

Kansas State University

Strategic Plan for the Division of Communications and Marketing (DCM)

1. Executive Summary

The Kansas State University Division of Communications and Marketing will establish itself as a leading communications and marketing organization while developing an exciting and engaging brand that resonates with target audiences. By leveraging innovative strategies, captivating creative, and compelling storytelling, the division will showcase the K-State brand to target audiences, aligning with the Next-Gen K-State Strategic Plan.

2. Mission

To amplify Kansas State University's brand and grow the reputation of K-State through innovative communications, strategic marketing, and engaging storytelling that highlight the university's impact on Kansas, the nation, and the world.

3. Vision

To establish K-State as a recognized leader in education, research, and engagement impact by delivering engaging, innovative communication and marketing strategies that resonate with constituent audiences and drive performance.

4. Core Values

Next Gen Strategic Plan Values:

- **Connection:** We are stronger together
- **Courage:** We lead with bold conviction
- **Impact:** We listen, adapt and challenge the status quo
- **Learner-focused:** We welcome all who seek to learn and grow
- **People-centered:** We are everything because of our people
- **Stewardship:** We are committed to our future

Communications and Marketing Shared Values:

- **Collaboration:** Partnering with units and external stakeholders.
 - **Innovation:** Adopting cutting-edge technologies and creative methods.
 - **Excellence:** Delivering high-quality, impactful outputs to achieve measurable results.
 - **Opportunity:** Representing the many voices of K-State.
 - **Accountability:** Ensuring goals are met with integrity and transparency.
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Strategic Goals and Tactics

Goal 1: Be a Leading Communications and Marketing Organization

Tactics:

- *1.1 Strengthen Engagement with Campus Partners:*
 - Reintroduce a communications and marketing council with all communicators across campus to share updates, strategies, and the direction of K-State's brand.
 - Engage college and major unit communicators regularly to gain feedback, identify shared opportunities, and strengthen communications.
 - Initiate collaborative projects, resource sharing, and transparency of marketing strategies, tactics, and outcomes.
 - *1.2 Transition to a Strategic and Proactive Team:*
 - Reposition DCM as a strategic partner that enables and empowers units to better communicate and market to achieve goals.
 - Identify strategic initiatives that advance university priorities and collaboratively develop plans to achieve imperatives.
 - Build trust and become a valued partner for leadership on key initiatives across campuses.
 - *1.3 Invest in People Development:*
 - Encourage storytelling by enabling the team to take creative risks and explore new ways of engaging target audiences.
 - Promote professional development through webinars, training, and exposure to new creative ideas.
 - Attract and retain talent in creative, writing, video production, and leadership roles within the division.
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Goal 2: Develop an Exciting and Engaging Brand for Kansas State University

Tactics:

- *2.1 Create a Modern, Performance-Focused Brand:*
 - Redevelop the brand story, manifesto, and guidelines with a new, modern visual language to represent K-State.
 - Provide resources and training to educate the campus community on consistent brand storytelling.
 - Develop measures to help guide decision making and enable accountability
- *2.2 Generate Exciting, Entertaining, and Engaging Content:*
 - Embrace digital transformation and utilize new mediums to share authentic content.
 - Tailor content for specific target audiences and channels to align with imperative goals.

- Highlight stories of students, faculty, alumni, and partners in innovative ways.
 - *2.3 Regularly Assess the Brand with Constituents:*
 - Add tools to track K-State's market position relative to peer institutions.
 - Develop a brand assessment program to gather insights from stakeholders and measure impact regularly.
 - *2.4 Expand Awareness Regionally and Nationally:*
 - Use storytelling to engage target audiences and build interest in K-State.
 - Adopt an omnichannel strategy to deliver content across paid, earned, shared, and owned channels.
 - Measure success and refine strategies to enhance effectiveness.
 - *2.5 Develop Resources for Campus-Wide Storytelling:*
 - Partner to implement common platforms and tools to reduce costs and increase efficiency.
 - Realign existing systems to enhance storytelling and effective communication to internal and external audiences.
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Goal 3: Develop Innovative Communications, Captivating Creative, Engaging Storytelling, and Strategic Marketing to Achieve Shared Goals

Tactics:

- *3.1 Collaborate with Admissions and Recruitment:*
 - Develop marketing strategies that align with enrollment goals and target prospective students effectively.
 - *3.2 Partner with KSU Foundation, K-State Alumni Association, and K-State Athletics:*
 - Coordinate activities and initiatives to engage donors, alumni, and the campus community.
 - *3.3 Support Enrollment and Student Success Initiatives:*
 - Work alongside Enrollment and Student Success to elevate the K-State student experience.
 - *3.4 Redevelop K-State.edu:*
 - Reimagine the university website as a brand-first platform that highlights innovative teaching, research, engagement, and the people behind these achievements.
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Alignment with Next-Gen K-State Strategic Imperatives

- Enrollment Growth: Attract diverse learners through innovative campaigns and personalized outreach.
- Operational Excellence: Build a cohesive "One K-State" voice with streamlined tools and unified strategies.
- Research and Fundraising: Highlight transformative research and fundraising success stories through compelling content.
- Fundraising and Philanthropic Support: Help generate pride and engagement and drive activity for fundraising and support

Five-Year Measures by Goal (2026–2030)

Goal 1: Be a Leading Communications and Marketing Organization

YEAR	MEASURES
2026	Establish baseline for campus communicator engagement, launch DCM partner satisfaction survey, initiate quarterly reporting of performance metrics. Launch updated brand guide online.
2027	25% increase in council participation, 10% rise in partner satisfaction, pilot 3 collaborative projects
2028	50% of units integrated into annual planning, launch strategic project tracker, 25% increase in collaborative content
2029	75% of units involved in DCM-supported strategy, launch shared dashboard, 90% staff PD participation
2030	100% strategic engagement with colleges/units, recognized by leadership as a key partner

Goal 2: Develop an Exciting and Engaging Brand for Kansas State University

YEAR	MEASURES
2026	Launch new brand guide and training, benchmark brand awareness (regional and national)
2027	15% increase in positive brand equity, establish baseline national awareness, track omnichannel impressions. Increase social media engagement by 20%.
2028	15% increase in unaided brand awareness, 10% growth in out-of-state brand familiarity, 30% increase in engagement with branded content. Achieve a 15% improvement in website traffic, organic and paid, annually.
2029	Achieve Top 3 brand awareness among peer institutions in the Midwest region, based on brand tracking studies. Launch constituent brand tracker, implement brand health scorecard.
2030	50%+ growth in brand engagement, consistent brand application across 95%+ of units, recognized nationally for brand excellence

Goal 3: Develop Innovative Communications, Creative, Storytelling, and Marketing

YEAR	MEASURES
2026	Launch collaboration with Admissions/Foundation/Alumni, begin K-State.edu revamp, benchmark video engagement
2027	20% increase in digital content engagement, 15% increase in inquiries from digital campaigns, pilot immersive storytelling formats
2028	Launch full brand-first website, 25% growth in digital conversions, 2 national-level storytelling campaigns
2029	40% increase in engagement from creative content, optimize digital journeys by audience. Grow social media following by 25%.
2030	50%+ increase in earned media value, increase awareness by 30% amongst target constituents. Grow K-State's reputation among peer leaders and institutions.

Conclusion

The Kansas State University Division of Communications and Marketing is poised to transform how the institution connects with audiences locally, nationally, and globally. By becoming a leading communications and marketing organization, developing a bold and engaging brand, and embracing innovative storytelling and creative strategies, the division will amplify K-State's impact and visibility. Aligned with the Next-Gen K-State Strategic Plan, this roadmap ensures accountability through clear five-year goals and measurable outcomes. Through collaboration, innovation, and strategic alignment, the Division will elevate K-State's reputation and drive meaningful engagement across all platforms and audiences—fueling institutional pride, enrollment growth, philanthropic support, and long-term success.