Academic Health Center Communications Plan: Advancing the Goals of the University’s Health Sciences and Supporting the President’s Strategic Plan

This strategic plan will guide the activities of the Academic Health Center Office of Communications as we work to advance the goals and priorities of each of our schools/colleges and centers while also supporting the broader goals of the University’s strategic plan.

The health sciences play an integral role in the University’s mission as a land-grant institution. By training the next generation of health professionals, advancing critical research, supporting and stimulating the state’s economic and business climate, and providing high quality care to patients and families, the health sciences schools and colleges touch the lives of all Minnesotans.

The Academic Health Center (AHC) Office of Communications provides leadership, expertise, and support for the University’s health sciences colleges, schools and centers. We work to engage audiences through strategic communications, partnering with units to promote and enhance the reputation of the University of Minnesota’s health sciences.

This plan aims to set a big picture direction and priorities for our work. It will help us identify collaborative initiatives to focus on as an office, and in collaboration with University Relations, while continuing to provide ongoing professional support services through:

- Our web support system and web transformation initiative
- Media relations activities
- Community outreach and public affairs activities
- Creative agency projects
- Internal resources such as media training for faculty, the AHC Resource Hub for employees, and other tips and best practices

By continuously evolving and improving our support to AHC units, we help all of our health sciences schools and centers showcase the benefits they bring to communities across our state and around the world.

The overall strategic plan will be reevaluated and refreshed annually, with specific tactics and activities that respond to emerging goals and priorities.
COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

The Academic Health Center Office of Communications aims to:

• Effectively tell stories that educate the public about the vital role of our health sciences schools
• Clearly demonstrate our commitment to education, workforce development, research and clinical care
• Show the importance of interprofessional approaches to health, and why having the breadth of health sciences schools under one umbrella makes us stronger than the sum of our parts
• Highlight the many ways we are connected to communities across Minnesota and how we enhance the health, well-being and economic vitality of the entire state
• Offer a cost-effective resource to develop marketing materials that properly represent the brand via the Creative Agency
• Build trust and pride in our health mission and in the University of Minnesota as a whole
• Engage school communicators, University Relations and others throughout the University to bring multiple perspectives together around Grand Challenges, rural initiatives, legislative requests, etc.

KEY AUDIENCES

• Media—statewide, national and international
• State policymakers
• Statewide opinion leaders (with particular focus on Greater Minnesota and key Suburban Districts)
• Students and prospective students/families
• Potential patients and families (University of Minnesota Health)
• Alumni, donors and other advocates
• Professional/Trade associations or publications
• Minnesotans/General public
• U leadership/Deans
• Faculty and staff

PRIORITY 1: Promote and highlight the University of Minnesota health sciences as stewards of Minnesota’s health

Leverage each of our communications functions—web, marketing materials, community outreach and media relations—to help explain how the health sciences schools have a direct impact on communities throughout the state.

Greater Minnesota outreach

• Support President Kaler’s Greater Minnesota initiatives by providing relevant data and, when appropriate, students/faculty to participate in events. Use health sciences as a proof point for Greater Minnesota impact and connection.
  o Identify students, faculty, partnerships in each community for possible invitations to events or to highlight as examples of statewide connections
  o Leverage the expertise of Duluth campus and other health sciences facilities/efforts around the state to bring a broader, less Twin Cities based, story to Greater Minnesota
• Conduct events and outreach that tell a health sciences-focused story, building on President Kaler’s Greater Minnesota platform. This effort could include:
  o Executive visibility: VP/Dean Brooks Jackson visits to key districts/communities, sometimes accompanied by faculty or students, to meet with influencers and highlight the impact of health sciences on that community
  o Mini-Med on the road: Taking a smaller version of Mini-Medical School on the road, finding a venue where we could have one or two key speakers discuss a topic that is particularly relevant to Greater Minnesota
  o Media relations: Looking for Greater-Minnesota stories to pitch to community newspapers, radio and television. These stories will focus on patient care, health access issues, and research. Because of the nature of smaller news outlets, we may have luck pitching human/patient interest stories that would not get traction in the Twin Cities. We may consider using news release services that target a broad spectrum of small town newspapers with content. This could be a collaboration with University Relations as well.
  o Strategic partnership: Develop a public awareness campaign in collaboration with Extension around the importance of math and science education that we can work to promote through schools, clubs or organizations such as 4-H.

Suburban Minnesota outreach
• Look for opportunities to highlight clinical care, education and research stories for suburban Twin Cities audiences through:
  o Social media channels
  o Community magazine and newspaper outreach
  o Connection with organizations and events in suburban areas
  o Working with government relations on meetings with suburban legislators and possibly organizing campus visits/tours
• Assist government relations with Medical School simulation event for legislators, getting them on campus for an in-depth look at medical education and training
• Possible University of Minnesota Health expansion might offer further story angles for Suburban areas served by Fairview

University of Minnesota Health (M-Health)
• Expand our normal clinical care storytelling to a broader scope, looking at Greater Minnesota and suburban audiences
• Use human interest stories that may not play with larger market media to tell positive stories to smaller market media about innovative clinical care and how it impacts patients’ lives
• As M-Health expands, find stories about suburban and rural clinics that are benefitting from the closer alignment to academic medicine

Video strategy
• Continue to develop and promote the “Why you do what you do” series as a way to highlight the passion and drive of our researchers. “Why you do” is built on authenticity, allowing researchers to talk about their work in an unscripted manner. We are constantly adding to our library of videos and will work to be sure we are highlighting diversity and showcasing work that benefits the state as a whole
• Similarly, we will look to build our library of “Everyday” videos that show interesting sides of our researchers away from work, and show how the personal passions inspire their professional lives
• As the new Driven to Discover campaign rolls out, look for ways to cross promote and capitalize on the synchronicity of these efforts
• Coordinate and support UR social media promotion around D2D by showcasing our own content in this context, and promoting health related D2D content on our channels
• Look for opportunities (such as the Association of American Medical Colleges video contest) to use video to explain and demonstrate the important work we do around research, education and clinical care

Web strategy
• Continue working with units across the AHC and UR to encourage web content that highlights how we are stewards of Minnesota’s health (about, research, community impact, news, alumni...)
• Encourage units to present their research using language that resonates with general, non-academic audiences, such as the research topics on health.umn.edu and research strengths on med.umn.edu
• Provide proof points and stories to illustrate our impact in a compelling way for the revamp of the health.umn.edu our impact section
• Raise visibility for and enhance the web presence of AHC units on system campuses, as done already for the Duluth campus in the Medical School site revision and working with Duluth centers and departments

Community outreach
• Maximize the potential of our Minnesota State Fair presence, Mini Medical School, and other events such as the Opiates Conference to clearly demonstrate that the impact of our health sciences schools extend far beyond the walls of the University
• Engage in discussions through news media, social media, web sites and events that will help build an advocacy coalition that can be called on for support

DESIRED OUTCOMES:
• Increase in high-quality storytelling that connects with suburban communities and Greater Minnesota in particular
• Broader engagement with key audiences around our mission
• Greater understanding by legislators and community leaders that the University is making an impact in all communities around the state
• Clear and compelling demonstration of the University’s commitment and passion around research, education and clinical care

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:
• High quality, proactive media coverage
• Effective use of all communications platforms to leverage media coverage and to tell our own stories in a compelling manner
• Increased engagement with suburban/rural audiences, including legislative support and better advocacy networks
PRIORITIZE 2: Support the strategic plan and priorities of the University, the Academic Health Center and each of our colleges, schools, and centers

Help connect health research and education to the Grand Challenges defined by the University, and the University’s broader commitment to excellence. Show how each of the schools plays a critical role in addressing the most difficult issues facing our state.

- When possible, tie the work of our researchers directly to the issues of health and food safety that are called out as Grand Challenges
- Tie into the idea of Grand Challenges on a broader scale, addressing areas such as health disparities, preventative care and immunizations, caring for an aging population, etc. in the context of the University’s desire to tackle larger questions and issues
- Show that the University is uniquely equipped to address complex issues and to make a difference in our communities
- Capitalize on positive news – extend the best examples through our websites, social media, Government Relations, University of Minnesota Alumni Association, and the University of Minnesota Foundation
- Connect with and support the themes of the University marketing campaign, using health sciences as a key proof point of Driven to Discover

Work to find the unique space each of our schools and colleges occupies in addressing health issues, while also helping show how their priorities are connected and strengthened by each other.

- Tell stories that spotlight the specific goals and priorities of each school. Partner with school communicators to be sure each school’s strengths are recognized and celebrated
- Use all of our available vehicles (websites, social media, email, multimedia, publications, community outreach, media relations, etc.) to tell stories that inspire people and reinforce the importance of the work that we do
- Look for ways to tell interprofessional stories:
  - How our researchers collaborate across schools
  - How our students are taught to work in teams and to value the important role each team member plays
  - How the breadth of our schools is offering solutions to workforce shortages and health access issues

Showcase the critical role of the health sciences schools and colleges in solving workforce shortage issues.

- Find and develop stories showing how communities are struggling to provide primary care
- Highlight in particular the shortages in family practice, dentistry, geriatrics and mental health
- Highlight the outreach programs that exist at each of our schools/colleges where we are actively training students to work in underserved areas
- Show how our National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education is at the leading edge of efforts to leverage all health professionals toward a joint solution to health access issues
- Where possible, provide messages and examples on a broader scale to support the general University’s workforce messages
DESIRED OUTCOMES:

• Increase in high-quality, proactive storytelling that reinforces our impact on critical health issues facing our state, country and global communities
• Influence and guide discussions in the news media, on social media and with legislators about formal and informal Grand Challenge themes and how health sciences play a key role
• Increased awareness and understanding of the breadth and depth of the U’s health sciences schools and how these schools are a crowned jewel for the state
• Appreciation of the impact of research, education and workforce training on the health of communities

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

• High quality proactive media coverage
• Effective use of all platforms to leverage media coverage and to tell our own stories in a compelling manner
• Stories that tie our health sciences schools together and lift the reputation of the University as a whole

PRIORITY 3: Promote the benefits of a new academic health system

Support AHC/UMP efforts (and Fairview as discussions progress) to explain the proposed merger and to facilitate the culture change that will be needed for a successful integration.

• Work with all entities and the communications contractors on common message platforms that will be used to explain the new merger
• Help refine and clarify the key elements of the merger and what they will mean for the various stakeholders including:
  o Patients and families
  o Communities served by M-Health
  o Faculty, staff, physicians
  o Other AHC health professionals
  o Other health systems
  o Legislators
  o Attorney General

Clearly explain the benefits of a Fairview/UM Physicians merger in terms of care delivery, education and research.

• Tell inspirational stories that illustrate what “academic medicine” is, and how it provides hope to families
• Clearly explain the role of health systems in helping educate future generations of health professionals
• Demonstrate the value and efficiencies gained through the development of a true academic health system for Minnesota

Use the Clinics and Surgery Center (CSC) as a proof point for how the partnership will benefit the state.
• Highlight the unique design elements that put the patient at the center of a care team
• Tell stories of efficiency and how the CSC is ushering in a new era of care
• Look for interprofessional stories that illustrate how the CSC encourages greater collaboration
• When possible, tell stories that go beyond the immediate neighborhoods, and tell a story of how the CSC is a resource for the region or the state
• Educate people about the importance of clinical research and how the CSC is making it easier for patients to learn about and sign up for clinical research opportunities

Highlight examples of research, education, interprofessional training, etc. that are enabled by M-Health.
• M-Health can provide a template and proof points to illustrate our vision for an expanded academic health system. We will look for ways to tell stories that convey successes, things we have learned so far, and gaps that have been exposed that will require a deeper partnership to address
• Highlight patient stories that show academic medicine at its best, and the role various health professionals play on the care team

DESIRED OUTCOMES:
• General understanding throughout the community of the reasons for and benefits of the M-Health merger
• Proactive media stories illustrating the benefits of academic medicine
• Positive attention around the CSC opening that highlights innovation and patient centered care
• Content for social media and other communications vehicles that calls out the benefits to communities and the importance of having an academic health system

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:
• High quality proactive media coverage
• Clear and compelling messaging that is reinforced internally and externally as the merger is developed and implemented
• Coverage and content that branches beyond our core facilities and shows the statewide reach and impact of a new M-Health

PRIORITY 4: Support the legislative request and clearly demonstrate the return on investment that comes from supporting health sciences

Medical Discovery Teams
• Track the progress as the Medical Discovery Teams are developed to look for possible story angles
• Highlight the topic areas and the potential of those areas in terms of statewide impact
• Demonstrate the return on investment into the Medical Discovery Teams by showing national leadership in the focus areas, and highlighting the successes and momentum that arise as a result of these efforts
• Show how the breadth and depth of our health sciences schools helps make the University a more attractive place for potential Medical Discovery Team recruits
Use the opening of the Microbiology Research Facility to tell a greater story about the impact of the Biomedical Discovery District (BDD).

- Through all of our channels, find and tell stories that demonstrate collaboration and innovation thanks to the resources available through the BDD
- Look for examples where the BDD and other state investment has helped assist in recruiting/retaining top faculty
- Track and highlight examples where basic science research has yielded discoveries that are showing promise in clinical settings
- Help tell the story of the BDD by expanding the section on health.umn.edu to create an insider look (video, images, stories) and coordinating content with Health Talk posts and social media to drive to it, and look for places on AHC websites (e.g., departments and centers in the BDD) to feature the BDD and link to its web section in order to help raise its visibility across the AHC

Highlight need and potential benefits of the new education building and the long-term vision for health sciences facilities.

- Work with the planning teams to develop key messages and storylines that paint a picture of the potential of a new Education Building
- Develop angles on the Education Building and the potential impact on recruitment, on training and workforce issues, and on interprofessional practice
- Consider ways to get news media and to tell our own stories showing the current state and how transformational a new education building could be
- Develop messages and use social media to reach out to alumni and other stakeholders to mobilize an advocacy network supporting the plan/vision

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- Increased engagement with legislators and enhanced understanding of the benefits of strong health sciences schools
- Clear and positive storytelling about the impact of state support when it comes to recruitment, facilities, workforce development, research and clinical care
- Set the stage for positive discussion about the need for an education building in light of the demonstrated results of previous investment AND the clearly illustrated needs going forward

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Proactive, positive storytelling in news media and through social/web channels demonstrating the return on investment in health sciences
- Receptiveness on the part of key legislators when it comes to discussion of future investments

PRIORITY 5: Aggressively recruit, retain and promote field-shaping researchers and teachers

Engage in national conversations around areas of excellence (informatics, interprofessional education and training, regenerative medicine, immunotherapy, medical imaging/CMRR, etc.).
• Look for key trade and specialty outlets where we can position our faculty and departments as thought leaders
• Develop relationships with influential media who focus on our areas of excellence
• Consider a national media tour to help raise the profile of key faculty
• Work with school communicators to leverage speaking engagements, conference presentations, etc. that could provide news angles
• Collaborate with University Relations to promote/utilize the new broadcast facility in Morrill Hall

**Identify key areas of focus for Dean/Vice President Brooks Jackson where we can work to promote him as a thought leader nationally.**

- Use his own scholarship credentials to highlight his leadership by example around the importance of academic medicine
- Look for ways to highlight interprofessional activities, training, and innovation and how Brooks has worked to improve the way we train health professionals
- Highlight success stories showing how the push for increased scholarship and research has led to breakthrough discoveries that impact lives

**Tell stories about thought leadership and how University researchers are making a difference across the spectrum of discovery (basic science through clinical trials).**

- Leverage CTSI and showcase how it is helping researchers move discovery from the bench to the bedside
- Highlight each phase of research and the critical role those researchers play in advancing health (basic science, translational research, clinical trials)
- Develop web content and tools to support this leadership with online tools and promotion of efforts such as Study Finder

**Identify and position top researchers and educators as ambassadors for the health sciences, and prominent spokespeople on topics of state, national and global interest.**

- Increase our bench strength of researchers who are willing and able to serve as spokespeople on various health topics
- Conduct media training across all schools to educate people about how to tell their stories more effectively and to help identify more spokespeople
- Look for ways to build relationships with national reporters corresponding to our areas of expertise so we can begin playing a larger role in some of these national discussions
- Leverage online tools/videos to highlight and promote experts across the health sciences

**DESIRED OUTCOMES:**

- An increased roster of capable spokespeople
- Stronger and deeper knowledge among our stakeholders of the expertise that we have within our colleges/schools
- Improved national reputation and visibility in our key areas of strength (informatics, interprofessional education and training, regenerative medicine, immunotherapy, medical imaging/CMRR, Medical Discovery Team areas)

**MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

- Increased local, regional and national media coverage focusing on key areas of strength
• More spokespeople media trained and used by media, increasing our ability to respond quickly to newsworthy topics
• Long-term goal of improving national reputation measures in our key areas of focus

About the Academic Health Center Office of Communications:
z.umn.edu/communications

Strategic planning for the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus—10-year plan: strategic-planning.umn.edu

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