

Marketing and Communications at Texas A&M

R. Ethan Braden

Vice President, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer





I build brands and teams that people love and trust.



#4

**MOST TRUSTED
PUBLIC UNIVERSITY**

IN THE U.S.

Morning Consult, 2022

TOP 10

MOST INNOVATIVE

UNIVERSITY IN AMERICA

U.S. News & World Report, 2023

5 YEARS RUNNING



FAST COMPANY RECOGNITION



THE ONLY UNIVERSITY ON THE LIST



Your world is built on semiconductors. Purdue is safeguarding a secure supply of this critical tech by training the next generation of semiconductor engineers and technicians.

PURDUE UNIVERSITY





■ EDUCATION

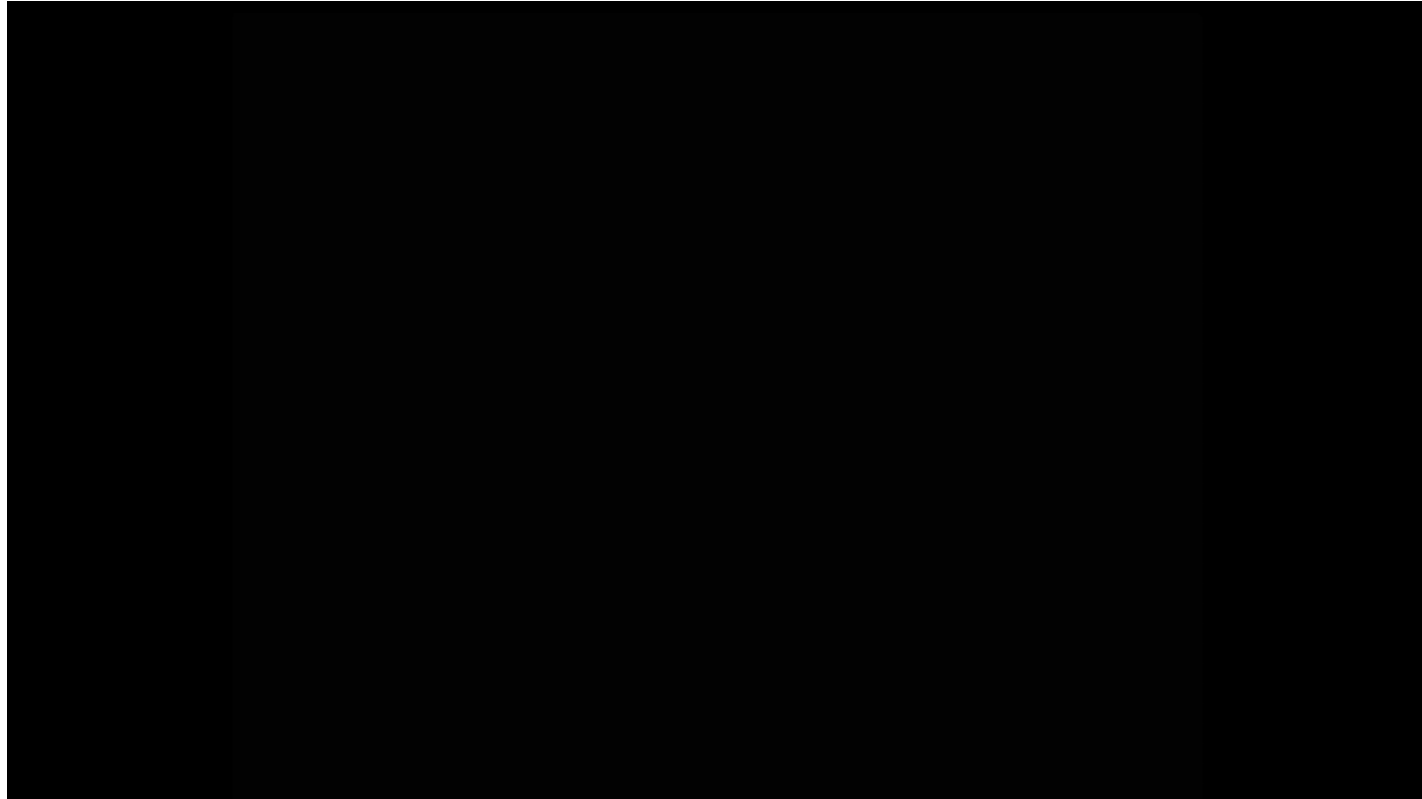
1. Purdue University
2. LearnPlatform
3. edX
4. Babbel
5. InStride
6. One League
7. SchoolLinks
8. Multiverse
9. TPT
10. Disco

Great brands don't just happen.

They are built over time on a clear positioning and a great story.



Steve Jobs, 1997



Highlights

“This is a very complicated world; it’s a very noisy world. And we’re not going to get a chance to get people to remember much about us. No company is. And so we have to be really clear on what we want them to know about us.”



Highlights

“Even a great brand needs investment and caring if it’s going to retain its relevance and vitality.”



Highlights

“Apple spends a fortune on advertising. You'd never know it. You'd never know it.”



Texas A&M University spends over \$20 million on central and unit marketing and communications FTEs annually.



“Every system is perfectly designed to the get the result that it does.”
- W. Edwards Deming



4. MAKE TEXAS A&M A CONSTANT IN THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

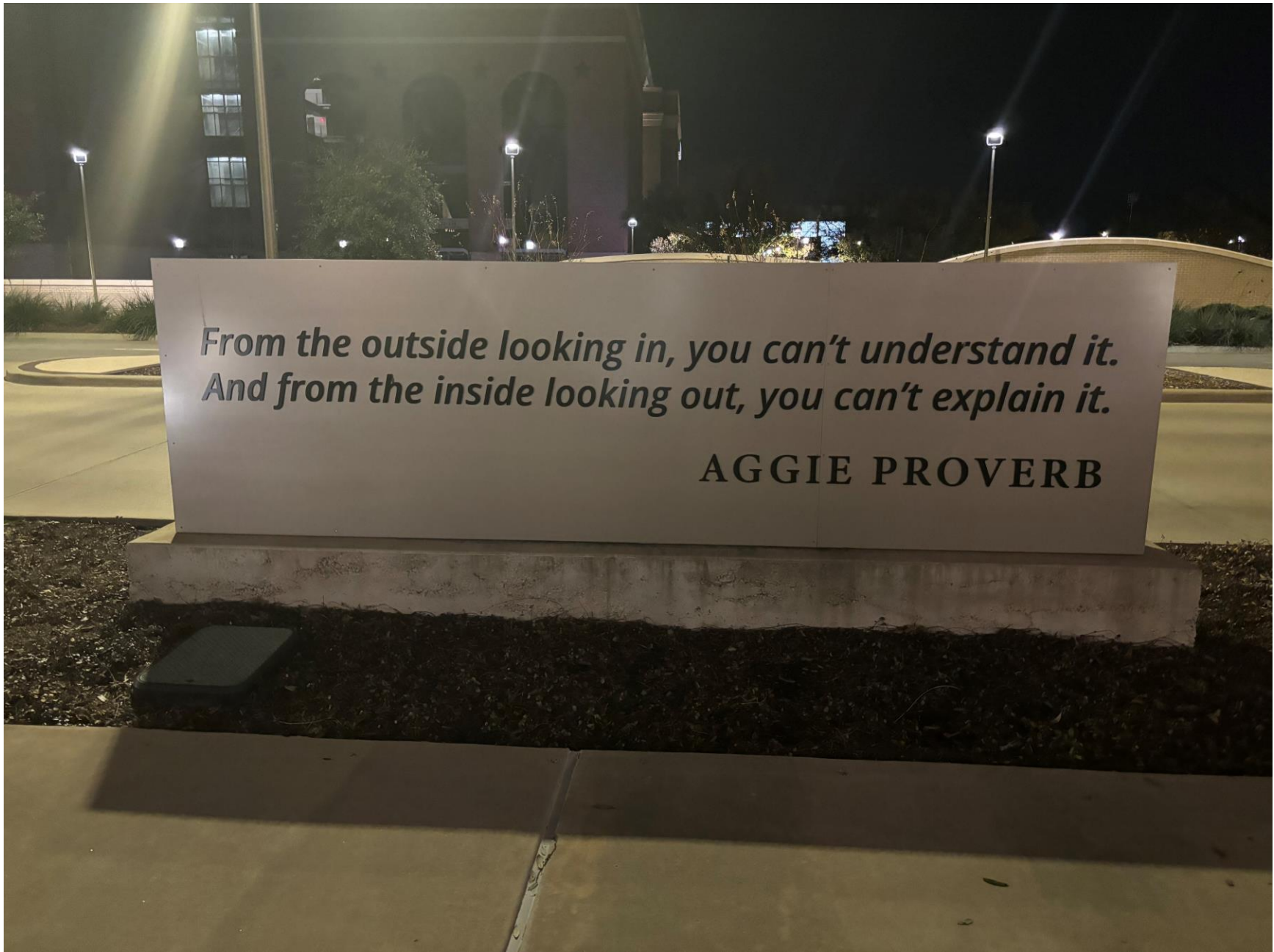


Play to our strengths • Invest • Blend and market

A great national institution requires a great national reputation

WHERE WE ARE GOING

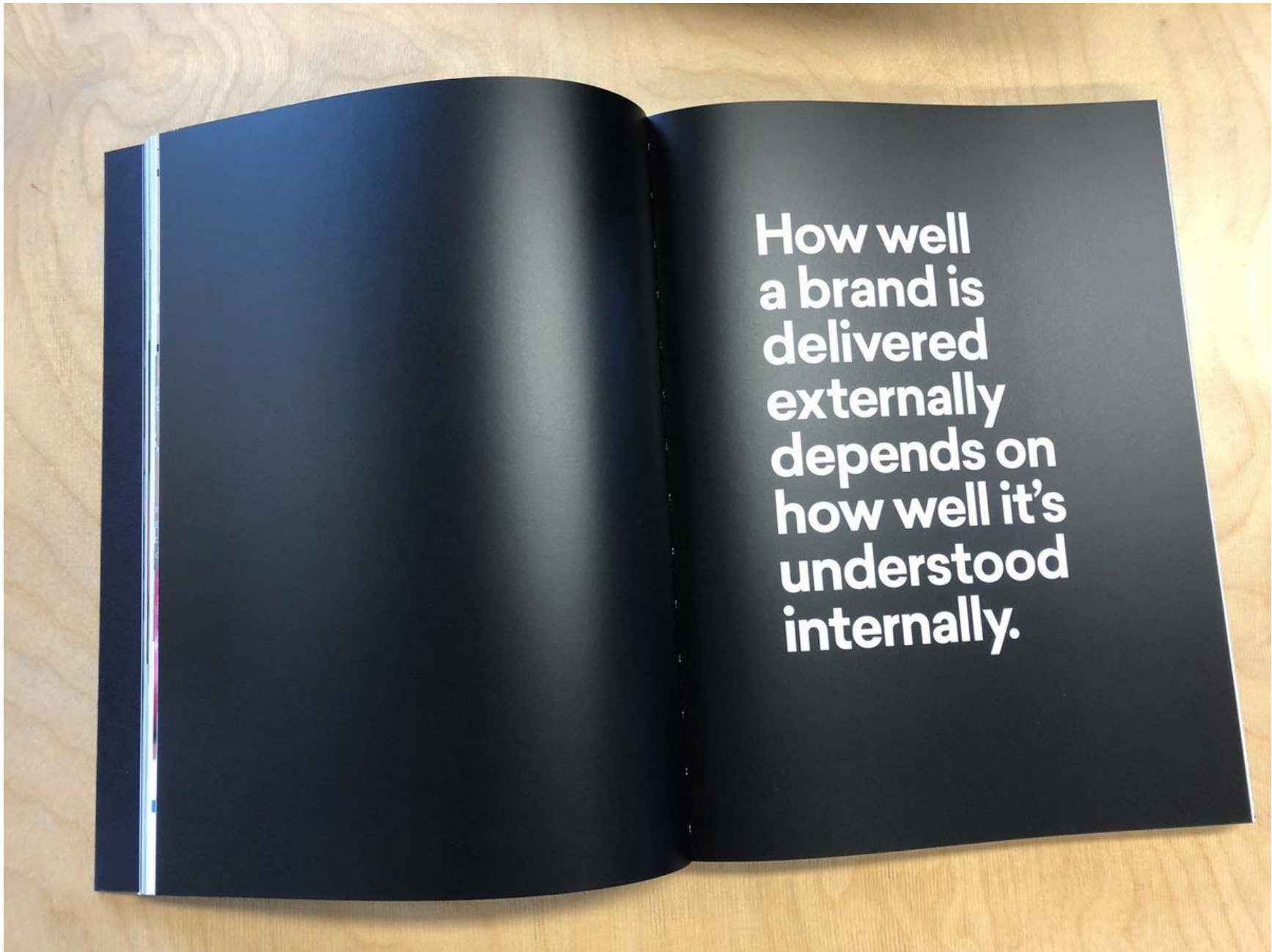




*From the outside looking in, you can't understand it.
And from the inside looking out, you can't explain it.*

AGGIE PROVERB





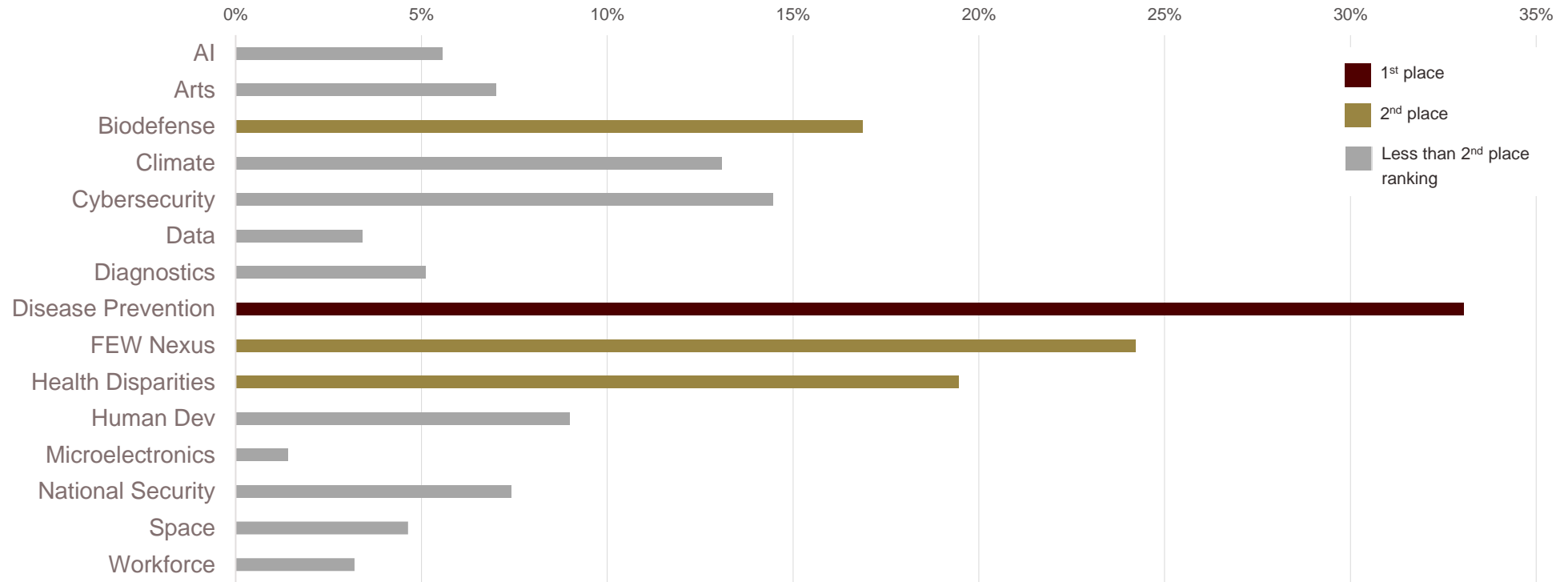
Source: Dixon Baxi



Texas A&M University really lacks nothing to gain desired national attention.



Texas A&M Share of Voice by Volume per Research Area, Relative to Benchmarked Peers



It just hasn't focused on crafting a story that tells audiences what it stands for.
What makes it distinct.
And why audiences should care.



And it hasn't prioritized telling its story externally with excellence.
Or invested here.
That's changing.



The objective of a transformed Central Marketing and Communications Division is to enchant external target audiences with Texas A&M's story and stories.



In doing so, we will deliberately help build desired national awareness, affinity, demand, choice, and loyalty...



...toward building an even greater national reputation.

Toward building a *remarkable* brand (a brand worthy of remark).





Stop Playing It Safe: The Peril of the Generic College

6

Aaron Basko

Higher education tends to get lost in the morass of the word branding, which has a lot of baggage around it. We get caught up in tag lines, color palettes, and elevator speeches. Those are important, but branding as a concept often does not engage the academic areas of our institutions, nor is it easy for frontline staff members to use in everyday ways.

The best way to differentiate is to discover a compelling story that is true to your institution but also makes sense to the market.



How advertising really works

Advertising increases/maintains sales and/or margins

By

Slightly increasing the chance that people will choose your brand

By

Making the brand easy to think of and easy to buy

And

Creating positive feelings and associations

Via

Broad reaching ads that people find interesting and enjoyable

And

Targeted activations that they find relevant and useful

Source: Les Binet, adam&eveDDB



“Your focus determines your reality.”
- George Lucas





Interesting



Useless



Useful



No one can whistle a symphony.
It takes a whole orchestra to play it.

H.E. Luccock



What is changing?

Marketing and Communications will be primarily externally-focused.

Texas A&M employees are our colleagues, not customers or clients.

Our efforts will help create, change, or reinforce desired attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors with specific, external target audiences in pursuit of desired perceptions, demand, choice, and loyalty.

Great brands are built and managed globally, while units execute with some localization.



Where are we focused?

- Building an elite 1) central MarComm team and 2) a University marcom community like an orchestra with purpose, passion, culture and expertise.
- Enchanting target audiences with our excellent story and storytelling – consistently performing our symphony with flawless, unified sound.
- Constantly asking, “Will it make the boat go faster?” and relentlessly prioritizing accordingly. We can’t do what we have always done and expect a different outcome.
- Resourcing and investing accordingly. As we noted, “Every system is perfectly designed to get the result that it does.”



What have we said?

“...Central MarComm team is deliberately assembled and focused on positioning, promoting and protecting the university at the enterprise level, showcasing its signature stories and incredible individuals. It will retain some of the duties it owns today, such as undergraduate recruitment marketing.

The central MarComm team will also be charged to and must empower unit marketing and communications teams to perform their duties successfully by collaborating to build a world-class, distinct brand platform and specific resources to help unit teams localize and execute “in Texas A&M character,” not just “on brand.”



What have we said?

“Unit teams are empowered and responsible for performing specific and value-adding, local MarComm duties. This includes gaining a thorough understanding of target audiences, managing internal communications, handling recognition efforts, overseeing unit-level marketing and demand generation, managing unit websites, maintaining unit social media, etc.”



What have we said?

“Similarly critical, unit teams will be re-established, staffed and resourced. Unit marketing directors will be enabled and expected to lead these unit marketing teams. They will also be representatives for a new Brand Council. These senior unit marketing and communications leaders will report directly to leaders within the units (deans, vice presidents, etc.) like we have in engineering, AgriLife and athletics today, with support from the central MarComm team and the overall marketing community.”





Dave Gerhardt ✓

@davegerhardt



Marketing is an INVESTMENT.

Not a get rich quick scheme.

I'm about the scrappy stuff ... but at some point you have to be realistic.

Your goal is to create \$3-\$5M in new pipeline this year.

And you're going to hire an intern and one FT marketer with basically no experience and pay them \$70k and get there?

No way.

Life is too short to work for a CEO who doesn't get marketing.

Everyone wants the results.

Few want to invest.



| <u>Strategic Communications - Model</u> | <u>Strategic Communications - Texas A&M (Current)</u> |
|---|---|
| Assoc. VP, Strategic Communications | AVP, Marketing and Communications |
| | |
| <u>Assistant VP, Media and PR</u> | - |
| ED/Director, SC and Media Relations | - |
| Director, SC and Media Relations | - |
| Director, National Media | - |
| <i>AP Video News Content Producer</i> | - |
| | |
| <u>Assistant VP, Internal Communications</u> | ED, Internal Comms |
| Writer | Director, News |
| Writer | Comm Specialist II, Exec Comms |
| Specialist | - |
| | |
| <u>Assistant VP, External Communications and Earned Media</u> | Director, News |
| Senior Science Writer | Assistant Director, News |
| Senior Science Writer | Comm Specialist II, News |
| Senior Science Writer | - |
| Senior Science Writer | - |
| Senior Science Writer | - |
| Emerging Media Specialist | - |
| | |
| Others: | |
| Data Analyst | - |
| Electronic Communications Specialist | - |
| AA | - |
| Clerk | - |
| Lead Editor | Editor/Writer |
| <i>Editor</i> | Jr. Editor |
| <i>Editor</i> | - |
| <i>Editor</i> | - |



Considerations:

- A rising tide will lift all ships.
- Some unit marketing teams will be more complete than others on Day 1.
- People alone are not a silver bullet.
- This will take time and it will be worth it.



4. MAKE TEXAS A&M A CONSTANT IN THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION



Play to our strengths • Invest • Blend and market

A great national institution requires a great national reputation

WHERE WE ARE GOING



Thank you.



Questions?



Extra Slides.





**Marketing for a Massive
Online University**

Lindsay McKenzie

 4 

“Young people are smart,” he says.
“They don’t really want to be
spammed or marketed to. They want
you to win their hearts and minds.”





**"THE LACK OF
FOCUS IS WHY WE
HAVE A LACK OF
GREATNESS."**



What are we doing?

The Texas A&M Brand Platform:

- Build, train, and mobilize the University against a professional-grade, distinct, insight-based, and emotional brand platform as the unifying vessel (aka campaign) to tell our story/stories and intentionally build our desired reputation together. (January 2025)
- This also has the potential to build a natural, ideal pathway to our 150th Anniversary.



What are we doing?

Central Marcom Team:

- Define the purpose and responsibilities of the central marcom function and team
 - What must this team do for Texas A&M and its marcom community?
 - As a result, what specific positions, and how many, does this require?
- Hire, coach, manage, resource, focus, support, reward and hold accountable accordingly.

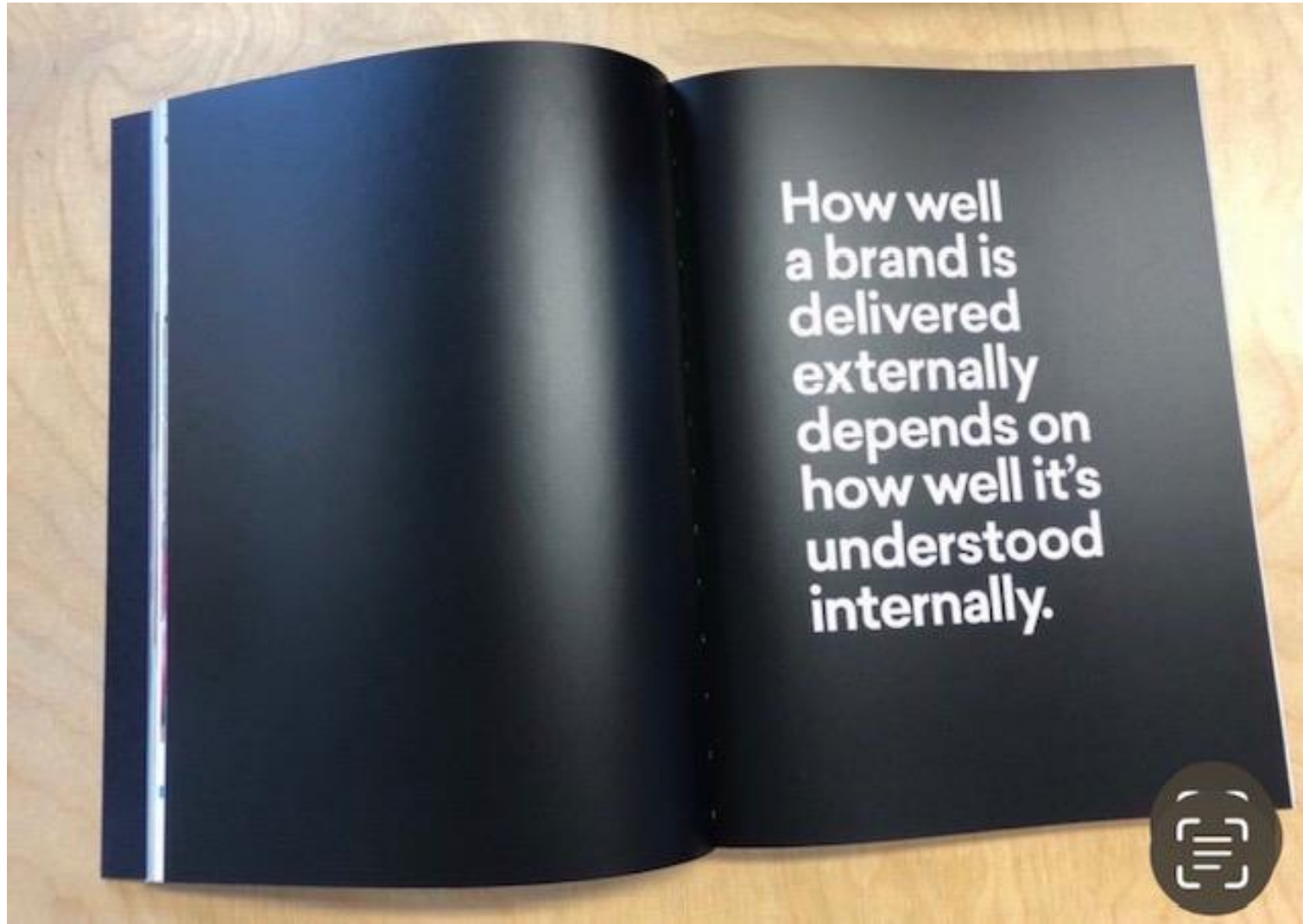
What does this look like?

Evaluate and build an elite central marketing and communications team that is incentivized and accountable to building a great national reputation for Texas A&M ... our Air Force of sorts.

Identify, prioritize, build and socialize the resources and support that the central marcom team will provide the marcom community (administration, divisions, colleges, etc.)

Address talent/skills and capacity gaps, as well as excess FTEs supply, relative to objective, current and future purpose, responsibilities, and budget.





FULL FUNNEL CREATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Good creative is good for business

Creative is the dominant
ROI driver across all
media platforms.



Creative 49%

Media 36%

Brand 15%



“Creative is the #1 driver of ROI. Understanding who, how and why consumers respond improves the entire ad creation process.”

- Leslie Woods, **NCSolutions** Chief Research Officer



What are we doing?

Colleges / Schools / Departments / Divisions:

- Define the purpose and responsibilities of the marcom function and these teams at the College/School/Department/Division level.
- Hire, coach, manage, resource, focus, support, reward and hold them accountable accordingly.
- Re-resource with ~140 previously-centralized FTEs, as equitably and commensurately as possible to which they were centralized (i.e. 4 in, ~4 back), effective April 1, 2024.



What does this look like? An example:

| Original pin | Replacement pin |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| P-102507 | returning |
| M19952 | P-178644 |
| M19992 | returning |
| M34473 | P-168482 |
| M42087 | returning |
| P-60556 | returning |
| | |
| | |
| Present value of original transfer | \$546,679 |
| Proposed transfer | \$561,622 |
| Difference | \$14,943 |



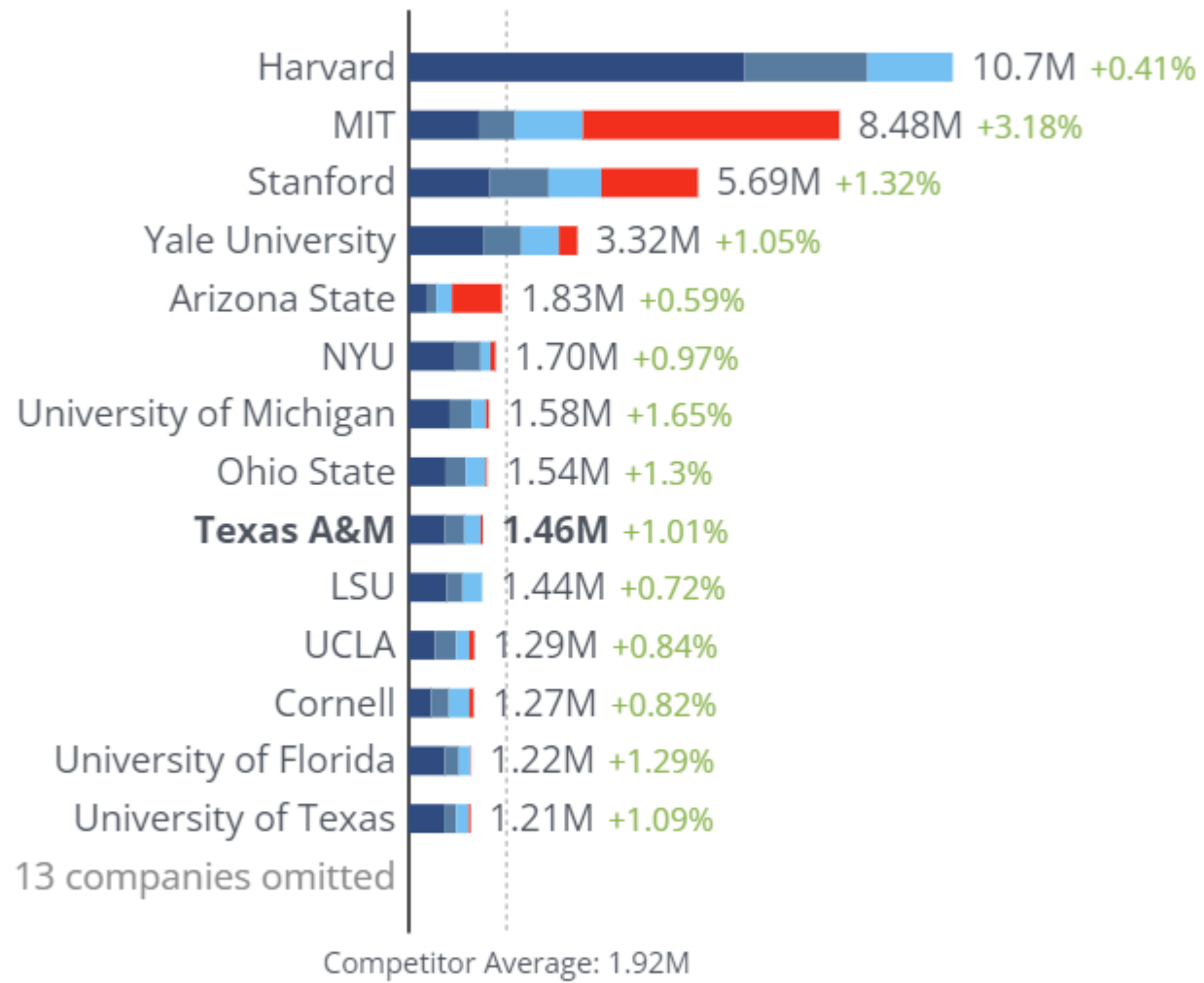


“Purdue’s new brand is about one voice, organized and aligned around a clear and effective message.”

– President Mitch Daniels

Cross-Channel Audience ⓘ

Export ▾

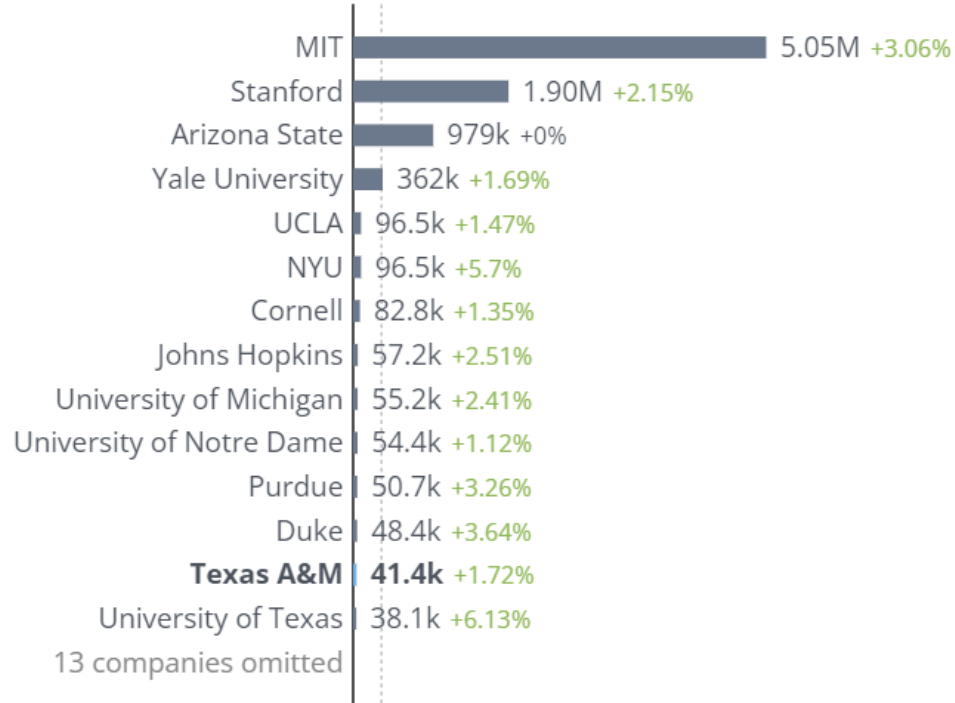


✓ Facebook ✓ Instagram ✓ Twitter ✓ YouTube □ TikTok



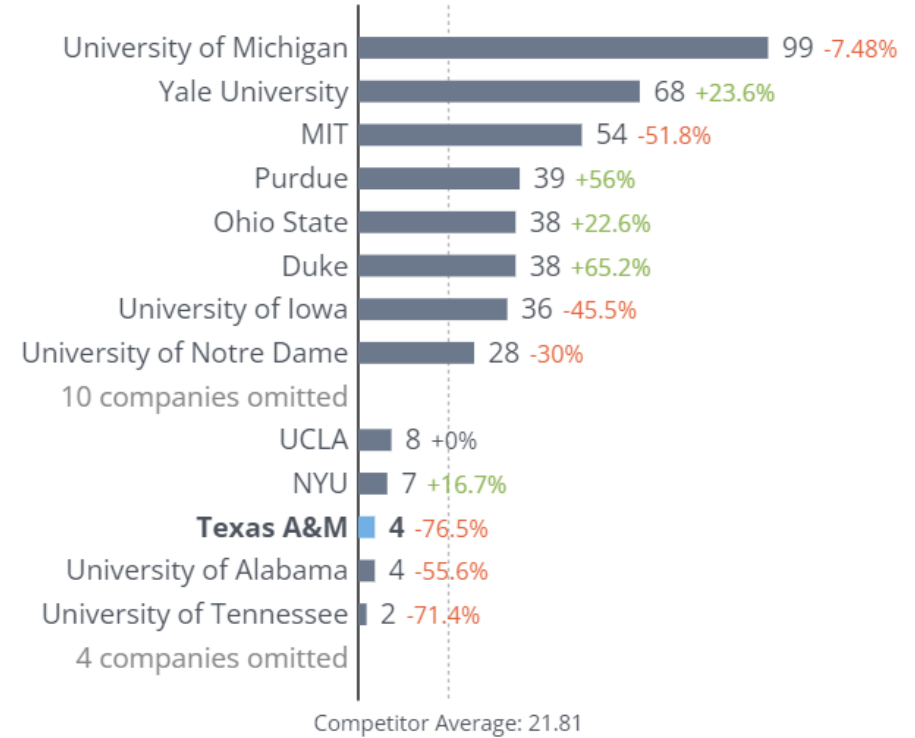
YouTube Subscribers i

Export v



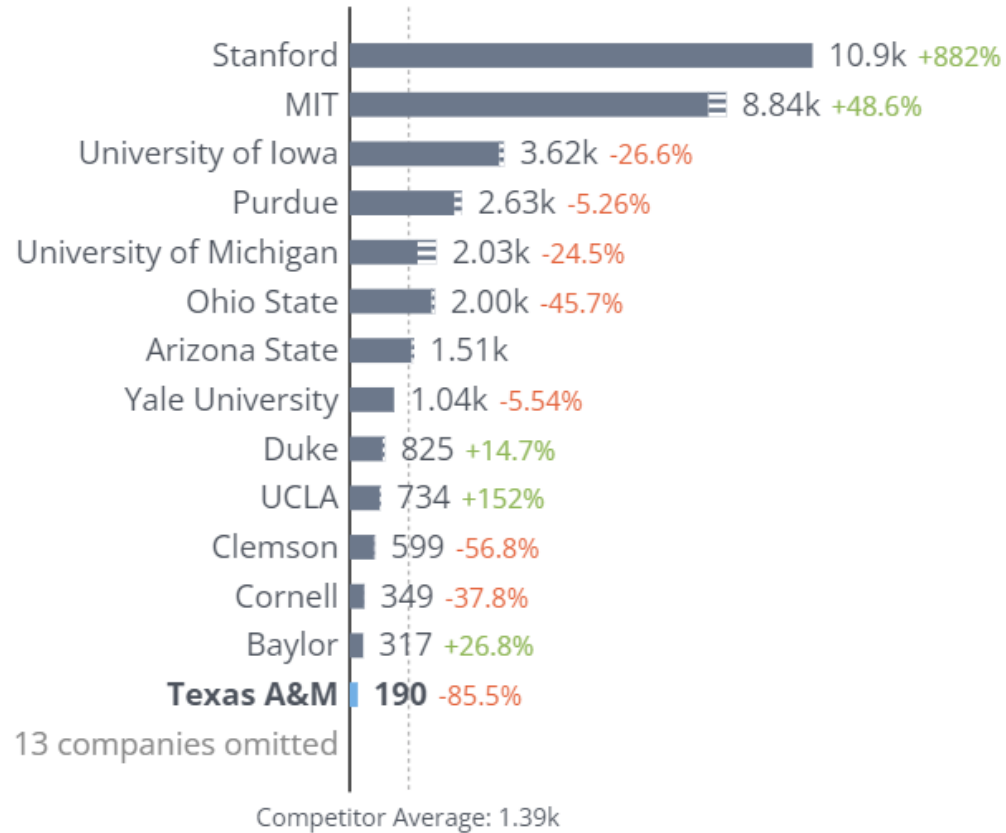
YouTube Posts i

Export v



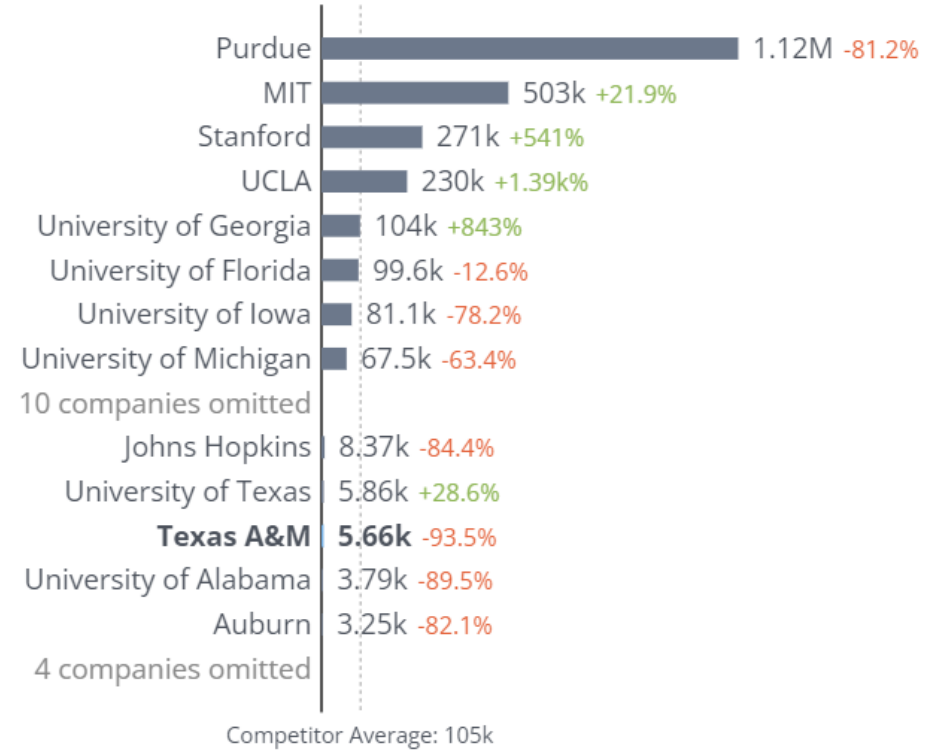
YouTube Engagement Total ⓘ

Export ▾

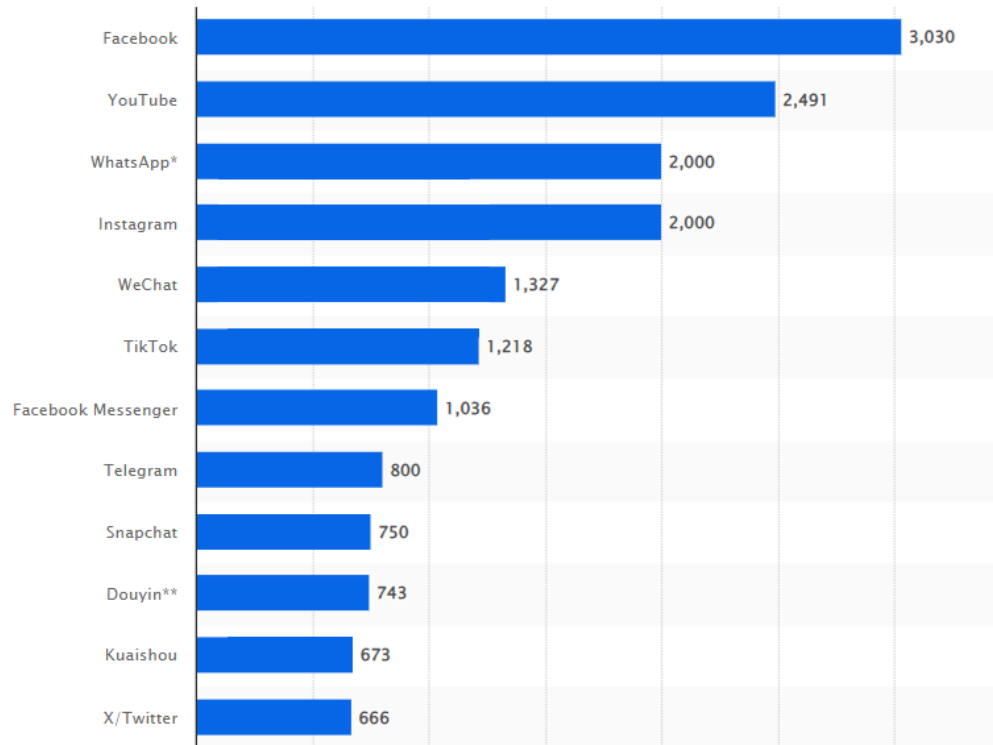


YouTube Views ⓘ

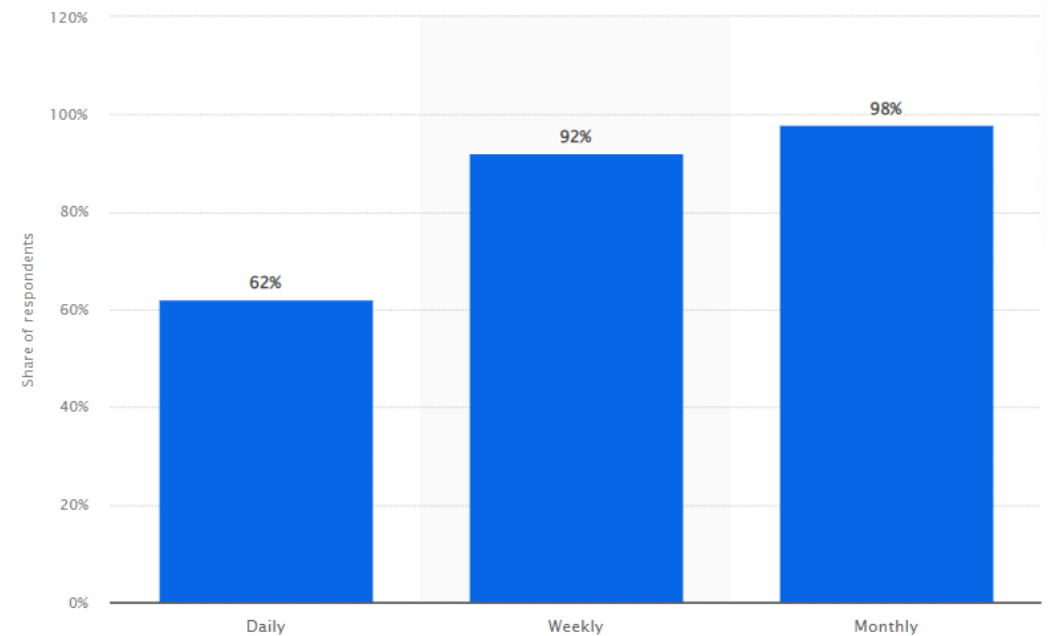
Export ▾



Example: YouTube matters. Storytelling matters.



Most popular social networks worldwide, by monthly active users (millions).



Frequency of YouTube use in the United States, 15 yo and up.



With ~41k subscribers, Texas A&M's 12 most viewed videos on YouTube total 5.5 million views, while none are from the last 3 years. Only 1 video at Texas A&M has ever surpassed 1 million views, slowly accumulating views over 13 years to do so.



The Perfect Defense: The Oral Defense of a Dissertation
1.4M views • 13 years ago



The Fightin' Texas Aggie Band
962K views • 11 years ago



The Aggie War Hymn
717K views • 5 years ago



"America is under attack" – Informing the President on 9/11
632K views • 12 years ago



Texas A&M - Core Values
272K views • 6 years ago



An Aggie Ring Lost in World War II
242K views • 4 years ago



Texas A&M - Energy
237K views • 6 years ago



Fearless :30 | Texas A&M University 2016 Commercial
236K views • 7 years ago



Together We
232K views • 6 years ago



Texas A&M - Home of Opportunity
199K views • 6 years ago




Texas A&M University - Water
196K views • 5 years ago



One Health - Texas A&M University
181K views • 6 years ago



With ~50k subscribers, Purdue's 12 most viewed videos on YouTube total 55 million views and 10 are from the last year. In fact, Purdue produced 15 videos with 1 million+ views last year alone.



What Can You Imagine at Purdue?
29M views • 1 year ago



Purdue University Creates Animation of September 11, 2001 Attack
9.6M views • 16 years ago



The Possibilities of Purdue: What Comes Next?
4.8M views • 2 months ago



Purdue University: 150 Years of Giant Leaps #TakeGiantLeaps
4.5M views • 5 years ago



Small Steps Lead to Giant Leaps: Alexis Harroun
4M views • 1 year ago



Purdue University in Indianapolis is building the future
3.3M views • 6 months ago



Be a part of what's next at Purdue University in Indianapolis
2.8M views • 4 months ago



Purdue Space Program Liquids Team: This is Persistence at Purdue University
2.8M views • 1 year ago



All Hail Purdue!
2.6M views • 4 months ago



Small Steps Lead to Giant Leaps: Hudson Tsang
1.7M views • 1 year ago



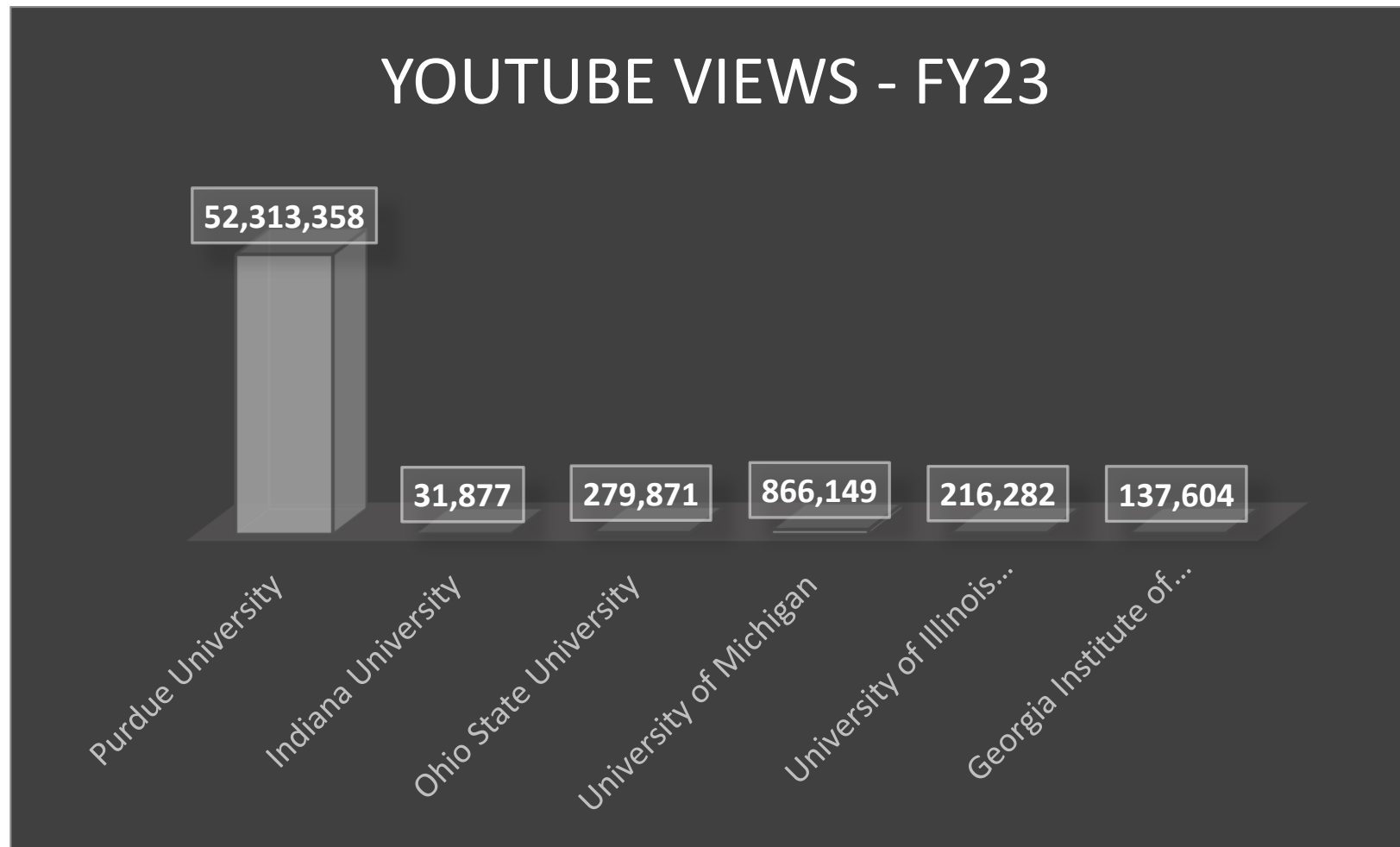
Mason Gillis: This is Persistence at Purdue University
1.7M views • 11 months ago



National Pan-Hellenic Council: Nigel's story | Purdue University
1.7M views • 1 year ago

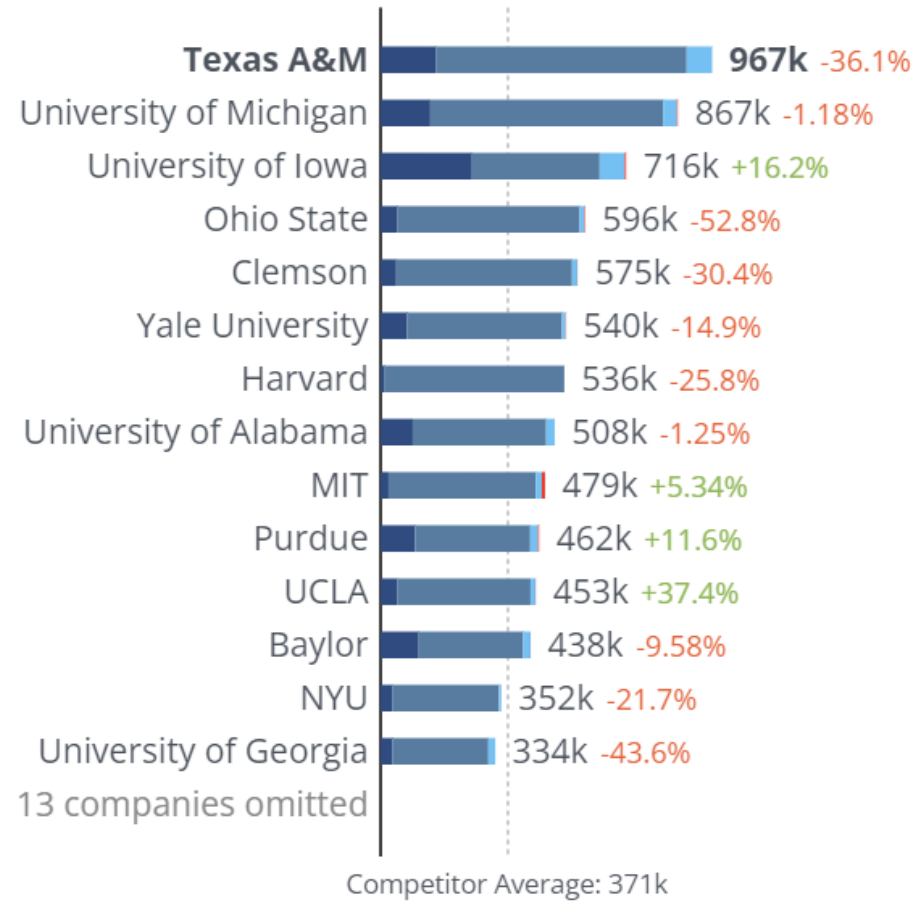


Texas A&M's YouTube performance is not uncommon. Higher education has not prioritized emotive video storytelling, and YouTube in general, like other industries.



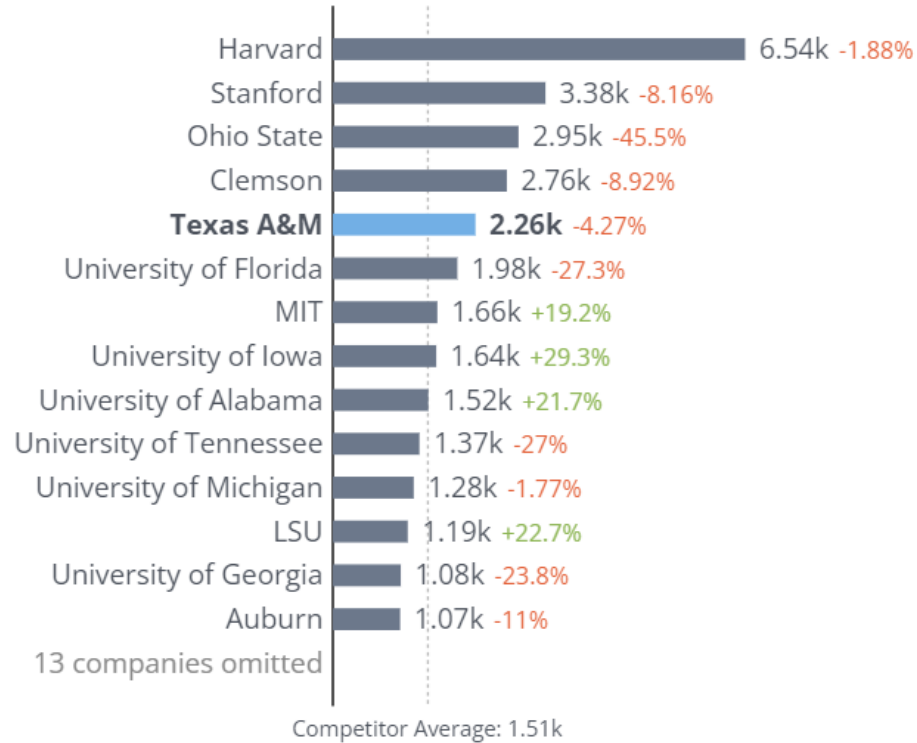
Cross-Channel Engagement Total i

Export ▾



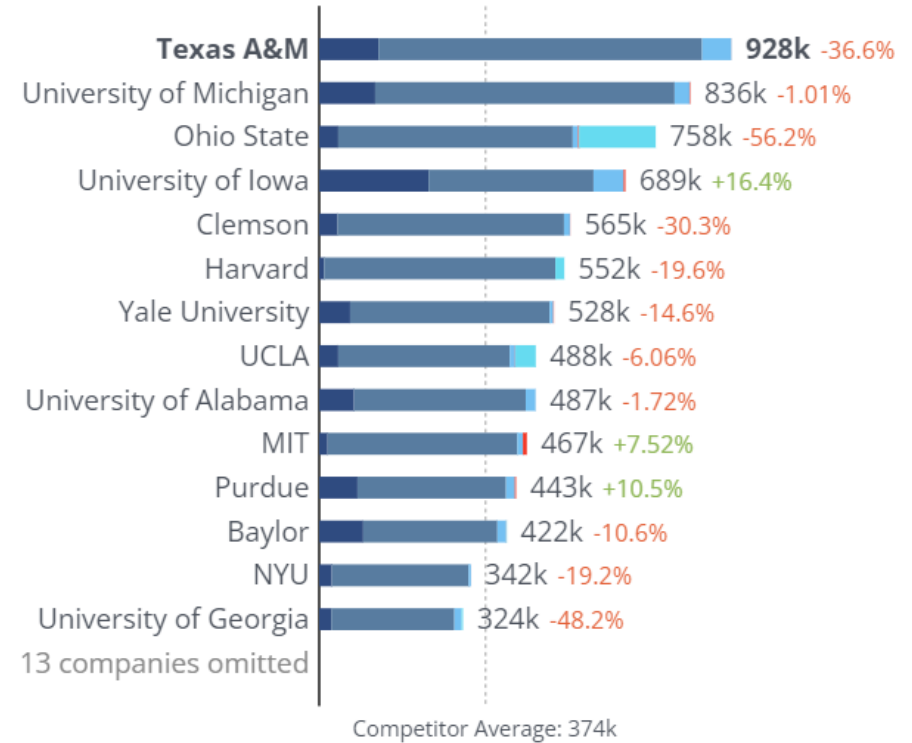
Cross-Channel Engagement Total / Post ⓘ

Export ▾



Cross-Channel Applause ⓘ

Export ▾



#Ogilvy**CANNES**

If the story is not great
or if the story is not human,
no technology will save you.

Not today.

Not any time
in the future.

PIYUSH PANDEY
CHAIRMAN OF GLOBAL CREATIVE

Ogilvy



“Good Stories Always
Beat Good
Spreadsheets”

Tools of Titans
Timothy Ferriss





Adam Grant ✓

@AdamMGrant



Worry less about what's "on brand" and more about what's in character.

