

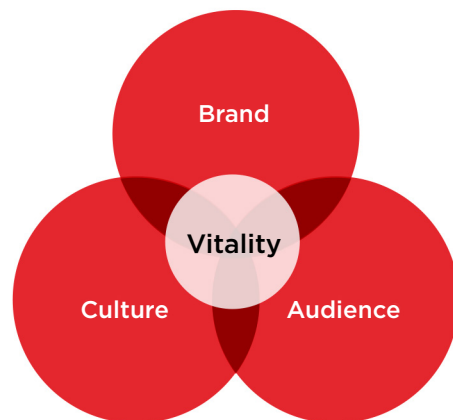


CORE BRAND COMMUNICATION & MESSAGING STRATEGY

A brand is more than logos, colors and words. The UofL brand is cultural and visionary; it's how we define and articulate the Cardinal Family's noble purpose. Our why. Our reason for being.

Our brand is a promise we make to our students, alumni, faculty, staff and our local and global communities. It encompasses UofL's vision, mission and Cardinal Principles. It represents who we are, what we stand for and the value and benefits we contribute toward the common good.

To help define the University of Louisville brand through words, voice and tone that resonate with our various audiences, we have created these communications guidelines as a strategic foundation for marketing messaging and storytelling. Refer to them to help ensure integrity and consistency across communications channels.



BRAND POSITIONING

The University of Louisville’s positioning represents the intersection between our noble purpose, our “why;” beliefs that personally resonate with our audiences; and cultural relevancy. At that intersection is a core human value we’ve identified to characterize our university and ensure our positioning is relevant, ownable, durable, meaningful, compelling and, ultimately, inspiring.

UofL’s core human value is the foundation that informs every element of our brand framework. It helps us articulate who and what we are in a way that makes an emotional connection with our audiences and motivates them to take action.

At UofL, our core value is vitality.

Vitality is:

- A powerful, life-giving energy
- Progressive, vibrant, dynamic and resilient
- Thriving and flourishes in diverse environments
- An impetus for change

Vitality in both the physical and mental sense refers to a feeling of aliveness. It is the antidote for apathy, weakness or decay. Vitality endures, radiating life and growth. As a result, it is the basis for creating meaningful connections with our audiences, enabling a human-centered approach to strategic brand communications and experiences.

Vitality is not meant for external use. It is not a tagline, nor will the word regularly appear in our communications. Rather, it is the strategic center point that informs the voice, personality and content of our internal and external communications.

A university like ours, born of a city where diversity, inclusiveness and originality thrive, is a catalyst for vitality.

BRAND POSITIONING

This strategic framework inspires what we do, what we say and how we say it. It helps us communicate in a consistent voice and allows us to differentiate the university and create meaningful connections with our audiences.

Vision: Aspirational description that defines what we want to achieve

The University of Louisville will be recognized as a great place to learn, a great place to work and a great place in which to invest because we celebrate diversity, foster equity and strive for inclusion.

Mission: Our reason for being, core philosophies and advantages

The University of Louisville pursues excellence and inclusiveness in its work to educate and serve its community through:

- Teaching diverse undergraduate, graduate and professional students in order to develop engaged citizens, leaders and scholars;
- Practicing and applying research, scholarship and creative activity; and
- Providing engaged service and outreach that improve the quality of life for local and global communities.

UofL is committed to achieving preeminence as a nationally recognized anti-racist metropolitan research university.

Cardinal Principles: Guiding values that shape our community and our actions

- Community of care
- Accountability
- Respect
- Diversity & inclusion
- Integrity & transparency
- Noble purpose
- Agility
- Leadership

Positioning: Succinct description of our brand benefit to audiences; aligns to vision and mission

UofL is a vital ecosystem that creates thriving futures for students, our community and society.

Pillars: Primary message points that support our positioning and highlight our competitive advantages

- Redefining Student Success
We invest in the whole student to unleash their potential and prepare them for the careers, workplaces and complex challenges of tomorrow.
- Research & Innovation Powerhouse
We create and apply knowledge that improves lives.
- Premier Metropolitan University
We are dynamically connected to our local and global community.

Personality: Characteristics rooted in our core value of vitality that define how we look, feel and act

- Resilient (persevering, strong)
- Welcoming (inclusive, accessible)
- Dynamic (multi-faceted, energetic)
- Innovative (entrepreneurial, leading)
- Passionate (driven, spirited)
- Real (grounded, genuine)

HOW WE COMMUNICATE

Effective writing goes beyond proper grammar and punctuation. When crafting messaging and content for the University of Louisville brand, it's important to make it engaging and evocative. Above all, it should sound as consistent as possible. The following section provides insight into how our brand sounds and expresses itself, as well as advice to keep in mind when writing.

Voice: The fingerprint we leave on our communications, making them uniquely identifiable as UofL

We are one university, and we should speak with one voice.

Our voice shapes every communication across all audience segments, both internal and external. It captures the unique personality the University of Louisville expresses to the world and reflects how we think and feel. Our voice should remain relatively consistent no matter who we're talking to or what we're talking about.

The UofL brand voice is:

- Optimistic
- Self-assured
- Inclusive, welcoming and positive
- Vibrant
- Tenacious
- Bold and inspiring
- Honest, genuine

The UofL brand voice is not:

- Arrogant
- Aggressive
- Condescending
- Indifferent
- Fanciful or cute
- Dismissive
- Trite or superficial
- Academic

Tone: The attitude we convey in our communications

This shapes how we are perceived by our constituents and audiences. While our voice should remain consistent in all situations, our tone can be adjusted to suit the audience. For example, the way we speak to prospective students may be less formal than addressing alumni donors. When you write, think of your audience as an individual and consider that person's perspective when determining how to capture attention and bring about an action. What motivates that individual? What concerns that individual? What resonates on both an intellectual and an emotional level?

The tone of our brand should be genuine, confident and guided by a relentless sense of purpose. It should also convey the open, inclusive nature of our Cardinal community and our hunger for innovation.

UofL is on a mission to be the change. To rise to the challenge. To stand up for what's right. To find a way. And to lead. Imagine you are speaking as any of the countless people who provide the distinctive energy that defines not only our university but also our impact on Louisville and the world. Strive to capture that energy with the tone of your communication in a way that resonates with your audience.

BRAND OR CAMPAIGN?

It's important to understand the difference between a brand and a campaign. These two terms are closely related. But they are not interchangeable.

Brand is a macro expression of who we are. When we speak of the UofL core brand, we mean the broad collection of traits and guiding principles that define our identity.

- Long-term, enduring manifestation of who we are
- Broadly applicable across the university, to all audiences
- Inspires all levels of communication and action; what we say and do

Campaign is a micro expression of our brand that serves a specific purpose. We create campaigns to meet strategic and tactical communication goals.

- Shorter-term, focusing on timely goals, trends
- Focused on specific audiences, but can serve as a rallying cry for many
- Focused on outputs: ads, collateral, social media

Perhaps the simplest way to think of the difference is that a campaign is a single chapter in our ongoing brand story. Campaign guidelines for UofL's latest chapter can be found in a separate document, also available at louisville.edu/brand.

CREATING CONTENT

Ultimately, our goal is to help audiences understand why and how UofL matters to them, using our brand framework as a roadmap for determining and prioritizing subject matter. Our communications should answer, for the intended audience, the questions: *So, what? Who cares? What's in it for me?* To help you determine if a proposed story or piece of content aligns with the messaging pillars of our brand and qualifies as audience-centric (something people want to read), we have created the following checklists.

Supporting our messaging pillars:

Does the proposed story/content ...

- Demonstrate student success or describe the student experience
- Highlight research and innovation
- Demonstrate community engagement or ties to the city/region
- Highlight university goals, expertise or strategic priorities
- Show how UofL is a great place to work

Audience-centric:

Will the story/content be of interest to ...

- Prospective students and parents
- Potential donors and partners
- Faculty and staff
- Current students and parents
- Alumni
- Policy and decision makers
- General public

Is the story/content, or can it be made to be ...

- Consumable, valuable and easy to understand
- Beautiful, compelling and have visual stopping power
- Extensible and able to be developed across multiple content types
- Engaging and aligns with what has performed well in the past,
based on analytics

STORYTELLING

When you get right down to it, the power of UofL is its people. And each of these people has a story. Telling these stories is an essential component of bringing our brand to life. Whether an article, an advertisement or a script, the assets we create need to be as compelling as possible and reward our audience for viewing them.

Find the purpose:

The most important part of the storytelling process is to determine why you're going to tell it. Think about what makes that story relevant to your audience. What do you want your audience to think, feel and/or do after seeing your content? When looking for the purpose, use UofL's brand pillars as a guide. If your story reflects one of them, you're on the right track.

Create an arc:

Simply put, have a beginning, middle and end. Introduce your subject and put it into perspective. Explain the challenge or opportunity and why it matters. Then explain what happened or is happening. Be sure to include UofL's role in the story. Finally, let the audience know the resolution of the story or the progress made.

Make a point:

Whenever possible, put the story in a broader context that relates to the university and our community. What is the impact it will make? Where will it lead? Who will benefit from it? Be direct, so your audience knows precisely what you want them to think, feel and/or do.

Editorial tips:

Whether crafting a simple email or a lengthy article, writing is an opportunity to connect, inspire and invite others to engage with the UofL community. The idea of community is an important one. Be sure to remember you are speaking from the perspective of real people, not an institution.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when writing.

Be conversational, write the way you would speak to a friend (but avoid slang and technical jargon)

***Like this:** At the Swain Student Activities Center, you can get a bite to eat, find a cozy place to study or just relax with your friends between classes.*

***Not this:** The SAC is lit! You can grab tasty eats, hang with your peeps and even hit the books if you absolutely have to.*

Be clear and concise, do your best to simplify descriptions and explanations

***Like this:** Another way to be more environmentally friendly is to take advantage of the Bike Share Program. The program is offered to all UofL students, and it is entirely free.*

***Not this:** Undergraduate students who wish to promote sustainable practices that limit impact on the environment may utilize the Bike Share Program. This eco-friendly mode of campus transportation is offered to all students currently attending UofL and it is available at no cost.*

Be efficient, avoid passive voice and eliminate redundancies

Like this: *The University of Louisville hosts more than 400 student organizations covering a wide variety of interests.*

Not this: *More than 400 student organizations, clubs and groups are hosted by the University of Louisville that cover a wide variety of interests and passions.*

Be helpful, highlight the benefits and give people a reason to care

Like this: *The Honors Program challenges students to reach their potential with thought-provoking academics and research and exclusive opportunities for personalized support, experiential learning and study abroad.*

Not this: *The Honors Program is an excellent option for motivated students who want to get the most out of their education.*

Be engaging, remember people “buy” with their hearts and believe in brands that mirror their values

***Like this:** When Loay Elbasyouni was a 10-year-old boy growing up on the besieged Gaza Strip in Palestine, he built his first antenna from kitchen parts and aluminum foil so he could receive TV channels.*

***Not this:** Speed School of Engineering alumnus Loay Elbasyouni has been interested in science and technology since he was a child.*

Be purposeful, get to the point quickly and don’t overwhelm the reader with too much information

Be assertive, choose words like “do” and “will” as opposed to “can” and “might”

Be flexible, use sentence variety to establish a flow for the reader

Be a fan, speak with pride about UofL traditions and our legacy of impact

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Social media allows us to connect with readers on a personal level. But the dynamic nature of social channels means copy must be both brief and compelling enough to capture their attention before they scroll on. Your post must have stopping power. It's also critical to make the post about the audience versus the brand. People care about their story, their narrative and their why, so appeal to this motivation.

When you only have a handful of words and a split-second of time, is it possible to connect with your audience in a way that is both effective and true to the UofL brand? Absolutely.

Tips & best practices:

- Get to the thesis, the “why,” the “hook” in the first sentence
- Cut prepositional phrases
- Use simple, concise words, including for “academic” types of stories
- Be contextual
- Tell stories that demonstrate impact — on individuals and the community — that fit your objective
- Tell stories your specific audiences and constituents care about
- Engage/respond/answer questions

Examples:

Like this: Despite the global pandemic shutting down international travel, UofL maintained its international collaboration with Universidad El Bosque in Bogota, Colombia, by creating remote performances together.

Not this: COVID-19 can't stop the music.

Like this: UofL Health's new Urgent Care Plus location in Louisville's Parkland neighborhood provides access to critical health care in a historically underserved area. UofL Health continues to show its commitment to improving the health of all the communities it serves.

Not this: UofL Health opens new Urgent Care Plus location in west Louisville

Like this: UofL aims to solve three "Grand Challenges"—empowering our communities, advancing our health and engineering our future economy. Our goal is to give researchers the tools and support they need to expand their impact in our community, state and beyond.

Not this: UofL is adding new programming, tools and hires to support its Grand Challenges.

Like this: Historically, most studies exploring an association between genes and disease were conducted with a bias toward those with European ancestry. UofL researchers are working to diversify this work and advance genomic research more equitably.

Not this: UofL researchers lead the call to increase genetic diversity in immunogenetics

Like this: Finding talent amid a constantly evolving digital transformation of the supply chain can be a challenge for major companies like Louisville's GE Appliances. But thanks to a partnership with UofL's Speed School, GE has access to plenty of talent for its needs.

Not this: Speed School alum is the first graduate of the new GE Industry 4.0 program.

Tone and voice:

When writing social content, adopt the same tone and voice you use with other brand elements, but also remember that social media is meant to be social. Here—to a much greater degree than in other communications channels—you should strive to be positive, conversational and engaging.

Engagement:

We are a community of care, and we should reflect that in our engagement, responses and posts. What does this mean, exactly? Be considerate to all but don't engage with users actively trying to instigate conflict, hostility or arguments.

Here is a breakdown of how to respond to a social media comment:

- If a comment is positive, thank them whenever possible
- If a comment asks a question, get the answer and either respond online or redirect offline. (Not every question has a quick and easy answer, so manage the commenter's expectations).
- If a comment is neutral, no response is necessary
- If a comment is off-topic or spam, report and then hide
- If a critical comment is the result of a negative experience, respond empathetically and redirect offline
- If a critical comment is the result of incorrect information, research the commenter and either respond gently with the correct information or ignore it; don't provoke haters or conspiracy theorists.
- If a negative comment is factually correct and adheres to the social channel's posting and community guidelines, no response is needed
- If a negative comment is incorrect but adheres to those guidelines, respond gently and redirect offline
- If a negative comment is sarcastic or satirical, no response is needed
- If a comment is abusive, aggressive or profane, report and then hide

Channel-specific considerations:

Twitter

When you only have 280 characters to work with, brevity is crucial. This means mentions (@) should be fluidly incorporated into the copy whenever possible.

Facebook

Although character limit is not a concern, you should keep posts to easily digestible statements.

Instagram

Instagram photography style should follow UofL brand standards. When possible, use candid or user-provided photography. If sharing user photography, include appropriate credit.

Pinterest

Pinned images must follow UofL brand photography and imagery standards. Captions should be concise, follow brand voice and have an informal, friendly tone.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn posts should be professional in tone and demonstrate our impact to the broader community. The most effective messaging is focused, concise and valuable to the audience.