3. Positioning

At U of T Engineering our vision is to continue to be a leader among the world’s very best engineering schools in our discovery, creation and transfer of knowledge and technology through teaching and research. This vision guides our decisions and actions as we accomplish the objectives set out in our 2011-16 Academic Plan.

We consistently place first among engineering school in Canada, by a significant margin, in all international rankings. While rankings are only one of many measures of our excellence, they serve to enhance our international profile and strengthen our global reputation. This is evident in the growing number of international students, both undergraduate and graduate, who apply to our prestigious programs.

The impact and span of our research, paired with the diversity of our activities and community, offers a wealth of stories to tell. We continue to employ a variety of communication vehicles to showcase our leaders at the forefront of innovation. In the past year, we gained the most attention from online news outlets, followed closely by radio, websites/blogs, television, and print newspapers. Local media coverage helped to raise the profile and awareness of several key Faculty initiatives:

- ILead: TTC CEO Andy Byford spoke to students at the Faculty (Toronto Star)
- Entrepreneurship Hatchery: Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian shared his advice with budding entrepreneurs (Toronto Star)
- Research and Innovation: Professor Yu Sun’s (MIE) groundbreaking research on robotic in-vitro fertilization gained national coverage in the Globe and Mail

We are also gaining traction in our international coverage; nearly half of the 9,000 stories published were generated by media outlets outside of Canada. A selection of stories that gained international attention include:

- smart traffic lights invented by several U of T civil engineers,
- invisibility cloak device developed by two ECE researchers, and
- the first sustained flight of a human powered helicopter achieved by two U of T Engineering alumni.

Keeping faculty, staff, students, and alumni engaged in establishing our priorities, activities, and future plans is instrumental in fostering a culture of engagement and pride. Our three newsletters and topical town halls were designed with these audiences in mind. They endeavor to open dialogue and are returning positive results - specifically with faculty. The most recent COACHE survey showed that 71.5 per cent of tenure-stream faculty members surveyed are satisfied by the communication of priorities by the Dean. This is significantly higher than the University as a whole (which stands at 42.9 per cent) and speaks to the power of consultation and information sharing.
Transparency in Faculty communications is epitomized in our Annual Report of Performance Indicators, now in its sixth edition. The Annual Report measures our progress over the past 10 years in key areas and highlights major activities from the past year. While the Annual Report of Performance Indicators primarily serves an internal audience, its companion document - the External Annual Report – serves our alumni, prospective donors, and industry partners. The external annual report distils the more comprehensive information found in our performance indicators report and provides a snapshot of the Faculty’s progress and success in the areas of education, research, awards, finances, philanthropy, and provides updates on the progress of the Centre for Engineering Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CEIE). We published the first edition of this report in 2013, with plans to publish the next edition in spring 2015.

Raising awareness among prospective and existing industry partners on the diverse range of impactful research and opportunities for collaboration is fundamental to our ongoing success. To facilitate this, we created a flexible corporate brochure that highlights our areas of strength. Departmental and research specific inserts allow us to customize each brochure to meet the needs of the various audiences.

Building on the success of last year’s Discover Engineering hybrid viewbook, we have implemented a similar strategy in creating the Guide to First Year. This streamlined print publication provides key information to help students navigate their first year, while directing them to various areas of our website for more information. This new searchable site also enables our First Year office to provide the most up-to-date information to incoming students. This strategy has been incredibly successful: we received over 1,900 unique page views on the guide’s landing page within one month of the mail out, from an incoming class of just over 1,000.

As the appetite for mobile content continues to grow, the Faculty is keeping pace. We are migrating content and redesigning Faculty-level microsites to a mobile and tablet friendly platform (WordPress). These sites now meet all accessibility standards and allow users to easily share information on social media. Implementing the new WordPress platform has also enabled us to respond quickly when new research centres, such as the University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute, require an online strategic web presence. We have taken initial steps toward moving our main Faculty website to this new platform. The planning phase was completed this year and we are now building the architecture and designing the wire framing for this important project.

Our social media presence is also growing. Using Twitter, Flickr, Facebook and YouTube, we are showcasing the amazing talents of our students and faculty. Videos such as “the Jedi Wars Flying Robotics Competition,” have proven to be excellent promotional tools. The Jedi Wars video has received more than 1,400 views since April 2014. Flickr has seen equally impressive results: within four days of posting our convocation photos on Flickr, we received over 70,000 hits, up dramatically from the 5,000 hits received the previous year.
As we move forward in positioning ourselves among the very best engineering schools, we will build on the work to redesign the main Faculty website with particular focus on improved navigation, content, and marketing. Our anticipated launch is spring 2015. In tandem, we will also redesign and migrate our undergraduate website. We will also continue to strengthen our media relations strategy by developing and promoting stories that showcase our innovative educational programs and outstanding research, and by aligning those stories with the core themes identified by our Faculty and the University.

3. POSITIONING: YEAR 3 PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

3.1 Deliver a plan that articulates our communication goals, maintains consistency of our branding and products, keeps on top of markets, and clearly outlines methods so that we can remain competitive and set the Faculty apart.

- Completed in early 2013; to be updated as appropriate by new Executive Director, Communications

3.2 Strengthen the Faculty’s key messages and customize them for target audiences.

- Assessed metrics in key areas and published our 6th internal Annual Report of Performance Indicators
- Created a themed issue of our Skulematters alumni magazine highlighting entrepreneurship and commercialization
- Developed a corporate brochure that highlights our key research strengths and the benefits of partnering with U of T Engineering; it can be tailored to target specific audiences with customized inserts that feature specific departments or research areas
- Reviewed faculty and staff newsletter statistics and developed plan to improve content delivery for maximum impact

3.3 Establish the Faculty as the go-to resource for media looking for comments and engineering expertise on breaking news issues.

- Re-launched Engineering news site on new platform, incorporated revised search engine optimization strategy which resulted in significantly increased pick up by google news
- Increased public exposure received from media outlets in Canada and around the world
  - Nearly three quarters of coverage appeared in online news outlets, blogs and other websites
  - Approximately half of all stories were published by outlets outside of Canada, indicating a strong interest from international media
- Made news headlines throughout 2013–14 on several innovations and breakthroughs, including:
  - Smarter traffic lights win global recognition for U of T grad
  - An invisibility cloak that actually works
  - U of T Engineering grads make aeronautical history with Sikorsky Prize
  - “Asia’s richest philanthropist,” major Silicon Valley firm invests in alumni’s Nanoleaf light bulb
  - U of T Engineering Grads Invent World’s Most Energy-efficient Light Bulb
- Iron brew: Canadian wins grant to develop fortified tea to help save lives
- New algorithm finds you, even in untagged photos

• Leveraged a growing contributor media model: disseminated U of T Engineering-drafted stories through mainstream and niche media channels (such as Huffington Post), we shared our story on the national James Dyson Award winners, Phys.Org posted our story on a research advance in the field of turbulence

3.4 Continue to increase the quality of our storytelling, journalism and communications processes and tools to make our practices best-in-class and in pace with emerging technologies and their uses by our target audiences.

• Continued the use of social media during events to increase engagement and public awareness of our events
• Integrated more multimedia components into web communications to enhance our storytelling
• Developed research inserts on emerging areas for our corporate brochure, with ongoing production of new inserts to remain current
• Maintained the practice of showcasing our newest faculty members through biographies and videos on our dynamic academic appointments microsite
• Revitalized the Guide to First Year through the creation of a hybrid print and online publication ensuring that the most accurate information is available at all times; received over 1,900 hits within the first week of mail out
• Enhanced graduate student recruitment tools with redesigned brochures for research and professional stream students; this will be carried through to the redesigned website; launch expected this fall
• Began the process of redesigning the main Faculty website, with particular focus on improved navigation, content, and marketing; launch expected in 2015
• Re-launched the Faculty’s news microsite with improved storytelling capability and search engine optimization
• Developed effective new websites for the Institute for Leadership Education in Engineering, University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute, Division of Engineering Science, and Engineering Student Recruitment & Retention Office
• Created and streamlined several internal tools for our network of 30+ communicators, such as a new Engineering Communications Network hub and email listserv

3.5 Remain flexible to changing media and technologies, nurture blogger and social media relationships, and build relationships and communications with traditional media.

• Established regular updates to our social media platforms such as Twitter and Flickr
• Achieved improved reach in online coverage with almost three quarters coming from online news outlets, blogs and websites
• Through pitches to national newspapers, garnered stories featuring our impact on research and education, such as in the Toronto Star (TTC CEO Andy Byford speaks to ILead students) and Globe and Mail (Professor Yu Sun’s research on robotic in-vitro fertilization)
3.6 Increase the Faculty’s presence, visibility and reputation on modern social media platforms.

- Transitioned the Faculty’s videos from Vimeo to YouTube; the channel and playlists are now highlighted in marketing and promotional pieces
- Established the practice of posting all new news stories to our Twitter account, reaching over 6,000 followers, and our Facebook account, reaching over 1,100 followers
- Released a news video for the Jedi Wars Flying Robotics Competition which has resulted in over 1,400 views
- Received over 70,000 hits to our Convocation Flickr gallery within four days of posting; up dramatically from the previous year’s 5,000 hits