Brand Voice and Tone:
How We Tell the Georgia Story

June 2017
We are here to tell the story of the University of Georgia.
Cool. Thanks, guy.

What’s that supposed to even mean?
It’s not just about:
It’s not just about:

- Teaching people something
It’s not just about:

• Teaching people something
• Convincing people of something
It’s not just about:

- Teaching people something
- Convincing people of something
- Informing people about something
We’re here to make people feel something.
EMOTIONAL
HUMAN-CENTERED
STORYTELLING
PART ONE:
THE TOOLBOX
Our Positioning

1. Who are we?
2. What do we do?
3. Why do we do it?
4. Why does it matter?
Our Positioning

The University of Georgia tackles the most pressing issues of our time, by inspiring those who will lead, discover and serve on a relentless pursuit to improve our world.
Our Messaging

- student-centered teaching
- a people-centered culture
- human-centered research

Attributes (what we offer)
- The University of Georgia...

Benefits (what they get)
- Because together we are on...

Our Value Proposition
- inspires those who will lead, discover and serve

- a relentless pursuit to improve the world
- a higher-quality of learning
- a new quality of leader
- a better quality of life
Our Personality

**NUPTUING**
We are personable, supportive and invested in others, as well as easygoing, kind and respectful.

**OPTIMISTIC**
We are hopeful, and we envision a better world that we are helping make possible.

**TIME-HONORED**
We are guided by a respect for history, tradition, and our Southern roots.

**TENACIOUS**
We are ambitious, and we never stop searching for better answers and bigger solutions.

**FOCUSED**
We are intentional and doggedly determined, guided by a clarity of purpose.

**COMMITTED**
We are deeply invested, and our conviction—to our students, our state and our world—is unwavering.
How does it sound?

Confident, but not cocky.
Earnest, but not humorless.
Humble, but not self-deprecating.
Direct, but not pushy.
Inspiring, but not didactic.
Ambitions, but not overreaching.
Smart, but not pretentious.
Matter-of-fact, but not blunt.
At the heart of all we do
At the heart of all we do is HEART.
And it’s the love we share for our students,
for the state of Georgia,
and for the people of the world
That turns every potential possibility into something truly possible.
THIS IS WHY
WE’RE SOLVING
GRAND GLOBAL
CHALLENGES.
THIS IS HOW WE’RE SERVING COMMUNITIES AND IMPROVING HUMAN LIVES.
And this is the reason we give our students every opportunity to **DO MORE,**
And this is the reason we give our students every opportunity to

**DO MORE,**

**ACHIEVE MORE,**
And this is the reason we give our students every opportunity to **DO MORE, ACHIEVE MORE,** and **BECOME MORE.**
We share a deep sense of duty and dedication.
We acknowledge the past while we look to the future.
We embrace the challenges that push us way past our **COMFORT ZONES**—
into DISASTER ZONES,
END ZONES
and every **TIME ZONE.**
WHEREVER PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING,
WHEREVER COMMUNITIES ARE LOOKING FOR STRONGER LEADERS
And whenever the world cries out for those who will bring better solutions,
WE ARE THERE TO ANSWER THE CALL TO SERVICE.
It’s more than our **MISSION.**
It’s more than our **PASSION.**
It's our COMMITMENT.
A COMMITMENT TO OUR FUTURE.
A COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER.
A COMMITMENT TO A BETTER WORLD.
A COMMITMENT
WE HOLD CLOSE TO OUR HEARTS.
Our brand platform captures the spirit of our voice and is a high-level inspiration for our brand story.

But this isn’t how everything needs to sound. Not exactly.
Questions that helped define our brand story.

- Why do we exist?
- What basic human value do we offer?
- How do we do it differently?
PART TWO: BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK FOR EMOTIONAL STORIES
3 Things You’ve *Always* Got To Do:
3 Things You’ve *Always* Got To Do:

Be interesting
3 Things You’ve *Always* Got To Do:

Be interesting
Make an emotional connection
3 Things You’ve Always Got To Do:

Be interesting
Make an emotional connection
Say something real
12 Ways to Try to Get There
1 Start with a hook.

Give them a reason to care right away. Lead with a benefit.
2 Find an angle.

A story should be about one thing. Place, process, purpose, people.
“A trending story on Twitter could mean thousands of people care about an issue—or that some computers are doing their jobs. New research from the University of Georgia found that Twitter "bots" can be the driving forces behind dialogue in social movements, possibly leading to journalistic attention and governmental change.”

The Angle: Bots may be driving social movements.
Find the hero.
People are at the heart of everything we do. Put them there.
Find the hero:
In a story about Removing Barriers and Opening Doors on give.uga.edu:

“Since she was six years old, proudly shuffling along in fuzzy, UGA slippers, Chloe Hamby ’19 has dreamed of two things: being a Georgia Bulldog and becoming a lawyer. Now in her sophomore year at the University of Georgia, Chloe has achieved the former and is hard at work on the latter. It was not an easy path for Chloe to get to where she is; her family has struggled with illness, financial difficulties and even homelessness. These adversities, however, have only increased Chloe's drive. She is determined to not only reach her goals, but also help others who have had similar struggles.”
Reveal our character.

You don’t always have to say “commitment”. But you should always show it.
Breathe life into every word.

Our voice is personal—we write like we talk. Read it out loud to test.
6 Be real. Clever is overrated.
The best writing doesn't call much attention to itself. Speak to people.
Avoid jargon and hyperbole.
Even if it’s what everybody says. *Especially* if it’s what everybody says.
Avoid Jargon:
“The utilization of the material learned in the training was bolstered by the local capacity building and gender sensitive expertise of local experts; the synergies brought together by different sectors, the information about the local context leveraged by the leaders, and the cross-cutting themes adopted by the facilitators made for a successful workshop for the beneficiaries that will facilitate knowledge sharing and bottom up development.”
Cut out excess. Say only what you need to say. Get to the point without using unnecessary words.
Cut out excess:
An exceptionally unique example:
Show the impact of our work.

Every story should reveal why we do the things we do.
10 Make an emotional connection.
Decide how you want your audience to feel, and write accordingly.
Draft a plot.

Rather than state the benefit, dramatize it. Show our brand promise at work.
Draft a plot:
It's Tuesday at 11 a.m., and a rapt classroom of students is gazing up at huge pictures of rashes and macroscopic photos of the insects that caused them.

It's gross, it's squirm-inducing and it's absolutely engrossing. It's just another day in "Medical Entomology," a course co-taught by UGA entomology professor Darold Batzer.

Batzer has been teaching students about the incredibly small, but powerful, world of insects since joining UGA's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences entomology department 20 years ago.
Be consistently inconsistent.

These aren’t rules and they shouldn’t be. Choose the language that best communicates our message, and the voice will follow.
PART THREE: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER
Answer these questions before you write anything, and you’ll be most of the way there.
What are we talking about here?

• How does this story show how we’re improving the world?
• How does this story represent our relentless commitment?
• How does this story illustrate the ways we inspire those who will lead, discover, and serve?
• How are we doing this in a way that’s different from other institutions?
• How does this embody and celebrate the spirit of who we are at UGA?
2 Who are we talking to here?

- List all possible audiences for your story.
- Prioritize them by narrowing your focus to the most important audience.
- Determine what they care about.
- Use your understanding of them to influence the casualness or formality of our voice.
What larger truth is this story revealing about the University of Georgia?

• If you think of the specifics of your story as proof points, what point are they proving?
• Find ways to connect the details with the larger benefits and attributes of the institution.
• Choose just one big message and go with it.
Thank you.

Questions?