Town Hall 4: Effectively Communicating Cost and Value Data in Higher Ed

CIMA-AAG Town Hall | June 3, 2024
Speakers

Johnny Cruz
Chief Communications and Marketing Officer
University of California, Riverside

Mike Brost
Director, Public Affairs
APLU

Tiffany Carpenter
Vice President, Communications and Marketing
University of Tennessee System

Amanda DeRito
Associate Vice President for Strategic Communications
Utah State University

Chris Nelson
Chief University Relations Officer & Secretary to the University
University of Utah
Series Goals: Reframing Cost & Value of Higher Ed

- Address and counter the negative narrative around the cost and value of higher education using data
- Equip participants with tools, data, and strategies to effectively communicate the cost and value of higher education
- Foster a collaborative environment for sharing best practices and challenges
Resources from Previous Town Halls

https://wakelet.com/wake/7sUP6ym9o6F7N41kaYfF7
Today’s Objectives

Provide broad strategies for effectively communicating using data

Share examples that follow best practices
A 4-year public degree is good for Tennessee and good for you.
Overview

### Community Sentiment
**Message:** A4-year degree is good for Tennessee businesses, families and communities. It’s good for Tennesseans.

**Goal:** We want influential people to know this, shout this, spread this.

**Tactics:** Advertising, earned media, op/eds, speakers bureau.

**Responsible:** UTLGI Consortium

### Influencer Ideation
**Message:** A4-year degree will help the young person in your life to be healthier, wealthier and happier.

**Goal:** We want students and their influencers to see the value of a degree.

**Tactics:** Advertising, earned media, influencer toolkit.

**Responsible:** UTLGI Consortium

### University Action
**Message:** A degree from _____ university is great for your local communities and individuals.

**Goal:** We want the UTLGI message to bolster individual university efforts.

**Tactics:** Co-branded materials, landing page, digital marketing.

**Responsible:** Universities with support from consortium if wanted.
Creative Review

**Goal:** Develop content that captures the attention of and resonates with each of our audiences.

**Strategy:** Create a recognizable, unified message that demonstrates the value of a four-year degree from a public university. Campaign must translate across several platforms.

**Creative Elements Developed**
- Branding
- Landing page
- Video concepting
- Advertising (static and digital)
- Marketing collateral
Creative Review

YOUR CPAS

PETS NEED VETS.

YOUR NURSES

BRIDGES NEED ENGINEERS.

Display Ad. CPA focus

Display Ad. Vet focus

Display Ad. Nurse focus

Display Ad. Engineer focus

FourTheFutureTN.com

FourTheFutureTN.com

FourTheFutureTN.com

FourTheFutureTN.com
Marketing Efforts Overview

**Goal:** Improve the sentiment around the value of higher education, specifically the value of a degree from a four-year, public university, in Tennessee, through advertising and other digital avenues.

**Strategy:** Reach as many people in the state of Tennessee as possible with the initial messaging that a four-year degree is good for local communities and individuals and that Tennessee universities support local communities.

**Multi-channel Campaign**
- Local TV broadcast
- Cable
- Streaming and CTV
- Social media advertising
- Geofence campaign for the state legislature
- Billboards statewide

**CTV/OTT Statewide Targeting**
Parents/grandparents of high school students
- Elected officials/legislators
- Business leaders/owners
- County leadership
- Clergy
- Community leaders

**Social Media Targeting**
- Facebook + YouTube – Adults statewide
- LinkedIn – Elected officials, business owners/leaders, county leadership, clergy, community leaders statewide
Marketing Analytics

19MM Impressions across all digital ad platforms

5.4MM Impressions from streaming and display ads

757K Impressions from geofencing campaign

15.1MM Impressions from broadcast

232K Total website visitors FourTheFutureTN.com
Earned Media Analytics

66 Pieces of coverage procured since the campaign launched

24 from the launch announcement in November 2023

17 pickups of Op-Ed articles across the state

25 FAFSA-related articles in May sprint

1.1MM Estimated number of views on Four the Future articles

171MM Combined publication-wide audience figures for all coverage
Community Engagement Overview

**Goal:** Reshape perceptions regarding the value of a four-year degree through community events and engagement.

**Strategy:** Consistently engage with our target audiences – legislators, county leadership and alumni – through events and outreach; develop and share materials that further educate about the campaign’s mission while creating brand recognition.

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**Event Presence/Support**

- TN Chamber Workforce Development Conference (January)
- Tennessee Chamber Annual Luncheon/Tennessee Chamber of Commerce Executives (TCCE) Winter Conference (February)
- TCCE Institute Conference (March)
- UT Day on the Hill
- MTSU Day on the Hill

**Outreach**

**Community**

- Met with Persist Nashville
- Met with Tennessee Chamber
- Organized meeting with THEC for ETSU

**Tennessee Leadership**

- Email outreach to Education Committee members (House and Senate)
- Email outreach to contacts from TCCE events

**Materials Created**

- Educational materials, including palm card, FAQ sheet and one-pager
- Conference materials, including tablecloth and pull-up banner for visibility
- FTF-branded swag, including pens, T-shirts and lapel pins
First Impressions

Since the campaign launch in November, we have been monitoring public feedback and analytics across various channels. Campaign familiarity is on the rise, and we want to take a moment to highlight and recap some of those wins.

Impressions
The numbers don’t lie. The campaign has racked up more than 19 million impressions across digital ads; the word is out, and people want to learn more.

Positive Engagement
Most ad engagements are positive. People tag friends and family or take time to comment positive feedback, and they seem to resonate with the creative.

Recall
The campaign is being recognized at events in which we've participated (where we've had facetime with key audience members). People recognize billboards and ads.

Reach
More than 231,000 people have visited the campaign website and learned more about the benefits of a four-year degree.
The recent delays and missteps surrounding the revamp of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) became a hot-button topic in media and among universities across the state. Not only were FAFSA applications on a decline (30 percent lower than the previous year), but several schools reported a decline in enrollment as well. In response, we worked to create a FAFSA Sprint – a multifaceted 15-day campaign to encourage Tennesseans to complete the FAFSA.

Our main audiences included:

**Students**
- Students who have already been accepted into college
- Those who are considering attending a university but are concerned about financing higher education

**Influencers**
- Those who influence students to attend college, including:
  - Parents
  - Counselors
  - Youth workers
  - Students about to graduate/are already within the collegiate bubble
FAFSA Sprint

In order to deploy the FAFSA messaging as quickly as possible, we utilized the following strategies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEBSITE</th>
<th>ADVERTISING</th>
<th>EARNED MEDIA</th>
<th>MESSAGING</th>
<th>SOCIAL MEDIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed a landing page with a real-time countdown tool that included easy-to-find links to FAFSA and university financial resources.</td>
<td>Swapped current campaign digital billboards to FAFSA messaging.</td>
<td>Developed and distributed three press releases with university president quotes.</td>
<td>Provided talking points for university leadership to incorporate into graduation speeches.</td>
<td>Created an aggressive social media influencer campaign that focused on LinkedIn and Facebook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Deployed ad and post engagement campaign to target audiences with link to landing page.</td>
<td>• Leaned into college graduation season to capitalize on interview opportunities.</td>
<td>• Secured interviews.</td>
<td>• Provided copy for several university newsletters and email correspondence, including alumni outreach/new student information.</td>
<td>• Shared videos of university leadership highlighting the importance of FAFSA.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>• General messaging about the countdown.</td>
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**FAFSA Sprint**

- **25** Pieces of coverage related to the FAFSA Sprint
- **350K** Estimated number of views on FAFSA media hits
- **300+** Number of visitors to the FAFSA landing page on the FTF website

**Metrics**

- **113K** Impressions across ad and post engagement campaign (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- **42K** Engagements across all platforms (likes, comments, shares, reactions, etc.)
- **360** Clicks through to the landing page

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**Tennessee News**

- **250K** Estimated number of views on FAFSA media hits

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**Trending Stories**

1. Last remaining Zoo Knoxville elephant placed in hospice
2. This is the salary it takes to be middle class
3. New Bishop of the Diocese of Knoxville appointed
4. Teenage boy missing since 2017 found dead
5. Tennessee weather: Snow, ice, freezing rain forecast

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**The University of Tennessee System**
## Phase II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>CREATIVE</th>
<th>MARKETING</th>
<th>EARNED MEDIA</th>
<th>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin prioritizing focusing on influencers who surround those who could enroll in an institution of higher learning.</td>
<td>• Iterate on campaign messaging.</td>
<td>• Utilize ad data from Phase I to drive strategy for Phase II.</td>
<td>• Continued Op-Ed creation and placement.</td>
<td>• Ongoing participation in conferences; support Day on the Hill events.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Showcase success stories.</td>
<td>• Email marketing campaign.</td>
<td>• Curation and distribution of university stories based on key themes.</td>
<td>• Ambassador Plan implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Update digital and static content on a regular basis.</td>
<td>• Landing page strategy – digital experience.</td>
<td>• Amplify success stories.</td>
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Phase II – Earned Media

We’ve had a lot of success sharing the stories of how a four-year degree benefits not only the degree holder, but the communities and state as a whole. We plan to continue leaning heavily into this space as we enter our second year.

Each partner university has a great story to tell, and amplifying those stories will benefit the campaign. This is where we could use your help – identifying strong stories that help us boost the goals of Four the Future.

Workforce Development
To attract new businesses and for existing businesses to thrive, Tennessee needs a skilled workforce that supports the community in a multitude of ways.

Many career fields that are essential for the public good and local communities are experiencing a critical shortage, and universities prepare people to fill the gap.

Unlocking Opportunities
Exploring how colleges serve as bridges to previously unreachable networks. Such as:
• A look at the work of career centers
• Universities with real-world application

Research
Colleges drive critical research in a variety of fields, particularly advancements in STEM.

Entrepreneurship
Universities help prepare future entrepreneurs.

Success Stories
Do not necessarily tie directly into these categories. Particularly heartwarming stories that resonate with readers and result in an uplifting impact and positive sentiment.
Phase II – Community Engagement

As we look to prioritize influencers, we are aiming to launch an ambassador program. Establishing a group of “ambassadors” will allow us to develop a network of supporters across the state whom we can call on to speak to the importance of a college degree and higher education. **School support and assistance will be crucial.**

### Ideal Ambassador

- Graduate of FTF school
- Current Tennessee resident
- Additional characteristics (not dealbreakers, but pluses):
  - Larger social following
  - Advocates for university/close relationships
  - Respected government official
  - Involved in local community/state
  - Powerful success stories
  - In underrepresented minority group

### Ambassador Events

- Held across the state to engage alumni and establish campaign credibility
- 30-35 alumni invited to each event
- General event design:
  - Several schools present at each event; communicators to speak about campaign
  - Alumni invited to attend location nearest them
  - Happy hour/cocktail hour
  - Ambassadors given a “toolkit” with campaign information, talking points, swag, social content/copy to share, etc.
  - Will provide opportunity to gather testimonials, stories, etc.
Unified Messaging Platform for Utah System of Higher Education
Setting the Scene

• USHE: six universities, one two-year college, and nine tech ed institutions
• All new board of higher education (May 2023)
• Utah Legislature focused on free speech, DEI and cost
• Institutions already communicating about value of higher education
  • Utah State: Worth It | Aggie Impact
  • U of U: https://impact.utah.edu/ | Resonating Impact
Confidence in Higher Education Falling Nationally

36%

“A great deal” or “quite a lot”
Confidence in Higher Education Falling - Utah

52%

“A great deal” or “quite a lot”

How much confidence do you have in institutions of higher education in Utah?

- 21% A great deal
- 31% Quite a lot
- 31% Some
- 14% Very little
- 3% Don’t know

Deseret News/ Hinckley Institute poll

SOURCE: Poll conducted by Dan Jones & Associates Jan. 16-21, 2024, of 801 registered Utah voters and has a margin of error +/- 3.02%.
Board of Higher Ed Directive
November 3, 2023

Form a strike team of communications personnel from USHE institutions to create a campaign to inform Utahns about the value of higher education.

Increase the number of students who end up at the top of the marketing funnel.
USHE Communicators Objective

- Create a **unified messaging platform** promoting the benefits of higher education
  - Key messages to integrate into institutional comms
  - Influencer campaign to change trust in Utah’s public institutions
- **Target Audiences**: legislators/elected officials, rural prospective students, rural Utahns, parents/families of prospects, local community/business leaders
System Strengths

• History of collaborative learning: DEI, Title IX, Clery, and a monthly coordination meetings
• University of Utah and Utah State have stronger collaboration
• Data showing impact of higher ed in the state as well as for the University of Utah
Serendipitous Data: Impact on Individuals

- Higher wages
- Lower unemployment
- Less likely to live in poverty
- Happier, healthier, more confident in the future

Is higher education still worth the cost? Here’s what the data in Utah shows.

A policy brief from analysts at the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute found economic and social benefits for people and the economy.
Impact of Higher Education on Society

- Higher civic engagement
- More likely to vote
- Increased tax revenue
- Less use of public assistance
Key Messages

• Higher education lifts Utah.
• More graduates means higher paying jobs.
• We want to empower every Utahn to pursue at least some college.
• Higher education creates dividends for everyone—the graduates, their families, the state, and society at large.
Outcomes

• Data seeking
  • USU and other institutions pursuing economic impact studies with the U’s Gardner Policy Institute
  • Recognition for simpler internal data for comms
• More intentionally communicating value of higher ed
  • Op-eds, earned media
  • Building on existing marketing campaigns
  • Alumni magazines
• Higher Ed Day – June 6
  • Social media influencer campaign 🙌
**Median Earnings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Median Earnings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>$45,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>$61,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$58,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate's degree</td>
<td>$44,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>$38,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>$34,583</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(90% Confidence Interval) $60,000 – $40,000

**Increased earnings**

**Median** earnings rise with years of education attained while poverty rates and unemployment rates decline.

**Reduced disparities and higher economic mobility**

**Students** with a family member with a postgraduate degree are far more likely to complete postsecondary education. The share of individuals with family income higher than their parents is greater among those with a college degree.

**Utah ROI**

**Return** on investment — It is estimated that every $1 the state invests in public higher education returns $3 in tax revenues from increased wages of Utah college and university graduates.

**Quality of life**

19% Happy, 63% Healthy, 57% Confident in Future Career Success
Collaborations & Earned Media

Opinion: Higher education is key to Utah’s future workforce
Higher education is not just about better jobs — it is genuinely about better lives.

Opinion: The benefits of a college education may surprise you
Now, more than ever, the economy of the future requires a broad spectrum of workers. The education they’ll need to perform those essential jobs will vary, but the benefits of graduating from a college or university are indisputable.

Why a college education is not a waste of time
Published: April 3, 2024, 11:23 a.m. MDT

Students walk through campus at Utah Valley University in Orem on Jan. 10, 2023. Utah’s prosperity still depends on having an educated workforce. | Spencer Hislop, Deseret News

By Derek Miller

University of Utah sophomores Asher Stewart, Neon Huff and Annie de Bry study in the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City on Wednesday, March 13, 2024. | Kristen Murphy, Deseret News

By Taylor Randall, University of Utah President, Betsy Cantwell, Utah State University President
Lessons Learned

- Set realistic Expectations
  - Focus of individual resources difficult – institution communication offices have their own directives
- Seek data for ROI: student, individual, family and society
- The more localized the data and audience, the more impact
- Copy others (don’t reinvent the wheel)
Q&A with Speakers
Share Your Thoughts!

Please provide feedback on today’s town hall and offer suggestions for other ways APLU and NACUBO can support your institution in using data to communicate the cost and value of higher education.

https://nacubo.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_87VWXC68E1nZJQ
Thank You!

Bao Le, ble@aplu.org

Lindsay Wayt, Lindsay.Wayt@nacubo.org