2020 Key Communicators Survey_FINAL.02.21.20

University Relations

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BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

There are about 150 Key Communicators at the University. The Vice President for University Relations & Enrollment Management wants to ensure that University Relations is: a) providing the Key Communicators with the resources they need; and b) providing guidance to University leadership as to how they can best utilize Key Communicators’ talents.

A survey was emailed to all Key Communicators. The objectives of the survey were:

• Determine if the monthly keys meeting conveys information that is applicable and constructive.
• Understand the relationship between Key Communicators and their dean/vice president, as well as the key’s ability to work in partnership with them.
• Determine if the Keys’ responsibilities are in alignment with their/UR expectations.
• Identify areas where University Relations can lend keys better/additional support.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Restructure the monthly keys meeting. The meeting falls short in providing Keys with information and networking opportunities that enable them to improve their work performance.

Advocate for a higher level of engagement. Key Communicators’ top responsibilities in their unit/division are: managing social media, advocating on behalf of their leader by writing key messages/columns, championing their leader as an expert or thought leader and advising them in crisis situations.

Their engagement is somewhat stifled. Most, but far from all Keys, regularly meet with their leader but are not part of the leadership cabinet. About half of those surveyed identify as a project manager rather than strategic advisor, possibly due to this lack of higher engagement. While many are aware of what the priorities are in their unit and are able to articulate them, a significant number acknowledged not having that insight.

In terms of proposed future initiatives, Keys’ and the dean/vice president’s suggestions are aligned most of the time. When that’s not the case, Keys feel they have the appropriate resources and support from University Relations to express their concerns. Their relationship with the dean/vice president gives pause to some, but most feel they can speak candidly.
Clarify the roles and responsibilities of Key Communicators. The types of projects Keys are involved with and the amount of responsibilities they have appear to vary greatly. Most feel content with their work because it corresponds well with their skills and expectations. That said, there is still an opportunity to better match the skills and projects assigned to other Keys who do not consider themselves as fortunate.

Ensure deans have a clear understanding of Key Communicators’ abilities. Given that no formal job description exists at the University level, it’s not surprising there is little consistency among Key Communicators’ responsibilities and a lack of clarity among deans/vice presidents as to their capabilities.

Create a meeting agenda and eliminate “rounds.” Key Communicators have an extensive list of topics they’d like covered in future meetings. Creating an agenda would allow them to pick and choose the sessions that would benefit them most. Also, the elimination of “rounds” would allow more time for the discussion of topics they deem pertinent.
DETAILED FINDINGS
Just 12% of Key Communicators believe the monthly keys meeting is extremely valuable in helping them do their job more effectively; 29% find it very valuable. About half consider it somewhat valuable. Ten percent deem it not very or not at all valuable.
Most Key Communicators manage social media accounts for their unit/division (79%), write key messages/columns for their leader (60%) and meet weekly/bi-weekly with their leader (60%). Fewer attend leadership meetings (55%), advise in crisis situations (51%) and position their leader within media as an expert or thought leader (49%).
Nearly three-fourths (73%) believe their current responsibilities are completely or very much in line with what they were hired to do. About one-fourth (23%) said their duties are just somewhat in line with their expectations. Just 4% said their responsibilities are hardly what they anticipated.
As the size of the text boxes indicate, the number and types of projects Key Communicators work on vary greatly. These are a just sample of the responses provided.

- “Meetings”
- “Graphic arts, videos”
- “Internal communications”
- “Weekly newsletter, magazine, social media”
- “Video production for recruitment”
- “Advertising our events and advising student interns”
- “Digital marketing (specifically e-mail, web, social media, digital advertising, digital billboards, and info stations)”
- “Story telling, alumni magazine, strategic communications, enrollment management communications, social media management”
- “Creating marketing and event materials, event planning and facilitation, communications planning, websites, editing, working with staff on communication issues, working with division heads on special projects.”
- “I manage dean's messaging, school and clinic websites, school and clinic social media accounts, clinic marketing campaigns, promotion of recruitment events, outreach awareness, marketing material content and purchasing for the clinic and school, media relations, internal news messages. Attend chairs and leadership meetings. Other items include directory updates, new employee announcements, tobacco cessation CE, alumni connections, photography, story writer, student event/outreach/fundraiser awareness, info station content.”

Q. What types of projects do you spend most of your time working on?
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<td>Q. What types of projects do you spend most of your time working on?</td>
<td>“I currently handle everything from writing for recruitment to development to designing everything from websites, HTML emails, posters, booklets and everything in between. Every day I do some writing and do some design and manage tasks as best that I can. It is not uncommon to bounce from event marketing to recruitment to outreach or another topic every single day. I would say the majority of my job at this point is taken up by event marketing / management. Bernadette and I even plan and staff major events when they happen (ex. 50th CAC Birthday, donor events, etc.)”</td>
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<td>“Coordinating with other parts of campus on behalf of our office. Internal team communication. Developing messages for campus and beyond. Improving our channels for communication - internally, on campus, and beyond.”</td>
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<td>“External affairs and collaboration with other departments on campus and across the system; marketing and communication strategy for general awareness, enrollment and other campus programs/initiatives”</td>
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<td>“Managing the day-to-day communications platforms for the organization - web, social, video, print, etc. Creating gift proposals and stewardship/leadership giving reports.”</td>
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<td>“Projects relating to technology changes - I write the internal/external communications, create social media content, test the new systems/provide UX support, and assist in developing training materials/knowledge content”</td>
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<td>“I spend the majority of my time working to change the culture of communications in my office to transition us from a tactical print shop to a strategic operation that supports the mission critical priorities. I also spend a lot of time on executive-level communication and donor/alumni relations.”</td>
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<td>“Writing articles for the alumni magazine (I'm responsible for every aspect of producing the School's publication except for design); writing and distributing a weekly internal faculty/staff email; maintaining the School's social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram); creating short write-ups about student events; taking photos for the website, social media, the alumni magazine and various events; making web updates requested by faculty and staff; adding news stories to the website; creating graphics for alumni events and other assignments as requested; assisting with event planning; planning for student profiles to use on the web, social, recruitment materials, etc. (have finish very few); working on a viewbook and recruitment materials (have not finished viewbook, but was able to get a few one sheeters created for our recruiter.)”</td>
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Q. What types of projects do you spend most of your time working on?

- "Researching content topics and conducting interviews to inform content creation - Content strategy - Creating and editing content (news releases, media advisories, event pages, web, print pieces, emails, social media, infostations, e-newsletters, magazine, recruitment messaging) - Managing all social media accounts - Media relations (pitching, connecting experts to reporters, etc.) - Assessment/reporting - Supervising and mentoring intern team - Project management - Coaching/teaching/advising director"

- "Technology management, documents and presentations, front desk - checking clients in and out, arranging and scheduling meetings for various people in my department, AR/AP, website and blog content, social media copy and graphics"

- "A lot of current student communication, as well as prospective student communication (emails, website, social media). In addition (less so), some event promo (postcards, websites, RSVPs, planning) and press releases."

- "Our work at Cancer Prevention and Control connects WV communities to the University and to the WVU Cancer Institute to address cancer health disparities unique to WV and Appalachia. Central to the Institute’s mission, CPC fosters relationships to promote community engagement and innovative service opportunities; develops culturally appropriate education and outreach initiatives; conducts community-based participatory research; and translates cancer-related science and research for WV communities."

- "Strategizing internal and external communications initiatives, managing three social media accounts, developing content (graphics, photo, video) for social media, overseeing internal ambassador group, leading/serving on committees, compiling analytic reports, writing web and ENews content, taking photos at WVU events."

- "In no particular order ... Managing social media (identifying content, creating a posting calendar and scheduling posts), overseeing creation of recruitment publications, internal communications (including messages to students, faculty and staff), writing stories about the college’s research, teaching and outreach efforts, and serving as an "air traffic controller" for ideas, projects and problems related to "communications."

- "Key messaging, aligning goals/strategy and providing guidance on story development to achieve our goals, as well as those of the university. And, managing people consumes a lot of time."
Q. To what extent do you feel those are the projects you should be working on?

Below is a word cloud depicts the keys’ areas of responsibility.
About seven in 10 Key Communicators (72%) deem the projects they work on to be appropriate most or all of the time. About one-fifth (21%) feel that sometimes they are appropriate. Just 6% believe they rarely make sense.
Q. What are the greatest challenges you currently face in doing your job?

Key Communicators who indicated that, at times, they work on projects that they don’t feel they should be working on were asked to identify their greatest challenges. They cited these:

- Not kept in the loop/lack of communication
- Undefined priorities
- Understaffed/lack of resources
- Viewed as a “task master” rather than strategic partner

“My dean does not understand the value of communications and does not seem to be interested in any of the strategic advice and input I provide. I am not viewed as a member of the leadership team, invited to leadership team meetings, or regularly updated on important college information or strategic priorities.”

“My dean isn’t as forward-thinking as I would like him to be. His style and way of thinking are from the 1980s and 1990s. I don’t think he values what I do as a communicator and has said as much in public. I am the last to know about important projects and crisis situations. He puts too much emphasis on alumni and fundraising efforts and not enough on recruitment and retention. He is too in the "weeds" with projects and doesn't give me enough space to do my job.”

“Balancing time between the demands of different colleagues. I accept projects from everyone in my work area, and can have sometimes 10-12 projects running simultaneously.”

“Too many intricate projects with no project management software or another way to ensure integration with development or leadership staff and WVU Medicine marketing. Crossed priorities depending on which meeting I'm in. Being a team of one.”
Just over half of the Key Communicators (53%) describe their relationship with their dean/vice president as one of a “project manager” rather than “strategic partner/adviser.” However, 67% indicated they have a good understanding of their dean/vice president’s priorities for their college/school/unit, and they are able to articulate those priorities.

Q. Which better describes the overall relationship between you and the dean of your college/school or your vice president? Q. Do you have a good understanding of your dean/vice president/s priorities for the college/school/unit? Q. Are you able to describe or share those priorities easily with others?
About six in 10 Key Communicators (61%) acknowledged that their suggestions regarding new initiatives within their college/school/unit are frequently, if not always, in alignment with their dean’s/vice president’s suggestions. Another 28% said this is occasionally the case; 10% said their suggestions are sometimes or never in sync.
On those occasions when Keys feel the need to push back on their dean/vice president’s suggestions, the vast majority (83%) feel they have access to resources that support their point of view, as well as have support from University Relations that enables them to do that. Fewer, but the majority (71%) feel the trust/relationship they have with their dean/vice president allows them to feel confident when questioning his/her suggestion.

| Access to resources that lend credibility to your point of view | 83% |
| Access to support from University Relations team | 83% |
| The trust/relationship with your dean/vice president to do so | 71% |
There is little consensus regarding topics Key Communicators would like to learn about in future meetings, but verbatims can be found on the next two pages.
Verbatims:

- “Video production and distribution”
- “How can we help our schools recruit; how can we be on the same page as the overall University; I'm not sure recruiters know what they need from us and we aren't sure what we should be providing.”
- “Anytime templates are shared, it's a major win for one-man or small communications teams.”
- “I appreciate when teams within UR give information/how to updates. Recently, there was one from Brand and Trademark Licensing.”
- “How to manage relationships with/ expectation of your dean/faculty and a UR template for an IMC strategic/action plan”
- “Marketing strategies, digital advertising, and how Enrollment Services communicates (in all aspects) with University Relations in Morgantown.”
- “Project management”
- “Refreshers on how best to access/request UR resources for School/College/Division-level communication initiatives”
- “It would be great to have a messaging update each quarter for alumni and friends. What are the primary message points we need to convey to these constituents? It seems like all or nearly all the messaging is centered around recruitment and retention of students.”
- “It's been great to collaborate with other areas/schools on a variety of projects and any opportunity to expand on those opportunities would be great.”
- “Less meeting-wide mandatory information sharing -Communication timeline for recruitment with tangible examples of each step -Using Target X for recruitment emails and reporting -Updates regarding WVU Foundation and relationship with RNL (what's expected for college communicators, etc.) -Assessment -Executive communication -Crisis communication”
- “Social media trends and best practices, establishing a presence/connection with students and faculty so they are aware of the services we provide, how to communicate the value of what we do to faculty/students who might not understand the purpose of our unit.”
Verbatims:

- “Social media best practices and up and coming technologies. Continue to provide generational data and info - have found this very interesting and helpful.”
- “How tos and advice to make communications easier. Where is the line between my individual unit and the communication head for my department.”
- “Workshop on getting a robust plan (including prioritizing work, assigning work to student workers, etc.)”
- “We are interested in engaging with communities throughout WV (not necessarily our student/parent population, more the general public) on Facebook, the web, and via podcasting.”
- “Building internal campaigns, best practices for website content, primer on how to set measurable goals and track those goals effectively.”
- “One thing we struggle with communicators at Health Sciences is convincing their deans to see them as the marketing experts. Too often they feel worn down by the Dean's wants, rather than the needs of the school. It's a give and take, but I have had several talk to me that their Dean either doesn't respect them, or listen to them, or invite them where they need to be. If we could get some HR-based initiatives about how we can empower our communicators - be it through confidence building (they're the experts, they should say that!), how to use better language to shape conversations, and make themselves seen as visible and respected partners, rather than a messenger to communicate things they shouldn't. Anything we can to empower, see their value as highly qualified media marketers, and more!”
- “Creating an effective marketing-communications plan; tips and tricks for managing social media as well as creating engaging content; crisis communication.”
- “Smaller working groups with people who are in the "same boat" would be helpful. It's nice to seem the star projects from across campus, but many of these items aren't relatable. There are large teams and lots of resources that go into these projects. It doesn't feel relatable on the unit level.”
- “It would be great to not only hear from University Relations, but also from other colleges/units to see what colleagues are doing. The reminders about messaging, strategy and goals is also valuable/appreciated in helping the academic/program units be successful. And, as always, branding tips/information is always helpful.”

Q. On those occasions when you feel you should push back on your dean's/vice president's suggestions, do you feel that you have...