

Communicating Our Diversity

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 THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

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**“You cannot not
communicate.”**

--Paul Watzlawik

Goals

- I. Explore the idea of a “**diversity brand**” and understand the challenges of creating one
- II. Recognize **best practices** and **identify strategies** for successfully communicating about equity and diversity
- III. Consider **next steps** for you and for your unit/dept. around communicating diversity

Brand = Communication Shorthand



#RaceTogether



Jamil Smith ✓

@JamilSmith

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The only folks happy about Starbucks baristas discussing race with customers are the suits who run it. Feel-good liberalism at its worst.

10:14 PM - 16 Mar 2015

374 RETWEETS 357 FAVORITES



Jessica Misener ✓

@jessmisener

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if only Selma had just put in a starbucks

8:54 AM - 17 Mar 2015

50 RETWEETS 79 FAVORITES



Why Diversity Branding Matters

- Enhances the connection/engagement with your constituents
- Promotes your DNA--mission and vision
- Showcases recognition/points of pride
- Helps create clarity and focus for your work
- Sets you apart from the competition
- Provides your “business” value

(Antonelli, 2013)

Challenges

- Higher education professionals wear many hats
- Often focused on day-to-day management/initiatives
 - Need for more infrastructure/greater capacity
- Little time for effective communication
 - Lack of clarity around key messages and goals
 - Focused on event marketing (as opposed to strategy)

General Best Practices

- Be mindful of your audience(s) and methods
- Carefully consider responses to biased/offensive communication
- Pay attention to language



GRAY-ACE PANSEXUAL AFRO-LATINA

Photo courtesy of S. Deragon, identityprojectsf.com

Strategy #1: Congruence

- Align your communications tactics with your organizational values
 - Congruency informs authenticity
 - Remember: your audience is savvy
 - There is value in communicating about areas in need of improvement (as long as you follow through with action)

NEWS » CAMPUS

In hiring, officials seek to rid unintentional bias

The University is continuing a plan that aims to improve the school's hiring processes.

Strategy #2: Creativity

- Think beyond brochures and flyers.
 - Don't rely only on visual representation.
 - Profile stories/press releases about points of pride/accolades/signature initiatives
 - The ways in which you organize your space, collaborative relationships you have in place, etc.



GUIDELINES for Accessible Meetings and Events

Attitudinal Access

- Always ask what accommodations are desired — Individuals who use wheelchairs may be more or less mobile than you suspect, not all individuals who are blind read Braille, and not all individuals who are deaf use ASL.
- When interacting with or asking questions of an individual with a disability, speak directly to that individual.
- It is okay to use words such as walk, hear, and see.

Strategy #3: Collaboration

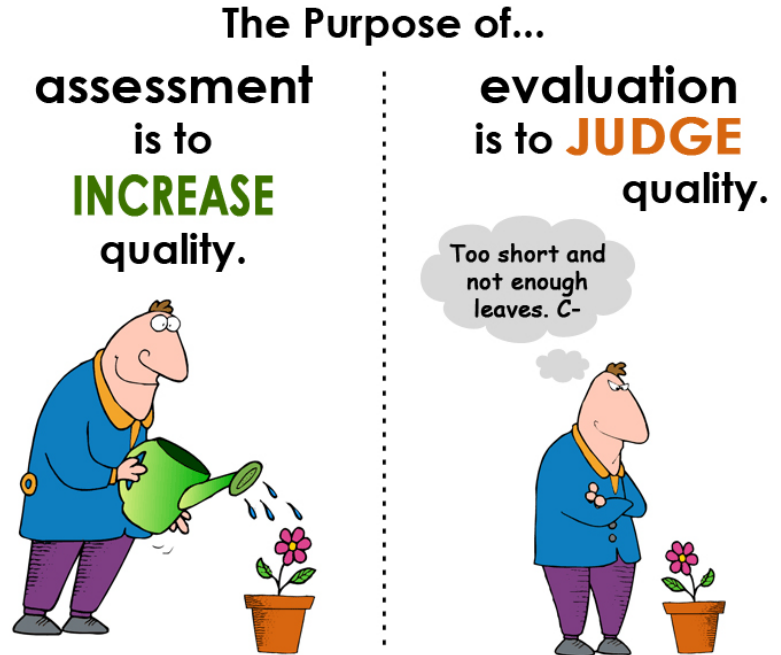


- Build communications partnerships
 - Develop relationships with key stakeholders/media personnel
 - Leverage in-house expertise
 - Work collaboratively to address issues/crises

Strategy #4: Check In

- Assess your strategies
 - Number of: stories placed, social media followers, program attendees, etc.
 - Opinion shifts within target audiences
 - Strategic collaborations
 - Policy/program changes

(Quiroz, 2013)



In Review

- **Be congruent** with your organizational values and mission.
- Explore **creative** ways to tell your diversity story.
- Relationships w/**collaborators** enhance communications.
- **Check in** regularly to see if your communication strategies are meeting your goals.

Next Steps

Consider a context where you might be involved in communicating about equity and diversity (e.g., your own unit or department; an initiative in which you are involved; or your own personal commitment)

- What are – and should be – the next steps around communicating a commitment to equity and diversity?
- What role can – and should – you play in the communication of this commitment?

Thank You!

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