

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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To: Campus Community

From: Provost Kim A. Wilcox
Vice President Fred Poston
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Subject: MSU's external communications

Times of budget constraint require us to look carefully—and often differently—at the ways in which we have done business in the past. This challenge can lead to creative solutions that make better use of resources and yield more effective outcomes.

The university is investing in building its brand with key external audiences. This is important in good times, but it is even more important in difficult times. Universities thrive on reputation maximization. It's what attracts talented faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates, particularly those from out-of-state who have many options open to them; encourages alumni engagement; and underpins philanthropy. While there are many factors that contribute to reputation, it is more important than ever to use communications in a strategic, intentional way to build awareness and create a positive image of Michigan State University.



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At the university level, this is the mission of the Division of University Relations, which will be making a number of changes to increase its focus on university-level, brand-aligned marketing and media communications while at the same time reducing its overall operating budget.

Immediate changes include:

- University Relations will place greater emphasis on its role in providing communications leadership for the campus, offering consultation to units and assisting them in developing strategies to align unit communications with the university's brand. This consultation will be offered without charge. UR also will assist in connecting university units with area agencies and freelancers who are familiar with the university's graphic standards and brand guidelines.
- University Relations will enhance collaboration with Advancement, Admissions, and Athletics to leverage resources and to integrate messages and visual

elements in ways that will build the MSU brand and increase effectiveness of communications with key audiences.

- University Relations will eliminate the job-by-job service component of its marketing and creative functional area while expanding its outreach and consulting to assist units with developing communications strategies. University Relations will complete any marketing and creative jobs currently underway. The division will not accept new for-fee writing, editing, design, or Web jobs after October 30, 2009.
- University Relations will retain a for-fee service component for its photo and video functional area, which creates multipurpose content essential to promoting the university as a whole, particularly through Web and social media.
- Print and Digital Communications, formerly Printing Services, will be realigned within University Services. University Services and UR are working together to determine which services will be retained and which will be eliminated in order to balance the service needs of the university with the need to reduce costs associated with capital equipment and overhead.
- To assist with the procurement of services no longer be available on campus, University Services will develop a buying program and negotiate strategic contracts with companies that provide such services as graphic design, Web development, and printing. These contracts will conserve resources as well as allow the university to better manage brand identity.
- Overall, the changes in University Relations, including Printing Services, will result in a reduction of approximately 17 FTEs.

Changes in University Relations are just one component of building a stronger brand for MSU through external communications. Like a capital campaign, brand building can succeed only if we pull together in the same direction. For this reason, some additional changes and charges lie ahead.

- University Relations currently provides salary support to communicators in approximately half of the academic colleges and in several other units. This salary support was provided to facilitate collaboration and alignment between unit and institutional communications strategies. As we invest more substantially in building the university brand, this kind of alignment will need to become standard and no longer a function of salary sharing. UR salary support for joint communicators in academic units will conclude at the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year. Salary sharing arrangements will be maintained in Admissions, International Studies and Programs, and Research and Graduate Studies, which cut across the university.
- University Relations will continue to build a network for, engage in dialog with, and offer guidance to the university's many unit communicators as a group.

- We will appoint a task force in the near future to work with University Relations to review the external communications of MSU. This assessment will provide the campus community with more information about how we are collectively deploying our resources and how we can achieve better alignment. It also will provide University Relations with input on creating more robust guidance for the campus community regarding external communications.

We all have a role in telling the MSU story, and we are investing in telling that story like never before. Yet to leverage this investment, we must begin to speak with a more unified voice. The changes outlined are designed to move us in that direction.