The University Brand
Communicating, Branding, and the Case for the “M” Word
Improving the effectiveness of CU-Boulder communications
At the University of Colorado at Boulder, we do a lot of communicating...
...and many hands play a role in what we say to our audiences.

Minds to Match our Mountains
Vision 2010
Total Learning Environment
Your Team
Find Your Place
Elevate Your World
Sometimes, however, our left hands don’t know what our right hands are doing...
...and as a result our audiences often end up confused.
Branding is one of the most misunderstood words around.

truth?  logo?
tagline?  value?
BRANDING?
emblem?  slogan?
wordmark?
Our brand is not a logo.

Colorado
University of Colorado at Boulder
Neither is our brand a mission statement.

The Boulder campus of the University of Colorado shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admissions standards. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall offer a comprehensive array of undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degree programs...
Our brand isn’t a strategic plan, either...
Simply put, our brand is the sum of how our audiences perceive us...

“CU-Boulder is a party school.”
“CU-Boulder is the wannabe Berkeley.”
“CU-Boulder is one of the most beautiful universities I’ve ever seen.”
“Great physics department.”
“Go Buffs!”
So if our audiences are confused, what does that say about our brand?

We don’t actually have one . . .
The Case for the “M” Word...
It’s no secret that many people in higher education have a negative perception of marketing.

“Marketing obliterates subtlety and nuance ... in pursuit of mass name recognition and the superficial catchiness of a three-minute pop song.”

“Universities are not companies vending consumer satisfaction....”

“More and more university senior administrations are besotted with ideas of ‘branding’ and ‘strengthening the franchise.’”
In reality, though, traditional definitions don’t quite do it justice.

marketing |ˈmɑrkətɪŋ|
noun
the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.
Marketing is not merely propaganda, “spinning,” advertising, or sales...

OUTLASTED DINOSAURS
AND THE ICE AGE, BUT CAN THEY SURVIVE YOUR PREJUDICE?

University of Phoenix
University of I can change my life and have a life.

Cavemen
Cavemen are people too!

UP WITH CAVEMEN
Cavemen are people too!

SURF FASTER AT HOME.

University of Colorado Boulder
These days, marketing is everything we say and do that affects how we are perceived—whether we mean it to or not.
At CU-Boulder, we engage in marketing (both intentional and unintentional) every day.

- Publications
- Websites
- News Releases
- Advertising
- Community Events
- Facebook
- Research
- Student activities
- Academic misconduct
- Student conduct
- 4/20
- Alcohol abuse
So in order to more effectively market ourselves, we must be more deliberate and consistent in... what we say, and, Sports BUFFS... what we do...

Visit the online events calendar @ www.colorado.edu/events
We must decide as a university community how we wish to be perceived...
... and build a more strategic approach to our communications...
...so our audiences better understand what we’re all about.

I get it!
A strong brand benefits the entire university.

- More positive relationships with our audiences
- The ability to tell our story so others don’t tell it for us
- A solidified reputation with our internal and external audiences
- Greater ability to compete with other institutions for students, faculty, staff, and funding
“The art of marketing is the art of brand building. If you are not a brand, you are a commodity. Then price is everything and the low-cost producer is the only winner.”

–PHILIP KOTLER, Professor of Marketing
Kellogg School of Management
Northwestern University
Branding initiative process

- Engaged Landor & Associates, a global branding firm
- Led by CU President, Chancellors, CU Foundation leadership, and lead communication staff from campuses, system administration, and CU Foundation
Branding initiative process

- Peer analysis and quantitative and qualitative research
  - ~12,000 quantitative surveys among faculty, staff, students, alumni and donors
  - nearly 50 focused interviews with key people inside and outside the university
- Research, strategic plans used to develop key messages and visual images
CU-Boulder brand website

- [http://brand.colorado.edu](http://brand.colorado.edu)
- Contains information and guidelines about CU-Boulder brand messages and visuals
- Access to CU-Boulder logos and other digital assets for downloads
- Third-party links and frequently asked questions
- Archive of branded communications samples
Annual communications calendar
by core brand/fundraising theme

Creating branded communications

The communications plan/creative brief—answering the following questions is the first step in developing branded CU-Boulder communications…

1. What do I hope to achieve with this communication?
2. Who is my audience?
3. How is my communication an example of our university position?
4. Which core message is the primary focus of my communication?
5. What additional core messages will I include in my communication?
6. Which CU-Boulder brand attributes will drive the tone of this communication?
7. What are best methods for distributing this communication?
8. What do I want audiences to do as a result of this communication?
9. How does this effort complement other communications my audience might see?
10. How will I assess the effectiveness of my communication?
Questions?