

Forging ahead  
in the spirit of  
progress.

# The University of Pittsburgh is a name you know.

This top-ranked public institution, with deep ties in Pennsylvania, is renowned as one of the most innovative universities in the world. Award-winning research facilities. Perennial success as one of the nation's top producers of Fulbright scholars. An inherent spirit of reinvention and a persistent drive to always be greater. Pitt is a major player that garners respect and recognition in all it does.

However, despite fairly high *awareness* of the university, there wasn't a deep *understanding* of what Pitt stood for or its tremendous accomplishments – at least, not outside of its home city. So Pitt was seeking to use a recently refreshed identity and institutional brand to move into the upper echelon of nationally ranked universities.

Further goals included bolstering its already impressive enrollment numbers, and cementing the reputation of its people as elite innovators, game-changers, and trailblazers – in Pennsylvania, and beyond.

## A reinvention begins.

In 2019, Pitt was ready to roll out a new, powerhouse institutional brand. That was abruptly put on hold as the nation dealt with COVID-19. So in 2022, Ologie and Pitt picked up where we'd left off: translating the new brand into an engaging campaign that would serve as both an introduction and a comeback.

Pitt sought to increase its brand awareness and visibility and to boost its reputation as a leader in innovation and a driver of change: two pillars the institution was built on. As a university, Pitt believes that progress never comes from standing still – and that reinvention is the key to success.



## The road to forge ahead.

Pitt's new brand positioned the university as a place to seek answers and pose new questions. To never stop moving forward and never stop reinventing. To be at the forefront of innovation. To pursue change relentlessly, for the good of all.

From these ideals, the Forge Ahead platform was born.



## Since 1787, we've never stopped pushing the edge of what's possible.

We were forged in the spirit of progress and the thrill of the unknown.

And over 200 years later, we're still driven by the search. By the rush that comes from connecting dots and seeing ideas converge. Then finding more dots. And seeking newer ideas.

We thrive in forging new paths to mold better futures, embracing each setback as fuel for something greater. Because at our core, we're focused on human impact and the relentless pursuit of change, for good.

That's why the goal of our work has always been to keep working. To answer the questions, to question the answers, and to never, ever, stop reinventing.

Here, progress is always in progress.

This is the University of Pittsburgh.

# Forge Ahead.

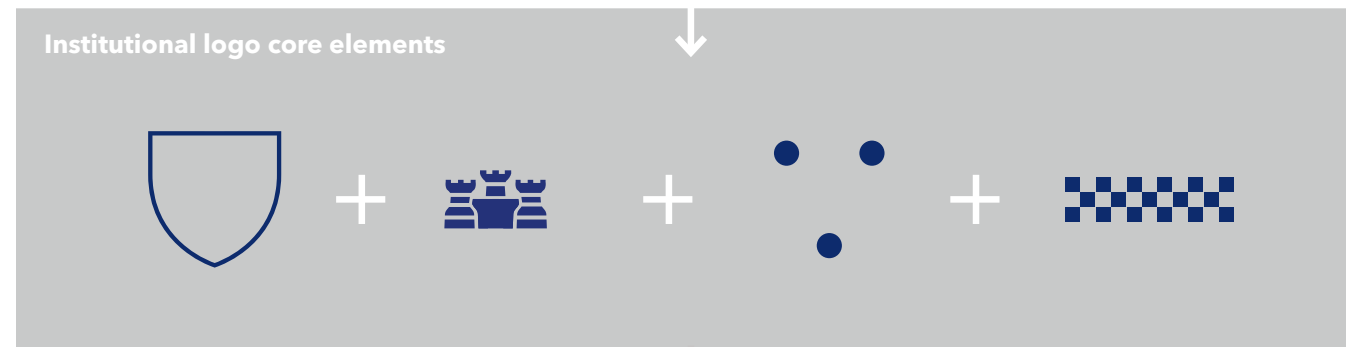


CREATIVE PLATFORM

Modernizing a traditional identity.

The university's visual identity – which hadn't changed for decades – presented several challenges: It was mostly incompatible with digital media. The color palette did not reflect the innovation or leadership of the new brand. And since it relied on a traditional collegiate seal, it lacked any significant power in differentiating the institution.

Our task was to address each of these issues while honoring elements from the past.

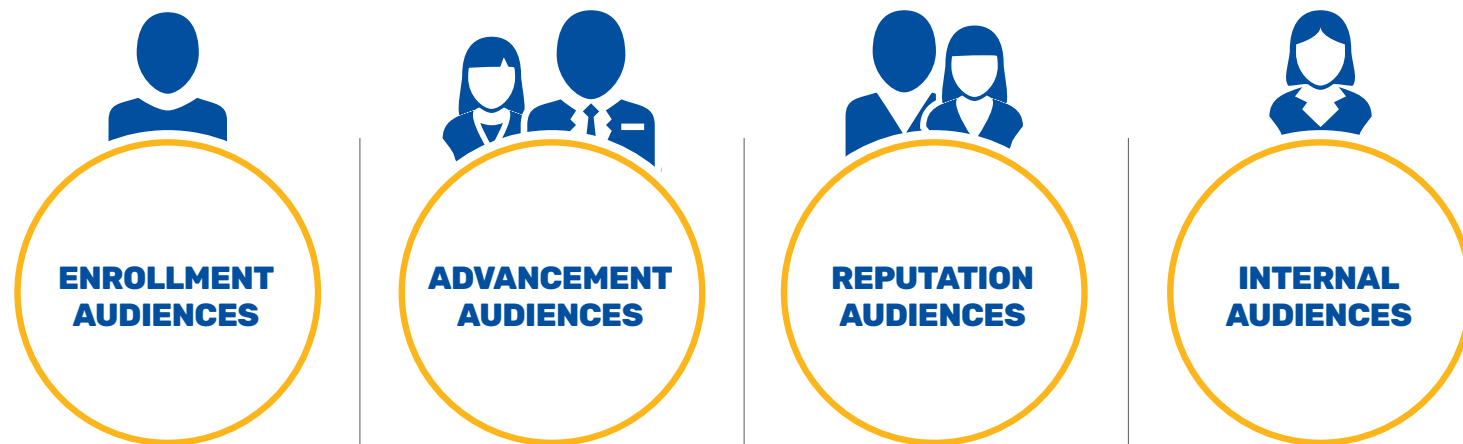




## Reaching the right audiences.

Riding the wave of an internal brand launch, and with a fresh arsenal of hard-hitting creative poised and ready to tell the Pitt story, Ologie’s team began work on a multichannel, multimedia reputation campaign.

Pitt held the perspective that progress never comes from standing still – and reinvention is the key to perpetually innovating and upgrading. To achieve the university’s goals, we began the media plan with a deep dive into audiences, aiming to find the right customization to boost their well-earned but undervalued reputation as leaders in innovation and drivers of change.



In considering the campaign’s different audiences and the experiences we wanted them to have, we began by asking five core questions:

- 1** Who are they?
- 2** What do we need them to do?
- 3** How can we reach them?
- 4** Where can we place media to reach them?
- 5** How will we apply messaging?

This led us to split the audiences into two groups, based on their intent – either explorative or tactical.

Next, we created content and experiences to support those intentions.

Finally, we further customized the campaign by focusing on specific messages for each audience segment.

### GROUP 1: EXPLORATIVE

#### Asking audiences to learn

- Alumni
- Donors
- Constituents (Pennsylvanians)
- Current Pitt students

We wanted this group to seek out information – reading about Pitt, watching content, or signing up to visit campus. To reach them, we used database lists for current Pitt audiences, geo-locations based on a shared map, demographic data, and affinity categories from current website traffic.

We sought to inspire and rally these audiences, priming them for more pointed messages later in the campaign or later in Pitt’s marketing efforts.

### GROUP 2: TACTICAL

#### Asking audiences to take action

- Alumni
- Donors
- Prospective undergraduate students
- Graduate students

We wanted this group to engage with Pitt. This also included motivating alumni and donors to attend events and make donations, sign up for newsletters and updates, and request materials from the university itself.

To reach them, we used databases of current Pitt juniors and other students who had already expressed interest, user trends from website traffic, and pinpointed geographic locations based on current students as well as alumni.

### CAMPAIGN MESSAGING FOR EACH AUDIENCE SEGMENT

Prospective students and influencers	Alumni and donors	Constituents
Forging progress via groundbreaking discovery. Excellence within reach.	Building on historic strengths to fuel progress. Our comprehensive power is leading enduring change.	An engine of progress and excellence for Pennsylvania. Pitt ignites forward momentum for all Pennsylvanians.



## A bird's-eye view of a sprawling media initiative.

During the discovery process, we looked at qualitative and quantitative data about the brand and the audiences Pitt wanted to reach during the campaign's first phase.

We explored regional markets, possible placements, and estimated reach in specific areas where we knew Pitt needed to gain new traction and build its reputation across audiences – including prospective students, alumni, donors, Pennsylvanians at large, and the current Pitt community (students, staff, and faculty).

**When evaluating placement opportunities, we explored topics that included:**

- Geographic and demographic data of current Pitt audiences, alumni, and donors
- First-party data lists to reach direct audiences one to one, with new messaging at a high frequency
- Competitor media placements across key regions and major thoroughfares in key cities
- Areas with high usage of public transit
- TV and streaming channels with relevant viewership
- Social media platform usage across key audience groups



Our campaign strategy was developed into a full-fledged multimedia, multiple-market approach that placed the campaign's message (which spanned over 300+ individual assets) front and center in the places that were most important to the university's continued growth.



**DIGITAL CAMPAIGN**

The campaign was launched with a range of compelling digital and out-of-home assets, released in several waves across five Northeastern cities. It featured a suite of digital ads, digital urban panels and transit shelters, streaming video and

broadcast placements, and public radio – plus a full three-level takeover of 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. The campaign’s creative platform centered on the idea of “We will always forge ahead.” This concept exemplified

the innovation, leadership, and quest for discovery that Pitt’s students, alumni, and community have. With its strong focus on reinvention, the platform gave Pitt something new to say that would pique the world’s attention.

**CABLE/CONNECTED TV AND STREAMING VIDEO**

A&E, AMC, CBS, DirecTV, Discovery Networks, Fubo, NBC (Peacock), Samsung TV, Pluto TV, Tubi, Viacom Networks (Paramount, Paramount+, Comedy Central)

1.2x  
AVERAGE  
FREQUENCY

71%  
AVERAGE VIDEO  
COMPLETION RATE

Higher than industry benchmark of 50%

184,200  
ESTIMATED  
HOUSEHOLDS  
REACHED

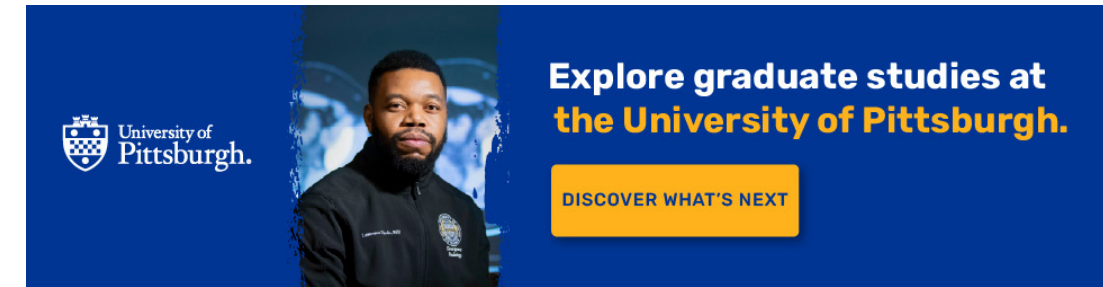
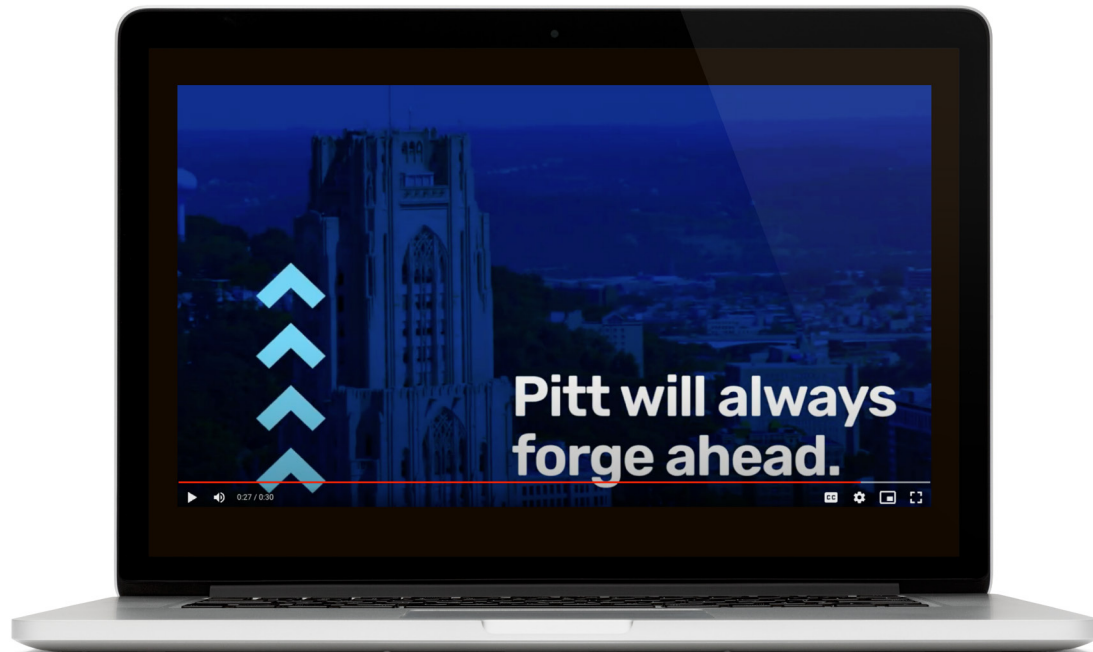
**PAID SOCIAL**

Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram

0.79%  
AVERAGE CLICK-  
THROUGH RATE

14,061  
CLICKS

1.9 million  
IMPRESSIONS



**PROGRAMMATIC DISPLAY**

0.17%  
AVERAGE CLICK-  
THROUGH RATE  
More than double the programmatic display benchmark

3,642  
CLICKS

2.2 million  
IMPRESSIONS





University of  
Pittsburgh

Reinventing  
progress.

# Reintroducing Pitt.





OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS

## Train Station Domination



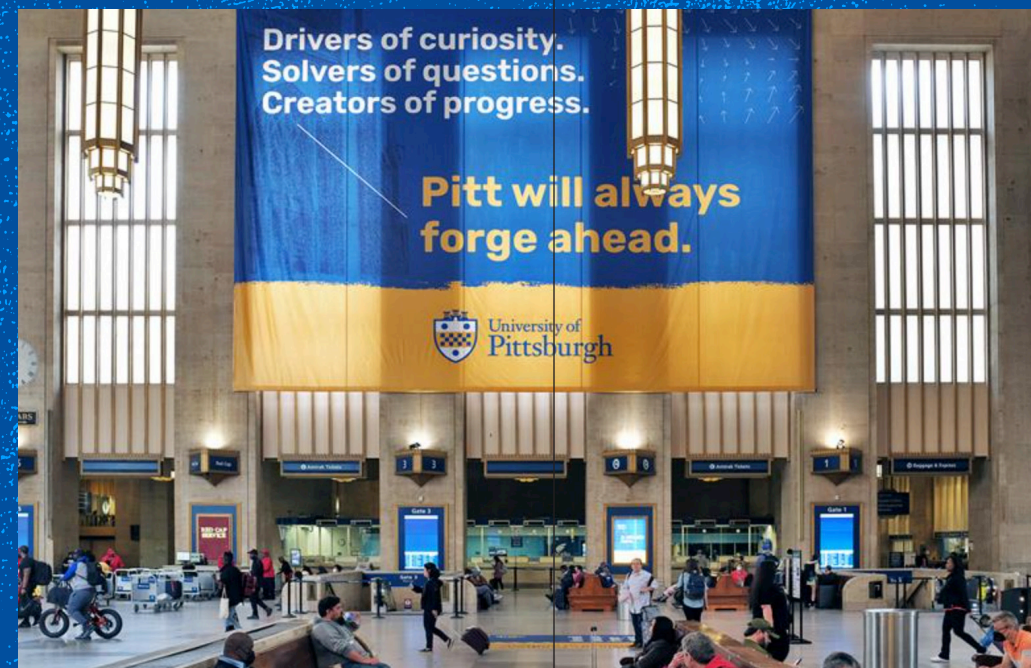
149 TOTAL ASSETS

Over 50 million IMPRESSIONS



30TH STREET STATION, PHILADELPHIA

- Entirety of 30th Street Train Station – Amtrak, SEPTA, and main levels
- Major international transit station – metro Philly's main railroad station and a major stop on Amtrak's Northeast and Keystone corridors





OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS

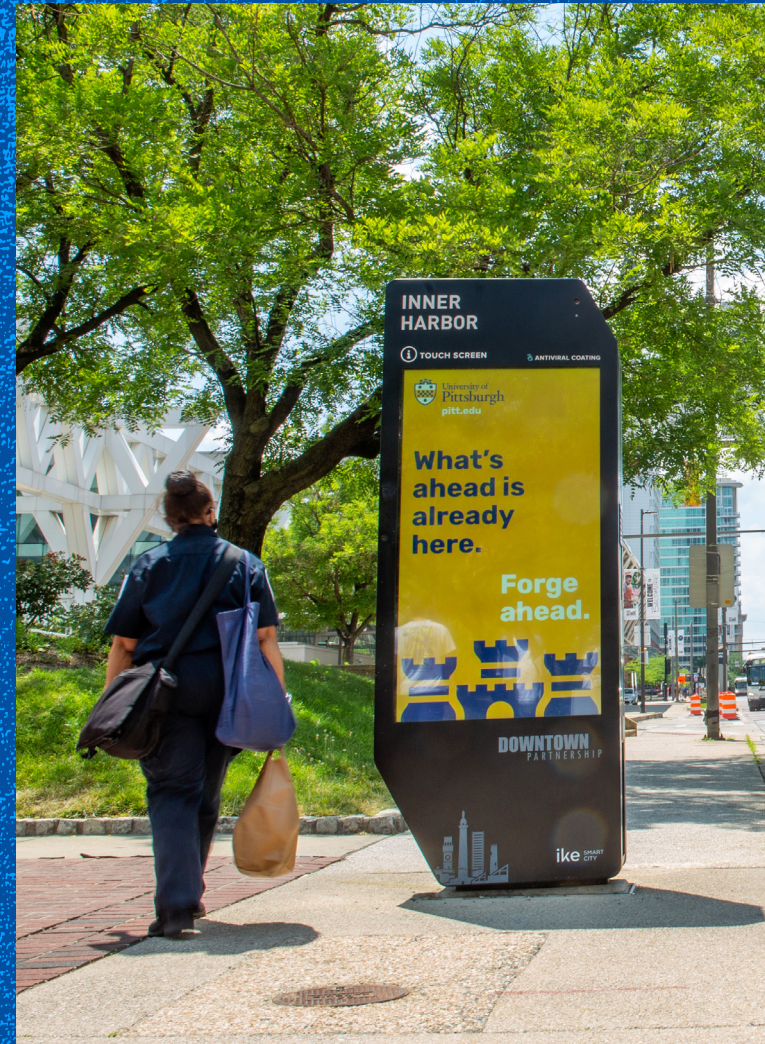
Billboards and Kiosks



PHILADELPHIA

7 million ESTIMATED IMPRESSIONS

- Digital kiosks
- Digital billboards
- Static billboards
- Bus Wraps



NORTHEAST CORRIDOR: NYC, DC, BALTIMORE, AND WILMINGTON

Over 11 million ESTIMATED IMPRESSIONS

Placements in:

- Penn Station (NYC and Baltimore)
- Union Station (DC)





# The Outcome

71 million  
TOTAL  
IMPRESSIONS

300+  
ASSETS  
CREATED

5  
URBAN  
MARKETS

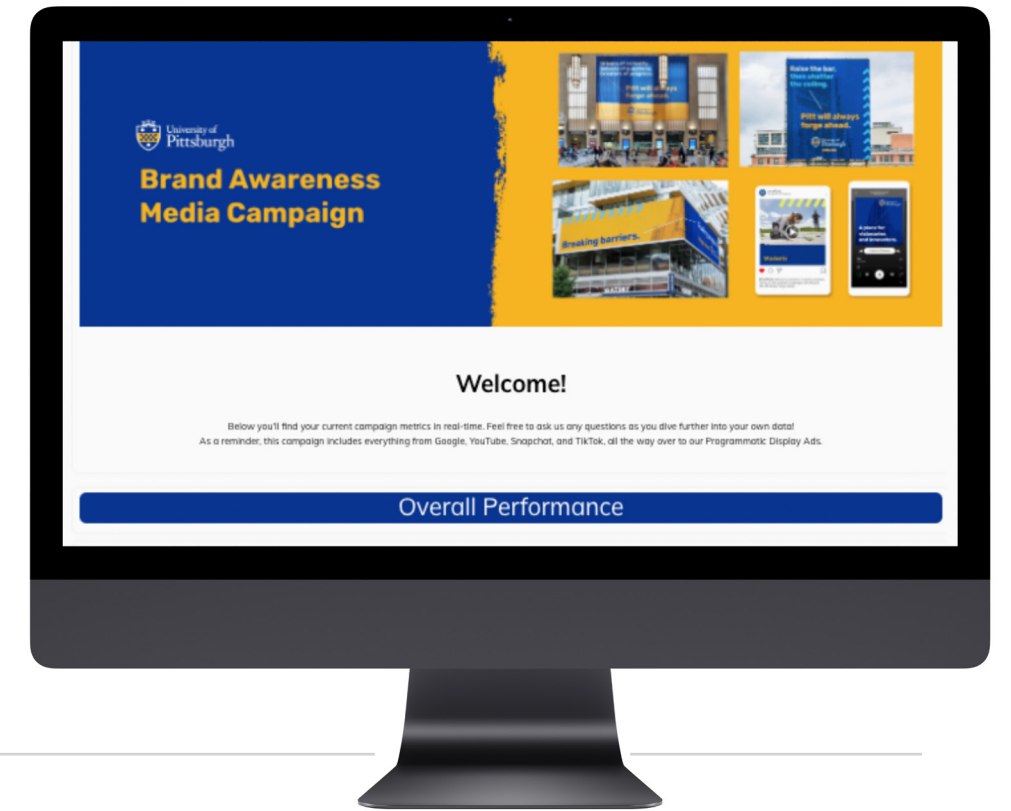
The campaign measurably raised awareness of Pitt: not only in Pennsylvania, but throughout the surrounding region. The university achieved its goal of maintaining a strong regional presence, and being known not just as an in-state innovator, but as a national

destination for those with big talent and bigger ideas. This immersive campaign redefined what it meant to forge ahead, and reintroduced Pitt as the home of preeminent thinkers and doers who are already striving for what's next.

At the end of the initial two-month campaign, it had garnered over 71 million estimated impressions across five major urban feeder markets, setting the foundation for subsequent campaign work at an even more granular level.

SOCIALIZED WITH 120 STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS PITT

2 MONTHS TO MARKET



## PHASE 1

In Phase One of the media campaign, Ologie's digital and media studio built a custom metrics dashboard.



## PHASE 2

With this in place during Phase Two, Pitt will have access to digital results in real time, as new and updated assets go live.

Both Ologie and Pitt can track and speak to progress as it happens, and we can use this vital data to guide our collective conversations and make recommendations as we move forward.

The data from Phase One taught us some valuable lessons, even after only two months in the market. For example: We found that the general Pitt market responded well to the reintroduction of Pitt's creative and messaging.

We determined that Twitter wasn't our best channel, and that our efforts and budget would pay off better elsewhere. And we learned that 15 seconds was our sweet spot for video ads across YouTube.



“Data helped us understand where the need was at any given point, so the ability to pull levers and adapt to those needs drove the strategy. That’s the beauty of digital media: we can adapt to the data quickly to be most effective with limited budgets.”



Kate is responsible for the marketing vision, strategic planning, and campaign management that helps build the Pitt brand seamlessly across its communities of focus.

**KATE LEDGER**

Acting Vice Chancellor for  
Communications and Marketing

**Q: During a time when most institutions are laser-focused on enrollment campaigns, you’ve invested in a reputation campaign. Why now, and why not just enrollment?**

**KL:** A university’s brand strength is foundational to its revenue and reputational success. Enrollment is a critical piece, and requires the support of a broader brand campaign across undergraduate and graduate recruitment, but our work also influences philanthropy, rankings, and even research outcomes. Those of us serving higher education institutions are bombarded with the threats of competition and the general public’s questioning of higher education. The time is now to remind people of who we are, what we do, and why it matters. The University of Pittsburgh brand platform (brand.pitt.edu) defines these attributes, and this year’s campaign reinforces the significance and impact of our people, programs, and purpose.

**Q: One of the goals of the campaign was executing a phased media approach, using data from the first phase to make adjustments for the second. How did you prioritize your audiences, markets, and channels? And how did data help reinforce and redirect those decisions?**

**KL:** Our audience prioritization was based on our needs during the campaign. We were balancing messaging for prospective undergraduates, prospective graduate students, and constituents during budget discussions in the Pennsylvania legislature (Pitt is a state-related university, which indicates a unique budget structure among public universities). Understanding the distinct differences in our audiences helped to define the channels that would be most effective.

Data helped us understand where the need was at any given point, so the ability to pull levers and adapt to those needs drove the strategy. That’s the beauty of digital media: we can adapt to the data quickly to be most effective with limited budgets.

**Q: The campaign draws on the “Forge Ahead” brand platform that was launched in 2019, along with a new visual identity and brand alignment across the university. Why was it important to align with that messaging for this campaign?**

**KL:** Our master brand platform is rooted in truth. It’s based on data-driven input from thousands of Pitt voices. While we intended to go to market shortly after we launched the platform in 2019, COVID-19, among other things, delayed the launch. But the brand platform still rang true, perhaps even more so as I watched our “Forge Ahead” spirit come through during the pandemic.

I also believe that audiences know when brands are inauthentic. They start to doubt or question what the brand stands for. Aligning with the brand for this campaign reinforced audience perceptions of our brand, so that when the advertising popped up or someone drove by the digital outdoor signage, our campaign solidified their idea of who we are in the world.

**Q: Providing the value of a reputation campaign has never been more important. How are you measuring success for this campaign, and what results are you seeing?**

**KM:** Measuring the value of marketing in higher education is tricky. There are many conversations in this space, and organizations like the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) are trying to help institutions define marketing measurements.

In the “Plan for Pitt” strategic planning framework, there is a dashboard of data that leaders watch internally. We used those markers to help determine success. We relied on a combination of metrics: traditional university measures of enrollment and philanthropy, as well as digital measures of web traffic and social media engagement, among other data points.

In the last academic year, our undergraduate applications skyrocketed, and graduate enrollment increased for the first time in several years. Neither of these successes are solely based on our brand work, but our leaders in these areas do believe that the brand campaign contributed and the campaign needs to continue.

Anecdotally, though, it feels great when we hear from alumni who see the campaign and are excited to share it on social. I never thought people would be so pumped to see the University of Pittsburgh during their morning commute.

**Q: What advice do you have for other institutions and CMOs who are considering a campaign like this one?**

**KM:** There are key leaders at my institution who understand the value of a brand campaign. Our vice provost for enrollment and our senior vice chancellor for university relations routinely champion the importance of this work, why it matters, and the power of “the rising tide that lifts all ships,” so to speak. My advice is to do the research and build the relationships so that your colleagues, students, faculty, staff, and alumni buy into the brand platform. Once university affiliates believe, pushing that belief externally ignites a spark that has the power to positively spread.

Although it takes time, the brand work is the most worthwhile work I believe marketers can do, because of the value it brings to the institution.





# Building brands. With purpose.

Ologie is a marketing and branding agency focused on higher education. We are dedicated to helping colleges, universities, and other education-based organizations build their reputations, recruit new students, and gain philanthropic support. We do this with a results-oriented mindset, a digital-first approach, highly targeted marketing strategies, and emotional storytelling that moves people to take action.

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