This year's ONE Conference focuses on the 'Power of Perspectives'

University Communications
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More than 400 people are expected at this month’s ONE Conference, a daylong conference for University marketing and communications professionals.

The July 18 conference, taking place in the Student Union Memorial Center, will tip off in a big way – with a keynote address from Arizona women's basketball head coach Adia Barnes, who will share insights on how trust, respect and open communication have strengthened her as a coach, player and community member.

"I'm really honored and excited to be the keynote speaker for the ONE Conference and to share my story with our marketing and communications professionals who are as passionate about Arizona as I am," Barnes said. "I hope that hearing about my experiences will be beneficial for the attendees and their professional growth."

Barnes played for the University of Arizona from 1994-98. She played for four teams in seven seasons in the WNBA and won a WNBA championship with the Seattle Storm in 2004. Barnes returned to the University as women's basketball head coach in 2016 and took the team to its first Final Four in 2021.

The theme for this year's conference is "Power of Perspectives," which is one of the six foundational blocks that inform the University's brand platform. The theme encourages marketers and communicators from throughout campus to focus on collaboration and teamwork, said Jenna Rutschman, director of marketing strategy for Campus Brand Engagement, part of University Marketing and Communications, and chair of the ONE Conference planning committee.

"We really want everyone to understand what resources are available to them, who they can contact for help and how we can create a more inclusive and collaborative marketing and communications ecosystem across campus," Rutschman said.

What to expect

The conference agenda will be filled with sessions and workshops on topics ranging from back-to-basics branding to emerging and evolving industry trends.

Rutschman will lead a panel discussion about bringing the University's "Wonder" campaign to the campus level.

"We have this beautiful national advertising campaign that everybody sees on billboards, on the trolley and in TV commercials, but they may not really know how to use ‘Wonder’ on a day-to-day basis in their unit or college," Rutschman said. "Our panel will shed some light on how to do that and why it matters."

Steve Patterson, interim chief safety officer, will be on hand to lead a session on how marketers, communicators and safety leaders can work together as the University continues to implement recommendations from the PAX report on campus safety.

"We’ll be discussing the ongoing work the Office of Public Safety is doing to keep our campus and community safe, and how we can work with our marketing and communications colleagues to tell that story," Patterson said. "Transparency and clarity are key when it comes to keeping people informed, and we will discuss how we can partner with all of our units to make sure everyone has the resources they need to make that happen."

Sessions on technology and digital platforms also are planned. One panel discussion, moderated by Darcy Van Patten, the University's chief technology officer, will look at the opportunities and challenges that come with ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence tools. In another session, Ravneet Chadha, chief data officer and associate vice president for University Analytics and Institutional Research, will talk about how UAIR data can be used to tell University stories.

"Accessing University data not only helps our leaders make decisions and informs campus policy, but also allows us to use data to tell the University of Arizona story," Chadha said. "Most metrics and numbers in our system represent a person – whether it be a student, a faculty member, a staff member or anyone in the campus community. My hope is to help our marketers and communicators tell their stories better."

For those involved in social media, there’s a session on keeping content student-centered. The presenters are Emily Stulz, director of social media with Campus Brand Engagement, and Carrie Johnson, health education and promotion manager with Campus Health.

"Carrie and I will be focusing on how units can collaborate to go beyond just posting flyers and graphics and really make social media work," Stulz said. "We recently worked with Counseling and Psych Services counselors to make short-form videos sharing mental health tips and resources for students. We'll talk about how the process worked and how other units
can find the same success."

Another key focus this year is diversity and inclusion, which Rutschman said will be an ongoing theme throughout the day.

"Our goal this year, rather than having diversity and inclusion just be the focus of one panel or session, was to work with our speakers to ensure that they're thinking about how to interweave diversity, inclusion and equity into their expertise on their topics," she said.

**Smooth and sustainable**

Since planning for the conference began about six months ago, organizers have been working to ensure the day goes as smoothly as possible for attendees. Joe Klug, assistant director for experience with University Marketing and Communications and one of those planning the conference, says that begins right when attendees arrive.

Klug said committee members have used feedback to inform multiple tweaks to the physical setup from previous years, from adding more places to stand in the shade outside to relying more on volunteers, rather than signs, to help people find their way. Changes also have been made to the check-in process to avoid logjams and get people registered quickly.

Additional feedback that informed this year’s conference had to do with clutter – too many stickers, too many bags and too many other miscellaneous items crowding tables and ending up on the floor. Making a change in this area not only allowed organizers to focus more on content, but moved the conference in a more sustainable direction, Klug explained.

"We've done away with most of the swag," Klug said. "We're focusing on QR codes and things that are digital that people can scan and take with them. That way, people can still get access to the information, but we're not printing a whole bunch of things that will sit in folders and sit on desks and eventually make their way into the trash."

The committee is also cutting down on waste by doing away with printed programs and eliminating boxed lunches in favor of a buffet-style lunch.

Because the conference takes place on a workday, the Student Union Memorial Center’s Diamond Atrium will be set up to allow attendees to step aside and get some work done – or just take a break.

"The foyer will be a connection spot with nooks for people to gather, connect and process the information they're getting," Rutschman said. "It will also be a place where people can check email, take calls and even just charge their phones."

**A yearlong effort**

The ONE Conference will end with a social hour at the Bear Down Building, featuring food created by Michael Omo, senior executive chef for Arizona Student Unions.

While the ONE Conference is just one day, learning opportunities for marketers and communicators will continue throughout the year.

"We're going to try to offer useful, quality content in smaller snippets once per month," Rutschman said.

Each month, University Marketing and Communications plans to hold meetings and workshops on topics geared toward marketers and communicators, such as how to play a role in campus safety and how to support student success and retention.

The ONE Conference is free, but attendees are asked to register online [4].

"Come and engage," Klug said. "Whether it's your first time or your fifth time, with over 400 people attending, you're going to meet someone new and discover something you didn't know before."

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