Voices Carry
THE RISE AND AMPLIFICATION OF STUDENT ACTIVISM

Presented by:
Joel Curran, Vice Chancellor for Communications
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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Some History...
Our Future…
2018: Carolina Annual Comms Pillars

- **8.20.2018**
  - Week of Welcome

- **10.12**
  - University Day

- **12.16**
  - Winter Commencement

- **5.12**
  - Spring Commencement
2018: Reality

- **8.20.2018** 
  Week of Welcome

- **9.13** 
  Hurricane Florence

- **10.11** 
  Hurricane Michael

- **10.12** 
  University Day

- **11.5** 
  OWASA Water Emergency

- **12.9** 
  Winter Storm Diego

- **12.16** 
  Winter Commencement

- **5.12** 
  Spring Commencement
Our Conversation Today

• UNC’s Operating Reality
• Evolved Activism
• Typical Campaign Approach
• Typical Activists
• Takeaways from Corporate Activism
• Getting Prepared: Your Response
• Next Steps & Discussion
Definitions

**Carolina Community**
Invested stakeholder community—this includes the current student body, faculty & staff, the board of governors, donors, alumni, and family members of invested parties.

**Engaged Student**
Engaged students working to bring awareness to social, cultural, political, environmental or justice-oriented cause. Engaged students act as activists on campus, engaging through petitions, clubs, protests, social media, traditional media engagement and more.

**Activist**
External partners in activism—often come through as NGO and non-profits partners or political organizations looking to rally and leverage student enthusiasm and visibility.
UNC Stakeholder Landscape

The current and prospective student body are more than a community -- incoming students, alumni, donors, and the student body are the university's largest spokespeople and customer base:
Evolved Activism
Evolved Activism

Trust & Transparency
How Trust in NGOs, Government and Institutions has changed the type of activism seen on university campuses and in corporate settings.

Expectation
The student expectation – what students expect from the institutions they invest in and tie themselves to.

Action Driven
Activism’s return to direct action/protest vs. clicktivism (slacktivism)

Regulation
In lieu of policy changes and a lack of government action, activists are becoming de facto regulators and these movements are now emphasizing private regulation worldwide.
How Do Activist Approach Issues?

Campaign Style 1
Single Issue, No NGO

Campaign Style 2
Alliance Campaign - One Issue, Many NGOs

Campaign Style 3
Leaderless – many NGOs, Interconnected issues

Campaign Style 4
Alliance Campaign - One Issue, Many NGOs
Activism Highlights Consumer Concerns

71% of millennials are putting their faith in companies to ignite change

76% of people will boycott a company based on values

**SUSTAINABILITY**

92% of consumers said they have a more positive image of a company based on their support for environmental or social issues.

**TREATMENT OF WORKERS**

94% of consumers consider being a good and fair employer one of the most important traits of a company.

**TRANSPARENCY**

Nearly 9 in 10 consumers globally (86%) say they will stop purchasing form brands that lack transparency.

2. Cone Communications: 2017 Cone Communications CSR Study
Typical Campaign Approach
Drumbeat of a Corporate Campaign

GATHERING SUPPORTERS; SPREADING AWARENESS:
• Petitions
• Letter Writing
• Fundraising

IDENTIFYING VILLAINS AND HEROES:
• Targeting corporations
• Vilifying actions
• Fishing for companies willing to engage

MEDIA ATTENTION:
• Stunts, protests, direct action
• Involving influential 3rd parties
• Leveraging the Diamond of Influence

TARGETING REGULATORS & POLICYMAKERS:
• Lobbying politicians
• Looking for influential supporters
• Protesting in order to gain attention

CREATING LASTING CHANGE:
• Establishing a legacy for their organization
• De facto regulators holding corporations accountable
Students Follow a Similar, but Adapted Path

GATHERING SUPPORTERS; SPREADING AWARENESS:
• Rally peer support
• Activate on Social Media
• Gauge administrative stance

IDENTIFYING VILLAINS AND HEROES:
• Identify administrative or academic ally
• Vilifying actions
• Fishing for administration’s

TARGETING ADMINISTRATION AND POLICYMAKERS:
• NGO student recruitment
• Looking for influential supporters
• Protesting in order to gain attention

CREATING LASTING CHANGE:
• Establishing a legacy for their cause
• De facto regulators holding universities accountable

MEDIA ATTENTION
• Stunts, protests, direct action
• Involving influential 3rd parties
• Leveraging student enthusiasm

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

Original research by Edelman
Where We See Activism on Campus

1. Internal campus issue
   - Student activation around an issue directly associated with the university to ignite administrative or cultural change
   - Sexual Assault, civil rights, police brutality, administrative politics, etc.

2. External cause awareness
   - Students activating around an issue that is not directly associated with the university to raise awareness and action
   - Environmental issues, human rights, politically driven causes, etc.

3. Organizationally affiliated
   - Student activation around an issue associated with a specific organization linked to the university (e.g., Hillel, Greek organizations)
   - Political affiliation or ideological presence or corporate influence (e.g., outside speaker, donors, etc.)
Internal Issues that Drive Action

Sexual Assault

The New York Times
‘New Wave of Student Activism Presses Colleges on Sexual Assault’

Civil Rights

The Washington Post
‘Silent Sam’ decision provokes loud response at UNC

Police Brutality

NEWS
Protests erupt after police shoot woman near Yale University

*Representative not exhaustive
External Issues That Drive Action

Immigration

Dreamers protest on Capitol Hill on DACA deadline day

Climate Change

TIME

Students From 1,600 Cities Just Walked Out of School to Protest Climate Change. It Could Be Greta Thunberg’s Biggest Strike Yet

Gun Control

The New York Times

Students Lead Huge Rallies for Gun Control Across the U.S.

*Representative not exhaustive
Organizationally Affiliated Issues that Drive Action

Political Affiliation

Corporate Influence

Religious Association

*Representative not exhaustive

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
Student Activism Brought to Life

Experiential Stunts
Action designed to garner social and media attention to the cause. Whether that be through art, events, verbal or physical altercations – experiential stunts bring attention to student causes, and by association the university.

Ex: Columbia Student’s “Carry that Weight” performative art piece protesting campus sexual assault, in articular the one endured by the artist.

Traditional Activism
Petitions, sit ins, protests – these are traditional activism tactics carried over into the campus to rally support and petition for change.

Ex: Howard students successfully negotiated to have a greater voice in university decisions after a nine-day sit in.

Social Media Rallying
Activating on social media mobilizes not only students within the campus community, but across their networks, capitalizing on their networks and social currency – lending their cause an established following.

Ex: Parkland Students activated across social media, not only garnering media attention and social following, but creating a national movement aligning allies for their cause.
typical activist
The Activist is Evolving

**Citizen activism**
Any issue, any place, anywhere.

**Stronger together**
NGOs are creating powerful alliances in an entirely new way. Agenda over ego.

**The company you keep**
Activists are looking at identifying issues and building alliances within supply chains from source to post-consumers and everything in between.
## The Anatomy of an Engaged Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong sense of community</th>
<th>Answers to a higher power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues are personal</td>
<td>Demands transparency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong desire to create lasting change and leave a legacy</td>
<td>Tunnel vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven by social currency</td>
<td>Smells spin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shift from Clicktivism to direct action</td>
<td>Strong communicator</td>
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</table>
Millennials  
born 1981-1996

- They are digital natives.
- They use social media to (re)connect with friends and share life updates.
- They “don’t see color.”
- They are the “I” generation.
- They want a seat at the table.

Generation z  
born late 90s/early 2000s

- They are social media natives.
- Use social media to create communities, perform, and explore identities.
- They are “beautiful because of our many colors.”
- They are the “we” generation, that’s why their nickname is “the plurals.”
Traditionally in the corporate sector, we see a similar strategy through influencer engagement being utilized across media, brand and NGO partnerships to garner media attention.

With students not only being a young and sought-after market, they’re enthusiastic, empowered and eager to engage with organizations who are looking to do good in the world or give them opportunities to bring a unique element to their resumes in an increasingly competitive market.
External Tactics

NGO Training Camps & Internships
Engaging with enthusiastic students through internships and training programs, NGOs and political organizations identify and educate young people about their cause and empower them to champion their peers back home.

University Representative
Regardless of the work done on campus, when engaged students leave - they still act as representatives of the school, and the university is therefore often brought up in association to their causes.
takeaways from corporate activism
# Key Takeaways & Considerations

## Best Practices of Corporate NGO Engagement

1. Don’t panic
2. Be realistic about what a win looks like
3. Maintain united front across all working groups & markets
4. Always address the issue at hand
5. Don’t make promises you can’t keep or back up
6. Establish systems
7. Set clear goals for meetings and interactions

## What Won’t Work With Engaged Students

1. Villainizing & alienating students
2. Not inviting students to be partners
3. Having an unclear message across faculty & staff
4. Gaslighting or attempting to distract
5. Communicating to families & media before students
6. Funneling them to ineffective routes
7. Ignoring areas for potential student concern
Engaging with Activists

Guiding Rules of Activism Engagement

Activists seek change: Activists use various publicity tactics to solicit change, whether that be consumer behavior or corporate practice. Constructive dialogue can be difficult to achieve.

Activists will bait a response: In addition to visible demonstrations, activists will target stakeholders they expect to create a response, in an effort to draw attention to get a reaction and generate attention to their cause.

Words may not solve the issue: A well-written response supported by facts will likely not deter activism. Their ultimate goal is the change they argue for, and a written response may only intensify their action. Consider the best way to engage, and if engagement will even be beneficial.

Thinking Like an Activist

While not all activists operate from the same playbook, many activist organizations and those that lead them have certain things in common, including:

- **Community:** Activists operate with a strong sense of community and can activate that community quickly; finding intersectional allies is especially common on campuses.

- **Change vs. Profits:** Above all, activists share a strong desire to create lasting change, and while they do need to fundraise, they are not often motivated by profits.

- **Smart and Aware:** Activist organizations today are socially aware and often know their issue; they usually seek radical transparency and can easily identify language that is overly “corporate.”
TRACKING, PLANNING FOR AND RESPONDING TO ACTIVISTS

Getting Prepared
Assess
Before mitigating risk associated with activism, it's important to understand the landscape, who the key players are and what their motivations are.

Prepare
Once the landscape is understood, begin planning for engagement and risk management.

Monitor
Anticipate and mitigate incoming attacks by activists and their allies by closely monitoring activity and issues.

Manage
Activist campaigns need to be consistently managed while they are ongoing.
## Activist Tracking and Monitoring

### 1. Assess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Traditional And Social Media Audit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Activism Mapping And Risk Assessment</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strategic Research</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Determine who the most vocal and active groups are</td>
<td>- Map out activist activity targeting UNC</td>
<td>- Identify possible connections to other detractors or competitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identify social media pages, groups and accounts where conversation is taking place</td>
<td>- Map activism risks according to likelihood and potential impact</td>
<td>- Research funding sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gauge level of risk, compare to other relevant cases</td>
<td>- Identify internal vulnerabilities and gaps in planning and resources</td>
<td>- Research political connections</td>
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### Activist Tracking and Monitoring

- Map out activist activity targeting UNC
- Map activism risks according to likelihood and potential impact
- Identify internal vulnerabilities and gaps in planning and resources
- Identify possible connections to other detractors or competitors
- Research funding sources
- Research political connections
- Identify vulnerabilities and help inform communications

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*Original research by Edelman*
Activist Tracking and Monitoring

2 Prepare

Once the landscape is understood, begin planning for engagement and risk management through scenario planning, and the development of an Activism Engagement and Response Plan.

Activism Escalation and Response Plan
A plan is an essential part of being prepared for any issue or risk that may arise through activism.

Components
• Roles and responsibilities
• Contact information
• Plan of escalation
• Approved messaging
• Background information on groups
• Guidelines for engagement

Best Practices
• Make directions clear and plan actionable
• Coordinate with law enforcement/security
• Get approvals from legal
• Hold trainings to familiarize the plan, and refresh it as needed
Activist Tracking and Monitoring

### Monitor

#### Ongoing Monitoring
- Traditional and social media audit
- Ongoing traditional and social reporting and conversation audits
- Leverage digital tools to identify hot spots and conversational trends

#### Reporting & Escalating
- Identify SMEs at locations to serve as local leads for activism
- Establish clear lines of communications between departments as well as campuses
- Determine triggers for escalating to core activism team

#### Activist Tracker
- Create an activist tracker outlining key activists as well as actions
- Manage tracker on an ongoing basis, reviewing periodically to identify trends and help mitigate risks

#### Timeline Planning
- Build out a timeline to identify potential hotspots in the future
- Circulate timeline to relevant parties to ensure coordination and preparedness
- Use timeline to help inform forecasting and planning
Activist Tracking and Monitoring

4 Manage

Leverage Existing Engagement And Escalation Plans

Establishment Of “Task Force” To Monitor And React To Issues

Revisit Strategy, Refresh Plans And Reassess Risks
### WHEN TO CONSIDER CHANGING STRATEGY

**Evaluating Triggers and Changing Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Students, Faculty or Other Stakeholder Speaking Out</strong></td>
<td>Significant, widespread and vocal groups speaking out regularly and/or forcefully against the University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk of Litigation</strong></td>
<td>The University comes under threat of a class action or similar legal threat as it relates to an activist group’s campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mainstream media attention</strong></td>
<td>Significant, proliferate, top-tier media coverage of the University in the context of the relevant issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment Issues</strong></td>
<td>Enrollment suffers as a direct result of the relevant issue and/or campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board/DoE Inquiry</strong></td>
<td>Inquiries, investigations or other actions from the Board of Regents or Department of Education that come as a result of the relevant issue or at the request of activism groups or campaigns.</td>
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Different Levels of Triggers

When a momentum shift is indicated, leverage internal tools and plans to assign a level of risk to the trigger, and how to respond accordingly (reactive, reactive plus, proactive).

Factors to consider include:

- Level of media coverage
- Level of conversation/inquiries from internal stakeholders
- Possible safety risks
- Impact on day-to-day operations

### Incident

**Level 2**

Potentially serious reputational impact, but a relatively small stakeholder reach.

### Crisis

**Level 3**

Severe reputational and/or enrollment impact with high-level of stakeholder impact and reach.

### Event

**Level 1**

A small localized issue that does not have much impact on day-to-day business or key stakeholders

### Incident

**Level 2**

May not stall or impact day-to-day operations, but poses a reputational threat with important stakeholders

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**Potential Reputational / Business Impact**

**Stakeholder Reach & Influence**
next steps and discussion
Next Steps

**Activist Audit & Intelligence Gathering**
- Audit known groups and activists to understand broad landscape and motives
- Conduct IDIs with University stakeholders to understand relationships
- Develop a timeline of activist activities (past and future) to identify trends and potential hot spots
- Perform strategic research on select groups to glean vulnerabilities

**Campus Activism Map**
- Map and categorize activism groups to help understand risk areas and opportunities
- Map University relationship holders to identify gaps where relationships can/should be built

**Activism Engagement Plan**
- Identify groups who may benefit from university engagement based on campus map
- Create a plan and strategy for engagement based on the audit and map developed
- Identify where and how third parties may be used to explain or advocate for the University’s position

**Activism Escalation & Response Plan**
- Create an easy-to-follow guide for University leadership and administration to follow when managing campus activism
- Identify trigger points for engagement and/or escalation