

AC 2025-2026 Assessment

Public Information & Media Relations, Marketing & Branding

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

Public Information & Media Relations/Marketing & Branding and Mission: The mission of the two units is to promote the university, its students, faculty, staff, programming, accomplishments and resources to external audiences through a variety of media platforms. These units work collaboratively with each other and with personnel from throughout the campus to highlight activities, events, opportunities and milestones related to all aspects of Northwestern State. The work of the units helps attract and retain students as well as enhances alumni relations, fund raising and community engagement. The units report to the Chief Marketing Officer.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director;
- (2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met:
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);
- (5) The executive director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. Create broad and positive exposure for Northwestern State on the local, regional and national level by (1) Promotion of programs and opportunities available by (2) promotion of student, faculty and institutional accomplishments and (3) increased engagement both internally and externally.

AC 2025-2026 Assessment

Measure 1.1.

Public Information/Media Relations issues timely press releases, website updates and accompanying photos and graphics with the goal of engagement by 100 percent of local media, 60 percent of regional media and 30 percent of national print and online media organizations.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In 2024-2025 the target was not met. The target was engagement by 100 percent of local media, 60 percent of regional media and 30 percent of national print and online media organizations. Based on the analysis of these results in 2025-2026 personnel targeted press releases to specific markets.

From July 2025 to June 2026, Northwestern State University received a total of 5,913 non-athletic earned media mentions in traditional news media. This includes:

- 5,866 online news articles
- 47 print news articles

The coverage was overwhelmingly driven by online news platforms, with print media contributing a small fraction. This reflects the broader trend of digital media dominance in earned media exposure for universities.

As a result, in 2025-2026, the target was not met. News outlets were receptive to all press releases related to the return to classes, commencement programs and normal campus activities but print news outlets are shrinking and/or closing.

Based on the number and frequency of press releases, photos and social media posts and shares, along with the growth in updates that developed, NSU news reached most targeted media outlets, except print audiences.

This goal was met on the local and regional level. From July 2025-June 2026, NSU News Bureau distributed over 800 press releases with accompanying photos and posted more than 500 articles on the NSULA website.

Action - Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of 2025-2026 results Public Information & Media Relations will in 2026-2027 work with other units on campus to continue to maximize publicity for the university's assets, programs, accomplishments and opportunities and plans for moving forward. The staff should continue to strategically "pitch" stories to specific markets, localize stories when necessary and continue to make new media contacts.

A new team member was hired to do video work to supplement written press releases and photographs. It is expected that providing video to TV stations and online news outlets, more exposure for the university will be created.

AC 2025-2026 Assessment

The unit might consider revising the Service Outcome to better reflect the rise of digital media and the decline of traditional print media.

Measure 1.2.

Marketing and Branding will increase the university's social media engagement by 15 percent per year.

Finding: Target met.

Analysis: In 2024-2025, the target was met. The intent was to increase social media engagement by 15 percent. Based on the analysis of these results in 2024-2025, engagement grew as student workers were added to the staff. Marketing and Branding continue to focus on social media growth and analytics with positive results.

Strategic content creation, consistent posting, and the continued growth of our social media channels helped expand NSU's digital reach and visibility throughout the year. Additional student workers allowed us to expand content creation efforts, including social media management, event coverage, photography, videography, TikTok and Instagram content.

As a result, the target was met.

From July 2025 - June 2026, NSU's social media footprint grew significantly. Social media engagement (likes, shares, comments across all channels) grew by approximately 28 percent. Transitioning content to video-heavy testimonials and spotlights and a higher posting frequency resulted in +20% month-over-month.

The award-winning Proud To Be Purple campaign was a great success:
600+ community facing items distributed.
100+ businesses received the items.
120,000+ people watched the campaign videos.

The director of Marketing and Branding and her assistant developed effective strategies to increase social media engagement, integrating strategic social media campaigns with efforts in other digital spaces to increase exposure to NSU's brand as well as engagement across all platforms. This includes the UGC ("tag & share") Push in which students were encouraged to tag NSU in their own photos.

Results are:

Facebook: 134.8K engagements/reach

Instagram: 134.2K engagements/reach

TikTok: 88.9K engagements/reach

X: 3.7K engagements/reach

AC 2025-2026 Assessment

Each platform played a unique role in our social media strategy, helping the team connect with audiences through a mix of organic and paid content. Facebook delivered the strongest overall results, supported by targeted advertising efforts that expanded the unit's reach and engagement. TikTok led in organic performance, generating more than 1M impressions and demonstrating exceptional audience growth without paid promotion.

TikTok has been a huge trend with the unit's audience, allowing the team to market to potential students more effectively and with content created.

Marketing & Branding produced videos (short-form reels, TikToks, and other videos across platforms). The average engagement rate was 8% (well above industry average of 4–5%). The unit posted 44 videos. The highest-performing post was the First Day of School video, which generated more than 50,000 views and resonated strongly with students, parents, alumni and the broader NSU community.

Based on the analysis of the results from last year, data indicates the Office of Marketing and Branding and added student workers who focused on social media campaigns in conjunction with campus activities, events and holidays made a significant positive impact in social media engagement. The director continues to focus on growing the university's external visual presence and social media presence so that going forward, data should indicate that Marketing and Branding play an important role in the mission of the university and its stakeholders.

Action - Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, in 2025-2026 the Office of Marketing and Branding will invest, schedule and track analytics across social media platform use and brainstorm more marketing campaign ideas.

SO 2. Public Information/Media Relations and Marketing and Branding support the university's internal and external communication efforts to increase brand recognition and impact.

Measure 2.1.

Each unit monitors earned media, growth of network, video views, website hits and other analytics with the goal of a 15 percent annually to demonstrate increased engagement and interest in NSU.

Finding: Target met.

Analysis: In 2024-2025 the target was met. Top news-generating events were CAPA programming, the launch of the redesigned website and news from the Creole Heritage related to the new Pope Leo's connection to Louisiana.

Marketing and Branding specifically targets prospective students (high school juniors/seniors) through Instagram, TikTok, paid social media ads, paid google ads, and

AC 2025-2026 Assessment

digital and print mail. The unit targets current students through Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, event/campus coverage and engagement. M&B targets alumni & prospective families through LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, targeted ads on social media and google, email and print marketing materials, and radio and print ads.

Public Information engages communicates with alumni by producing four editions of Alumni Columns Magazine per year. This past year, the number of editions was reduced and fewer were distributed as a cost-saving measure. Readership dropped as a result.

NSU joined sister universities in the University of Louisiana System in using Meltwater to track performance.

Based on the analysis of the results, NSU's media and social media is reaching a wider audience because of successful marketing campaigns.

As a result, in 2025-26 units used analytic tools like Meltwater to measure engagement and market the university's programming.

Spikes in social media/external media engagement occurred in conjunction with campus events that follow the academic calendar, such as Freshman Connection, Welcome Week, Christmas Gala, Commencement and other large campus events

NSU Press, NSU Publications and Photo Services support units across campus. From July 2025-June 2026, NSU Publications completed more than 1,600 jobs for a variety of units and divisions across campus. A special program created for LMTA resulted in \$276.

Purchases of books from the NSU Press totaled \$2,533 for the general fund. Cookbook purchases totaled \$206 for the NSU Foundation.

The Chief Marketing Officer at Northwestern State unveiled a redesign of the university website in August 2025. The new website was mostly well received.

The new website is user-friendly, easy to navigate and has a modern look and feel. The new website presents a modern, dynamic and cohesive image for NSU.

Redevelopment of the university website included the following components:

- Reconsider website messaging to appeal to prospective students
- Showcase campus culture through storytelling, imagery, and video
- Differentiate NSULA from competitive schools
- Showcase student career success
- Add robust site-wide search capability
- Optimize the website for mobile viewing
- Make it easy to browse degree programs
- Provide clear calls-to-action to encourage enrollment or campus tour sign-ups.

AC 2025-2026 Assessment

Action - Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of 2024-2025, NSU Press will market more books for sale. NSU Photo Services and NSU Publications will work with the campus community to advance the mission of the university.

The staff will integrate social media with efforts in other digital spaces to increase exposure to NSU's brand as well as engagement across all platforms.

SO 3. PI&MR and Marketing and Branding stay current on trends in media and promote an atmosphere of teamwork and collaboration.

Measure 3.1.

Units attend at least one (more when feasible) professional development conference or webinar per year to sustain quality in writing, editing, graphic design photography, videography and other communication arts and to monitor pertinent trends in the industry.

Finding: This goal was not met.

Analysis: In 2024-2025 the target was not met.

Based on the analysis of these results, in 2024-2025, the director of Public Information and Media Relations attended no conferences but utilized Youtube and other online platforms for skill development. Personnel from Marketing and Branding were not able to attend a conference. As a result, the target was not met. However, personnel do stay informed about trends in social media via their own research. Personnel might consider changing the measure to include online programming for professional development when attending a conference is not feasible. Personnel could use online resources and webinars to stay current in technology, skills and best practices.

Tiktok has been a huge trend with the unit's audience, allowing the team to market to potential students more effectively and with content created.

Action - Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of 2025-2026 results, in 2026-2027 units will seek professional development opportunities and attend at least one professional development meeting or conference. When attendance is not feasible, personnel will use Youtube and webinars for professional development. Engaging in professional development increases enthusiasm, teambuilding and generates ideas for increasing engagement and media relations.

Measure 3.2.

The units will hold weekly meetings to discuss projects and their progress and share information relevant to completing projects in a professional manner and a timely fashion. Success is defined as meeting 100 percent of deadlines and producing quality work with 0 percent errors.

AC 2025-2026 Assessment

Finding: This goal was not met.

Analysis: In 2024-2025 the target not met. The goal was to meet weekly to discuss projects and their progress, as well as collaborate on joint projects to promote the university. As a result, based on the analysis of these results in 2024-2025, staff will coordinate schedules to meet regularly to formulate strategies to produce work that underpins the mission of the university, however lack of resources, scheduling conflicts and overall chaos was not conducive to meeting the target.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Based on the analysis of the 2025-2026 results, the units will coordinate weekly meetings to share ideas and facilitate projects that support the mission of the units: recruiting, retention and fundraising.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvement based on analysis of results: The following reflects the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2025-26. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the analysis of AC 2024-2025 results.

- In addition to regular press releases, it was determined that video elements should be included in media packages.
- Staff maintained a proactive approach in reaching out to media to “pitch” story ideas to relevant markets, as well as increase social media engagement.
- The addition of active, competent student workers to the Marketing team increased engagement. The units communicated more effectively to leverage better outcomes.
- The units worked together and with other units on campus on strategic initiatives and campaigns to increase social media engagement and crisis communication.
- Strategic planning and collaboration improved to develop better teamwork.

Plan of action moving forward.

Public Information & Media Relations and Marketing & Branding work with internal and external stakeholders to promote the image of Northwestern State, viewing their roles as critical in vaulting Northwestern State to becoming the nation’s premier regional university. Though staffs are small and resources are limited, each team member exhibits dedication to the quality of their product and to the reputation of the university. The units will continue to reach out to media to pitch story ideas and continue to target markets with relevant content.

Because technology and media platforms continue to evolve, the team is challenged to stay current and relevant to several different demographics and fluent in technology to utilize traditional and non-traditional media platforms.

The team continue to seek professional development opportunities either through workshops/conferences or online resources and engage in teambuilding and strategic planning.