

Media Task Force 2018-19 Report

Members:

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This new task force looked broadly at communications and messaging around the positive contributions of faculty across a range of activities. A beginning of the year poll, first of Senators and then of faculty at large, gave us a sense of the kinds of projects people might be interested in pursuing and the kinds of messages that they hoped to see. We used this survey to guide our work.

The year started with the [OpEd Project](#), an intensive 2-day training with national columnists on how to craft editorials and columns that will translate out the work we do and that will reach a larger public often suspicious of the role of higher education. To date, 7 editorials have been published out of that project, with more promised by September of 2019.

With the help of Brooke Killion, our fantastic RA, we worked through several related [Twitter campaigns](#), including a #FunFactsFacultyFriday series on professors who have interesting interests; a FirstGen series in conjunction with the launch of the University's FirstGen effort; two different series efforts on higher education's value and social purpose; and various more responsive and timely messages promoting or responding to events. These tweets, usually with photos, reached thousands of viewers and helped to grow our twitter following to a modest but respectable 700 followers.

Candace White's Public Relations 340 took us on as a "client" to help us shape messages about faculty. They closely workshopped the scripts for our two videos (below) to reflect their sense of the larger publics we would like to address to "renovate" the negative or erroneous images of professors they might have accumulated through cultural and university messages. Their final projects, 5 "pitchbooks" of SWOT analyses, ideas, interviews, and suggestions have proven valuable.

The two videos we produced, with the help of undergraduate Grey Mangan, the UT Libraries, VFL Films (especially Barry Rice), and consultation from Theatre professors Jed Diamond and Steve Sherman, both had considerable audience. [Tennessee: Home](#) was entirely student and faculty produced and emphasized the mix of Tennessee roots and international talent that faculty bring to the people of this state. The second, "[A Place at the Table](#)," involved the professional services of VFL films and a voice over from Phillip Fulmer, talking about how faculty work hard to give the people of this state a great education. That video has received

over 48,000 views and engagements. These videos build significantly on last year's experiment with the #UTellOurStory videos of a professor/student pair talking about the classroom. Out of that positive relationship with VFL films came the opportunity to consult with Athletics' communications team and collaborate on some specific efforts. At regular season home basketball games this year, we were able to feature a faculty member who is both an accomplished scholar and a long-time supporter of either Men's Basketball or the Lady Vols. We are also working on more ideas about connected faculty expertise to particular sports, a venture that could involve collaboration with the Senate's Athletics Committee next year.

Looking ahead, we hope to work more closely with the VC for Communications on the content of messages about the faculty, improving the visibility of faculty in university messaging, and additional collaborations with other units on campus and committees of the Senate. Our pilot for "Elevator Pitch" can be a model for a series next year that can be more hand-held and quickly produced. We also hope to help with revised content for STRIDE and facilitate a second life for the Play It oUT Project this coming year with Enrollment Management.