

Communication Audit of The College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts (CHSSA)

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This Communication Audit was conducted for the College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts (CHSSA) at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) and it aimed to evaluate and analyze the internal and external communication within the college. The audit assessed internal and external communication channels, brand consistency, inclusivity, and accessibility within CHSSA's communication.

Key Findings

Internal Communication:

The directly observed interview with Dr. Stephanie Caulder, the founding Dean of CHSSA, highlighted strong internal communication. Dr. Caulder's active engagement with students and faculty demonstrated a commitment to clarity and understanding. Her emphasis on ensuring comprehension of answers highlighted the College's inclusive internal communication. The interview's accessibility through platforms like Zoom further reinforced the college's dedication to inclusive communication.

External Communication:

The analysis of artifacts, notably the Dean's Student Leadership Council (DSLCL) application on CHSSA's Instagram, emphasized efforts to promote engagement and inclusivity. The use of a QR code for the application's access highlighted CHSSA's commitment to accessibility, allowing for easy entry into leadership roles for students from any location.

Areas for Improvement:

However, there were weaknesses identified in external communication, specifically, the absence of a presence on the influential social media platforms, Twitter and TikTok. Given the use of these platforms among the college's target audience, their absence limits CHSSA's outreach and engagement. This absence impedes brand consistency and restricts student engagement opportunities.

Recommendations:

Enhance Social Media Presence: Establishing an active presence on Twitter and TikTok would significantly expand CHSSA's reach, engagement, and brand consistency. Using these platforms could have real-time interaction with students, sharing success stories from alumni, promoting events within the College, and fostering discussions about student experiences.

Reinforce Inclusive Communication: Continue and amplify efforts like the DSLC application's use of QR codes, ensuring accessibility for all students.

Conclusion:

The audit revealed many strengths in CHSSA's internal communication practices, which is demonstrated by Dr. Caulder's interview with students. Moreover, initiatives like the DSLC application showed positive steps toward inclusivity and accessibility within the College. However, addressing the absence on influential social media platforms, specifically Twitter and TikTok, will be important for CHSSA to establish a more connected, engaged, and inclusive community, aligning with its mission of transforming student experiences through humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

Introduction

The College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts (CHSSA) at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) is UNCW's newest academic college. On July 26, 2023, CHSSA's founding Dean, Dr. Stephanie Caulder, assumed her role in the college (Hoover & Kauzlaric, 2023). On October 11th, 2023, Dr. Caulder stated that "UNCW's new vision statement, 'UNCW transforms lives,' captures what we do in CHSSA so well" (Vick, 2023). This statement by Dr. Caulder reflects the values and mission of what CHSSA aims to do, which is to empower and professionally transform students with education through the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. As CHSSA continues its commitment to academic excellence, it is imperative to assess its communication practices.

This communication audit aims to evaluate the current communication landscape within CHSSA. By examining internal and external communication channels, brand consistency, and the inclusivity of CHSSA's communication, this audit seeks to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for CHSSA to improve their internal and external communication, as well as their brand consistency.

Audit Diary

My primary objective for this communication audit was to assess the effectiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility of CHSSA's communication processes. This was done using various research methods, such as observing interviews with the founding Dean, Dr. Caulder (Caulder, 2023).

In observing the interview on November 28th, 2023, I noticed that Dr. Caulder was very engaged with the students when they asked her questions. She would go in-depth into her

explanations for students and ensured that the students understood her answer before moving on to the next question. My primary reason for attending this interview was to see the internal communication that was used within CHSSA. A firsthand experience of the internal communication that CHSSA uses is beneficial in determining the inclusivity and accessibility of the communication that is used within the College.

Moreover, I also engaged in the observation and analysis of artifacts that were created and uploaded by CHSSA itself. This was done throughout the semester by analyzing the CHSSA website as well as artifacts posted CHSSA's social media. Observing and analyzing these artifacts and documents gave me a look into how CHSSA externally communicates, as well as providing me insight into the accessibility and inclusivity of external communication by the College.

Methodology

For this communication audit, I used a Mixed Methods Approach, which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This was to ensure a comprehensive understanding of communication practices within CHSSA. Using the Mixed Methods Approach, I employed the use of reviewing documents and artifacts posted by CHSSA, such as websites, social media content, and internal communications, to assess consistency inclusivity, and accessibility of the communication used by CHSSA. Moreover, I also engaged in in direct observation of communication practices and interactions within CHSSA's academic settings, such as instructional materials posted on their website, the promotion of panels and events held within CHSSA, and a direct interview with Dr. Caulder, the founding Dean of CHSSA.

In observing and reviewing the documents and artifacts by CHSSA, I analyzed the rhetoric used within the documents or artifacts as well as the ease of accessibility. To determine this, I looked at the ease of access for the document or artifact, in other words, if it was easy to obtain or view from any location by anyone. Moreover, in observing and reviewing the documents and artifacts by CHSSA, I made sure to analyze if the communication in the artifacts and documents aligned with the organization's mission statement.

To observe the internal communication of CHSSA, I engaged in direct observation of the interactions between students and the faculty of CHSSA. One part of the observation involved attending a direct interview with the founding Dean of CHSSA, Dr. Caulder. This observation provided me with a clear picture of the internal communication within this organization, as it allowed me to see how Dr. Caulder engaged and interacted with students on a personal level. I attended the interview to determine if the external communication aligned with CHSSA's mission statement.

Results

The communication audit I conducted for the CHSSA revealed many insights into the current state of communication within the College. Through a mixed methods approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods, my audit aimed to evaluate the internal and external communication, brand consistency, inclusivity, and accessibility within CHSSA's communication.

Internal Communication Evaluation

I directly observed an interview with Dr. Stephanie Caulder, the founding Dean of CHSSA, on November 28th, 2023 (Caulder, 2023). This interview and direct observation offered

valuable insights into the internal communication within CHSSA. Dr. Caulder's interaction with students during the interview demonstrated a high level of engagement to both students and faculty present, as well as a commitment to ensuring clarity and understanding for her answers to the questions that the students asked her. Dr. Caulder ensuring that the students understood her answers highlighted a positive aspect of the internal communication within CHSSA, as it emphasizes inclusivity and accessibility. The interview with Dr. Caulder that I directly observed served as a great example of what inclusive internal communication is, as every question was answered with the same amount of detail and understanding. Moreover, providing the interview through Zoom showed that the internal communication within CHSSA is accessible as well, as students could access the interview from any location.

External Communication Assessment

The analysis of artifacts posted on CHSSA's website and social media platforms provided an understanding of the college's external communication practices, as it was media not only posted externally off the college's website, but it was able to be consumed by non-students at the college, whether they are prospective or upcoming students. By reviewing these materials, I was able to analyze the manner and tone of the external communication for CHSSA. Assessing the artifacts shed light on the college's efforts toward inclusivity and accessibility in information to a broader audience, not only the students at the college.

The artifact pictured below was posted to CHSSA's Instagram and Facebook social media pages:



UNCW CHSSA. (2023) 1

This artifact stands as an opportunity for students within CHSSA to actively engage and contribute to the institutional discourse through the Dean's Student Leadership Council (DSLCL). By employing a QR code as the access for the application for DSLC, CHSSA gives every student, no matter their location, the chance to partake in this leadership opportunity. The QR code's function ensures ease of access, which highlights the inclusive external communication that CHSSA provides students. The strategy of the graphics within the artifact serves a dual purpose, to not only emphasize the importance of feedback to CHSSA, but the depiction of

megaphones symbolizes public feedback, as megaphones are associated with giving feedback in a public forum. This amplifies the significance of the student's input within CHSSA, as it tells the student viewing the graphic that their feedback is heard, no matter what it is. Moreover, the use of UNCW's school colors in the graphics not only creates an association to the University, but also enhances readability of the graphics, ensuring that the information is easily comprehensible for all students. One of the most important deductions from this artifact is how it implies that the feedback is important to the College. By stating that the feedback provided through the DSLC goes directly to the Dean, CHSSA shows their commitment to the voices within their community.

Another artifact of external communication for CHSSA would be their social media. According to UNCW's "Registered Social Media Accounts" website, there is no officially linked social media page for CHSSA (UNCW, 2023). However, a Google search shows that CHSSA does have a Facebook and an Instagram. On their Facebook, CHSSA has 86 likes and 111 followers (Facebook, 2023), while on their Instagram, CHSSA has 128 followers (Instagram, 2023). While the engagement between students and faculty on these two social media websites is good, it would be better if it was linked to UNCW's "Registered Social Media Accounts" page, as it would increase awareness for the brand of CHSSA. Moreover, the absence of a presence on the major social media platforms, Twitter and TikTok, represents a missed opportunity in external communication for CHSSA, as it limits the potential for brand consistency, student engagement, and overall inclusivity and accessibility for all students.

Twitter is known for its concise yet impactful communication, and TikTok is a platform driven by creative and engaging content. There are billions of users on both TikTok and Instagram (Doyle, 2023), which would offer diverse avenues to showcase everything that

CHSSA has to offer compared to other Colleges both within and outside UNCW. These two social media platforms are full of student activity, allowing for real-time interaction between the College and students, the sharing of experiences within CHSSA from students, and sharing information and events about CHSSA. Having a platform on these two social media platforms would allow for CHSSA to not only increase their brand consistency across all platforms, but also share success stories of students and alumni, promote events happening within the College, and facilitate discussions about the College and student experiences. Without a presence on these platforms, CHSSA misses out on the chance to actively engage with its student body on social media platforms that their target audience, prospective students, are most likely to use over Facebook (Doyle, 2023).

Moreover, the absence of Twitter and TikTok undermines inclusivity and accessibility efforts within CHSSA. By not using these two immensely popular platforms, CHSSA inadvertently excludes its student population who might rely heavily on these channels for information. According to Tonogbanua (2023), 69% of Twitter users say that one of the main reasons why they prefer Twitter over other platforms is to stay informed about events that are happening in their local communities. Furthermore, 23% of adult users from the U.S. use Twitter as a news source, as it allows for instantaneous updates when they occur. Moreover, according to Matsa (2023), American adults who say they regularly get news from TikTok has gone from 3% in 2020 to 14% in 2023, showing an increase in people who rely on TikTok for their news. In contrast, only 16% of adults use Instagram for their news source (Pew Research Center, 2023). While this is higher than the rate of people who use TikTok for their news, TikTok is still growing, while Instagram has mostly stagnated. While Facebook does have a high rate of users

who use the social media platform for news, it is mainly an audience that is outside of CHSSA's target range (Pew Research Center, 2023).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Communication Audit conducted for the College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts (CHSSA) at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) has shed light on both the strengths and opportunities for improvement in the College's communication. Through an evaluation of internal and external communication channels, brand consistency, and inclusivity, there were several findings on what the College does well and what the College can improve on.

In terms of internal communication, I had a direct observation of an interview with Dr. Stephanie Caulder, the founding Dean of CHSSA. This provided valuable insights into the college's internal communication. Dr. Caulder's dedication to engaging with students and faculty within the interview, ensuring clarity and understanding in her answers to the student's questions, highlighted a positive aspect of the internal communication within CHSSA. Dr. Caulder's commitment to inclusivity, evidenced by her attention to ensuring student understanding of her answers, emphasized the College's efforts at inclusive communication for all students and faculty. The accessibility of the interview through platforms like Zoom further underscored the college's commitment to inclusive communication practices.

Externally, the analysis of artifacts, particularly the Dean's Student Leadership Council (DSLCC) application shared on CHSSA's Instagram, highlighted CHSSA's endeavor to foster engagement and inclusivity. The use of a QR code to access the application showcased a

commitment to accessibility from CHSSA, allowing students from any location easy entry into leadership opportunities within the College.

However, there were evident weaknesses in external communication, primarily concerning the absence of a presence on the prominent social media platforms Twitter and TikTok. The prevalence of Twitter and TikTok as information hubs, particularly among the college's target audience, highlighted the missed opportunity for CHSSA to reach and engage with a wider student community. The lack of a profile on these platforms also harms CHSSA's potential for brand consistency as they cannot share their mission statement and goals beyond their website and it also hinders opportunities for enhanced student engagement with CHSSA on these more personal social media platforms.

Dr. Caulder's exemplary internal communication practices and the innovative efforts seen in the DSLC application reflect positive communication strategies for CHSSA. However, addressing the lack of prevalent social media platforms in external communication, particularly on Twitter and TikTok, will be very helpful in fostering a more connected, engaged, and inclusive community within CHSSA.

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Appendix

**CHSSA Students, want to
help shape the college?
Join the DSLC and share
your ideas!**

