

# OCM 2020

AUBURN UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING  
2020 ANNUAL REPORT





## OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The Office of Communications and Marketing brings the Auburn story to life. We proudly serve as the hub for the creative, digital and marketing presence seen around campus, the community and the nation. Our brand is our identity — and we don't take our responsibility to protect, enhance and grow it lightly. Every day our news stories, digital presence, marketing materials and visual elements illustrate the authenticity that is Auburn.

2020 was an unprecedented year, but it challenged us and gave us the opportunity to explore new ways to communicate and promote Auburn. Our team continued to strategically engage stakeholders across campus to develop important COVID-19 messaging, keeping Auburn in the national conversation. Our collaborative efforts allowed students, faculty and staff to continue operations with minimal interruption.

You'll discover in the following pages that our award-winning team continues to build and grow the Auburn brand through our integrated approach, news expertise, social media platforms, creative projects and broadcast services. This year may have challenged us, but by all campus units working together, we demonstrated the true definition of the Auburn spirit.

War Eagle!

Nick Clark

Mike Clardy  
Assistant Vice President

# OUR PRIORITY: BUILDING AND LEVERAGING BRAND VALUE

## COMMUNICATING A STRONG BRAND

The Office of Communications and Marketing is uniquely positioned to maximize the value of the Auburn brand by leveraging expertise, resources and processes, driving unified, consistent communications and ensuring high-quality creative application and visual representation across all touchpoints.

Defining the Auburn University brand is critical to successfully communicating to our diverse audiences. In doing so, we can more effectively position the university and its value proposition with target audiences to help drive student and faculty recruitment, alumni engagement and development efforts. We take a disciplined approach to long-term communications and marketing strategy, guided by Auburn's strategic priorities.

### OBJECTIVE

Elevate the value of the Auburn brand by ensuring:

- Cohesive and consistent brand application
- Unified, integrated communications
- Optimal use of resources, data and channels

### TACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Define the brand
- Manage the brand
- Advance the brand

## DEVELOPING THE BRAND STRATEGY

In 2020, OCM began development of a long-term strategy to build and leverage brand value, which will serve as the foundation of Auburn's brand positioning and guidelines. This has been a strategic effort involving thorough assessment of where we are today, where we want to go and how we get there. We began the process of meeting with stakeholders, including every college and school communications unit, to gain valuable input and work together to understand how best to align college/school/unit goals with brand strategy. We look forward to continued momentum moving this collaborative process forward in 2021.



### Define the brand

- Assess the current situation to identify key need areas.
- Review and **refine logo systems**.
- Update the **brand guidelines**.
- Identify and **define target personas**.
- Articulate the Auburn **brand positioning**, including values, personality, voice.
- Create/design cohesive **visual branding elements**.

Seek input/feedback from key stakeholders. Measure adoption.



### Manage the brand

- Create a **Brand Center** to house all guidelines, assets and resources.
  - Interim: Brand Center on current web platform.
  - Long-term: DAM (Digital Asset Management) system.
- Establish **templates** and **workflow system** (via DAM) for brand consistency.
- Create **educational** tools, **train users**.
- Create efficiencies and empowerment by **identifying brand champions** within colleges/schools, units.

Measure adoption and value creation. Seek user feedback to optimize tools.



### Advance the brand

- Commission a **Brand Health Study**.
- **Communicate study results** to stakeholders.
- Obtain input from stakeholders; hold **messaging/content strategy sessions**.
- Focus groups/**research to get to the big idea** (aligned to strategic priorities, brand vision, values, positioning).
- Develop **campaign strategy** based on above.
- Develop **creative concepts**, test and refine.
- **Execute** campaign.

Measure campaign effectiveness. Act on learnings. Set benchmarks for future.



OCM EXPERTISE

- Branding
- Crisis Management
- Digital Advertising
- Graphic Design
- Market Research
- Media Relations
- Photography
- Project Management
- Publications and Print
- Public Relations
- Social Media
- Strategic Communications
- Video Production
- Website Development
- Writing and Editing

INTEGRATED APPROACH

An integrated approach to marketing and communication ensures our key messages are consistent and timely, reaching audiences wherever they consume their news and information. Our owned media following, including social channels, website and campus newsletters, tops 1 million. Our media relations program employs aggressive and strategic story pitching to elevate Auburn on the statewide and national stages. Finally, our paid media strategy capitalizes on digital advertising opportunities to further generate awareness and boost our reputation.

EXAMPLE OF INTEGRATED APPROACH: AUBURN EXPERTS TAKE ON CORONAVIRUS

**Objective:**  
Generate awareness of Auburn University expertise, engagement and actions in a quick-turn response to COVID-19.

**Alignment of Objective to Strategic Plan:**  
Transformative Research: Elevate research and scholarly impact to address society’s critical issues and promote economic development in Alabama and beyond.

**Goal:**  
Create a comprehensive media relations campaign featuring our faculty experts and their take on COVID-19-related topics across four key areas: health and medical solutions, economic analysis, community impact and education and learning techniques.

- Tactics:**
- Build robust microsite to serve as central hub.
  - Execute digital ad buy and retargeting with fresh content to C-level executives, business owners and elected officials.
  - Extend campaign through news outlets, social media and internal digests.
  - Leverage homepage to drive to microsite.
  - Collaborate with campus communicators to identify and tell compelling stories.

1

THE FRONT LINE

Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

2

THE FRONT LINE

Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

Health and Medical Solutions

Economic Analysis

Community Impact

Education and Learning

View articles

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

3

THE FRONT LINE

Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

COVID-19's Impact on 2020 Elections

Bridgett A. King

College of Liberal Arts

5

THE FRONT LINE

Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

Health and Medical Solutions

New articles added

View Now

AUBURN EXPERTS TAKE ON THE CORONAVIRUS

1 Web Header

2 Digital media ad buy

3 Auburn Experts homepage slider

4 Social graphic featuring Education and Learning

5 Retarget digital media buy ad featuring Health and Medical Solutions

CAMPAIGN RESULTS

- 38,000 unique visits to microsite
- 79 Q&A COVID-related story posts with faculty experts
- 3.45 million digital ad impressions
- 522 million audience reached via news outlet coverage
- \$290,530 earned publicity value via news outlet coverage
- 447,000 social media reach



# COMMUNICATING IN A COVID WORLD

While no one could have anticipated the level of disruption the pandemic created, OCM's preparation and planning for communicating during emergencies and crises served us well. When the university transitioned to remote operations, we not only stayed up and running, but we developed strategic content that kept Auburn in the national conversation.

In a matter of days, OCM launched a COVID-19 resource website — The Front Line: Auburn Experts Take on Coronavirus — collaborating with college communicators to identify and

write stories of faculty with expertise related to the pandemic. In addition, we quickly developed signage and messaging aimed at campus safety. In August, we partnered with the COVID-19 operations team and associated communications task force to promote the A Healthier U campaign.

We also identified other opportunities to tell authentic Auburn stories related to the pandemic, highlighting Auburn alumni making an impact on the front line.

## The Front Line: Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus (March-July)

43

national media hits

123

statewide news stories

38,000

website views

522 million

audience reached through news outlet coverage

\$290,530

earned publicity value through news outlet coverage

## A Healthier U (August-December)

More than

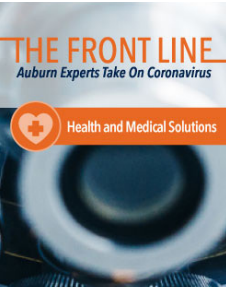
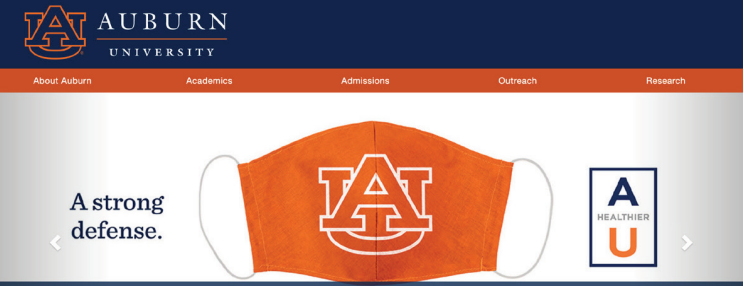
1,600

print and digital A Healthier U campaign placements across campus and daily visibility on AU Access

More than

50

media statements issued

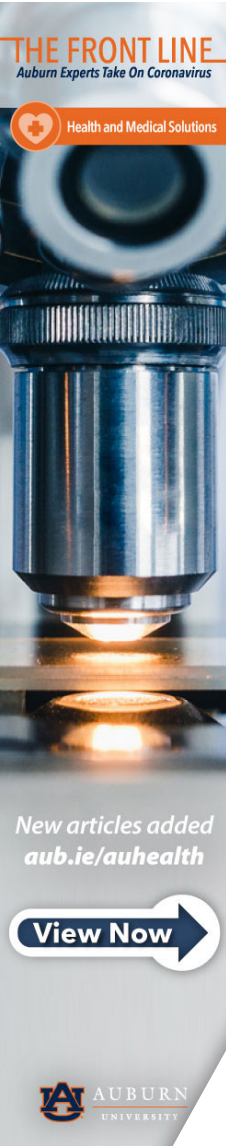
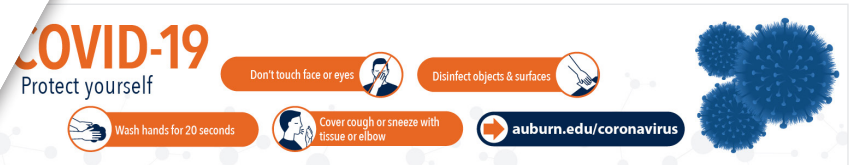


Aubie TikTok

Daily Health Check Reminder

66,300

views (one of Aubie's highest-viewed videos of the year)



## COVID-19 Social Media Video Stats

15

weekly update videos with Dr. Fred Kam (since Aug. 20, 2020)

217,052

total views (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

503,461

total reach

8

videos highlighting fall semester operations

233,830

total reach (Instagram and Facebook)

69,738

Twitter impressions

1

creative video with shots of campus set to the bell tower fight song, giving students a connection to campus

105,500

Facebook (highest-ever viewed video)

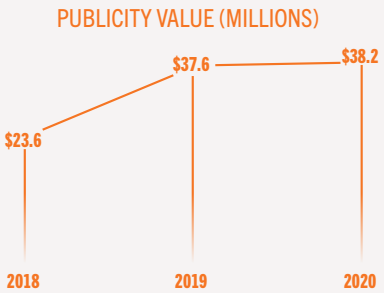
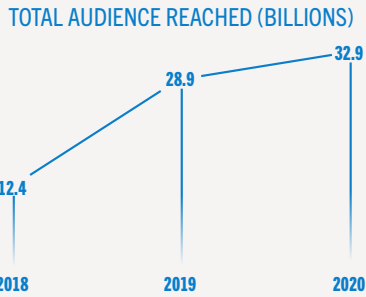
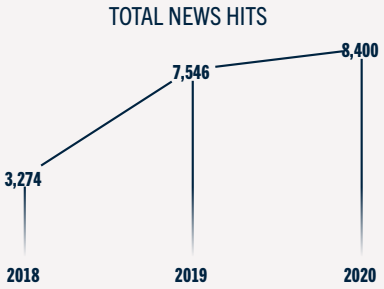
25,890

Instagram (most-watched video)

94,450

Twitter impressions

NEWS TRENDS



Source: Cision

EARNED MEDIA

Third-party validation — others telling their audiences about Auburn’s great work — is the most effective way to raise the university’s profile and reputation. Our staff works closely with college communicators to develop strategies for pitching stories, and we employ Cision software to identify and cultivate relationships with reporters on all levels. In 2020, coverage was secured in major outlets such as People Magazine, The New York Times, Yahoo Finance, MSN, Fox Business, ABC, the Associated Press, MarketWatch, The Street, iHeart Radio, Politifact, Christian Science Monitor and the Canadian Broadcast Corporation.

1

2

3

4

5

Top 5 stories of 2020

STORY	REACH
1. Auburn researcher and astrophysicist Dennis Bodewits leads study about comet’s unique composition	159 million
2. Supply Chain Management Associate Professor Rafay Ishfaq bolsters need of telemedicine in pandemic	149 million
3. Auburn unveils Student Center naming in honor of Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Harold D. Melton	118 million
4. Auburn study has implications in restoring or enhancing sense of smell	104 million
5. Auburn political science professors address election concerns during university webinar	86 million



**LTN STUDIO**  
In 2018, OCM partnered with Raycom Media and the School of Communication and Journalism to create a live-TV studio. We continue to pitch subject matter experts to network-level media. In addition to Columbus, Georgia, ABC affiliate WTVM and Montgomery NBC affiliate WSFA, past hits have included CBS News, MSNBC and ERR network in Estonia.



**WEBINAR COLLABORATION**  
OCM partnered with the Department of Political Science to host an informational Zoom webinar titled “Voting in 2020: What to Expect.” Six political science professors from the department’s Election Administration Initiative offered their thoughts on voting and the November election. The Zoom webinar is a new tool that OCM will continue to leverage.



843,851  
total followers  
14% increase from the previous year

38 million  
total impressions  
18% increase from the previous year

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS/SUBSCRIBERS

367,183 Facebook

140,890 Instagram

130,447 Twitter

195,891 LinkedIn

9,440 YouTube

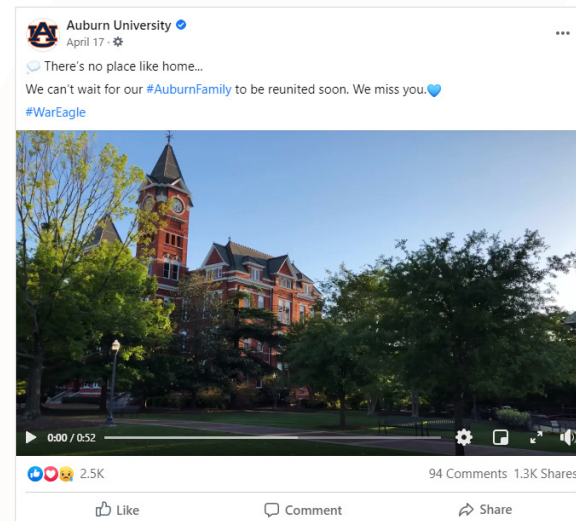
OWNED MEDIA

SOCIAL CHANNELS

Incorporating community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration is critical in spreading Auburn’s message. We are visible to the world online as Auburn University on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and our YouTube channel, with a total of 843,851 followers. In an effort to further strengthen our social media presence, and better engage with our audience, we created our first social media filters for Instagram and Facebook, generating 32,692 impressions. We likewise grew our use of Instagram Story posts — and videos — while creating a more updated and modern feel for our Instagram “highlights” section which includes campus scenes, spirit, student life, news, alumni features and the A Healthier U COVID-19 campaign.

Also, as part of our COVID-19 messaging strategy, we collaborated with Student Affairs, specifically Aubie’s TikTok account, to create a video conveying the importance of completing a daily health check for students when they arrived back on campus in August. This short, lighthearted, yet informative video garnered 66,300 views on Aubie’s TikTok account — one of his highest-viewed videos of the year.

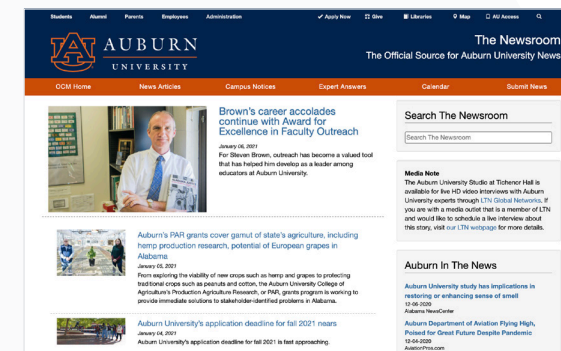
Top Performing Social Video of 2020: No Place Like Home  
(highest-ever viewed video on Facebook)



WEBSITE, NEWSROOM AND DIGESTS

Audiences count on our website to stay informed. The auburn.edu homepage is Auburn’s “front door” and a key hub for marketing messages, news and events. The Newsroom is an online resource for telling the stories that align with strategic priorities and accomplishments.

Stories from the Newsroom are repurposed and placed in news digests distributed to the campus community. Auburn News is emailed twice a week to faculty and staff, and includes stories about research, employee events and pertinent news. This Week@Auburn is sent once a week to students with news regarding their campus and academic experience.



266  
articles posted to the Newsroom

920,331  
total article page views

300,000+  
readers of campus news digests

145,019  
combined page views of the Auburn Expert Answers webpage and The Front Line: Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus site



PAID MEDIA

OCM launched two digital advertising campaigns to further our audience reach while continuing to elevate our national reputation. The first campaign, launched in April, drove awareness of our expertise, engagement and action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Phase 1 used digital display ads to promote the overall Auburn Experts message, directing audiences to the COVID-19 microsite The Front Line: Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus. Phase 2 used retargeting ads to promote new content availability, with updated creative ads based on users’ specific interest from Phase 1 tracking of engagement with specific category subpages within the microsite.

The second digital campaign, Auburn Action, elevated the university’s reputation and credibility by highlighting Auburn research and outreach that is positively impacting the world around us, especially in this time of health and economic uncertainty. In partnership with the Media Production Group, this campaign followed a multi-level approach — placing digital ads on three key influential state websites, targeting business leaders across the state, employing a site retargeting and engagement ad strategy for residents across Alabama and placing direct ads on AL.com. Our campaign approach was successful in achieving our goal of increasing visibility across the state.

The Front Line: Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

THE FRONT LINE Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

Community Impact

New articles added [aub.ie/aucommunity](#)

View Now

THE FRONT LINE Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

Economic Analysis

New articles added [aub.ie/aeconomy](#)

View Now

THE FRONT LINE Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

Education and Learning

New articles added [aub.ie/aueducation](#)

View Now

THE FRONT LINE Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

Health and Medical Solutions

New articles added [aub.ie/auhealth](#)

View Now


Results  
Campaign Run:  
March – July

3.45 million  
total impressions

3,442  
clicks on ad

.10 click-through rate to  
Auburn landing page  
(above national average of  
.08-.09)

# We Are What We Do.



The Auburn Family is made up of those who get things done for the greater good. Fueled by an undergraduate experience that is second to none, our graduates are prepared and inspired to lead and innovate in their professions, their communities and the world. And every day, our faculty discover and refine life-changing solutions to real-world problems facing humanity. At Auburn, we are what we do.

VIEW OUR NEW PSA

AUBURN HEALS   AUBURN DISCOVERS   AUBURN SUSTAINS   AUBURN PROTECTS

Auburn Action

AUBURN DISCOVERS

We are what we do.  
See more at [auburn.edu/action](#).

AUBURN SUSTAINS

We are what we do.  
See more at [auburn.edu/action](#).

AUBURN HEALS

We are what we do.  
See more at [auburn.edu/action](#).

AUBURN PROTECTS

We are what we do.  
See more at [auburn.edu/action](#).

Results  
Campaign Run:  
September – November

3.89 million  
total impressions

5,442  
clicks on ad

.13 click-through rate to  
Auburn landing page  
(above national average of  
.08-.09)

Auburn Heals

Auburn Discovers

Auburn Sustains

Auburn Protects

## We are what we do.

Austin Robinson, assistant professor in the School of Kinesiology, exemplifies Auburn’s commitment to solving our nation’s most pressing challenges. Robinson was awarded a grant from the National Institutes of Health to address why African Americans react so strongly to a high salt diet that causes elevated blood pressure and cardiovascular problems. His research aims to improve underserved communities — making a practical world a better world.

[auburn.edu/action](#)





The Office of Communications and Marketing teamed up with the School of Nursing to help develop, market and promote the book titled, “Auburn Nursing — Living the Creed During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” which told heroic stories from nursing alumni who were on the front lines fighting the global pandemic. This book offered us an opportunity to increase Auburn’s visibility across the nation, and showcase our unique and selfless alumni. Using Cision, a national media database software, our office distributed an excerpt from the book which was picked up by 116 media outlets and had an audience reach of 162.7 million. In addition, the book was promoted on full display on one of the most prominent digital billboards in Times Square.

116  
media outlets

162.7 million  
audience reached



# CREATIVE SERVICES

Creative Services provides design and brand leadership that ensures creative solutions are rooted in brand strategy and the university as a whole achieves brand consistency and high-quality visual representation across all communication touchpoints. Our design team functions as an in-house agency providing professional communications solutions for the university and for various campus clients. The team completed more than 400 creative projects this year from print to digital, social, web, signage, logos and various graphics, as well as copywriting and editing across a myriad of materials and channels. Our project managers led the creation of marketing plans, facilitated production, promoted special events and provided client support.

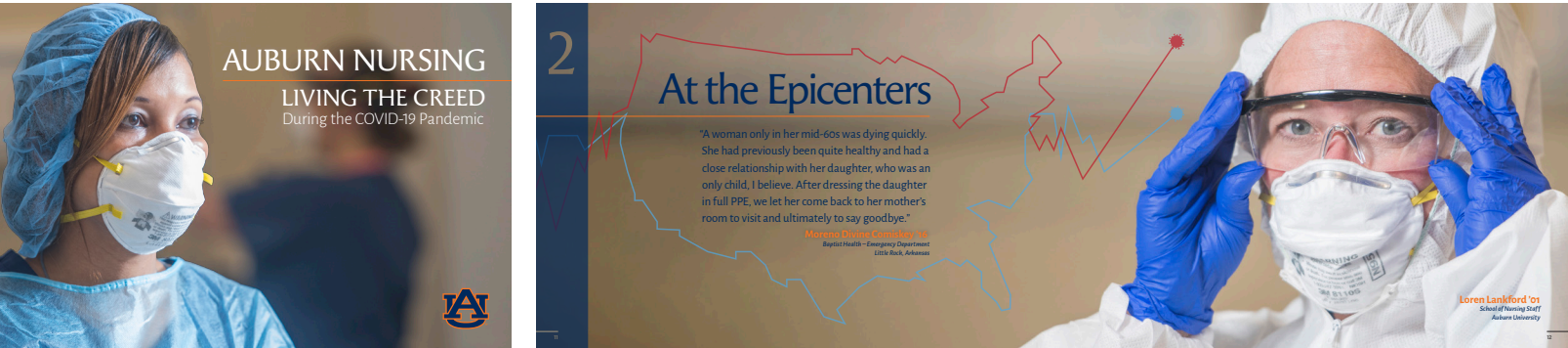
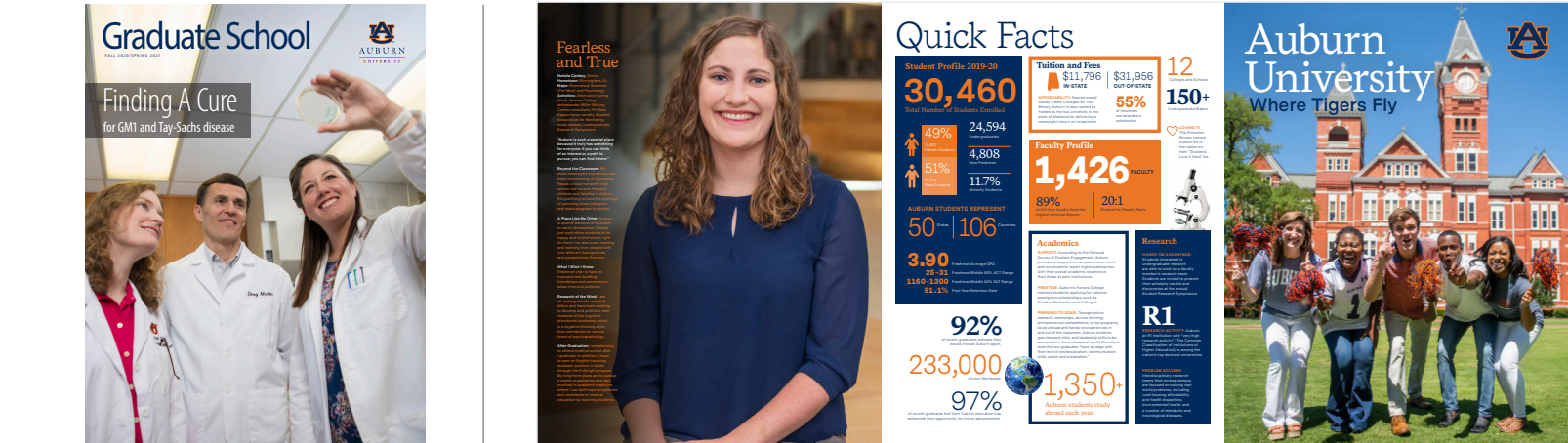
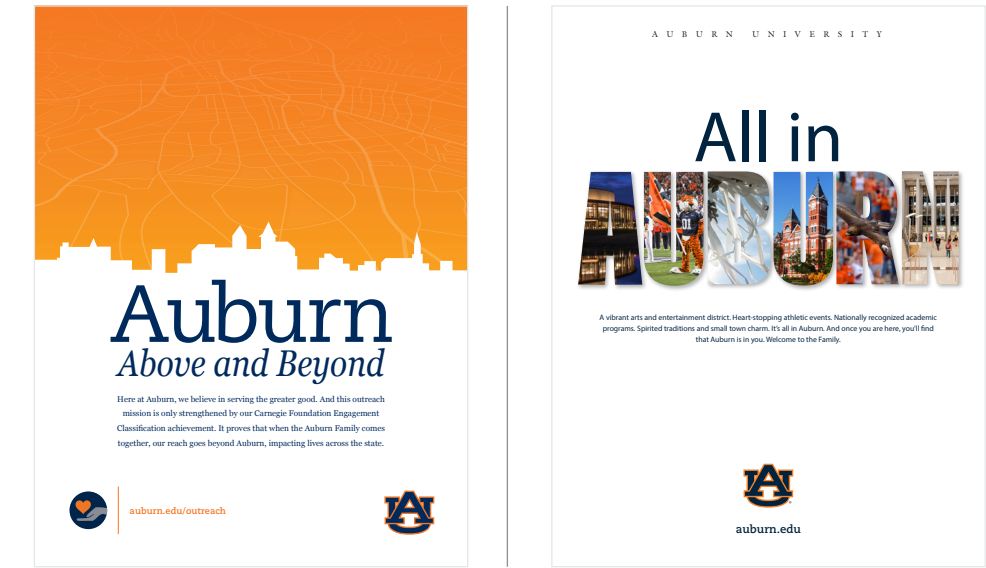
The team began an in-depth assessment of brand strategy and guidelines this year, resulting in the beginnings of a long-term plan to guide our communications and create brand value. Also, we established a new process for brand reviews providing a more streamlined workflow to ensure brand consistency across campus. We'll continue refining that process as well as develop new tools and resources to provide the support our campus stakeholders need.

425

creative projects completed

600+

brand reviews completed



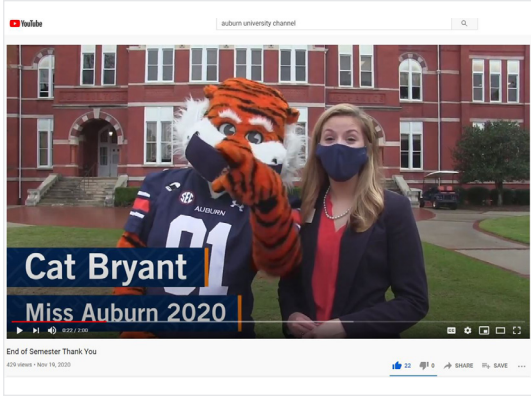
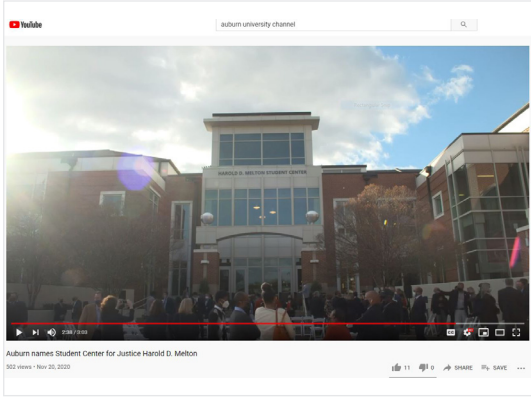
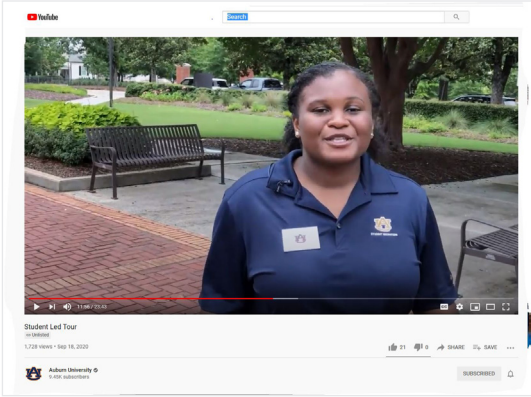
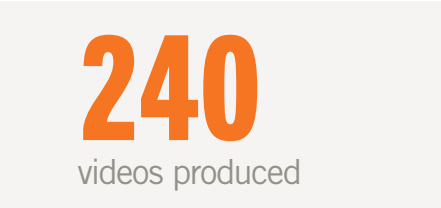


# BROADCAST SERVICES

Our broadcast team answered the call to increase the number of videos that were seen across all mediums, including social media, our website and YouTube channel. This group reminded our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends that Auburn was still operating — even during unprecedented times — with videos, including faculty and medical experts, virtual student-led tours and emotional reminders that Auburn will always be “home.” And when everyone was required to work remotely, the broadcast team still found a way to virtually film 23 faculty experts for The Front Line microsite.

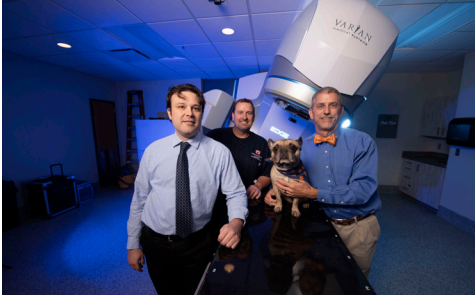
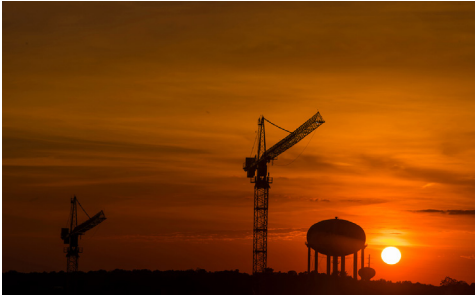
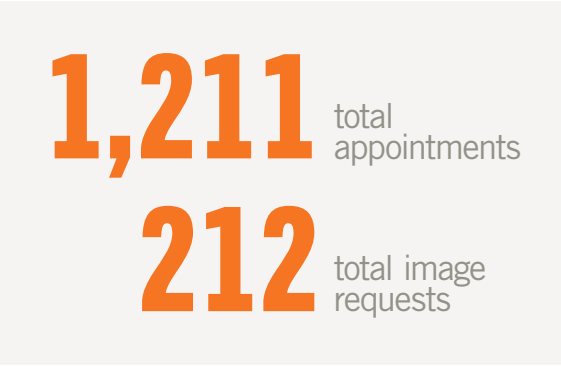
Our broadcast arm of OCM offers the campus community:

- Concept Development
- Location Shooting
- Copywriting
- Postproduction



# PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES

It is said a picture is worth a thousand words, and that is the standard held in Photographic Services. This group diversified their portfolio of work even more this year with breathtaking campus landscape shots, portraits of students, faculty and staff and never missed an opportunity to capture everyday campus life at Auburn.





# STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

OCM partners with major constituents across campus to produce compelling materials that help meet their goals and advance the Auburn brand. Here are examples of our collaboration with Admissions, Alumni Affairs and Development to drive student recruitment, engage alumni and assist in donor stewardship efforts.

18,000

applicants received Admissions acceptance packages

260,000

alumni reached monthly via Auburn Connection email

2,800

customized Foy Society packages delivered to donors

## ADMISSIONS

**You're In:**

The Office of Communications and Marketing worked with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to create an updated acceptance package mailed to all applicants who have been admitted to Auburn. This tri-fold piece included an acceptance letter, Aubie checklist, Next Steps brochure, a keepsake hashtag poster and Auburn magnet.



## ALUMNI AFFAIRS

**Staying Connected:**

The Auburn Connection email newsletter allows us to partner with the Office of Alumni Affairs to share news and feature stories about the university with our alumni. The email is distributed every month to nearly 260,000 Auburn graduates, donors, friends and stakeholders.



## DEVELOPMENT

**Giving Back:**

The Foy Society donor mailing was a collective effort between our office and the Office of Development. The customized package with iconic Auburn imagery thanks loyal donors for their commitment to the university and includes a society pin for consecutive-year donors with a thank you note for their continued support.





# AWARDS

The following projects were created and produced during 2019, but were recognized as award winners in 2020.

CASE Awards

SILVER – Expert Answers Microsite

Collegiate Advertising Awards

GOLD – PAIR/R1 Research Magazine

SILVER – President's Holiday Card

SILVER – Study Abroad in Seville Poster

SILVER – R1 Auburn Magazine Ad

BRONZE – School of Forestry and Wildlife

Sciences Spring Newsletter

BRONZE – School of Nursing 40 Years Graphic

Educational Advertising Awards

GOLD – American Airlines Print Ad

GOLD – School of Nursing 40 Years Graphic

GOLD – Study Abroad in Seville Poster

SILVER – School of Forestry and Wildlife

Sciences Spring Newsletter

SILVER – Auburn Community Garden Graphic

SILVER – Game Face

SILVER – Graduation GIF for Social Media

BRONZE – PAIR/R1 Research Magazine

MERIT – President's Holiday Card

MERIT – R1 Auburn Magazine Ad

Service Industry Advertising Awards

GOLD – Graduate School Magazine

GOLD – Graduation GIF for Social Media

GOLD – School of Forestry and Wildlife

Sciences Spring Newsletter

GOLD – School of Nursing 40 Years Graphic

GOLD – Study Abroad in Seville Poster

SILVER – American Airlines Print Ad

SILVER – Auburn Community Garden Graphic

SILVER – Game Face

SILVER – President's Holiday Card

MERIT – Nursing Building Magazine

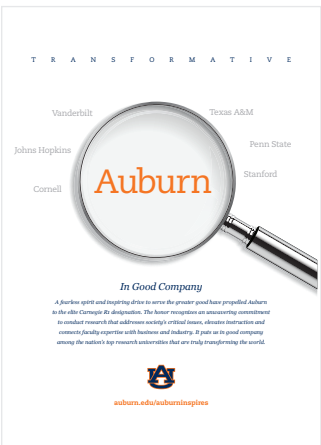
MERIT – PAIR/R1 Research Magazine

MERIT – R1 Auburn Magazine Ad

Education Digital Awards

BRONZE - Game Face

MERIT - Graduation GIF for Social Media





Keep a distance at least 6 feet wide  
using Aurea as your guide.



## THE FRONT LINE

Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus



COVID-19 Impact on 2020 Elections  
Bridgett A. King  
Political Science



## A HEALTH

### COVID-19

Protect yourself



A conversation with  
Acting Secretary of  
Homeland Security  
Chad F. Wolf

Watch live [aurea/live](#)  
Thursday, April 30  
11 a.m. EDT / 10 a.m. CDT



## THE FRONT LINE

Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

New articles added

[View Now](#)



We are  
what we do.



## THE FRONT LINE

Auburn Experts Take On Coronavirus

Community Impact

New articles added

[View Now](#)

