

UCCS Advancement & Alumni Relations

Graduate Practicum and Capstone Experience

Supervisor: Abigail Beckman, Content Writer, Philanthropy & Engagement

- Please contact Abigail Beckman (abeckma5@uccs.edu) for more information or to express interest in this opportunity.

Position Overview

This practicum provides a graduate student with hands-on experience in advancement through [communications](#), storytelling, philanthropy education, and constituent engagement within higher education. Working alongside the engagement team, the student will explore how strategic communications can strengthen connections among students, alumni, donors, and the broader UCCS community.

Through content creation, research, interviews, and project development, the student will gain experience translating institutional initiatives into meaningful stories that build engagement and promote a culture of philanthropy and belonging.

Learning Objectives

The student will:

- Explore the role of storytelling in higher education engagement and advancement.
- Develop skills in interviewing, writing, editing, and content planning.
- Learn how communications strategies support student engagement, philanthropy, and alumni connections.
- Gain experience creating content for multiple audiences and platforms.
- Apply student affairs and higher education concepts to real-world communication projects.
- Develop assessment and research skills through a capstone project focused on engagement and communications.

Proposed Responsibilities

- Storytelling and Content Development
- Research, draft, and edit stories featuring students, alumni, donors, faculty, and staff.
- Conduct interviews and develop written content for engagement-focused publications and campaigns.
- Assist with gathering quotes, testimonials, and impact stories that demonstrate the value of philanthropy and alumni engagement.
- Help identify storytelling opportunities that highlight student success, campus initiatives, and donor impact.

Engagement Communications

- Assist with content development for alumni and donor communications.
- Support email, website, and campaign content projects.
- Help ensure messaging aligns with engagement and advancement goals.
- Review existing communications and recommend improvements centered on audience engagement and storytelling.

Digital Content and Audience Engagement

- Assist with website content updates and content audits.
- Research communication trends and best practices in higher education engagement.
- Help develop content calendars or communication plans for engagement initiatives.

Other

- Events may occur in the evening or on the weekends, to be discussed with supervisor

Capstone Project Opportunities

Option 1: Student-to-Alumni Storytelling Strategy

Research how institutions use storytelling to support the transition from student to alumni and create recommendations for UCCS.

Deliverables:

- Literature review and benchmarking of peer institutions
- Analysis of current UCCS student-to-alumni communications
- Recommendations for future content and storytelling initiatives
- Strategic communications guide

Option 2: Donor Impact Storytelling Project

Examine how donor impact stories influence student engagement, gratitude, and understanding of philanthropy.

Deliverables:

- Student interviews or focus groups
- Content analysis of existing donor-impact stories
- Recommendations for future storytelling approaches
- Sample story templates and messaging framework

Option 3: Student Belonging Through Storytelling

Explore how institutional storytelling contributes to students' sense of belonging and connection to campus.

Deliverables:

- Research review
- Student interviews or surveys
- Findings report
- Recommendations for future engagement communications

Option 4: Advancement Communications Audit

Evaluate existing engagement communications and identify opportunities to better connect with students, alumni, and donors.

Deliverables:

- Audit of current communications
- Audience analysis
- Recommendations for messaging improvements
- Sample content plan

Option 5: Student Success Story Framework

Develop a sustainable process for identifying, collecting, and sharing student success stories across Advancement communications.

Deliverables:

- Story collection toolkit
- Interview question bank
- Content workflow recommendations
- Final presentation and implementation guide
- Benefits to UCCS
- Completed series of articles in Q&A format featuring UCCS faculty and staff who are also alums written by graduate student using toolkit, question bank, and workflow recommendations listed above

The graduate student will contribute meaningful content and communications projects while gaining practical experience in Advancement storytelling and engagement. Their capstone work will provide research-based recommendations and resources that strengthen UCCS's ability to

connect students, alumni, donors, and community members through authentic and impactful stories.