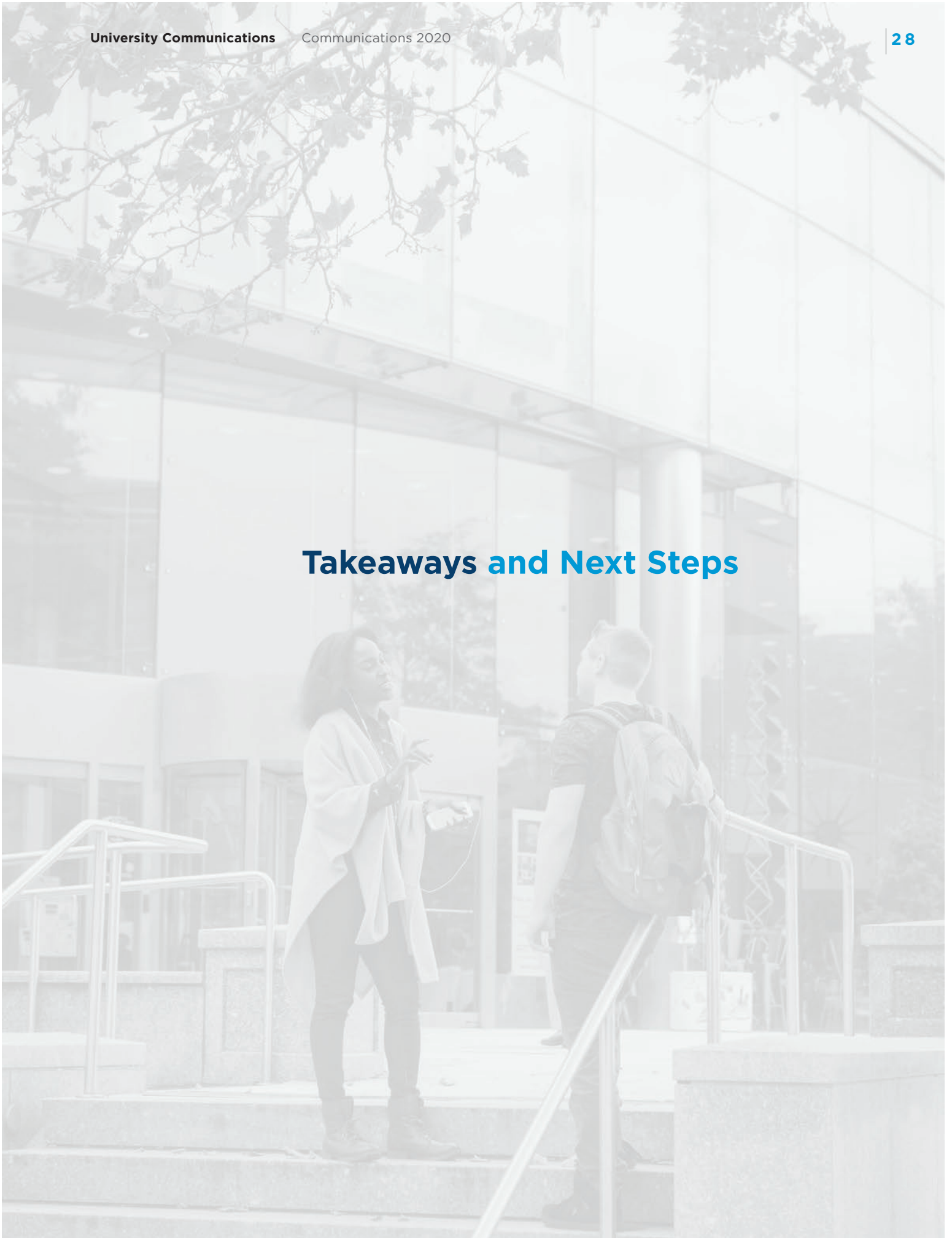
On the health care side, staffing to better address direct-to-consumer marketing needs would be a desirable area in which to build capacity. This may involve customer relationship management staffing, or perhaps even in-house marketing

research expertise to ensure our efforts stay current and abreast of shifting market trends and perceptions.

However, to reiterate a recurring point, any staffing decisions — including those identified as well as unforeseen needs and opportunities that may arise — will be balanced against rebuilding an operational budget to support the work of our talented professionals already on board. This simply offers a snapshot of what we currently foresee as staffing opportunities. Fiscal circumstances, as always, will dictate what we are capable of doing at any given time.



## Takeaways and Next Steps



## What Does This Mean?

The intention of this document, as stated at the onset, was not to be “Siri” and have all the answers. Instead, the hope was to ensure everyone had a clear understanding of our vision and rationale for our shared strategic direction, and a better sense of our collective short-term standing and priorities amidst growing challenges.

As has been articulated, we will continue to pursue our core functions of content development, with particular emphasis on research communication and human interest features, as these stories demonstrate our academic strength and positive impact on society. We will seek to push out this content directly to our audiences via current and emerging media developed by our web development and social media practitioners. Through multimedia design and visual production, channeled through targeted marketing opportunities, we will continue to explore opportunities to paint a vivid picture of teaching, research, public service, all taking place within a vibrant learning community.

## Efficiency and the New Normal

University Communications is one of the smallest cabinet-level administrative divisions at UConn. This group, in its broadest description, supports advertising, alumni, media relations, and outreach — all people-intensive functions required by any university.

Between the staff’s daily observations and what has been articulated herein, it should be obvious that we operate in a manner that makes the most out of limited resources in a relatively small budget for our type of operation. Recent budget and personnel reductions have rendered our operation as lean as possible without eliminating major core functions that would seriously affect our ability to communicate institutional messages in an effective way.

Clearly, we can’t do everything, and as such we always need to look at re-prioritizing existing functions and standing projects. Although our budget modeling can only afford to look ahead two fiscal years due to the significantly changing fiscal climate, we must always evaluate needs and resources and make decisions that have longer-range impact.

We are faced with a ‘new normal’ in some areas that already have faced reductions in staffing and workload. With no light at the end of the tunnel, we are forced to look even deeper within our ranks again to prepare for a continuation of dire fiscal times in fiscal 2019 and beyond, and consider reducing or eliminating functions that previously had been central to our business model.

As already stated, some functions will remain priorities for the foreseeable future. *UConn Magazine* — an earlier stated priority — and projects that support undergraduate admissions will remain staples of our workflow, although other print-specific

design work may decline as a function of university-wide budget reductions and printing costs.

As a result, it is a reasonable expectation that we will look more toward multimedia design and web-based options as marketing communications solutions in the years ahead.

We also identify content development as the heart of what we do and a priority moving forward, and this crosses all areas of our operation. While developing content around research and high-priority marketing endeavors such as UConn Health is an area of deficiency and high need that we currently are working to address, it is going to be a challenge to restore general assignment writing support to levels enjoyed four years ago.

Instead, we increasingly will find ourselves relying on our colleagues spread throughout the university. This is the one area where we can pull in existing resources around campus to help fill the gap — and a big reason behind building a more broadly accessible UConn Today content management system, and moving toward a model of formally aligning communications professionals university-wide.

The biggest tug-of-war we currently face in budget balancing is institutional advertising, which is both a priority and, unfortunately, the only remaining pool of dollars that can be cut without affecting staffing and basic services to keep the building running. It's a troubling contradiction.

By 2013, the institutional advertising budget already had eroded significantly, but was temporarily bolstered through internal cost cutting and new support from the central administration. With recent cuts, that budget line has reverted to approximate 2013 levels despite a concurrent increase in traditional and new market visibility opportunities being leveraged by our peers and competitors — especially in the electronic realm.

Beyond fiscal 2018, we anticipate possibly needing to eliminate the annual institutional advertising budget of nearly \$125,000 if faced with further budget reductions. The stark reality is that amount alone wouldn't even cover the sum of, for example, a three-percent cut.

This would remove any flexibility in pursuing advertising opportunities and needs and make it more of a decentralized, ad hoc effort — also an unacceptable long-term situation for a central marketing communications shop charged with enhancing the university brand across all channels.

It clearly would impact our workflow as well. Perhaps most noteworthy in this vein is the annual production of UConn's institutional public service announcement, which is a costly endeavor with limited impact as a function of the small media placement budget. Managing expectations for such longstanding deliverables will be part of our challenge.

## Creating a Better Workplace

It was mentioned in the introduction to this document that we strive to provide flexibility in the workplace so that staff can find a balance between work and family. That remains priority one. For the work piece of that equation, however, cutbacks and dreary budget outlooks should not get in the way of doing new things that assist and motivate us to stay sharp and productive.

Any progressive efforts to improve the workplace dynamic amidst stark challenges starts with the assumption and recognition that all staff are invested in the greater university and take pride in their work. No workplace will be ideal unless staff carry this basic trait with them to the office or field each day, and no initiative to make one's workday more satisfying will be successful without that basic commitment on the part of the employee.

For those who take that obligation to heart, leadership must empower those who demonstrate the attitude and excellence that aligns with our aforementioned vision, and provide appropriate opportunities for them to grow and thrive within the organization. Sometimes, this may involve selective investments of time and money to spur innovation in all we do.

We've worked particularly hard to cultivate the next generation of communications and marketing leaders. In some cases, this has yielded reclassifications and a shifting of job functions for those high performers who bring the right attitude, work ethic, and high-level of performance to their jobs each day. Others have been afforded more opportunity for supervision and greater project oversight. As an organization, we've sought ways to provide more career ladders for staff despite being small, flat organization encompassing distinct creative and technical vocations.

Moving forward, it is an expectation that we will continue to look within our ranks first for growth opportunities that arise. The best thing we can do for staff is enable them to find reward in their work — and even if that ultimately leads them to places other than UConn, we'll have generated an environment in which people who want to put in the effort to make a difference know that we value them and will invest in their success.

With all that said, while senior leadership and unit directors can offer suggestions on enhancing the workplace environment and boosting qualitative and quantitative productivity, ultimately the best suggestions come from those who directly benefit from such endeavors.

As such, we've taken heed of some ideas from staff — ranging from basic practices that cost nothing to ideas that will modestly impact work schedules and budgeting. These ideas, mind you, always must comply with state and university labor guidelines and policies that govern the workplace environment and activities of staff.

## COMMUNICATION GRANTS

Sometimes the best ideas for operational effectiveness and inspiration are those being used by peers on campus. Such is the case with the UConn IDEA Grant program.

The IDEA Grant program in the Office of Undergraduate Research awards funding to support student-designed and student-led projects, including creative endeavors, community service initiatives, entrepreneurial ventures, research projects, and other original and innovative projects. The program awards up to \$4,000 per student to fund self-designed work on a topic, project, problem, artistic product or performance, or other idea of their choice that represents new thinking.

Obviously, state employment policies and collective bargaining agreements prohibit us from paying stipends to staff for a similar purpose. But that doesn't mean the concept can't still work. Starting with fiscal 2018, we will seek to allocate \$25,000 annually from our budget for Communication Grants. This fund is designed to bring communications and innovation together, in line with our vision, and is designed to support a new creative endeavor or original project that will improve our operation or potentially benefit the university. Ideally, these projects should be based within the communications and marketing realm, but do not necessarily need to be tied to one's specific vocation or job role.

Staff will be invited to submit proposals for funding from this budgetary pool. It may be used to attend a different conference that would expand one's perspective and explore a new vocational area. It might involve procurement of emerging software or equipment. It could involve a team-building exercise. Ideally, it would involve imagination the likes of which could not be envisioned in a list of sample proposals.

The funding, which would need to meet with procurement process approval, will not be limited per person; sometimes, a great idea will require more funds than others. We will convene a panel of representatives from all sectors of the building to decide on fund disbursements from this pool quarterly, avoiding any conflicts of interest in evaluating proposals.

By putting the onus on staff to develop ideas all their own — rather than the standard, daily process of having work assigned or require tending on a periodic basis — and providing peer-approved funding to pursue those ideas, hopefully we can bring to life the countless creative concepts within our walls that go unfulfilled because they never are brought forth out of resignation that no funding exists or lack of support at a supervisory level.

This initiative puts innovation directly in the hands of our creative thinkers and doers.



## BIG IDEAS

Not all ingenuity involves seed money. Some involves simple process and resource allocation that defies conventional thinking and practice.

As our staff roster has diminished in size over the last few years, accompanying that has been an understanding that we simply do not have the “boots on the ground” to produce content at the same volume as in years past. We can’t write every story, produce every video, or develop every web site request or lead that comes our way. Although many of our staff strive to do just that and grow frustrated over the sense that we’re falling short, the math just doesn’t add up. What’s more, “outside the box” thinking succumbs to the daily grind.

Moving forward, we should be fostering an environment that regularly sets aside time from daily projects and workflow demands to let creativity flow in each of our organizational units. We should not let the routine pound us into an assembly line mentality. Time must be carved out to shift focus from the routine to identify new ways of carrying out our charge.

This could be a weekly endeavor or it could be a monthly exercise involving a full-day. But in doing so, we are more likely to be the innovators we seek to be in our vision statement. If we’re going to be a model for communications, we can’t simply conduct business as usual. We need to be the big thinkers and occasional risk takers. While only a handful of these big ideas may wind up sticking, the exercise only needs to produce a couple ideas every so often to be successful.

As the old sports adage says, “you miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.” Let’s put the ball in play with our staff and see what shots open up for us.

## OFFICE HOURS

The same philosophy of carving out time for substantive interactions with colleagues to develop new approaches to work should apply to the top of the organization.

Since arriving in 2013, the vice president for communications often has shared two philosophies for staff interactions. The first is that large staff meetings are, by and large, and ineffective way to communicate. They typically are one-way conversations, sharing sometimes complex or evolving information that may generate questions over how it applies to the individual — but those questions often are left unasked amidst a reluctance to speak up among a large group of peers.

The second, related philosophy is that one-on-one or small group conversations with people of like interests and job roles is a more effective tool for connecting leadership with front-line staff. For better or worse, the onus has been put on the individual employee to avail oneself of the vice president’s “open door policy.” However, that invitation is rarely acted upon, and sometimes the nature of the leadership position results in less-than candid and open feedback. Many also have expressed reservations about being a bother. This is understandable, if not unfortunate.

It is for that reason that the vice president's office will, effective immediately, implement an age-old and simplistic solution to better foster dialogue, one utilized regularly in the academy by faculty: office hours.

Every first Thursday of the month, from 3 to 4:30 p.m., the vice president's schedule will be cleared — whenever within his control to do so — to give staff the ability to drop-in or schedule time to discuss new ideas, concerns, and other thoughts that may benefit the workplace environment. This will be done so that staff feel comfortable that there is a standing time when the unit administrator has no obligations other than connecting with staff in such a way that his schedule may not regularly permit at other times.

Once a month is hardly enough time to connect with staff, and every University Communications colleague should feel absolutely free to continue taking advantage of the open door on the east end of the second floor. However, this set time frame on the schedule will relieve the concerns over the vice president's schedule or focus at that time. Should this effort prove to be well utilized, it will be expanded with greater frequency.

## Conclusion

University Communications still is well positioned to be the innovative leader we strive to be in informing, intriguing, and inspiring our audiences. We have overarching guideposts for channeling our work in a thoughtful, and strategic manner. And, although we are wrought with fiscal challenges not expected to end any time soon, we have great people who are making a difference. These people, if empowered to help re-shape our activities amidst the new normal of resources and the fast-changing communications environment, have the capacity to break conventions and elevate the UConn brand in ways never imagined.

We never will allow the demands of quantity become the enemy of quality. We cannot let business as usual and the status quo suffocate new thinking. We will not fear change, collaboration, and stepping out of comfort zone.

Together, we can realize our vision and UConn's status as a great American university on the rise.