Advocacy Strategy Overview
To better advocate for the value of higher education statewide, the Commissioner’s Office, in partnership with USHE institutions, has created a communications strategy that will create and distribute positive, collaborative, and engaging messages about higher education at both the public stakeholder level (joint editorial calendar) as well as the individual grassroots level (Merit Pages).

By intentionally working to reach both public stakeholders and individuals, the Commissioner’s Office anticipates the organic conversations that will occur as a result will be more effective (and cost-effective) at shifting perceptions on the value of higher education than a broad-based, general marketing campaign.

Joint editorial calendar
For the first time, USHE institutions and the Commissioner’s Office are collaborating on a joint editorial calendar. The purpose of this effort is three-fold:
1. To amplify key messages at specific times of the year
2. To identify opportunities for collaborative messaging across institutions
3. To better distribute and communicate meaningful data from the Commissioner’s Office

USHE institutions and the Commissioner’s Office have identified three focus areas for messaging efforts:
1. Fall: Access/affordability/scholarships
2. Winter: Economic impact and value of higher education
3. Spring: Graduate outcomes/importance of higher education to Utah’s workforce

Many of these messages are already distributed by institutions, but there is real strength in aligning efforts. Types of message distribution could include: joint op-eds, press releases, alumni magazine articles, internal institutional communications, e-newsletters, digital/social campaign, presentations to external stakeholder groups, etc. Institutions and the Commissioner’s office will identify success measurements for each message (i.e. social engagement, earned media placement, etc.)

Merit Pages
Six of the eight USHE institutions have signed on to a unique content-sharing tool called Merit Pages. This tool allows individual messages about a specific student’s achievement to be sent from their institution to that student and their parents, in addition to students’ hometown newspapers, legislators, and high schools. The achievement is easily shareable on social media channels, and redirects back to the institution’s selected webpage.

There is also a function that operates much like a social media platform. Stories about specific students are aggregated on a student’s individual profile page, and the student can fill in the rest of their profile with work history, education, and other relevant experiences.

Next steps
The USHE communication and public relations directors will meet monthly to discuss the content calendar and Merit Pages implementation.

A report with the results of this year’s collaborative advocacy efforts will be presented to the USHE Board of Regents in July 2020.

Commissioner’s Recommendations
This is a discussion item only; no action is required.

Attachment
Merit enables you to **create, discover and share** content at scale and empower your audiences to **share your content with their networks**.
Transforming **everyday experiences** into **earned media outcomes** to drive awareness and engagement for your institution.
Unlike other platforms, Merit drives interest to your own website/assets rather than try to keep it captive.
Merit takes your existing content and turns it into dozens, hundreds or even thousands of personalized stories in minutes.

James Madison University
August 22
The Class of 2022 has officially kicked off 1787 August Orientation. An exciting week awaits our newest Dukes!

Josie Kupsky of South Riding enrolls at James Madison University
October 11, 2019
James Madison University is excited to welcome the class of 2022 to campus this fall. The incoming freshmen class represents an accomplished, diverse group of individuals who hail from all states, the District of Columbia, and several countries around the world.

South Riding, VA resident, Josie Kupsky, has enrolled at James Madison University for the fall 2019 semester. Kupsky’s selected major is International Affairs.

About James Madison University
James Madison University offers each student a future of significance – not an education of mere prestige, but an extraordinary education of exceptional scholarship, innovative thinking, unparalleled attention to the world community, a university-wide enthusiasm for teaching, and a commitment to student success.
Merit then matches each story to **relevant audiences** using **managed databases** of media, high schools and government representative contacts.

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**Sarah Vaughan of Front Royal enrolls at James Madison University**

October 11, 2018

James Madison University is excited to welcome the class of 2022 to campus this fall. The incoming freshman class represents an accomplished, diverse group of individuals who hail from 34 states, the District of Columbia and several countries around the world.

Front Royal, VA resident, Sarah Vaughan, has enrolled at James Madison University for the fall 2018 semester. Vaughan’s selected major is Health Sciences.

**About James Madison University**

James Madison University offers each student a future of significance – not an education of mere prestige, but an extraordinary education of exceptional scholarship, inventive thinking, unparalleled attention to the world community, a university-wide enthusiasm for teaching, and a commitment to student success.
Merit distributes your personalized stories and gives your audiences the tools to share your message in their own networks increasing organic reach.

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Merit drives interest from these personalized stories back to your institution’s website using custom landing pages.
MERIT DELIVERS BETTER RESULTS

- Better email marketing metrics
- Better awareness with influential audiences
- Better social media engagement
- Better organic reach through sharing
- Better return on institutional websites/assets
MERIT DELIVERS BETTER RESULTS

400x

Higher email open rates
75% vs. 25%

— Mailchimp 2018 Email Marketing Benchmarks
MERIT DELIVERS BETTER RESULTS

10x

Average increase in organic reach

— Rival IQ 2018 Social Media Engagement Report
MERIT DELIVERS BETTER RESULTS

- Ranked #7 in engagement
- 720 institution posts in 2018
- 1,032 engagements/post
- 12 stories published w/Merit
- 9,709 engagements/story

38% Lift in social media engagement

— Rival IQ 2018 Social Media Engagement Report
“Our president has already noticed a difference in media placement since we started using Merit. In less than four months Merit has already been worth the investment.”

Jennifer Swain
Dir. of Communications & Marketing
Elmira College
MERIT DELIVERS BETTER RESULTS

75% Average email open rate

400x Industry avg. email engagement

10x Increase in organic reach

38% Lift in social media engagement

35% Increase in earned media
MERIT DELIVERS BETTER RESULTS

- 2 MERIT ACHIEVEMENTS
- 2,424 PERSONALIZED STORIES
- 684 PRESS RELEASES
- 529 LOCAL NEWSPAPERS
- 76% STUDENT EMAIL OPEN RATE
- 78% STUDENT CLICK RATE
- 34,000 ONLINE STORY VIEWS
- 1,500,000 SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

- Client since 2016
- 7,500 students
- Uses Merit 1/month
MERIT DELIVERS BETTER RESULTS

- 1 Merit Update
- 1,881 Student Stories
- 230 Press Releases
- 250 Local Newspapers
- 147 Elected Officials
- 78% Student Email Open Rate
- 65% Student Click Rate
- 21,821 Online Story Views
- 586,656 Social Media Impressions

Client since 2014
- 13,500 students
- Uses Merit 1/month

Copyright © 2019 • Merit Pages, Inc.
2018

- Over 1 million stories told using Merit
- 84% average email open rate
- 10 million page views generated
- 1 billion total impressions
HOW IT WORKS

1. Add your students
2. Add your content
3. Merit does the rest!
1. ADD YOUR STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Postal Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First1</td>
<td>Last1</td>
<td>Email1</td>
<td>Hometown1</td>
<td>Postal1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First2</td>
<td>Last2</td>
<td>Email2</td>
<td>Hometown2</td>
<td>Postal2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First3</td>
<td>Last3</td>
<td>Email3</td>
<td>Hometown3</td>
<td>Postal3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. ADD YOUR CONTENT

Write or paste your story below. If you choose not to personalize this story with placeholders, every student’s story will be the same. Stories will also be added to each student’s Merit page. Learn more...

Welcome, First Name, Last Name, to Iowa State University!

State

First Name, Last Name, a first year student from Hometown, State in the Iowa State University College of Human Sciences, participated in Orientation on the Ames campus, June 13-14, 2018. Pask, who has opted to major in Major, joined other students and their families to become more familiar with the campus, learn tips for making the most of college, and sign up for classes.

In the College of Human Sciences, we are driven by a passion to help people. We study every aspect of their daily lives, whether it’s how they learn, how they eat, or how they exercise. How they spend money. How they vacation. How they stay well. Even how they dress. We help people expand their potential.

Iowa State University is a public, land-grant university, where students get a great academic start in learning communities and stay active in 800-plus student organizations, undergrad research, internships and study abroad. They learn from world-class scholars who are tackling some of the world’s biggest challenges — feeding the hungry, finding alternative fuels and advancing manufacturing.
3. MERIT DOES THE REST

CREATE ➔ DISTRIBUTE ➔ SHARE ➔ DRIVE INTEREST
MEASURE THE RESULTS
Annual subscription
Monday - Friday telephone support
No IT integration required
110% FERPA / GDPR compliant
Dedicated client success manager
CLIENT SUCCESS

- We work with you to craft a strategy
- We train your team (super-easy)
- We support your team
- We review your results with you
Over **300 colleges and universities** trust Merit to drive awareness and engagement for their institutional brands.
“I used to manage by myself. It was so hard and time consuming but with Merit, tasks take minutes rather than hours or days!”
— Hannah Wallace, Mississippi College

“Merit is by far one of the best solutions for higher ed marketing.”
— Scott Rutledge, Community College of Beaver County

“Merit has truly transformed our PR office and we are so grateful.”
— Abby White, Bob Jones University

“Merit is one of the best investments we’ve ever made.”
— Philip Poole, Samford University

“I have to say out of all the vendors we work with, you are the best!”
— Gina Piellusch, McDaniel College
USHE ADVOCACY STRATEGY UPDATE

USHE joint editorial calendar

Merit Pages
Purpose
1. To amplify key messages at specific times of the year
2. To identify opportunities to collaborate across institutions
3. To better disseminate and message impactful system data

Outcomes to be reported back to Presidents and Regents in July 2020
# JOINT USHE EDITORIAL CALENDAR

## Winter: December to March

Each institution will distribute two messages within the December-March timeframe addressing **economic value of higher ed topics**, such as: economic impact of institution on service region, ROI of a degree/program from your institution, etc. The stories may overlap with the content you already have planned.

### USHE Data to Support Messaging

- Economic impact of institution by service region (based on employees hired, % of workforce employed at the institution, etc); overall ROI data

## Message One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message Info</th>
<th>Measurements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>Types of measurements could include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quality of earned/paid media placements, social engagement (likes, shares, etc); magazine subscribers, pageviews on institution website, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Distribution method(s) (eg: press release, social campaign, internal campaign, alumni magazine, etc.)</th>
<th>Release date (if applicable)</th>
<th>Link to message (if applicable)</th>
<th>Any specific items called out (eg: programs, initiatives, key messages, etc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Op-Ed (Regent Chair and Commissioner), issue brief, press release, social campaign, newsletter, videos</td>
<td>January-February</td>
<td></td>
<td>Value of higher education, Utah’s Growing Opportunity Gap, college access advising initiative, impact of higher ed on Utah’s economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Message Two

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<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
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**JOINT USHE EDITORIAL CALENDAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR-ROUND: Executive Presentation Calendar to External Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Track presentations from executive leadership (Presidents and cabinet) to local, external stakeholders where messages can be reiterated/amplified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Date</td>
<td>Topic area (access/affordability, value of higher ed, student/grad outcomes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USU</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WSU</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SUU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLCC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USHE</td>
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</table>
MERIT PAGES

• 6 of 8 institutions have signed on/are in the process of signing on
• USHE paying one-time implementation fee
Merit takes your existing content and turns it into dozens, hundreds or even thousands of personalized stories in minutes.
Merit then matches each story to **relevant audiences** using **managed databases** of media, high schools and government representative contacts.
Merit drives interest from these personalized stories back to your institution’s website using custom landing pages.
MERIT PAGES

• Average email open rate: 75% (vs 25%)
• 10x increase in organic reach
• 38% lift in social media engagement
• 35% increase in earned media
MERIT PAGES

• https://utah.meritpages.com
• https://meritpages.com/emersonford
• https://meritpages.com/samanthathorne