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APRIL 14-16

Athletics directors and spouses/partners welcome

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Vice Admiral Walter E. "Ted" Carter, Jr.
Superintendent
U.S. Naval Academy



Peg Bradley-Doppes
Senior Advisor to the Chancellor
University of Denver



Mark Hollis
Former Director of Athletics
Michigan State University



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Chelsea Blakely

UTRGV

Senior Associate AD for
External Operations/SWA

In 2013, the Texas State Legislature dissolved two neighboring University of Texas campuses along the United States-Mexico border, combining their resources to create one regional school: the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV).

The creation of UTRGV presented a unique opportunity, and necessity, to create a new athletics brand aiming to serve as the most visible marketing tool for the first university of the 21st century.

The transition required new institutional and athletics marks and a new mascot while expanding our footprint to nearly 70 miles between campuses in three counties.

Our primary challenge was developing new and innovative external operation strategies to reintroduce intercollegiate athletics to the community, specifically to engage alumni from legacy institutions, UT-Pan American and UT-Brownsville. We looked for a way to rally support and spark a new sense of pride and tradition.

The amount of challenges associated with our rebrand was atypical. Most athletics rebrands do not involve extremes like launching an entirely new university and recreating an athletics identity. While we are not experts in branding, our unique transition could provide invaluable insight to rebrands of any scale. What might seem like a daunting task could prove to be a vital opportunity for an athletics department.

Based on our experience, the following are some important aspects to consider prior to undergoing a rebrand:

Develop a committee to gain perspective from key internal and external stakeholders. Use feedback to guide various decisions involving the brand. This helps create buy-in from crucial constituencies who will eventually serve as brand ambassadors across campus and in the community.

It's likely your organization will outsource the development of new marks to a creative agency. Provide consultants with access to research as soon as possible by adding them to the committee. We included our agency, Rickabaugh Graphics, in committee meetings from the beginning to incorporate diverse perspectives and strive for authenticity.

Consider adding your licensing firm to the committee. As you begin finalizing new

wordmarks and logos, they will be instrumental in the development of a style guide to ensure consistency. Their involvement will be pivotal in maximizing your brand's impact and merchandise royalty revenue.

Reevaluate contracts that include trademark and licensing agreements to align third-party vendors in the rebrand. This ensures synergy across physical and digital assets. We renegotiated our apparel deal, redesigned our digital platforms, and employed an RFP for installation graphics to ensure consistency.

Do your homework to find the right creative agency that can bring your brand to life, especially in your facilities. We contracted Phoenix Design Works to develop installation graphics designed around our new athletics marks and relaunch campaign. Refreshing athletics venues provides continuous reinforcement of your brand for fans.

Develop a launch plan of action and strategic initiatives to reinforce your brand through digital properties, collateral materials and facility presentations. Utilize an event to unveil your new wordmarks, logos, and mascot. Collaborate with internal and external partners to obtain exclusive branded giveaways introducing your new identity. For example, we partnered with adidas to outfit fans with cobranded inaugural UTRGV gear. Fans were shown digital presentations that outlined the creative process while highlighting partners who helped make our rebrand possible.