University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

ScholarWorks@UARK

Graduate Theses and Dissertations

12-2021

Symbolism or Substance: Factors Influencing Campus Messaging Decisions and their Alignment with Institutional Values

Laura Herzog Jacobs
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons, Higher Education Commons, Higher Education Administration Commons, Organizational Communication Commons, and the Public Relations and Advertising Commons

Citation

Jacobs, L. H. (2021). Symbolism or Substance: Factors Influencing Campus Messaging Decisions and their Alignment with Institutional Values. *Graduate Theses and Dissertations* Retrieved from https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/4349

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu, uarepos@uark.edu.

Symbolism or Substance:
Factors Influencing Campus Messaging Decisions
and their Alignment with Institutional Values

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education

by

Laura Herzog Jacobs
University of Arkansas
Bachelor of Arts in English and Communication, 1995
University of Arkansas
Master of Education in Higher Education, 2005

December 2021
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

____
Michael T. Miller, Ed.D.
Committee Chair

____
G. David Gearhart, Ed.D.
Committee Member

____
Suzanne McCray, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Abstract

Historically, institutions of higher education (IHE) have been cautious and slow in making changes. Yet in today's fast-paced and dynamic world of content availability and information flow generated by 24-hour news cycles and the ubiquity of social media present a challenging reality for colleges and universities in their public relations and communications approaches (Sands & Smith, 2000). Creating a harmonious and agile approach to managing these responsibilities against the backdrop of an incessant flow and public demand for information, including responses to national events often with seemingly little or no connection to the institution, suggested a need to examine the duties of university relations organizations. The study yields valuable insights into how university relations organizations offer timely and relevant responses to meet stakeholder demands for statements about off-campus events in ways that serve to build and maintain the trust of these key audiences. The study answers five research questions to understand the stimulus-response phenomenon that triggers stakeholder desires to hear from institutions, and how that informs decision-making by senior university relations officials and, finally, the development of values-based messaging strategies on the behalf of the institution. The contemporary issues faced by these offices is also discussed. The study used a case study approach manifested as a series of interviews with the communications leaders at 5 IHEs. The conclusions reveal several themes, which are described in the areas of candor, frequency, allegiances, trauma, and power – and ultimately suggest there are times when a president should respond to demands to make a statement, and times when a president should say nothing, both are equally complicated and important decisions to be made.

Acknowledgments

To say the completion of this dissertation and accompanying program of study was a "long time coming" is an understatement. Having completed my Bachelor of Arts degree last century and my Master of Education degree 16 years ago, my momentum to pursue a terminal degree was limited by my own fears of this very document. In 2018, the fear abated. Perhaps my circumstances or station in life had created an internal capacity to allow me to follow this degree. Perhaps being surrounded by brilliant and accomplished people in life served as an inspiration. Or perhaps the hope to set an example to my school-aged children about lifelong learning and that Mama could do homework, too, won the day. It was a sudden change of heart, and literally one day the distress was overruled by a desire to attain this credential. I applied for admission by the August deadline and was admitted just days before the beginning of the fall semester.

Friends and colleagues encouraged me along the way are appreciated including program alumnae Dr. Susan Neyman, Dr. Marcia Overby, Dr. Danielle Williams, to name but a few. Thanks to my dissertation committee Dr. G. David Gearhart, Dr. Suzanne McCray, and Chair Dr. Michael T. Miller for the thoughtful appraisal and guidance, and to all my faculty throughout my studies. Being in the classroom with other students is the best part of graduate school – even when you are the oldest kid in class. Finally, I must particularly acknowledge my doctoral adviser Dr. Miller, who served in the same capacity when I was a master's student nearly 20 years earlier. I sheepishly asked if he would be so gracious to advise me through this doctoral work, to which he responded very matter-of-factly that he assumed this would be his role given we had been in this together for quite some time. And together we were. His patient guidance and counsel were consistently delivered in the context of "we" and "our" as though he had a personal stake in the completion of this study and resulting dissertation as well. Thank you.

Dedication

For my family. To my mother Carol Herzog and brother Adam Herzog for forging their own educational pathways. Mom never finished her degree but is as erudite as a philosopher as well as an accomplished scholar and practitioner of sarcasm; and my brother who dutifully completed his degree over a span of nearly two decades while serving our country. But especially to my husband, Cade Jacobs, for giving me the love, space, and nurturing to pursue this (second) multi-year educational aspiration, making dinner, and knowing how to do things such as middle school pickup and high school algebra. To my daughter, Caitlyn Elizabeth Jacobs, who inspires me with her own academic and personal ambitions. To my son, Peter Herzog Jacobs, whose curiosity, and cleverness make me smile every day.

And to my father, Barry Herzog, who even though prior to his death in 2016 frequently told a joke that Ph.D. stood for "piled higher and deeper," would be ridiculously proud of me.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I. Introduction to the Study

A. Context of the Problem

Public relations (PR) and communications are practices like any other profession, and when conducting them on the behalf of any company or for-profit organization is a noteworthy responsibility. Practicing PR and communications on behalf of an institution of higher education is no less significant of a responsibility. Colleges and universities in general are not known for their ability to make quick changes (Sands & Smith, 2000) and the coexistence of contemporary communication variables, communication organizations, and their purpose is worth study and understanding in order to implement continuous improvements against a backdrop of how an organization relate to key publics. Organizations are goal-oriented, and indeed nearly every organization has goals and objectives and activities that are measurable and designed to complete in a specific timeframe (Lunenburg, 2011). The ultimate purpose of communications is to support and advance institutional goal attainment (Lacayo-Mendoza & Pablos-Heredero, 2016), which necessarily leads to a desire to understand how to practice communications more effectively as well as examine resource allocation within organizations. Public relations seeks to build relationships, manage and protect reputation, and build and nurture trust between the public and an organization, (Horrigan, 2007; Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle, 2017), and it is intertwined with communications.

The purpose and effectiveness of public relations in higher education settings has evolved and remains important for managing reputation and building and maintaining trust with key stakeholders (Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle, 2017). Research on this evolution suggests how processes of continuous improvement and infusions of new thinking not only help better the practice of communications and public relations, but in how it is understood and valued (Fawkes, 2018).

Today, the 24-hour news cycle, widespread access to, as well as the relative ease of sharing digital content have contributed to an impossible-to-satisfy public demand for information and response (Fawkes, 2018). National events happen and are broadcast nearly simultaneously. Campus stakeholders are increasingly expectant of an institutional response to these events regardless of their connection to the university. Colleges and universities need to be in a strong position to manage their reputations, image, and brand (Gavrila & Ramirez, 2019), as well as maintaining institutional reputation and protecting the institution from risks on a daily basis (Hiles, 2011). Constituents want to know where an institution stands on many issues, not just those happening locally, and it is this 24-hour news cycle combined with a growing public expectation of brand responsiveness that leads to the purpose of this study.

B. Purpose of the Study

The purpose for conducting the study was to examine notable external factors and events that influence university messages and how those factors align with campus values. The study looked at external stimuli, internal demand, the motivations, rationale, and processes that senior campus communications officers at public universities use to determine and issue different types of messaging and whether organizational structure plays a role in the development and dissemination of messaging.

C. Research Questions

1. How did senior campus communications officers describe the factors that influenced their messaging decision making and how do they assess its effectiveness?

2. What guiding principles were described as informing campus communications officials decision making to issue messaging/statements in response to external events and what factors contributed to evaluating the stakeholder demand?
3. How did senior campus communications officers evaluate and align messaging decisions, as well as messaging itself, with organizational values?
4. How did senior campus communications officers describe the most significant concerns they were confronting about serving the university through strategic communications supports?
5. How did senior campus communications officers describe the trends they were studying that might impact their institutions, and what structural adjustments were they considering in response to these trends?

D. Definition of Terms

Several terms were operationally defined to provide context and consistency throughout the study.

1. *Senior communications officer*: the senior most official charged with leading the unit and setting the university's communications strategy.
2. *University relations*: the unit or office staffed with communications professionals who execute communications to promote the university. Typically, this unit provides public and media relations, publications and editorial services, website design and creation, strategic and specialty communications, creative services and graphic design, videography and photography, and marketing. Not to be confused with a corporate definition of university relations as a corporate function or unit charged with developing relationships with colleges and universities for the purposes of talent recruitment.

3. *University advancement*: the administrative division found on many college campuses that serve as an umbrella organization for fundraising and alumni relations.
4. *External event*: a non-campus event featured prominently across various media outlets typically with little direct connection other than a perceived resonance among audiences.
5. *Public relations*: the work to advance institutional goals and objectives through building relationships via communications with the public.
6. *Reputation management*: the practice of careful, deliberate, and strategic effort to understand, react, and craft and disseminate communications designed to contextualize, frame and protect an organization's reputation.
7. *Stakeholders*: people who have influence over the organization and to whom the organization is accountable in some fashion. These include, but are not limited to, students, faculty, staff, alumni, legislators, taxpayers, donors, parents, and community members. Sometimes also referred to as "publics."
8. *Messaging*: a single communication, or series of communications, delivered to a specific audience using any number of media distribution vehicles, including, but not limited to, press releases, press kits, social media feeds, videos, website content, magazines, brochures, press conferences, and public statements delivered verbally or in writing.

E. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Researchers are human and there are variables that researchers cannot control, (Simon, 2011), thus there several limitations that might have impacted the study. Limitations include researcher bias given the researcher's experience working in higher education communications settings for more than two decades. The researcher has experience in crafting both pro-active and reactive messaging designed to reflect or reinforce institutional values, and thus had some preconceived notions about the utility and value of both approaches. Further, the researcher had experience and understanding of organizational structures of the contemporary university relations office and experience with organizations where the university relations unit reports into a vice chancellor and the chancellor.

Another limitation was that many institutions of higher education are highly decentralized organizations and while the responsibility of developing an overarching messaging strategy may be defined by a single office, often the responsibility for messaging activities is distributed among the colleges and divisions, therefore unified strategies for messaging are difficult to deploy and enforce due to competing priorities of the units as well as a strong desire to brand college units independently from the university. This decentralization presented a limitation of competing messaging, local unit versus institutional values as a driver of messaging, and consumer confusion. Finally, there was a limitation regarding external and uncontrollable factors that impact a university's reputation.

As a delimitation, a single institution studied would present too significant a limitation to reveal broad generalizations (Creswell, 2012), and the study comprised five case study interviews with the university relations leaders at five institutions, which Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest three to five as a suitable number range to comprise a qualitative case study. This boundary of five institutions enabled the researcher to prioritize and focus on the research. The researcher sought to elevate the understanding of organizational effectiveness and glean actionable insights for future deployment and thus will set aside preconceptions.

F. Assumptions of the Study

In conducting the study, several assumptions were accepted. First, the senior campus communications officers participating in the study would be forthcoming, open, and honest in the information that they shared about the influences on their decision-making regarding (a) values-based messaging, and (b) stakeholder expectations.

This led to the second assumptions that each institution in the study had a set of articulated institutional values, known by the senior campus communications officers, that serve as a touchpoint for fundamental beliefs shared by the people of the institution. The researcher's assumption was that these values are important to institutions and their stakeholders, creating the condition of being easily influenced by outside forces.

Another assumption was that leaders in such prominent positions in higher education had a wide networks of peers, access to professional organizations and consultants, wide discretion in advising and decision-making for their institution, as well as significant levels of training and experience in their fields, as well as the authority and discretion to make decisions about messaging and its content based on institutional goals and priorities.

Finally, the researcher approached the study assuming that the institutions involved in the study has similar organization components both within the university relations office, and across the institution in terms of academic departments and/or colleges and schools embedded within the university.

G. Importance of the Study

An organization's reputation is its single most important asset, and by virtue, the practice of public relations practice on behalf of an institution is not only a significant responsibility, but a necessity, (Gibson, Gonzales, & Castanon, 2006). Higher education has not historically been known for its ability to make quick changes and the reconciliation of information flow, speed, and frequency against the duties of university relations organizations (and leaders), which provided valuable insights into how university relations organizations remain positioned as credible and relevant to managing institutional views from the public and other stakeholders.

The purpose and power of public relations is grounded in an organization's ability to develop two-way relations between the organization and the key publics it serves (Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle 2017). Building trust seems essential, but the building blocks for doing so must be deliberate and meaningful.

The importance of the study is to inform higher education leaders of communications strategies, structures, and priorities for effective contemporary university relations organizations, and specifically, when responsive to external stimulus of a national or global event. Values matter to stakeholders (customers, alumni, students, employees), who choose to support organizations, businesses, and causes, or purchase products from organizations whose values are in alignment with their own. The ability to reflect personal, corporate, or institutional values to key publics is essential to delivering powerful communications that resonate with audiences, (Trayner, 2017). Understanding this is imperative for communicators and certainly must factor into the substance, timing, and purpose for messaging decision-making by communications leaders.

The reasons an institution would choose to make any statement in response to an external event tend to be grounded in the practice and goal of developing and maintaining stakeholder relationships. Best practice in public relations include not just saying or writing words for expediency of telling an audience what the organization thinks that they want to hear, or to make a problem disappear, sometimes referred to as "spin" (Dach, 2013), but there is also an importance of pairing those words with actions for maximum authenticity and believability (Pyle, Linville, & Gennett, 2017).

The results of the study may be of assistance to aspiring future leaders of university relations, campus presidents, as well as sitting leaders of university relations who are seeking new insights into decision making and organizational structure.

H. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Relationship management theory provides a scholarly paradigm through which to view the effort and outcome of public relations as being greater than a transactional or quantity-based activity and shifts the understanding to strategic inputs resulting in better managed relationships between organizations and various publics and can be useful in teaching public relations (Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham, 2006). The theory was the result of four pivotal formations, or developments, including the role or recognition of the importance of relationships, the emergence of measurement tools, new models of practice, and re-visioning of public relations as a management tool. The theory emerged from loyalty theory by necessity and may be reflective of Littlejohn's (1992) suggestion that a relationship is defined more as an expectation of behavior than by what is said. How that ties back to public relations: "The relational theory is predicated on the notion that the appropriate domain of public relations is relationships," (Ledingham, 2003, p. 422). Ledingham offered suggestions for approaching further research. Relationship management theory engenders a more comprehensive understanding, or an organizing concept, behind public relations, including the continuation of organization-public relationships are dependent on whether needs and expectations are met. Communication is part of this, but not the only driver of building a relationship.

Public relations as a practice should do more than one thing. Taking the view that public relations is solely designed to enhance an organization's image disregards the larger purpose of relationship management as a two-way, mutually beneficial, iterative, shared outcome process between organization and stakeholder. It is multi-faceted, omni-channel, strategic, designed to evoke a result, and build or strengthen a relationship. Finally, the appropriateness of the relationship management theory as the framework for this study may best be illustrated by the simple action of reverse ordering the term “public relations,” to reveal the phrase “relations public,” which amplifies the nature and function of relationship-building with the public (Hayes, Hendrix, & Kumar, 2012).

Fourteen propositions presented by Ledingham (2003) help guide understanding of relationship management theory and will underpin the development of the study’s interview guide and survey questionnaire (p. 195). They are:

1. Organization–public relationships are transactional.
2. The relationships are dynamic; they change over time.
3. They are goal-oriented.
4. Organization–public relationships have antecedents and consequences and can be analyzed in terms of relationship quality, maintenance strategies, relationship type, and actors in the relationship.
5. These relationships are driven by the perceived needs and wants of interacting organizations and publics.
6. The continuation of organization–public relationships is dependent on the degree to which expectations are met.
7. Those expectations are expressed in interactions between organizations and publics.
8. Such relationships involve communication, but communication is not the sole instrument of relationship building.

9. These relationships are impacted by relational history, the nature of the transaction, the frequency of exchange, and reciprocity.
10. Organization–public relationships can be described by type (personal, professional, community, symbolic, and behavioral) independent of the perceptions of those relationships.
11. The proper focus of the domain of public relations is relationships, not communication.
12. Communication alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of supportive organizational behavior.
13. Effective management of organization–public relationships supports mutual understanding and benefit.
14. The relationship perspective is applicable throughout the public relations process and with regard to all public relations techniques. (p. 195)

Both comprehensive and exhaustive, these points are reproduced here as a tool, reminder, and guiding principle for the researcher to align the substance, tone, and theme of interviews to Ledingham's theory.

I. Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the purpose of the study, which described the influences, motivations, rationale, and processes that senior campus communications officers in universities use to determine and issue different types of university messages and how those factors contribute to current and future organizational structures or vice versa. Chapter I further outlined the questions the research seeks to answer, defined relevant terms that will be used in subsequent chapters, defined the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study.

The importance of the study is defined in Chapter I, which is to inform aspiring and current higher education leaders of strategies, structures, and priorities for effective contemporary university relations organizations. Using the premise that values matter to stakeholders who choose to support organizations, businesses, and causes, or purchase products from organizations whose values are in alignment with their own. Relationship management theory provided the conceptual framework for the study and was throughout the development of the survey questions and resultant analysis through the use of Ledinghams 14 axioms (2003).

Chapter II. Review of Related Literature

A. Method

There are many factors and external stimuli that influence senior campus communications officers in their public relations practice and decision making. Communication is a tool for advancing institutional goals and objectives and public relations is a practice for developing and maintaining relationships with key publics. The purpose for conducting the study was to describe the influences for, rationale, and processes that senior campus communications officers in universities, use to determine and issue different types of university messages and how those factors describe current and perceived future organizational structures.

A thorough literature search was conducted using online databases including ERIC database, JSTOR, and Google Scholar to find articles using the search terms “evolution of public relations,” “leadership in higher education,” “institutional response to executive orders higher education,” and “policy changes impacting higher education,” “public relations theory,” all of which provided a range of articles for potential use. The terms for specific national policy names were also included to find results on the terms designed to identify research to understand how external activities serve as stimuli for institutional communications and messaging. The shift of presidential administrations in 2017 (and 2021) provided fodder for communications and as such, the relevant terms searched were “DACA, Title IX, Travel Ban, policy, or legislation, or laws or legislation.” This review helped sort examples of values-based messaging and the accompanying rationale. Often, citations found in articles led to the identification of additional relevant articles. Other search terms including “college response to policy changes,” did not yield specific enough results. The viable results were sorted by year, focusing on literature from the most recent past, within the last 10 years.

For the purposes of this literature review, a spokesperson is defined as someone who speaks on the behalf of an institution. In the literature, the spokesperson might be a college or university president, chancellor, dean, a secondary school principal, or head of university relations. The review of the literature is organized in the following sections of history, function and organizational structure of university relations offices, and a review of public relations theory and practice.

B. History, function and structure of university relations

Around 1906 universities began experimenting with creating the first bureaucratic structures of academic ranking, which are still in use today. Although this development seemed inevitable, it also created a perception of competition among different department units and was observed to “increase the importance of attention to public relations” (Lucas, 2016, p. 186). As universities began to increase in size and complexity, more administrative systems began to emerge to fulfill functions beyond teaching. The 1960s saw management strategies borrowed from corporate America, characterized later by some in the academy as the corporate corruption of higher education (Washburn, 2008), and sparking an age of further bureaucratization and colleges putting efforts into developing mission statements and public relations functions (Lucas, 2016).

University fundraising became another codifying reason to develop more coordinated and sophisticated public relations efforts initially, and in 1912, those charged with outreach to alumni for raising money eventually formalized their activities through the formation of the American Alumni Council and in 1958, merged with the American Public Relations Association to better coordinate institutional activities (Caboni, 2002). This group would become the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) in 1974, establishing the functions of publications, public relations, alumni relations and fundraising under one organization (Cunningham, 2020).

In the late 1980s, research further validated the benefits of integrated development and university relations programs, particularly in the context of preparing for major fundraising campaigns, (Gearhart, 1989). The trend for institutions to intentionally mimic and model one another results in strikingly similar structures, organizations, or programs, and this mimetic isomorphism is not unique to higher education, but given the tendency for institutions to share information, is almost unavoidable (Bontrager & Hossler, 2014). As such, the model began to take a greater foothold in American higher education and by the 2000s, it was the norm for university relations to be embedded within university advancement operations, along with sister departments of university development (fundraising) and alumni relations.

The focus of university relations public relations efforts shifted to address public perceptions about the institution. In the 1980s, public relations efforts turned to reminding citizens and politicians about the intrinsic value of a higher education, it's contributions to society in the form of human capital development and economic development, while the charge in the 1990s shifted to make the public case for return on investment in college given exploding student indebtedness and the growing expectation of universities as job-placement factories (Thelin, 2011).

A custom research brief created by The Advisory Board (2011), a higher education consultancy, illustrated several advancement models with university relations nestled within that organization alongside fundraising and alumni relations units; some alternative models include sister departments of marketing, governmental affairs or a news and information bureau, reporting to a vice president of university relations. Both centralized and decentralized models were presented, along with the relative advantages of either.

Typical contemporary structures may be found in the organizational charts of institutions across the spectrum and the need for more central and coordinated approaches to higher education communications (Sands & Smith, 2000). The University of Waterloo (2020) presented a university relations organization led by a vice president with distinct units embedded beneath that featured associate vice presidents for marketing and strategic initiatives; communications; government relations; and community relations and specialty functions under each of those leaders. Vanderbilt University (n.d.) featured a vice chancellor for communications at the helm of their public relations practice, which oversees the areas of strategic communications, marketing solutions (and brand engagement and governance), and university relations. The Vanderbilt model of university relations included functional responsibilities for digital strategies; leadership communications; internal communications; donor and alumni strategies; diversity, equity and inclusion communications; and academic affairs communications.

C. External Politics Impacts on Campus and Leadership and Messaging

On January 27, 2017, President Donald J. Trump signed *Executive Order 13769: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*, which unilaterally barred admission into the US by people from five predominantly Muslim nations including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen (Exec. Order No. 13769, 2017). The response from international faculty, staff, and students on American college campuses, as well as US citizens outside the academy, ranged from shock and surprise to support and confirmation. On college and university campuses, which often have a significant international population, this order caused confusion and raised questions (Pyle, Linvill, & Gennett, 2018) and led to calls for statements by university leaders.

Executive orders and shifts in federal policy over time, have consequences for higher education and often necessitate a public relations response or reaction, often manifesting in some signal of the institution's values and ideals. The purpose and power of public relations lies in an organization's ability to develop two-way relations between that organization and the key publics it serves (Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle 2017). A campus senior leader may be called upon in times of change, worry, or concern to give a sense of calm, to interpret changes, and to reinforce campus values. Executive Order 13769, or EO 13769, and two other policy declarations on the issues of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Title IX, have caused confusion and unease across college campuses. The impacts of changes to these three issues are included in this literature review.

Several things are worth understanding regarding institutional responses to public actions. First, the way campus presidents (and other education leaders) communicate is important to building trust with the institutional stakeholders (Bowen, 2006). This trust includes responses to sometimes controversial public declarations at both the state and national level, and these actions can force institutions to change or modify their behaviors and actions, sometimes in ways that the public agrees with, and sometimes in ways that the public does not agree with (Brown, 2017).

A response can be a crafted message, written and distributed via a medium such as e-mail, social media, newspaper article, press release, or delivered via personal communication or public presentation, or an action/reaction or, even statements published in academic journals. All response channels have merits and challenges and illustrate the variety of ways in which people (audiences) consume information as much as it illustrates the various channels that must be considered (Cardwell et. al., 2017; Pyle et. al, 2018).

Among the reasons for disseminating issues-based messaging by colleges and universities include developing and maintaining stakeholder relationships as well as matching institutional words with actions (Pyle, et al., 2018). Messages serve to inform and influence change within systems of higher education using evidence along with consideration of political and historical values and beliefs (St. John, Daun-Barnett, & Moronski-Chapman, 2018).

Another way that institutions can speak or make a public declaration in “safe” ways is through signing onto professional group letters or statements, such as those facilitated by professional associations including American Council on Education and American Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (ACE, 2017; McPherson, 2017). Rather than issuing a direct message to its audiences about an issue, the spokesperson can point to the joint statement issued by the group. For example, in 2017, ACE published a letter condemning changes to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The letter was authored by ACE and signed by more than 550 institutions of higher education signaling their support for the message yet positioning them among a large number of entities making it difficult to single them out.

D. Values-based Messaging Influenced by National Events

Institutions that accept money from the United States federal government, or from state governments, are incentivized or required to comply with federal and state mandates, actions, policies through funding (Koebel, 2018), meaning federal and state actions have a direct effect on college campuses. These impacts range from funding to compliance and incentivizing research and innovation (Whitley, Gläser, & Laudel, 2018). What constitutes a policy change and a summary of the types of policies that could impact campuses is broad, but for the purposes of this literature review, impacts and responses to three federal policies are provided as examples, primarily due to the fluidity of statements and actions made early on by the Trump presidential administration (Mayda & Peri, 2017).

The three policies described here are "The Travel Ban," an attempt to bar immigration from seven mostly Muslim countries; the attempt to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program designed to help immigrants who have been brought to the US illegally as children; and finally, proposed changes to Title IX, a law designed to protect women from discrimination and create environments free from sexual discrimination, assault, and harassment.

a. Executive Order 13769 a.k.a "The 2017 Travel Ban"

President Trump's Executive Order 13769, commonly referred to as the "Travel Ban," is an example of how a single decision and action can create confusion on campuses as well as create a demand for a response, either through words or advocacy actions. The ban included entry into the US by people from five predominantly Muslim nations including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, "to protect the American people from terrorist attacks by foreign nationals admitted to the United States" (Exec. Order No. 13769, 2017,). At the time, an estimated 17,000 students studying in the US were from those countries as well as thousands of scholars (McPherson, 2017), creating a great potential for impacting colleges and universities. Peri et al. (2015) presented evidence to show that foreign high-skilled STEM workers complement native-born workers, especially young ones, in US companies. A high percentage of immigrants hold higher education credentials, many of them temporary visa holders who work in the US in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields as well as the academic and scientific community found on college campuses (Peri et. al., 2015; Mayda & Peri, 2017). The immediate disruption of the ban includes inbound/outbound travel delays and interruptions, hiring uncertainty, and other unintended consequences including general negative impacts on higher education and the economy, along with global perceptions of the US as “hostile,” toward immigrants, when in actuality, there are many local benefits from their presence (Mayda & Peri, 2017).

Student media is a common channel where responses may be disseminated while providing a sense for the campus climate. The February 6, 2017 issue of the California State University at San Bernardino, the student-run campus newspaper, *The Coyote Chronicle*, features numerous articles on the travel ban and other Trump administration policies. The fact that the student newspaper devoted an entire issue to the “Travel Ban,” and other Trump administration orders and policy changes signaled the perceived importance of these issues by the campus community. The Espinosa & Walley (2017) articles quoted faculty and students who were concerned and dismayed by the ban, as well as administrator responses. The student newspaper served as one outlet for disseminating that campus’s feelings about the political climate while expressing an opinion. The CSU-San Bernardino example reflected a clear and outright condemnation of the “Travel Ban” executive order, and a valuable reflection of community values. The leadership response was clearly attuned to the values reflecting the campus newspaper articles, which may be inferred as the values of the campus community (Spring, 2018; Bowen 2006), and the relationship-building and preservation with key constituent groups (Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle, 2017). The public relations value was very much in line with theory of values rcement for members of the community, in this case, the individuals from seven mostly Muslim countries, and others in the community concerned for their wellbeing. The main story featured the messages by the campus chancellor, a message by the president of the student association, as well as the subsequent messages by presidents of the other CSU campuses (Espinoza, 2016), all of which shared a similar tone of condemnation for the executive order and a promise to continue to support, encourage, and educate those impacted by the order. The campus leadership responses echoed the sentiment and concern of the faculty and student body on the CSU campus.

Timeliness of message and message dissemination method are important factors in establishing or maintaining an institution's credibility (Pyle et al., 2018). Given the "Travel Ban" may have had a disproportionate effect on institutions of higher education due to the large numbers of international students, staff, and faculty, aggregating public relations responses by college campuses provides a compelling framework to gauge institutional values, (Pyle et al., 2018) and stakeholder expectation. Making use of social media, video, public statements and press releases within a week's time allowed for institutions to remain timely in response, which is key in reaching audiences.

Institutional response to the "Travel Ban" ranged from informational, passive support for community, active support for community, implied critique, to outright condemnation of the order (Pyle et al., 2018). Some institutions did not make a statement at all, which can be interpreted as its own kind of statement. The type of responses issued have a strong correlation to the geographical region of the campus as well as that region's 2016 voting record and university affiliation (i.e. public, private, religious), and suggest that campuses that issued a condemnation-type statement of the "Travel Ban," were located in states that voted for Democratic party candidate Hillary Clinton, while campuses that issued more passive statements were in states that voted for Republican candidate Donald Trump (Espinoza, 2016; Pyle et al., 2018) suggesting that stakeholder politics may influence existence and content of messaging. Many examples of messaging can be found including a 2017 letter from City University of New York Chancellor J. B. Milliken specifically citing that institution's values, while enumerating the ways in which "the executive order is inconsistent with the values of openness and inclusiveness that have made CUNY—and our country—great," (p.1) as well as the many supports the university will provide the campus community."

b. DREAM On: DACA's Influence

Since being enacted in 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) provides educational hope and status to thousands of students, and when rescinded on September 5, 2017, yielded confusion, uncertainty, and a lack of clarity regarding processing and status of cases (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.). Pathways to Legal Permanent Residence (LPR) is the determiner for the success and persistence of DACA students and DREAMers (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act). Following the 2017 request by the Trump administration to "undo" the DREAM act, understanding the pathways and population in each track for achieving LPR reveals important context for higher education leaders and policy makers (as well as creating messaging opportunities) given the scope of the population impacted is approximately 2 million young people (Batalova, Soto, & Mittelstadt, 2017). Most students in the DREAM/DACA category reside in the US as a result of their parents bringing them here as infants or minor children, and higher education is one of the pathways to Legal Permanent Residence. Several factors help estimate the likelihood of success of each pathway to LPR, thus informing an analysis designed for policymakers and providing a valid backdrop to the complexity of the lawmakers' role, and the variables that impact LPR attainment (Batalova et al., 2017). This reality coupled with the change in federal policy created a demand for messaging. In late 2016, Peter McPherson, president of American Association for Public Land-Grant Universities wrote about the demand for values-based responses from higher education: "APLU universities report to me that student support offices are handling a significant number of requests for assistance by distressed DACA students who are trying to quickly understand what a change in administration means for their status," (p.1).

Barriers to educational access and success is a common theme among research into DACA and immigration and should be used to inform higher education leaders. Many articles examine education's accessibility and appeal to immigrants, couched against xenophobic attitudes, economic realities, and informed by policy changes (Bjorklund, 2018), in contradiction to previously passed state laws designed to help immigrants access in-state higher education. Financial barriers to higher education, psychological and social burdens (Bjorklund, 2018; Nienhusser, 2018) are significant impediments to access and success. Additional experiences and characteristics about immigrants ranging from social, emotional, economic, ethno-racial, demographic, and others provide an assessment of impacts as well as attempts to support immigrants and an increased public awareness of the plight of immigrants in their access to higher education.

Another common theme among leaders and others with institutional agency is to respond proactively to find ways to help those impacted by policies. Methods include either behind-the-scenes support, such as finding pathways to financial assistance, ensuring relevant policy changes, or overt advocacy (Nienhusser, 2018; Bjorklund, 2018). Help can further take the form of leaders organizing community meetings, or in evaluating the conditions for which students in need, for example undocumented students, may thrive or fail, (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Nienhusser posited that leaders or "institutional agents" serve as either policy implementers and explainers, a compliance officer, facilitator, or advocate in a landscape of ever changing requirements and regulations, (2018), and this can be a challenging role, due to concerns about public impressions and political pressures from state legislatures.

Many leaders in the K-12 sector have intentionally sought to create climates conducive for education and support and bridge the gap between home and education cultures. Maintaining a passive sensitivity to legal issues yet training personnel to not inquire about immigration status allows educators to focus on the education mission at hand (Crawford, Witherspoon, & Arnold, 2017). Some principals are responding to policy demands in ways designed to provide comfort and advocacy, while stressing the importance of education (Burkett & Hayes 2018). They do this out of a desire to take a compassionate and mission-centric approach, similar to the approach of college and university leaders, who err on the side of finding ways to help students not only in their words, but in their practices as well. Use of deliberate outreach by schools to reinforce values and to help keep the kids in school, and displaying empathy to the families and the children impacted by lack of documentation positions principals and teachers as being relatable through shared experiences and making valuable connections with parents (Burkett & Hayes, 2018). Burkett and Hayes (2018) suggested that leaders must develop tools to advocate and support their constituents and possess an ability to calm the fears of those in the community (often through messaging), while removing external and internal barriers.

The implementation of DACA by President Obama in 2012 is seen as a positive policy for educational, civic, and economic reasons. While DACA had little or no effect on community college attendance, likely due to the flexibility of courses balanced with a work-requirement, there is a decrease in persistence among students at four-year colleges and universities (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). This reality presents a variable for consideration by institutions in establishing responses and policies to aid students.

c. Title Fight: The Challenges of Title IX

The 2017 rescinding of Obama-era Title IX policies for colleges and universities is another development of executive-level changes that required campuses to take notice and respond through not only messaging, but actions as well. Campuses' ability to develop suitable practices, policies, and protocols are often vexed by the complexities of Title IX law. Further, the staffing burden created by external reviews by agencies such as the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights, required dedication of "hundreds if not thousands of staff hours" (p. 397) to responding (Napolitano, 2015). The recent history of the law includes the importance of what is referred to in campus compliance and legal circles as "The Dear Colleague Letter of 2011," which provided key background to the confusion of the Department of Education's (DOE) 2017 change (Osland, Clinch, & Yang, 2018). The views held by stakeholders and advocates as Education Secretary Betsy DeVos rolled out 2020 DOE changes to college and university approaches to dealing with sexual misconduct are relevant on college campuses. Although institutions were asked by media, advocates, and survivors of sexual assault to speculate how proposed changes might impact their campus practices, the current national climate, including the #MeToo movement launched in 2017, provides a backdrop to encourage universities to remain ever-vigilant in a robust approach to preventing and responding to sexual assault as well as key messaging to audiences accordingly despite a perceived "watering down" of the law in 2017 (Edelman, 2018).

d. *January 6, 2021*

There are numerous examples of an even more contemporary national-political event, to which many higher education leaders made statements in response to the January 6, 2021, certification of the 2020 presidential election results by Congress. The procedural event attracted protestors demonstrating against the election of Joe Biden, which ultimately led to a breach of the security perimeter and a siege of the Capitol in Washington, DC, and the ensuing riot caused at least five deaths (Whitford, 2021). Not only did higher education presidents and chancellors use the moment to author and distribute a values-based message condemning the violence and reinforcing education's role in democracy, but again, so did APLU in its capacity as advocate for higher education, (McPherson, 2021). The researcher expects future literature to reflect on the impact of this event on higher education in coming months. Despite the dearth of peer-reviewed journal articles at the time of this writing, the incident was significant enough as an example to reference in this literature review for context and potential influences on data collection.

E. The Role of Public Relations and Communications in Advancing Goals

The role of public relations to manage relationships. "As corporate leaders grapple with an increasingly hostile public environment—indeed, one that is inherently politicized—communicators need to ensure strategies, messaging and initiatives telegraph values and motivations" (Trayner, 2017, p. 2). In other words, colleges and their leaders must be strategic and deliberate with words and actions that demonstrate to their audiences that the organization will do what's right. Moral foundations theory, a framework from psychology, can be adapted to communications use in understanding how people's values drive their expectations, and related, how they expect organizations they trust to behave and respond. Facts alone are not sufficient, and messaging must be nuanced in new and deliberate ways to communicate the right tone

(Trayner, 2017).

The very essence of public relations is to create stronger relationships between corporations and the public (or campuses and the public) and the purpose and method is equally important. Use of a "dialogic theory" of public relations practice is the central focus of the study, and the findings implicate practitioners, that while open to using dialogue as a tool for effective communications, sometimes experience specific challenges in their success in achieving desired results because of issues in relationship-building with key publics. Dialogue is a tool for effective communications, and practitioners sometimes experience specific challenges in their success in achieving desired results because of issues in relationship-building with key publics (Cardwell et. al., 2017). Dialogic theory and public relations best practice of pairing words with actions (Pyle et. al., 2018) is useful in understanding why college and university leaders might choose to, and indeed in some instances should, issue messaging in response to certain events or climate realities.

The explosion of digital communications that was on the horizon in 2000 pointed to the need for more effectiveness of communications, along with the recognition that communications is but a tool for advancing the goals of higher education. Sands and Smith (2000) reviewed the perception and reality of higher education's reputation for being relatively slow to react, slow to change, particularly in the communications realm. In their view, the problem is not one of staffing or funding, but planning across the entire institution. The desires to be more agile and meet the needs of the turn-of-the-century market expectations may have led to the formation of integrative strategic communications practice. Centralization, the authors argued, is essential for an institution to be more coordinated, more efficient, and more effective, and that the central institution should take a prominent role in establishing this.

Advancing an organization's (or an institution's) goals is the essential purpose of the field of communications (Lacayo-Mendoza & Pablos-Heredero, 2016), which includes tools such as brand management, reputation management, and public relations, the purposes of which has evolved over time yet remains essential for building trust (Horrigan, 2007; Cardwell, Williams & Pyle, 2017), especially with key stakeholders. The study of the public relations field itself has evolved in its examination to understand and illustrate process improvements and ways to strengthen the practice. Value is added when systems, methods, and new ideas imbue the practice, leading to an improved understanding of public relations' importance as a valuable tool, (Fawkes, 2018).

a. Contemporary Landscape Examples & Integration

There is a wide variety of contemporary examples of communications platforms, media, and outputs. These include vehicles that contain written content published digitally on the internet through owned and earned media, videos produced by or about institutions, and content written for and shared via commercial products comprising a host of social media sites (also called networks) including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, and many more. Traditional print materials published include brochures, booklets, magazines, press releases, cards, fliers, and many other written, designed, and printed produced developed with key audiences in mind with the purpose of conveying a specific goal-advancing message, (Lacayo-Mendoza & Pablos-Heredero, 2016). Messages created by institutions and posted on social media platforms intend to build relationships with key publics and enhance two-way engagement and interaction and, if done well, convey goal-advancing information and build trust, (Trayner, 2017) while solidifying a relationship between audience and institution. Social media's birth and rapid ascent and relative ease of public access created a new opportunity for institutions and organizations to have a direct link to stakeholders, and vice versa (Lacayo-Mendoza & Pablos-Heredero, 2016). The contemporary 24-hour news cycle publishing content on digital and social media platforms enabled easy and direct access by the public; now, any member of the public with internet access can share and receive digital content quickly, creating an exponential public demand for more content (Fawkes, 2018). Put another way, the availability of content and direct access between company and consumer has created an insatiable, growing opportunity and expectation for interaction.

Integrated communications strategies are defined by leveraging various media and media platforms as part of a plan to advance a project and are sometimes referred to as a campaign. A successful integrated communications campaign plan may combine some number of related (yet discrete) communications outputs, utilizing all available media (owned, earned, paid), and designed to reach audiences at predefined intervals of time (Phelps, Harris, & Johnson, 1996; Horrigan, 2007).

Student recruitment and retention is a goal that can be approached by the institution's strategic and integrated communications efforts, and a centralized and coordinated approach can improve outcomes, and as noted, communications are most effective when coordinated. The fact that organizations, including universities, tend to be decentralized in their staffing and distribution of responsibilities, often with employees who are assigned similar tasks to those of other employees in different and sometimes unconnected departments. This decentralization, the, ha the potential to create territorialism between departments and unnecessary conflict (Phelps, et al., 1996), suggesting greater oversight of communications from a central focus to ensure the deliberate allocation of human resources and efforts to avoid creating obstacles to achieving goals (Horrigan, 2007). Unified communication strategies are crucial for practitioners to synchronize messaging content, distribution location, and duration of visibility as they influence not only public perception but goal achievement (Gavrila & Ramirez, 2019). An institution's website can be characterized as its "front door" to the public and thus one of its most valuable tools in advancing goals, suggesting that decisions for populating websites need to be made deliberately and in coordination across units.

Competition among a growing number of institutions of higher education for a shrinking number of students in the higher education market leads to complex challenges for colleges and universities. Institutions desire to create a bond with prospective students for the purpose of positive matriculation. Integrated organizational structures that start with leadership, a shared vision across the organization, adequate resources placed appropriately, as well as data use and collection can support the role of effective communications for strong student relationship-building efforts (Horrigan, 2007).

As much as integrated communications approaches are held up as the ideal for efficiency and effectiveness, they may be more aspirational than achievable. Higher education has historically been built on specialization through the creation of distinct departments, yet with some overlapping functions, creating silos, an unwillingness to share responsibilities, and indirectly, competition for scarce resources, (Sands & Smith, 2000). Additionally, challenges to organic coordination of effort has been amplified through the emergence of relatively new administrative fields inside higher education such as enrollment management and institutional advancement. These are two distinct and important resource development functions, operating in parallel, but rarely with coordination. Enrollment management's evolution was due to an institutional need to increase revenue from tuition-paying students. Advancement's purpose is to raise significant levels of private gift support and for several decades included alumni relations and communications (Sands & Smith, 2000). These authors believed the assignment of institutional marketing functions should be tied to neither advancement nor enrollment management alone, but rather suggest an opportunity for greater consistency and reputational gains through restructuring and realigning leadership.

> While we went on to explain that commitment throughout a college or university can be secured by clearly and precisely integrating the institution's communications goals with its strategic and academic goals, we elaborated exclusively on ways to integrate the strategic not the academic goals in an integrated marketing communications effort, (Sands & Smith, 2000, p. 44).

b. Goal and Value: Diversity

Institutions have held diversity and inclusion not only as an institutional value, but as a goal to be reached, and such aspirations have informed university planning (Brunner, 2005). Diversity goals and values necessitate the institution's need to understand its relationship to the public, as well as the public's perceptions about that institution's commitment to inclusion and diversity. This is an important way an institution can measure its success or inform a need to make improvements.

Being intentional about diversity and inclusion can serve an institution of higher education well. An institution's internal audiences of faculty, staff, and students are key stakeholders for whom the institution seeks support from, but also seeks to support as participants in diversity-enhancement. Internal stakeholders are a high priority for an institution, and a critical participant in advancing diversity goals and objectives. If some see diversity as a threat, this can undermine goal-attainment from the inside out. The Hon-Grunig Scale survey instrument can be useful in measuring relationships and better understand trends and attitudes to assist an institution in developing strategies to address issues such as climate and public relations approaches (Brunner, 2005). Knowing how stakeholder perceptions and beliefs (and disbeliefs) align with the university's stated goals and values can lead to more intentional and targeted relationship development between institution and minority students.

Academic literature is beginning to catch up with the constant and contemporary news cycle and current events have been commented upon by higher education leaders if not studied empirically. One such national event occurred as recently as summer 2020 when George Floyd, an African American in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was tragically killed at the hands of police, instantaneously becoming national news that lent itself to local contextualization across America.

Chief executive officers of national brands responded to public and stakeholder demand of condemnation of Floyd's killing, leading to a many CEOs offering statements of condemnation to their publics (Pacheco & Stamm, 2020). College and university campuses turned to public relations and communications tools to assist in not only the interpretation, but to provide a signal to their key audiences about institutional values. One connector to higher education was the existence of diversity and inclusion values and goals generated an expectation by stakeholders that the institution fulfilled an expected duty to join in on the condemnation. Within hours, many institutions of higher education published messages directed at students, alumni, faculty, and staff reinforcing anti-racist institutional values. A sampling of messaging across colleges and universities reveals a collection of statements ranging from department-level statements to presidential reflections. At the University of Arkansas, the Department of Anthropology published a message attributed to the faculty of the department, yet unsigned by an individual so ascertaining how the message was crafted is difficult. Perhaps unique to the role and scope of an Anthropology department, the message deployed an academic tone as it dispensed Anthropological constructs defining race in the context of recent history. The prospective audience was implied as a combination of students and employees affiliated with the unit (Unknown. “Statement on racial injustice. University of Arkansas,” 2020). Also, unknown and unmentioned was whether the message was delivered in response to stakeholder expectation or out of a perceived obligation to reinforce departmental values. Another timely example from higher education can be found as a signed memo to the academic community authored by the dean of the Columbus University School of Law (also referred to as Catholic Law). This sample illustrates using communications as a tool to reinforce institutional values, embedded within a heartfelt message to stakeholders: “... I just wanted to let you know that Catholic Law stands with you in solidarity for love and justice,” (p.1), words that possibly directly address the school’s African American employees and constituents who may have experienced Floyd’s death on a personal level (Payne, 2020). Such examples from analysis of publicly available documents illustrate communications and public relations being used in response to external stimuli to meet stakeholder expectations and advance and strengthen relationships.

c. Building Relationships

Foster and Jonker (2005) approached cultivating symmetrical approaches and processes in the creation and dissemination of statements. The flow of this approach begins with a message sent to an audience; the audience reacts and responds; the message sender learns valuable information about the audience’s expectations and their desires, which in turn, leads the sender to adjust its messaging to better align organizational goals to audience desires. This is symmetrical in that each side has a role to play. In an asymmetrical communications approach, the public’s response and reaction is neither integrated nor considered in organizational messaging strategies, which is believed to be ineffective given the public’s high expectations for, and vast experience with, two-way dialogue with companies and brands (Foster & Jonker, 2005). Organizations cannot ignore their stakeholders and must be highly attuned to stakeholder expectations for two-way communications.

The role of social media in building relationships, as seen through the massive growth of these networks, provides the necessary evidence for higher education leaders to include social media as an important part of their message delivery mix. The purpose of most social media platforms is to build communities and to use as a tool for building relationships and trust. Since 2011, institutions of higher education have embraced social media networks, adapting and growing each year based on the dynamic nature of the market with the closure or development of new platforms, and a failure to adapt their deployment of social media, does so at risk of being left behind: “The relational coordination model focuses on the relationships that emerge from the various roles that shape a process, more than on the relationship that some individuals maintain with each other during work [p. 29]” (Lacayo-Mendoza & Pablos-Heredero, 2016). Social media eliminates the barrier between a company and a consumer.

Relationship development theories and practices have examined the criteria and factors that go into building relationships and reciprocity is a recipe for success. Brunner pointed out a three-step approach starting with trust and resulting in a mutual satisfaction between parties, which can be instructive for institutions of higher education to understand and adopt. Relationships must be developed intentionally, and when those relationships become successful, they feature an exchange or some type of agreement (Brunner, 2005). Take the context of an institution’s desire to address and respond to issues of diversity and inclusion, and to better understand its student’s feelings about the campus’ vision of a diverse and inclusive institution. This exchange is the bedrock of a developing relationship between student and institution. An institution must engage in the things that are important to its stakeholders and must understand how it is perceived by stakeholders in their actions. Brunner found that institutions perceived as taking a strategic and thoughtful approach toward diversity and inclusion, typically demonstrated through public relations efforts, result in measurably favorable student reactions and feelings of trust toward the institution. In other words, students who felt their institutions had intentionally and actively worked to build relationships have greater levels of trust and belief in their school's commitment to diversity. The ability to measure relationship development is important for organizations to understand where they can best direct their efforts (Brunner, 2005).

F. Chapter Summary

In conclusion, a review of the literature suggests external and internal forces have impacts on college campuses, and that university leaders are called upon to not only interpret the changes to their communities and stakeholders, but to provide reassurance and support to those most directly affected through strategic messaging that bolsters institutional values. Recent history examples of Title IX, the "Travel Ban," and the attempt to rescind DACA, all examples of federal policy actions that sounded an alarm by the immediate consequences on affected populations at educational institutions, and each necessitated either a values-based or content-based response. An institution's decision to respond to federal policy changes should be based on the values of the institution, the expectations of the stakeholders, and the perceived utility and value of making a response. The form of a response can widely vary to include numerous channels (media) and actions. Whether it's a one-on-one conversation about resources and services with an undocumented student or issuing a reassuring message to the Muslim Student Association, the words and messages conveyed in any response should also be carefully selected.

Chapter III. Research Methods

The current study was designed as a qualitative case study, focusing on a curated sample of university relations leadership, or the appropriate and similarly situated or authorized leader who has oversight of and authority to direct and disseminate messaging content strategies on behalf of the institution. Similarly situated leaders included the vice president or chancellor for integrated or strategic communications, or a chief of staff, whom often has communications duties in their portfolio of responsibilities (Jacobs, 2020). The study used relationship management theory to inform a series of questions and corresponding interviews with the communications leaders at five American public universities.

The research design further considered how to curate an appropriate sample and sample size, strategies for how the interview questionnaire was developed and vetted as a mechanism to remove researcher bias but also to ensure the questions were understood and answerable within a defined period-of time conversation, and also how the data would be collected and analyzed.

A. Research Design

This qualitative study was designed as a single interview with the leaders at five institutions of higher education. The interviews were conducted by video conference partially due to the current climate and conditions available related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which presents logistical and meeting challenges in many cases still during the summer of 2021, but also for convenience. Case study is popular across many fields as an approach, and a good case study reflects an in-depth understanding revealed through the work and often yields conclusions by the researcher and new understandings (Creswell, 2012). A qualitative approach is validated for its academic rigor and inherent empathetic approach, which presents a two-way opportunity for the researcher: to draw empathy from the work, while conducting the work with empathy

(Patton, 2002), which presents an appropriate parallel to the public relations focus of the study, given the purpose of public relations is to develop two-way relations (Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle 2017).

Using relationship management theory as the framework for interview data collection, the study provided insights to help understand motivations that inform decision making and choices for effective structures of organization. I approached my case studies through Ledingham's relationship management theory, which presents an appropriate framework for reviewing public relations as a management function (Ledingham, 2006) grounded within a four-step process model widely recognized to comprise research, planning, execution, and evaluation (Ledingham, 2006; Hendrix, et. al., 2012). A modern definition of public relations emphasizes the strategic nature of public relations and the imperative of its purpose "to build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (Corbett, p. 1, 2012).

The qualitative methods used in the study relied on great preparation and planning of the interviews. The investigator utilized techniques including patience and kindness and finding the appropriate balance between listening, prompting, and prodding (Patton, 2002; Kvale, 2009). The researcher prepared a list of questions (see Appendix A), but also cultivated the diligence to go "off-script," to pivot, probe, and delve appropriately. Powers (2005A, 2005B) reminded the interviewer that context is key and that a transcript on its own is devoid of emotion and that clever or errant punctuation can change the meaning or interpretation of the spoken word in a live (and lively) context.

Kallio (2016) reinforced Patton's suggestion of the importance of developing a guide as an approach to semi-structured interviews, creating an element to aid in objectivity and trustworthiness. Both provide context into avoiding asking biased or leading questions, although a questionnaire or list of questions should be designed with the type of responses the researcher is hoping to elicit. Building rapport between interviewee and interviewer is essential.

B. Sample

The sample identified for data collection consisted of current practicing communications leaders serving at institutions of higher education. The institutions surveyed were all public universities. The sample was solicited from a two-step process: direct outreach to members of the APLU Strategic Communications Council to identify prospective professionals willing to participate; and then arranged case study interviews collected via direct outreach to these individuals.

The leaders volunteering to participate following the recruitment invitation served as the total study sample. To determine the sample size for the interviews, a review of the literature revealed that for case study analysis, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested a range of three to five as a suitable number to comprise a qualitative case study. The goal of the interviews was to achieve qualitative theoretical saturation, that is, when additional new themes cease to emerge from the interviews (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The sample was confirmed via a review of the selection criterion at the beginning of the 2021 calendar year and focuses on five different public and state supported institutions in the United States to represent a set of US institutions similarly situated and sized to the home institution to the researcher, the University of Arkansas. The researcher was given permission to use the listserv of Association of Public and Land-grant Institutions Strategic Communications Council members for outreach to the target sample for solicitation purposes. (The University of Arkansas is a member of this organization.) There are 216 members of the APLU, not all of which are land-grant institutions. The APLU listserv reached the senior most university relations or communications official at the institution. Once the participant roster was identified, the researcher then reviewed institutional data to narrow the sample size and assist with the ultimate selection of the sample.

The following six criteria were used to prioritize the case study sample: Institutions created by the 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act, located in America's "Heartland" also known as the "Midwest" as defined as states that touch neither the Pacific nor Atlantic Oceans; those with university relations units that report directly to the chancellor or president; those where the incumbent was not in an interim position and has been in the role for at least one year; and institutional size ranging between 27,000 and 32,000 total student enrollment (graduate and undergraduate students) as evidenced by the "eleventh-day snapshot" count available publicly. The size range was intended to seek institutions roughly the same size as the University of Arkansas.

Table 1.
Criteria for selection, prioritized

Criteria 1	Public institution
Criteria 2	Institutional size ranging between 27,000 and 32,000 student enrollment (Fall 2020)
Criteria 3	Incumbent in role ≥ one full academic year
Criteria 4	Located in the Midwest
Criteria 5	Institutions with a permanent university relations leader (non-interim)
Criteria 6	Unit reports directly to the chancellor or president

The purpose of selecting similar institutions was to illustrate possible institutional-based differences and/or similarities in determining values-based versus content-based messaging decisions and organizational structures of institutions with similar missions and mandates.

C. Instrumentation

The creation of a clear and well-defined instrument is important to avoid problems with interpretation of the results (Hinkin, 1998). The instrumentation that was used to collect data for the study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher through an iterative and multiple-method process using subject matter experts to weigh in through interviews and focus groups on potential survey questions as well as to test survey questions (Esposito, 2004; Kaplowitz, Lupi, & Hoehn, 2004). Iterations should be used to help inform questionnaire aspects including length, ordering of questions, and wording of questions (Lietz, 2010).

There are four main ways to measure validity and reliability of social science questionnaires or survey research instruments including face, content, construct, and criterion validity assessments, each grounded in the purpose to obtain objective information (Taherdoost, 2016). Face validity and reliability are key to educational research, and are often assessed by external experts; in the case of this study, the researcher deployed a third-party subject matter expert to review the instrumentation for relevance of what is being studied through a lens of whether the questions are unambiguous, clear, relevant, and appropriate (Oluwatayo, 2012). Specifically, the researcher tested the questionnaire by selecting a leader of university relations not involved in the study sample to evaluate the questionnaire items for relevance.

An informed consent form was provided to each interview subject (Appendix B) and signatures were collected digitally as well as verbally during the interview. The informed consent, the study instrumentation, and the protocol were reviewed and approved by the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (Appendix C).

D. Collection of Data

The researcher first sent a letter (Appendix D) to the APLU listserv to reach the senior most communications officials at public institutions outlining the purpose of the study and presenting an invitation to participate in an interview, and from those responses, winnowed the list to the heads of university relations departments at the five confirmed institutions. The researcher followed up on the invitation immediately via email (Appendix E) to confirm participation and to make an appointment for the interview. The researcher provided in advance the interview questions so that the interview subject had adequate time to prepare for the interview. During the interview, the researcher asked the interview subject for any related documents for further document analysis. Such documents included organizational charts, policies, protocol documents, and other guiding or organizing documents or relevant websites. Following the interview, a thank you note (Appendix F) was sent to each participant. There was no incentive offered for participation.

E. Data Analysis

The corresponding document analysis further helped to ground an analysis free from bias. Digital tools will be used for coding qualitative research data derived from the interview transcripts including a macros-enabled Microsoft Word template as a tool for assigning, extracting, and then sorting coded data using a method described by Peach (2020). Chunks of text will be coded organically by applying relevant terms to sentences or phrases of content, keeping a list of the terms, which will serve as a code book. Following an initial first pass at coding the data, the data chunks were sorted by code and reviewed for additional context or differentiation. This process, with a loose color-coding system for quick viewing, the product was organized by the list of terms (my code book) to “nest” related words and concepts together to help reveal ultimate themes from the interviews. This analysis was related to the research questions.

F. Positionality, Researcher Bias

Researcher bias can influence how the data are interpreted and the researcher possesses several biases and assumptions based on having worked in some type of professional communications capacity for 30 years, 20 of which have been in a university setting. Of those university years, 15 of them were direct experience working in, and eventually leading university relations at the University of Arkansas. Other professional communications experience held by the researcher includes service at two different print media outlets and one museum of American art, where she led a team functionally and organizationally similar to a university relations unit on a college campus. The researcher's experience in the position for which she seeks to understand decision-making influences certainly contextualizes her understanding of the role, responsibilities, and the pressures placed on the head of university relations, and this inevitably leads to some presuppositions and assumptions, but it also lends itself to a potentially more fluid conversation, through greater understanding and relatability.

Further, the researcher's experience has greatly informed an assumption about the influence of external stimuli on an institution's messaging priorities. That is to say, through direct experience working in an institution of higher education that finds itself being asked to respond to external issues and events, the researcher believes that the demand for values-based messaging by stakeholders is regularly tested and demonstrated simply through the contemporary news cycle and stakeholder desires to have their values validated time and again by leaders, employers, and those in positions of power.

However, to reduce, if not eliminate, this potential bias the researcher sought an external review and validation by a third party, an incumbent university relations leader who is not part of the study to review the instrumentation for relevance of what is being studied through a lens of whether the questions are unambiguous, clear, relevant, and appropriate for the data gathering phase (Oluwatayo, 2012), as well as of professional interest and utility. A corresponding document analysis of documents provided by the interview subjects helped to ground an analysis free from bias. The University of Arkansas was not included in the survey collection of data. Field notes were used to compare and analyze characteristics and response of the interview subjects, including attributes such as body language and facial gestures.

G. Chapter Summary

In summary, the research design of this qualitative case study featured a set of interviews with the university relations leaders at five public institutions of higher education across the US. A questionnaire was developed within the conceptual framework of relationship management theory, which was subject to review by a third-party and unconnected subject matter expert/practitioner in the field, and corresponding documents analysis to describe the motivations, rationale, and processes that senior campus communications officers use to determine and issue different types of university messages and how those factors describe current and perceived future organizational structures.

Chapter IV. Summary of the Study

Analyzing and evaluating the stimulus-response factors that senior communications leaders and public institutions face and how they use those triggers to develop campus messaging is an important exercise for leaders at institutions of higher education. Studying not only the factors that influence the need to create a message, but also understanding the pressures applied by various publics, most notably stakeholders, provides further context into how institutions use responses to manage relationships with these stakeholder groups. Overall, external events have a significant influence on stakeholder demands for an institution to issue a statement and across the board, it is widely felt that these calls from stakeholders is increasing, yet to respond without strategy or purpose can have diminishing returns.

Stakeholders take on many forms at public institutions. Ranging from internal groups of students, faculty, staff, and administrators to name a few, to external groups of alumni, taxpayers, legislators, fans, parents, and others who have an affinity or connection to the university. Each of these groups has a set of values and the desire to hear from the campus president is most often grounded in the group's desire for affirmation from the institution that their values are in alignment, in times of comfort, but especially in times of crisis.

This study seeks to provide valuable context and rationale into how major public events play a role in public calls for a campus message, in how the campus crafts and disseminates such public messaging, how decisions are made to do so, and how the content of messaging is determined. Further, this study seeks to understand how campuses react to stakeholder demands for such messaging and how that messaging reflects on institutional values.

A. Purpose of the Study

Public relations (PR) and communications are practices like any other profession, and when conducting them on behalf of any company or for-profit organization is a noteworthy responsibility. Practicing PR and communications on behalf of an institution of higher education is no less significant of a responsibility. The ultimate purpose of communications is to support and advance institutional goal attainment (Lacayo-Mendoza & Pablos-Heredero, 2016), which necessarily leads to a desire to understand how to practice communications more effectively as well as examine organizations. Public relations seek to build relationships, manage and protect reputation, and build and nurture trust between the public and an organization, (Horrigan, 2007; Cardwell, Williams & Pyle, 2017) and as such, is inextricably intertwined with communications.

The purpose and effectiveness of public relations in the higher education settings has evolved over time and remains important for managing reputation and building and maintaining trust with key stakeholders (Cardwell, Williams & Pyle, 2017). Research on this evolution suggests how processes of continuous improvement and infusions of new thinking not only help better the practice of communications and public relations, but in how it is understood and valued (Fawkes, 2018).

Today, the 24-hour news cycle, widespread access to, as well as the relative ease of sharing, digital content have contributed to an impossible-to-satisfy public demand for information and response (Fawkes, 2018). Colleges and universities need to be in a strong position to manage their reputations, image, and brand (Gavrila & Ramirez, 2019), as well as maintain institutional reputation and protect the institution from risks on a daily basis (Hiles, 2011).

Considering all of these factors, the purpose for conducting the study was to describe influences, rationale, and processes that senior campus communications officers at public universities use to determine and issue different types of university messages and how those decisions align with institutional values and stakeholder expectations.

B. Importance of the Study

The importance of the study is to inform higher education leaders of strategies, issues for consideration, and the role of public relations and managing relationships with stakeholders through strategic messaging. Values matter to stakeholders (customers, alumni, students, employees), who choose to support organizations, businesses, and causes, or purchase products from organizations whose values are in alignment with their own. As such, stakeholders may expect, indeed demand, to hear from trusted organizations in times of peril or in times of crisis, regardless of that crises' connection to the organization or institution. The ability to reflect personal, corporate, or institutional values to key publics is essential to delivering powerful communications that resonate with audiences, (Trayner, 2017). Understanding this is imperative for communicators and very often factors into the substance, timing, and purpose for messaging decision-making by communications leaders on both proactive and reactive levels.

C. Design of the Study

Using relationship management theory as the framework for interview data collection and analysis, the study provided insights behind motivations that inform decision making regarding campus messaging, specifically messaging responsive to stakeholder demands. These interviews were approached through Ledingham's relationship management theory, which presents an appropriate framework for reviewing public relations as a management function (Ledingham, 2006) grounded within a four-step process model widely recognized to comprise research, planning, execution, and evaluation (Ledingham, 2006; Hendrix, et. al., 2012). Public Relations is defined contemporarily through an emphasis on the strategic nature of public relations and its purpose “to build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (Corbett, 2012, p. 1).

The qualitative methods used in the study relied on great preparation and planning of the interviews. The investigator utilized techniques including patience and kindness and finding the appropriate balance between listening, prompting, and prodding (Patton, 2002; Kvale, 2009). The researcher prepared a list of questions (see Appendix A), but also cultivated the diligence to go “off-script,” to pivot, probe, and delve appropriately. Powers (2005A; 2005B) reminded the interviewer that context is key and that a transcript on its own is devoid of emotion and that clever or errant punctuation can change the meaning or interpretation of the spoken word in a live (and lively) context.

The study was designed as a candid examination behind the external influences that lead campus communications leaders to recommend when and how to respond to these events. The promise of confidentiality for the study subjects was intentional to elicit true examples of successes and failures, how expectations of various stakeholder groups are managed, and contemporary examples. The study aimed to examine similarly situated institutions in terms of status, mission, scope, scale, and region, in hopes of learning what similarities may exist on the social and political landscape, internally and externally.

D. Data Collection

The researcher first sent a solicitation letter (Appendix C) to the APLU Strategic Communications Council Listserv, reaching more than 175 senior communications professionals and APLU member institutions, outlining the purpose of the study and presenting an invitation to communications leaders to participate in research. From the solicitation, 7 total responded to the initial invitation and the heads of 5 identified APLU-member institutions were sent a follow up on the letter immediately via email (Appendix D) to confirm receipt and to ask to make an appointment for the interview. The researcher provided in advance of the interview, the questions designed to frame the discussion to allow subjects to have adequate time to prepare; all the interviews were scheduled within 2 weeks of the initial solicitation. The researcher selected the first five available participants, keeping the remaining two in reserve should one of the interview subjects decide to withdraw from the study.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom conference calls with 5 current communications leaders of APLU-member institutions. The study sought to identify leaders who served not only as advisers to the campus president on matters related to communications and public relations, but who craft messaging as well. The interviews were recorded for transcription purposes, with the permission of each participant.

During the interview, the researcher did ask the interview subject for any related documents for further analysis, and in most cases, was pointed to the institutional website as the institutional repository. Following the interview, a thank you note (Appendix F) was sent to each participant.

E. Data Collection Results

The participants were all Caucasian, with 3 males and 2 females being selected following the invitation to participate. The participants were not selected for their race or gender, but due to responsiveness to the invitation, and as the demographics of the APLU Strategic Communications Council membership are unknown, there was no way of understanding if this representation was consistent with their membership. The range in years of service by study participants ranged from 2 years to 13 years of service at their current institution in their current role. All 5 had previous related experience at either their current institution or another institution of higher education. All were “seasoned” professionals with the title of either director, associate vice president, or vice president, and all reported to the chief executive of their institution either directly or in a dotted-line capacity, meaning they reported to the CEO indirectly, and were supervised by a different leader. All but one serve as a member of the president’s cabinet.

One finding in the data collection was a variable institutional approach to the name of the department being studied. Of the 5 institutions surveyed, 1 had a department called “university relations.” The remaining 4 all used some construct to include “communications” in the departmental name, with variants to include “marketing” or “public affairs;” a clear demonstration of the connection between government affairs and marketing practice within those operations, noted as reflective of the point being studied about institutional organization decisions.

The average interview time was 52.8 minutes, and the range spanned from 45 minutes to 62 minutes. The transcripts were edited only to correct garbled constructions, eliminate fillers and repetition, and to correct mis-transcribed words such as “COVID” which was errantly transcribed by Zoom’s Closed Captioning as “covert” 100% of the time. The transcripts were redacted to remove identifying features such as names of presidents and any cited gender pronouns, the names of other administrators and colleagues, state and university names, and any other details of stories that could potentially lead to the identification of the university or the communications leader if published. The interview questions were reviewed and validated by an unconnected subject matter expert, who was not a participant in the study. The transcription content was verified by sending the edited transcripts to two subjects for review, which did not result in any corrections or concerns.

As previously referenced, the transcripts were coded using a macros-enabled Microsoft Word template described by Peach (2020) for the eventual sorting and organization of themes related to the research questions.

Table 2.
Participant demographics

Race, ethnicity	Frequency
Male	3
Female	2
Caucasian	5

Table 3.
Years of service in current role

Range	Frequency
1-5 years	3
6-10	0
11+	2

Table 4.
Participant-institutional match to preferred sample criteria

	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3	Institution 4	Institution 5
Public institution	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Institutional size ranging between 27,000 and 32,000 student enrollment (Fall 2020)	no	yes	no	no	no
President in role ≥ one full academic year	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Located in the Midwest	yes	yes	no	yes	no
Institutions with a permanent university relations leader (non-interim)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Communications leader reports directly to the chancellor or president	yes	yes	no	yes	yes

F. Data Analysis

Four research questions served as the guide for the study and the data retrieved from the interviews was analyzed here and organized by an analysis of responses to each question.

Research Question 1: How did senior campus communications officers describe the factors that influenced their messaging decision making and how do they assess its effectiveness?

The question was discussed by all 5 institutional communications leaders as a deliberate part of the interview protocol. A factor that might influence messaging is very often an external event that has been broadly covered in the news such as a national tragedy or a highly publicized attack, crime, or piece of legislation making its way through the state legislature. The commonality is that the mere existence of these events is not enough, but that these events are highly publicized and widely known to various key publics and serve as a factor, influence, or sheer reason to issue a message. The factor becomes the trigger for rationalizing a need to react. This is the starting point and is ever-present thanks to a rapidly changing world where news is omnipresent, easy to access, quick to share, and can be localized for stakeholders in an instant. Notably, the trigger factor tends to be not news on its own, but rather most especially bad or controversial news. The trigger examples discussed by the institutions included contemporary events such as the death of Minnesota resident George Floyd, an African American man whose killing at the hands of Minneapolis police Derek Chauvin was highly publicized across national media outlets. Every campus in the sample cited this event as trigger leading to demands for campus message, while each campus evaluated the decision to make a statement on its own terms: "… we're always under the pressure of the political environment of our state," one leader shared, citing how the murder of George Floyd factored into their campus messaging. "Roughly [some proportion] of our students come from Minnesota. But there's a rural, urban split in

Minnesota too so our student body, a high percentage of our student body comes from very red states… it is not clear on how that affects their worldview ... And the internal audience was expecting and demanding and needing, and wanting a heartfelt message from the president, and the risk to [the president], given the political leadings of our politicians and a lot of our donors, was a tight squeeze." Other influential events cited include violence in several American cities targeting Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islanders, and unrest in the Middle East. At the state level, institutions cited issues such as legislative attempts in several states to prevent use and teaching of Critical Race Theory in public schools and on college campuses, which has recently emerged as a political flashpoint, campus gun carry laws, sexual violence and Title IX, and legislation targeting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) community. Each of these examples resulted in some campus stakeholder group requesting, desiring, or even demanding a response by the institution. The global COVID-19 pandemic also provided a significant trigger and discussion point which necessitated strategic and unified institutional responses to key stakeholders on a frequent basis.

Once the trigger stimulated the intention of a response, a calculus of questions were asked and answered by leaders when deciding to message. Communications officers tended to run through a litany of questions to help gauge not only whether to respond, but the appropriateness and potential content of a response. These tended to fall along the lines of the 3 distinct themes of relationship management, reputation management, and values positioning and include the following critical questions described by the study participants and collated and summarized as follows in a question-and-answer format:

Who is demanding messaging and what is the relative influence and importance of that group? Meaning determining which stakeholder groups are the most vocal in seeking a response, and the relative influence and power of that individual or group that would react either favorably or negatively impacts not only the act of, but the weight and depth of, response. For example, one leader explained, “You know, who are the top four or five audiences that were that are probably going to pay most attention to this communication. In, how are they likely to respond to this in good ways and bad ways. And you can't always guess that but we know our audience is pretty well and through the feedback of other colleagues, you can get a sense of it.” While another communications leader said “Trust is paramount. Internal stakeholders have to be prioritized over external stakeholders,” one communications leader said regarding audiences. Campuses tend to have a cadre of “usual suspects,” defined as longtime members of the community who weigh in regularly with their demands for responses: “That institutional assessment I think is trying to look at how widespread are these calls for statement, and who are they coming from… Is it from a broad cross section or is it from a small constituency? Are the people, respected and influential or are they are they the usual suspects that will just jump on a bandwagon and get cranky?”

Who needs to hear from us and why? And are we helping our institution? Communications leaders are duty bound to advance goals and objectives through communications and messaging, therefore deploy strategy and assessment in figuring out how a message might be helpful. “How would a statement advance the greater welfare of the entire campus community which is highly diverse. It [the campus community] contains a wide spectrum of views,” observed one leader. Delving deeper into the who, why, and are we helping concept, one of the leaders explained their process and defined role and scope of the job:

> Somebody to be a third-party line, because people need to be heard first and invited to the table to offer solutions. And then they may choose to support those solutions, or to lend their voice towards a more harmonious communal approach, right, so I and I mobilize several other people to do that with other stakeholders

> and influencers. And I think that's very important. And I would remind all public relations counselors, your job is not to sit down and be a mouthpiece and, you know, tell me what you want to say boss and I'll make it, you know, good English, and I'll send it out. That's part of your job, but really part of your job, much more important part of your job is to help build the connection and you personally get engaged with that you personally get engaged. And you know you do it in a way that you are contributing to the harmony to campus, and you know you understand to your ethical obligations to the institution and to your employer.

Another leader expressed the decision-tree approach to determining whether to issue a statement being grounded in defining who on campus may be impacted: "And so is this impacting the university and if, if not, it doesn't mean we can't make a public statement, but we walked through that chart and say, 'do we have someplace that's being impacted the most by this?' and if we answer, 'No, and we don't always necessarily address the position what we've done in the past is sort of reestablished our core values … and use our core values to say that, 'despite what's going on around us, this is who we still are.'"

One communications leader said: "you know, who are the top four or five audiences that were that are probably going to pay most attention to this communication. In, how are they [the audiences] likely to respond to this in good ways and bad ways." Another point in considering influence, but also relevance, one institution elected to withhold messaging on violence in the Middle East supporting Muslims due a very active Jewish population in their community so as not to descend down a "slippery slope," of engaging in a messaging strategy that would not be sustainable. Meaning, once a message is issued on a particular topic, a cultural or religious moment, for example, calls by other groups for matching messaging can be ignited: "… the problem here is that it does open the door for the president to be sending out a message, every day of the year," one communications leader explained.

Among the conclusions of factors that stimulate messaging is the deepening well of the question-and-answer process to inform communications decisions, ranging from a question of messaging relevancy and campus impact: "…Stakeholders, and stakeholder groups and publics that organize around issues and topics may not approach these things from that same model of common interests, mutual benefit shared solution making." And spanning through a determination of risks of messaging that could be financial, reputational, or credibility based. Sometimes, it is determined that saying nothing is the best action. Other times, the concern revolves around the potential that saying something might inflame or negatively inform those who seek to do our audiences harm? This is a key consideration in areas where legislative authority over public institutions can often work at cross purposes to institutional values and policies. This will be discussed more fully in research question 4. An alternate data point cited reflects this seemingly tenuous relationship among institutions of higher education and certain publics: "…I'll be honest, we're just kind of in a place where we're not sure what we're supposed to say, and I and I think most of the campus recognizes that too," said one communications leader.

The complementary step is to examine how the success of a response is measured, and such assessment is primarily anecdotal. Although practitioners can view clicks and review engagement with certain messages and pieces of content, much of the real audience reaction is in direct responses, email messages into the president's office, or comments on social media. Because of this, the overall assessment may be skewed in part because the feedback loop offered in public relations to develop two-way dialogs is an inherent compact between stakeholder and organization. People have a greater propensity to engage when they are upset or concerned. It is rare for people to spontaneously respond in agreement or with praise and so the tendency is for communications leaders to view silence as success: "When you hear silence, we generally read that as 'Okay, they seem okay with the message,' because if they're not, then you hear about it –

and you usually hear about it pretty quickly," another leader said.

In sum, and to answer the first research question, the stimulus that often influences senior campus communications officers to make or recommend messaging on behalf of the institution is a highly publicized national, state, or local event of significance, and leaders further assess the viability and potential effectiveness issuing a message through a deliberate calculus of reasoning and strategic evaluation, and finally, they evaluate the success of actualized messaging anecdotally.

Research Question 2: What guiding principles were described as informing campus communications officials' decision making to issue messaging/statements in response to external events and what factors contributed to evaluating the stakeholder demand?

This question also yielded significant discovery from the interviews. While Q1 dealt with the triggers to influence responses, Q2 digs deeper into the who, what, and why. This question deals more with the nuanced approach to response, more of a focus on the output rather than the inputs, and the determinants that inform the communications officer's response.

The emergent themes from this question include managing audience expectations, risk assessment, and collaboration. Regarding managing expectations, often, stakeholders want attention to be sure they are valued, and sometimes there are stakeholders who advocate for messaging on behalf of other groups or individuals. Take for example the expectations of a faculty group who want the president to speak out against a policy decision at the state level. The faculty group has expectations that the president issues a strong admonition against the legislative body, a state senator, or even the governor. This can be untenable and problematic for a public institution that derives a portion of its funding from the state and so the need to manage expectations is critical to protecting and preserving the relationship with both the elected officials and the faculty. One example often cited is that the faculty is a group that typically has strong expectations that the president makes statements to support or condemn state actions. This group may not be sensitive to the pitfalls of the institution speaking out and the associated risks therefore feel disappointment when the president does not issue a strong message condemning legislation. “A really high percentage of them are just disappointed that [the president] is not all ‘guns blazing’ on their behalf all the time,” one leader shared. “The faculty were expecting the president to stand up and, you know, speak the truth to [the general assembly], and again, [the president] has to try to thread a teeny tiny little needle with a big piece of twine so you know it was never – nothing [the president] said was ever satisfactory to anyone, which I think is about as good as it gets if everybody’s a little disappointed in the president that’s about as good as it gets,” they continued. Presidents are expected to be strong advocates for academic freedom, freedom of speech, and myriad social justice causes often embedded in diversity, equity, and inclusion concepts by the campus faculty, and to reinforce these values when legislative efforts broach these topics.

The theme of risk assessment is a significant determinant in the type of messaging created. Institutions have many publics and taking a position on an issue or event can unintentionally alienate one of those publics, while it seeks to support another. Risks are calculated and presented to the president, who always has the final say in determining whether to issue a statement and what that statement ultimately will say. The risks include reputational harm, credibility, and even financial if there could be a possibility of inflaming donors or other funders, including the state, depending on the existence and content of a message. An example of a financial risk being part of the messaging decision was cited regarding an externally funded faculty research endeavor, the subject of which was not favored by the General Assembly in that state shared:

> The legislature, several legislators have been, against that [subject] all along … the facts, were not relevant… so they had been pressuring the president, sort of behind the scenes to cancel the grant – just don't do it – and no amount of explaining academic freedom is relevant to them, even when you say, 'if we lose our accreditation, we lose a lot of federal money,' they don't care about that…One of those senators had found a way to put that pressure on it…

The potential legislation could have led to a multi-million-dollar loss of extramural funding for that institution, so the president had to be very careful in responding to legislators despite pressures from faculty to make strong statements of condemnation against the legislative concerns about the research project.

Another type of risk is inherent in the timing of a message. Institutions do not want to appear to be "late to the game" in their response and can be criticized for responses that are not issued in a timely fashion. "I think I'm at this point now and, many of us are, where it starts with 'Are we too late?' It really does it starts with [asking], are we truly, are we running definitely to catch up, to meet the expectations and needs of those in our community who wanted this message to go out the minute they realized this was a message that is needed?" asked one leader. This speaks directly to an overarching reality of the speed with which information is shared and audience expectations for instantaneous reaction and response.

Collaboration is key to message development and across the board, the institutions represented in the sample rely on teams of professionals in different areas of the campus to help them determine the content and often the delivery vehicle for messaging through their unique lens and relationship to key constituencies. In this practice, communications leaders often turn to their chief diversity officers, their provosts, their chief financial officers, their chiefs of staff, and most often, their governmental relations leaders to test and gauge potential audience reactions. It is rare and unusual for a message to be delivered that has not been thoroughly vetted by more than one person. “We have made, I would say, a lot of progress in working collaboratively and composing the messages with a small group of communicators,” one leader shared. “Thinking about the head of a group effort, pulling the different minds to make sure that you are saying the right thing to the right people,” is a typical practice. Another range of considerations for including collaborators are found in this institution’s plan that includes points such as, “Where does [the message] need legal counsel in here … to as there’s a piece of it that talks about engaging with an outside public relations firm if it got to that, if its internal or do we need some help with that as well … And then how much of our senior team gets involved or when they’re notified in there as well because it elevates.”

The guiding principles described as informing campus communications officials’ decision making include a risk assessment, an evaluation of the stakeholder demand and the influence of the stakeholders demanding, as well as the practice of managing expectations.

Research Question 3: How did senior campus communications officers evaluate and align messaging decisions, as well as messaging itself, with organizational values?

The question resulted in a saturation of similar responses from the participants. The emergent themes were values and voices. The existence of institutional or organizational values was seen as a key tool in the communicator’s toolbox. Often, respondents noted, values can be conjured in messaging to remind audiences of alignment, and vice versal, audiences can demand messaging to seek reinforcement; stakeholders want to support organizations and entities that reflect their personal values. When there is a stimulus that triggers calls (or demands) for an institutional message, and the institution indeed decided to issue a message in response, then a statement of values was described as most often the framework for issuing such message. This was described as valuable and powerful in that it was indicated to never be wrong to reinforce values.

> I think every institution has this – you know – we have a public affirmation and values that many in our community cite as the reason they work here, and are the reason they go to school here, right, so it's, absolutely in keeping with who they think they are, and the kind of people they are, and its alliance their values are our values and our values are theirs. And so, I think I see a lot of that, 'I the individual want to affirm my stance on this national decision … this national event. And so I need the university to do so as well. Otherwise, I'm going to begin to doubt that the university's values are actually in alignment with mine.' I think there is a strong sense to many in our community that the university doesn't have the luxury anymore of claiming to represent all ideas and to be open to all viewpoints, to being a site of public discourse.

Reinforcing values often provides institutions that cannot be more overt in supporting or condemning an action in direct and specific language an opportunity to do so. The political divisiveness of the country and the current conservative dominated legislative bodies were described as playing a role in this. Recent calls on college campuses to make anti-racist statements in response to the Black Lives Matter movement or violence against the AAAPI community forced institutions in the study sample to contemplate how to temper responses within the framework of institutional values, in ways that eschew buzzwords such as "liberal," "diversity and inclusion," that could potentially inflame conservative points of view among elected officials and alumni. Even though the institution's represented in the study are non-partisan and strive for neutrality, public perception of these institutions being bastions of politically liberal thought and bias impacts messaging. Word choice becomes a key element when considering certain audiences. "We have to lean on our core values and say that, 'you know, this is an inclusive community,'" Or technically, using the touchstone of the campus mission and history helps frame messages: "I made sure to do that on two fronts I tied [the message] to the fact that our land-grant mission of access has existed for over 135 years and that won't change, and that our value of diversity and inclusion won't waver because everybody is welcomed here." Some defaulted to messages that purely reflect on university values or refer to previous statements in lieu of saying anything directly about a new issue. "Fortunately … we've, had many prior statements, before this becoming a big deal this year in our legislature, where we could remind faculty that [the president] is on the record here, here, here, and here, we've signed on to [statements from national organizations], we've done this before, we've got a green light from FIRE [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education]. So, that helps this not to seem like we're coming late to the game in protecting free speech," as an example of how to remind stakeholders of previous and related citations of institutional values.

The question further yielded the "how" behind the messaging. Communications officers described the need to respond honestly, ethically, and with integrity at all times: "It was just a real, direct, honest communications that they needed to hear," one leader described of a response. These are the basic tenants of public relations and form the backbone of messaging. And, it is never wrong to reinforce values; reflecting on values provides an opportunity to remind audiences of what is important to the institution. Respondents stressed a need for neutrality while condemning certain actions or applauding others; audiences demanding statements do not care about institutional neutrality. Respondents indicated that often, saying the wrong thing is worse than saying nothing. "Trying to speak neutrally, I think that there are some people, so many members of our community, who say that's a cop out, right, that you don't get to do that anymore. You have to pick a side, and it needs to be my side," said one leader about the need for and reaction to neutrality at times.

A general area where presidents and universities tended to be more "bullish" with confidence of their voice were in the areas of academic freedom and freedom of speech, and perhaps this was because this is “their lane,” or the area in which it is widely known and expected that they would have a position of support.

> I think when there are issues that for [the president] get to the heart of what being a public research university is about. I would say, yes. So, back to the divisive concepts, critical race theory, free speech, [the president] is a near absolutist on free speech and academic freedom. If [the president] sees things happening that are a threat to that, [the president] is going to want to proactively speak out against that. I think, issues of investments by the federal government in research and science. [The president] is passionate about those things that help drive innovation and the need for Washington to do their part in funding research and science … the president before … was fairly bullish and bold on some immigration issues which are obviously critical particularly at the Ph.D. level in the need to bring in the best talent and retain that talent. I think it depends on the issue but I do think for our current president, there’s probably a shortlist of things that really strike at the heart of our university, and when they do, [the president] more than comfortable to be proactive and not reactive.

The trends in the area included a deliberate attempt to activate additional campus voices at appropriate times. Every university in the sample had experience with, or plans to, actively engage other leadership voices at key times to validate and amplify university values. Whether that was an influential member of the community who could speak to a key demand for messaging, or a vice president on campus whose voice could also be positioned as relevant and credible to stakeholders, was viewed as an important step to distributing the messaging responsibility and reinforcing that more than a single individual espouses institutional values. “That's actually something that our whole leadership team is really determined to do because we can’t have every message be written by the same person. We believe that that’s not a strength for the university,” one respondent said.

An outlying finding was the dearth of calls for institutional responses for events that were considered positive. That is, no respondent described stakeholder demands for issuing a presidential statement in response to good news or positive external events.

However, overall, senior campus communications officers evaluated and aligned messaging decisions, as well as the message itself, with organizational values thoughtfully, methodically, by design and with purpose, and with the belief that it is always appropriate to reinforce values.

Research Question 4: How did senior campus communications officers describe the most significant concerns they were confronting about serving the university through strategic communications supports?

Concerns about serving the institution through strategic communications support were abundant among the senior campus communications officers participating in the study. The range spanned thematically between perceptions and priorities, both internal and external. Communicators cited examples suggesting a lack of external understanding for not only the work of communications, but for the role of higher education. They cited power struggles between elected bodies and boards or systems and the institution. They described the need for neutrality with purpose in their messaging given the wide variety of stakeholders, while managing expectations and relationships with key publics. They also cited the strategic nature of seeking to avoid what could be concluded as "road maps" in their messaging, and a constant concern about the need to be careful with their words so as not to anger certain audiences. This can be seen in the following example illustrating the delicate balance between mollifying stakeholders, while protecting the institution. Legislators had proposed policy legislating the teaching of "divisive concepts" and stakeholders at this institution were demanding statements from the president:

> We had some folks in leadership asking us, you know, 'when are you going to issue talking points? When are you going to issue a president statement on it?' And we just had to explain where it stands politically. We shared some brief talking points, but I think you know they, in the end wanted more than we were going to give them, and we chose. I think, at times, we need to choose. Sometimes it's more helpful to not say much. The more we put out in writing on divisive concepts, the more we're going to feed the sponsors of the bill language that they're going to use against us in the next session. So if they pass this bill, but

> they really wanted up here [a stronger policy], let's not provide them any ammunition in our words. We will provide our faculty and staff what they need to know so they can go teach their class this fall, knowing that they've got full academic freedom to build their course the way they want. But we're not going to venture into commentary about what we think of the bill to provide lawmakers so I think sometimes there is a layer of leadership within universities that are wanting. Maybe it's bolder statements or more language. Those are good conversations to happen and we will explain why we're not going to do that in certain cases. And they, they get it, but I think sometimes they, there's a there's a group of leaders that want more.

This example illustrates the construct that can be referred to as "road maps," and this was described by several leaders as a reluctance to respond to demands for messaging for fear that the message might inadvertently provide information to an audience who may disapprove of a project, program, or entire group of people, and provide that audience with material that can be used to craft legislation or policy preventing the institution from providing a program or a service to a campus population. A general example extrapolated from the interviews could be summarized as: Audience A demanding a response and more resources for diversity programs and the strategy for institutional response might seek to omit references to the existing programs out of concern that legislative fiat might seek to eliminate funding for those programs. More than one communications leader described their campus president having been criticized by elected officials for offering support and reinforcing institutional values on social media to a particular group, often a marginalized group. One campus described a reluctance to comment on activities conducted in a particular program out of concern the language would end up in the legislation being crafted to limit the institutional ability to provide that program, another example of the "road map" construct phenomenon. These examples were shared with caution and are being deliberately and further anonymized out of an abundance of caution to protect the institutions. "And sometimes, oftentimes I think less is more," that leader shared about the caution exercised in crafting messages.

Competing priorities was another element of ongoing concern, particularly when multiple stakeholder audiences wanted different things. Students have different priorities than legislative bodies, which have different priorities from faculty, which have different priorities from alumni; and when campuses craft a message on a topic, a communicator must take into account how each of these audiences may interpret and react to a message, while still respecting and reflecting institutional values. "At times, competing interests for which audience are we speaking to and leading with our communications are we, you know, it's no longer the case that when you're, you're sending an email just to faculty you know really quickly that email is going to reach many other audiences and, when the university speaking, they may have a dominant audience in mind, but you've got to know, you got to be thinking through while if a lawmaker sees this tonight, how is that lawmaker going to respond," a communications leader said on this topic.

The COVID-19 pandemic on campuses was also of significant concern to communications leaders on the sample campuses. Many lessons in timeliness, frequency, and the necessity of sharing information strategically with the campus have been realized since February-March 2020 and continue through the time of this writing in 2021. The campus needs for transparency in messaging to be reinforced through numerous public forums and listening opportunities held on campus to address questions related to campus COVID-19 policies and practices and subsequent collateral in the form of newsletters, email messages, websites, videos, and social media posts designed to help the campus understand the current conditions and expectations on campus.

> It was just so dizzying about how fast our universities had to make decisions. You know, big decisions like every student is going to get off campus and go home immediately, every employee, except for very few are going to start working remotely mean things that are universities had never done before. These enormous decisions that then had to be communicated out often very quickly without the benefit of too much thought because given the how fast the

> COVID was moving, and our universities not having faced a pandemic like this before, we had to move fast. And I remember after a week or two of what seemed like daily communications about some new decision we had to get out there around COVID … there's a lot of substantive details we need students and faculty to digest in this communication.

Again, these efforts served to build trust, rapport, and institutional credibility and some in the sample had plans to augment internal communications supports for this very purpose.

Another concern confronted was the culture of demand and expediency by stakeholders. Rare was it that a stakeholder group simply approached the institution or institutional leadership with a request or a concern; there was an increasing number of stakeholder groups described that came armed with demand letters or lists, which was thought to be a generational tactic. One leader described being astonished by demands for a presidential statement in response to the Black Lives Matter movement coming internally from younger early career employees: “They went straight to the president and didn’t request or encourage or support, they demanded. I quickly got schooled on the social justice perspective of that age group.”

Senior campus communications officers were significantly concerned with language, how to be effective and reach audiences, while balancing the reputations of their institutions and understanding of the role and scope of communications and institutional concerns they were confronting about serving the university through strategic communications supports.

Research Question 5: How did senior campus communications officers describe the trends they were studying that might impact their institutions, and what structural adjustments were they considering in response to these trends?

Campus communications officers continually strived to meet people where they were, meaning that they used the communications vehicles available to reach people in their native environments. As such, they were paying attention to trends and developments in communications. The influence of social media, while not new, was a primary consideration and leaders were paying close attention to what is influential to students in particular as social media can be the driving force behind a movement or demands on campus.

Also related to social media was the ways in which students used social media to communicate with one another, and some of the concomitant issues that arise when reportedly racist, sexist, or vulgar speech inadvertently become public, creating issues necessitating a demand for an institutional response around the student conduct issues, code of student life expectations, and institutional values. All institutions deal with student conduct, but the ability for bad conduct to happen, be witnessed and widely shared, and quickly resulting in public outrage and demands for action and response leaves institutions feeling unprepared and very often, simply cannot respond. One institution shared an experience that emerged when a student's private Snapchat group chat became public that used racist tropes and words. The resultant cry from students of color and their allies called for a swift and punitive institutional response, however, communications responses could not be as direct and specific given student privacy concerns. "We started talking about needing to be much more proactive about talking about our values," to return to the campus touchstone in situations when legally there is little that can be said due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) limiting institutional ability to share student information. "So, we're talking a lot more about our values. In a proactive kind of way, so that we're not behind and something happens," which can feel like a losing battle when messaging demands are not possible to meet.

Some in the study sample have observed and studied the influence of external advocacy groups (or outside agitators) that target students to help these groups amplify their priorities via the students, which they know institutions will respond to. One leader described an apparent increase in activist organization attempts to sway student demands for messaging as a source of influence.

> The second source is that there are activists and activist organizations that, in my view, target, college students, state to embroil college students in whatever their issue is, and encourage students to demand statements, actions and policies from their leadership. Perhaps because these activist organizations believe that that will contribute to them prevailing, or more cynically, perhaps they would like to provoke conflicts because conflict draws headlines and headlines stimulate people to join their cause and support their cause. And I think I've seen examples of both over my 30-year career where it’s very clear that there are outside organizations that are reaching into the campus and motivating and encouraging students to take sides and pressure administration to take a stand, as well as it sort of being more organic than coming out of perhaps the students themselves.

New deployment of existing media is another trend being studied and deployed by institutions. Specifically, the use of shorter and shorter videos as a communications vehicle. The prevailing trend has suggested that shorter and shorter videos are preferable. One leader described the conditions on their campus:

> We know we've we're getting way more eyeballs on the videos than we are on emails and so we, and [the president] is very open to using video. We were using video way more with [the president] then we did with the prior president, and in the community directly with students responds, really well to it I think our challenge is, you know, how do you get those videos even shorter right because they’re used to watching really short videos … that’s the next bit: how do you take what is probably substantively needs to be a 60-second video but how can we chunk it up into smaller bits, and feed it up again really thinking about the students here. How do you serve it up in ways that’s even more digestible, knowing that most of their video consumption or these pretty short videos … Can we be quicker and more nimble to meet students where they are? My child sends probably 800 short videos to friends each day.

This concern is not unique to a single campus. Others also shared, perhaps with lament, that 60 seconds of video is too long and they, too, are studying ways to change, yet institutions struggle to create and share one or two videos a week.

Students were not the only priority for this approach. The leaders observed that people have a reduced interest in long emails and these institutions are seeking ways to reach employees and other stakeholder groups with more frequent shorter communications. “People don't like a lot of emails, but they are looking for answers right now and I said pretty much everything we communicate to students at this point goes to all employees, and vice versa.”

Despite the distaste for length and breadth, the trend of “more is more,” is being explored as institutions are seeking ways to provide an increased frequency of messaging.

> Your audience expects more and you’re providing more and likely that won’t shift toward the less that we will probably continue to be in this sort of state of play, where we continue that ongoing more messaging repetition of seven times – if we can. And, and that and then we have to balance that because our, our audiences have greater demands that they probably ever have. And so I think the question is going to be, who is who the messages come from.

Balancing the need to be strategic and proactive with messaging is aligned with the demands of reactive communications, which even though the reactive is the focus of the study, strategic communications remain a goal and priority for communications leadership for participating institutions. Information was described as power and among the trends in this area is a deliberate and intentional movement for institutions to message internally first, which is to say, if there is a media query or other external stimulus that would necessitate a response, and particularly a response that may be news to the campus, some institutions have worked to respond first to their campuses. These efforts are in response to competition with the lightning-fast news cycle by telling internal audiences first, which serves to build trust, rapport, and institutional credibility with internal audiences.

Aside from expansion of staff to assist with internal communications, most of the trends senior campus communications officers described that they were studying that could impact their institutions were operational rather than organizational, in deliberate attempts to improve responsiveness and quickness in reaching audiences.

G. Chapter Summary

The chapter served to analyze and discuss the pressures that senior communications leaders and public institutions face when determining to issue responsive messaging and how they study the conditions around them to form the best values-based responses possible. Managing audience expectations, walking a careful line between the sometimes disparate desires of key groups, balancing public demands against reasonable institutional actions were all part of the process described by 5 campus communications leaders in forming their messaging strategies and tactics. They all sought ways to craft messaging that was effective, responsive, honest and ethical, and serves to manage relationships with various publics thus preserving the two-way compact between organization and stakeholder.

As demands for presidential response by various publics have accelerated in frequency and quantity, so has the need to adopt new principles and practices. Evolving the communications practice to better connect with audiences was a shared priority, as is the opportunity to activate additional voices on campus beyond the president.

Chapter V. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Summary of the Study

The study sought to describe the phenomenology of how external events lead to stakeholder demand for IHE presidential messaging and the role of both stakeholder and institutional values in the messages. External events, often not connected to the campus directly, could range from as a presidential election to widely publicized murder. Sometimes, the external event could be connected to the campus, or impact the campus, such as the development of legislation. These external events become triggers for stakeholders who wish to hear the institution’s position on the event, as delivered through the campus president. These stakeholder demands further influence communications leaders to develop campus messaging. In summary, the stimulus-response phenomenology within the conceptual framework of relationship management theory was the basis of the study.

Studying the factors that influence the need to create a message and the pressures applied by various publics (stakeholders), provides further context into how institutions use responses to manage relationships with these stakeholder groups. Overall, external events can be perceived to have an influence on stakeholder demands for an institution to issue a statement and across the board, it was widely perceived that these calls from stakeholders is increasing, yet to respond without strategy or purpose can have diminishing returns.

The study provides valuable context for leaders at institutions of higher education and into how major public events play a role in public calls for a campus message, in how the campus crafts and disseminates such public messaging, how decisions are made to do so, and how the content of messaging is determined. Further, this study sheds light on how campuses react to stakeholder demands for such messaging and how that messaging reflects on institutional values.

B. Conclusions

The leaders who participated in the study were honest and forthright in their description of actual occurrences of external-to-campus events that led to calls from stakeholders to hear the institution's position on the matter. Each of them participated fully and the stories shared were strikingly similar in several ways. The actual events that inspired stakeholder demand were, by and large, the same events or types of events, and the similarities between stakeholder groups were significant as well. There were five specific conclusions that have been discussed here and could be thematically described in the areas of candor, frequency, allegiances, trauma, and power.

First, with respect to candor, there were several related characteristics among the individuals in the sample. Each communications leader was abundantly and rightfully concerned about confidentially, yet each was equally concerned about collegiality, meaning they willingly wanted to share their experiences and thoughts with a colleague and none of them indicated that their stories or experience were proprietary. The mission of public and land-grant institutions is typically a threefold, to teach and learn, to research and discover, and to provide outreach and engagement. This mission extends to administrators who purposely and intentionally share information that would most likely be deemed confidential or craft knowledge or defined as a trade secret. This was not so in the higher education space where leaders readily share information, success and failure stories, and even documents as one leader in the sample did. The fact that the sample was culled from a professional strategic communications organization via a Listserv the purpose of which is designed to share information, problems, and seek advice and counsel on solutions, is not inconsequential to the conclusions of the study. Each leader's candor couched in concern with confidentiality and protecting their institution was also consequential in that is contributed to each of the other conclusions.

Regarding the conclusion of frequency, it was widely demonstrated that the demand from stakeholders was increasing, and this was partially due to the way in which people consume media and the constant availability and access to news and information. And it was also due in part to the conditions created during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which campuses and many businesses around the globe, including all in the study, had shifted operations to remote or virtual status in the spring of 2020. Popularly described as a "pivot" to virtual operations was so broadly experienced and universally forced employees, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and others to spend more time online, on their devices and computers, engaging with content, and severed from pre-March 2020 levels of contact. People stopped not only going to campus, but also to stores, businesses, and other places at the same frequencies, if they went at all, and human interaction changed fundamentally. Compounded by this deep insertion into media, the isolation, and summer 2020 events triggering a national racial reckoning led people to seek new outlets and channels for their concerns, whatever those concerns may be. IHE stakeholders tended to be outraged by the killing of George Floyd and those stakeholders turned their outrage toward the institutions they trusted seeking support but also using this moment as a platform to issue demands for changes on campus and presidential responses. Additional events occurred which quickly led to calls for more IHE presidential statements on many topics.

The desire for stakeholder messaging triggered by campus events did not start in 2020 but rather has been an ever-present reality on college campuses. Discrete examples over institutional histories were shared, yet while the COVID-19 pandemic and associated isolationist behaviors did clearly accelerate the frequency of stakeholder demand, the demand frequency increase began a few years earlier with the 2016 election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States.

The third conclusion revolved around the interpretation of allegiances, and this was grounded in the public's shifting perspective of higher education as a public good to higher education being a commodity or a product. Institutions do not have the luxury of picking and choosing which public to develop and nurture a relationship with as it must manage relationships with all the publics it serves. These public institutions are non-partisan, but much of the response expectations or outright treatment of the institutions seem to assign a perception that the institution deploys a liberal bias in its institutional policy and response. However, despite deliberate non-partisanship of public institutions, society demands allegiance or declaration of one position over another. People expect for institutional positions on a particular cause to be selected and clarified and done so with transparency and timeliness. And often, non-partisanship is neither accepted nor believed by stakeholders. Generational perspectives and attitudes of stakeholder groups factor into the allegiance conclusion, as campus leaders share a strong desire to understand and speak to generational perspectives for the most effective outreach.

Particularly noteworthy was that none of the participants brought up examples of stakeholder demands for presidential statements in response to perceived "good things" happening. When stakeholders demanded messaging, the demand tended to reflect their feelings and reaction to events that are traumatic: Murders, shootings, violent crimes, racial disparities, legislation seeking to set limits on LGBTQ rights, expand gun carry laws, restrict voting, or control the curriculum. These traumatic types of events tended to be promoted, often with sensation and deep penetration across media types and outlets making it very likely that the public will be exposed to news and have an easy mechanism for interacting with and sharing the traumatic event. Trauma necessarily led to a personal and individual or collective need for soothing and comforting, which may explain the demand by stakeholders for reminders that the things they value are also valued by others, particularly institutions they trust. Take that notion about a need for soothing one step further by reframing the question about stakeholder desires slightly to ask: Why would a stakeholder demand confirmation of something that should be obvious? This signals the very essence of stakeholder demand for messaging on significant issues is grounded in an emotional need for validation. For example, stakeholders certainly know at all times that their institution of higher education, and their presidents, stand firm against racism, sexism, discrimination, or violence. These are but a few of the values that are often reinforced with campus messaging. Demanding a statement in response to an incident that is grounded in racist, sexist, discriminatory, or violent acts is symbolic, and any such statement typically does not announce a new value, but rather reinforces what is true and likely widely known. And the natural conclusion is that this is a tactic to provide comfort. It is accepted that the best practice of public relations is to pair words with actions (Pyle, Linville, & Gennett, 2017), and so the best response to trauma-based messaging demands is a response that also includes specific actions. For example, in response to racist national events, stakeholders may demand institutional statements of condemnation for these events, but also tie those events to negative experiences on campus and thus demand actions from the university. Another example might be a highly publicized sexual assault case that leads to demands from stakeholders for a statement from the campus president but also for reforms in handling sexual assaults on campus. A campus response condemning sexual violence that also informs of steps to provide prevention, training, and support mechanisms to campus is a strong illustration of pairing words with actions. In conclusion, trauma, whether experienced or perceived, is a significant predictor of, and factor in, stakeholder demands and needs.

Finally, the effects of power, perceived and actual, on the institution from various external forces is a significant conclusion to messaging demands and institutional response. It was apparent that all stakeholder groups had some form of power necessitating carefully considered responses, although the other stakeholders played a role into the power dynamic. Institutional donors and alumni whose demands wield an additional pressure may be tied to sources of private funding. However, legislators and legislative bodies have an outsized effect on decision making due to their power over public institutions and create the need for more careful communications. This power dynamic hangs over these institutions who must calibrate stakeholder demands for statements with the will and agendas of elected bodies or individuals. Each institution in the study described careful treatment of public officials, sometimes so as not to invoke their ire, other times to protect funding and to help shape (or avoid unwanted shaping) of legislation. The welcoming and inclusive spirit of America's public institutions presents a nearly untenable tightrope that must be balanced in states with conservative-dominant or powered legislatures or governors. Sometimes, the course of business activities designed by colleges to help students and employees in federally protected classes, race, color, religion or creed, national origin or ancestry, sex (including gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), physical or mental disability, or veteran status, such as programming or housing policies, are viewed through an agenda-driven lens by elected bodies that seek minimize perceived benefits and supports through legislation. Some 18 states, mostly located in America's heartland, passed legislation restricting transgender athletes from participating in women's sports (Kalich, 2021), potentially placing state-supported universities in conflict with NCAA bylaws (Osburn, 2021), as an illustration of the balance universities face when stakeholders demand topical messaging.

C. Recommendations

The flow, frequency, and demand for messaging by stakeholders is not going to abate, and this is appropriate and should be expected in the contemporary media rich environment. Planning and preparation is the gold standard of public relations, but sometimes elusive to busy practitioners given the competing demands on their time and the often emergent nature of news leading to calls for statements. The following three recommendations may help communications practitioners prioritize some strategies to support their efforts in the future, as well as provide ideas for future research.

First, meeting people where they are, not only audiences, but other administrators as well, is a practice that requires intentionality. This means the communications leader should have a continual narrative in the back of their minds asking themselves "who needs to know… and why?" The communications leader should deliberately cultivate and steward these relationships. A good relationship with colleagues can certainly help with messaging strategy so as to avoid colleagues working at cross-purposes unwittingly by advancing their priorities that may harm the institution with certain audiences. Communications practice is thoughtful and often very nuanced and it is incumbent upon the communications leader to help colleagues understand the potential for unintended consequences of messaging decisions as well as the potential benefits. Cultivating connections to audiences in the spaces where they communicate is part of this. Consider ways to penetrate key stakeholder groups by consuming the media they consume, whether it is a Facebook group for parents, reading the student newspaper, or perhaps a Listserv for alumni, finding and understanding the sources and the content they are encountering will help the communications leader keep a sense on the interests, concerns, and general pulse of that stakeholder group, and use that intelligence when responding to those groups.

The second recommendation is for campuses to focus on internal communications and developing audience-as-advocates. Cultivating and managing the relationship with internal audiences, typically faculty and staff, can be a powerful tool in assuring messages as shared and understood. Institutions that have the wherewithal to create transparency in processes and to communicate out those processes and policy decisions may be better served. This can be difficult and challenging given the innate inquisitive nature of employees, especially faculty which has been described by some as possessing a suspicion about administration due in part to the traditional perceived bifurcation on college campuses between central administration and the rest of the campus. Understanding this innate distrust, for lack of a better term, is key to college leaders and campus communicators in developing plans and structures to let more people, particularly campus influencers, have a “seat at the table” when policies and statements are being deployed. If internal audiences have a shared understanding of why things are the way they are, and trust that the institution has their best interest at heart, these groups can help amplify the desired messages and potentially reduce the demand by internal audiences for stimulus-based messaging.

Finally, activating additional voices beyond the president is the third recommendation for managing and responding to demands for messaging. Public college campuses are not lacking in leaders serving in specialized academic and administrative roles. Often, these people are subject-matter experts who can lend their voice in organic and meaningful ways, thus reducing the burden on the campus president, while distributing and sharing the responsibility for espousing institutional values. This recommendation serves two purposes: first, it assures leadership at varying levels and stations are in synch when it comes to messaging and messaging priorities, and second, it creates greater cohesion and collegiality among these leaders to be using a shared voice when it comes to communicating institutional values. Although there will always be topics that are most appropriate for the president to address, using the voices of vice presidents and deans and other who may better resonate with certain audiences can help that message better penetrate. Considering unique experiences, demographics, and other characteristics of these other voices in relationship to the messaging demand and related circumstance can be powerfully productive in engendering trust, compliance, and audience satisfaction.

Lastly, I offer two recommendations for future research. The first suggestion is for a study about the demographics and diversity of the higher education public relations field and respective communications offices. The demographics of the study available from the APLU Strategic Communications Listserv are not tracked by APLU, so there was a relative apparent lack of ethnic diversity in the study's the sample, which may very well be endemic to the communications profession but was not reviewed here. A second line of inquiry related to the stimulus-based demand for messaging would be a contemporary examination of the political constructs and characteristics of land-grant university states and analysis of messaging based on political majority. A similar study by Pyle, Linvill, and Gennett (2017) was cited earlier in the review of relevant literature, however new lines of inquiry could be conceived to potentially develop some best practices in navigating political pressures specific to land-grant institutions.

D. Relationship to Conceptual Framework

Relationship management theory provided a model through which to view the effort and outcome of public relations as being greater than a transactional or quantity-based activity but rather shifts the understanding to strategic inputs resulting in better managed relationships between organizations and various publics and can be useful in teaching public relations (Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham, 2006). This theory underpins public relations practice and was resultant from four major developments: (a) the role or recognition of the importance of relationships, (b) the emergence of measurement tools in public relations practice, (c) new models of practice, and (d) re-visioning of public relations as a management tool. Relationship management theory suggests that a relationship is defined more as an expectation of behavior than by what is said and not only undergirds the data collected from the study participants and conclusions and forms a grounding of each of the recommendations as well.

Again, the author of the chosen theoretical framework stated: “The relational theory is predicated on the notion that the appropriate domain of public relations is relationships” (Ledingham, 2003, p. 422). It all comes back to relationship management, the need for audiences to affirm their connection to the institution by demanding statements is a dynamic and transactional phenomenon. Messaging demands are typically grounded in a goal, to affirm that the university cares about the concern mutually and expectantly shared by the stakeholders and while the message is important, the true focus is measured not by the communications but in tending to the relationship. These follow quite cogently along with the 14 Ledingham (2003) axioms discussed in Chapter I and served to buttress the development of the study overall and are clearly reflected in the analysis and recommendations.

E. Discussion

Communications leaders serving institutions of higher education have an enormous responsibility to advise campus CEOs to make ethical and honest statements that demonstrate truth and integrity. The opportunity to reflect upon university values is a strategy and a tactic that can help ground campus messaging in what is generally agreed up as the prevailing sentiment of the institution. These leaders serving in lead communications roles in land-grant, and other public, institutions serve as counselors and arbiters and help establish and convey institutional priorities and values in messaging. Often these leaders have a role in developing the institutional values themselves, from crowdsourcing efforts and focus group assembly to arrive at mutually agreed upon lists of values. There is little surprise and difference in the values statement or word choice across institutions. Words like character, integrity, humanity, excellence, education, discovery, creativity, inclusivity just to cite a few found online permeate the values statements across institutions higher education. Newfield (2016) and Gavazzi and Gee (2018) have written significantly about the transference of public sentiment over time unequivocally altering public perception of higher education less as being a public good, to being more of a commodity or consumer product. Has this shift also colored stakeholder expectations about institutional values to the point to which they need continual reminding that the institutions they care about are good and worthy and possess lofty and benevolent ideals? Perhaps just a few decades ago, it would be inconceivable that an institution would need to reinforce and affirm its values to key publics because it was assumed as a foregone conclusion that these venerated institutions were held in high esteem, yet in today's information-rich culture, this reminding takes place again and again.

Public relations as a practice should do more than one thing. Taking the view that public relations is solely designed to enhance an organization's image disregards the larger purpose of relationship management as a two-way, mutually beneficial, iterative, shared outcome process between organization and stakeholder. It is multi-faceted, omni-channel, strategic, designed to evoke a result, and build or strengthen a relationship. The last piece is perhaps the most notable; *to build or strengthen a relationship.* Communications professionals practice this through messaging, responsive to stakeholder needs and desires for the purpose of building or strengthening a relationship and, it should be added, trust. As the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study, relationship management permeates the stimulus-and-response phenomenon, the silent compact between stakeholder and institution, and is evident and illustrated in practice, planning, and execution of messaging and public relations in the study sample. There is a psychological and socio-emotional element to the stimulus-and-response phenomenon that emerged and could probed further through an analysis of stakeholders themselves who have demanded institutionally responsive messaging. To reduce this to a single example, students who called for statements condemning George Floyd's murder at the very most basic level wanted to be re-assured of their own safety, or validation of their rage, and/or/also, assurances that their school also valued the lives of Black students.

F. Chapter Summary

This final chapter builds upon the work done to define the context of the problem and the purpose of the study to understand how external factors influence stakeholder demands for campus messaging and how those demands are met by institutional leaders. Studying the factors that influence the need to create a message reveals key insights that can help institutions manage such processes. Further, understanding the pressures applied by various publics (stakeholders) is important not only for communications leaders, but equally so for their colleagues who may not be as sensitive to the nuances of messaging and audience demands. Together, this provides further context into how institutions use responses to manage relationships with these stakeholder groups.

The chapter provided an identification of several conclusions that range topically as candor, frequency, allegiances, trauma, and power and each conclusion was discussed as informed by the analysis of the five case study interviews focusing on the phenomenon of external stimuli influencing campus messaging decisions.

The recommendations surround the notion that communications leaders should not expect any change in the level of stakeholder demands for messaging, but rather use that understanding and inevitability to better focus planning and managing internal expectations. Meeting people where they are by infiltrating the media they consume and the places they digitally inhabit helps to provide a ground-level understanding and assessment of audience and stakeholder priorities. Deliberate attempts to cultivate audiences and colleagues can be a powerful tool in developing an army of advocates who can assist with amplification and trust building in campus messaging.

Recognition that the president does not necessarily need to be the sole and prevailing voice in response to stakeholder demands for messaging provides additional opportunity for communications leaders to spread the responsibility and engender internal support. Vice presidents, deans and other leaders in both the academic and administrative frameworks have influence over key audiences as well as expertise, characteristics, and experiences that may position them as desirable and resonant message deliverers.

The relationship of the conclusions, recommendations, and discussions to the conceptual framework are possibly best summarized by the actual words of the twelfth axiom: "Communication alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of supportive organizational behavior, (Ledingham, 2003, p. 422)." Relationships are the glue that holds the remaining stakeholder transactions, attitudes, trust, and beliefs in an organization together.

Overall, external events have a significant influence on stakeholder demands for an institution to issue a statement and across the board, it is widely felt that these calls from stakeholders is increasing, and the opportunity to be embraced by campus leaders is to respond with strategy, purpose, and action to have maximum effectiveness in the reinforcement and affirmation of shared values.

References

American Council on Education (2017). *Letter from college and university presidents to President Trump about dreamers*. Retrieved from https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Letter-From-College-and-University-Presidents-to-President-Trump-About-Dreamers.aspx

Batalova, J., Soto, A. G. R., & Mittelstadt, M. (2017, July). Protecting the DREAM: The potential impact of different legislative scenarios for unauthorized youth. *Migration Policy Institute Fact Sheet.* Washington, DC.

Bjorklund Jr, P. (2018). Undocumented students in higher education: A review of the literature, 2001 to 2016. *Review of Educational Research*, *88*(5), 631-670. doi:10.3102/0034654318783018

Bontrager, B., & Hossler, D. (2014). *Handbook of strategic enrollment management*. American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Bowen, S. A. (2006). Autonomy in communication: Inclusion in strategic management and ethical decision-making, a comparative case analysis. *Journal of Communication Management*, *10*(4), 330-352. doi:10.1108/13632540610714791

Brown, G. (2017). Introduction. In G. Brown (ed.), *Economics and policy in the age of Trump* (pp. 9-20). London. Centre for Economic Policy Research Press.

Burkett, J., & Hayes, S. (2018). Campus Administrators' Responses to Donald Trump's Immigration Policy: Leadership During Times of Uncertainty. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, *6*(2), 98-125.

Caboni, T. C. (2002). Institutional advancement in higher education. In J. W. Guthrie (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of education, Volume 4* (2nd ed., pp. 1139-1144). Macmillan Reference USA.

Cardwell, L. A., Williams, S., & Pyle, A. (2017). Corporate public relations dynamics: Internal vs. external stakeholders and the role of the practitioner. *Public Relations Review*, *43*(1), 152-162.

Crawford, E. R, & Witherspoon, A., N. (2017). We don't talk about undocumented status...we talk about helping children: How school leaders shape school climate for undocumented immigrants. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, *5*(2),116-147.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Corbett, G. (2012). *A modern definition of public relations*. Public Relations Society of America. Retrieved from http://prdefinition.prsa.org/index.php/2012/03/01/new-definition-of-public-relations/

Cunningham, S. (2020). President's perspective: Integrated advancement celebrating 45 years of CASE and the variety of advancement functions that support education. *CASE Currents*, Retrieved from https://www.case.org/trending/issues/march-april-2020/presidents-perspective-integrated-advancement

Dach, L. (2013). Don't spin a better story. Be a better company. *Harvard Business Review.* Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2013/10/dont-spin-a-better-story-be-a-better-company

Edelman, M. (2018). The future of sexual harassment policies at US colleges: From repeal of the 2011 DOE-OCR guidelines to launch of the #MeToo movement on social media. *Wake Forest Law Review Online, 8*(12) 12-18.

Espinosa, E. A., & Walley, J. (2017, February 6). Campus stance against "ban." *Coyote Chronicle* (1). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1669&context=coyote-chronicle.

Executive Order No. 13769, 82 FR 8977, (January 27, 2017).

Fawkes, J. (2018). The evolution of public relations research-an overview. *Communication & Society*, 31(4), 159-171.

Foster, D., & Jonker, J. (2005). Stakeholder relationships: The dialogue of engagement. *Corporate Governance*, *5*(5), 51-57. doi:10.1108/14720700510630059

Gavazzi, S.M. & Gee, G., (2018). *Land-Grant Universities for the Future: Higher Education for the Public Good.* Baltimore. JHU Press.

Gavrila, S. G., & Ramirez, F. O. (2019). Reputation management revisited: US universities presenting themselves online. In *Universities as Agencies* (pp. 67-91). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-92713-8_3

Gearhart, G. D. (1989). *A study of the relationship between the preparation for and initiation of a capital fundraising campaign in a major research university and two types of organizational structure* (Order No. 8925697). Available from Dissertations & Theses @ University of Arkansas Fayetteville; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (303662737). Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/303662737?accountid=8361

Gibson, D., Gonzales, J. L., & Castanon, J. (2006). The importance of reputation and the role of public relations. *Public Relations Quarterly*, *51*(3), 15-18.

Hendrix, J. A., Hayes, D. C., & Kumar, P. D. (2012). *Public relations cases*. Cengage Learning.

Hiles, A. (Ed.). (2011). *Reputation management: Building and protecting your company's profile in a digital world*. A&C Black.

Horrigan, D. W. (2007). *Integrated marketing communications in higher education*. https://opencommons.uconn.edu/dissertations/AAI3265778/

Hsin, A., & Ortega, F. (2018). The effects of deferred action for childhood arrivals on the educational outcomes of undocumented students. *Demography*, *55*(4), 1487-1506.

Jacobs, L. (2020). Liaison, delegates, and advisors: An examination of the chief of staff role on college campuses. *Journal of Research on the College President*, *4*(1), 37-44.

Kalich, S. (2021). Here are the states banning transgender athletes in women's sports and the states considering it. *News Nation.* https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/here-are-the-states-banning-transgender-athletes-in-womens-sports-and-the-states-considering-it/

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954-2965.

Koebel, J. T. (2018). Facilitating university compliance using regulatory policy incentives. *Journal of College & University Law*, 160-207.

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2^{nd} ed). Sage Publications.

Lacayo-Mendoza, A., & Pablos-Heredero, C. D. (2016). Managing relationships and communications in higher education efficiently through digital social networks: The importance of the relational coordination model. *Dyna*, 83(195), 138-146. http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?pid=S0012-73532016000100018&script=sci_abstract&tlng=en

Ledingham, J. A. (2003). Explicating relationship management as a general theory of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15(2), 181-198.

Ledingham, J. A. (2006). Relationship management: A general theory of public relations. In Botan, C., & Hazleton, V. (Eds.), *Public relations theory II,* 465-483. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (1992). *Theories of human communication* (4^{th} ed.). Waveland press.

Lucas, C. J. (2016). *American higher education: A history*. Springer.

Lunenburg, F. C. (2011). Goal-setting theory of motivation. *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration*, 15(1), 1-6.

Mayda, A. M., & Peri, G. (2017). The economic impact of US immigration policies in the age of Trump. In G. Brown (ed.), *Economics and Policy in the Age of Trump* (pp. 69-78). London. Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) Press.

McPherson, P. (2021). *APLU statement on President Trump & violence on Capitol Hill*. Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. Retrieved from https://www.aplu.org/news-and-media/News/aplu-statement-on-president-trump--violence-on-capitol-hill

McPherson, P. (2016). *APLU President McPherson sends letter to President-elect Trump on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program*. Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. Retrieved from https://www.aplu.org/news-and-media/blog/aplu-president-mcpherson-sends-letter-to-president-elect-trump-on-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-daca-program

McPherson, P. (2017). *APLU statement on Trump administration's new order temporarily banning citizens of seven countries from entering the U.S. Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities*. Retrieved from http://www.aplu.org/news-and-media/News/aplu-statement-on-trump-administrations-new-order-temporarily-banning-citizens-of-seven-countries-from-entering-us

Milliken, J. B. (2017). *Message from Chancellor Milliken*. City University of New York. Retrieved from http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2017/01/29/message-from-chancellor-milliken/

Napolitano, J. (2015). Only yes means yes: An essay on university policies regarding sexual violence and sexual assault. *Yale Law & Policy Review 33(*2), 387-402.

Newfield, C. (2016). *The Great Mistake: How we wrecked public universities and how we can fix them.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Nienhusser, H. K. (2018). Higher education institutional agents as policy implementers: The case of policies that affect undocumented and DACAmented students. *The Review of Higher Education* 41(3), 423-453.

Osburn, S. (2021). Board receives equity report, reaffirms transgender participation: NCAA's top governing body also discusses sexual violence policy. National Collegiate Athletic Association. *Media Center.* https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/general-board-receives-equity-report-reaffirms-transgender-participation

Osland, A., Clinch, N., & Yang, I. (2018). DeVos's changes to Title IX enforcement. *Journal of Case Studies*, *36*(1), 20-31.

Pacheco, I., & Stamm, S. (2020). What CEOs said about George Floyd's death; A look at what the leaders at 35 big companies from Facebook to Bank of America said in response to the killing and recent protests. *Wall Street Journal*. New York, N.Y. https://search.proquest.com/docview/2409638894/4936A4770DBB4CABPQ/1?accountid=8361

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Payne, C. (2020, June 1). A message from Dean Payne on the death of Mr. George Floyd. *Columbus School of Law*. https://www.law.edu/news-and-events/2020/06/2019-0601-george-floyd.html

Peach, H. (2020). Using MS Word to do qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Research Tools and Resources*. Wheaton College, Buswell Library. Retrieved from https://guides.library.wheaton.edu/QualResearch/analysis

Peri, G., Shih, K., & Sparber, C. (2015). STEM workers, H-1B visas, and productivity in US cities. *Journal of Labor Economics*, *33*(S1), S225-S255.

Phelps, J. E., Harris, T. E., & Johnson, E. (1996). Exploring decision-making approaches and responsibility for developing marketing communications strategy. *Journal of Business Research*, 37(3), 217-223. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0148296396000720

Powers, W. R. (2005A). *Creating the verbatim transcript*. AltaMira Press.

Powers, W. R. (2005B). *On editing and context*. AltaMira Press.

Pyle, A. S., Linvill, D. L., & Gennett, S. P. (2018). From silence to condemnation: Institutional responses to "travel ban" Executive Order 13769. *Public Relations Review*, *44*(2), 214-223.

Sands, G. C., & Smith, R. J. (2000). Organizing for effective marketing communications in higher education: Restructuring for your competitive edge in marketing. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 9(2), 41-58.

Savin-Baden, M., &Major, C. H. (2013). *Qualitative research. The essential guide to theory and practice*. Routledge.

Simon, M. K. (2011). *Assumptions, limitations and delimitations.* (2011 ed.). Seattle, WA, Dissertation Success, LLC.

Spring, J. H. (2018). In service to the state: The political context of higher education in the United States. In Sommer, J. (Ed.), *The Academy in Crisis: Political Economy of Higher Education* (2nd ed., pp. 45-68). Routledge.

St. John, E., Daun-Barnett, N., & Moronski-Chapman, K. (2018). *Public policy and higher education: Reframing strategies for preparation, access, and college success*. Routledge.

The Advisory Board Company. (2011). *Structuring university advancement operations: The role of a vice president of external relations. Custom research brief.* Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://www.etsu.edu/125/documents/structuring-university-advancement-operations.pdf

Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A history of American higher education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Trayner, G. (2017). Why values matter–how public relations professionals can draw on moral foundations theory. *Public Relations Review*, *43*(1), 123-129.

University of Arkansas, Department of Anthropology. (2020). *Statement on racial injustice*. https://fulbright.uark.edu/departments/anthropology/diversity-and-inclusion/racialinjustice.php

University of Waterloo. (2020). *About university relations. Organizational structure*. Retrieved from https://uwaterloo.ca/university-relations/about-university-relations/organizational-structure

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (n.d.). *Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)*. Accessed from https://www.uscis.gov/archive/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca

Vanderbilt University (n.d.) *Division of communications. University relations*. Retrieved from https://www.vanderbilt.edu/communications/university-relations/

Washburn, J. (2008). *University, inc.: The corporate corruption of higher education*. Basic Books.

Whitford, E. (2021). The worst day for American democracy in my lifetime: College presidents called the violent unrest at the US Capitol building shocking, frightening and a "clear attempt to hijack the very foundation of our democracy." *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/01/07/higher-ed-leaders-condemn-riot-us-capitol

Whitley, R., Gläser, J., & Laudel, G. (2018). The impact of changing funding and authority relationships on scientific innovations. *Minerva, 56*(1), 109-134.

Appendices

Appendix A. Interview Questions

1. How do external events -- such as state or national and potentially unconnected to campus events -- influence your messaging?
2. Could you provide some (up to five) recent examples of messaging influenced by external events?
    a. How do you gauge their success?
    b. How were these messages received by stakeholders?
    c. Do you have an example of a message being demanded by stakeholders that your institution did not issue?
3. How do stakeholder expectations inform your decisions?
4. What role do campus/institutional values play in messaging decisions?
    a. What role do stakeholder values play in messaging decisions?
5. What strategies do you deploy to develop and manage stakeholder relationships?
6. What is the expectation on your campus for commenting on state/national events?
7. Does your institution/president perceive a duty or obligation for higher education leaders to comment on social or political issues?
    a. Is commenting on state or national events a role your president readily embraces?
    b. What factors play into a willingness or a reluctance to issue messaging on external events?
8. What is your strategy for responding to proposed legislation at the state and federal level?
    a. Does this match stakeholder expectations?
9. What risks do you identify for your campus when evaluating whether your president should make statements about external events?

10. How are university values connected to, and reflected in, campus messaging?
11. What trends are you studying that might impact your institutions, and what structural adjustments are they considering in response to these trends?

Appendix B. Informed Consent Document

Informed Consent Document

I, ____________________, volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Laura Jacobs from the University of Arkansas. I understand that the project is designed to gather information that influences senior university relations professionals when making decisions about messaging and how institutional values, and stakeholder expectations, play a role in those decisions.

I will be one of approximately five (5) people being interviewed for this research. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.

I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher from the University of Arkansas in an one-on-one setting either in person or via teleconferencing technology. The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes. Notes will be written by the researcher during the interview. An audio recording of the interview and dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.

I understand that the researcher will not identify me, or my organization, by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects at the University of Arkansas. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through contacting Iroshi (Ro) Windwalker, IRB coordinator at the University of Arkansas by telephone 479-575-2208 or email, irb@uark.edu.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

______________________________ ______________________________

My Signature Date

______________________________ ______________________________

Printed Name Signature of the Investigator

For further information, please contact: Laura Jacobs, Principal Investigator, laura@uark.edu or 479-[redacted]; or Michael T. Miller, Dissertation Director, mtmille@uark.edu or 479-575-3582.

Appendix D. Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	Laura Jacobs
From:	Justin R Chimka, Chair IRB Expedited Review
Date:	08/05/2021
Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Action Date:	08/05/2021
Protocol #:	1903182093
Study Title:	Symbolism or Substance: Factors Influencing Campus Messaging Decisions and their Alignment with Institutional Values
Expiration Date:	07/15/2022
Last Approval Date:	

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Michael T Miller, Key Personnel

Page 1 of 1

Appendix D. Invitation Letter

Dear [NAME]:

I am writing to invite your participation in a study I am conducting for partial fulfillment of a doctorate in higher education administration at the University of Arkansas. As a longtime leader and employee of University Relations at the U of A, I have gravitated toward a research topic that seeks to understand leadership decision-making as it relates to values-based messaging and stakeholder expectation. Secondarily, I'm interested in learning about leadership decisions related to such messaging and when presidential messaging is appropriate and utilized.

My request is for no more than an hour of your time to have what I hope is a lively and mutually informative discussion to answer a series of questions. I would be pleased to provide the questions in advance for the sake of expediency and allow you time to consider your responses.

If you agree to participate, then kindly reply to this message with some possible times and dates when you might be available for a Zoom call. I will schedule that time immediately.

The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, and I will send you an informed consent document once we set an appointment.

Thank you so much for your consideration and I look forward to answering any questions you may have as well as a future conversation.

Sincerely,

Laura Jacobs
Chief of Staff & Vice Chancellor for University Relations
University of Arkansas

Appendix E. Email Follow Up

Dear [NAME]:

I hope you received my letter dated [DATE] requesting your participation in a doctoral dissertation study. I hope you have had time to favorably consider my invitation and will agree to participate.

Do you have an hour of availability on any of the following dates and times?

- Time/Date 1
- Time/Date 2

- Time/Date 3
- Time/Date 4
- Time/Date 5

Thank you again for your consideration and I look forward to connecting.

Laura Jacobs
Chief of Staff and Vice Chancellor
University of Arkansas

Appendix F. Thank You Note

Dear [NAME]:

Thank you so much for your participation in my doctoral dissertation study. I recognize how precious your time and candor is and found the information to be exceedingly valuable.

As I begin my data analysis, I will never forget how you made it possible for me to capture the information necessary.

If I can ever be of service, please don't hesitate to ask.

With sincere appreciation,

Laura Jacobs