

Joseph A. Brennan, MBA, PhD

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Vice President – Marketing and Communications

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Montclair State University

Jan 2019 to
Present

Vice President | University Communications & Marketing

Established robust C&M functions as inaugural VP. Manages \$6 M budget and leads a highly productive team of two assistant VPs, three directors, a market researcher, a project manager, and 15 creative professionals across various communication channels. Formed a cohesive team with a healthy, positive work culture; improved diversity, and introduced best-practices approaches and innovations. Provides expert guidance and effective communications support for a new president. Drives revenue growth.

- *Innovated student recruitment marketing strategies, resulting in a 35% improvement in advertising ROI, 200% growth in news coverage, social media engagement rates 2-3x higher than national benchmarks, and contributing to record-breaking first-year classes for three successive years and the highest enrollment in institutional history.*
- *Designed and executed metrics dashboard and custom "content categorization" system and implemented strategic priority-setting and project management practices to improve outcomes and efficiency.*

University at Albany – State University of New York

Aug 2015 to
Mar 2018

VP Communications & Marketing | Clinical Professor of Business | Spec Assistant to President

Spearheaded public relations and marketing initiatives as VP for a public research university boasting 17,300 students. Directed a high-performing team of 23 professionals to manage news media relations, internal communications, web development, social media, photo/video, and marketing services. Expertly navigated communications during nationally publicized bias incidents, ensuring transparency and accountability and protecting the university's reputation.

- *Headed comprehensive rebranding initiative, introduced persona-based storytelling methodologies, and directed marketing initiatives that produced 18% growth in applications, a 2% drop in summer melt, and the largest freshman class ever. Sponsored a successful major overhaul of the website.*
- *Expanded earned news coverage by 77% in the inaugural year and 40% in the following year, cost-effectively elevating the university's visibility and reach.*

University of Iowa

Sept 2013 to
Aug 2015

Vice President, Strategic Communications

Directed news media relations, communications, and marketing efforts, including branding social media, web presence, photo/video, and graphics services; oversaw Hancher Auditorium, the UI's performing arts center. Provided strategic counsel to the president, provost, and senior executives, guiding communication strategies on complex and sensitive issues.

- *Orchestrated comprehensive statewide multichannel campaign, resulting in significant improvements in visibility and perceptions, assisting in thwarting a potential \$60M state budget cut, and contributed to record-breaking freshman class through increased applications from in-state students.*
- *Led the launch of innovative programs to highlight student accomplishments, resulting in over 6,000 earned news stories and 1.2M social media impressions within an inaugural year.*

Associate Vice President | University Communications

Led comprehensive university-wide communication strategy, policies, and planning initiatives, overseeing the 32-person central team, and managing a \$5M budget at a 29,000-student AAU public research university. Synchronized decentralized staff of over 150 communicators through the establishment and leadership of a resolute "communicators network."

- *Superintended integrated advocacy program aimed at garnering public and legislative backing for the university, resulting in securing \$100M in fresh capital and operating funds.*
- *Facilitated seamless transition of ownership of public radio station to community broadcasting organization, guaranteeing uninterrupted service to the region while generating a \$4M endowment and eradicating a \$250K annual subsidy. Designed and managed all aspects of the transaction, which was the first in SUNY's history.*

Early Career

Executive Director, Communications & Marketing – Ohio University

Executive Director, Marketing & University Relations – University of the Pacific

Executive Director, Public Relations and Marketing – University of Toledo

Public Relations Director – Delgado Community College

Manager, Research Support Services & Public Communications – NYS Research Institute on Addictions

SELECTED CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS

- Fostered substantial social media growth with TikTok engagement rate of 60%, ranking among the top 25 fastest-growing U.S. university TikTok accounts.
- Designed integrated advocacy campaign that produced \$100M in new revenue for an AAU university.
- Deflected planned state funding cuts of up to \$60M for a flagship Big 10 university.
- Innovated marketing tactics, producing 18% surge in applications, a 2% decline in summer melt, and enrollment of the largest freshman classes for three research universities.
- Established a newsletter that reached over 6,000 unique visitors per week, boasting a 36% click-through rate, and enhancing employee pride and engagement.
- Implemented targeted multi-channel strategies that reduced negative perceptions from 13% to 6%.
- Increased national and international news coverage by over 200% and placed stories in major outlets.
- Won top national awards for “best university website overhaul” and “best public relations campaign.”
- Managed the three largest pledge drives and produced best ratings in 20 years for a public radio station.

SKILLS

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|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ▪ Marketing & Communications Strategy | ▪ Multimillion Budget Management | ▪ Leadership & Team Management |
| ▪ Revenue Growth Initiatives | ▪ Research and Data Analysis | ▪ Executive Communications |
| ▪ Strategic Planning & Execution | ▪ Crisis Communications | ▪ News Media Relations |
| ▪ Budgeting | ▪ Stakeholder Relationships | ▪ Digital Marketing Technology |
| ▪ Brand Management | ▪ Cross Functional Collaboration | ▪ Emotional Intelligence |
| | ▪ Working in Academic Setting | |

EDUCATION

MBA - Marketing, GPA 4.0 | Beta Gamma Sigma, Phi Kappa Phi honors | University of the Pacific, CA

PhD & MA - English, Presidential Fellow, VP Grad Student Assn., Teaching Assistant | University at Buffalo, NY

BA - English & Psychology, Summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, Psy Chi honors | Wayne State University, MI

DISTINCTIONS

Accredited in Public Relations

Public Relations Society of America, College of Fellows

PUBLICATIONS

17 peer-reviewed professional studies of higher education rankings, crisis communication, and leadership, communication metrics. Full list and links at www.josephabrennan.com

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- American Marketing Association
- Council for the Advancement & Support of Higher Education
- Public Relations Society of America

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management | Reviewer (current)
- PRSA Counselors to Higher Education Professional Interest Section | Chair, Past Chair, Chair Elect, Board Member (former), Advisory Group Member (current)
- American Marketing Association | National Conference Planning Committee Member, NJ Chapter Board Member (former)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- St. Peter's Episcopal Church (Morristown, NJ) | Adult Ed Committee Member, Meditation Group leader, Lector (current)
- People, Inc. Services to the Developmentally Disabled (Buffalo, NY) | Board Member and Marketing Committee Chair (former)
- American Red Cross Chapter (New Orleans, LA) | Board Member and Communications Committee Chair; Disaster Relief Services Volunteer (former)

CLIFTON STRENGTHS

Strategic, Learner, Arranger, Activator, Individualization