



PENN STATE BRAND FRAMEWORK 2018

“A Pathway of Opportunity”

WE ARE PENN STATE. A familiar and resounding call for our community. But what does that mean? Who is Penn State in the eyes of our constituencies, and what messages and images drive support, advocacy, and passion for the University? The answers to these and other important positioning questions are needed in order to create a consistent and impactful voice and identity for Penn State communications. And so, in 2016, we set out to better understand these and other positioning questions, with the goals of creating a unified brand framework that will:

- Support** the University’s reputation for academic, research, and service excellence
- Nurture** pride and attachment to the University
- Build** understanding and support for the University’s needs and priorities
- Grow** the value of a Penn State degree

Communications that advance these various objectives will help to drive recognition and support, attract outstanding faculty, staff and students, and improve upon our already strong reputation for research and educational excellence. Additionally, a university brand framework can help communicators support University priorities like promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth, addressing global challenges such as energy, water and food security, and helping ensure Penn State provides an accessible education to all residents of the Commonwealth.

The pages that follow provide background on our process, which is anchored in qualitative and quantitative research, and a clear snapshot of the framework we created, and have begun to employ. We hope that it will serve as a blueprint for concerted action by all University communications units that will benefit Penn State for years to come. It also will help Strategic Communications oversee and implement policy AD61, meant to help ensure the quality and consistency of Penn State brand communications.



BRAND FRAMEWORK BLUEPRINT

Objectives & Deliverables:

The comprehensive, clear, creative-focused, and insight-based method allowed us to develop a brand positioning that **inspires, engages, and elevates** perceptions about Penn State. Such an approach ensures the University mission, goals, and tone remain top of mind.

Our core objectives included:

- Prepare, test, and launch Penn State brand communications
- Identify current and aspirational perceptions of Penn State
- Establish unified brand framework and supporting materials
- Develop communications program to help drive recognition and support for the University

Strategic Partner Selection:

We initiated a thorough Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify external partners who could, as experts in their field, help gather insights and identify the optimal forward direction for the brand. Specifically, we worked with these firms on developing methodologies and approaches to:

- Test messaging and creative platforms** that would be integrated into several key initiatives aimed at advancing the University's reputation, recruitment, and resource goals
- Establish baseline measures** of reputation with key audiences
- Develop communications** messaging and campaign platform

Strategic Communications selected New York agencies, Decoded Advertising (for creative) and Whitman Insight Strategies (for market research), as partners and collaborators.

DECODED ADVERTISING (decodedadvertising.com)

Decoded Advertising is a full-service creative shop focused on bridging the industry gap between meaningful storytelling and data-driven ad optimization. One reason Decoded was selected was because of its broader experience—the ability to bring a fresh perspective—and creative and digital storytelling strengths. Founded in 2014 by Matt Rednor, former Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer at MRY, Decoded is based in New York City with a team made up of award-winning creatives, top media talent, and Ph.D. analysts and technologists.

WHITMAN INSIGHT STRATEGIES (whitmanstrategies.com)

Whitman Insight Strategies (WINS) is a full-service strategic market research and consulting firm that builds winning brands, causes, and political leaders. The firm uncovers and ignites insights worldwide to win elections, issues, and market share. Its market research helps to evaluate moving the needle, and looks at what is needed to change perceptions, behavior and action over time. Founded by Bernard Whitman, former pollster for Bill Clinton and Michael Bloomberg, the WINS team brings expertise in brand growth strategy, issue advocacy, and messaging strategy as well as quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and data analytics.

Socialization & Internal Engagement

Following the selection of Decoded and Whiteman, Strategic Communications socialized the research and creative approach with University leaders. Our team, along with our creative and research partners, met with key stakeholders, including college and campus communicators, development, alumni, government relations, students, faculty, donors, and others, to discuss the approach and learn more about internal perceptions of Penn State's defining qualities. In order for us to truly create something that will be used as an engine for change, gaining critical insight from within was an important step to take before proceeding with message development and testing.

Through this process, we were able to glean insights, test ideas, identify story possibilities, and surface opportunities. These discussions were instrumental in helping our team to learn more about the proprietary and differentiating strengths of Penn State, and begin to lay out positionings for testings, and ultimately the creation of a unified brand framework.

Quantitative & Qualitative Research

We used quantitative research to evaluate the true baseline understanding of features including the unique nature of our twenty-four campus educational model, plus World Campus, the breadth and depth of our \$800+ million research engine, the diversity and inclusiveness of our community,

and our role as an engine for economic development in Pennsylvania, and whether these understandings drive positive action.

The quantitative research phase included strategy and concept development, message testing, and reputational baseline evaluation with key stakeholders. WINS conducted Baseline Brand Perception Research among core constituencies, **surveying 5,215 key audience members** between May 25 and June 13, 2016. These surveys assessed benchmark perceptions of Penn State, identified key drivers of core Key Performance Indicators, and created standards for tracking the effect of communications on Penn State's reputation compared to its peers. Survey respondents included:

- Students (at all locations, undergraduate, graduate, World Campus)
- Penn State alumni
- Penn State faculty & staff (at all locations)
- Prospective students (in state and out of state)
- Pennsylvania voters

As expected, quality of education, sense of pride and community, and football were top of mind for respondents. While respondents rated the University strongly in **high familiarity, favorability, and advocacy**, only 3 in 4 considered Penn State unique relative to other top-tier competitors. This insight reaffirmed the value and opportunity to further define the Penn State brand.

Based on the survey findings, Strategic Communications honed in on the aspects, attributes, and features of Penn State that must be prioritized in order to shift perception—landing on the importance of bridging the “Uniqueness Gap.” Building on this insight, we developed a refined set of four positioning statements for more in-depth evaluation. These positionings emphasized different aspects of Penn State, and included specific language phrases, and examples for discussion.

To gain more personal and qualitative feedback, we also conducted **11** small focus groups that:

- Assessed the effectiveness and resonance** of four positioning statements among core constituencies (Pennsylvania voters, high-value donor alumni, young alumni, students, faculty, mixed age alumni)
- Identified strengths and weaknesses** of each positioning
- Determined the most effective positioning and opportunities** for improvement and optimization

All focus groups were 90 minutes in duration and conducted in person by WINS between March 20 and March 28, 2017. Locations included: Philadelphia, PA, Pittsburgh, PA, State College, PA, New York, NY, and Abington, PA. Focus group participants reviewed four positioning themes/statements and provided feedback on whether the content was believable and accurately portrayed Penn State today, or if the content was more aspirational, as well as whether participants learned anything new from the positioning statements.

Each tested theme below emphasized a specific aspect of the University and included language, examples, and supporting facts. (Education itself is “table stakes,” meaning it is our core deliverable and people are already aware of our role in this space.)

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

United by the land grant mission, we are “tied together in our desire to impact humanity in a positive way.” We are a community driven to make a difference, locally and globally.

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Our interdisciplinary research excellence and its “impact, along with our public mission, are meant to benefit every walk of life.” We’re an idea that’s designed to change the world.

OPENNESS

Open doors and open arms, open minds and open hearts—at Penn State there is a clear pathway to social mobility and a welcoming environment for anyone willing to work hard. We are the “great public university.”

COMMUNITY

There is something at Penn State that “converts the ‘I’ to ‘we’,” an intangible that connects everyone associated with the University to feel something greater than themselves.



The combination of “**Community + Quality of Life Impact**” through work that enriches society resonated most significantly among audiences as this positioning:

- Effectively brings stakeholders together under the Penn State umbrella
- Provides a platform to re-position Penn State that emanates from a place of strength
- Has the potential to be communicated in a way that is wholly ownable and unique for Penn State

Focus group participants highlighted the idea that Penn State is “a community that makes a difference” as the most powerful statement for the same reasons. The theme of community is both a strong statement, and also can change perceptions and awareness, and help unify our diverse constituencies. Under this umbrella, focusing communications on Penn State as the number one corporate recruiter, having a large and committed alumni network, strength of research, the unique educational model, and providing the how and why of Penn State’s impact through the theme of community and using personal stories, will be incredibly powerful among audiences, and will lay the foundation for driving future calls to action.

FINAL BRAND FRAMEWORK

Our process culminated in the development of a core Penn State brand framework, which will serve as the guiding light for all communications. This uniform framework is helping a decentralized communications structure make sure everyone is working in the same manner and has the same resources needed to achieve our common goals.

Throughout the extensive research, it became clear that the Penn State community is at the heart of our brand, and the intersection of community, purpose, and impact is the pillar of who we are and how we define ourselves. The final Penn State brand framework includes core brand pillars and foundational elements, including our: Purpose, Positioning, Tagline, Manifesto, Storytelling framework, and graphical toolkit. Our community is a diverse, passionate, and dynamic group of individuals who join together, through shared values, to enrich communities on the issues people care about. The integration of and focus on each of the brand elements will guide how we tell our Penn State story, and share our “why-we-do-things”, to set ourselves apart. Our motivations, both individual and collective, make the subsequent stories meaningful and unique, proof that we are a community of people drawn to the opportunity to make a positive difference in the world.

Brand Framework

These elements are supported by a manifesto and voice/personality descriptions developed for marketing and communications professionals to guide content development (brand.psu.edu).

PURPOSE

Bring Positive Impact to Humanity.

POSITIONING

One Community. Impacting Many.

TAGLINE

We Are Penn State.

PILLARS

Openness

For anyone with the willingness to put in hard work, Penn State's doors are open to you. Penn State's world-class faculty is available to you. Penn State's state-of-the-art facilities are at your disposal.

Interdisciplinary

At Penn State, we think that ideas and solutions come from bringing in a multitude of perspectives. Cross-discipline interactions are essential components to fostering new paths to ideation.

Culture of "We"

Our land grant is our reason for being. Our individual passions are met with collaboration, culminating in a culture that is rooted in supporting and inspiring each other, from our classrooms to the world.

PROOF POINTS/POWER FACTS

Our Alumni Community

e.g., Penn State has the largest dues-paying alumni association in the world.

Our Top-Tier Quality

e.g., Penn State is tied with Johns Hopkins for the number of disciplines that rank in the top 10 nationally for research expenditures.

Our Scope and Reach

including the University's scale and footprint and our external reach and impact

e.g., The Invent Penn State initiative has established innovation hubs in 21 communities across Pennsylvania to fuel entrepreneurship and economic development.

IMPLEMENTATION OF BRAND POSITIONING

Strategic Communications is already implementing and integrating the results of the refreshed brand work. For example:

Storytelling: We are sharing stories from within the Penn State community, using a variety of channels, to highlight meaningful ways Penn Staters are advancing their communities. These stories highlight the unique differentiators of Penn State, and key perception drivers. The most visible example is a media campaign targeting Pennsylvania voters, which uses social media, print, radio, and television to bring high levels of awareness. (For examples, <https://spark.adobe.com/page/AK6mIMGFhI9kc/>)

Brand book: We developed the brand book to tell the story of the Penn State brand, and to serve as a guide for communications professionals. It provides necessary tools to ensure consistent brand use and to elevate creative assets available.

Brand commercial: Leveraging our pro bono airtime during televised football and basketball games, the brand commercial communicates who Penn Staters are and why we are here. The commercial is intended to ignite a sense of pride across all audiences, a rallying cry that zeroes in on the emotional connection of the Penn State community and ends with the bold statement: We are Penn State.

The work that continues to be done will only make our already strong brand that much stronger, reinforcing the value and contributions of Penn State.

BRAND ELEMENTS IN USE

From positioning to tagline, below are screenshots illustrating how the brand elements were executed in recent videos for an advertising campaign in Pennsylvania. (To view the videos, go to impact.psu.edu.)

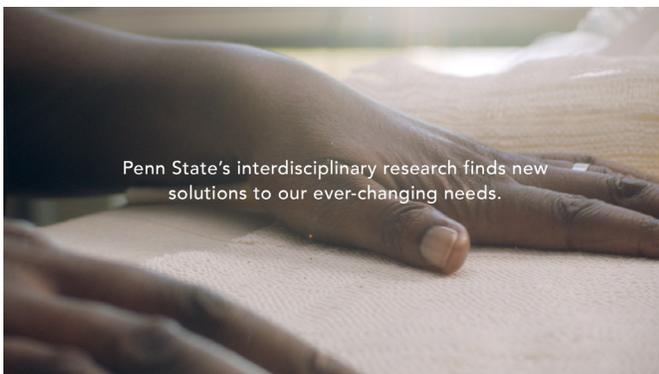


POSITIONING

The idea that we are a community driven to make a difference allows us to speak from a place of strength and authenticity while unifying our diverse audiences.

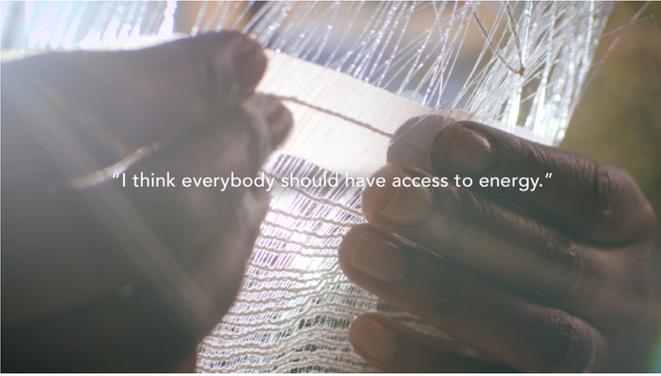
TAGLINE

Brand surveys show that the phrase “We Are Penn State” evokes a shared experience of family, community, and intense pride that extends beyond athletics. It is a powerful mantra, best used to punctuate our communications.



BRAND PILLAR

One of three brand pillars, the theme of interdisciplinary research is a core principle and finds expression in this research initiative where solutions come from multiple perspectives.



HER WHY

"I think everybody should have access to energy."

Through the subject's own voice, we hear this professor's motivation for her research. It is not only what we do, it is why we do them: Penn Staters are drawn together by their desire to enrich their world.

PROOF POINT

"Invent Penn State helps entrepreneurs incubate and grow businesses in Pennsylvania and beyond."

This proof point illustrates the University's scale and footprint and demonstrates a specific way we bring value to the state.



PROOF POINT

"Penn State is working with local farmers to change the fate of the Chesapeake Bay and the 17 million people it touches."

This type of proof point frames the problem within a global context to illustrate the scale and potential impact of the solution.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

For more information about the brand framework and brand positioning, for guidance on creative assets or 'We Are' usage, or if you have additional questions regarding this content, please visit brand.psu.edu.

Please contact the Strategic Communications team with any questions regarding use of slogans other than 'We Are', as well as suggested proof points and facts and language nuances.