Brand Platform/Key Messages
Final Revisions Based on Feedback

January 2018
Division of University Marketing & Communications
# TU Identity Audit Process Timeline

The sharing and testing of the brand platform and key messages served as a good check-in with the TU community as the Identity Audit Process reaches its mid-way point.

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Our goals at this checkpoint:

• Share the newly developed brand platform and key messages with the university community.
• Evaluate the messages for their appeal, capacity to differentiate and ability to motivate prospective students toward deeper engagement.
• Provide guidance on how we can strengthen the platform and messages.
• Inform marketing and communications strategies in subsequent deliverables.
We shared. Between November 2017 and January 2018, we met with 16 different campus divisions, departments, councils, groups, and shared governance bodies.

We listened. You told us what resonated, what felt true and authentic to the TU experience and where we see it headed in the future. You also gave us revisions and other considerations for wording.

We tested. We used a third party to conduct formal message testing and focus groups for internal and external stakeholders.
Who did we talk to?

The **TU Brand Team**, an advisory group of representatives of university divisions with varying levels of responsibilities for key stakeholder engagement, worked alongside the University Marketing and Communications team and our creative partner to develop the brand platform and key messages.

**Sharing & Feedback Sessions on Campus**
- President’s Council
- Board of Visitors
- Alumni Association Board
- University Senate
- TUSC
- SGA
- Provost’s Council
- Council of Chairs
- Divisional Staff Meetings: University Advancement; Auxiliary Services; Student Affairs; WTMD; DIAR
- And more...

**Formal Third Party Testing & Focus Groups**
- Three Internal Focus Groups:
  - Faculty
  - Staff
  - Students
- Two External Focus Groups:
  - Prospective Students (Juniors)
  - Parents/Guardians of Prospective Students
What we learned.

• Overall, the prospective student and parent groups rated the messages very appealing, relevant and important.

• Prospective students and parents were most engaged, followed by students, staff, and faculty.

• After reviewing the messages, a majority of prospective students and parent participants reported their perceptions changed and felt compelled to deepen their engagement with TU.

• The concept of “Opportunity” was a compelling point across all five focus groups, and current students confirmed opportunity as true to their TU experience.

• The “Mentorship” message resonated the strongest of all five messages.
BRAND PLATFORM

BIG IDEA
Experts in Opportunity
WHAT WE HEARD...

Experts in Opportunity

The feedback around opportunity was very positive. External groups responded especially well. A few felt the idea was broad and not specific enough.

Some felt uneasy with this word. Others said it was hard to define and prove. It was clear this word was too controversial.
“The word ‘opportunity’ shows that at Towson, taking chances and trying new things are valued.”

“Opportunity is important. Showing innovation in creating opportunity where it does not exist.”

“I like the spirit of it.”
“Like the way it presents Towson.”
“Students and the public need to learn what ‘expert’ means. Putting it with ‘opportunity’ sounds like PR.”

“The word ‘expert’ is too charged these days. Maybe we should avoid it.”

“I feel like ‘opportunity’ is too generic. Like it’s just something that’s not special.”
REVISED BIG IDEA

Create opportunities

* Remember – the big idea is not a slogan or tagline
REVISED BIG IDEA

- Turns the big idea into an impactful action.
- Changes ‘opportunity’ from an idea to a more concrete set of deliverables.
- Instills that opportunities must be created and it requires Towson University’s expertise and work to establish them.
BRAND PLATFORM
POSITIONING STATEMENT
A lot of institutions *talk* opportunity. But ensuring students engage, explore, persist and succeed requires more than talk. At Towson University we *create* opportunity. We stay agile to meet the demands of a changing world. We connect students to industry experts in intimate learning environments. We offer a wide scope of challenging and relevant programs. TU is the expert in creating opportunity – which is why our students are prepared, no matter what.
A lot of institutions *talk* opportunity. But ensuring students engage, explore, persist and succeed requires more than talk. At Towson University we *create opportunity where it doesn’t exist*. We stay agile to meet the demands of a changing world. We connect students to industry experts in intimate learning environments. We offer a wide scope of challenging and relevant programs. TU *never stops creating opportunities* – which is why our students are prepared, no matter what.
KEY MESSAGES

CORE MESSAGE
Towson University has over 150 years of experience creating opportunity: nimbly adapting and evolving to anticipate what the world needs. We use the power of learning, discovery and creativity to open up more possibilities for more people, ensuring that the future is one everyone can share. Being ambitious on behalf of others isn’t just a promise at TU – we deliver on it every day.
Students reported the core idea of “opportunity” as true to their TU experience.

Participants felt “isn’t just a promise” lent an element of truthfulness.

All groups had strong positive responses to the idea of “adapting & evolving.”

Some felt “Everyone can share” implied all students would share the same future.

Faculty reported the word “nimbly” felt unnecessary and made the statement more awkward.
REVISED CORE MESSAGE

WE ARE OPPORTUNITY CREATORS.

Towson University has over 150 years of experience creating opportunity: adapting and evolving to anticipate what the world needs. We use the power of learning, discovery and creativity to open up more possibilities for more people, ensuring a future where everyone plays a role. Being ambitious on behalf of others isn’t just a promise at TU – we deliver on it every day.
KEY MESSAGES
SUPPORTING MESSAGE #1
A TU student is never far from someone inspiring. Our 17-to-1 student-faculty ratio doesn’t just mean smaller class sizes – it means students work directly with leaders in discovery and practice who are dedicated teachers and have the highest level of training in their field. Our team of curricular and co-curricular advisors provide opportunities for students to grow, flourish and put their knowledge to work in internships, community engagement, study abroad and other transformative experiences. With TU’s focus on the whole person and mentorship as the norm, our students find their calling and their voice.
SUPPORTING MESSAGE #1

SOME SPECIFIC THINGS WE HEARD...

This message was extremely impactful with prospective students and parents. The strongest rated of all messages.

“Putting knowledge to work shows outcomes.”

Several noted the student:faculty ratio was unimpressive.

“This one feels more personal. It’s speaking to me.”

Faculty hoped to see “professors” mentioned by name in this message.

“All the words support the fact that my son would be part of a team who is interested in his academic success.”
MENTORS ARE ALWAYS CLOSE BY.

A TU student is never far from someone inspiring. Students work directly with professors in discovery and practice who are dedicated teachers with the highest level of training in their fields. Our passionate leaders provide opportunities for students to grow, flourish and put their knowledge to work in internships, community engagement, study abroad and other transformative experiences. With TU’s focus on the whole person and mentorship as the norm, our students find their calling and their voice.
KEY MESSAGES
SUPPORTING MESSAGE #2
In little more than a decade, TU has become Maryland’s fastest-growing university. We have 60+ undergraduate majors, 75 graduate degrees and certifications, 190 local and regional partnerships with BTU, a thriving research enterprise and programs no other institution in the region can match. We’re investing almost $700 million in campus infrastructure over the next seven years, including two new major academic buildings. Washington Monthly now ranks us No. 1 among the state’s universities for contributing to the public good, and our momentum is always accelerating—energizing everyone who experiences it.
Growth was perceived as improvement.

“It seems they are moving in the right direction.”

“I like that they mentioned giving back to the community; it makes the school seem like a welcoming place.”

“There was a lack of interest in the Washington Monthly proof point.

“It gave me a good impression.”

For some, “In a little more than a decade” implied that Towson’s reputation as a strong university was relatively recent.
REVISED SUPPORTING MESSAGE #2

MAKE OUR MOMENTUM YOURS.

TU is Maryland’s fastest-growing university. We have 60+ undergraduate majors, 75 graduate degrees and certifications, 190 local and regional partnerships with BTU, a thriving research enterprise and programs no other institution in the region can match. We’re investing almost $700 million in campus infrastructure over the next seven years, including two new major academic buildings. Towson University is ranked No. 1 among the state’s universities for contributing to the public good and our momentum is always accelerating—energizing everyone who experiences it.
KEY MESSAGES
SUPPORTING MESSAGE #3
ORIGINAL SUPPORTING MESSAGE #3

LEARNING THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

TU’s 155,000 alumni play essential roles in their communities. They’re transforming classrooms and health care settings, leading businesses and nonprofits; they’re innovators, creative forces and champions for the public good. At TU they learned how their hard work and creative energy could serve a bigger purpose. In our diverse and inclusive campus community, they experienced firsthand how different perspectives produce smarter and more lasting solutions. Knowing they’ve been afforded these life-changing opportunities, our alumni are determined to pay it forward – many times over.
SOME SPECIFIC THINGS WE HEARD...

“**It helps kids visualize what comes next after college.**”

“**Diverse and inclusive campus community**” and “**life-changing opportunities**” were seen as strengths.

“**It gave me a good impression.**”

“I felt left out of the conversation with the use of the word ‘they’.**”

“The least compelling message for prospective students who couldn’t see themselves in the alumni messaging.

“What caught my attention was at Towson they learn to serve the greater good.”
REVISED SUPPORTING MESSAGE #3

LEARNING THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

TU graduates are part of 155,000 Tigers playing essential roles in their communities. It’s a network of alumni transforming classrooms and health care settings, leading businesses and nonprofits, innovators, creative forces and champions for the public good. At TU, alumni learned how their hard work and creative energy could serve a bigger purpose. In our diverse and inclusive campus community, students experience firsthand how different perspectives produce smarter and more lasting solutions. Knowing they’ve been afforded these life-changing opportunities, our alumni are determined to pay it forward—many times over.
KEY MESSAGES

SUPPORTING MESSAGE #4
ORIGINAL SUPPORTING MESSAGE #4

THIS IS WHAT HIGHER EDUCATION WAS MEANT TO DO.

TU embodies what higher education’s role should be in the 21st century. We are relentlessly focused on ensuring students engage, explore, persist and succeed; as a result, we’re one of only a handful of institutions in the nation with graduation and retention rates that are the same for all students, regardless of race. We’re an anchor, sought-after partner and powerful catalyst for our region, building the human and intellectual capital that fuels cultural, economic and knowledge growth. We believe it’s our role to improve lives – and that responsibility doesn’t stop with the boundaries of our campus.
SUPPORTING MESSAGE #4

SOME SPECIFIC THINGS WE HEARD...

The graduation and retention rate proof point was perceived as impressive by many groups.

“It made me feel like Towson is not only diverse, but its diversity is unique and not something I could find anywhere else.”

“I am impressed.”

Current students recommended removing “regardless of race.”

“21st century” seemed awkward and unnecessary to some.

Faculty perceived the word “anchor” to imply “stuck.”
REVISED SUPPORTING MESSAGE #4

THIS IS WHAT HIGHER EDUCATION WAS MEANT TO DO.

TU embodies what higher education’s role should be now and in the future. We are relentlessly focused on ensuring students engage, explore, persist and succeed; as a result we’re one of only a handful of institutions in the nation with graduation and retention rates that are the same for ALL students. We’re a beacon, sought-after partner and powerful catalyst for our region, building the human and intellectual capital that fuels cultural, economic and knowledge growth. We believe it’s our role to improve lives – and that responsibility doesn’t stop with the boundaries of our campus.
PAYOFF
I was afforded amazing opportunities, and I’m fully prepared to pay that forward in my profession, my community and the world.

PLEDGE
Your potential holds us to the highest standards. We’ll go above and beyond to challenge you, inspire you and ensure you’re ready for anything.

PERSONALITY
The experienced, community-minded innovator.

BIG IDEA
Create opportunities

COMPETITIVE POSITIONING
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PROOF (TOP 4)
- Top university in our region for 32 consecutive years (U.S. News & World Report).
- 17:1 student-to-faculty ratio so our experts of discovery and practice directly inspire and challenge our students.
- TU’S (6-yr.) minority graduation rates and (2-yr.) minority retention rates are the same as for majority students—there is no “achievement gap.”
- Fastest-growing university in the state of Maryland.

MISSION
Towson University fosters intellectual inquiry and critical thinking, preparing graduates who will serve as effective, ethical leaders and engaged citizens. Through a foundation in the liberal arts, an emphasis on rigorous academic standards, and the creation of small learning environments, we are committed to providing a collaborative, interdisciplinary and inter-professional atmosphere, excellence in teaching, leadership development, civic engagement, and applied and sponsored research opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Our graduates leave Towson University with the vision, creativity and adaptability to craft solutions that enrich the culture, society, economy, and environment of Maryland, the region, and beyond.
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THANK YOU