

March 2008

To: All UCFV employees via VPs, deans, and department heads

Re: Internal consultation process for developing a new identity for UCFV following the attainment of university status

Hello everyone,

This message is intended to convey the process that UCFV will embark upon as we develop our new visual identity and brand messaging as a regional university.

Background

UCFV is facing a monumental opportunity, one that few public post-secondary institutions have ever had the good fortune to face. When university status for UCFV is announced, our brand “slate” will be wiped clean. Visually, the current UCFV logo and identity elements will cease to exist. We will be in a position to establish and launch a new brand, one that respects our roots and values but also conveys our future goals and aspirations.

We will only get one chance to do this and we need to do it properly. This will require a collaborative effort across the institution to develop and implement a new brand in a timely fashion following the announcement and legislation of our new status.

Today’s universities all offer similar products but great university brands convey a single idea distinct enough to bridge time, discipline and geography. The value of these brands exists in the minds and hearts of each institution’s community. If we do not verbalize and cultivate ours proactively, public perception will create one for us.

Here are the steps we will be taking as we create our new brand:

1: Distill the underlying idea

UCFV has a vision, mission, and value statement, but – with the exception of specifying our geographic region – the underlying idea is not very unique. Most post-secondary institutions would aspire to similar, if not identical, goals. We need to determine what our single-most important point of differentiation is or should be. This will guide our branding process.

2: Verbalize our brand promise

Once we have determined our big idea – the one that transcends disciplines, geographies, personalities, and the passage of time – we need to verbalize what it means to our students, employees, and community stakeholders. We need to give tangible examples of our values and how they can be applied on a regular basis.

3: Select a name

A name is at the very root of a university brand: it speaks volumes in a single word. It frames our “foundation myth” and encapsulates the experience associated with time spent on our campuses. It engenders loyalty that can both inspire new students wearing a school sweatshirt for the first time and give alumni goosebumps at a reunion decades later. It can convey pride for a local community, get a grad a coveted job, secure a sizeable donation, and help close a deal overseas.

K. Lawrence, 2008

But a name is just a word without the underlying promise (see above) that it represents to its audience.

Although a number of names have been suggested for the new university, UCFV may have a name assigned as part of a new Act or announcement. Our challenge is to build a very strong story around this name, whatever it may be, so that it creates clear positioning in the minds of our audiences from day one.

4: Create an identity

This phase involves the creation of a visual identity and physical representation of the new brand. It involves crafting the story and the pieces required to share that story with all target audiences, internal and external. Associated with this phase is the creation of guidelines about how the brand can grow over time, whether sub-brands will be introduced, and who the ultimate guardian of the brand and its related assets should be.

5: Implement the new brand

We will target a launch date and implement a full-scale brand change-over on that day. This will require wholesale cooperation from all UCFV employees and an understanding of why a dramatic change is important to marking this milestone event. This is more than a visual change; significant internal and external communications will tell and re-tell the new brand story so that everyone can internalize it and convey it clearly themselves.

Implementing the new brand will be a daily event that everyone at the institution undertakes. From how a phone is answered, to how our graphics are used, to the events we undertake on campus, to the manner in which students and employees interact, every action will either reinforce or undermine the brand...and our reputation.

Stakeholder groups and levels of involvement

Marketing & Communications (Marcom) is the functional group responsible for verbalizing the brand messaging and developing a new visual identity program. This group is also responsible for driving implementation of the new brand and monitoring it for consistent application across the institution and beyond.

There are multiple stakeholder groups that will be consulted as the new brand is built. These include students, employees, alumni, Boards and advisory councils, and community supporters. We will strive to balance the desire for broad consultation with the need to develop a strong brand, one that is not diluted by a “design by committee” approach.

The following methodology is proposed as we embark on this complex process:

Stakeholder consultations:

UCFV, led by the Marcom team, will undertake a series of broad consultations to address steps 1 (*distill the underlying idea*) and 2 (*verbalize the brand promise*) of the brand development process. This will result in a brand promise draft and a creative brief that will be vetted through the Senior Administrative Group and the UCFV Board of Governors. This is the opportunity for the broadest cross-section of the UCFV community to voice their opinions and ideas about our new brand.

With regards to employee groups, we will ask the advice of the VPs and Deans for their advice on how best to consult the people working within their areas. With regards to student groups, we will conduct open consultations with students on all campuses, in the very near future (before classes end for this semester). We will ask key liaison people (e.g. Alumni Relations, Friends of UCFV, etc.) at UCFV about the most efficient way to capture the thoughts of their constituencies.

Working group activities:

Once the creative brief has been approved by senior administration and the UCFV Board of Governors, the remainder of the brand development process will be handled through a small working group. Final approval of the visual identity will be made by senior administration and the UCFV Board of Governors.

In the interest of developing a strong, undiluted brand that appeals to our primary external target audiences and meets all technical requirements, our team of professional designers will be responsible for all graphic development. There will be no contest or voting involved in the development of our visual identity.

Implementation activities:

Marcom has compiled a brand audit of all major items that will require rework to reflect a new brand. Over the course of the consultation process, we will add to this list and solicit advice from each different group about how best to work with them to facilitate a quick and complete change when we do launch.

This approach is recommended as a method of securing the maximum amount of input at the most critical point in the re-branding process: when we decide what the points of distinction are for our institution and how we want them to reflect in our verbal and visual messaging.

We look forward to your feedback and advice on this process, and to your input as we roll it out in the coming weeks and months. These are exciting times – we hope to convey this enthusiasm to all stakeholder groups we work with throughout the process.

Sincerely,

Kim Lawrence
Director, Marketing & Communications