

# AC 2022-2023 Assessment

## Public Information & Media Relations, Marketing & Branding

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**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

**External Affairs:** External Affairs provides multimedia services to promote a positive image of Northwestern State University through relationships with the local community, the media, our alumni, prospective students, donors and government and civic leaders. These offices units play an important role in showcasing the university and impacting enrollment, fundraising, alumni and community involvement, and other goals. The Division is directly involved in promoting a learning-centered environment, improving retention and graduation rates and maintaining a positive, student-oriented atmosphere. External Affairs includes a diverse segment of the university that includes Alumni and Development, The Robert Wilson Recreation Complex; NSU Press/Publications, Marketing and Branding, University Printing, the News Bureau (Office of Communications), Photo Services and Sports Information.

In November 2022, Jerry Pierce, long-time vice president for External Affairs, passed away. Following his passing the division was restructured and Dr. Drake Owens was appointed interim vice president. The Department of Athletics and the Wellness, Recreation and Activities were separated from External Affairs to become their own divisions. Owens was named vice president of External Affairs in April 2023

**Public Information & Media Relations/Marketing & Branding and Mission:** The mission of the two units is to promote the university, its students, faculty, staff, programming, accomplishments and resources to external audiences through a variety of media platforms. These units work collaboratively with each other and with personnel from throughout the campus to highlight activities, events, opportunities and milestones related to all aspects of Northwestern State. The work of the units helps attract and retain students as well as enhances alumni relations, fund raising and community engagement.

**Methodology:** The assessment process includes:

(1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director;

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(2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met:

(3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;

(4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);

(5) The executive director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

### Service Outcomes:

**SO 1.** Create broad and positive exposure for Northwestern State on the local, regional and national level by (1) Promotion of programs and opportunities available by (2) promotion of student, faculty and institutional accomplishments and (3) increased engagement both internally and externally.

#### Measure 1.1.

Public Information/Media Relations issues timely press releases, website updates and accompanying photos and graphics with the goal of engagement by 100 percent of local media, 60 percent of regional media and 30 percent of national print and online media organizations.

**Finding:** Target met.

**Analysis:** In 2022-23 the target was engagement by 100 percent of local media, 60 percent of regional media and 30 percent of national print and online media organizations. Based on the analysis of these results in 2023-2024 personnel targeted press releases to specific markets and observed spikes of interested related to Athletics and Recruiting initiatives. Staff maintained a proactive approach in reaching out to media to “pitch” story ideas to relevant markets.

PIMR personnel at NSU coordinated and communicated with sister schools in the University of Louisiana System to send cohesive, comprehensive messaging in regards to campus operations affecting stakeholders on a local, state and national level.

Sports Information garnered media coverage on athletes transferring into and out of NSU with the new transfer portal. Media profiles of student-athletes with Name Likeness Image contracts also generated earned media. All efforts were supported by Photo Services and NSU Publications.

In 2022-2023, the target was met. News outlets were receptive to all press releases related to the return to classes, athletic events, commencement programs and normal campus activities and they resumed. Starting in July 2023, the News Bureau and Sports

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Information Office will develop a relationship with a new news outlet in Shreveport/Bossier to supplement the regional coverage of the Shreveport/Bossier Advocate.

Based on the number and frequency of press releases, photos and social media posts and shares, along with the growth in updates and human-interest stories that developed as the campus returned to normal operations, NSU news reached most targeted media outlets.

This goal was met on the local and regional level. From July 2022- June 2023, NSU News Bureau and Sports Information combined to distribute over 1,165 press releases and accompanying photos and social media posts.

Northwestern State's earned media for 2022-23 (non-athletic):

- ~10,000 mentions in the news
- 34.3B readership across news and content, blogs, and TV (the sum of the Unique Visitors per Month for online articles, Print Circulation and Broadcast audience)
- Advertising equivalency of \$65m (earned media)
- Facebook mentions: 39,000

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of 2022-2023 results Public Information & Media Relations will in 2023-2024 work with other units on campus – and with our sister schools in the UL System -- to maximize publicity for the university's assets, programs, accomplishments and opportunities, pandemic recovery and plans for moving forward. The staff should continue to strategically “pitch” stories to specific markets, localize stories when necessary and continue to make new media contacts.

### Measure 1.2.

Marketing and Branding will increase the university's social media engagement by 15 percent per year.

**Finding:** Target not met.

**Analysis:** In 2022-2023, the target was to increase social media engagement by 15 percent. Based on the analysis of these results in 2022-23, engagement did not grow and more changes took place. At the beginning of the reporting cycle, Cree Roark was hired as an assistant director for videography/photography projects. Marketing and Branding were moved to the supervision of the Director of Strategic Initiatives Cole Gentry. Late in the reporting cycle, Amy Lee was hired as the new Marketing and Branding and immediately began to focus on social media growth and analytics with positive results.

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Video and social media campaigns are currently being redeveloped as the unit is being reorganized with plans in development with other units, such as Recruiting, to refocus on the unit's primary focus of recruiting, retention and engagement.

As a result, the target was not met.

From July 2022 - March 2023, NSU's social media footprint grew modestly. Facebook grew from 39K followers to 41K followers. Instagram followers grew from 21.3K to 22.4K. Twitter grew from 8,884 followers to 9,142 followers. LinkedIn stands at 34K followers. Tik Tok has 2,647 followers.

As of June 2023, a new director of Marketing and Branding is at the helm and already developing strategies to increase social media engagement. The new staff will integrate social media with efforts in other digital spaces to increase exposure to NSU's brand as well as engagement across all platforms.

Based on the analysis of the results from last year, data indicates that by reorganizing the Office of Marketing and Branding, refocusing on social media campaigns in conjunction with campus activities, events and holidays will make a positive impact in social media engagement. The new director is also focused on growing the university's external visual presence and social media presence so that going forward, data should indicate that Marketing and Branding play an important role in the mission of the university and its stakeholders.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, in 2023-2024 the Marketing Department will be investing in a program to schedule and track analytics across a single platform for Linked In, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok.

**SO 2.** Public Information/Media Relations and Marketing and Branding support the university's internal and external communication efforts to increase brand recognition and impact.

**Measure 2.1.**

Each unit monitors earned media, growth of network, video views, website hits and other analytics with the goal of a 15 percent annually to demonstrate increased engagement and interest in NSU.

**Finding:** Target met.

**Analysis:** Several events on campus garnered attention for the university, including the death of the vice president of External Affairs, several large grants and athletic news.

Northwestern State's earned media for 2022-23 (non-athletic):

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Based on the analysis of the results, the Office of Marketing and Branding is currently under direction and administrative assistant in place. As a result, in 2023-24 units used analytic tools to measure engagement and will continue to market the university's programming.

The units combined with sister schools in the University of Louisiana System to acquire a Cision account for better media monitoring. Hiring a new photographer and videographer has resulted in an increase in social media engagement. The new director is already devoting a significant amount of time, energy and resources into growing online engagement and visual prominence.

Spikes in social media/external media engagement tend occur in conjunction with campus events that follow the academic calendar, such as Freshman Connection, Welcome Week, Christmas Gala, Commencement, and other large campus events

NSU Press, NSU Publications, Photo Services and Sports Information continue to support units across campus. From July 2022-June 2023, NSU Publications completed 1,327 jobs for a variety of units and divisions across campus. One special job resulted in \$720.

Purchases of books from the NSU Press totaled \$4,181. Cookbook purchases totaled \$400 for the NSU Foundation.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of 2022-2023, NSU Press will continue to market books for sale. NSU Photo Services and NSU Publications will continue to work with the campus community to advance the mission of the university.

The new staff will integrate social media with efforts in other digital spaces to increase exposure to NSU's brand as well as engagement across all platforms.

**SO 3.** PI&MR and Marketing and Branding stay current on trends in media and promote an atmosphere of teamwork and collaboration.

### **Measure 3.1.**

Units attend at least one (more when feasible) professional development conference or webinar per year to sustain quality in writing, editing, graphic design photography, videography and other communication arts and to monitor pertinent trends in the industry.

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**Finding:** This goal was met.

**Analysis:** In 2022-2023 the target was to attend at least one professional development conference per year.

Engaging in professional development increases enthusiasm, teambuilding and generates ideas for increasing engagement and media relations. As a result, in 2022-2023 the director of Public Information and Media Relations attended the University of Louisiana's "For Our Future Conference" in Lake Charles.

**Action** – Based on the analysis of 2022-2023 results, in 2023-2024 units will seek professional development opportunities through the University of Louisiana System and other organizations as they become available.

### **Measure 3.2.**

The units will hold weekly meetings to discuss projects and their progress and share information relevant to completing projects in a professional manner and a timely fashion. Success is defined as meeting 100 percent of deadlines and producing quality work with 0 percent errors.

**Finding:** This goal was not met.

**Analysis:** In 2022-2023 the target was to meet weekly to discuss projects and their progress. Based on the analysis of these results in 2023-2024, staff should strive to meet regularly to better formulate and coordinate strategies to produce work that underpins the mission of the university.

**Action** – Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, the units will set regular meeting times to share ideas and facilitate projects being completed in a professional manner and a timely fashion for 2023-2024. The new Director of Marketing and Branding has already schedule monthly meetings

### **Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvement based on analysis of results:**

- Press releases targeted to specific markets resulted in observed spikes of interested related to Athletics, Recruiting, grants and commencement initiatives. In addition, staff maintained a proactive approach in reaching out to media to "pitch" story ideas to relevant markets.
- Personnel changes in Marketing and Branding precipitated a reorganization with the goal of better management in the future. The units will communicate more effectively to leverage better outcomes.
- The units worked together and with other units on campus on strategic initiatives and campaigns to increase social media engagement and crisis communication.

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- Unit heads should pursue professional development opportunities as they become available.
- Strategic planning and collaboration will be key to developing better teamwork.

### **Plan of action moving forward.**

Public Information & Media Relations and Marketing & Branding work with internal and external stakeholders to promote the image of Northwestern State, viewing their roles as critical in vaulting Northwestern State to becoming the nation's premier regional university. Though staffs are small, and resources are limited, each team member exhibits dedication to the quality of their product and to the reputation of the university. The units will continue to reach out to media to pitch story ideas and continue to target markets with relevant content.

Because technology and media platforms continue to evolve, the team is challenged to stay current and relevant to several different demographics and fluent in technology to utilize traditional and non-traditional media platforms.

The team will attend at least one and preferably two professional development workshops/conferences and actively engage in teambuilding and strategic planning.