

Joseph A. Brennan, M.B.A., Ph.D.

Accredited in Public Relations, Fellow PRSA

CAREER SUMMARY

I provide transformative leadership to help universities succeed during changing and challenging times. I create data-driven communication strategies, craft powerful and distinctive brand narratives, build internal and external support for a shared vision and messaging, and apply innovative methods to engage audiences. I form, lead and inspire teams of skilled professionals to achieve measurable results. And I counsel leaders during crises.

Over 28 years, I've progressed rapidly from entry- to executive-level posts, moving up from a coordinator with a staff of two to a vice president with a staff of 23, serving two AAU universities along the way. I've been actively sought-after by employers who understood my impact and value, resulting in an employment history filled with rapid growth and change. Each opportunity offered significantly more responsibility and influence. Former employers still use programs I created for them, speak highly of me and recommend me often. My peers have honored my work with election to the PRSA College of Fellows, and twice named me "communicator of the year."

SKILLS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As a **chief communications officer**, I have created and led marketing and public relations programs that helped:

- generate \$100 million in new funding, and prevent budget cuts of up to \$60 million
- enroll the largest freshman classes ever for two research universities
- achieve the 3 biggest pledge drives ever and the best ratings in 20 years for a public radio station
- exceed fundraising campaign goal by 78% for a private university
- earn extensive national and international news coverage for a health-sciences research center
- win national awards for "most improved web site" and "best public relations campaign"

As a **crisis manager**, I have led communications and served as a spokesman for many critical incidents, including:

- Allegations of racially-motivated violence that drew national news coverage and social media attention, including tweets from a U.S. presidential candidate and an NFL player
- A fire that displaced 250 students, and a power outage that took a large part of campus offline for days
- A hurricane in Puerto Rico, where I directed regional communications for the American Red Cross

As a **national thought leader** and sought-after speaker, mentor and consultant, I have:

- Chaired a national professional association's board, leading my fellow volunteers to grow membership from 400 to 700, attract record sponsorship dollars and expand programs and services
- Published 16 professional and academic articles, and gave 20+ conference presentations
- Taught college courses in marketing, public relations and mass communication

EXPERIENCE

Founder and Principal Consultant

Joseph A. Brennan PhD - Communications Counsel to Higher Education, 2018-present

- Consultant to higher education institutions and businesses that sell services to colleges and universities. The firm specializes in strategy, brand development, leadership coaching and crisis counsel.

VP Communications & Marketing | Clinical Professor of Business | Special Assistant to the President

University at Albany - State University of New York, 2015-18

As Vice President (2015-18):

- Reinvigorated brand and sharpened position; rebuilt messaging map; introduced persona-based storytelling; modernized student recruitment marketing, resulting in 18% growth in applications, 2% drop in summer melt and biggest freshman class ever; sponsored first major overhaul to website in 10 years; expanded strategic use of social media; unified campus communicators; created digitally-based

employee communications program; worked closely with staff to grow media coverage 77% in year one and 40% in year two.

- Co-designed and co-led institutional strategic planning process, and aligned it with brand development project. Built extensive campus support for research-based brand initiative.
- Successfully managed communications for a nationally-visible crisis, a residence hall fire and a rape.

As Clinical Professor (2016-18):

- Developed and taught MBA course in Services Marketing; supervised student honors thesis; conducted research and published papers on crisis communications and social media strategy and metrics.

As Special Assistant to the President (2018):

- Marketing strategist for targeted high-growth programs in entrepreneurship and public health.

Vice President, Strategic Communications - University of Iowa (2013-2015)

- Planned and led comprehensive multichannel campaign that measurably improved visibility and changed perceptions statewide, which helped to fend off a \$40-60 million state budget cut and contributed to more applications from in-state students, resulting in largest freshman class in history.
- Managed communications for complex and sensitive issues including sexual assaults, racial tensions, controversial speech and student-athlete welfare.

Associate Vice President, University Communications - University at Buffalo, 2008-2013

- Led advocacy communications program to build public and legislative support for the university, resulting in \$100 million in new capital and operating funding. Unified schools and colleges under one brand umbrella; designed and directed rebuilding of entire web site. Built communicators network to unify 80+ professionals campuswide. Planned and managed sale of public radio station, netting \$4 million and ending \$350K annual subsidy.

Executive Director, Communications & Marketing - Ohio University, 2006-2008

- Planned and launched first-ever multi-channel brand awareness campaign; redeveloped alumni magazine; worked directly with president to articulate his vision and build support.

Executive Director, Marketing & University Relations - University of the Pacific, 2003-2006

- Grew media coverage by 34% in first year; directed communications for campaign that raised \$355 million (\$200 million goal); built reputation, helping Pacific move up 15 places in *U.S. News* rankings.

Executive Director, Public Relations and Marketing - University of Toledo, 2000-2003

- Rebranded the university; redeveloped admissions marketing to reverse 10-year decline in enrollment; created employee communication program that rebuilt trust after a president was fired.

Public Relations Director - Delgado Community College, 1995-2000

- Consolidated all comms & marketing efforts and spending; won national award for "best PR campaign."

Manager, Research Support Services & Public Communications - NYS Research Institute on Addictions, 1992-1995

- Built and ran a multi-channel communications program using earned, paid and direct media.
- Placed news stories and faculty experts in national and global outlets, including NY Times, Oprah, & BBC

Coordinator, Conferences & Lifelong Learning - Niagara University, 1990-1992

- Improved net income 30% by developing new, higher demand programs and innovating marketing.

EDUCATION

BA - English & Psychology - Wayne State University - Summa cum laude. Phi Beta Kappa, Psy Chi honor societies.

MBA - Marketing - University of the Pacific - 4.0 GPA Beta Gamma Sigma, Phi Kappa Phi honor societies.

MA & PhD - English - University at Buffalo - Presidential Fellow. VP, Graduate Student Assn. Teaching assistant.