INTRODUCTION

The Division of Marketing & Communications (MarCom) communicates Texas A&M’s impact, managing news, social media, licensing, trademarks, advertising, branding, events, and presidential outreach.

Every MarCom tactic/deliverable (including those in our strategic plan) has a D&I component. D&I also is a primary focus as we reconfigure KAMU-TV/FM (PBS and NPR station), which was merged into MarCom in 2018. We validate our efforts in quarterly reviews with senior leadership, including the Office of Diversity.

MarCom has 69 employees: 81 percent White, 10 percent Hispanic or Latino and 4 percent Black/African American. Forty-one percent are female and 59 percent are male. Seventy-five percent of our senior leaders are women.

A committee developed this report in three meetings: Kelly Brown, Lesley Henton, Lisa Hurrey, Dr. Ann Kellett, Laura Root, Hailey Sanders, and Amy B. Smith, with input from teams. Some committee members will rotate annually. The report will be briefed to team members, VPs and Deans, and will be posted on the division site.

The division thanks the Office for Diversity for counsel on behalf of MarCom and the university. With the pandemic and social unrest in 2020, this collaborative focus on campus and beyond helps make Aggieland the best it can be.
We aspire to create a workplace culture that reflects the land-grant mission of Texas A&M and the diversity of our community and state. To that end, we draw on our differences and seek diversity of thought, backgrounds, and experiences.

*In the last year, MarCom has developed the following to enhance recruitment both internally and across the university:*

- Templated fact sheets about Texas A&M;
- Customizable template about the university to send to prospective hires;
- New experts guides for reporters on topics such as hurricanes and elections, and from a diverse cross-section of faculty; and
- Increased job postings to broader media outlets and job boards (including sponsored postings) to reach a more diverse candidate pool.

Creative, top-rate experiences also strengthen the university’s reputation, reaching stakeholders who may not have been previously exposed to the brand. Although physical events were curtailed because of COVID-19, these efforts will be leveraged virtually when possible and reintroduced in-person as soon as safe to do so:

- SXSW with NASA: virtual or virtual/in-person hybrid in March 2021;
- Texas Tribune TribFest: we were a major partner in September 2020 and likely will be for September 2021. Participated in multiple events and facilitated athletics leadership panel on challenges in social unrest and the pandemic on college campuses. Participants: Athletic Director Ross Bjork, Deputy AD and Chief Diversity Officer of Athletics Kristen Brown, Dr. Ryan Pittsinger and student athlete Karlina Sample;
- A large-scale event in top recruiting market Washington, D.C., where we will also launch a new Texas A&M teaching site in 2021, featuring first class offerings by the Bush School of Government and Public Service;
- Ribbon cutting and news story for the new building for the College of Dentistry, allowing 50 percent more dental visits for underserved patients;
- Qatar, Galveston, McAllen and the School of Law campus activities; and
- When appropriate, MarCom will coordinate and participate in an international event.

*MarCom also supports recruitment through these ongoing efforts:*

- This year, the division invested beyond D&I-focused publications to place TAMU D&I content in tier-one national publications such as TIME and U.S. News & World Report;
- Two television commercials with D&I themes and participants;
- Advice and counsel on branding with D&I to all university units;
- General advertisements in traditional and minority-centric print and electronic outlets such as Dallas Examiner, Univision, INSIGHT into Diversity, Diverse Issues in Higher Education and Chronicle of Higher Education diversity issues;
- Job advertisements through the Texas A&M Hispanic Network, Black Former Student Network, Aggie Women and Greek Former Student Network, as well as ListServs and other channels targeted to historically underrepresented groups (with continued paid advertising in INSIGHT Into Diversity following free advertising after the university’s recognition as a HEED Award winner/Diversity Champion in 2019); and
- Maintaining a large-scale effort to update every video and webpage for 508 compliance.
The division understands the importance of retaining outstanding employees. Not only do they increase their knowledge of, and contributions to, the workplace culture over time, but they also make possible the momentum that is required for significant progress toward organizational goals.

Over the last year, with the integration of KAMU-TV/FM, the division has focused on revamping the station’s strategic priorities, programming and activities to showcase the full breadth and depth of local offerings and innovation, which is likely to improve retention among viewers and listeners. To date, this has included work on the following:

• Creating guidelines for how the university and local community can promote their work, to include D&I content and targeting diverse audiences;
• Specific focus on underserved communities;
• Evaluating and introducing new programming;
• Conducting a market salary review and subsequent equity adjustments; and
• Adding new podcasts, programming and community events designed to draw a diverse audience.

Ongoing, division-wide retention tools for MarCom staff include the following:

• Customized performance plans that include training opportunities locally and across the nation, with attendees briefing others at MarCom afterward;
• Career development planning as part of the annual performance review process, with up to $2,000 per team member to attend conferences and workshops;
• Support for staff to present at conferences and workshops;
• Attending and opportunities to present at the annual Communications Summit for more than 275 communicators throughout The Texas A&M University System (although this is currently virtual only, with sessions throughout the year); and
• For student workers, meaningful, real-world assignments that build their résumés and mentoring with a focus on employment after graduation.
Workplace climate reflects an organization's character and personality. MarCom in recent years has systematically implemented tools and tactics to attract top employees, drive engagement within the division and with stakeholders across campus and beyond, and increase the division's ability to achieve D&I and other goals.

The division's work on climate over the past year includes the following:

- Anti-racism communications;
- Social media and news stories celebrating LGBTQ+ pride;
- Recognition of Holocaust Remembrance Day with a news story about how to recognize coded anti-Semitism;
- Open, honest communications from the university acknowledging our D&I shortcomings and explaining actions to address them, coordinated with the president and leadership team;
- Approval during a semi-hiring freeze to hire an Associate Vice President for Strategy and Analytics to gather and analyze data and develop metrics for even greater accountability through measurable objectives;
- Managed an intensive process to select a new national advertising agency to increase engagement with and recognition of Texas A&M, with proven work in D&I a major factor; and
- For the first time, MarCom and the Office of the Provost partnered on an ad campaign to recruit a more diverse student body in order to better reflect the state's demographics.

Ongoing division-wide efforts that improve climate include the following:

- Hosted a half-day workshop on D&I, led by Dr. Srividya “Srivi” Ramasubramanian of the Department of Communication;
- TeamWork project management tool that ensures transparency in workload equity;
- Bi-weekly Directors meetings to enhance collaboration;
- Investment in staff health and well-being (standing desks and healthier snacks); and
- Redesigned workspaces that maximize communication and collaboration.

Ongoing MarCom efforts to support climate at Texas A&M and across the System include the following:

- An ongoing, virtual System-wide Communications Summit (as opposed to the single annual in-person event), which includes sessions on D&I best practices, web accessibility, mental health, and content creation and distribution;
- Monthly meetings of special interest groups for the university's news, social media, photography/videography and graphic design professionals;
- Collaborating on campus-wide initiatives such as Step In. Stand Up. and suicide awareness, and with groups such as Counseling & Psychological Services to support mental health, Flourish to support employee health and wellness, and various other units.
EQUITY

Every MarCom employee is responsible for creating a workplace where everyone has a place at the table and where everyone can succeed. Equality means providing access to the same opportunities and equity means providing the proportional representation to participate in those activities. Improving workplace equity helps make such an environment possible.

In the last year, MarCom has accomplished the following related to equity within the division:

• Conducted a division-wide market salary review study;
• Revisited and updated job descriptions for KAMU-TV/FM to help recruit and retain diverse team members; and
• Posted a position for a new Associate Vice President for Strategy, who will create university- and unit-specific reports for the division and for deans that will include D&I factors.

These efforts are in addition to the ongoing activities implemented in recent years:

• Developed and staffed a project management system to ensure equitable workflow and measure capacity across teams;
• Introduced software and other tools that increase efficiency;
• Added a web-based project management system (TeamWork);
• Hired two full-time project coordinators;
• Held regular division-wide meetings; and
• Aligned job responsibilities commensurate with salaries on par with The Texas A&M University System job plans program.

For the broader campus community and external stakeholders, MarCom has begun the following efforts related to equity in the last year:

• Supported the university’s “fourth pillar” (community) that President Young announced in the 2019 State of the University address, which has the goal of making Bryan-College Station more welcoming for everyone;
• Launched the #SupportAggieland website and social media campaign to assist businesses (including small and Black-owned businesses) hit hard by COVID-19;
• Developed and promoted an inventory of accessible web design elements for campus;
• Continued a D&I focus on stories and social media posts related to university priorities (faculty investment, student success initiative, and so on), and with a renewed emphasis on MarCom’s partnership with Athletics;
• Worked with the campus master architect on comprehensive campus-wide signage to include signage that can be a destination for photos;
• Updated the campus map to include information for people with special needs;
• Consulted with university graphic artists and communicators on leveraging the brand for targeted outreach to their stakeholders while remaining brand compliant;
• Web team generated a list of priority projects and reviewed organizational design to address changing needs with a new focus on optimizing popular sites and removing or rerouting underperforming sites; and
• Allocated significant resources in staff time and expertise to ensure that the university complies with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which included a comprehensive overview of IT and web accessibility issues and tools.

Ongoing efforts include the following:

• Counsel and support by two staff members on university-wide D&I committees (including the Strategic Liaisons to the Chief Information Officer committee);
• Support on D&I initiatives in communications from the Office of the President, colleges and divisions; and
• Briefing the Faculty Senate on the division’s D&I efforts.
REFLECTION

HOW MARCOM “MOVES THE NEEDLE” WITH MORE TO DO

Our work to break down silos internally and across campus has helped us rapidly respond to—and also recover from—the events that consumed much of 2020.

• The TeamWork project management tool has been especially important in ensuring workload equity during this time of additional fatigue and stress.

• The abrupt switch to virtual platforms went relatively smoothly. Challenges included the need to film and broadcast communications from the President, Chancellor and Chairman of the Board of Regents. A combination of in-person and Zoom sufficed when we could not have principals in-studio.

• The pivot to virtual events helped bring Aggies closer together (figuratively speaking), through events including virtual Silver Taps, Midnight Yell Practices and Muster, which was attended live and virtually by more than 20,000 people world-wide. Likewise, graduation ceremonies and Facebook Live events reached a broader group of stakeholders in ways that will help us even when we return to in-person events.

• Job advertising and sponsored job postings are netting a larger applicant pool, vital for our goal of making our team better reflect Texas demographics.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES THAT IMPACT RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, CAMPUS CLIMATE, AND/OR EQUITY

For external audiences, our D&I efforts are reflected in the following from the past year:

• Updated the interactive mobile campus map to include information for wheelchair users (and Texas A&M was the first university partner of the software developer).

• Added all-gender restrooms to the interactive mobile campus map.

• Added preferred pronouns to university letterhead and email signatures.

• Integrated programming about Black and Hispanic history and culture year-round at KAMU-TV/FM.

• Added Spanish-language resources to the KAMU-TV/FM website on topics including talking to young children about racism.

• Bought more advertising in leading minority publications and also placed these ads in other publications.

• Prominently featured diverse faculty in media guides on different topics;

• Supported the strategic planning effort to expand the multicultural center in the MSC;

• Continued to collaborate with the Office for Diversity on messaging and events.

• Supported the Office for Diversity in its submission and post-award messaging for the 2020 HEED Award and Diversity Champion designation from INSIGHT into Diversity magazine (for the second year in a row). MarCom continues to advertise in the magazine and showcased the award in at least four videos and advertisements in other publications.

• The marketing team developed an ad series highlighting a student, a faculty member and staff and administrators whose stories illustrate Texas A&M’s D&I commitment. The ads appeared in multiple print publications, including the March issue of The Atlantic.

• Worked across campus to improve accessibility, such as replacing a .pdf on returning to campus with a mini-website more accessible on smartphones.

• Improved 508 compliance on videos to improve the way people with visual and hearing impairments experience the university and make use of university content. We plan to also focus on services, such as audio-to-text translations.

For MarCom staff:

• Conducted market salary review and equity adjustments;

• Encourage a culture of constant learning and professional development to include informal meetings with colleagues across campus; and

• Required staff to participate in at least one D&I workshop or training session per year. This led several staff members to become Aggie Allies and Green Dot trainers.
REFLECTION

[CONT.]

MAIN CHALLENGES

1. Ongoing issues management: helping campus leaders address numerous stakeholders on D&I issues proactively as well as reactively while maintaining university operations.

2. Recruiting and hiring, as well as employee retention following the merit pay freeze.

3. The toll on front-line communicators, notably in social media, is a concern because the team is small and the issues are large. The team worked honorably to address issues, publicly acknowledging where Texas A&M fell short while proactively communicating about news, leadership responses and solutions. We will look at ways to better support and sustain the team moving forward.

4. Enhancing diversity at KAMU-TV/FM and in the division. The addition of KAMU caused a sharp drop in MarCom's percentage of underrepresented employees. We will recruit additional positions for KAMU as identified in the strategic plan, and apply strategies, including paid job postings, to reach a larger candidate pool. Additionally, relocation budgets have been created to help attract diverse talent.

MARCOM'S DIVERSITY PLAN FUNDING

MarCom appreciates the $15,000 grant in 2020. To date, we have been able to source advertising dollars in support of D&I initiatives elsewhere within our budget, so we plan to use these funds for education and critical dialogues, notably in bringing known speakers to engage with us. These sessions have been enormously helpful for our team members to better understand each other, our overarching mission, and the importance of our role in making our team and our university an inclusive environment. We will incorporate new knowledge into our day-to-day activities and report on our progress.

Marcom created SupportAggieland.com to spotlight those who support our university and to support minority-owned businesses and organizations, which are essential to our goal of recruiting and retaining more diverse students, faculty and staff to Aggieland.