



## Kaitlyn Vincek

LSU

VP for Annual Giving,  
Ticketing and  
Communications

Our brand is how the world sees us. From donors to students, fans, and even the media, our brand transcends any singular aspect of the university. So, the natural question becomes: how do we use the brand to leverage fundraising?

College athletics brand management is constantly evolving, changing as quick as our landscape and financial priorities pivot. I have found that no matter what size of goal or environment you are fundraising in, the primary focus should be on the tactile actions we take to further enhance the brand. In other words, what will result in growing the culture of philanthropy towards your institution.

Through my past career stops within the FCS, Group of Five, and Power Five schools, all with distinct storied histories, the end goal is the same – how can we most effectively tell our story with the resources we have (human capital, financial, athletics success) and compete

against our local markets to build the best donor base possible?

I always seek to learn from the biggest brands (athletics and non-athletics) around the country, but with the caveat that the end goal is to strategize what WE have to work with. The most exciting thing about athletics fundraising is that you're not battling against other athletics institutions for funds. Instead, we have to determine what are the other philanthropic opportunities in our donors lives and how can we leverage our brand to ensure we are at the top of that list.

The more we set up our departments externally to be on the same page, delivering the same messages and cohesively distributing a full picture of our student-athletes, coaches, staff and fans – generosity always reciprocates.

So, what questions should we ask ourselves to check-in with our own branding?

- What stories are being told across all platforms, departments and various mediums?
- What resources do we have (regardless of department) and how can we effectively steward them to manage branding expectations, outcomes and prioritize growth?
- Is our messaging consistent across all external facing units of the athletics department?

- What data do we have to dictate priorities and strategy? We so often assume that we know what drives our different buckets of revenue, but seldomly do we have the qualitative nor quantitative data to back up our assumptions.

As I begin work at my fifth institution in athletics fundraising, I am asking myself the questions above to see where we currently are, what are the perceived expectations, who needs to be in the room to start the process of understanding where we are, and what we need to do to ensure we are stewards of the LSU brand. The goal is to ensure our donor pride in knowing that they have made a good investment and that we should remain in the top of their philanthropic priorities moving forward.



## Anthony Hulse

UCF

Director, Data Analytics  
& Revenue Generation

Brand awareness and advancement is a cornerstone for the growth and recognition of a university and its athletics department. With athletics being the front face of the university, brand standards and consistency are not only essential for the success of individual campaigns, but it is also the foundation for building long-term growth.

With so many moving parts, events, campaigns, travel schedules, etc. it's easy to get absorbed in your department's day-to-day routine and goals. Since early 2020 it has been even easier for departments to be siloed off from one another with different work set-ups, hybrid work environments and online meetings. It is because of these significant changes to our industry it is important to have a clear communication plan and approval process in

place when discussing the release and development of new fundraising or ticket sales campaigns.

**Use your brand and style guide!** – Every university, and most athletics departments, have their own brand and style guidebook. It is important that every member of your external team have a copy of these guidelines; especially those involved with graphic design, websites, emails, direct mail pieces, and digital ads. This guidebook provides everything from Pantone colors, to approved logos, to details on how, when, and in what combination these should be used on various pieces of communication. Following these guidelines early in the design process will help reduce revisions and additional work in the future.

**Build your communication network.** – One of the few bright spots to emerge from the pandemic and work-from-home environments was the implementation of internal communication tools. We have heavily integrated Microsoft Teams into our daily communication plan. Within our Teams environment you will find project teams that include members from differing departments (marketing, sales, development,

communication, operations, etc.). Within these groups we have the ability to share schedules, timelines, files and notes in real time. These newly formed working groups have increased efficiency while generating new ideas and opportunities.

**Use it anywhere and everywhere you can.** – The most successful campaigns we have developed have occurred when all departments share the same branding and messaging. The "Orlando's Hometown Team" campaign logo and messaging was used for fundraising, ticket sales and recruiting. Digital ads, car magnets, flags, emails, tickets, post cards, websites, radio spots and every other platform we had access to was sporting the "Orlando's Hometown Team" moniker. Despite this campaign ending internally years ago, "Orlando's Hometown Team" is still featured across the country, culminating in Lee Corso pronouncing it while donning UCF headgear on College GameDay.

While every department will have different access to resources to make this process easier, proactively engaging and communicating your messaging internally will ultimately lead to a smoother campaign launch and greater results.