

Communications & PR Annual Report FY2019

“The two words ‘information’ and ‘communication’ are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.” – Sydney J. Harris

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Executive Summary

Unit Definition

Communication & Public Relations (CPR) exists within the Comm & Info Unit to disseminate information internally through employee communications and to foster shared information across units. CPR is also responsible for external communications designed to tell the story of Facilities Services through relationship building and execution of the department's marketing plan while promoting the department to campus and the surrounding community.

FY19 Operating Highlights

- Facebook likes have increased by 21.7% over the previous fiscal year proving that campaigns for 2018-19 were successful.
- UTFS hosted a very successful SEC Facilities Services Conference with attendees from all 14 universities. This conference allowed the department to shine in front of peers who spoke very highly of the conference and planned activities.
- The first-ever Volunteer First Impressions Contest was launched in Fall 2018 with a goal of partnering with students, faculty and staff to make improvements to public spaces while providing positive PR for UTFS. The campaign created quite a bit of buzz with more than 100 submissions and 12 projects selected.
- As part of an effort to better communicate internally, employee comment boxes were installed throughout campus providing an anonymous way for staff to voice concerns, complaints, praise and ideas. Comments were submitted either online or at box locations, and each comment was addressed by Dave Irvin, Assistant Vice Chancellor.
- Through diligent fundraising efforts over several years, the Chuck Thompson fund was fully endowed in 2018, therefore lending permanency to a project that is very important to the FS staff.
- As former Communications Coordinator Brooke Krempa left her role in May 2019, Sam Jones Ledford was hired beginning in FY20. Sam came to the department with a degree from UT and 8+ years of experience in marketing, public relations and communications.
- On the heels of being awarded the Most Improved Division for the Big Orange Family Campaign, UTFS once again pulled strong numbers across units and contributed to nearly 60% participation across campus.
- The newly formed Communications Committee worked together to address internal communications strategies and developed a plan to implement "Communications Champions" in each subunit. These Champions will act as liaisons between CPR and their teams to foster better, more open communication about events, communiques, etc.

Vision

The vision of Communications & Public Relations is two-fold. Internally, the vision is to become a forethought in the minds of all UTFS employees as each person serves as a “face” of the department. This provides ownership as each employee recognizes that their position matters to the overall departmental mission and that CPR wants others to take an interest in every function of Facilities from Central Supply to Building Services. Externally, the vision is to craft a message to campus and the surrounding community that Facilities Services is truly here to serve while changing the perception that UTFS is only visible when bad or unexpected issues arise. The vision of CPR is that every individual on campus would come to recognize UTFS as a dependable, integral part of the University.

Moving Forward

In FY20, CPR is taking a brand-new approach in external communications as we shift away from reactive communications and more toward proactive communications whenever possible. We plan to do this through scheduled social media campaigns focusing on the scope of work for UTFS as well as our staff who give their all for Tennessee every day. Supporting public relations strategies will compliment these campaigns as we increase the number of press release distributions and internal news stories while working alongside the Office of Marketing & Communications to leverage their resources with ours.

Internally, FY 2019-20 will see many changes in the way we reach out to employees. The Communications Committee will play a prominent role in addressing issues the department faces, and the Communications Coordinator will be available as often as possible to speak directly with staff and supervisors about events, announcements and ways we can work together to streamline communication processes. It is the goal of CPR to build relationships both within the department and externally that will allow UTFS the opportunity to shine BEFORE unexpected issues arise.

Sam Ledford, Communications Coordinator
Communications and Public Relations
October 14, 2019

Unit Definition

The Communications & Public Relations unit's charter is:

Internal Communications – This unit is responsible for communicating with front line employees, fostering cross talk between units, sharing information as it relates to work, projects, etc. and breaking down unit silos.

External Communications – CPR upholds a standard for the UTFS brand by maintaining the fs.utk.edu, creating social media campaigns and using analytics as benchmarks of effectiveness, creation and dissemination of newsletter publications (both weekly and bi-monthly) and the upkeep of the campus building representatives list for communications regarding outages and/or emergencies.

Branding Enforcement – This unit is responsible for maintaining all printed and broadcast material templates by working hand-in-hand with the Office of Communications & Marketing.

Liaison with creative & campus communications – Through relationship building and constant contact, CPR serves alongside creative & campus communicators to ensure that all messaging is consistent and in line with brand guidelines.

Special Events – Working alongside the Special Projects unit, CPR helps to plan and promote most UTFS special events. CPR is also responsible for morale boosting programs such as Employee of the Month and the Exceptional Team award which seeks to honor individuals who truly embody the spirit of a VOLunteer.

Emergency Task Force – The Communications Coordinator serves as the Public Information Officer as part of the Emergency Task Force helping to release information in the event of an emergency via UT Alert, social media and/or through traditional media release.

Promote/Market Facilities Services to Greater Campus Community – This unit works alongside others in the department to promote and market Facilities Services to our customers on campus through participation in campus events and distribution of printed and promotional materials.

Reporting – CPR works with other units across Facilities Services for the completion of the Annual Report, Quarterly Project Reports & the FPI Survey. These reports provide objective data as a way of holding the department accountable. In addition, CPR organizes the customer satisfaction survey and employee satisfaction survey which serve as a gauge for where we are and help the department create goals for where want to be.

Guides - This unit also works on the upkeep and any necessary revisions of the Departmental Service Guide and Customer Handbook, both of which are necessary tools for helping customers understand the scope of Facilities Services and the way we do business.

Operating Highlights

Communications & Public Relations -

Social Media Outreach - The CPR office is responsible for the management of the department's five different social media platforms – Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest. The reach of the department's existing social media accounts expanded during the past 12 months. The FS Twitter account now has 1,382 followers compared to 1,237 in September 2017, the Instagram account now has 759 followers compared to 589 in September 2017, and Facebook likes have increased to 654 from 548. These platforms are used to promote department events, announcements, notices, and accomplishments while telling the story of Facilities Services in a way that better helps our customers and potential customers understand what we do. Each month, the office produces analytics of each of the social media sites to track the department's progress and reach.

Big Orange Family Campaign - The communications coordinator serves on the executive committee for the UT Knoxville Big Orange Family Campaign. The coordinator organizes all team leads and materials, promotes the campaign, and helps wherever necessary. During this year's campaign, campus as a whole reached 59% participation.

Facilities Services Student Assistant Scholarship Fund – Now in its second year, the 2018 Student Assistant Scholarship Fund was awarded to two deserving assistants – Grace Shoffner and Bridget Ash. CPR assisted Special Projects with a special recognition ceremony for both winners and offered promotional support through social media and the website. Fundraising efforts continue for this award, and it's expected that the Scholarship fund will be available for years to come.

American School & University - During the year the CPR office organized, created, and submitted separate portfolios featuring campus buildings for American School & University publications. The portfolios consisted of architectural-style images, which the communications coordinator organized and shot with the assistance of UT Photography, project data, site plans, and manufacturer lists. In August 2019, UT's pedestrian mall west extension was awarded a landscape architecture citation in the 2019 American School and University Architectural Portfolio, the premier competition honoring excellence in educational design.

Office of Emergency Management - The communications coordinator is involved with the Facilities Services portion of emergency management in various levels. The coordinator acts as the Emergency Operations Center Coordinator for the department, as well as support for the call center. The office is also responsible for the upkeep of the department's Emergency Response Plan that ties into campus-wide emergency response. The coordinator also acts as the campus-wide Public Information Officer for Facilities Services related emergencies.

Volunteer First Impressions – In late 2018, Facilities Services launched its first-ever Volunteer First Impressions contest aimed at sprucing up public spaces across campus that have the ability to make or break a first impression for our guests, students, staff, faculty, etc. More than 100 entries were received for the contest, and 12 winners were picked by a committee vote. Projects ranged from cleaning and paint touch up to installation of window film to deter bird strikes. All 12 projects will be wrapped up by September 2019. The impact this contest has had across campus is exceptional, and plans are

underway to carry this contest forward in 2019.

Surveys – At the recommendation of the Culture Committee, CPR did not conduct an Employee Satisfaction Survey in 2019. The survey is currently undergoing changes that will provide a more comprehensive picture of employee satisfaction. Each year, the communications coordinator is responsible for the completion of the 450-question APPA FPI Survey. The coordinator gathers all the necessary information from Facilities, as well as other campus units.

Building Representative List - The office continues to update the campus-wide Building Representative List twice annually and as needed throughout the year. This affords Facilities Services the ability to keep a more accurate list for both maintenance and emergency preparedness. The office also maintains an emergency contact list for the use of the Office of Emergency Management and UTPD. Once the list is updated it is posted to the Facilities Services website.

Facilities Services Annual Report - The Facilities Services Annual Report is one of the large-scale projects the Communications & Public Relations office completes on an annual basis. Last year's document details a department overview, unit summaries, and unit/office annual reports. The communications coordinator and student assistants worked with each Facilities Services office to update their summary and annual review information for the document. Each year the report is published on the department website.

SEC Chief Facilities Officers Conference – In 2019, UTFS hosted the SEC Chief Facilities Officers Conference, and CPR assisted Special Projects with the planning of this two-day event that incorporates Facilities Officers from our peer universities in the SEC. The two departments collaborated on the event to plan various activities, dinners and seminars for the participants. This includes space and event rentals, food orders, gift bags, transportation, and hosting. The event was a huge success with UT emeritus professor Dr. William Bass being the highlight of the conference. We received positive remarks from numerous participants about the conference as well as our campus.

Morale Boosters – CPR is responsible for making sure our employees get the recognition they deserve. That's why we honor both a star employee and an exceptional team every month. Both of these awards involve social media and website promotion as well as other "perks." CPR also works with Special Projects to plan and execute the 4th of July Picnic & Holiday Party. These parties are a chance for all of Facilities Services to come together for fellowship and fun which in turn creates a bond between co-workers which boosts morale.

Vision

Ideally, CPR would have 100% visibility throughout the department and all UTFS employees would complete their tasks with an awareness of how their job contributes to CPR. This means Supervisors would share photos and video taken of their teams, their work and how FS contributes to the system's overall goal of becoming a Top 25 research school.

Internally, CPR would have the ability to reach every UTFS employee through a variety of communications methods with the capability to track who is reading messages via email, text, etc. in order to analyze the most effective methods for disseminating important information and special events and adjust the communications strategy to better meet the needs of our employees.

Additionally, CPR would be integral in creating relationships that cross the unitary boundaries and silos that currently exist allowing for open communication through special events that focus on getting to know co-workers across the department. As relationships are built, silos break down because co-workers feel invested in each other and the work we do across Facilities Services. CPR would facilitate these opportunities as an opportunity to strengthen the department and boost morale.

Externally, CPR will work alongside other communicators to educate campus and the surrounding community on the scope of work for Facilities Services and how the department has a direct impact on student life, academics and the University's long-range Master Plan.

UTFS social media pages would become a valuable resource for students, staff and faculty providing important campus information on closures, outages, etc. balanced with human interest posts that show the heart behind the hard work that goes into UTFS. Through social media and website content, the story of Facilities Services would be one about people AND procedure rather than one over the other. Followers will increase, and the vision of CPR is to see a 25% increase in the number of followers across all platforms by August 2020. From there, CPR would like to convert this audience from followers to ambassadors helping to spread the mission of the department to all stakeholders.

Additionally, CPR would like to see more students and faculty utilizing the One Call Line and LiveSafe app to communicate hazards and maintenance issues as well as a way of bridging the divide between the student population and Facilities Services showing that we're all in this together as we work to help students achieve their goals and advance research done across campus.

Challenges/Needs Assessment

Hurdles

Two of the biggest hurdles we face for this unit are the way in which we reach front line employees and determining effectiveness of our external communications. Many of our employees do not check their email, and it's easy to forget information that's passed along orally. Additionally, we are extremely limited in ways we can currently track open rates, responses, etc. for our communication methods leaving uncertainty as to whether or not these campaigns are working. It would be in the best interest of this office to have access to a text messaging platform and a trackable e-newsletter platform for important staff communications and reminders.

The Communications Coordinator also foresees challenges as she continues to learn the ins and outs of the department while performing her duties according to the communications plan. Additionally, desk time is a challenge for CPR. It is the responsibility of the Communications Coordinator to maintain up-to-date content for the website and social media, but it is often difficult to devote time to these things which means they run the risk of being pushed to the back burner. This is also the case with devoting time to new ideas and thought processes. It is easy for this office to run on autopilot because there's often not time to dedicate to innovation and idea development.

Visibility is an issue for this unit as well. While it is largely the philosophy of Facilities Services to remain in the background, it's a challenge to adjust that way of thinking, both within our department and outside of it. It's the responsibility of CPR to shine a light on all of the great things that happen through our staff and through partnerships with other departments across campus. Most people aren't aware of Facilities Services until something goes wrong so we it's a challenge to shift the way CPR markets ourselves to the on-campus community moving away from a reactive approach and more toward a proactive one.

Lastly, it remains a challenge of this unit to facilitate communication between units in Facilities Services. While this is showing improvement through weekly communication via the Facilities Services Weekly newsletter, there is still room for much improvement.

Strategy

Overcome

We will address the hurdles we face in internal communications directly with the Communications Committee as we implement Communication Champions to serve as liaisons to their individual teams. We will also be adjusting the way in which we send the weekly and bi-monthly newsletter communications to streamline both pieces and bring them back to their original purpose. We also plan to migrate these pieces to a platform like Mail Chimp where we can track our open rate, bounce rate, etc. providing better benchmark data and adjusting accordingly.

CPR will also utilize the second student assistant position to better distribute some of the tasks that fall within the subunit which frees up the Communications Coordinator to work on other tasks and projects. These students will also be an invaluable asset for idea sharing and fresh perspective on the ways we market Facilities Services to Millennials and Gen Z.

This unit is working to better facilitate cross-talk among units and is currently researching the idea of quarterly round-table discussions that would allow key units a scheduled opportunity to talk about work while getting to know one another better and building stronger cross-unit relationships. In addition, CPR will begin using The Facilitator as a platform to encourage cross-talk through department wide scavenger hunts that will require participants to get out of their own shops and talking to others across the department.

Social media and the FS website will be very important tools over the next several years as we continue to post content that balances technical information with human interest stories showcasing all sides of Facilities Services. This new social media strategy seeks to gain followers, increase reach and increase engagement across all platforms which will help increase visibility for the entire department. In conjunction, CPR will continue to work closely with the Office of Communications & Marketing to promote all department accolades, awards and shared information to the entirety of UTK and the surrounding community.

Additionally, CPR plans to work with our One Call team to develop a leave-behind piece that lets people know that Facilities Services is working on their behalf across campus. This piece could be a tool to provide updates on work orders that were addressed after hours, and it could also serve as a reminder that our One Call line is available 24 hours a day therefore adding to the layered approach of increased visibility.

Performance Tracking/Evaluation

KPI

CPR projects can be difficult to measure as not all of our efforts are easy to track. We do, however, have set deadlines and publish dates for many projects as well as metrics for observing our social media campaign success, e-newsletter views, and more.

For projects with set deadlines and publish dates, the Communications Coordinator keeps track of these deadlines internally and holds weekly meetings with student assistants to track the progress of ongoing projects. This office also participates in the CIS monthly meetings where the communications coordinator reports on the office's ongoing progress toward set goals. Some projects the office undertakes do not have set deadlines, in this case, the office creates reasonable timelines to project progress and completion. These timelines are followed and met under the supervision of the Communications Coordinator.

Efforts to increase internal communications will be measured through the annual Employee Satisfaction Survey and any additional surveys developed by the Communications Committee. This serves as a tool to review how we've done and focus on what's ahead as a result of honest feedback from employees. If a text message platform is implemented, open rates can be tracked for all text communications which would show us who is receiving and reading their messages vs who is not. In addition, the move from an Outlook-based email strategy to an online platform will allow CPR to track email open rates, click-thru rates and to see who is actually reading e-communications down to the individual level.

The department's social media following is tracked through analytics received from the various platforms. The Communications Coordinator looks at page likes, engagement and reach to determine the success of social media campaigns and adjusts them accordingly.

The final KPI for CPR's strategy would be to work with One Call to track the number of work requests that come through One Call and to see if more students and faculty are utilizing this service as a result of any promotion we do surrounding this service.

Resources

The Communications Coordinator works hard to use her time and any student assistant hours in the most efficient way possible, spreading her resource across all tasks as necessary. This includes the ability to prioritize projects according to deadlines, importance, etc. As FS 2.0 has settled, the responsibilities of CPR have streamlined allowing the Communications Coordinator the ability to evaluate current usage of time and to see where time may be better spent.

Currently, CPR only uses one of two available student assistant positions, but the Communications Coordinator plans to hire a second during FY20 to help with the increase in workload as UTFS prepares to market ourselves on a more individual basis to all campus academic departments as a result of the anticipated changes to the University's budget structure.

The Communications Coordinator works within her means to increase communications, but it is the belief of CPR that a text messaging platform for internal communications could greatly benefit UTFS as a whole allowing a more direct avenue of communication with front line employees who seldom or never check their University email. This would allow us to streamline certain communications delivered directly to the front line employees. RAVE has the capabilities needed to send texts and track results should we choose that platform. Other options are available. Additionally, app-based programs like GroupMe allow the department to create groups and share information with the whole department or down to the level of unit, subunit, etc. This resource could prove invaluable as it relates to employee communication and frees up CPR to dedicate more time to other concerns.

Team Members



Sam Ledford
Communications Coordinator

Serves as internal and external communications executor as well as a liaison between campus communicators and Facilities Services

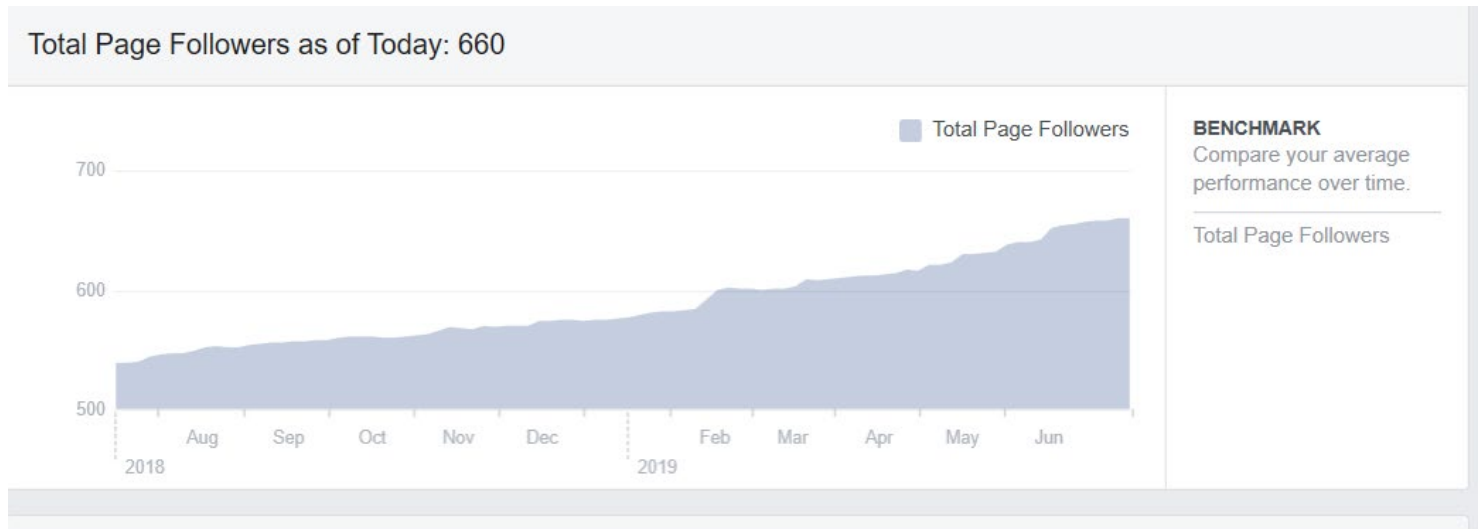


Megan Walden
Student Assistant

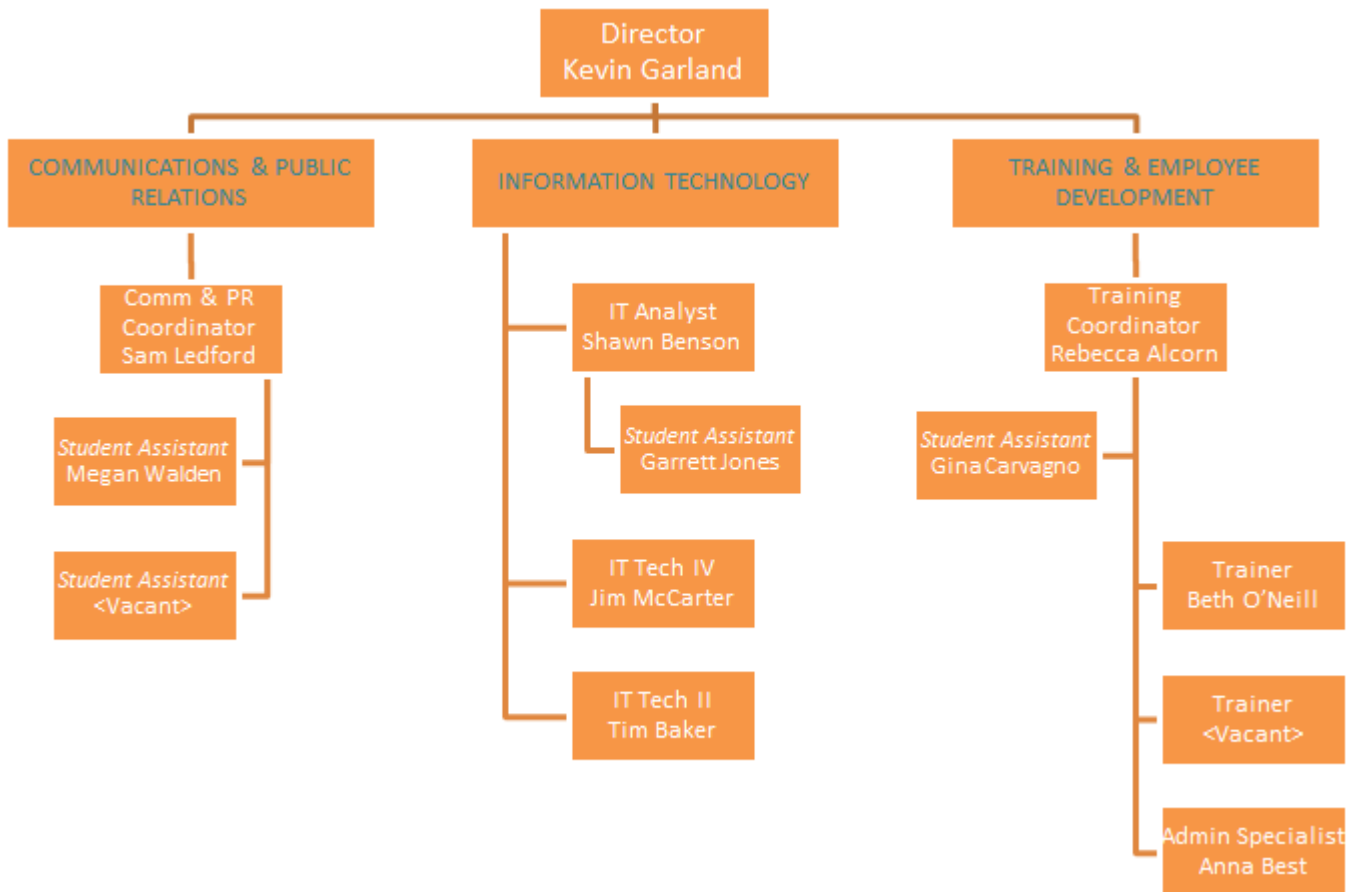
Assists with creative communications, event planning & admin tasks in support of the Communications Coordinator

Appendix A

Figure 1. Graph showing increase in Facebook followers



Org Chart





THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE

KNOXVILLE

FACILITIES SERVICES

Communications & Public
Relations

ANNUAL REPORT

FY2019

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