

**Finnish Higher Education Experts U.S. Study Tour 2014:
Communications and Community Relations**

March 31 – April 4, 2014

Themes and Questions

1. **Basics: Understanding the communication and marketing system of U.S. universities**
 - a. higher education system
 - b. communication and marketing system
 - c. social impact
 - d. financing
 - e. trends

2. **Strategic planning**
 - a. brand management
 - b. reputation management
 - c. evaluating the impact of communication and marketing

3. **Community**
 - a. internal communications
 - b. change communications
 - c. crisis
 - d. brand ambassadors

4. **Content production**
 - a. different ways, new ideas
 - b. news desks
 - c. infographics, visualization, sound and picture
 - d. science communication

5. **Media relations, community relations/public affairs, marketing**
 - a. marketing (student and staff recruiting, employer branding)
 - b. recruiting
 - c. partnerships
 - d. media relations

6. **Channels, digitalization, social media**

Questions throughout themes:

1. Innovative concepts and platforms
2. Approaching different audiences/target groups/stakeholders
3. Concrete cases: both success stories as well as lessons learnt from unsuccessful ones, sharing experiences
4. Measuring
5. Future plans or challenges
6. What do you wish to tell us that we may not know to ask?

1. BASICS: UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SYSTEM OF THE US UNIVERSITIES

Higher education system and funding in the U.S. (basic facts, introduction)?

- An overview of the U.S. higher education system and its future challenges
- How is the political/societal impact of universities evaluated and how does it affect funding?
- What's the role of science in American political decision making?
- What is the role of science news in American media now? In the future?

How is communications and marketing (typically) organized in U.S. universities / in your university?

- What is the administrative structure of the communications and/or marketing teams/units (org. chart, number of staff etc.)?
- What is the size of the budget for the communications and marketing as a total and as a percentage of the operating budget?
- What are the core responsibilities of the communications director and what tasks are delegated to communications managers?
- How are university communication and marketing efforts evaluated?

Present and future trends of communications and marketing in U.S. universities

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING (AND OPERATIVE IMPLEMENTATION)

- How do you incorporate the institution's mission, vision and strategy into communications and marketing?
- What are the strategic goals and priorities set for the communications and marketing?
- Do you have just one integrated strategy or policy for the whole area of communications and marketing or various sub strategies?
- How do you measure and track the success of communications and marketing? Do you carry out regular surveys, analysis or inquiries? What indicators do you use?
- What are the most important internal and external stakeholders for communications and marketing?
 - Have you designed specific processes for communications?
 - What kind of planning system, planning tools do you use?
 - How you monitor weak signals and how do you guarantee proactivity?

Brand management + reputation:

- How is university's reputation managed and measured?
- How is your brand positioned against competition?
- Do you have a brand manager? If yes, what are his/her duties and responsibilities? If no, who is responsible for managing reputation/ brand?

3. COMMUNITY

- How do you engage students and staff into your university and its communication and marketing?
- How do the following groups contribute to the developing communicational efforts – strategic planning, projects, development efforts – President, professors, admissions staff, alumni and fundraising, research services, student groups/leaders, local community and businesses, media partners?
- Which channels do you use for internal communications? Are they interactive?
- How do you link communication into change management? – concrete case(s)
- Could you tell us an example of a crisis situation your university has faced (e.g. regarding university's reputation) and how the situation was handled?
- What internal marketing and communications services do you offer to your university community members?
- What tools are used to guarantee the efficiency of the operative communication?
- How do you develop personnel's (academic plus non-academic) communicational skills? Do you have a regular training program?

4. CONTENT PRODUCTION

- Science communication: what channels and methods do you use?
- Do you have a (multichannel/rich media) news desk or a specific news service? If yes, how is it organized and led? If no, how do you predict and deliver news?
- What is your budget for content and visual production? What percentage of it is done in-house, what is outsourced?
- Visualizing information: how do you use visual elements, sound, videos, animation and infographics in your communications?
- Using storytelling in communication: tell about various narrative techniques you are using?
- Using different styles: piece of news, document, comic strip, communicating through persona, sketch, gamification...
- Do you have an open access initiative or guidelines? How do you implement them in practice?
- Do you have a content strategy (CS)?
- How do you do content marketing?

5. COMMUNITY RELATIONS/PUBLIC AFFAIRS, MARKETING/PR

- How do you popularize science and activate academic staff engage into it? Risks?
- How do you use scientific facts and outcomes in lobbying?
- How do you develop media relations? Which channels and practices do you use?
- What kind of partnership programs/agreements/co-operation do have with media, pr offices, advertising agency, governmental/private organizations etc.?
- Could you tell us about your current marketing activities and campaigns?
- What are the main marketing communications channels you use?
- Customer relations management (CRM) solutions and practices?
- Do you have a community manager?
- What does corporate social responsibility mean in your university? Concrete examples.

- How do you recruit future students and staff (academic plus non-academic)?
- How do you implement employer branding?

6. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS, DIGITALIZATION, SOCIAL MEDIA

- What channels are used for the communications and marketing - for what purposes and target groups and contents?
- Do you use 360 degrees planning?
- What are the strategic goals and priorities set for the digital and social media?
- Do you have an intranet/virtual desktop for students and personnel? If yes, could you offer a short virtual tour or give a presentation by using print screens?
- What are the key figures for the websites and the other social and digital media channels?
- Do you have responsively designed websites?
- What are your best and worst practices and experiences in the use of social media?
- Do you have a team for video production? Do you use MOOCs?
- How will the digitalization change the communications in the becoming years? How are the skill requirements for the communication or marketing professional going to change?

Publications

- What kinds of publications do you have - print/web/tablet/ etc?
- What magazines do you have? What are the key figures: the number of editorial staff, budgets, volumes, subscribers etc.?
- What kind of presentation materials do you have (printed and digital materials)

Events and innovative platforms

- Do you organize external events for the wider audiences/marketing/lobbying purposes?
- Have you created innovative platforms or co-operative models for the communications?