

University at Albany
Office of Communications and Marketing
RFP – Brand Marketing Research
February 9, 2016

Overview

The University at Albany, through the University at Albany Foundation, is seeking a well-qualified firm with expertise in conducting marketing research and supporting brand development for higher education institutions. The University wants to work with its partner to assess its current brand and marketplace position and develop strategies for strengthening the institutional brand and sharpening its position in order to support student recruitment, deepen ties with alumni, increase community engagement, and build pride and morale on campus.

The university wants to develop a comprehensive understanding of how several important audiences view the institution and then draw on the insights gained through this research to formulate institutional-wide messaging and ultimately develop new or updated creative materials.

The Vice President for Communications and Marketing, Joseph Brennan, is sponsoring this project and will work very closely with the selected firm throughout the process on research design, data collection, analysis and reporting. Dr. Brennan will lead campus conversations about the findings in order to build consensus around core messaging and institutional identity and to develop support for effective brand and marketing strategies. Jennifer Carron, Director of Marketing, will also be a key partner in this effort.

This project will represent the most comprehensive study of the institutional brand and position in recent history. The last such project was conducted in 2007, primarily for the purpose of supporting undergraduate student recruitment. It will coincide with other focused efforts to understand perceptions, including qualitative interviews of major prospects currently underway by the Development Office as part of planning for a major fundraising campaign. Additional data sources that can complement the brand study include the annual SUNY Student Opinion Survey, College Board analyses, and other recent survey research on prospects and current students.

The University at Albany - SUNY

Founded in 1844 as a “normal school”, the University at Albany has a long history of innovation and excellence. Today it is one of the four leading “University Centers” within the State University of New York. UAlbany is known for a number of highly-regarded academic programs, including top-10 rankings for criminal justice, information technology and public administration. Its student body of 17,300 is the most diverse among the SUNY University Centers.

Under the leadership of President Robert Jones, UAlbany is a university on the move. Since joining the University in 2011, President Jones has built strong support for an ambitious strategic vision that includes launching two new colleges and expanding academic offerings, dramatically increasing research funding, growing the enrollment by more than 2,500 students in the next four years, conducting a comprehensive fundraising campaign, and positioning the university as one of the nation’s leading public research universities. The president has attracted several experienced leaders to join his team.

In August 2015, veteran higher education marketing/PR executive Joseph Brennan, Ph.D., joined President Jones’s cabinet as VP, Communications and Marketing. Brennan is working to strengthen and elevate the communication function. Major initiatives include developing the institutional brand, strengthening the key channels of communications (digital/social, earned news coverage, and internal communication) and aligning mar-comm strategy and building mar-comm capacity across the university. This research project will lay the foundation for elevating the institution’s reputation.

The University at Albany currently presents many highly visible faces to the world, including communications materials that are issued by:

- Admissions
Nine Schools and Colleges, as well as the Honors College and several research institutes and centers
- Student Affairs
- Office of the Vice President for Research
- Uptown, Downtown and East Campuses
- Athletics
- Development
- Alumni
- Public Engagement
- Government and Community Relations
- Office of the President

This project will help unify messaging across all of these important touchpoints. It will also support several major strategic initiatives during the next five years:

- Growing Enrollment to 20,000 students by 2020
- Launching a Major Fundraising Campaign
- Expanding Academic Program Offerings
- Increasing Public Engagement and Experiential Learning

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of this project is to build the University at Albany's brand during the next five years. Our objectives for this engagement include:

- Understand how we are perceived by our key audiences
- Clarify how we want to be perceived
- Distinguish clearly and concisely what's different/unique about UAlbany
- Unite various voices of the university under a well-defined core position for greater awareness and impact
- Bring together internal and external stakeholders toward a common identity and sense of purpose
- Guide efforts to position ourselves in key markets
- Establish benchmarks to help measure success and create a plan for future assessment
- Support university leaders as they make strategic decisions

TIMELINE

Our timeline is to spend the first half of 2016 on market research and development of strategic messaging, then begin to apply the findings in the second half of 2016. This proposal requests help with the first part – research and strategy. This is not a request for creative services.

RFP Issued: February 9, 2016

Proposals Due: February 26, 2016

After proposals are reviewed, finalists will be selected and asked to come to Albany for half-day presentations and interviews. ***Please note that this will be at the expense of the bidder.*

After a decision is made, a project kick-off meeting will be scheduled. Anticipated completion date for this project is September, 2016.

Please submit any questions regarding this RFP to the designated contact (information on last page of this document).

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION FORMAT

This section includes instructions on the format Bidders must follow in preparing and submitting their proposals. Bidders are asked to be clear and concise, and to follow this format.

The required Sections of the response are listed and following each are specific instructions for the content expected in that Section. Supplier response must address the following project requirements. The University, at its option, may require a Supplier to provide additional documentation to support and/or clarify the provided information.

Proposals must be formatted on 8.5 x 11-inch paper and provided as PDF files.

Section Title

	Title Page
	Table of Contents
1.0	Methodology and Approach
2.0	Client References
3.0	Sample Documents
4.0	Cost Proposal
5.0	Project Staffing/Resumes
6.0	Company Background and Customer List
7.0	UAlbany RFP Contact Information

Instructions relative to each part of the response to this RFP are defined in the remainder of this section.

Table of Contents

1.1	Scope of services being proposed
1.2	Qualifications and Experience of the Supplier Doing Similar Work
1.3	High Level Project Execution Plan

1.4 Cost Summary

Budget Range: The University's budget for this project is \$85,000 - \$95,000

1.5 Requirements of the University, e.g., personnel and physical assets

1.6 Cost by Service Type

1.7 Value and Outcomes Delivered to University

1.8 Specify the names of similar sized higher education and other comparably sized clients that have used the services being proposed.

1.0 Methodology & Approach

The supplier should provide the step-by-step approach/methodology for both the research and the strategy development aspects of this project. Describe in detail the technical and implementation management methodologies for the proposed approaches.

It is anticipated that a combination of secondary, qualitative, and quantitative research will be needed to accomplish the deliverables. The proposal needs to clearly outline what information is expected from each of the different methodologies and from whom the information will be solicited.

Target audiences should include the following groups, and geographically be national in scope. The proposer should provide the best methods of surveying these groups. If the research team believes that other groups are important, the group can propose additional research for those groups. This information should be clearly delineated as additional research. The target group includes:

- Prospective students
- Parents of prospective students
- Alumni
- Current students, faculty and staff
- Students who applied but didn't attend
- Influencers in the Capital Region

2.0 Client References

Please provide the contact information and client background for the five (5) client references. Submit references for clients that are most similar to the services being proposed for University. University prefers that at least two of the five references are higher education institutions. Submission of current active client list is also necessary to provide.

3.0. Sample Documents

Provide sample survey formats, analysis, and reports from prior engagements for other higher education institutions; it is permissible to change specific data or recommendations to comply with non-compete agreements.

4.0. Cost Proposal

The supplier must specify all potential fees that may be charged to the University, as well as a proposed payment schedule. Please note that final payment will not be made until all deliverables are completed and submitted. A contract will be executed with the successful bidder outlining specific terms, conditions and payment amounts.

5.0. Project Staffing/Resumes

Describe your proposed Project Organization Chart and provide biographical sketches for the Project Manager and all proposed staff on the Organization Chart. The University will require finalists to bring key personnel to campus for interviews prior to selection.

6.0. Company Background

Bidder must provide the following information about its company so that the University can evaluate the supplier's financial stability and ability to support the commitments set forth in response to the RFP.

The supplier should describe the company's background, including:

- A brief description of the company size and organizational structure as it relates to services proposed.
- Indicate how long Supplier has been performing the services or selling the products requested in this RFP.
- Provide a corporate history/management summary showing that Supplier and/or its officers have been engaged for a minimum of three (3) years in providing similar services or products as requested in this RFP.
- The Bidder must disclose and provide description of insurance coverage and related amounts.
- Provide a description of Supplier's qualifications to meet Specifications and provide the Services/Products requested in this RFP, including a history of Supplier's prior experience in this area.
- Describe any specific *growth* in this service/product area over the past three (3) years for your firm.
- Please describe any anticipated risks to successfully completing this project within the timelines required, and how those risks will be mitigated.

7.0. UAlbany RFP Contact Information

Please direct all questions and RFP submission to:

Lisa Taylor

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