TO:       Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: President Sabah Randhawa by Donna Gibbs, V.P. for University Relations & Marketing
DATE:     February 11, 2022
SUBJECT:  University Relations and Marketing Report
PURPOSE:  Information Item

Purpose of Submittal:

A written report is provided on the recent activities of University Relations and Marketing.

Supporting Information:

Report Attached
The start of winter quarter brought new speed bumps as Omicron has continued to mess with our best-laid plans. We’re at a delicate juncture where people are weary of the ongoing pandemic uncertainty and a seeming lack of control in their lives and exhausted by the unrelenting workload and resource constraints. As much as we try, we struggle sometimes to land on the right timing and message tone for changes in modality that address both those who are concerned about learning and working in person and those that long for 2019 era normalcy. In short, we’re at a moment of profound culture change, both on campus and in society at large, and that has created ongoing challenges with communications and messaging.

On the bright side, after our return to in-person instruction on January 24 after a three-week remote start, there seems to be much less anger and frustration from students, families and employees on both sides of the fear/no fear divide.

Another hopeful glimmer comes from early results to our first-ever digital campaign targeted at transfer students for both the main Bellingham campus and Western on the Peninsulas (WOTP) launched in November.

We logged 217 conversions in December, normally a slow month, and 181 view-through conversions. A conversion is counted whenever a user clicks on an ad and takes an action on the landing page, such as filling out a request for information form or initiating an application. A view-through conversion is a user who clicks on an ad and comes back later to the landing page or website directly or through organic search. On retargeting, we saw an additional 91 conversions for Bellingham and 96 additional conversions for WOTP.

We’re pleased that this marketing activity seems to be contributing to an uptick in transfer applications in Bellingham, though those numbers are likely somewhat soft this early in the game. Unfortunately, we are not seeing a lift yet on the Peninsulas, but we’re encouraged by this early performance overall, especially when so many of our peers in state continue to struggle with transfer applications.

**UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS**

Our skilled professionals worked on a wide range of online, media relations, social media, and graphic design projects, which included:

Our office continued to provide broad, rapid and intensive communications support for Western’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interim UComm director and Western Today editor John Thompson continued to provide support for Western’s COVID Response Team and its associated structure of campus stakeholders, from the Student Health Center to Counseling, Health & Wellness; University Residences; Enrollment & Student Services; and Academic Affairs.

The office was a focal point for response to inquiries from parents and students during the start of winter quarter and specifically around the decision to switch to remote modality for the quarter’s initial three-week period, as well as media response and other communications requests. In the weeks while the campus switched to remote modality, UComm staff answered and responded to more than 200 emails and phone calls from concerned students and parents. The early winter snowstorm during intersession also necessitated a flurry of storm-related messaging.

The updated Western Today website, now fully converted to Drupal 9, made its debut on Jan. 26.
The new design has a more modern look and additional functionality especially in how it handles imagery. Western Today has continued to be a vital conduit of information for the campus community, news media and other external constituents, relaying important content to more than 18,000 potential readers each day.

Social Media Coordinator Zoe Fraley has been working to build more student voice into Western’s Instagram channel and has begun collaborating with Student Admissions Reps for Instagram Stories takeovers, with the first running just before the end of fall quarter. These takeovers are student-focused with a little information about majors as well to give both newer students and prospective students a peek into a day in the life for Western students. The first STAR takeover got great engagement, with our student getting questions about meeting people, getting started on campus, housing, safety and even weather, and giving lots of helpful answers from her own experience. We’ve got two more STAR takeovers lined up for winter quarter and hope it can continue as an avenue to build student engagement and connection. We’re also sharing more Admissions-related content that will hopefully support enrollment and engage prospective students, highlighting FAFSA deadlines, application deadlines and opportunities for students to tour campus or connect with advisors and current students.

In publications, we’re producing the next edition of Window magazine for publication in March, with stories about how alum supply chain professionals are weathering a once-in-a-lifetime disruption of global supply chains, a veterinarian who works with the CDC on stopping the next pandemic, and a former WWU basketball star who returned to Western to finish his degree at the encouragement of his old coach – and with financial help from the Western Foundation.

Western also continued to perform important media liaison work, including:

- The office worked with the new Cascadia Daily News on a story about the resumption of in-person classes at Western, including setting up their photographer with a spot at one of our vaccine clinics. This new publication has many WWU alumni on its staff and we look forward to building good lines of communication with them.

The office is beginning work on a guest column with partners from Woodring College of Education and Outreach & Continuing Education, with the hoped-for final draft being pitched to the Seattle Times for inclusion in its Education Lab section.

### OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

**Western Today**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Sessions</th>
<th>Top Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49,891</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Study shows dramatic decline in COVID-19 vaccines’ effectiveness at preventing infections over time – [Link](#)
- I-5 southbound reopens south of Bellingham, but all NB lanes closed in Ferndale due to water – [Link](#)
- Amazon Web Services outage impacting campus Canvas users – [Link](#)
Social Media

Twitter

Facebook

Instagram

Statistics at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Total Followers</th>
<th>New Followers</th>
<th>% Gained</th>
<th>Engagements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>22,471</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>50,755</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-.1%</td>
<td>6,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>26,105</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>48,983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

External Media

Total Stories | Top Stories
3,285 | • Astroworld: Who were the victims? – BBC
      | • Neil Marcus, Whose Art Illuminated Disability, Dies at 67 – New York Times
      | • From affordable housing to high-speed transit: A bold vision for the Pacific Northwest – Seattle Times

Family Connections Newsletter

November
Audience: 14,220
Opened: 36.4%
Clicked: 7.1%

December
Audience: 10,425
Opened: 42%
Clicked: 5.1%
Top clicks for November: Choosing and Declaring a Major drop-in sessions, Registrar’s calendar, Commencement information, CFPA’s “Cabaret.”

Top clicks for December: Commencement Information, MLK Event, SBO tuition payments, Registrar’s calendar, Career Center events.

Graphic Design Projects

UNIVERSITY MARKETING

Summary

University Marketing is engaged in a range of work which includes digital marketing, collateral creation, video and photography, brand management, and marketing planning & project management.

Digital Marketing

The UM team is responsible for strategy, creative, asset coordination and budget reconciliation. UM digital marketing is broken down into two main sections, campaign work that is coordinated with a third-party service provider, Carnegie Dartlet, and in-house placement of ads.

Campaign Digital Marketing

Beginning September 2021, URM launched the 2021-22 undergraduate digital campaign in partnership with Admissions as the primary enrollment and brand awareness campaign for WWU. This includes display, display retargeting, Snapchat, YouTube, Video pre-roll, Pay-per-click, Audience Select (list targeting), and Facebook/Instagram advertising which runs for a six to nine-month cycle, depending on the platform. This year we are also including the university’s first-ever targeted digital transfer campaign (launching Nov 2021); and a graduate school campaign (launching October 2021) geo-targeting undergrad seniors at key feeder schools in Washington and British Columbia focused on general awareness plus Weekend MBA and Rehabilitation Counseling (OCE supported programs). And after our success last year, we have a Financial Aid focused message running December 2021-February 2022 targeting parents and the university’s first campaign targeting Spanish-speaking households.

At-a-Glance (November 1 – December 31, 2021) Undergraduate Campaign (Apply now messaging with video creative featuring women in marine science)

- Total Impressions = 9,150,958
- Total Ad Clicks = 63,011
- Total Conversions (Application or RFI button clicks) = 1,581
At-a-Glance (November 1 – December 31, 2021): Transfer Campaign – Bellingham and Locations

- Total Impressions = 1,802,264
- Total Ad Clicks = 4011
- Total Conversions (Application or RFI button clicks) = 311

At-a-Glance (December 1 – December 31, 2021): Parents/FAFSA Campaign

- Total Impressions = 191,960
- Total Ad Clicks = 797
- Total Conversions (button clicks) = 8
At-a-Glance (December 1 – December 31, 2021): Spanish Parents/FAFSA Campaign

- Total Impressions = 91,102
- Total Ad Clicks = 613
- Total Conversions (button clicks) = 1

Collateral Creation (Graphic Design)

In November and December, the designers collectively worked on **88 projects** and produced **576 individual assets**.

Notable projects include:

- Ad Creative for Campaign (Undergrad, Grad, Transfer, Parents, and Spanish-Speaking Households)
- LGBTQ+ - Queering Research Studies
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day Collateral
- Window Magazine UX Redesign
- HR Recruitment and Benefits Collateral
Canadian-American Studies Collateral
First Generation Zoom Backgrounds

Video and Photography

Filming for our graduate campaign videos (WMBA and Rehabilitation Counseling) and filming for a video to support both undergraduate and graduate recruitment focused on a unique solar window project featuring a student who worked on the project at Western and went on to a career with the company licensing the technology in Los Alamos, New Mexico: https://vimeo.com/atomicguys/review/667571576/3bb32ed19f.

November and December Video & Photography
• Engaged in the ongoing transfer/organization of working footage into our new film storage and sharing system, the Studio Network Solutions EVO
• Polaris: In Deep Time 5 min educational video for gallery
• Continued work on Window Magazine video segments

Brand Management

The creative team works with partners across campus to manage Western Washington University’s brand. This includes the development of design elements and assuring adherence to Western’s style guide and brand standards.

In November and December, the Creative Team:

• Completed brand identity work for:
  o Institute for Watershed Studies
• Work in progress on brand identity for:
  o Entrepreneurship and Innovation
  o Tribal Office
• Continued work implementing the University’s Search Engine Optimization strategy and interdepartmental collaboration, utilizing a “One Western” approach.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Notable projects and connections that enhance WWU visibility, improve community access, and increase community-to-university partnerships.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Commemoration

Community Relations led an expanded collaborative effort bringing WWU, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, Skagit Valley College, City of Bellingham, Bellingham Public Schools, and Peace Health together to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day. This year’s MLK Day Advisory Team consisted of 26 community members representing partner institutions including many representing WWU’s students, faculty and staff.

In response to a national call of action by the King family, the theme of the virtual event was “Educate, Advocate, and Activate for Voting Rights.” The program featured an interview with 2021 MacArthur Foundation “genius grant” Fellow and New York Times bestselling author of How to Be an Antiracist, Ibram X. Kendi, who answered questions from WWU students, K-12 students and the broader community about the importance of voting rights.
The program included a speech by Kristina Michele Martens who was recently elected Bellingham’s first Black city councilwoman and featured a rendition of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” also known as the Black national anthem, performed by Seattle Opera Singer and WWU Alumna, Ibidunni Ojikutu.

The program was initially intended to be an in-person event at Bellingham’s Mt. Baker Theatre with a live-stream option, however due to the recent surge in Omicron cases, the event was converted to a virtual-only event.

In all, 1,030 people registered for the event and 780 people watched live. A recording of the event was made available on the MLK day event page for a limited time and is being used as an educational tool by partnering educational institutions in Whatcom and Skagit County.

Black History Month

This February, many departments throughout campus are offering in-person and virtual programs, lectures, and performances in honor of Black History Month. Those departments include Music, Art and Art History, Dance, Music, University Residences, Associated Students, KUGS Radio, English, Fairhaven College, Western Libraries, LGBTQ+ Western and others. Community Relations collaborated with those departments and other campus partners to consolidate and promote the diverse offerings which can be found at http://www.wwu.edu/black-history-month.

TRIBAL LIAISON

In conjunction with Capital Planning, the Longhouse steering committee has been engaged in conversations with the City of Bellingham Planning Department and Parks & Recreation on a development agreement for the project on the city owned Sehome Arboretum parcel. We have engaged land-use attorneys on a draft development agreement as a basis for negotiations with the city’s working group. Currently, we are discussing the options of land transfer to the university versus a long-term/perpetual lease agreement. We are also arranging a pre-application meeting to better understand what the utility costs will be for the site.

Additionally, the Tribal Liaison will join President Randhawa for a presentation to the Whatcom County Council on February 22 to make the case for a $75,000 contribution to the project from the county’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

We have also submitted another request to the Washington Women’s Foundation for funding to support the Longhouse project. Based on our feedback on a failed previous proposal, the Foundation has now added a new category for Community Cultural Preservation that seems tailor-made for this project. This new funding category is designed for investment in systemically under-resourced communities by supporting the preservation of language, stories, performing arts, sites, crafts, relationships to land, forms of subsistence, and other cultural traditions.

Our proposal is designed to educate the Foundation’s board on how Native American students often experience a sense of isolation on college campuses, which contributes to lower retention rates, degree completion, and other achievement gaps. As a gathering and ceremonial space for students and Coast Salish tribal nations, the longhouse will reduce isolation and support Indigenous students, faculty, and staff by providing a dedicated space to gather, build community, and support each other. The construction of the longhouse, plus ongoing efforts to recruit and support more Native American students at Western, demonstrates the Office of Tribal Relations’ mission to ensure the university honors the land we live and learn upon and pays respect to the peoples who lived and learned upon it first.
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC)

WWU SBDC Bellingham Quarter 4 Highlights:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Businesses Served</th>
<th>Q4 2021</th>
<th>Q4 2020</th>
<th>Year 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Counseling Received</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research or Students Projects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBDC Sponsored Training Participants</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information or Resources Provided</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients' Economic Impacts</th>
<th>Q4 2021</th>
<th>Q4 2020</th>
<th>Year 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Formation</td>
<td>$2.1M</td>
<td>$188K</td>
<td>$10.1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Starts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs Created or Retained</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top Areas of Counseling: Start-up Assistance, Buy/Sell a Business, Managing a business, Financing/Capital

Rolling 12-month Demographics

Top Industries: Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Service Establishment, Manufacturer or Producer

Annualized Sales: $290.8M

Jobs Supported: 3,133

The WWU SBDC has played a major role in flood recovery since mid-November

- SBDC Director CJ Seitz is leading the Countywide Business Recovery Task Force
- Hired a temporary Certified Business Advisor to work with businesses impacted by historic flooding particularly in north Whatcom County communities
- These businesses faced lost inventory, damaged equipment and structures, workforce displacement, and disruption of economic activity
- CJ Seitz testified in support of House Bill 1957, (which would establish a small business disaster recovery financial assistance program) with the support of WWU Office of Government Relations
- Coordinated with FEMA and the national Small Business Administration to open a Business Recovery Center in Everson
- **Worked with the City and Port of Bellingham** to co-promote Working Washington grant opportunities.

Working with the WWU Foundation to identify sources of financial support for ADEI+ work, essential to building a more resilient County economy.

In cooperation with the National League of Cities, working with CDFI Friendly America, a national association for Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) to bring more flexible business financing options to Bellingham and surrounding communities.

WASHINGTON CAMPUS COMPACT (WACC)

Continued Grant Funding

Washington Campus Compact/Western Washington University will receive continued funding for Year Two of a three-year grant for up to $2,087,640 in FY 2023 to support the grant, **Campus Civic Leaders and Engagement Corps**. Funding will support projects addressing the following issues:

- Academic success and engagement of underrepresented K-12 students
Re-branding
The Washington Campus Compact board voted to disaffiliate from the national Campus Compact and will be changing its name as of July 1, 2022. The board met in December 2021 to discuss possible new names for the statewide organization. They requested that staff bring in a marketing team to review the options and make recommendations. We are working with Jesse Sturgis, Assistant Director of Creative Services and Derek Bryson, Senior Graphic Designer in URM to help develop name and branding options to present to the board. We anticipate the board will select a new name and brand by March, with a statewide launch in April 2022.

WEB COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (WebTech)

Summary

The end of the year brought the name change for the College of the Environment. This required updating over 1,000 references to the college name across various web pages at Western. Through great collaboration with across campus this was completed.

WebTech released updated versions of the Marine and Estuarine Science Program (MESP) site, moving from a legacy web platform to Drupal, as well as a refreshed Shannon Point Marine Center site. We are pleased as well to share that the College of Business and Economics as well as Canadian American Studies have completed work to release new sites.

The library rolled out their revamped Self-Paced Online Tutorials in early December.

In collaboration with Enterprise Application Systems, we are pleased to release an updated department directory. This replaces a system that was no longer able to be maintained and that had originally been built for an era of printed paper directories. The new system reduces duplicate data entry as well by various segments of the campus community.

WebTech is excited to release “Skip To Content” functionality across many sites at Western. Skip To was originally developed by PayPal and the University of Illinois. WebTech’s Carly Gerard improved and integrated the tool into Western sites allowing users to easily skip around a webpage using a keyboard or other assistive technology. This is one way in which WebTech is helping Western embrace accessibility as part of our overall strategic commitment to Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI).
Web Traffic Analysis

Traffic continued to outpace the prior year though the high number of views compared to sessions suggests users were actively seeking information. This time period corresponds to when Western was due to return to in-person instruction and significant weather events across the county were impacting Western operations.

Undergrad recruitment marketing campaigns showed significant traffic ranking third across all pages, and the MLK Day event registered 9,016 views. The financial aid awareness campaign continues to make a strong showing with 6,915 views, up 28.2% from the prior time-period.

The marketing campaigns continue to drive engagement on YouTube as well, with the “Find Your Place” video being watched 70,437 times and the 4K version being watched 9,454 times. Rather incredibly, the Find Your Place video is watched all the way through by 96.89% of viewers. That totals over 780 hours of video being watched. The virtual campus tour and housing tours also had 810 and 372 watches, respectively, over the last month.

WebTech Workload
The work has stayed consistent even over the slower time for the university with winter break. WebTech continues to turn issues around in a healthy timeframe. In addition to the 101 issues solved between November 12th and January 19th, the office responded to 483 email support requests.