Strategic Plan Work Group Report
Marketing and Branding

BRANDING

The working group recommends that The University of Texas at Tyler should build its brand around several key elements. Numerous institutes of higher education define their brand far beyond the logo or tagline (see The University of South Carolina for example). UT Tyler's vision in the Strategic Plan (2009-2015) stated that UT Tyler is a "destination university" and "…a residential, park-like campus that encourages learning." Although UT Tyler's "vision" is not necessarily the charge of the working group, taglines such as these are what external stakeholders envision when they think of the UT Tyler Brand. Keeping this information in mind, the working group suggests that UT Tyler should rebrand itself based on four key strengths and use these key strengths in marketing of the University's brand. The essence of the UT Tyler brand centers on the university's ability to Impact, Support and Connect students, faculty, staff and communities, as it serves as an engine for Innovation across the region, nation, and globe. Regional resources, national notoriety, and international outreach of both internal and external stakeholders fuel UT Tyler's engine of innovation.

IMPACT – UT Tyler Impacts our students, communities, the nation, and the world. UT Tyler has students ranging from first generation college students to third generation UT Tyler Alumni. Our University has graduates who impact business communities, political landscapes, and more. UT Tyler has a lifetime impact on its students and impacts the community by serving as an economic and educational driver of East Texas.

SUPPORT – UT Tyler supports students, faculty, and community leaders with the common goal to better the human condition in East Texas and beyond. Our students receive the greatest amount of support as it relates to advising, financial aid, and academics. UT Tyler has an extremely caring faculty, like that of a supportive family that makes sure that every entity has their needs met in order to be successful. UT Tyler values and supports its students by enabling them to achieve their academic goals. Students are the faculty, staff, and administration's first priority. The UT Tyler "family" supports one another through cross-departmental cooperation and celebration of successes, and it supports the community through various outreach programs.

CONNECT – UT Tyler is like that of an interconnected web that gains strength through the entire structure working together. UT Tyler connects faculty and students through interdisciplinary endeavors. Our university is connected to the community in numerous ways, some known and others needing more recognition. We believe that our key strengths will connect the university internally amongst its faculty, staff, and students, as well as externally to the Tyler community and beyond.

INNOVATE – UT Tyler is innovative in instructional practices, research projects, co-curricular programs, and student-led endeavors. Students and Faculty use state-of-the-art technologies, research tough questions from microbiology to kinesiology, and maintain the highest level of professional instruction and service centered on educating beyond 21st century skills.
Our brand is that of a university who is an engine of innovation that impacts, supports, and connects stakeholders. UT Tyler is a community. Our family of faculty, students, staff, administrators, community leaders, and beyond work together to build an experience like none other.

MARKETING

The UT Tyler brand can only be communicated by marketing strategies that share in the innovative traits of the university. The working group asserts that all marketing efforts should be exercised aggressively to aid administrators in accomplishing the goals for the future of UT Tyler. These goals should encompass the elements of the aforementioned branding elements of Impact, Support, Connect, and Innovate. The University marketing initiatives have been categorized below as Internal, External, or Preliminary. Internal marketing strategies cater to the UT Tyler faculty, students, staff, and administrators. The External marketing strategies cater to stakeholders outside of the UT Tyler community, while the preliminary marketing strategies must be established before any internal or external marketing can take place.

Preliminary Marketing – UT Tyler must establish a marketing task force made up of students, faculty, and staff from the College of Business and Technology in partnership with the Office of Marketing and Communications. This task force will help establish marketing protocols and data collection methods to drive the creation of a marketing plan for both internal and external strategies. This task force would include students who offer a unique perspective. The first initiative for this marketing task

force will be to define the UT Tyler brand image and tagline. The marketing task force should establish a way of determining the viability of the current university image. UT Tyler needs to decide on our mascot, whether that be the Eagle, Patriot, or another iconic symbol. The marketing task force may find the current image is acceptable and marketing initiatives can proceed with the status quo. However, the task force may determine a more modern and aggressive logo needs to be utilized by our athletic and student services departments to incorporate our brand and provide a consistent message to external constituents.

Internal Marketing – The goal of creating an internal marketing plan would be to build a strong culture of university pride by implementing universal training programs, encourage personal interactions and cross departmental cooperation, and create partnerships in research and other outlets. The marketing task force would help departments and colleges coordinate their marketing efforts and ensure opportunities for cost savings are not missed. All marketing efforts should be coordinated through the Office of Marketing and Communications, and an academic culture should be maintained and promoted. The internal marketing strategies should focus on developing a strong company culture amongst the UT Tyler Family. These strategies could include implementing freshman convocation events with faculty and staff participation, establishing the tradition of having commencement receptions for different colleges similar to those that are already established, and many others that have yet to be determined. The internal marketing strategies should center on promoting and establishing traditions that help highlight the UT Tyler brand.

External Marketing – UT Tyler must establish a shared marketing vision that pushes Tyler to become a proverbial "College Town" without making endeavors too Tyler-centric as UT Tyler is currently located in Tyler, Longview, Palestine, Houston, and with the possibility expand to additional areas in the future. Along these lines, the University should seek partnerships with the cities of Tyler, Longview, Palestine, Houston, and area community colleges in order to co-market the educational opportunities available in the region. The external marketing initiatives should establish a plan that not only helps recruit new students, but also helps alumni and potential donors stay informed about the University. The plan should promote UT Tyler as a destination spot for students seeking to become young professionals through the acquisition of a quality education. The University should also make better use of its "Social Media Kit" (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) in order to attract the generation of students in which these platforms are utilized often.

Conclusion

The University of Texas at Tyler has seen decades of growth both in geographical real estate and human capital. UT Tyler is at a critical point in its plan where decisions have to be made that illustrate where the University will be in the next decade or two. As a university, we need to decide if we want to continue to grow at or even beyond the rate in which we have seen over the past several years. We must decide if we want to have regional appeal or international recognition, or both. Decisions regarding the direction of the university can only be made once we establish who we are as a university. The working group has developed a foundation to begin defining who UT Tyler is. The suggested brand of UT Tyler being an institute that impacts, supports, connects, and innovates is just the beginning. The University must take the work of this group and determine if the recommended brand encompasses all that is UT Tyler and whether or not we will move forward in this direction. In addition, the University must review the provided suggestions for the marketing of our brand to be grounded in work done by our students, faculty, and staff, and used to establish a strong culture inside and outside of the University community.