

## **THOMAS W. DURSO**

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### **SUMMARY**

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A strategic-thinking, results-oriented communications professional with nearly 20 years of experience in higher-education and nonprofit marketing communications, public relations, and publications; corporate communications; and daily and trade journalism.

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### **CAPABILITIES**

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- Strategic outlook equally comfortable assessing the big picture as dealing in details.
  - Emphasis on linking all communications efforts to institutional mission.
  - Superior writing and editing proficiency.
  - Comfortable, articulate, and engaging presentation style; excellent verbal communication skills.
  - Ability to grasp complex, often esoteric ideas and concepts and communicate them quickly and clearly to all audiences.
  - Genuine personal style that fosters effective interaction at all levels of the organization.
  - Inherent curiosity and multiple interests, able to communicate effectively on varied subjects.
  - Outstanding news judgment and media savvy.
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### **FUNCTIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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- Strategic marketing communications | Direction of rebranding process; supervision of integrated marketing function; writing/editing of website content, admissions brochures, marketing collateral, advertisements.
  - Publications management | Supervision of newsletters, alumni magazines, and internal and online communications; oversight of and collaboration with graphic designers; experience editing copy for content, style, and grammar.
  - Leadership communications | Issues management, speechwriting, internal communications.
  - Advancement communications | Donor profiles, case statements, annual reports.
  - Academic communications | Research stories; faculty, student, and alumni profiles.
  - Media relations | Proactive and reactive; crisis communications; on-camera experience; print and radio interviews.
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### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS**

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#### *Strategic communications*

- Led cross-functional teams and oversaw work of multiple consultants in integrating institutional messages and assuring common look and feel among various communications vehicles.
- Developed and delivered messaging (content and vehicles) that reflected university's rebranding and repositioning efforts.

- Responded to university's renewed emphasis on academic excellence by refocusing communications efforts on faculty research. Placed wide variety of faculty members as expert sources in numerous print and electronic outlets across the country. Planned and edited series of newsletters highlighting academic achievements in university's individual colleges. *U.S. News & World Report* ranking rose to university's best ever, boosted by an improvement in the critical metric of peer assessment.
- Launched university's Twitter feed; worked with Web editor to refine and advance Facebook presence.
- Managed internal and external communications related to hiring of new president, positioning him as a visionary, energetic, accessible CEO.
- Capitalized on top national ranking in Division I men's basketball by successfully integrating institutional stories into athletics messaging, resulting in positive university profiling in such national outlets as *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, ESPN.com, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and National Public Radio, and in dozens of regional and local outlets.

#### *Internal communications*

- Collaborated with leadership to develop regular internal messaging with strategic focus.
- Wrote on behalf of the president, increasing frequency and diversity of CEO's internal messages and fostering an atmosphere of transparency and trust.
- Increased diversity of topics in internal newsletter and streamlined editing, design, and production processes to reduce lag time, resulting in timelier, more relevant publication.
- Responded to need for greater information sharing by developing, launching, and overseeing daily electronic news digest sent to all employees every morning.

#### *Media relations*

- Developed excellent working relationships with the most significant reporters covering the institution, resulting in increasing media acknowledgment of university's changing nature and uniformly balanced coverage of even negative stories.
- Worked closely with faculty members to identify those with media presence and research expertise to pitch to news outlets as sources, increasing the breadth of expertise cited.
- Initiated greater tracking and reporting of media hits, raising department's profile and providing accountability.
- Drew on journalism background and even-keeled temperament to anticipate coverage of future university stories and prepare effective responses. Balanced serving the institution with assisting the media through a rigorous personal ethic recognizing fiduciary responsibility to the university and professional responsibility to the media.

#### *Journalism/writing*

- Freelance writing | Developed and maintain thriving practice that includes print and online coverage of academic, health-care, science, technology, business, and sports stories. Consistently deliver clean, readable copy on deadline.
- Daily newspaper reporting | Covered municipal governments, school boards, business, crime, and courts; wrote weekly personal column; won New Jersey Press Association second-place award for best feature for coverage of 50th anniversary of D-Day invasion.
- Trade newspaper editing | Transformed paper's briefs page into lively, colorful section

- filled with interesting, offbeat items. Worked with graphic designers to choose and create visually appealing photography and art. Promoted from contributor to section editor.
- Blogging | Sports and pop-culture writing recognized by influential sports blog Deadspin and *The Great Book of Philadelphia Sports Lists*; launched and contributed regularly to blog covering the business of nonprofits; launched and post regularly to blog exploring university communications at the intersection of old and new media.

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## WORK HISTORY

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- Holy Family University, Philadelphia, Pa., 2010-present. Senior director of marketing and communications at comprehensive university developing significant regional presence.
- Freelance writer and editor, 2007-present. Varied client list including higher education, nonprofit, and corporate institutions, newspapers, magazines, and Web sites.
- Wolf, Block, Schorr and Solis-Cohen, LLP, Philadelphia, Pa., 2006. Marketing and media relations manager of mid-sized, multipractice, regional law firm.
- Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, Pa., 1999-2006. Director of communications (2001-06), media relations (1999-2001) at university with growing regional and national presence.
- Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa., 1998-99. Science writer in news office of large public research university.
- Medical Inter-Insurance Exchange, Lawrenceville, N.J., 1997-98. Senior editor in corporate communications office of expanding medical malpractice insurer.
- *The Scientist*, Philadelphia, Pa., 1996-97. Associate editor of national life-sciences trade paper.
- *Gloucester County Times*, Woodbury, N.J., 1994-95. Reporter and columnist for daily newspaper.
- Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, Pa., 1991-94. Assistant director of external relations.

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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- Presenter, Council for Advancement and Support of Education, annual regional conference.
- Presenter, College and University Public Relations Association of Pennsylvania, annual statewide and regional conferences.
- Founding member, Communications Advisory Council, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.

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## EDUCATION

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- Master of Business Administration, Executive M.B.A. Program, Saint Joseph's University, 2002.
- Bachelor of Arts in English, Saint Joseph's University, 1991.

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## REFERENCES AND SAMPLES

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- Available upon request.