



Tufts University Communications Planning Guide

**Approved by the Tufts University Strategic Communications Council:
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I. Purpose and Scope

A group of communications professionals from multiple schools and divisions across the university prepared this document. This planning guide does the following:

- Defines the high-level strategic communications goals for Tufts and recommends steps for achieving them;
- Delineates the university's key audiences;
- Articulates messages and proof points to support Tufts' mission and vision and the university's strategic plan, [Tufts: The Next 10 Years \(T10\)](#), which the Board of Trustees approved in November 2013;
- Identifies the primary online, print and in-person communications channels currently available to reach Tufts' core constituencies.

This guide is intended as a framework to assist anyone engaged in communications at Tufts—including faculty, staff, students and administrators from schools, institutes, centers and departments—in the development of communications plans for their individual units and programs.

Ideally, individual communications plans will support the shared institutional commitment to foster the stronger, forward-looking Tufts envisioned in T10.

This document will evolve as university leadership further amplifies institutional priorities in preparation for a new capital campaign and as new communications needs are identified and new communications platforms emerge.

In addition to promoting outcomes from the university's five ongoing strategic initiatives—T10, [Campus Sustainability Council](#), [Diversity Council](#), TEAM ([Tufts Effectiveness in Administrative Management](#)) and Capital Plan—this document will, over time, be revised to include tactics and strategies for creating a more integrated internal communications program at Tufts.

II. Situation Analysis

Tufts University is a nationally ranked, student-centered research university with a global perspective, a thriving life sciences enterprise and deep scholarship in the arts and humanities.

The university community believes that higher education transforms individuals; embraces the importance of active citizenship; and holds that Tufts is exceptionally positioned to address some of the most pressing issues of our times.

The university has campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, Massachusetts, and a European Center in Talloires, France, and comprises the School of Arts and Sciences, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, School of Engineering, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, School of Dental Medicine, Fletcher School, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA), School of Medicine, Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences and the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service.

In 2013, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Tufts 28th among National Universities. Like Tufts, these universities offer a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master's and Ph.D. programs, and are committed to producing groundbreaking research.

Tufts' unique constellation of schools—as well as educational and research partnerships with entities including Tufts Medical Center, the New England Conservatory of Music and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, among others—creates myriad opportunities for disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and scholarship.

However, that breadth and depth also present one of Tufts' biggest communications challenges. Each school has a distinct mission and makes its own decisions about communications. Moreover, not all schools share the same constituents or strategic goals.

Thus, in addition to defining university-wide communications goals and key messages, this guide serves to strengthen and more closely integrate communications among the schools and central divisions. This will help identify where local communications goals intersect with those of the university and promote coordinated efforts to develop and convey consistent and timely messages to Tufts' key audiences.

III. University-Wide Strategic Communications Goals

- Convey Tufts' mission and vision as outlined in the T10 Strategic Plan (see **Institutional Mission and Vision, Section IV**) as well as these institutional core values:
 - We are inclusive, diverse, creative and innovative.
 - We value research, teaching, learning and scholarship, with a goal of having an impact on individuals and the world.
 - We promote the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge across the range of fields in which Tufts is active.
 - We believe that research that is interdisciplinary and collaborative has unique potential to address complex global challenges.
 - We combine traditional pedagogy with innovation in teaching and learning.
 - We foster entrepreneurship.
- Coordinate communications across schools and departments to support shared strategic goals.
- Strengthen engagement with Tufts' core constituencies (see **Key Audiences, Section V**).
- Enhance the university's reputation and visibility with our core constituencies and national and international thought leaders.

IV. Institutional Mission and Vision

Mission

Tufts is a student-centered research university dedicated to the creation and application of knowledge. We are committed to providing transformational experiences for students and faculty in an inclusive and collaborative environment where creative scholars generate bold ideas, innovate in the face of complex challenges and distinguish themselves as active citizens of the world.

Vision

To be an innovative university of creative scholars across a broad range of schools who have a profound impact on one another and the world.

V. Key Audiences

Tufts' core constituencies are broadly divided into internal and external audiences. Below is an overview of the target audiences within each category. They are not necessarily listed in priority order; indeed assigning priorities would be impractical. In some cases, communications activities will focus on specific audiences within each category. The **Communications Channels Matrix** that accompanies this guide attempts to identify the primary target audience(s) for each channel.

1. Internal

- a. Faculty
- b. Staff
- c. Students (undergraduate, graduate and professional)
- d. Trustees
- e. Boards of Advisors

2. External

- a. Alumni
- b. Parents
- c. Prospective students
- d. Prospective faculty
- e. Prospective staff
- f. Donors and prospective donors
- g. Funding agencies (public and private)
- h. Public officials
- i. Host community residents
- j. Higher education thought leaders
- k. Tufts' competitors in higher education
- l. News media
- m. Campus visitors

VI. Tufts: The Next 10 Years Strategic Themes

The T10 Strategic Plan encompasses four themes that provide a blueprint that will guide the evolution of Tufts over the next decade—**Foundational Initiatives, Enabling and Integrating Transformational Experiences, Engaging and Celebrating Commonalities and Differences, and Creating Innovative Approaches to Addressing Local and Global Challenges**. These themes are not independent pillars upon which Tufts rests, but a mutually reinforcing bridge to support a strong, interconnected and sustainable Tufts.

This section provides a definition and some initial proof points for each T10 theme.

1. Foundational Initiatives

The foundational initiatives respond to critical challenges facing higher education and are essential to the success of the three other strategic themes.

- Ensure a world-class faculty.
- Advance the student experience.
- Enhance graduate education across the university.
- Recognize our valued staff.
- Improve access to information about Tufts' educational, research and impact activities.
- Steward resources effectively.
- Create physical spaces consistent with strategic initiatives and sustainability goals.

Proof Points

- [Capital projects](#)
- [Graduate education](#)
- IT infrastructure
- Residential experience
- Faculty publications, grants and professional honors
- [TEAM](#)
- [Distinction Awards](#)

2. Enabling and Integrating Transformational Experiences

Tufts is committed to providing every student with ample opportunities for transformational experiences, both within and beyond the classroom, that are meaningful and integrated with his or her broader Tufts experience.

- Provide faculty with the resources necessary to create a greater number and range of transformational experiences.
- Identify and promote best practices for enabling transformational experiences.
- Renew and expand our commitment to active citizenship.
- Enhance and expand engagement opportunities for our substantial alumni community.

Proof Points

- [Alumni engagement](#)
- Teaching and Learning Experiences (TALEs)
- [Tufts 1+4 program](#)
- [Capital projects](#)
- [Tisch College](#)

3. Engaging and Celebrating Commonalities and Differences

Tufts is committed to achieving the promise of a diverse and inclusive community, curriculum and research portfolio, infused with myriad local and global, historical and contemporary, complementary and divergent perspectives.

- Enhance undergraduate and graduate financial aid.
- Implement emerging diversity and inclusion recommendations.
- Strengthen and coordinate global programs.

Proof Points

- Diversity initiatives
 - Hiring a [Chief Diversity Officer](#)
 - Establishing a [Diversity Council and Coordinating Committee](#)
- Enhanced [Office of Equal Opportunity](#)
- Expanding financial aid
 - Ongoing [Financial Aid Initiative \(FAI\)](#)
- Global initiatives
 - Establishment of the [Center for Global Public Health](#) (2013)
 - Launch of the School of [Dental Medicine's Global Service Learning Initiative](#) (2013)
 - Establishment of the [Cummings School's Department of Infectious Disease and Global Health](#) (2013)

4. Creating Innovative Approaches to Addressing Local and Global Challenges

Tufts thrives on embracing complex issues and marshaling the capacities of its unique constellation of schools to develop innovative approaches to local and global challenges.

- Enhance the resources required to nurture innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Tufts Institute for Innovation (TII).
- Identify and pursue emerging research areas.

Proof Points

- [Bridge Professorships](#)
- Computational approaches
- Tufts Institute for Innovation (TII)
- Cross school initiatives, e.g., in oncology
- [Campus Sustainability Council](#) and [Office of Sustainability](#)
- Departmental reorganization at the School of Medicine to promote [catalytic research](#) (2013)
- Cummings School involvement in the [USAID RESPOND](#) program to address emerging disease outbreaks
- Tisch College's [Tufts Community Research Center](#)
- [Civic Seed](#), a video game developed by Tisch College to prepare students for work in the community.

VII. Key Messages

The following messages support the strategic themes outlined above.

Tufts University:

- Is a **world-class institution** that embodies the best of both pillars of academia—a rich history of outstanding scholarship in the liberal arts and a burgeoning life sciences and biomedical research enterprise.
- Comprises a **unique constellation of schools** that positions the institution as an incubator for exceptional teaching, research and scholarship. These include:

- The nation's only graduate school of nutrition
 - New England's only veterinary school
 - The country's oldest graduate school of international relations
 - The nation's second largest dental school, with recently expanded clinics, teaching spaces and research facilities
 - A medical school offering innovative, cross-disciplinary degrees in medicine, public health and other health professions
 - A graduate school conducting groundbreaking research in the biomedical sciences
 - The nation's only university-wide college dedicated to civic renewal
 - An engineering school with close ties to research in health, sustainability and technological advances on all three Tufts campuses
 - An undergraduate School of Arts and Sciences that prepares students for a lifetime of learning through a liberal arts tradition
 - A graduate School of Arts and Sciences founded on dynamic learning, research and creative partnerships between faculty and students
 - The only U.S. research center focused on nutrition and the aging process
- Is dedicated to the **creation, application, and dissemination of knowledge** across the full range of fields in which it works.
 - Fosters a commitment to local and global **public service and active citizenship**.
 - Is a **prudent steward of its resources** and leverages them strategically to support its core mission of teaching, learning, research and scholarship.
 - Maintains a longtime leadership position on environmental issues and views its campuses as environmental learning labs that **link sustainability to academics and research**.
 - **Shapes future leaders** in their communities, in their professions and in society writ large.
 - Strives to provide every student, regardless of school or discipline, with opportunities for **transformational experiences** that contribute to their intellectual and personal growth.
 - Offers an education that emphasizes **experiential, hands-on learning** as well as close collaborations with faculty and other mentors.
 - Effectively employs technological innovation, lessons from recent research on pedagogy and best practices to foster an **inclusive learning environment**.
 - Is dedicated to ensuring that the best and brightest students can pursue a Tufts education, **regardless of their ability to pay**.
 - Has **more than 100,000 alumni**, many of whom are preeminent in their respective fields and active in the public sphere.
 - Is committed to developing a **diverse community** of exceptional faculty, staff and students from a range of backgrounds and with multiple frames of reference.
 - Believes that research in a **collaborative, interdisciplinary environment** has unique potential to make a significant impact on complex global challenges.

VIII. Implementation Activities

All central and school communications staff will engage in the following high-level activities to advance the strategic goals outlined in this document:

- 1. Roll out the University Communications Planning Guide** – Leadership within the university’s central communications divisions will work closely with school communications leads to present this guide to all school and department constituents, including Executive Deans and other administrators, to promote institution-wide understanding and consistent implementation. School communications leads are the stewards of the strategic themes and key messages in the guide. The expectation is that communications across all school platforms will be developed with these themes and messages in mind.
- 2. Support the Strategic Communications Council** – The SVP of University Relations will continue to chair the university-wide Strategic Communications Council, which comprises representation from all the schools and central divisions. The purpose of this group is to enhance collaboration among professional communicators across the university and improve our collective ability to keep the Tufts community and external audiences informed of major initiatives and events that support the university’s mission, vision and T10.
- 3. Conduct a university-wide branding audit** – The Brand Working Group, a subcommittee of the Strategic Communications Council, is conducting an audit of the Tufts’ Visual Identity System. The audit will take into account a representative sampling of core brand channels in play across Tufts, including web, social and print. Identity System updates will be defined in areas such as brand hierarchy, digital fonts and colors, accessibility and best practices for visual brand expression on digital devices and popular social channels.
- 4. Manage time-sensitive communications** – Implement the recommendations developed by the Time-Sensitive Communications Working Group to improve communication between university and school administrators around issues with potential public safety and operational implications (e.g., weather emergencies, prolonged power outages, serious fires, criminal threat) that impact the Tufts community.
- 5. Provide checklists and templates for university-wide announcements** – Accompanying this guide as an appendix is a sample checklist of steps for communicating a university-wide announcement, such as a new school dean or other major appointment. Generally, these messages are sent to each target audience in priority order.
- 6. Internal Communications** – The Internal Communications Working Group is focusing on strengthening effective, proactive communication with the university’s faculty and staff. The goal is to promote awareness of university initiatives; communicate news, announcements and policies clearly and consistently; and enhance the sense of community. The work is beginning with a needs assessment focusing on administrative communication with faculty and staff. A key initial component of this effort will be a user survey.

IX. Success Metrics

The following qualitative measures will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation activities in achieving the goals of the communications planning guide:

- **Rollout** – 12 months after formal rollout, conduct a qualitative survey of communications staff across the university to determine who used this document, how they used it, and whether they found it useful. Incorporate suggested updates and additions. The survey will also include questions about the effectiveness of, and

potential improvements to, the planning guide for time-sensitive communications as well as the scope of work of the Strategic Communications Council.

- **Branding audit** – Success metrics for the Brand Working Group will be qualitative and will be implemented once the updates to the Visual Identity System are completed and rolled out. We will collect information about the effectiveness of the updated brand standards in partnership with communications professionals in each school.
- **Time-sensitive communications** – Measure effectiveness of our time-sensitive communications by monitoring feedback from the Tufts community through social media, email and other channels and make the necessary adjustments to improve procedures for more timely and accurate communications. School representatives on the Strategic Communications Council will ensure that the schools' time-sensitive communications needs are shared and addressed.
- **Internal communications** – Conduct periodic surveys of Tufts faculty and staff to ensure that they are receiving timely and relevant information about the university through the most effective channels. Adjust internal communications plans as needed.

X. University-Wide Communications Functions

Advancement Communications is housed within the University Advancement Division and produces a wide range of print and digital deliverables, from event invitations to integrated marketing for advancement priorities—all in direct support of securing higher levels of engagement in and support for Tufts from alumni, parents and friends. Advancement Communications also provides news and information about fundraising and alumni engagement activities to the internal Tufts community.

University Relations (UR) provides multiple communications functions for the university and employs a range of media—from print and online news and feature articles to video and photography—to tell stories that engage a broad and diverse audience with the university's strategic themes as well as university-wide and school priorities. The communications departments within UR are:

Digital Communications manages the university's homepage and upper level, its main social media channels, the university-wide network of information screens, the Tufts events calendar, interactive campus maps and a host of other online applications. This department also produces multimedia stories that can be shared across channels by multiple groups at the university.

Marketing Communications is the primary steward of the Tufts Visual Identity System and provides oversight of brand standards university-wide, including the Tufts Bookstores. It is a creative partner on key university initiatives and provides brand consultation on visual identity and graphic design across print and digital channels. This team delivers a range of products and services for clients across Tufts: postcards, posters, brochures, branded graphics, email templates, messaging and integrated marketing strategies.

[News Publications](#) publishes five magazines—the university-wide *Tufts Magazine* and magazines for the university’s four health sciences schools: *Tufts Medicine*, *Tufts Dental Medicine*, *Tufts Nutrition* and *Tufts Veterinary Medicine*. The group produces and maintains the online editions of [Tufts Magazine](#), [Tufts Medicine](#), [Tufts Dental Medicine](#) (and soon, the digital editions of the veterinary and nutrition school magazines). Publications writers also produce daily news and feature stories for the university news site [Tufts Now](#).

[Public Relations](#) works to strengthen the university’s leadership position by informing the news media and the public about the achievements of our faculty, staff and students; communicating the perspectives of university leaders and faculty on important issues; and managing communications on sensitive matters affecting institutional reputation. With staff on all three Massachusetts campuses, the department prepares and distributes information to the news media, responds to media requests, offers clients across Tufts advice on how to work effectively with members of the media and tracks notable coverage.

[Tufts Photography](#) provides documentary, news, editorial and event photography for the Tufts community, the five magazines and *Tufts Now*.

XI. Communications Channels

The attached matrix includes the major online, print and in-person communications channels currently available to reach Tufts’ constituencies. The **Communications Channels Matrix** maps each channel to its primary audience(s) and describes the strategic messages and themes and types of content that would appeal most to audiences reached through these channels. The matrix also includes lead times and contacts for each channel.

XII. School and Division Communications Leads

In developing their local communications plans, individuals and departments should coordinate with the communications lead within their school or division—typically the communications director or manager—who can provide guidance on how university-wide strategic priorities and messages are expressed at the school level. Below is a list of communications leads at each school and division (as of September 17, 2014).

School and Division Communications Contacts (listed in alphabetical order by school or division)

School/Division	Lead	Role	Email
Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine	Lorraine Daignault	Marketing Director	Lorraine.Daignault@tufts.edu
The Fletcher School	Jessica Smith	Director, Public Relations & Communications	Jessica.Smith@tufts.edu
Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy	Patrick Connell	Director of Web, Communications and eLearning	Patrick.CConnell@tufts.edu
Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging	Deb Dutcher	Communications Specialist	Deborah.Dutcher@tufts.edu
School of Arts and Sciences	Heidi Brown	Director of Communications	Heidi.Brown@tufts.edu
School of Dental Medicine	Michael Chin	Web Content Specialist	Michael.Chin@tufts.edu
School of Dental Medicine	Emma Johnson	Communications Coordinator	Emma.Johnson@tufts.edu
School of Engineering	Julia Keller	Communications Director	J.Keller@tufts.edu
School of Medicine; Sackler School	Kim Huse	Communications Specialist	Kimberly.Huse@tufts.edu
Tisch College	Sarah Shugars	Communications Manager	Sarah.Shugars@tufts.edu
University Advancement	Dave Nuscher	Director, Strategic Marketing	Dave.Nuscher@tufts.edu
University Advancement	Christine Sanni	Executive Director	Christine.Sanni@tufts.edu
University Relations	Jean Ayers	Director, Digital Communications	Jean.Ayers@tufts.edu
University Relations	Karen Bailey	Editorial Director, News Publications	Karen.Bailey@tufts.edu
University Relations	Lisa Gregory	Director, Marketing Communications	Lisa.Gregory@tufts.edu
University Relations	Alonso Nichols	Associate Director, Tufts Photography	Alonso.Nichols@tufts.edu
University Relations	Kim Thurler	Director, Public Relations	Kim.Thurler@tufts.edu

Appendix:

Prototype Communications Timeline for Announcing New Deans and other Appointments

(Note: Ideally activities start five+ days prior to the announcement.)

Day 1-Day 4

- Information about dean, including CV, provided (by provost's office or SVP for University Relations).
- Work begins on announcement text (typically by Provost's Office).
- Coordinate with school-based PR/Communications and Advancement Communications.
- PR contacts current employer regarding its announcement plans.
- Photo supplied, or, depending on the location of the incoming dean, arrangements made for Tufts Photo or a freelancer to take a photo.
- Press release developed along with story for *Tufts Now*; arrange for PR/News Publications to conduct brief phone interview with incoming dean; PR determines if incoming dean wants release sent to alma mater, hometown media, professional organizations, etc.
- Approvals secured.

Day 5

- Announcement issued. (Ordinarily PR would reach out to the *Tufts Daily* under embargo prior to announcement):
 - **10 AM:** Confidential email announcement to trustees, board of advisors, and Administrative/Academic Councils (Trustees Office/President's Office/Provost's Office)
 - **Noon:** University community email announcement (faculty, students, staff)
 - **12:05–12:15 PM:** Email and/or calls to alumni and other special friends (Advancement Communications)
 - **12:15 PM:** Additional outreach may include:
 - Press release distributed (PR working closely with School Communications)
 - *Tufts Now* story goes live (News Publications)
 - Tufts.edu homepage status bar updated with link to *Tufts Now* story (Digital Communications)
 - Link from school website to *Tufts Now* story (School Communications)
 - Social media (Digital Communications/School Communications/PR)
 - Update Tufts.edu University Leadership webpage
http://www.tufts.edu/home/get_to_know_tufts/university_leadership (Digital Communications)
 - Link from Office of the Provost website <http://provost.tufts.edu> to *Tufts Now* story (Provost's Office)

TBD

- Welcome events at school or central level