

Accountability Report presented to **MCET**

from the Chair in Brand Communication for the period of July 2017 - June 2018

WATERLOO CAMPUS • SPRING 2018



We gratefully acknowledge the efforts and generosity of the **Marketing Communications Education Trust** in support of the Bachelor of Business Administration and the Chair in Brand Communication at the Lazaridis School of Business & Economics.

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OUR GRADUATES ARE ON THE LEADING EDGE

In 2011, the **Marketing Communications Education Trust (MCET)** generously committed a \$1,865,000 pledge to Laurier's Lazaridis School of Business & Economics to support the development, promotion and advancement of education and training in Canada related to brand communication through the establishment of a Chair in Brand Communication.

In the past year, the support of **MCET** has powered a flurry of activity under the leadership of Sarah JS Wilner, Associate Professor, Marketing, who became the Chair in Brand Communication in January 2017. Her work has engaged brand academics and practitioners, integrated industry expertise into a dynamic curriculum and ensured that students at all levels are learning relevant theory and practice. In this report she provides details about her activities for 2017-2018.

FALL TERM: SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER 2017

Canada 150 brand panels

In order to stimulate reflection and understanding of brands and brand communications in Canada, I initiated a partnership with Interbrand Canada, which was commemorating Canada's 150th year since Confederation with the launch of a list of 150 of Canada's most iconic brands.

As with all of the activities I develop as Brand Chair, I strived to meet the mandate provided by **MCET**, which includes:

- tapping into the expertise of leading brand academics and practitioners
- engaging industry to help ensure curriculum remains topical and grounded in practice as well as theory
- providing novel, meaningful and relevant learning experiences for both undergraduate and graduate students.

That partnership took shape as two panels of brand experts considered the role of iconic brands in Canada's history.

Panel 1: The "next generation" of Canadian brands

The first panel, held in Lazaridis Hall on Nov. 1, 2017, focused on the "next generation" of Canadian brands. I moderated the panel of esteemed experts who offered insights into the next generation of brand communications.

Panelists included:

David Bigioni, chief marketing officer for Canopy Growth Corp. and former vice-president marketing for Molson Coors

Dave was an excellent representative for Canadian industry and brands old (Molson) and new (Canopy). He spoke eloquently about the challenge of keeping an historic brand fresh as well as the special hurdles of launching new brands in a new industry.



Panelists (L to R): Mark Dwyer, Nina Sudra, Sarah Wilner, David Bigioni, Lisa Brown.



A student poses a question to panelist Nina Sudra, VICE Media.

Nina Sudra, general manager for VICE Media, Toronto

Representing a media company catering to a large and powerful audience of young adults, Nina brought valuable perspective on the meaning of brands in a digital world. Not only does Vice offer journalistic reporting and entertainment content, its internal agency, Virtue, develops campaigns targeting the “millennial generation.”

Lisa Brown, vice-president, talent, Vidyard

Lisa has been instrumental in building corporate brands one individual at a time, both in her current role at Vidyard, a breakout success in new generation video marketing, as well as in previous roles at Blackberry and Bell. Lisa spoke to the importance of corporate culture in creating brands that are authentic and meaningful.

Mark Dwyer, senior director for creative at Interbrand Canada

As the creative for the Canada’s 150 Iconic Brands launch, Mark explained how the list was compiled as well as the factors that seem to characterize strong Canadian brands.

Extensive outreach to the business community in Waterloo and beyond for this event brought a full house to the Lazaridis Hall atrium, including more than 50 undergraduate students.

Panel 2: “We’re asking politely: How Canadian do Canadian brands need to be?”

Graciously hosted by the TMX Group, the parent to the TSX, the second of the two panels took place at the stock exchange in Toronto on Nov. 29, 2017. The evening began with a special honour, as representatives from **MCET**, Interbrand and the Lazaridis School gathered to close the day’s trading. **MCET** board member Mike Welling gave a toast in honour of **MCET**’s work.

Following the market close, the panel convened. This panel’s topic was cheekily summed up on the invitation as, “We’re asking politely: How Canadian do Canadian brands need to be?” and explored the role of Canadian heritage, stereotypes and more in building strong brands. In a discussion, which I again moderated, the panelists were:



Interbrand Creative Director Mark Dwyer explains features of iconic Canadian brands.



MCET board member Mike Welling offers remarks before the market close as host and panelist Alison Simpson, SVP, Marketing, Communications & Brand, TMX Group, looks on.



MCET board members Jani Yates and Mike Welling with Sarah Wilner, Chair in Brand Communication, after closing the TSX.

Jim Gabel, CEO, Roots Canada

Jim discussed stewarding a brand steeped in Canadian heritage and the challenges of maintaining its voice while opening new markets in Asia.

Jason Anderson, senior vice-president, marketing, Cadillac Fairview (CF)

As chief marketer for one of Canada's dominant retail developers, Jason brought an alternate perspective to the discussion. CF's business is grounded in maintaining and promoting Canadian retail brands, but also competing with brands from around the world. He offered insights into his company's approach to doing both.

Alison Simpson, senior vice-president, marketing, communications & brand, TMX Group

Having just completed a rebrand for the TMX Group, Alison described that process and discussed her experience marketing Canadian brands for investment in Canada and around the world.

Mark Dwyer, senior director for creative at Interbrand Canada.

More than 80 professionals registered at the event, including several students studying in the Lazaridis School's part-time MBA program in Toronto.

Partnerships with Other Canadian Universities

In Fall 2017 term, I reached out to several colleagues at universities across Canada, hoping to establish a community of practice—a group of fellow academics specializing in brand management and brand communications who could share best practices in curriculum development and delivery, latest research, partnerships with practitioners and more. I have had some initial interest and will continue to build this community in the year to come.

Schools contacted/identified include:

- UBC
- Simon Fraser University
- Carleton University
- Concordia University
- Queen's University
- University of Victoria

WINTER TERM: JANUARY—APRIL 2018

Nielsen case competition

This was the first year I co-ordinated the Nielsen-General Mills case competition. Previously, it had been held during the Fall term, but the liaison from Nielsen proposed moving it to the Winter term to better capture interest from co-op students, who are often in the field working in the fall.

The revised initiative began in the fall of 2017, when seekers from Nielsen came into my fourth-year Brand Communications course to discuss how market research can provide insight into both brand strategy and tactics.

Promotion for the competition began in earnest as soon as students returned from holidays, and included working closely with the Lazaridis School's advertising club, The Advertising Project, to use their promotional skills to get the word out. Promotional activities extended through January.

The case, which was about increasing market penetration for Annie's Macaroni and Cheese and its brand extensions (fruit snacks and cookies), was released at a kick-off event in February. A first round competition among third- and fourth-year teams, judged by Lazaridis School Marketing faculty and Nielsen managers, took place at the end of February. Finalists then travelled to Nielsen headquarters in early March to compete in front of top management from both Nielsen and General Mills.

Although participation was more limited than expected given the shift in scheduling, the representatives from both General Mills and Nielsen reported seeing some of the best analyses and presentations they had experienced since the inception of the case competition.

Industry pulse-taking

To help produce research and teaching materials that will ensure the relevance of programs in Brand Communication, in late February I attended Marketing Evolution: The C-Suite Summit.

I was particularly interested in presentations by:

- **Craig Atkinson** (PHD Media) and Mitch Joel (Mirum Agency) on disruptive technology's influence on marketing communications (separate presentations);
- **Lucie Greene's** (JWTIntelligence Innovation Group) trends reporting;
- **Jason Chaney's** (formerly at Cossette, now at Koho) presentation on building a brand as rapidly as the technology being developed demands it;



Representatives from General Mills (left) and Nielsen (right) flank members of the winning team.

- A dialogue between **Andrea Hunt** (CMO, Weston Foods) and **Lori Davison** (vice-president, brand strategy for SickKids Foundation) on their experiences with rebranding and institutional change and
- A presentation about prospective branding for Canada’s new recreational cannabis market (a topic I have studied in the U.S.).

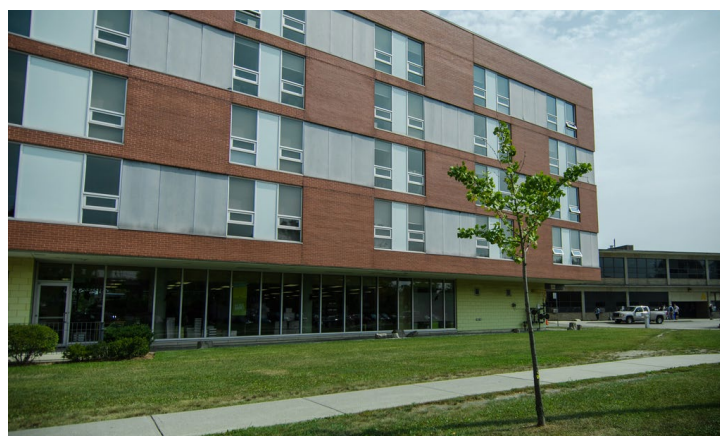
Information gleaned from each of those presentations has already made its way into my lecture materials and conversations with colleagues.

Humber College: Benchmarking and assessment

In March I was delighted to serve as an external examiner for Humber College’s Bachelor of Creative Advertising program. The assessment was to have taken place much earlier in the year but was delayed by the strikes at many local colleges.

Along with Ann Urban (Urban & Co., OCAD University), I reviewed curriculum and examined sample student work from every course; I read a previous report for the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) and I attended a full-day site visit during which I met deans, faculty, students and advisory board members and toured the program’s physical plant. I submitted a detailed assessment report which was joined with Ann’s and provided to the College leadership.

It was an extremely edifying exercise. The approach to education at a college is, not surprisingly, quite different in many ways from that of a university. For example, I was interested to see the influence of intensive studio training on student work. It was also gratifying to see the similarities, such as applied assignments and collaborations with industry partners and an incredibly engaged student body.



Humber College Lakeshore Campus, where students can study for their Bachelor of Creative Advertising.

Brand-relevant research

In April, the Chair sponsored a reception at the Lazaridis Marketing Research Symposium, which gathered renowned marketing academics Karen Winterich (Penn State), David Schweidel (Georgetown) and Dan Goldstein (Microsoft Research). Winterich explored how the self-concept may impact consumer responses to identity-based targeting; Schweidel’s presentation showed how models of topics can be used to understand the dynamics of consumer conversation online. Finally, Goldstein revealed that simple models may be as useful as complex ones (e.g., AI), and that AI still has a long way to go before human decision-makers trust its recommendations.

SPRING TERM: MAY—JULY 2018

Course redesign

Given the work I have been doing as Chair in Brand Communication over the past 18 months, I spent much of April redesigning BU472, the Lazaridis School's elective in Marketing Communications for delivery in the Spring term.

In recent years the course has often either been taught by limited-term faculty with very textbook-driven content, or by an agency leader in B2B marketing, which has distinctive benefits specific to industry marketing but may be less applicable to the kind of jobs our students will take on.

I began the overhaul with the assumption that most of our Marketing majors would end up working on the client-side, but that a small subset would work for agencies. I decided that beyond theories of communication and persuasion, students—whether as a client or working within—would benefit from first-hand exposure to agencies. This is a radical departure from the way the course has traditionally been taught.

I worked with Andy Macauley, director, Rethink, an independent creative agency, to select six agency partners—large and small, corporate and independent—with a key contact person in each. This year's participants are:

- Cossette
- Taxi
- Rethink
- John St.
- Red Urban
- Union

A central project for the term connects a team of five students with one agency. Each student team member selects a single functional role in the agency to learn more about, e.g., account management, creative, strategic planning, etc. They then work with their partner agency's key contact to connect with a person in that role willing to be interviewed about their job and their career. One of the key questions they must ask is a variation on, "what's something your clients do that drives you crazy? What makes for a great client?"

Each week in class, we assemble a panel to discuss an agency role. The students begin by discussing what they learned from their specific interview activity, and then the panel as a whole discusses the differences they uncovered across firms, for example, how the agency roles are structured (reporting relationships, number of employees, relationships between offices), or an industry or service specialization. Their class peers listen to the panel and ask their own questions.

Each student is also required to find an example of a marketing communication or campaign that shows evidence of the role that they have learned about. For example, a brand pivot might “show” the hand of a strategic planner, a quirky campaign reveals the work of the creative team and an integrated campaign’s choices reflect both the work of brand strategists and media planners, among others. The intention is get students looking at brand communications with a new lens, and to see campaigns as the work of agency teams, rather than a lone genius creative.

The student writes a report on the individual’s experience of a specific role and individual in that role, and then merges this document into a final report on the team’s overall assessment of the specific agency and how it functions and competes.

The results have already been interesting. During a recent panel, a student who had been on the client-side during a co-op term admitted that he hadn’t had much respect for his company’s agency, considering the work they did to be “cut and paste” (his phrase). But, after delving deeply into the work of a specific agency and individual, he emerged with a hefty dose of respect, awed by the amount of strategic work that was done within the agency and how much work the agency had been required to do because the client’s brief was too generic. He vowed to be a “good” client from then on, and said that, much to his own surprise, he would absolutely consider working at an agency after graduation.

It has been a productive year for improving brand communications and management education at the Lazaridis School and beyond. I remain grateful for the efforts of **MCET** and the generosity of its donors.

Respectfully submitted by,

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