"DO SOMETHING GREAT" TO FOCUS ON FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Program goal is to communicate excellence

Time magazine has named Ohio State's Dr. Lonnie Thompson one of the Top 50 scientists in the nation. Retention rates at the university have reached an all-time high. The incoming freshman class is the best-prepared and most diverse group of students ever to enter the university.

Those accomplishments -- and many others -- prove some great things are happening at Ohio State.

"It's something we've known for some time," said Lee Tashjian, vice president for University Relations. "Now, we're making sure the world knows."

That's why, over the past 18 months, Ohio State has engaged with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and parents in an effort to develop a strategic communications campaign that seeks to convey more broadly that the nation's second-largest university is synonymous with excellence in many areas. The message is being communicated by challenging those who are considering coming to Ohio State to, "Do Something Great."

"Our goal is to bring perceptions of the university more in line with reality," Tashjian said. "That is, if prospective students can be made to appreciate that Ohio State is an academically excellent university, they will be more likely to think of us as a first choice. Likewise with prospective faculty and staff. And if legislators better understand our distinction as a land-grant research university of extraordinary quality, they might be more inclined to support us better financially.

"Simply, the core message is that the university has an enormous positive impact on our state and nation, and if you aspire to make a difference, this university has the faculty, learning and research capabilities, and the resources to make it happen."

Tashjian said the current tight budget situation means that the communication effort will be more widely disseminated in stages. In addition, the university will rely primarily on low- or no-cost vehicles to disseminate the program's core message to the university community, parents, prospective students, and the public at large. Public Service Announcements with the "Do Something Great" theme already air at no additional cost on football and basketball games as part of the media sponsorship of Ohio State Athletics. And just this week, the university began airing PSAs during the Ohio High School Football playoffs on Ohio News Network, primarily because of the
strong audience of high school students and parents. Additionally, the program will seek opportunities to promote faculty research through several communications vehicles such as the first-ever Faculty Recognition event during a football game earlier this year; a newly designed campus tour; prospective student web site videos; scoreboard videos for football games; feature stories for placement in Ohio newspapers; and special features for OSUToday and onCampus. The program, which received allocations of $500,000 each in fiscal years 2000-01 and 2001-02, is funded totally by unrestricted gifts to the university and an additional gift from the Ohio State Alumni Association.

Tashjian said he and others in University Relations have met with more than 1,000 people on campus and off to explain the program's rationale, receive input, and improve the final outcome. "From the beginning, we sought input from all interested parties on campus. We established a group of distinguished faculty and deans to provide oversight, and they have given us important guidance at critical points," he said.

Tashjian said the university views the effort to change external perceptions to more accurately reflect the quality of the educational and partnership opportunities at Ohio State as an eight- to 10-year process. "It's likely that we will begin seeing measurable change in our general public reputation toward a more accurate reflection of who we are and what we are about within the next two to three years, assuming the economy improves and we are able to expand our current effort," he said.

Tashjian said the program was developed in stages. Stage I involved a research and testing phase to determine which characteristics of the university would better communicate academic excellence. Stage II involved identifying a communications firm to assist in the design of an implementation plan. Through an RFP process, HMS Partners in Columbus was awarded the job and the firm began work last spring. Stage III has focused on developing the specific communications vehicles that would best convey the campaign's messages.

Tashjian emphasized that the strategic communications program -- a concept in which a focused and substantive message is repeated in various forms -- is necessary to communicate the excellence already at the university.

"Right now, we're inappropriately perceived as an institution that creates great athletes; has good, but not great, academics; and is big," he said. "Our communication effort will focus on academic excellence but, at the same time, recognize our athletic accomplishments."

He emphasized that the tagline, which has received far more media attention than the program itself, is important but cannot be separated from the entire campaign.

"The tagline is important to the extent that it reinforces the relationship between Ohio State research and its impact on and relevance to the larger society. We also believe it provides an excellent contextual
framework for talking about the university's greatness," he said. "But all components of this effort are equally important and, to be effective, must be equally executed."
A special web site, http://www.osu.edu/dosomethinggreat, has been created to allow you to see the campaign in action. Included are inspiring vignettes on faculty, alumni, and students who are "Doing Something Great." Click and you'll see:
-- Television features on three Ohio State students involved in undergraduate research.
-- TV and radio features on seven faculty who are conducting research that has had a significant impact on society.
-- TV and radio features on inspiring alumni who have used their Ohio State educations to do great things.
The website will be updated regularly to reflect new accomplishments, Tashjian said. "The vignettes are just a snapshot, but are about the core promise of Ohio State: the creation of new knowledge through research that has a meaningful impact upon the lives of Ohioans and our entire society."
Let someone know that they're DOING SOMETHING GREAT!

http://www.osu.edu/education/ftad/thankaprof.html
Do you have an instructor —
Professor or Graduate Teaching Associate (GTA) —
who makes it completely worthwhile to go to class?
who makes class content interesting?
from whom you’ve learned a lot?
Have you had an instructor like this in the past?
Would you like a chance to send that instructor a thank-you?

Thank a Prof for the hard work, dedication, and effort that gave you an unforgettable learning experience. A letter will be sent to the instructor, conveying your appreciation.

Go to the website:
http://www.osu.edu/education/ftad/thankaprof.html

Fill out the form and click 'submit' when you're done.
A letter will be sent to the instructor, conveying your appreciation.
You may sign your name, but if you’d rather, you can remain anonymous.
Let someone know that they’re doing something Great!