



Communications and Marketing Guiding Principles

Beginning in 2016, the communications and marketing functions at Virginia Tech, then known as University Relations, evolved from a primarily service model to a strategic model. That evolution was guided by a set of guiding principles, described in Section 1 below. These principles serve as bedrock for the evolution of the Communications and Marketing division in 2022 and beyond. Section 2 outlines additional guiding principles that emerged from the work of the Communications and Marketing steering committee and development of the Communications and Marketing 5-Year Plan.

Section 1: Guiding principles (current)

- **University Brand:** The university brand is a reflection of the organization and a representation of its reputation. The [Virginia Tech Brand Guidelines](#) apply to all members of the Virginia Tech community and include the logo, language, and design elements. The administration of the brand is managed by the Marketing team.
- **Issues Management and Crisis Communications:** The Vice President of Communications and Marketing and the AVP/University Spokesperson are the designated communicators for issues management and crisis communications. Being proactive and managing an issue can prevent a crisis. It is the responsibility of campus partners at all levels to bring the VP or AVP into conversations at the earliest point to allow a proactive approach to manage or mitigate negative impacts on the university's reputation.
- **Messaging Strategy:** Evergreen elements of Virginia Tech's messaging strategy include: brand identity, the university style guide, and a guide to aligning top-level messaging. Targeted messaging strategies are developed and delivered to campus partners to support priorities, campaigns, and storytelling. Aligned messaging, not prescribed messaging, creates a unified voice and supports brand awareness.
- **Create Once, Publish Everywhere:** COPE is a strategy for content creation and distribution. At Virginia Tech, the COPE model describes the distributed creation of content and its dissemination across platforms that are available to campus partners. In this model, a single piece of content can be deployed by numerous partners on multiple platforms.
- **Breadth (University) and Depth (Colleges and Units) Content Development:** Content is created and shared at multiple levels at the university. Breadth represents presidential priorities and implies broad storytelling on behalf of the

whole university community. Deep content is developed by subject-matter experts and reflects the priorities and activities of specific colleges and units. Combined, both types of content provide a holistic view of the scope of university's mission and enhance our engagement with audiences.

- The Hubs and Spokes Model describes the distribution model at Virginia Tech to deliver and share content developed by partners across the university. The central team manages, develops, and supports platforms and tools to distribute content, and leads the creation of integrated communications and marketing plans to support priorities. The communications and marketing professionals work in a distributed but connected model articulated through reporting lines, MOUs, and working relationships.
- Platforms and Tools: Virginia Tech deploys numerous platforms to deliver content to broad and targeted audiences such as a content management system (Ensemble); email platforms (BBIS and Adobe Campaign); a news platform (VTx); a video aggregator (Kaltura); and a photo aggregator (Photo Library).
- Integrated Communications and Marketing Plans: Integrated communications and marketing plans support the alignment of multiple partners to achieve shared communications and marketing goals and provide detailed information about audiences, messaging, platforms and distribution methods, and measures of success.
- We are guided by the [Virginia Tech Principles of Community](#), shared priorities, and the Advancement mission.

Section 2: Additions to the current guiding principles:

- Support the creation of a community of users with access to tools and platforms to align and support their efforts.
- The core responsibilities for senior-most directors of communications and marketing will be guided by a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines duties and responsibilities.
- Require strategic, coordinated efforts across the university and provide the rationale for the professional development and training of communications and marketing professionals to achieve shared goals.
- Elevate communications and marketing efforts from transactional to strategic planning and allocation of resources.
- Foster alignment of communications and marketing efforts to support institutional and college/unit priorities.

Alignment of senior-most communications and marketing directors

The senior-most directors of communications and marketing in colleges and units will have an articulated working relationship with the Communications and Marketing division. This will include an MOU, work planning, and performance dialogue. The lead communicator must also have an articulated working relationship with the communicators in their college or unit.

Deployment of central platforms and tools

Communications and Marketing delivers a full suite of central platforms and tools to support communications professionals in colleges and units. All identified communications and marketing professionals have full access to a suite of tools to support message alignment and to coordinate the work.

Alignment with Virginia Tech brand

Colleges and unit communicators are required to comply with Policy 12000, Usage of the University Name, and have resources through the brand center (brand.vt.edu) to appropriately use Virginia Tech names and marks.

Support alignment with presidential priorities

Communications and marketing professionals, both central and distributed, align with presidential priorities to support the highest aspirations of the university. Priorities are derived from the Strategic Plan for the university. Integrated communications and marketing plans for priorities, developed in Communications and Marketing, guide central, college, and unit teams. Current priorities (2022) support Virginia Tech's imperatives to become a *top 100 global university* and to increase *access and affordability* for all students.

Support alignment with Advancement priorities

The Advancement division leverages integrated communications and marketing plans and messaging, developed in Communications and Marketing, to support its goals for engagement and giving that align with presidential priorities.