



# University of Toronto Communications Annual Report to Business Board

November 27, 2024



Presented by:

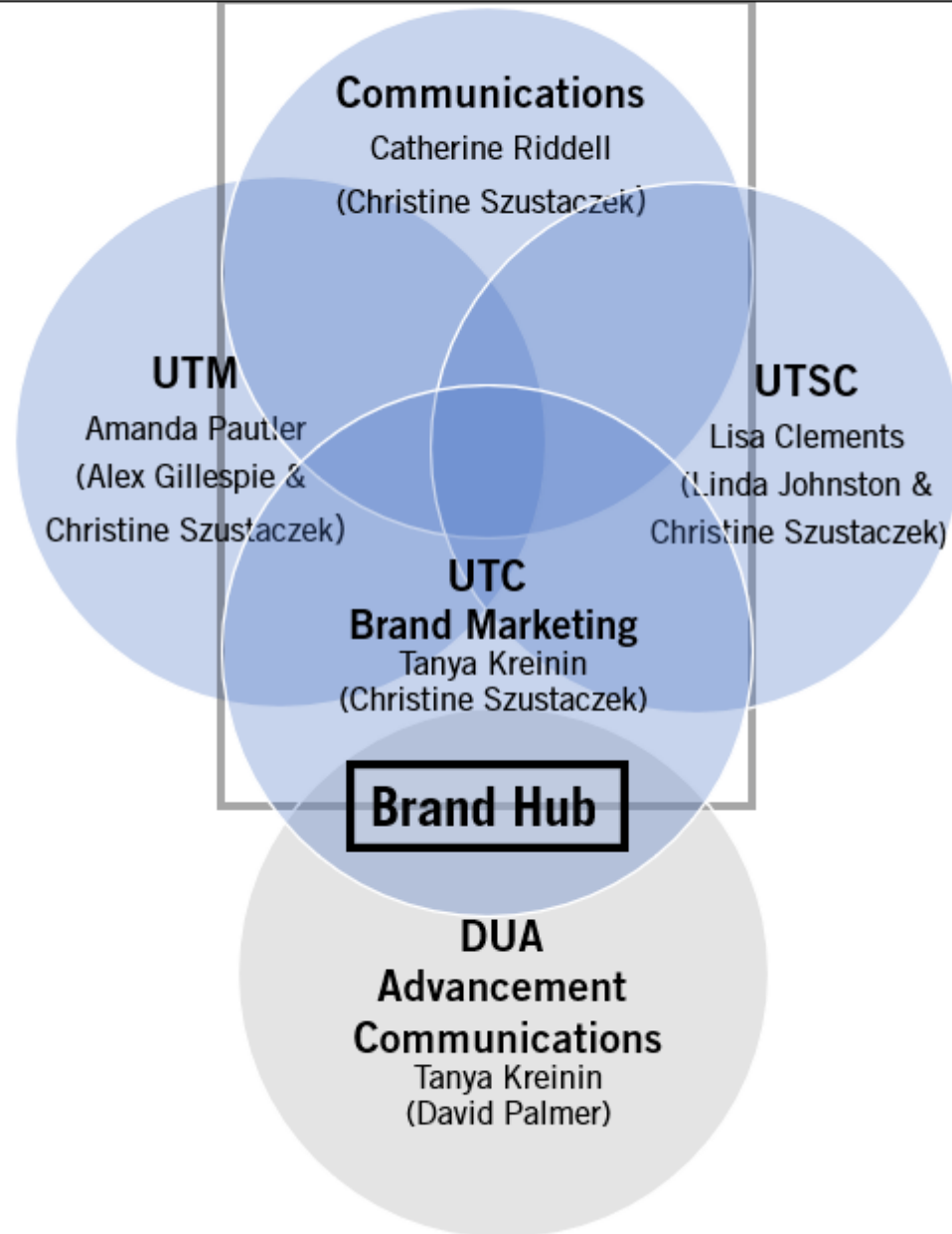
**Christine Szustaczek**  
Vice-President, Communications



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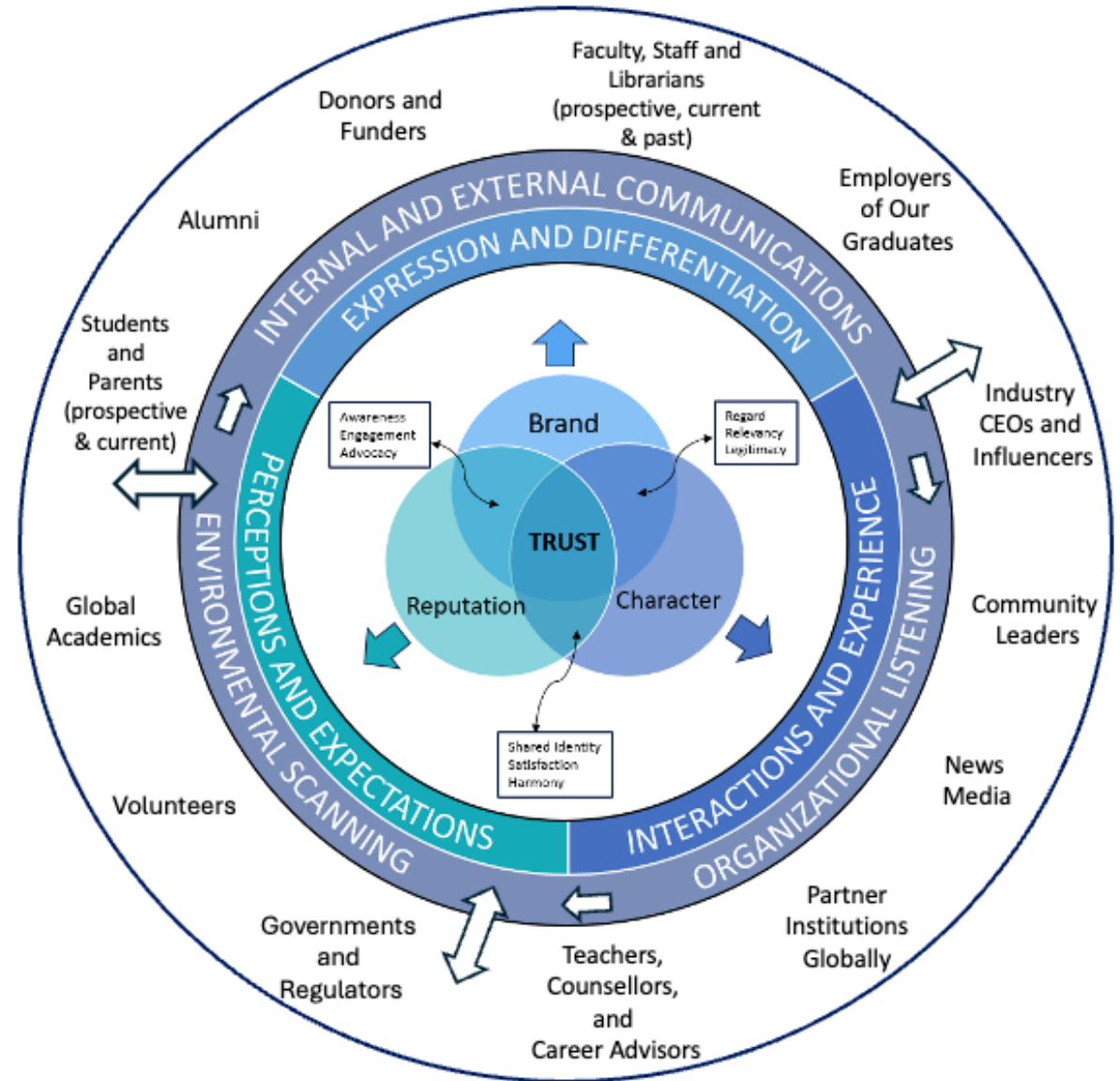
## Who we are

### University of Toronto Communications - UTC



# UTC's Five-Year Vision:

- UTC creates and evolves U of T's brand and promotes it to the world.
- We strengthen and protect the University's enviable reputation as one of the world's top-ranked public research institutions.
- Our work to communicate our vision, mission, values and purpose (character) deepens relationships with stakeholders which leads to increased affinity, loyalty, and supportive behaviours
- By increasing U of T's visibility and renown we give the University a competitive advantage and an invaluable reservoir of goodwill and support



# What we do

## Foundational elements

- Brand
- Reputation
- Character
- Organizational listening
- Environmental scanning
- Research, measurement and evaluation
- Advising, consulting, mentoring
- Developing resources, tools, templates

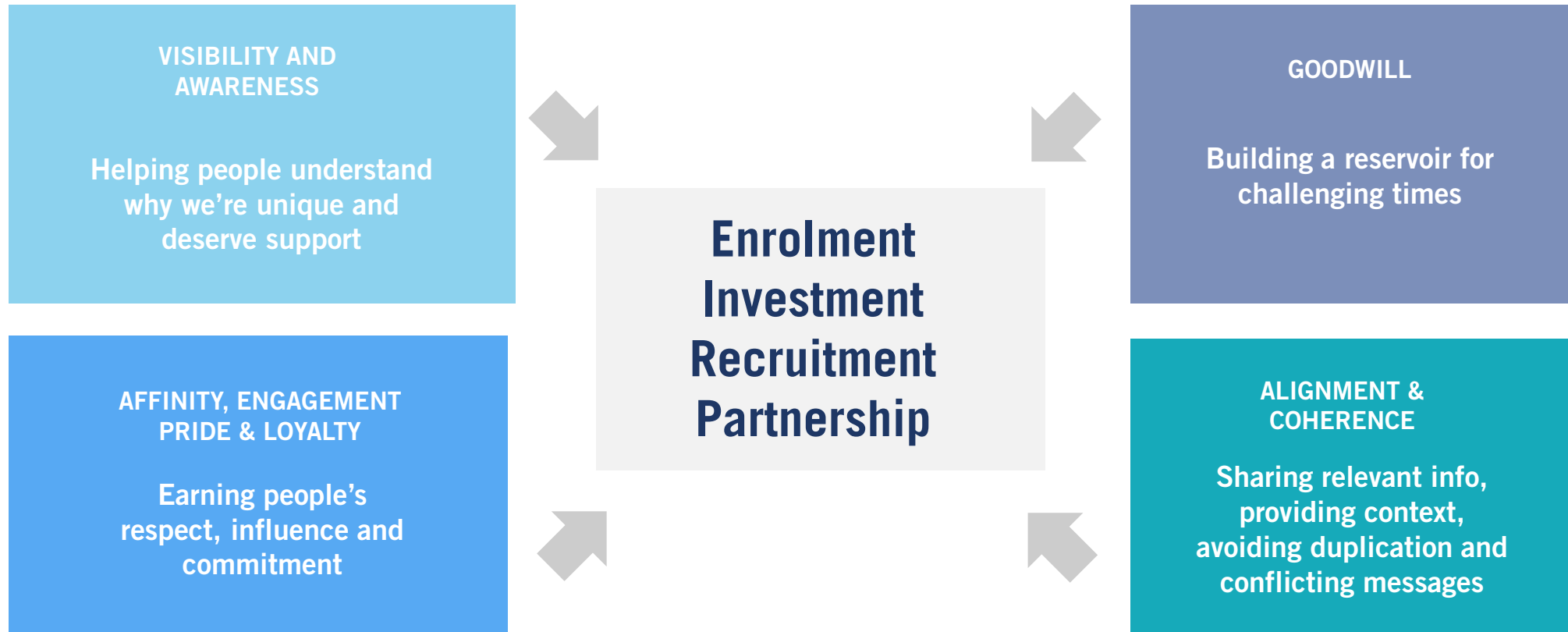
## Strategic, coordinated efforts

- Communications strategy and planning
- Brand strategy, architecture and awareness campaigns
- Internal relations, communication and engagement
- Integrated marketing and communications campaigns
- Issues management and crisis communication
- Marketing campaigns
- Social media management
- utoronto homepage & UTogether

## Technical Expertise

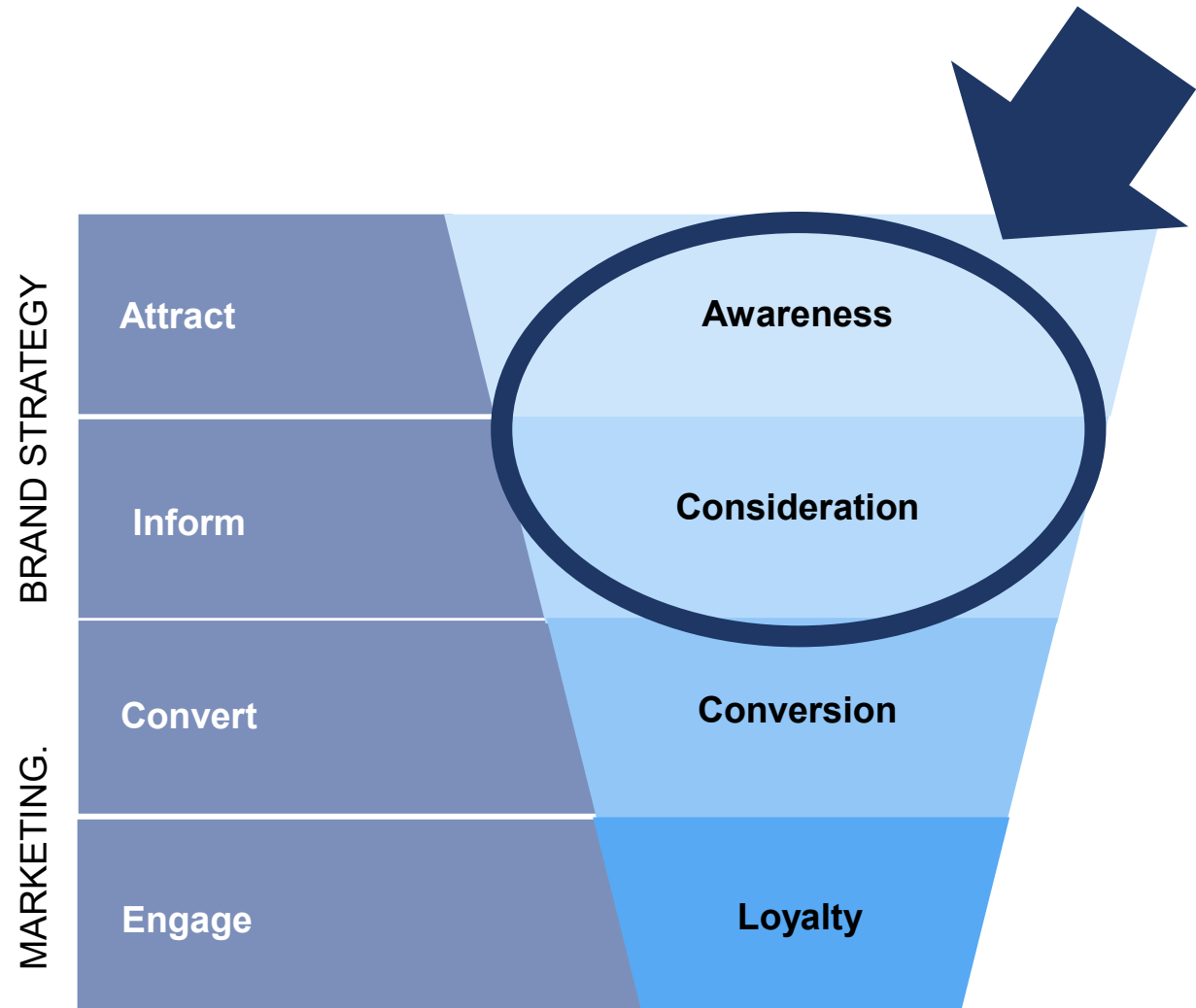
- Publishing U of T Magazine, Bulletin Brief, Top Stories
- Videography, podcasts, photography
- Media relations and U of T Newsroom
- Positioning and messaging frameworks
- Content strategy, development, art direction, graphic design, production
- Web strategy, design and development
- Paid media planning, buying and reporting
- Market research, analysis, insights generation
- Experiential and event marketing

# We fuel brand and reputation to give U of T a competitive advantage



# Why does visibility matter?

- Reputation is a perceptual construct. It lives in people's hearts and minds and is the sum of people's opinions about us.
- We can't have a reputation – good or bad – if we are not visible.
- Visibility leads to awareness and is intrinsically linked to the perception of prominence and prestige
- High visibility gives us the greatest chance to occupy the people's mindshare and keep U of T in people's consideration set.



# Metrics- Definitions

UTC measures all stages of our work, aligning to international best practice in our profession, as defined below:

## **Inputs**

Evidence-based planning and preparation, leveraging the right tools, resources, and expertise to operate a best-in-class communications function, ensuring productivity and efficiency in alignment with a world-class university's standards.

## **Outputs**

The content, experiences, and distribution efforts that deliver our work to target audiences, supporting Divisions across the university with well-crafted communications.

## **Outtakes**

What audiences take away from our communications, including their actions and initial reactions that reflect engagement with our content.

## **Outcomes**

The impact of our communications on audience behaviours and perceptions, measured through prioritized performance metrics for campaigns and key MarCom initiatives.

## **Impact**

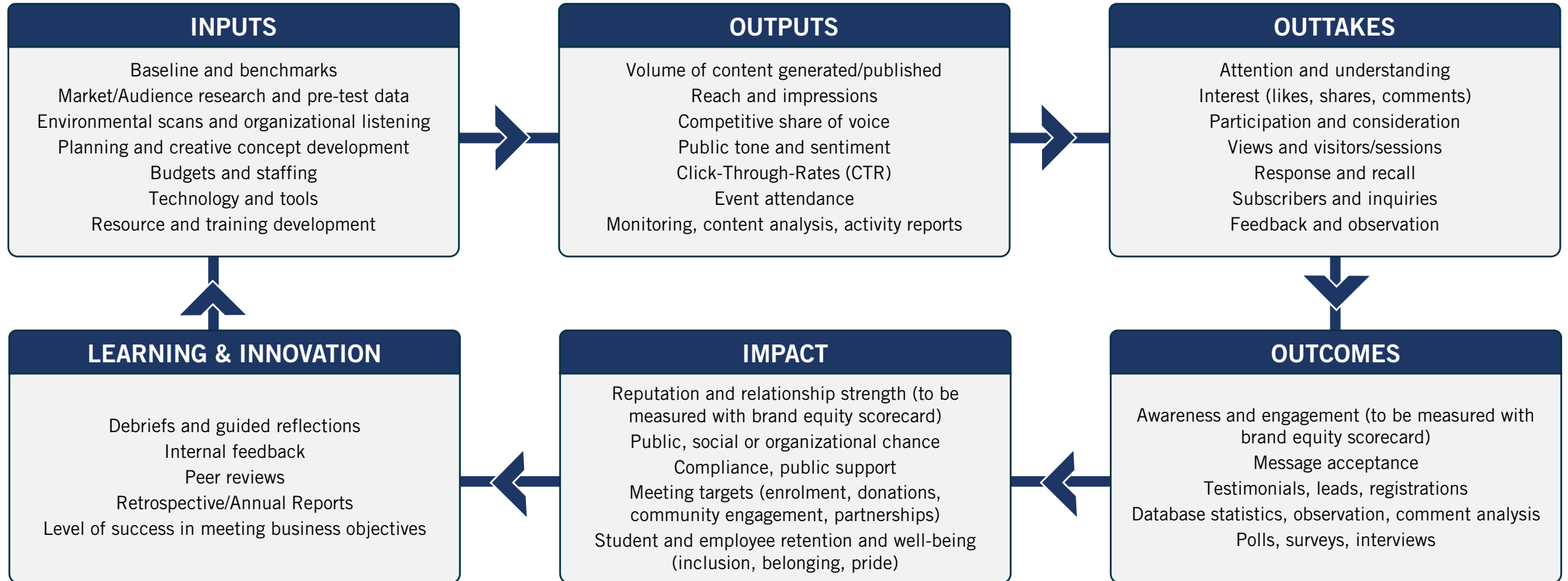
The tangible, long-term results of our efforts, encompassing operational outcomes, risk and reputation management, and brand equity as reflected in awareness, reputation, brand health, loyalty, and engagement scores.

## **Learning & Innovation**

The insights gained through evidence-based evaluation, informing future planning and strategy improvements while enhancing our tools, resources, and operational productivity to maintain a leading communications function.

# Metrics – Evaluation Cycle

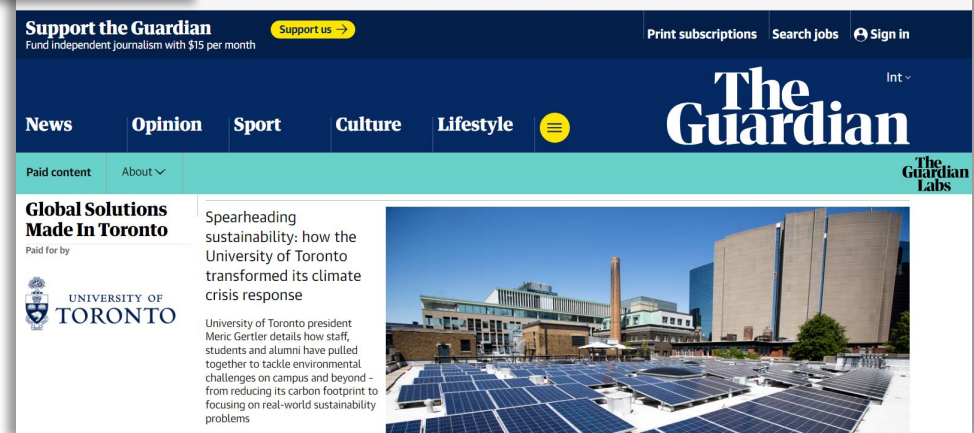
UTC uses a selection of the following metrics, milestones and/or methods of evaluation.





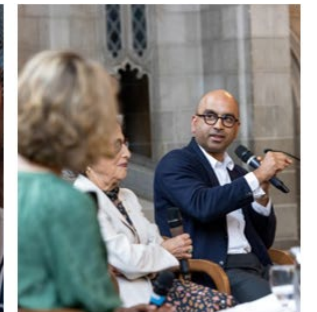
# Brand Promotion and Storytelling

- 425 pieces of content; 3.2M pageviews (60% ↑ YOY)
- 176M targeted global brand impressions; 15%↑ in awareness
- long and short form video
- impactful storytelling
- experiential signage



# Pan-Institutional and Divisional Efforts

- Civil discourse
- Student access and financial support
- Indigenous tuition initiative
- Black excellence
- Harmony Commons
- Welcome signage
- Convocation
- Collision conference



# Reputation Management



A core part of our work this year focused on anticipating and managing issues to protect U of T's hard-earned reputation for inclusive excellence.

We responded to **297 reporter requests**, on topics including international students (56); diversity, discrimination and Israel-Palestine issues (49); and safety and security (31).\*

Our tri-campus team developed more than **50 issues briefs** and numerous communications strategies to support the university's Issues Management Group.

\*NOTE: the reporting period for this report excludes the encampment on King's College Circle, which will be covered in next year's report.

# Best-in-Class Marketing & Communications Operations

## ALIGNING AND STRENGTHENING INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- emergency notification system
- new guidelines for institutional statements
- Internal Communications Table and Student Communications Table
- 15 communications plans to ensure tri-campus coordination on matters of significance for our internal community.



## U of T ranked 1st

among public institutions and 5th among 700 global institutions in the 2024 Global University Visibility Rankings— success fueled by UTC efforts to share U of T's research and teaching expertise, increase news mentions, and generate public interest, our online footprint and social media reach.



Driven by a strategic communications campaign to promote the Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health (SAMIH) and the health sciences program, UTSC achieved a

### 58% rise

in domestic life sciences applications.

Partnering with faculties and divisions, UTC amassed

### 176M+

impressions, a 76% increase from last year, on initiatives elevating global brand awareness of U of T's impact and excellence in research, teaching and innovation.

## A record-breaking 46 awards

this year from global organizations recognizing communications excellence, including IABC's global Not-for-Profit Communications Department of the Year award for the second consecutive year.

A focus on original, amplified and user-generated content resulted in a

### 20.3% growth in institutional social media followers, resulting in

### 1.2M+ total followers

across Instagram, Facebook and X. We remain the university with the largest social media following in Canada.



In coordination with PSEC, UTC updated the university's emergency notification system with a new vendor and rolled out a rigorous communications plan that has led to over

### 220K subscribers

receiving notifications via email, text and/or mobile push notifications.

UTC produced 50+ pieces of content showcasing U of T's trailblazing work in AI, including "The Godfather in Conversation", which remains one of our most popular videos. It was translated into

### 18 languages,

and through resharing and publishing to secondary channels and sites, it has generated

### 4M+

 opportunities for people to view, and facilitated coverage in major international news outlets like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *Bloomberg*.

We launched a comprehensive and updated

## Brand Portal

to share brand guidelines, templates and resources driving consistency across the university attracted over

### 70K pageviews, 10K unique visitors

in its first four months.



U of T was featured in approximately

### 310K global news media mentions with 1.3M+ shares across social media.

92% of coverage was positive or neutral with U of T having the greatest share of voice in national news coverage among universities.



Close to 

### 1M

 video views and over 1.1M impressions

on social media. To help position U of T as a global leader in sustainability and climate change solutions, UTC produced an eight-episode series titled "Sustainable Future: Challenge Accepted!"

# YEAR IN REVIEW

UTC created

### 586 pieces of original content

We focused on impact this year, decreasing volume, leading to greater engagement from audiences, with pageviews climbing to more than

### 3.2M

 an increase of 60%.

A reputation-building partnership with *The Guardian* showcasing U of T's leadership and global impact in research, teaching and innovation led to a

### brand lift of over 14.5%

making it *The Guardian's* most successful sponsored content campaign.



To support faculties and divisions, we established a **U of T Communicators Network** Microsoft Teams channel that brings together more than

### 425 communicators across the tri-campus

to enable real-time information sharing and peer-to-peer troubleshooting.



UTM's social promotion for the launch of its first wet lab venture incubator supporting early-stage life science startups earned more than 40K social impressions.



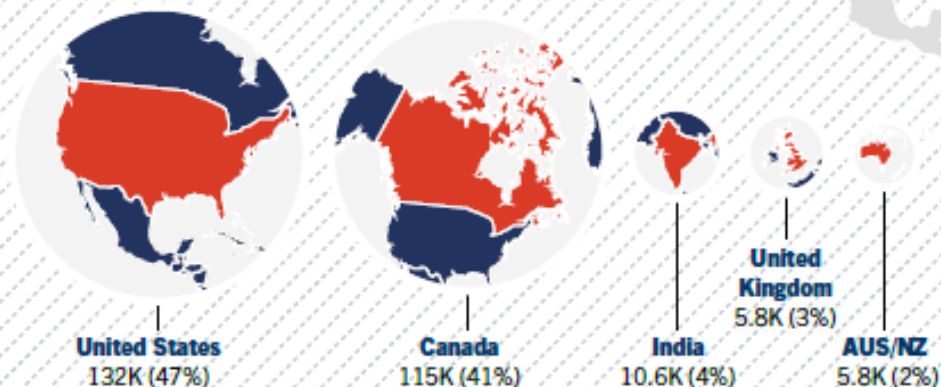
# GLOBAL MEDIA REACH

The University of Toronto generated significant global media attention this past year, with over a **quarter-of-a-million mentions** identified across online news, radio, TV, and print platforms from May 2023 to April 2024, according to our media monitoring platform. Coverage was particularly robust in North America, with Canada and the U.S. accounting for 88% of all traditional and online news related to U of T. Amplified social sharing of online news stories across platforms such as Facebook, X and Reddit helped the university's influence reach even wider audiences. U of T captured 13.4%—the greatest share of voice—in national news media coverage among universities. Here are some of the highlights from FY2023-24.

**310,257**

Public News Media Mentions about the University of Toronto were published during FY2023-24.

## Most Mentions (by Region)



**88%**

of all news media mentions were published by North American news media outlets and affiliates.

## Who's Been Talking About U of T Globally?

These were just a few of the global top-tier news media outlets that published articles about the University of Toronto during FY2023-24:



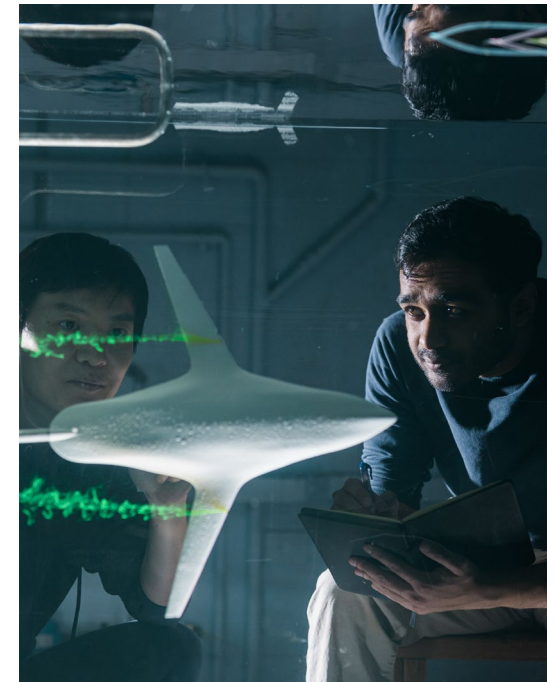
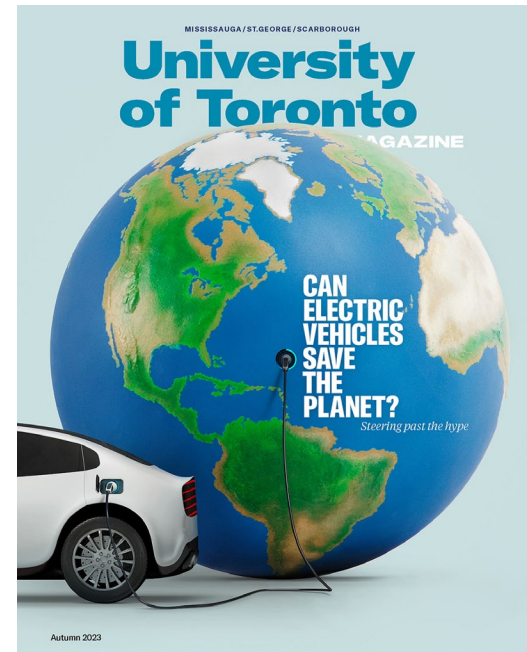
**91% of Global Media Mentions about U of T were Favourable\***

\*Favourable\* includes content tagged as Positive or Neutral.

# Benchmarking and Peer Review

**46 awards** from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the Canadian Council for Advancement of Education (CCAEE) and the National Media Awards Foundation.

**18 regional and international awards** from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the standard of excellence in our industry.



# Discussion

