

### 3. Positioning

The final year of our Faculty's Academic Plan was characterized by exceptional opportunities to enhance our standing as Canada's premier engineering program and one of the world's best with key regional, national and international audiences. Our global leadership in multidisciplinary research, pioneering experiential education and world-leading entrepreneurship and commercialization once again earned us recognition as the top-ranked engineering school in Canada across all international rankings.

The Centre for Engineering Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CEIE), the Faculty's newest building, embodies our commitment to research excellence and teaching. The CEIE, which is currently under construction, provides a tremendous opportunity to introduce stakeholders to this next era in the history of U of T Engineering. To do this, we conceived, designed and unveiled Toronto's longest single graffiti installation on the construction hoarding surrounding the site. This project allowed us to leverage our urban location, start a public conversation about the positive impact of engineering on society, and celebrate the history and achievements of U of T Engineering.

The Faculty garnered more than a 15 prestigious communications awards over the past five years, and was named the Not-for-Profit Communication Department of the Year at the world conference of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The CEIExSKAM graffiti mural project earned a Gold Quill Award of Excellence and an Ovation Award from the IABC, a Prix d'Excellence from the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education, and several other prizes, and our flagship publication, the Annual Report of Performance Indicators, was recognized with an IABC Gold Quill Award of Excellence.

Our integrated internal and external communications strategies, including enhanced brand journalism, custom pitching and expanded social media reach, disseminated stories on the achievements of the students, faculty, staff, alumni and industry partners who form our vibrant community. From 2011–2016 we published more than 1,100 stories on the U of T Engineering News website. This year alone, we secured more than 3,400 media stories in strategic priority areas, nearly 60 per cent of which appeared in international outlets.

We leveraged existing communications channels in new ways, debuting fresh approaches to our digital platforms. We refreshed and relaunched our Faculty homepage with a clean look and feel to improve usability, mobile accessibility and loading times. In addition, our renewed focus on social media has led to growing engagement across all channels, strengthening relationships with our vibrant community, particularly students and alumni.

The past five years have seen unprecedented change in the communications and media landscape. Our success in telling the U of T Engineering story to different audiences across multiple platforms will position us for success over the next five years as we continue to build our Faculty's brand as a global leader in multidisciplinary research and education, and as a powerful engine driving the new innovation economy.

## **POSITIONING: ACADEMIC PLAN 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 original plan in early 2013; identified strategic communications foci for external media in 2014–2015 and further refined editorial priorities in alignment with both Faculty's Academic Plan and President's Three Priorities.
- Strengthened focus on existing four themes that underpin the Faculty's internal and external news and media relations efforts:
  - world-class research;
  - entrepreneurship and innovation;
  - student experience; and
  - enriching engineering education.
- Placed additional emphasis on stories that demonstrate the Faculty's global leadership in the following three areas:
  - international impact;
  - innovations in engineering experiential learning; and
  - multidisciplinary collaboration in both research and teaching.

### **3.2 Strengthen the Faculty's key messages and customize them for target audiences.**

- Assessed metrics in key areas to express the core messaging of the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering in our eighth *Annual Report of Performance Indicators*, published in September 2016.
- Earned a Gold Quill Award of Excellence from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) for the 2015 edition of the *Annual Report of Performance Indicators*.
- Conceived, designed and unveiled Toronto's longest single graffiti installation on the construction hoarding surrounding the Centre for Engineering Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CEIE). Building on momentum from the groundbreaking ceremony in June 2015, this project allowed us to leverage our urban location to start a public conversation about the positive impact of engineering on society, as well as celebrate the history and achievements of U of T Engineering.

- Refreshed our Faculty's website with an increased emphasis on streamlining design, refining content and promoting news. The new homepage features a cleaner layout and more sophisticated design, prominent visibility for the latest Faculty news, quick access to key facts and info, and improved display on mobile devices and faster loading times.
- Implemented new practice of refreshing Faculty homepage daily to promote the latest news stories and demonstrate relevance within the broader national and international context, such as the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and the back-to-school period.
- Conducted focus groups in November 2015 with engineering undergraduate students across all years to better understand how they consume e-communications received from staff and faculty. Feedback indicated that high e-mail volume, combined with messages that are dense or difficult to read, leaves this key audience feeling frustrated. To address this challenge, the Faculty developed an online tool that will help faculty and staff improve the quality of e-communications, while decreasing volume.
- Developed a visually engaging one-page infographic to consolidate Faculty key messages. This reputation-building piece provides a single solution to align messaging across the Faculty's many external points of contact, such as our Recruitment, Outreach and Advancement teams, as well as all members of the Engineering Communications Network (ECN) representing the Faculty's departments, divisions and institutes. The concise format serves our diverse key audiences, including prospective students, alumni and industry partners.
- Launched Faculty-wide initiative to develop new templates for advancement materials, designed to be customizable to serve departmental, divisional and institutional priorities with consistent visual identity. Debuted completed folder and custom inserts for IBBME, followed closely by Civil Engineering, with all other groups to follow.
- Designed brochure for The Entrepreneurship Hatchery, capitalizing on the University of Toronto's status as the number one university in North America for research-based startups and featuring a strong call to action for advancement prospects. Further tailored this material for a prospective student audience, enhancing the profile of CEIE facilities that will enable aspiring entrepreneurs to accelerate their innovations from concept to commercialization. This version of the brochure reached thousands of prospective students at the 2016 Ontario Universities Fair, the single largest event of the recruitment cycle.
- Continued to take an active role in University-wide brand equity consultations led by University of Toronto Communications (UTC), representing the Faculty's brand identity and vision.

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

- Continued to build the Faculty's reputation as the premier engineering school in Canada and among the world's best with key local, national and international audiences by securing more than 3,400 media stories, in 2015-2016 alone, in strategic priority areas. Nearly 60 per cent of these stories appeared in international outlets.
- Refined and enhanced the Engineering presence in the University of Toronto Blue Book, a resource for journalists seeking comment on breaking news issues and current affairs.
- Increased proactive pitching of U of T Engineering experts on breaking stories of global significance.
- Increased share in local, national and international media outlets to build awareness of U of T Engineering's position as the top-ranked engineering school in Canada, particularly along five strategic focus areas.

### **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.**

- Garnered more than 15 prestigious communications awards, including being named the Not-for-Profit Communication Department of the Year at the world conference of the IABC.
- Launched innovative, multi-platform media campaign to support CEIExSKAM graffiti mural, which garnered 12 media stories with 5.5 million impressions, 5,000 visitors at Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, more than 282,900 social media impressions and a Gold Quill Award of Excellence from the IABC.
- Published more than 1,100 stories on U of T Engineering News.
- Secured more than 28,000 media stories mentioning the University of Toronto with the key word 'Engineering' since launching our targeted media monitoring services in 2014.
- Generated more than 10.7 billion impressions with this earned external media presence — a measure of the total number of potential readers, viewers and listeners who interacted with our content — and over \$56 million in equivalent advertising value, the cost of purchasing equivalent ad space or air time with the news outlets in which our stories appeared.
- Refreshed editorial approach to news coverage by incorporating social-first treatments of select student-focused and awards stories.
- Undertook communications workflow audit in fall 2015, which led to closer coordination among more than 30 communicators who comprise the Engineering Communications Network (ECN).
- Consolidated comprehensive list of academic and research priorities for all departments, division and institutes to raise awareness, encourage sharing of best practices, and further streamline coordination and collaboration between the ECN and Engineering Strategic Communications team.

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

- Capitalized on reality of shrinking newsrooms by producing award-winning, high-quality content and supporting multimedia assets for journalists, delivered via highly targeted tailored pitches. This approach resulted in many top international outlets, including The Daily Mail, Forbes, VICE Motherboard, Science Daily, and more, picking up U of T Engineering stories and materials.
- Delivered a combination of brand journalism, proactive pitching and extending content reach via social media resulting in strong local, national and international coverage.
- Fostered ongoing relationships with local journalists to secure far-reaching coverage for several experiential learning and student life stories that strengthen the Faculty's image as a place that nurtures the next generation of global engineering leaders.

### **3.6 Increase the Faculty's presence, visibility and reputation on modern social media platforms.**

- Expanded the reach of the Faculty's social media channels: Facebook engagements grew 447% and Twitter engagements grew by nearly 600% over the previous year.

- Relunched our Instagram channel in January 2016 with a new focus on engineering student life and our diverse engineering community. Since this relaunch we have seen a surge of engagement on Instagram, and have increased our number of followers by roughly 250% to more than 1,440 as of September 2016.
- Established performance indicators and added regular tracking of social media metrics to monthly media relations reports, allowing us to set a baseline for evaluating the effectiveness of our social media strategy.
- Executed a social media campaign to coincide with international Pride Month in June 2016 and #DisplayYourPride day across all three University of Toronto campuses. This short video showed students, faculty members, staff and Dean Amon working together to build a rainbow flag made of three-foot balloons to celebrate our vibrant and diverse U of T Engineering community. The project gained massive traction across our social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, garnering more than 100,000 post impressions on Facebook alone and more than 4,000 views of the video.