



WENDELL S. ESBENSHADE

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Seasoned higher education marketing and communications leader with a proven track record of driving enrollment growth, enhancing brand visibility, and modernizing communications across digital and traditional channels. Expert in digital innovation, brand stewardship, and mission-aligned marketing strategies that advance equity, social justice, and learner-centered outcomes. Trusted executive partner with deep experience managing internal teams, external vendors, and institutional change.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Director of Marketing and Communications, Oct. 2023 – Present

Tulane School of Social Work (TSSW), Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

- Spearhead all marketing and communications strategies to support brand growth, recruitment, and stakeholder engagement for a nationally ranked graduate school.
- Over the last two years, led marketing/branding efforts that increased completed applications by 41.2%, while improving lead quality by increasing the number of newly enrolled students by 72.6% in the same period.
- Led complete website redesign with enhanced brand messaging, dynamic content feeds, embedded video, GEO/AI-ready, and clearer CTAs to drive user action.
- Conducted mission-aligned brand research and competitor analysis to develop differentiated positioning messaging tailored to diverse adult learner segments.
- Created video content for storytelling, virtual tours, and internal communications from leadership.
- Designed and launched segmented, data-driven email campaigns using A/B testing and performance analytics to optimize pipeline growth and ROI.
- Built centralized marketing data repository to ensure accuracy across internal teams and external vendors.
- Developed and implemented standard operating procedures for digital signage, communications, social content, and internal news.

Director of Marketing and Communications, Oct. 2010 – Sept. 2023

Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences (now Saint Joseph's University), Lancaster, PA

- Architected and executed a college-wide rebranding strategy (name, logo, website, brand narrative) that resulted in a 22% enrollment increase within the first year.
- Developed marketing performance dashboards tracking cost per lead, conversion rates, and ROI to guide budget and resource allocation decisions.
- Integrated digital marketing tools and CRM platforms to personalize content delivery, optimize the student journey, and increase retention rates.
- Collaborated closely with academic leadership and enrollment teams to translate program priorities into compelling marketing campaigns aligned with institutional mission and social justice values.
- Led crisis communications and brand reputation management initiatives, representing marketing strategy at executive and board levels.
- Directed and mentored a high-performing hybrid marketing team, fostering a culture of innovation, accountability, and continuous improvement.

EARLIER EXPERIENCE

Director of Alumni Relations

Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, VA

December 2006 – October 2010

- Developed and executed alumni engagement strategies, marketing plans, and events; increased Homecoming participation by 60%.
- Produced award-winning print and digital communications; built first alumni social media presence.

Vice President of Operations

Stow Away Self-Storage, Harrisonburg, VA

July 2005 – December 2006

- Developed marketing and operational infrastructure for a new business, including brand identity, website, and ROI systems.

Assistant Director of Alumni Relations

James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

September 1999 – June 2005

- Directed alumni marketing and communication initiatives; redesigned

newsletter and digital communications to boost reach and engagement.

- Increased website traffic by 56% and scholarship revenue by 120% through targeted campaigns.

Senior Graphic Designer & Adjunct Instructor

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA

1998 – 1999

- Led creative direction for university print and marketing materials; taught ART 342: Introduction to Graphic Design.

Assistant Director of Communications / Graphic Designer

Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY

1995 – 1997

- Designed alumni publications and restructured institutional website to improve usability and branding.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- Cuppie Awards: Greater Good Ad Campaign (Silver), CUPRAP, 2020*
- Cuppie Awards: Instagram Story (Bronze), CUPRAP, 2020*
- Cuppie Awards: Spotify Ad (Silver), CUPRAP, 2020*
- Telly Award: Advertising (Silver) – Outdoor, The TELLY Awards, 2018
- Telly Award: Advertising (Silver) – Print, The TELLY Awards, 2018*
- Telly Award: Online Video (Bronze) – Recruitment Video, The TELLY Awards, 2015*
- Session Presenter, Education Dynamics, Conference, "Life After Launch: Measuring Your Institutional Brand," 2014
- Session Presenter, CASE District III Conference, "Small School, Big Voice – Making Your Size Work For You," 2010

**Produced in conjunction with partner vendor, JPL, of Harrisburg, Pa.*

EDUCATION

Certified Digital Marketing Professional, Digital Marketing Institute – 2022

MBA, Lebanon Valley College – 2014

BA in Art (Graphic Design Concentration) / Minor in Business, Messiah University – 1994