INCREASING YOUR *U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT* GRADUATE

SCHOOL RANKINGS: A CENSUS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS SCHOOLS AND

THEIR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS TO CREATE A

TRADITION OF DISTINCTION

A Thesis

by

KARLA S. HOEFELMEYER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

May 2005

Major Subject: Science and Technology Journalism

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Approved as to style and content by:

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Your *U.S. News and World Report* Graduate School Rankings: A

Census of Public Affairs Schools and Their Strategic Communications Efforts to Create

a Tradition of Distinction. (May 2005)

Karla S. Hoefelmeyer, B.S, Texas A&M University

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Colleges and schools in today's competitive marketplace must not only be
cognizant of student and faculty recruitment, but also of their positioning in rankings.
This thesis seeks to determine how the use of strategic communications can play a role
in increasing student applications, the quality of student applications and funding
resources; thereby, increasing their rank as determined by the *U.S. News and World
Report.* It is believed that an in-depth strategic communications plan committed to paper,
and resourced properly, can increase each of these areas. Specifically, this research
examined the top 50 ranked schools in public affairs to determine the relationship
between top ranked schools and their communications departments and each of their
uses of strategic communications as defined as the long-term planning, implementation
and research of the use of public relations, marketing, and advertising.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Colleges communicate similarities and differences among themselves to prospective students and faculty, as well as to competitors and peers, through various media; however, the use of strategically focused communications is becoming more widespread. It is my hypothesis that by using strategic communications, these colleges essentially build the appearance of superiority and a well-rounded environment, which then can influence and be correlated to the *U.S. News and World Report* graduate school rankings.

These rankings are believed to directly translate into a wider, more diverse student population, higher funding for research and an increase in a faculty base. The goal for this study, then, was to examine the influence of communications on graduate rankings, but more broadly implied is the assessment of the influence of communications on student population, research funding and the superiority of faculty. The survivability of schools in the years to come will depend on a strong emphasis on strategic planning in operations, as well as in the communications department.[1]

The use of strategic communications to convey compelling messages of schools, thus creating a holistic environment, has not been widely studied. Extensive studies have

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This thesis follows the style and format of the *Journal of Higher Education.*

been done on strategic communications in the corporate world, but few (cited in the following paragraphs) have studied higher education and none, to date, have been designed around the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings. However, studies have been done on faculty and faculty research and their ties to public affairs program rankings. One such article by David R. Morgan and Kenneth J. Meier assessed the productivity and quality of academic programs, which concludes that productivity at one time was measured by counting the number of journal articles published by program faculty.[2]

In keeping with the importance of rankings, Richard S. Katz and Munroe Eagles concluded in their 1996 article on political science programs that larger faculties rated more highly than smaller ones.[3] However, as Morgan and Meier conclude, people do make their own conclusions and judgments regarding graduate schools whether they make them directly or indirectly.[4] This then is the basis for research examining the use of strategic communications, and communications as a whole, in public affairs schools. Can or do communications influence these voters? Communication is critical to the overall recruitment and rankings of schools, but do public affairs schools utilize strategically focused communications? If so, to what extent do they utilize this type of communication?

The study provides figures to support the theory that public affairs schools, ranked in the top 50, communicate their research through various methods and that the majority of public affairs schools compete with one another for students, faculty, and research funding. Most importantly though, the findings demonstrate that public affairs

schools in the top 50, who are seeking top status, utilize an in-depth and strategically designed communications plan.

A. Strategic Planning

Strategic planning, the buzzword of the 90's, where universities and corporations engaged in defining missions and restructuring their organizations through the use of market research and long-term planning, has been rejuvenated within communications departments.[5] Prior to this movement, the major operational activity underutilized by higher education was marketing, or long-term planning of communications.[6] The utilization of communications through a strategic process is the actual method, implementation, and evaluation of developing and maintaining a planned fit between the organization and its ever-changing marketing opportunities. This strategic process is done to maximize recognition and prestige of students, faculty, and research. Maintaining this fit includes the analysis of internal environments, market environments, public environments, competitive environments, and microenvironments.[7] More simply, as a 1992 Hainsworth study suggests, strategic planning within public relations and communications departments includes research, planning, communication, and evaluation. The analysis provides a strong emphasis on planning, which is essential if colleges are to survive and prosper. Previous research indicates that colleges and universities excel at day-to-day operations, but are poor at systematically planning for future activities. Well-planned public relations activities (strategically planned initiatives) replace the "seat-of-the-pants" approach characterized by early public

relations endeavors. [8] This calculated approach is a direct response to the need for

organizations to move away from reactive stances. At the heart of strategic planning is a

sound understanding of the organization's public or publics, thus placing the role of the

communications department central to the institution to carry out the organizational

plan.[9]

Systematically planning for future activities in communications departments is not

unlike planning in any other unit. Strategic planning requires the ability to critically

analyze the external environment and propose solutions. [10] The information base

acquired through scanning and monitoring (research) enables organizations to engage in

long-term strategic planning. [11] However, engaging in strategies may not be quite

enough. One 1989 study showed that strategies, not created through a formal process and

not conceived near the line management level, are not executed effectively by

organizations.[12] Many times, this ineffective planning results in failure at the most

critical levels.[13] Additionally, strategic plans in any department, including the

communications department, not committed to paper also suffer the same fate. The

solution, therefore as stated by David Reid, is to engage line managers in the

communications department in the management process in which strategic concepts are

committed to paper for review, implementation, and evaluation.[14]

Strategic communications in public affairs schools, like any strategic plan, is the

correlation between the ends, ways, and means of the department of communications

within the school. Measuring the amount of resources to accomplish a set of objectives is

examining the usage and implementation of the strategic process. Planning strategically

simply provides the ways and means to reach a goal.[15] This planning also provides long-term, credible advice to those in decision-making positions and enables them to make appropriate choices in the managing of communications. It also enables communications departments to fully commit to specific goals. Do public affairs schools engage in the strategic communications process, and if so, who is involved in the process formalized?

B. Strategic Communications in Higher Education

In a 1989 study, Ragan and McMillan recognized that education costs were on the rise and student populations would be highly sought after.[16] Even 13 years prior to this study, researchers did not argue over the importance of strategic materials. The role of the communicator in organizations such as these is changing with the transformation of the communications environment.[17] Strategic marketing and communications should assess external forces and develop strategy options that accommodate these forces.[18]

Studies suggest that the ever-changing environment of higher education calls for a strong emphasis on a systematic approach to planning[19] A.R. Krachenberg, in his 1972 study, *Bringing the Concept of Marketing to Higher Education*, explains that while academic institutions excelled at developing and borrowing administrative practices from the private business sector, they fell short on utilizing marketing methods from the same arena.[20] Later, studies advocated that academic institutions were concerned with communications materials and marketing methods; however, they engaged in the practice without planning and without any strategic process.[21] Again, however, they do not detail any processes through which communications and marketing methods are

developed or utilized. A consensus throughout much of the literature that higher

education is becoming an increasingly competitive marketplace in terms of students and

research funding, lays the groundwork for further exploration into the communications

planning of graduate schools. Douglas Leister examined this increasingly competitive

marketplace to discuss institutional positioning.[22]

Academic institutions, known to be excellent at day-to-day operations, have never

proven to be successful at any type of strategic planning or implementation as Philip

Kotler and Patrick Murphy explain in their "Strategic Planning for Higher Education"

article in the *Journal of Higher Education.* [23] Target market identification and the

advantages and disadvantages of an institution relative to its competition assist with the

evaluation of changes in positioning resulting from strategic processes.[24] The key to a

strategic process, including strategic planning within in the communications department,

is stability. Effective strategic communications planning should result in consistent

efforts through good and bad times with small movements to expand during adverse

times and to contract during profitable times. Similar to strategic planning at other

operational levels, strategic communications is where the future scope and shape of the

department should be determined. [25]

As previously stated, most colleges are engaged in randomly advertising and

marketing for the recruitment of students and faculty through posters, announcements,

and brochures.[26] More importantly, though, competition amongst peers within the higher

education system is directed primarily toward the achievement of recognition among

faculty and prestige of research.[27] Do recognition and prestige result in increased

research funding, a superior graduate student base, and an increase in rankings, thus creating a level of distinction through scheduled and consistent communications to peer institutions? If this recognition equals success then the process of arbitrarily communicating should be extinct.

Each school, itself a system, resides within this larger social environment along with other higher education systems with similar degree plans.[28] Each school exists in the communication network and is describable by a large number of similar characteristics and a large number of like personality attributes.[29] Therefore, because of similar competitors, the continued acquisition of like resources is not assured.[30] Hearn and Heydinger addressed universities' external environment and concluded that universities are not closed systems sealed off from their environment, but are open and dependent on the flow of personnel outside their own system.[31]

Based on the competition of like resources, including personnel, and the necessity for long-term objectives to increase recognition and prestige, do public affairs schools utilize strategically focused communications efforts? Does their effort, in essence, build a tradition of distinction among competitors? And, does this level of distinction reflect positively on the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings as submitted by competitive public affairs schools on a bi-annual basis?

It is also important to note that graduate schools, including public affairs schools, are ranked using a survey of opinions of deans, program directors, and senior faculty from peer institutions based on the overall academic quality of programs in their field based on a scale of 1 to 5. The scores are averaged out and weighted based on comments

from experts within the field. Calculations are then processed and schools are ranked accordingly. Public affairs surveys are mailed and tabulated bi-annually in odd-numbered years.[32]

Because of the subjective nature outlined above, it is believed that graduate schools can actually influence rankings based on the types and timing of communication pieces sent out to influential voters. The basis for this research is just that: can communications influence rankings thereby influencing research funding and student applications/enrollment?

II. METHODOLOGY

Each year the top 50 academic institutions in the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings are highly competitive and their positions highly sought after. These institutions, ranked in 2001, will be closely studied. Those institutions, which have reached top 50 status will also be looked at more in-depth because they may have different objectives, such as continued support from peers including a continued vote in the subjective portion of the ranking process. This could be a unique strategy in itself. It is critical to note that public affairs schools in the top 50 rankings are not necessarily a duplication of overall universities in the top 50. These two levels are exclusive to one another, but could possibly affect one another. This, however, will not be part of this research.

An email-based survey was distributed to each of the top 50-ranked schools. A follow-up phone inquiry was done to ensure that a knowledgeable individual completed the survey. When responses were not received, the phone call served as a reminder and many times, respondents were called several times prior to submitting the survey for final analysis.

The key person selected for the survey was located by researching public affairs schools on the National Association of Schools of Public Administration website. This individual was a communications specialist or someone of like title such as information specialist, outreach specialist, outreach director, or communications director. When a key individual was located, they were contacted via phone to ask for the accurate, up-to-date contact information, as well as the name and title of the exact individual who would

be best suited to fill out the survey. This information proved to be critical as there were individuals not seemingly related to communications who were in control of budgetary figures.

Once the email survey was sent out, this particular person was pinpointed to complete the survey; however, their superior was questioned in his or her absence. The survey also attempted to calculate budget figures and key personnel in communications departments. A separate series of questions, see appendix A, questioned the schools as to the actual number of communications personnel as calculated by the number of individuals spending more than 50 % of their time on communications projects. The second series of questions, or the second portion of the research, centered on the strategic communications material. This section attempted to understand what types of information schools deem significant in an effort to increase the *U.S .News and World Report* rankings. It is during this portion that those responding to the survey questions had to reflect on the internal communications plan, as well as the internal and key messages outlined in their communications plan. Also, in this portion of the research those responding had the opportunity to respond to whether their strategic communications plan is linked to their strategic business plan. This research examines the strategic use of their communications efforts. The final section of research or series of questions pertains directly to the rankings process and their use and importance of the rankings process. The information gained in the previous sections, while critical to the analysis, does not give a representation of whether public affairs schools actually place any significance on any ranking systems, which is crucial to this research.

III. RESULTS

The first step in analyzing the results was to separate out all questions relevant to each section. Results were divided into sections in several categories of equal relevancy. Communications professionals, strategic communications plan and budget, and strategic communication goals each have applicable information. The final section on goals has subsequently been divided into three categories for further analysis. This section includes information on increasing student applications, increasing the quality of student applicants, and increasing the overall school image.

A. Communications Professionals

As stated in the methodology section, the ideal individual to answer the survey was the administrator of the communications budget, if possible the director of communications or the highest-ranking communications employee. Responses from the survey were acquired from 18 of these individuals. Their job titles ranged from director of communications, outreach director, coordinator of admissions and recruitment, and assistant dean to program directors. There was very little duplication of job titles and although specific job responsibilities were not requested, it is apparent that there is very little consistency among public affairs schools as to the type of person heading up communications. The number of individuals working within the communications unit also varied, ranging from zero to seven. Nearly 30% of the schools surveyed had only one person dedicated to communications with nearly 24% having either two or three individuals allocated to communications. Schools with more than two communications

professionals working in-house was nearly 50%. The numbers dedicated to each facet of communications is also interesting.

Dedicated staff members are assigned to four basic categories for communications functions including web, events, print, and press. Schools were asked what types of individuals they employ. Nearly 65 % of all public affairs schools have a dedicated web specialist. Right behind the web specialist, 53 % of the schools employ a print/marketing specialist, 41 % employ an individual who has dedicated press responsibilities, and 35 % of the schools employ a dedicated event specialist. Other specialists that appeared in the data include book sales professionals, broadcast studio faculty, and outreach directors. Figure 1 shows the percentages of the most frequent dedicated staff members in public affairs schools including web, print, events, and press personnel.
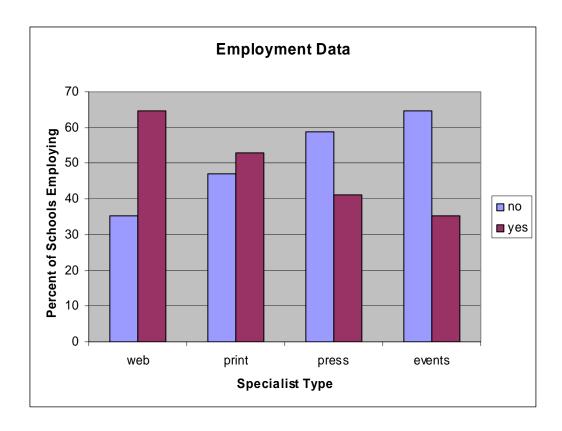
FIG. 1. Employment Data for Communications Departments

SOURCE: Figure data includes web, print, press, and events personnel data as provided by survey respondents in communications departments at public affairs schools ranked in the top 50 by the *U.S. News and World Report.*

B. Strategic Communications Plan and Budget

After determining the number of people who work on communications projects, as well as the number of individuals who are dedicated under each aspect of the communications umbrella, it was important to establish how many schools actually have a formal communications plan in place and what types of information and dates the plan spans. Looking at survey results, it was shown that although 76.5% of the schools engaged in planning efforts, only 47.1% committed their data to a formal strategic communications plan with 43.3% of the schools linking the data in the strategic

communications plan to the schools' business plan. For most schools, the plans' dates ranged from one to two years. Other schools did have plans that included a six month time frame, while a couple of school's plan included a five year timeframe. The plan was referred to quarterly to stay on track. Information was also gathered to reflect the types of individuals involved in the planning efforts. And again, like job titles within the communications profession, individuals engaged in the actual planning process also varied greatly. Involved parties ranged from deans to directors of outreach, admissions and communications to mid- and senior-level administrators.

Additionally, individuals were questioned on budgetary information in an effort to examine the percentages of actual budgets that were allocated to communications and more so, what percentage of the communications budget was committed to each aspect of communications. The largest percentage of the operating budget allocated to communications was 25% with 10% being allocated the most frequently. Figure 2 gives a graphic representation of the percentage of schools who allocated each portion of available money out of the operating budget.
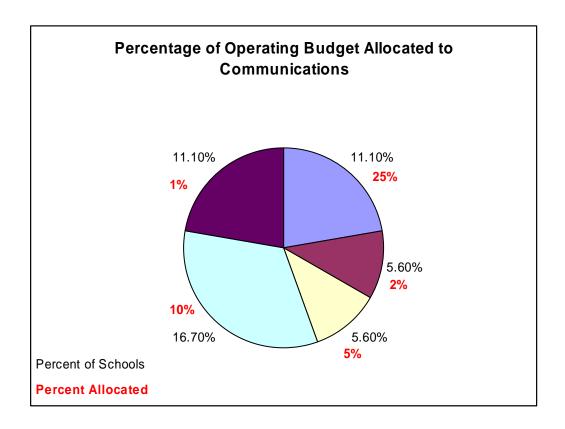
Percentage of Operating Budget Allocated to Communications

Percent of Schools
Percent Allocated

FIG. 2. Budget Figures for Communication Departments

SOURCE: Figure data includes the percentage of operating budgets allocated to communications departments. The data is illustrated by the percent of schools allocating each amount as provided by survey respondents in communications departments at public affairs schools ranked in the top 50 by the *U.S. News and World Report.*

Also being examined was the percentage of the communications budget allocated to web, events, print, press and other. The most frequent percentages allotted to web operations were 10%, 25%, and 30% with 30% being the highest single percentage allotted to any facet of communications. The most frequent percentage allotted to print communications was 20%. Events, like web, had several percentages show up

frequently. Twenty percent, 15%, and 5% all were allocated most commonly from the communications operating budget. Press, surprisingly, also had 2%, 10%, and 5% show up regularly.

C. Strategic Communications Goals

Various schools have various goals as do most business corporations and long-term planning is crucial to the school as a whole. For strategic communications and marketing to be effective in any higher education setting, clear objectives and goals must be set. In order to accomplish this, a couple of things must take place. First of all, concise and focused questions must be asked of the program itself, and second of all, schools must participate in market research of some manner. Because of low operating budgets and a low number of full-time employees, many times market research in higher education reverts to primitive methods including questionnaires at interview weekends, phone conversations producing intangible results, and questions on general university student applications. The next two sections of this research are dedicated to questions relevant to strategic planning within a communications budget and the types of market research available and performed within public affairs schools.

1. Increasing student applications

Questions related directly to the goals of communications activities at public affairs schools were asked of the top 50 ranked schools. Two questions were asked to attempt to directly link the ability to increase student applications through the visibility

of distinguished faculty research and through the visibility of conferences and speakers.

Overwhelmingly with 88.3%, respondents said that faculty research was directly

correlated to the increase of student applications. The responses on the topic of speakers

and conferences, however, were a bit more divided. While 76.5% agreed that these

events increased student applications, there were also 11.8% who were in direct

disagreement. Figure 3 illustrates these results.

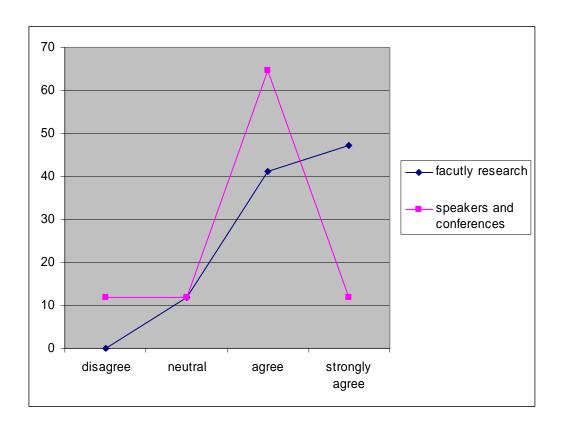**FIG. 3. Increase of Student Applications**

SOURCE: Figure data illustrated the percentage of responses from communications
departments at public affairs schools ranked in the top 50 by the *U.S. News and World
Report* in strong agreement, agreement, disagreement, as well as those neutral that
faculty research and speakers/conferences have a direct relation on increasing student
applications.

2. Increasing the quality of student applicants

A separate question directly related to the goal of increasing student applications centered on increasing the quality of student applications. An overwhelming 94.1% of the responses either agreed or strongly agreed that the quality of student applicants would increase with an increase of highly distinguished faculty research agendas. Of the 94.1%, 58.8% strongly agreed. The remaining 5.9% were neutral on the question, but were not in disagreement. Another question regarding faculty research dealt with increasing funding opportunities. Answers to this question were a little more diverse with 17.6% being neutral, 41.2% agreeing, and 41.2% strongly agreeing. Both questions made an effort to place faculty research as a top reason for increasing both the quality of student applicants and funding opportunities.

3. Increasing overall school image

A third series of questions associated with overall goals of the communications programs for public affairs schools inquired about increasing their program/school image through various methods. This portion of the survey produced some of the most interesting results. The first question produced absolutely no negative or neutral answers

while the second question produced the widest span of answers in the survey. When

asked if faculty research was a factor in increasing program/school image, 66.7%

strongly agreed; the remaining 29.4% agreed. There were no neutral answers, nor were

there any in disagreement. The second question asked if the visibility of conferences and

events had an impact on increasing the program/school image. Answers to this question

were varied comparatively with 5.9% disagreeing, 11.8% being neutral, 52.9% agreeing,

and 29.4% strongly agreeing. The final question in the series dealt with increasing the

image through the visibility of current students and alumni. Responses from this

question were somewhere between the previous two with 11.8% responding that they

were neutral, 52.9% responding that they were in agreement, and 35.3% responding that

they were in strong agreement. Figure 4 illustrates the responses for the third series of

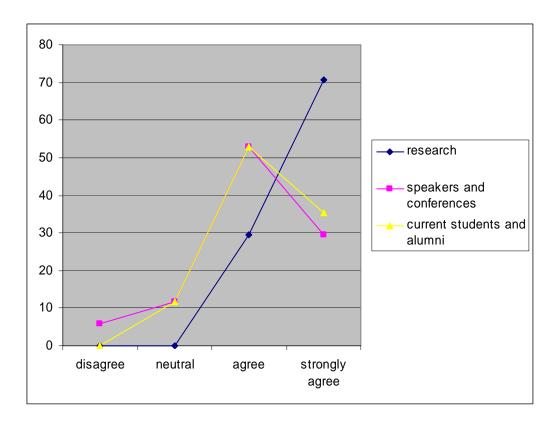questions, which were directly related to increasing the program's image.

FIG. 4. Image Relations

SOURCE: Figure data illustrated the percentage of responses from communications departments at public affairs schools ranked in the top 50 by the *U.S. News and World Report* in strong agreement, agreement, disagreement, as well as those neutral that research, speakers/conferences and current students/alumni have a direct relation on the overall image of the school.

D. Strategic Communications Market Research

Previous sections of the survey dealt directly with the schools' or programs'

internal strategic communications plans, as well as their internal reflection on their goals

and personnel. However, as most strategic communications journal articles and research

will affirm, a true strategic plan is dependent on outside factors as well as internal

factors. This section of the research queried each school or program as to their

engagement in market research for publicity efforts. Not surprisingly, 47.1% of the

respondents engaged in market research while 52.9% did not. Most research was centered on prospective student surveys, applications, and recruitment; however, some schools did respond that they surveyed alumni and prospective employers through their career services office. Other means of research ranged from informal contact with peer institutions to tracking media placement. The means were extremely varied as expected.

The set of questions linked to publicity research asked if the school's publicity was restricted to faculty and students with 28.6% in agreement and 71.4% in disagreement. With this unbalanced number, it is important to examine what types of events, individuals, or groups warranted publicity. Responses varied, however, conferences and academic events did come up more than once. For a list of these publicity efforts see appendix B.

E. Use of *U.S. News and World Report* Rankings in Strategic Communications

The *U.S. News and World Report* rankings were listed as the top ranking system used by programs/schools. They were also pinpointed as the top ranking system used to influence communication plans. Seventy-six percent of the respondents agreed that the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking were important in their efforts. The remaining 23.5% were neutral; there were no schools in disagreement. Closely representative of those stating the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking system was important, 70.6% of the respondents use the rankings in their publicity efforts. Ways in which they were used, however, varied. Schools responded that they used their ranking information in

marketing information including websites, newsletters, recruiting efforts, brochures, and in alumni publications.

While respondents were in agreement that the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking system was important and that they use the rank in publicity and communications efforts, there was a slightly more divided response as to what actually influenced the rankings. When asked if public relations efforts, tied directly to faculty research, increased the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, there was some conflict. While 62.5% of the responses agreed that the faculty research publicity increased the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, there were 12.5% that disagreed, 12.5% that were neutral, and 12.5% clearly agreed.

IV. SUMMARY

Competitive marketplace trends in the past ten to fifteen years have resulted in academic institutions competing for top positions in the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings to influence graduate students, prospective faculty, and donors as well as the university administrators. As Arthur H. Miller, Charles Tien, and Andrew A. Peebler open their 1996 article, "Department Rankings: An Alternative Approach," "Deparment rankings are import." They continue the article by saying that students examine rankings when applying for graduate schools, and better students apply primarily to more highly ranked departments, thereby perpetuating the rankings of the top programs. Also stated is that "no doubt rankings also have more subtle and indirect effects on the resources and quality of graduate programs. It is not farfetched to expect that department rankings could influence peer review of research proposals for funding, or manuscripts submitted to journals for review and publication."[33]

Schools are now faced with the task of competing against one another for positioning. This research showed that communications activities associated with increasing rankings are believed to have an affect on research funding, student applications, and faculty research. It can be reasoned from the data that communicators at public affairs schools believe that an increase in publicity related to faculty research or speeches and conferences has a positive impact on the number of student applications with a substantial increase as a result of increased awareness of faculty research. Consistent with this analysis, communicators said that the quantity and quality of student applications was directly tied to faculty research, as was the overall school image;

therefore, it is evident that a strategic communications plan as devised by public affairs school communicators should include a direct approach to increasing awareness of faculty research.

The study supplied information that supported the theory that public affairs schools, ranked in the top 50, communicate their research through various methods. It also illustrated that the majority of these schools compete with one another for students, faculty, and research funding. This competition is seen on all levels; communications is not exclusive. The study provided substantive information that administrators find it a necessity to highlight their current research, faculty, and student base to their peers based on the competitiveness of the environment. To do so, nearly 50% engaged in some type of market research, but their research and publicity efforts were not centered on faculty and faculty research. The schools' research was mainly centered on student enrollment, applications, and recruitment; however, the publicity itself was extremely diversified.

Most importantly though, the findings demonstrated that public affairs schools in the top 50, who are seeking top status, utilize an in-depth communications plan. In fact, nearly 80% engaged in planning efforts; however, only 47% actually committed their data to a formal plan. As stated earlier in this paper, committing this plan to paper is one of the most critical keys to success in communications. Most importantly, in strategic communications, it is imperative to create a link between the communications plan and the business plan. Research demonstrated that 43% of the schools were able to link these two together. This use of strategic communications illustrated that schools find it necessary to highlight their current research, faculty and student base to their peers on a

scheduled basis. Information was also gathered on the planning and execution, which was found to originate near the mid-senior levels in the management of the schools. Most individuals' names in the report were directors of outreach, admissions, and communications. The involvement of directors of these areas, along with the deans and department heads, as stated earlier, is critical to the productivity of the strategic process. When line managers are involved in the process there is a much greater success rate in communications.

Planning strategically, although the main factor in success, cannot be accomplished without resources. Research illustrates that nearly 50% of the schools have two or more in-house professionals dedicated to communications. Of the schools, most had a dedicated web specialist working in communications with print or marketing specialists following closely behind. Although indicators do point out that more communications professionals necessarily does not ensure success, it does indicate that highly ranked schools have dedicated staff members associated with communications departments. Additionally, information regarding the dedicated funding resources can be summarized by saying that the highest percentage of schools allocated 25% to communications. What was not reflected in this number is whether those funds are in salary figures or in production figures.

In addition, the findings presented in the study provided an insight to the types of information utilized by communications departments within public affairs schools. It was evident that faculty research was highly publicized. It seems most evident that research and faculty research was tied more closely with increasing the *U.S. News and*

World Report rankings. With the data shown in the research, conclusions can be drawn

that research and faculty research is seen most often as a factor in rankings and while it

is important to publicize this information, it is most critical to publicize it on a regular,

scheduled basis founded on research and conveyed through a wide range of strategically

focused communications. Therefore, it can be concluded that strategically

communicating research and faculty research has a positive impact on the quality and

quantity of student applications and funding opportunities, thus positively impacting the

U.S. News and World Report rankings.

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[5] Ferguson, Sherry Devereaux. "Strategic Planning for Issues Management: The Communicator as Environmental Analyst." *Canadian Journal of Communication, 18* (Winter 1993), 33-50.

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APPENDIX A

- ❖ Academic events
- ❖ Conferences
- ❖ Distinguished faculty Lecture Series
- ❖ Faculty Research
- ❖ Invited Lectures
- ❖ Lectures and Public Events
- ❖ Public Speakers
- ❖ Public Symposia
- ❖ Colloquium Program, Series of Lectures
- ❖ Events with Research
- ❖ Faculty Research Publications
- ❖ New Research
- ❖ Research Findings
- ❖ Seminars
- ❖ Speakers
- ❖ Training Sessions
- ❖ Workshops
- ❖ Faculty Honors
- ❖ Major Gifts
- ❖ Presentations
- ❖ Alumni& Board of Councilor Accomplishments
- ❖ Collaborative Projects with Library
- ❖ Lectures
- ❖ Collaborative Projects with other Institutions

APPENDIX B

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. This research is being conducted on strategic communications in public administration programs/schools. The university will release no information as to how any particular individual answers the survey; however, results will be made available to all participants upon request.

You were selected to be a participant because of your role in communications at a public administration program/school. A total of 50 people have been asked to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about strategic communications plans for pubic administration programs/schools. Please have an individual responsible and knowledgeable on the planning and execution of communications materials fill out the survey. The survey is 35 questions in length and should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

There are no foreseen risks involved with this study; however, all participants will be given an opportunity to review analyzed results upon request. The study is confidential. All identifiers will be separated and destroyed; data will be coded according to an identification number. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in the published report. Research records will be stored securely and only me and an undergraduate assistant will have access to the records. If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make you uncomfortable. You can contact Karla Stone at (979) 862-8845 (stratcom@bushschool.tamu.edu) for more information regarding this research.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Research Compliance, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 845-8585 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu).

------------------ Please return survey by September 30, 2004 -----------------

Please check only one box unless other specified. Thank you in advance for you time and participation. Click the mouse on the box (before ☐ after ☒) next to the correct option. For typed answers, type in the text box provided (before   after Example).

<u>*Respondent Information - Optional*</u>

Name:

Job Title:

Affiliation:

E-mail Address:

Phone Number:

If you would like a summary of the results, please check here: ☐

Goals of communications activities at your program/school

Increase student applications through visibility of highly distinguished faculty research.
☐Strongly Agree   ☐Agree   ☐Neutral   ☐Disagree   ☐Strongly Disagree

Increase student applications through visibility of conferences and speakers.
☐Strongly Agree   ☐Agree   ☐Neutral   ☐Disagree   ☐Strongly Disagree

Increase quality of student applicants with highly distinguished faculty research.
☐Strongly Agree   ☐Agree   ☐Neutral   ☐Disagree   ☐Strongly Disagree

Increase funding opportunities through visibility of faculty research.
☐Strongly Agree   ☐Agree   ☐Neutral   ☐Disagree   ☐Strongly Disagree

Increase program/school image through visibility of faculty research.
☐Strongly Agree   ☐Agree   ☐Neutral   ☐Disagree   ☐Strongly Disagree

Increase program/school image through visibility of conferences and events.
☐Strongly Agree   ☐Agree   ☐Neutral   ☐Disagree   ☐Strongly Disagree

Increase program/school image through visibility of current students and alumni.
☐Strongly Agree   ☐Agree   ☐Neutral   ☐Disagree   ☐Strongly Disagree

Communications planning

My institution engages in communication planning efforts.

☐Strongly Agree ☐Agree ☐Neutral ☐Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

Who is involved in these planning efforts?

Are efforts are committed to paper in a formal communications plan.
☐Yes ☐No

What time period is covered in the plan?

How often do you refer your strategic plan?
For what reason(s).

How often has this plan be rewritten in the past 6 years?

Is there a specific plan for rewriting in the future?
If so, when?

My institution's communications plan is linked to our business plan.
☐Strongly Agree ☐Agree ☐Neutral ☐Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

My institution considers the *U.S. News and World Report* graduate program/school rankings to be important.
☐Strongly Agree ☐Agree ☐Neutral ☐Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

Public relations' efforts, tied directly to faculty research, influence the *U.S. News and World Report* graduate program/school rankings?
☐Strongly Agree ☐Agree ☐Neutral ☐Disagree ☐Strongly Disagree

My institution uses its rank in the *U.S. News and World Report* graduate program/school rankings in communications efforts and materials?
☐Yes ☐No
How?

What percentage of your operational school/unit budget is allocated to communications?

Approximately, what percentage of the yearly communications budget is allocated to each of the following for maintenance and production?
Web   Events   Print Marketing   Press
Other (specify)

Do you engage in market research to benchmark your publicity efforts?
☐ Yes ☐ No
If so, please list the type of research conducted in the past two years.

Is your publicity restricted to recruitment of faculty and students?
☐ Yes ☐ No
If not, please list your most publicized events.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Communications professionals
How many full-time employees work primarily on communications projects?

How many full-time employees work secondarily on communications projects?

How many part-time employees work primarily on communications projects?

How many part-time employees work secondarily on communications projects?

Do you have a dedicated staff member for maintenance and production of?
Web: ☐Yes ☐No
Events: ☐Yes☐No
Print marketing: ☐Yes   ☐No
Press activities: ☐Yes   ☐No
Other: ☐Yes   ☐No Specify:

Program information
Since the 2001 rankings, has the number of faculty within your program/school changed?
☐Increased   ☐No Change   ☐Decreased

Since the 2001 rankings, has the number of students/applicants to your graduate program changed?
☐Increased   ☐No Change   ☐Decreased

Rank, 1 through 5, which factors **you believe** influence *U.S. News and World Report* rankings.
Visibility of faculty
Quality of research
Visibility of dignitaries/invitees to special events
Visibility of program/school at national functions
Quality of Students
OTHER (SPECIFY)

How many students are currently enrolled in your public administration program?
Do you have additional programs? Please list with enrollment numbers?

Is your institution NASPAA accredited?
☐Yes ☐No

How many years has your program/school been established?

How many permanent, full-time faculty members does your program/school have?

How many associated faculty members does your program/school have?
(Define associated faculty as a faculty whose tenure is located in another college within your institution and lectures within your college/department.)

How many full-time employees does your institution have?

Please list, in order of preference, all ranking systems that may influence the fortune of your program.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

VITA

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EDUCATION   Texas A&M University
               Master of Science in Science and Technology Journalism, 2005
               Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Journalism, 1997

PROFESSIONAL

5/01 - Present   Director of Strategic Communications
                   George Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M

5/01 - 5/02   Associate Editor, Center for Presidential Studies
                   George Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M

7/00 - 5/01   Managing Editor, Presidential Studies Quarterly
                   George Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M

6/98 - 7/00   Program Specialist *(in-house promotion in September of 1999)*
                   Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

6/98 - 7/00   Information Specialist
                   Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

8/97 - 6/98   Marketing Communications Manager
                   McLane Company, Incorporated, Temple, Texas

6/97 - 7/97   Assistant Editor
                   American Hereford Association, Kansas City, Missouri

1/96 - 5/97   Communications Assistant
                   Agricultural Communications, Texas Agricultural Extension Service

AWARDS   *STEP Inside Design* Top 100 Design Award and #1 Judge's Pick (2005)
               Printing and Imaging Assoc. of Mid-America—*Award of Merit*
               IABC—*Bravo Brazos Excellence Award in Poster Design and Brazos
                  Valley Chapter Big Hand of the Year Award*
               Texas Farm Bureau—*Burleson County Director & Designate to
                  Washington D.C.*
               George Bush School of Gov't and Public Service—*Outstanding Staff Award*