

Oral Defense Announcement

University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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B.S. in Economics, December, 1983, University of Missouri-St. Louis
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A Study of Digital Communications between Universities and Students

Date: June 22, 2017

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Place: SSB, Room 401

Abstract

This study examined the digital and social media communication practices of nine urban universities including UMSL to known corporate best practices.

The purpose of this study was to (1) research how these universities are using social/digital communications, including strategies to engage with students and prospective students, (2) compare the executional tactics of universities to corporate best practices, (3) determine if by applying corporate best practices universities reap the same benefits as corporate in terms of higher engagement rates with their customers, and (4) determine if a correlation exists between a university's Forbes ranking and its use of social media communications best practices.

This research employed a case study and correlational analytical approach. All content on Facebook and Twitter for the nine universities under study was examined for a 4-week evaluation period. Adherence to social and digital media corporate best practices were observed and noted. Metrics were created. These metrics were then correlated with overall engagement rates on the various social media platforms.

The results of this study did show that those universities better at applying corporate best practices did see higher engagement rates with statistical significance. This informs us that best practices as determined by corporations for engaging with customers and potential customers also apply for universities in dealing with students.

Additionally, this study sought to better understand issues that may hinder a university from being able to quickly adopt to the technological needs of students and the platforms they use for communications. This was done via an extensive review of the literature and various industry journals. There were found to be many reasons why a university may be incapable of implementing cutting edge communication platforms quickly including the fact that universities (1) may be slower in adoption of technology (2) must adhere to FERPA rules and regulations (3) have difficulty in operating strategically (4) are known to be very "siloed" in structure (5) have limited resources that cannot be easily redeployed as needed, and (6) are confused about who their customers are.

Defense of Dissertation Committee

Carl Hoagland, Ph.D. - Chairperson

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