



HOW TO CRAFT OUR STORY

**A guide to creating messages
about our graduate and
professional programs**

Introduction

The University at Buffalo has an amazing story to tell, and our university brand and identity strategy set the stage for telling it.

Now, our graduate and professional programs will draw on the established university brand and identity strategy to tell the distinctive stories that result from graduate and professional education at UB.

First, we will review each component of our graduate and professional programs strategy: our personality, our audiences and our message map. Then, we will show you how each of these elements is used to craft communications, and how to apply them to develop compelling, consistent and authentic messages on behalf of graduate and professional programs.

Personality

The University at Buffalo has defined a set of characteristics that capture our quintessential voice. These personality traits, which are a result of research conducted for the university identity and brand strategy initiative, should also infuse the messaging for our graduate and professional programs. The statements on the right show how they're relevant to graduate and professional audiences, based on our quantitative and qualitative research.

To inform this strategic initiative, we conducted a quantitative survey, the results of which indicated that the starred personality traits are most impactful when communicating with our graduate and professional audiences. However, utilize your best judgment in considering the characteristics that best align with your program or communication piece.

UB's brand personality is **authentically...**

[PRAGMATIC]----->

**focused, innovative and resourceful—
a community of real-world thinkers and doers**

We're pragmatic in our approach to graduate and professional studies, continually working to meet the varying needs of our students.

[TENACIOUS]----->

always persevering

Our students consistently describe themselves as tenacious. They proactively seek opportunities that will drive their own success.

***[INCLUSIVE]**----->

**open, welcoming and engaging—
working together for success**

Our communities are defined by support and collaboration.

***[AMBITIOUS]**----->

big thinking, optimistic and future-focused

Graduate and professional students are here to achieve more, further their careers and set higher standards within their industries.

But **aspirationally**, it will push to feel more...

[PROUD]----->

**rallying around our momentum, achievements
and impact**

Our highly regarded faculty rally around graduate and professional students to help them achieve more.

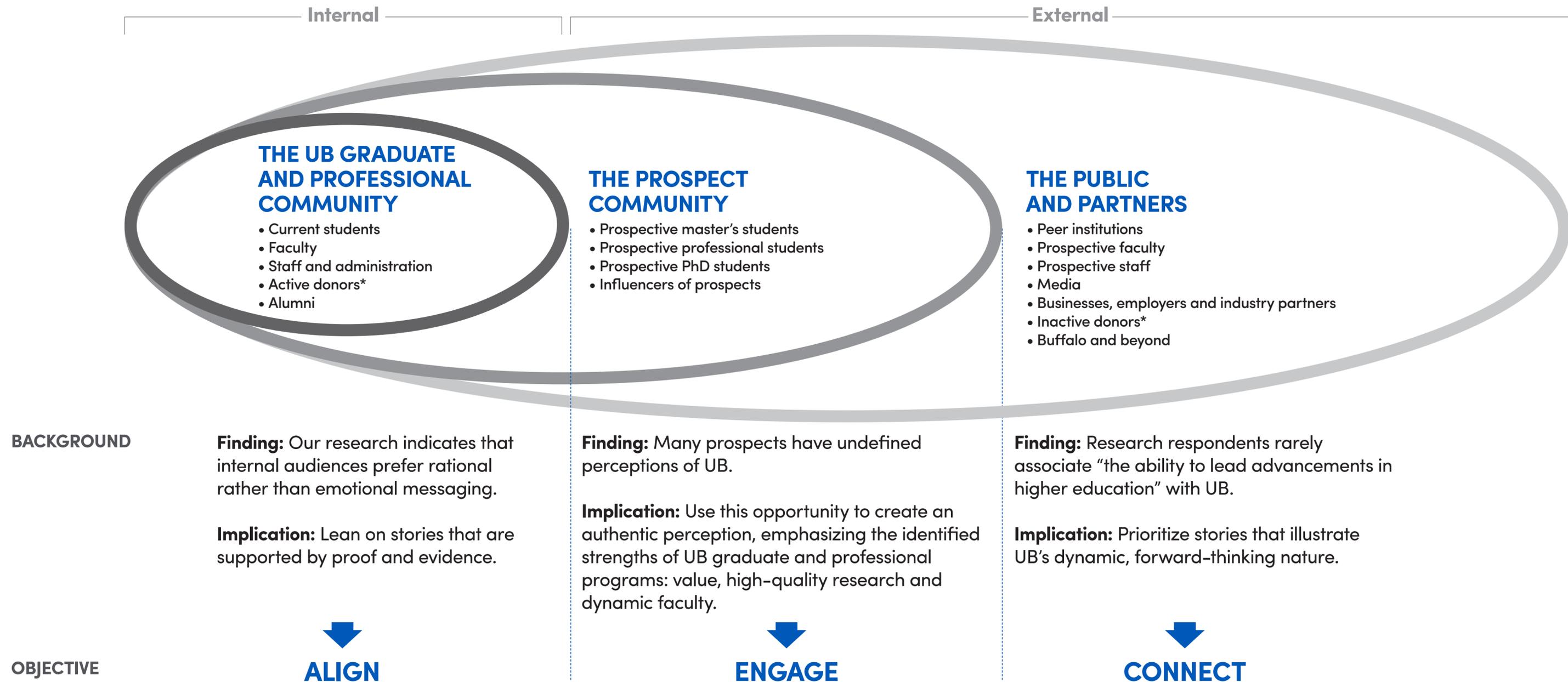
***[DYNAMIC]**----->

enhancing excellence, boldly on the move

The graduate and professional environment at UB is composed of dynamic relationships that have true impact.

Audiences

For our communications, we craft messages that vary somewhat, based on the audience we're addressing. With this in mind, we've defined the audiences we communicate with below. They're organized by their relationships with UB—internal audiences versus external audiences—as well as by the overarching objectives we're always working toward, based on our research.



*Philanthropic efforts may be handled directly by University Advancement.

How to Craft Your Story: A Step-By-Step Guide to Messaging

Hierarchy

A messaging map is a useful tool because it establishes a clear hierarchy for our messages. It allows us to organize:

- our value proposition (our graduate and professional programs' differentiated core message)
- our secondary messages (our graduate and professional programs' secondary attributes and benefits)

Pillars

Each program's story is tied directly to the message maps for both the university brand and identity strategy and graduate and professional programs, leaning heavily on the core messages, attributes and benefits. The four messaging pillars from the master brand—purposeful ambition, global perspective, radical empathy and bold participation—are carried over for the graduate and professional programs as well, but are viewed through a graduate and professional lens.

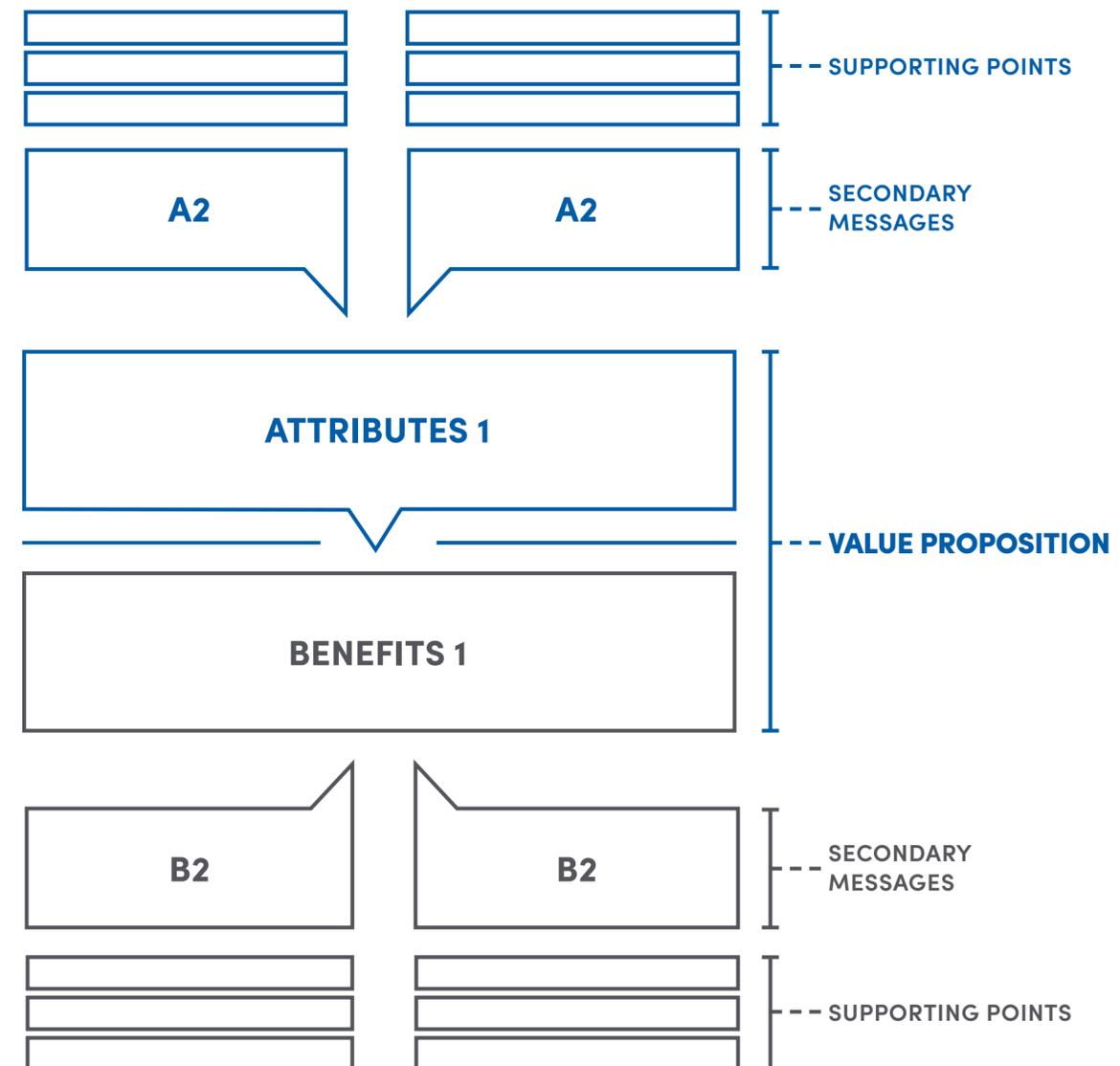
These pillars provide topic-oriented organization to our messaging. They help guide what UB's specific, differentiating components sound like in external-facing messages.

Attributes and Benefits

A compelling message map (and brand story) is built on attributes and benefits.

Our **ATTRIBUTES** are **what we offer** to our audiences. Attributes include the programs, services, knowledge and unique offers that we bring to the table.

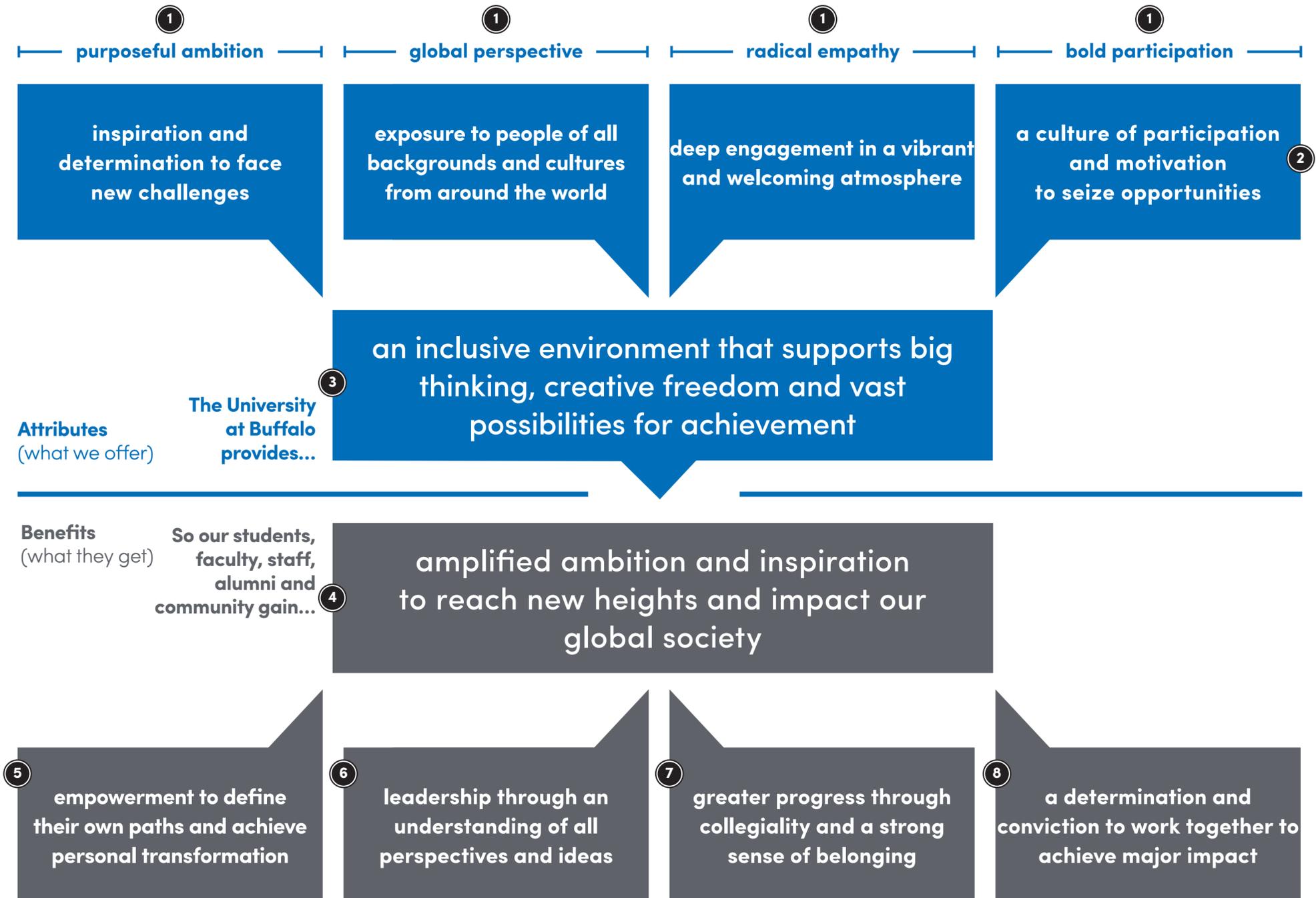
Our **BENEFITS** are **what our audiences get**. They're the value of the attributes that we offer. They're the answer to the question "so what?" or "why do they care?"



University Messaging Map

The university brand messaging map (shown here in part) sets the foundation for all messages that come from the University at Buffalo. The graduate and professional programs map (shown on the following pages) has the same pillars and many similar elements for its messages. Below, we break down what elements should be emphasized and what elements should be understated in graduate and professional communications.

- 1 The four pillars are all relevant to graduate and professional programs.
- 2 Some components that are vital to undergraduates are generic to graduate and professional students. For example, participation is an expectation. Graduate and professional students tenaciously seek opportunities rather than being merely motivated to seize them.
- 3 Graduate and professional students at UB take it one step further from big thinking—they apply their knowledge through research beside dynamic faculty.
- 4 UB takes the amplified ambition of graduate and professional students and instills meaningful expertise and know-how.
- 5 Personal transformation is present, but professional preparation is the focus.
- 6 Leadership is critical: Alumni of the graduate and professional programs at UB don't just earn a career—they become leaders and catalysts in their respective fields.
- 7 A supportive and collaborative environment is crucial to the fabric of the UB graduate and professional programs, but communities are built differently for each individual program and unit.
- 8 Determination remains steady in graduate and professional programs and turns into a lifelong passion for discovery.



Graduate and Professional Messaging Map

Here, we've expanded on the appropriate elements of the master brand to craft the evolved messaging map below for the graduate and professional programs at UB. This map was also informed by our quantitative and qualitative research.



To align the message maps of all units and make this graduate and professional map feel more relevant for your specific program, we recommend brainstorming tertiary attributes and benefits that show proof of the secondary messages in action. (The subsequent slides will demonstrate the most effective way to do this.)

Building Your Message

The UB graduate and professional messaging map represents a flexible framework for strengthening your communications.

Here's what the map brings to your message:

Context—By positioning your message in relation to UB's broader offer, it takes on greater meaning.

Support—By identifying meaningful attributes and benefits, your story becomes more concrete.

Focus—By aligning your message with UB's core value proposition, it becomes clearer and sharper.

Purpose—By framing your message thoughtfully and intentionally, it affirms UB's greater role.

Impact—By emphasizing how we approach challenges, your message gains relevance and power.

On the following pages you'll see, step by step, how to use the ideas within the map to assess and form the elements of your message into a compelling story that fits into a greater narrative of UB graduate and professional studies.

Building Your Message

At the most basic level, using the message map to strengthen a particular communication entails asking three questions, and crafting your message from there:

1 What attributes achieve the greater impact?

Programs, honors and technologies are never the whole story; they're the mechanisms for impact. Consider the greater effect we're having, and choose which attributes convey it best.

3 Who is the audience, and what tone will resonate?

The audience you intend to reach—whether it's internal or external, prospective students or current students—will determine which of our personality traits will best resonate.

2 What benefits arise from the attributes?

Our attributes are the means to a greater benefit, but which specific benefits from our message map help us tell the best story? Choose the benefits from the map: They typically align with a specific attribute above them.

4 Craft your message.

The text in the message map is precise, but it's not intended for your audiences. Construct your message from the ideas in the map, taking cues from our attribute pillars, but craft your story in your own words.

A note on attributes and benefits: Be selective. **When it comes to crafting your message, using more than two sets of attributes and benefits can become unwieldy.**

Now, let's consider a sample story.

The opioid epidemic killed 64,000 people in the U.S. in 2016—more than those killed in motor vehicle accidents before seatbelts were required, and more than died from HIV before antiretroviral drugs were developed.

Those were the stark figures Erie County Health Commissioner Gale Burstein reported to a packed and attentive auditorium on Thursday at UB's second annual Fall Interprofessional Forum. It was attended by nearly 800 UB health sciences students in three consecutive sessions that ran from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Hosted by the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and sponsored by the UB Office of Interprofessional Education, "Confronting Opioid Dependence: An Interprofessional Strategy" gave UB's health professions students in 10 different programs of study an opportunity to work together on an urgent public health problem.

"We are dedicated to ensuring that our students graduate from UB as interprofessional collaborators with a strong moral compass and who are able to perform competently on a team to deliver health care that is safe, effective and equitable," Patricia Ohtake, assistant vice president for interprofessional education, said in her opening remarks.

The IPE emphasis is a hallmark of health professions education today and is designed to give students in all the professions a chance to collaborate with, and learn from, one another.

Ohtake says the opioid crisis is a textbook example of a situation that requires a collaborative approach, with many patients requiring care from physicians, dentists, nurses, social workers, pharmacists, public health workers, occupational and physical therapists, lawyers and health care managers.

After the welcome from Ohtake and Michael Cain, vice president for health sciences and dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, keynote presentations followed from Burstein and Paul Updike, medical director of substance abuse services for the Catholic Health System.

Burstein provided a grim picture, but also noted that several local initiatives, including more than 3,000 calls received by the county's addiction hotline and greatly increased training for medical providers, are starting to have positive effects.

Updike noted that hospitals like Sisters of Charity are seeing a dramatic increase in the incidence of newborns addicted to drugs, suffering from neonatal abstinence syndrome. This is in part, he said, because opioid addiction is a disease of the young, thus affecting many of childbearing age. He described his work with pregnant women who are addicted, and said a major piece of helping them get better is educating hospital providers and staff about addiction.

"We found there was a widespread feeling among staff that these patients are trouble. There was quite a bit of bias. A lot of it was classic ignorance," he said.

The decision was made then to educate every staff person who came into contact with a patient.

"We came together as a team of professionals to change how we delivered care to these patients who are very vulnerable to begin with and mistrustful—sometimes with good reason—of the system," Updike said. "We changed the way we delivered care to these patients." The result was a significant improvement in outcomes for both mothers and babies.

After the keynote addresses, students broke up into small, interprofessional teams and spent several hours discussing a specific patient case and how each of them could use their professional knowledge and skills to contribute to the patient's care.

The forum and other events sponsored by the Office for Interprofessional Education are based on strong collaborations between the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, the School of Nursing, the School of Dental Medicine, the School of Public Health and Health Professions, the School of Social Work, the School of Law and the School of Management.

Interprofessional education is required for pre-licensure professional students in these schools.

Cain noted that when he was in medical school, the only people he learned alongside were other medical students. "But all of a sudden when you graduate, you are working with people from all these other disciplines," he said. "Why not let them appreciate as students what these other providers do and how they'll interact with them? That's the value of interprofessional education."

What it says about us:

UB graduate and professional education takes on big challenges, seeking knowledge and practical solutions in a truly multidisciplinary style.

Who it speaks to:

The prospect community, seeking relevant experience and opportunities.

The public and partners, understanding the scope of our work and their role in it.

The UB graduate and professional community, sensing pride and purpose in the work we do every day.

On the next four pages, we'll look at this story in relation to the message map, following the four steps to build our message.

- 1** **What attributes achieve the greater impact?**
- 2** **What benefits arise from the attributes?**
- 3** **Who is the audience, and what tone will resonate?**
- 4** **Craft your message.**

Messaging

USING THE MAP

1 What attributes achieve the greater impact?

Programs, honors and technologies are never the whole story; they're the mechanisms for impact. Consider the greater effect we're having and choose which attributes convey it best.

PURPOSEFUL AMBITION

Does the story involve...

the ability to learn alongside highly respected and regarded faculty?

YES, we can safely say that the ability to learn alongside highly respected and regarded faculty supports our message.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Does the story involve...

diverse perspectives and inclusive experiences?

POSSIBLY, but there is stronger support elsewhere.

RADICAL EMPATHY

Does the story involve...

a supportive and collaborative approach to intellectual prosperity?

YES. The collaborative approach to intellectual prosperity is key to the initiative.

BOLD PARTICIPATION

Does the story involve...

extensive and powerful programs with practical opportunities?

SURE, this supports the greater benefit of IPE. But programs operating in concert make for a bigger story than the parts, so let's not prioritize this.

Our story here has **two supporting attributes** and most closely aligns with the **purposeful ambition** and **radical empathy** pillars.

2 What benefits arise from the attributes?

As noted previously, the subject of this story has little trouble conveying the notion of a benefit. Even still, there's a clear opportunity (and obligation) to spell out how the unique benefits of how our institution delivers innovative approaches.

PURPOSEFUL AMBITION

Does the story involve...

deeply rooted and highly valued knowledge?

YES. The cumulative benefit of 800 minds from 10 different disciplines focusing on one challenge.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Does the story involve...

a broader worldview to make impactful decisions?

PERHAPS, in the case of individual participants, but this wouldn't be the most direct benefit.

RADICAL EMPATHY

Does the story involve...

actionable understanding that furthers their personal paths and communities?

YES. The practical application of skills and knowledge will clearly lead to success for the participants.

BOLD PARTICIPATION

Does the story involve...

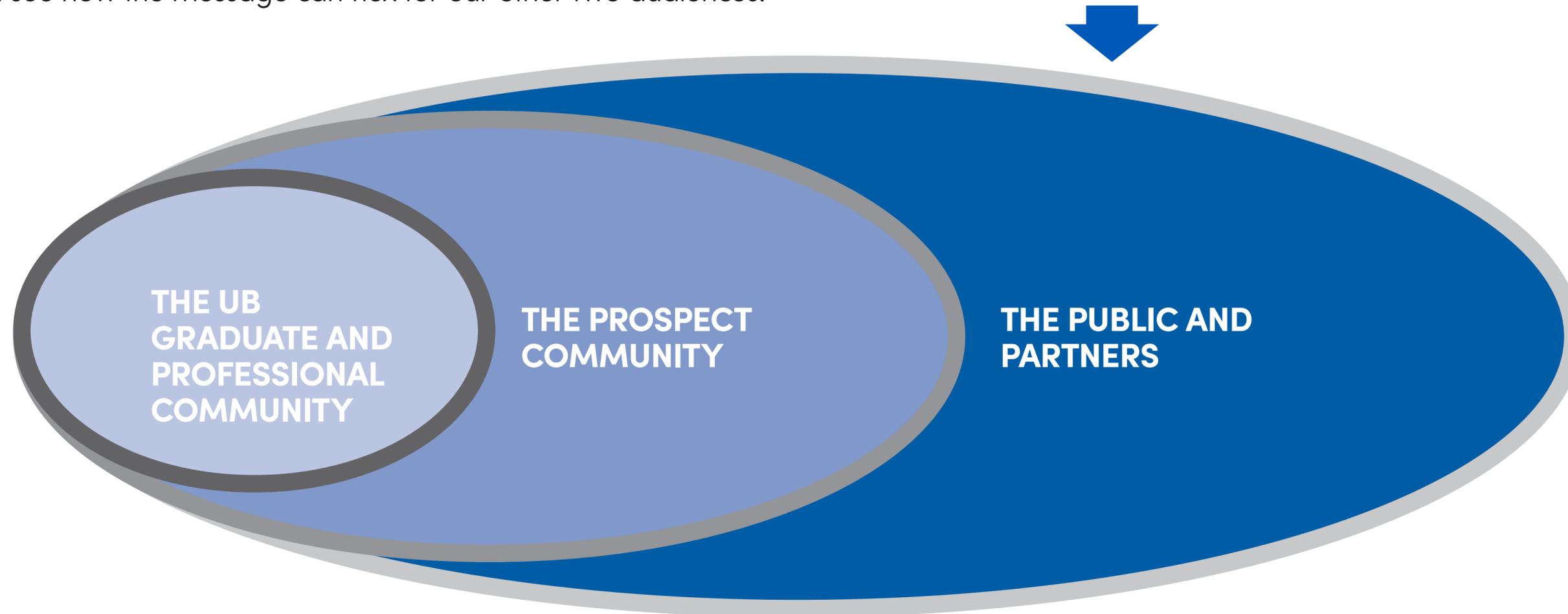
determined leaders with a lifelong passion for discovery and resilience?

MAYBE, but other benefits are far more relevant.

Our story also has **two supporting benefits** and, again, aligns most closely with the **purposeful ambition** and **radical empathy** pillars.

3 Who is the audience, and what tone will resonate?

With such far-reaching public health implications and such a vivid example of multidisciplinary education, this message would land best with the **public and partners** audience. Among our personality traits, **ambitious** and **dynamic** best inform our tone. We'll explore that direction first, and then see how the message can flex for our other two audiences.



A note on audiences: The public and partners might be the optimal audience, but there's no reason the story can't appeal to prospects and the graduate and professional community by emphasizing the identified strengths of UB graduate and professional programs: value, high-quality research and dynamic faculty.

4

Craft your message.

We've determined which elements of our message map support our story, along with the appropriate tone and optimal audience. Placing language verbatim from the messaging map results in an **unvoiced message**, which we will use as a guide for our **crafted message**. Follow the dotted lines from the elements of the unvoiced message to see how the ideas carry through while the language shifts.

UNVOICED MESSAGE

Pillars: Purposeful Ambition, Radical Empathy

Personality Traits: Ambitious, Dynamic

Audience: Public and Partners

Topic: Through Interprofessional Education (IPE) in the health sciences, UB's graduate and professional programs are addressing the opioid crisis [Attribute 1] by offering diverse perspectives and inclusive experiences alongside [Attribute 2] highly respected and regarded faculty that [Benefit 1] impart deeply rooted and highly valued knowledge and [Benefit 2] actionable understanding that furthers students' personal paths and communities, fulfilling UB's graduate and professional programs' commitment to [Value Proposition] fostering an engaged, dynamic environment that amplifies ambition through meaningful preparation so that our students gain expertise that empowers a lifetime of personal and professional growth.

CRAFTED MESSAGE

HEAD:

How does UB approach the opioid crisis? From every possible direction.

SUBHEAD:

Graduate and professional students from 10 programs take on opioids as one.

COPY:

The University at Buffalo is meeting the challenge of opioid addiction head on with more than 800 minds. Through UB's Interprofessional Education approach, graduate and professional students and leading faculty from 10 different health sciences programs are collaborating across disciplines, tapping into vital medical understanding to develop practical solutions to the immediate challenges of opioid abuse. In the process, they're also establishing a new guard of researchers and physicians. The initiative is typical of UB's multidisciplinary approach to graduate and professional education, helping make Buffalo home to big thinking that changes lives for generations.

Checklist

1. Are at least two of our personality traits reflected in the style and tone of the communication?
2. Have you emphasized the “how” with a focus on process, point of view or insight?
3. Have you included a benefit with every proof point or fact (bolded)?
4. Have you included a specific story that reflects the university master brand positioning in action?
5. Do the messages relate specifically to a graduate audience rather than an undergraduate audience?
6. Is the content compelling for its intended audiences?

OUR PERSONALITY TRAITS

PRAGMATIC TENACIOUS
INCLUSIVE* AMBITIOUS*
PROUD DYNAMIC*

OUR BRAND ATTRIBUTES AND BENEFITS

Purposeful Ambition

We work alongside highly regarded and respected faculty to gain **deeply rooted and highly valued knowledge**.

Global Perspective

We make **impactful decisions through a broader worldview** as a result of the diverse perspectives and expertise we’re exposed to.

Radical Empathy

We further our personal paths and those of our communities because of the supportive and collaborative approach to prosperity.

Bold Participation

We are determined leaders with a lifelong passion for discovery and resilience because of the powerful programs we are a part of.

OUR AUDIENCES

- The UB Graduate Community
- The Prospect Community
- The Public and Partners

*Indicates the most impactful personality traits for communicating to graduate and professional audiences.

One Message, Different Audiences

While the facts of a story don't change to meet an audience's expectations, our approach can and should. By looking to our audience map (page 4) and personality traits (page 3), and considering what motivates each audience, a subtle shift in emphasis, language and tone can resonate with specific groups and individuals.

Even by shifting a headline and subhead, one story can connect with three different audiences:

AUDIENCE:

UB Graduate and Professional Community

The Prospect Community

The Public and Partners

GOAL:

Align

Engage

Connect

EMPHASIS (what the audience is looking for):

- Shared sense of ambition and purpose
- Power of collaboration

- Multidisciplinary learning
- Opportunity to study

- Intellectual leadership
- Addressing the public health crisis

TONE:

Proud, Inclusive

Dynamic, Pragmatic

Ambitious, Dynamic

HEAD:

Putting our minds to it.

The more, the mightier.

How does UB approach the opioid crisis? From every direction.

SUBHEAD:

Addressing the opioid crisis brings together graduate and professional students from 10 UB programs.

Students and faculty from 10 UB graduate and professional programs unite to confront the opioid crisis.

Graduate and professional students from 10 programs take on opioids as one.

COPY:

The University at Buffalo is meeting the challenge of opioid addiction head on with more than 800 minds. Through UB's Interprofessional Education approach, graduate and professional students and leading faculty from 10 different health sciences programs are collaborating across disciplines, tapping into vital medical understanding to develop practical solutions to the immediate challenges of opioid abuse. In the process, they're also establishing a new guard of researchers and physicians. The initiative is typical of UB's multidisciplinary approach to graduate and professional education, helping make Buffalo home to big thinking that changes lives for generations.

Conclusion

Ultimately, we're telling a story.

Everything we do in UB Graduate and Professional Education is part of a narrative that's bigger than any one person, program, achievement or accolade. Every one of us plays a role in it, and together we move that narrative forward.

This is our story.

It's about a place that's also a way of doing things. Where amplified ambition and inspired thinking make an impact every day. For Buffalo, Western New York and everywhere else. Showing the world:

Here is how.