



**COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE AFRICAN
CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE AT UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA
(UR-ACEs)**

October 2019

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I. ACEs at UR

In order to deliver relevant and quality education, and applied research addressing key development challenges, the World Bank has funded the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence Project (ACE II) to establish and strengthen specialization and collaboration in the region.

Among the 24 Centers selected through an open and merit-based competitive process in eight countries UR is home to four Centers: African Center of Excellence in Data Science (ACE-DS), African Center of Excellence in Energy for Sustainable Development (ACE-ESD), African Center of Excellence in Internet of Things (ACE-IoT), and African Center of Excellence for Innovative Teaching and Learning Mathematics and Science (ACE-ITLMS).

This Communication Strategy will raise the visibility and profile of the ACEs and contribute to the achievement of their overall objective of delivering quality postgraduate education and of building collaborative research capacity in education, energy, technology and applied statistics. This strategy will improve internal and external communication with different stakeholders.

This strategy details best public relations practices, including public information outreach, special events, mass media relations plans, and electronic and web communications strategies to raise the public image and understanding of the UR-ACEs activities and achievements. The plan is to systematically disseminate information about the Centers, their priorities, achievements and best practices towards raising their profile, visibility, ownership, understanding and awareness.

II. GOALS

The ACEs are training national and regional researchers who will contribute to skills development and reverse the shortage of qualified researchers in these fields in Africa. To date, 300 research students are enrolled in different programs at ACEs and by the end of 2025, with continued enrolment they will have contributed substantially to the research base in the region.

Values that underpin what we do in the UR ACEs:

Home Grown Solutions: Rwanda has found solutions from within to local challenges. The UR ACEs commit to working with others to find address challenges faced by people living in the continent of Africa. Learning from this process and applying the outcomes of this work will often have relevance globally too.

Made in Rwanda: The Made in Rwanda initiative is embraced by the African Centers of Excellence in a way that students and researchers are trained in Rwanda, are sometimes from Rwanda, reflect the passion that Rwanda has for meaningful change and solve the problems seen in countries like Rwanda, with intellectual property emerging from Rwanda and the region.

And so, through the ACEs, Rwanda will become a place from where the influence of researchers has relevance to very many people worldwide.

This communication strategy is grounded in 3 main goals:

GOAL1: Raise the profile, visibility and awareness of ACEs

- Build awareness of ACEs through UR brand, drawing on areas of academic excellence across UR, research strength and impact on society
- Build the ACEs brand and visual identity, setting standards, and supporting with guidelines and services, to ensure they are delivered consistently across all media, to all markets and audiences
- Generate greater media coverage of the ACEs, their staff and students, locally, nationally and internationally
- Promote the impact, value and contribution of research and knowledge to society through public engagement
- Build strong media relations
- To anticipate stories and messages that distract from the successes, and to contribute to a quality improvement feedback loop to the managers and directors of the Centers.

GOAL2: Build the ACEs as places of choice for research students and staff, and create a sense of belonging

- Ensure that the experiences of students and staff are consistent with the messages of achievement and success that emerge from the Centers
- Create a sense of belonging for students and staff who are the Centers' greatest ambassadors, and whose personal stories of success and achievement will be crucial to the profile and visibility of the ACEs
- Use digital communications (website, social media) to promote the Centers and encourage students from national, regional and international markets for Masters, PhD and short-courses offerings, and talented administrative and academic staff to join us.
- Identify aspiring research students and connect with them through recruitment events and partnership activities

GOAL 3: Build strong relationships with external stakeholders

- Engaging in sustained campaigns to build trust and confidence in ACEs with potential students and researchers, partner institutions, researchers and foundations, industry, consultancies and businesses that are looking to hire talent
- Build a brand that is congruent throughout all communication channels including the website and marketing materials, engaging particular audiences through the most appropriate channels

Legacy

The Centers must plan to celebrate the legacy of staff and students and their achievements and so should develop an archive that can be used for press releases in the future, for publications, and for celebrations of international awards and honours given to Centers' alumni.

III. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Media Engagement

Rwanda has a diverse media targeting national and international audiences. Their editorial line range from different perspectives including the main focus of ACEs (Technology, Applied Statistics, Education and Energy). There is a need to create good relationships and engage more these media to widely and positively cover ACEs activities. Radio and TV will be give priority where by Centers will feature in Research, science and technology programmes

Website

Each Center has an active website which helps to share information. These websites will be enhanced and updated on regular basis.

The website should contain information about the Center mainly programs offered, requirements, procedures, success stories, achievements, reports among other key information. The information uploaded on website should be clear and concise. This will ease access to information about the Center for stakeholders and the public in general.

Video stories

Each Center shall regularly produce branded short video stories of 2-5 minutes featuring beneficiaries, Center leaders and other key players. The videos will be released on the Center website, social media and shared with stakeholders via Youtube channel.

Public talks

Public talks will be organised in undergraduate Universities to provide information on ACEs programmes, opportunities and key achievements. These public talks will increase the visibility and enrolment of new researchers (students).

Annual reports

The annual reports will play a key role in communicating the progress, performance and the achievements of the Center and will compliment other information sources such as the website, social media and hard copy documents. Hard and soft copies of annual reports will be circulated widely among stakeholders. The report should be infographic, grammatically well structured, not exceeding 15 pages. It should be: Font: Times New Roman, Size (text: 12, titles: 14), Spacing: 1.5. The annual report will also be posted on the website and shared via social media.

Social media

Social media provide a powerful and quick avenue for dissemination of information. Each Center has an active social media account used to share information about the Center activities and achievements. #ExcellenceinEducation will be used as Hashtag for UR-ACEs on social media.

IV. KEY MESSAGES AND TARGET AUDIENCES

Target group/audience	Key Message	Channel/tool
Bachelor Students from STEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Come to UR-ACEs and be transformed into the best regional researcher</i>	Social media, website, knowledge sharing events & exhibitions
Donors/Funders/International Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>The national and regional challenges are being addressed through your support in Centers' research trainings</i>	Website, conferences/workshops, social media
National Steering Committee	<i>The Centers are supporting the government to deliver quality postgraduate education in UR</i>	Meetings, email, phone

Industry/private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are producing high qualified researchers to support you and increase your productivity.</i> • <i>We are ready for research collaboration to address existing challenges in the society.</i> • <i>We are building capacities of your personnel. Come and enrol them in our respective areas of intervention to become the best researchers</i> 	Social media, website, promotional materials, knowledge sharing events (Conferences, workshops, seminars).
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Centers are enhancing quality of education and labour productivity and skills development.</i> • <i>The Centers are producing researchers who will find solutions to public challenges that hinder the public development</i> 	Mass Media (TV, Radio, Print, Online newspapers), Education & promotional materials (leaflets, flyers, pull up banners, banners, tear drops, brochures, T-shirts, caps, pens, notebooks, Newsletters, press release, press conferences, website, trainings/workshops, Centers' documents, etc), campaigns, awareness events, training, Exhibitions

V. KEY COMMUNICATION PARTNERS

National Steering Committee (NSC)

The National Steering Committee provides overall guidance and oversight for the ACEs at University of Rwanda. The National Steering committee members will facilitate national networking and outreach activities for the program as a whole. The NSC will act as a liaison between ACEs and national leadership.

University of Rwanda's Single Project Implementation Unit (UR-SPIU)

UR-SPIU will work closely with the Center Directors, National Steering Committee and World Bank to ensure successful implementation of the communication strategy through:

- Quality management of communication activities and outputs
- Coordinating knowledge sharing events
- Issuing ACEs joint press statements and releases
- Producing and disseminating special reports and advocacy materials
- Organizing periodic press conferences and briefings for the media
- Coordinating consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders
- Facilitating field visits for interested stakeholders

UR

- UR will be the overall coordinator of all activities.

VI. TOOLS OF COMMUNICATION

Success Stories

The short stories typically include both a human interest lead that illustrates how the Center has contributed to improved higher education in the country. Good success stories contain statistics, beneficiaries and beneficiary quotes. Such stories will be disseminated through short videos, website, YouTube and social media.

These are the general guidelines for success stories:

- Title– A story should have a title to attract reader's attention.
- Quotes–It should include a quote or quotes from participants/beneficiaries.
- Jargon free -Translate technical jargon to words that everyone understands.
- Acronyms - Avoid acronyms or use them sparingly.
- Word count – Each news story should be no more than 400 words.
- Photographs - Attach only a .jpg, .bmp, or .gif file with high resolution.

Op-Ed

Centers' leaders are encouraged to get Op-ed articles about their programs and achievements published in leading newspapers, higher education websites, and on the Center website.

Short videos (2-5 minutes) & Documentaries (5-10 minutes)

Well produced videos are an effective way of delivering messages to a mass audience. ACEs in collaboration with UR-SPIU shall develop videos/documentaries and share them on their websites and social media platforms.

Press Conferences

The press conference will be organised when there is an upcoming events regarding a single Center or all Centers. It will also be organised when there are any other information that need to be shared with the public and it is deemed the most appropriate channel to use. The press conference will be held jointly or individually in collaboration with UR.

Press Releases

The Centers will jointly or individually issue press releases about the ongoing/upcoming/ big events/activities when deemed necessary.

Photographs

ACEs will maintain vibrant social media platforms to publicise their achievements. The photos used in Centers publications and social media platforms should be clear, colourful, depicting action, and capture people's attention and should include the caption. ACEs will make effort to share quality high resolution photographs in .jpg, .bmp, or .gif file formats. Each Center should have a Flickr account for the archive of pictures.

Use of membership association websites, and partner universities' websites

Websites of AAU, ACU, ARUA will all be used to profile the Centers. The Centers have institutional partners and their websites will feature the ACEs logos.

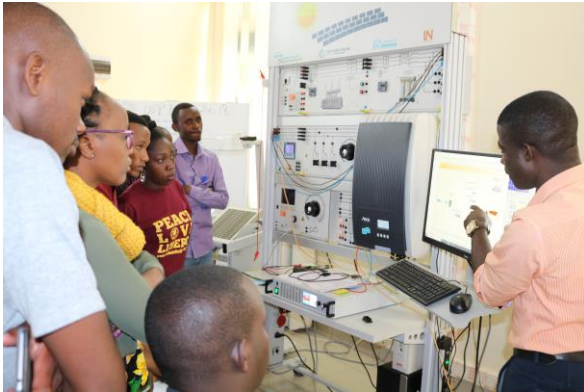
VII. BRANDING PRINCIPLES

For over 50 years, UR has been sharing knowledge and producing minds that have contributed to Rwanda's transformation. Today, UR is Rwanda's only public University. With ACEs, we are offering diverse research skills that will lead to national and regional solutions.

With more than 300 researchers being trained at ACEs, we are now making UR, the best regional multidisciplinary hub of skilled researchers. ACEs brand is a tool to attract students, researchers and partners we collaborate with to meaningfully address regional and international pressing challenges. When the ACEs graduates and staff go out represented by the strength and reputation of ACEs brand, they will get confident.

UR-ACEs offerings are unique in Eastern and Southern Africa. Our brand represents us visually, in our language and ultimately influences the way our audiences feel about us.

HOME GROWN...



SOLUTIONS...

Researchers experimenting renewable energy

62

PhDs awarded this year by the UR.

By any measure: Success.

300

Students enrolled in UR-ACEs.

By any measure: success.

MADE IN...



RWANDA...

A team of researchers came up with new teaching methods to secondary schools

Use of images:

Images must tell a story and this should be coherent, congruent, and consistent with the ACEs' brand.

All Centers' communication shall bear the UR logo and the Center logo in their public communications:

Letterhead:

The official letterhead of the Center has the UR Logo and the Center logo at the top of the page and the website and Twitter handle of the Center at the bottom.

Logo:

Each ACE has its official logo

Colour:

Each ACE has its colours

Website:

Each Center has its own website which should have the UR logo and the one of the Center

Photography:

Content images should depict people engaged in an activity related to the subject being discussed in the communication.

When selecting images, simple rules should be followed:

- depict a range of profiles of researchers in terms of age, gender, origin and physical abilities reflecting the diversity of the population of UR-ACEs.
- images must be wide enough so you can use the image in a variety of layouts.
- don't have the subject looking directly into the camera

Signposts:

Each Center shall put a distinct signpost outside the Center. The signpost shall carry logos of the UR and the Center.

VIII. EVALUATING SUCCESS

To ascertain the degree to which communication activities contribute to the visibility of the Center's activities, different methods will be used to measure the impact of communication. Specific ways that will be used in evaluating the communication process include:

- Web site traffic hits and online feedback.
- Social media followers, likes and metrics
- Attendees at events.
- Demand for information on Centers (from the public, media, private sector, civil society and students,).
- Numbers of newspaper articles written.
- Numbers of short videos and documentaries produced and aired, radio news coverage stories broadcast about the Centers.
- Numbers of information, education and communication materials produced and distributed.
- Calls for information and media appearance requests by the media houses to the Centers.

ANNEX: Communication Work Plan for the period July 2019 – July 2020

Output	Planned activities	Timeframe	Objectives	Performance indicator
Printed Materials				
1. Design and print Communication, Information, Education and Promotion materials	<p>Produce brochures on Centers' main components, key activities, areas of interventions</p> <p>Produce brochures/factsheets on Center's results, success stories, outcomes, Factsheets</p> <p>Banners, pull-up banners, teardrops, brochures, T-shirts, pens and notebooks</p> <p>Factsheets on key achievements and</p> <p>Photographs</p>	July 2019-2020	<p>-Build awareness among target groups</p> <p>-Improve knowledge of the Center, its activities, best practices and success stories</p> <p>-Improve Centers' visibility</p> <p>-Contribute to improved information exchange between the Center and its stakeholders</p>	<p>-Growing number of enquiries from public, media, number of trainings/workshops/campaigns and participants;</p> <p>-Mention in mass media, number of reference/citation of Center's materials;</p> <p>-Feedback about the Centers' activities in random informal interviews</p> <p>-Number of printed and distributed promotional materials</p>
2. Disseminate the printed materials		2019-2020	IDEM	Number of printed and distributed materials

(online & hard copies)				
3. Media coverage, mention and appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dissemination of press releases and press briefs on Centers' activities, seminars, trainings, conferences, campaigns and awareness events -Response to Media inquiries -Arranging/Organising media interviews -Sponsoring coverage of the Centers' activities -Video/Documentaries -Adverts and Publicity -Create a database of key media people/contacts 		IDEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Growing number of inquiries from public, media, number of trainings/workshops -Mention in mass media, number of reference/citation of Center materials; -Feedback generated through media -Number of sponsored articles/reports/advertsand publishing media Number of video/ documentaries produced -Number of interviews, spots, press conferences, press releases and press briefs

Online promotion				
4.Website	Regular update of news, reports, success stories and other materials on the Center's website		Improve Centers' visibility	Number of posts, visits, level of reach, references to the online materials
5. Social media presence and activeness	<p>Compiling and producing reports, articles, short videos, and posting/sharing them via online platforms</p> <p>Create social media pages to enhance online presence and visibility</p>			
Public awareness and media events				
7.Awareness, education and sensitisation campaigns	Campaign concept notes, factsheets, promotional materials		-Improve Centers' visibility	Campaign report, distribution of promotional and education materials,
8. Meetings with stakeholders 9. Study tours and experience exchange workshops	Workshops, seminars, exchange meetings		-Improve knowledge of the Center, its activities, best practices and success stories	Meeting documents, reports, presentations, number of study tours and reports, feedback